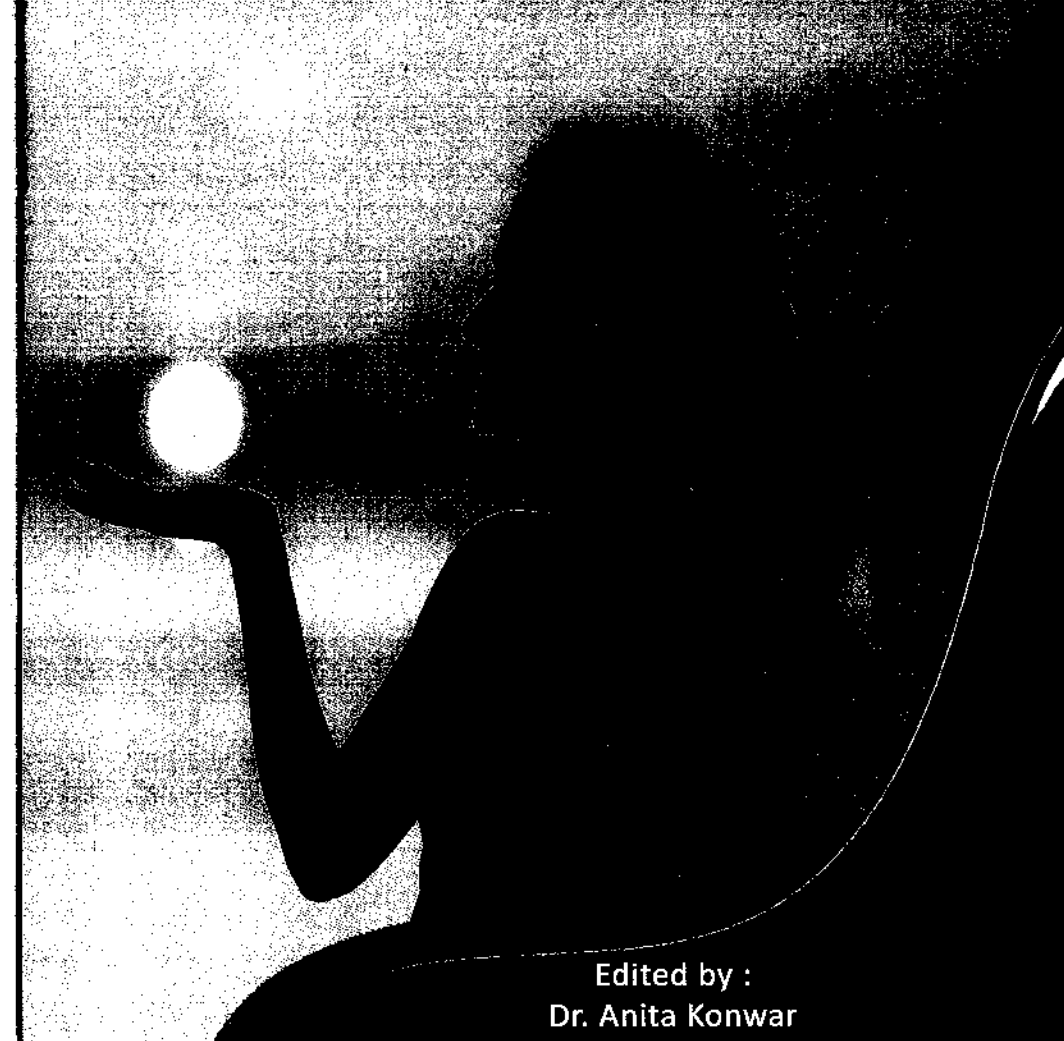




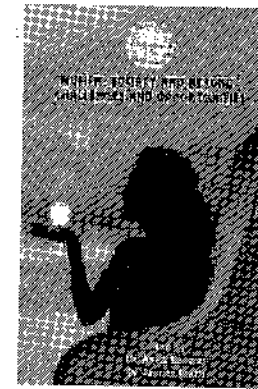
WOMEN, SOCIETY AND BEYOND : CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Edited by :
Dr. Anita Konwar
Dr. Amrita Mech

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Women, Society and Beyond : Challenges and Opportunities



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Women Study Cell
Sonari College, Sonari, Assam.

This book entitled *Women, Society and Beyond: Challenges and Opportunities* is a compilation of articles and has been published by Women Study Cell, Sonari College in March, 2023.

Women, Society and Beyond: Challenges and Opportunities

ISBN : 978-81-954970-1-0

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Published by : Women Study Cell, Sonari College, March, 2023.

Price: Rs. 400/- (Four Hundred Only)

Printed at :

KALPATARU OFFSET PRESS & PUBLICATION

No.1 Sonali Path, Moran - 785675, Dibrugarh, Assam

E-mail : kalpataruoffsetmoran@gmail.com

Disclaimer: The responsibility for the facts stated, opinions expressed and conclusion drawn is entirely that of the author, and neither the editors or the Institution is responsible for them.

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Principal's Note

*"When women are empowered, a society
with stability is assured."
(Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam)*

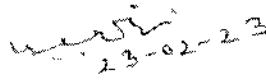
Women have an all-pervasive role in the formation and development of society. Women empowerment is necessary for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable society. Women's sense of self-worth, capability to regulate their own choices, right to stimulate social change for themselves and others are considered to be the various facets of women empowerment. Real empowerment means facilitating women with equal opportunity for education, health care and decent work and representation of women in political and economic decision-making processes will benefit societies and humanities at large. The Indian constitution grants equality to women and empowers the state to adopt measures favouring women. In the present scenario, women have both challenges and opportunities in various fields of society. To address the various issues relating to women would be a significant area of study and research.

The Women Study Cell of Sonari College published a book entitled 'Women in Various Fields: Roles and Contributions' on the occasion of the Golden

Women, Society and Beyond: Challenges and Opportunities

Jubilee of this institution and the book was inaugurated on 8th March, 2022 i.e. International Women's Day. Keeping the continuity, the Women Study Cell is going to publish a book entitled "**Women, Society and Beyond: Challenges and Opportunities**" on the occasion of International Women's Day i.e. 8th March, 2023. The book will be comprised of papers/ articles relating to various issues and perspectives relating to women. This is a praiseworthy step from the Cell.

I convey my best wishes to the editors for their endeavour to bring out the book which will provide resources for further study and research in the concerned fields.


23-02-23
Dr. Bimal Chandra Gogoi
Principal
Sonari College

Place : Sonari
Date : 23/02/2023

Editor's Note

Men and women are an integral part of society and the growth and development of the society cannot take place if the interest of the one section is ignored. Since the past few years women have made efficient use of the opportunities given to them and have proved time and again that they are no less than anyone else. The 21st century provides women with ample opportunities to excel in whatever field they choose. In spite of the opportunities in the changing scenario, women in the modern era have to face challenges in various fields. In that context, the book *Women, Society and Beyond: Challenges and Opportunities* will be a befitting medium to discuss the role of women in society as well as the various opportunities and challenges faced by them.

Dr. Pronita Kalita in her paper has highlighted the Articles of Indian Constitution that grants special protection to women. Special Laws, different programmes and initiatives related to women empowerment and their impacts are also studied and a few measures are suggested for women empowerment. Women remain second class citizens even in the 21st century. Though all are entitled to human rights, women have been fighting for them,

struggling for gender equality, facing discrimination and being subjected to violence and abuse all-round the globe. The most serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses are reported in Afghanistan after the Taliban regime took control of the country. Anansha Borthakur in her paper has shed light on the unbearable condition of Afghani women under the dictatorship of Talibans. They have mounted a resistance to the Taliban oppression; some choose to be mere victims of abuse and violence while others demand equality, rights, justice and peace to develop their identity.

It is stereotypical for women to perform the household chores and to take care of the family members. Rural women have to toil more than the urban women. In today's world, there is a need to accelerate the household income and women's participation in paid economic activities should be encouraged. But this doubles the workload of a woman. Annesha Mech in her research paper, advocates an egalitarian society where the unpaid household chore workload could be shared as a responsibility between the male and female counterparts so that stress of women and her workload is reduced. In order to achieve gender equality and to safeguard the rights of women, economic empowerment of women is of utmost importance. Malobika Gogoi in her paper describes education, financial interdependence, enhancing technical skills and knowledge, access to assets as defining characteristics that can empower women.

A nation can prosper and succeed only with the improvement of the socioeconomic conditions of women

and evolution of gender equality. Mridusmita Patowary in her research paper studies the sex ratio, literacy rate, and female labour force participation in the 8 states of North-East India and found discrepancies to be prevalent. Effective policies with the aim of limiting gender inequality, shrinking education gaps, reducing the male female disparity in earnings and economically empowering of women is the need of the hour.

Kabyasri Hazarika in her paper has focussed on the choice of educated women marrying late, viz. after her 30's and even higher. The age of marriage of both man and woman has been increasing in the past few decades. A comprehensive investigation was made by her in the Nagaon district of Assam. Majority of respondents were of the view that they wanted to be economically empowered, hence opted for higher education and find better job opportunities. Women marrying late face a lot of health problems like hormonal imbalances and pregnancy issues. She opines that educated women should take the right decisions in the right time.

Librarianship is a decent profession for women and the number of women librarians have been increasing. A librarian makes available "information" to the users and readers and is concerned with problems of storage, retrieval and access of documents of users. Dr. Nijumoni Changmai and Mrs. Swapnali Saikia in their research paper identify the issues and challenges faced by women librarians while managing the libraries in their style. They opine that women librarians have smartly and skillfully tackled the new technology and are role models to many

because of their all-round performances as facilitators, researchers, communicators, navigators and technological experts and enjoy respect but sometimes do face challenges and managerial issues. They sometimes confront gender stereotyping and sometimes are being ignored by their male subordinates which affect their mental health.

A person's mental health shapes his or her career and personality. It is imperative for a woman to have a good mental health at workplace for better results and productivity. This crucial issue is being addressed by Gitika Talukdar in her research paper where she pinpoints hectic schedules, inequality in payment, disturbance, sexual misconduct and inability to meet expectation as prime causes impacting negatively on a woman's mental health. She identifies certain stress coping and management strategies like talking about the problems to someone, practicing yoga and meditation, adopting healthy food habits, rewarding oneself by travelling and enjoying music which will surely keep mental health of women in check and give them job satisfaction.

Showcasing legendary women scientists, recognizing their contributions and how they overcame all obstacles that hindered their path to progress will surely motivate the young women to follow their footsteps. Pranati Gogoi in her paper has introduced us to such a revered woman scientist Janaki Ammal, who was the recipient of the prestigious Padmashri Award. She was the first woman to receive the PhD degree in Botany and also conferred with the honorary DSc by University of

Michigan. She has made a significant contribution in the field of cytogenetics, phytogeography and her most famous being the development of high yielding varieties of sugarcane. Women scientists should be acknowledged, remembered and celebrated for shattering the glass ceiling as they have contributed significantly to science.

India is the second largest tea producer in the world, and Assam ranks 1st in production of tea in India. The women workers are the backbone of the tea industry yet they earn meagre incomes for tea leaf plucking and have always been dominated, deprived and discriminated. Abhita Gogoi in her paper gives an overview of the degree of political awareness among tea garden women and their participation in political processes. The tea garden women have a hectic schedule and heavily burdened with work. They have to perform all duties at home and again work in the garden, which leaves them with no time and no interest for active participation in politics. A patriarchal society prevents them from taking major decisions of their lives. Encouraging the tea garden women folk to speak about their problems, improving literacy rate, making them aware of their rights and eliminating poverty will increase their political awareness.

India is a land of talents and Indian women are no less than men. Women in Science and Technology have a great potential to change the world. Through her paper, Parishmita Konwar helps us explore the lives of the greatest Indian Women involved in the field of science and technology and their most notable contributions. But it is a worrisome truth that women are underrepresented

in the field of science and technology. According to a Report of World Bank 45% of women constitute the graduate population in science and technology but their participation in workforce is low, only 14% join academic institutions and universities. Stereotypical gender roles, gender biases, wage gap, social stigma, household responsibilities, are the major issues leading to women backing out. To bridge this gender gap in science and technology, girls and women should be encouraged and empowered to participate and practice in that field.

Mousumi Daimari in her research paper helps us in visualizing the Educational and Social status of women in the Vedic Period. Though patriarchal system was prevalent at that time but women in that period lived a glorified, independent, well educated, confident life and were given a high status, revered and valued and were never deprived of any rights and privileges. They enjoyed the equal status with men and took equal part in intellectual debates and performing social customs and rituals. The Vedic Period has a great deal to teach the modern society.

During the Era 1890 to 1920, woman struggled to change the definition of womanhood in profound ways. Feminism questions the long-standing, dominant, male interpretations, phallogocentric ideology and patriarchal attitude. In her paper, Ankita Baruah has discussed essays like Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* to show that these literary texts unfolded the new women's perspectives to

analyze the patriarchal society.

The emancipation of women is not possible until they are aware of their own potentialities. Proper education and economic independence can pave the way for a new horizon where woman can lead a meaningful life. In her paper, Dr. Anita Konwar highlights woman's quest for identity and possible modes of emancipation with reference to the story "The Rooftop Dwellers" written by Anita Desai, one of the prominent Indian writers. In the story, the female protagonist, Moyna dares to go against the current flow of life and question the so-called conventions of society that entrap women.

Like the previous year, this year too, women study cell, Sonari College has come forward to publish a book related to women on the occasion of the International Women's Day. We extend our thanks to all the paper contributors for their papers and articles. We take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Principal of Sonari College, Dr. Bimal Chandra Gogoi for providing support towards publication of this book. We extend our sincere thanks to Dr. Lindy Lou Goodwin for taking the initiative to apply the ISBN on behalf of Women Study Cell, Sonari College. We acknowledge the support and cooperation of the members of Women Study Cell and the entire college family for their support and cooperation. We would also like to thank Mrs. Monidipa Rajkumari for initially designing the cover page. Finally, we offer our thanks to Mr. Ranju Borah of Kalpataru Publication, Moran for printing out the book on time. It is hoped that the contents of the book will be able to

Women, Society and Beyond: Challenges and Opportunities

stimulate thoughts and encourage further study and research in the concerned fields.

Place : Sonari
Date : 02/03/2023

Dr. Anita Konwar
Dr. Amrita Mech

**Women Empowerment :
An approach to safeguard the Rights
of Women**

Dr. Pronita Kalita

Abstract:

Since 1500 B.C., the time of Vedic period the condition of women in India has been changing from time to time. In ancient period women occupied a prominent position in the society. But gradually due to some self-centered scholars the status and dignity of women declined in the society. It became difficult for women to enjoy fearless liberty and to act at will. In course of time the demand for equal rights and liberty for women was forcefully stimulated and concept of women empowerment has been encouraged for the all round development of the society. The concept of women empowerment has been introduced for empowering women socially, economically and educationally and for strengthening the process of development to safeguard the basic rights related to women. In this discussion an attempt has been taken to analyze the present issues and

challenges related to women rights and how women empowerment can safeguard these rights through Constitutional provisions, Laws, different programs under NMEW (National Mission for Empowerment of Women). Descriptive method is used to analysis the different idea and data are collected from secondary sources.

Key words – Women Empowerment, Women's Rights, Challenges.

1.0. Introduction

As a mother, sister, daughter or wife the role of the women in the development of a human being's personality in particular and the growth and the progress of society in general, can't be either denied or undervalued. Since 1500 B.C., the time of Vedic period the condition of women in India has been changing from time to time. In the ancient period women occupied a prominent position in the society. They had equal status like men. Educated women were popularly known as 'Brahmabadini', 'Rishika', and 'Pandita'. They played important role in deciding things, necessary for their household, society or the country. They were respected and consulted by their male counterparts at any time of crisis. But gradually due to some self-centred scholars the status and dignity of women declined in the society. Men became dominant and women were constrained within four walls. With the passage of time many anti-women rituals and customs came into practice in the society. It became difficult for women to enjoy fearless liberty and to act at will. She was made dependent on

men for their all the basic needs and men suddenly became much superior to women. In course of time some social reformer realized that women should be given equal rights and liberty for the all round development of the society. These people advocated for women education and equal social status for women. They tried to change the social rituals and religious beliefs to provide women a life full of dignity and priority. But this craves for reformation faced immense hindrance from the orthodox decision makers and the high caste men of the society. During the reign of the British this challenging movement got support of the Government and after Independence the Indian constitution gave these issues of women special priority. India is a democratic country and the constitution provides different rights through articles to the citizens to safeguard their lives and honour. Hence, special articles have been included in the constitution to grant special protection to women. Through a number of articles and later amendments and policies it has been tried that women can avail the equal social, economic, cultural, educational, and political opportunities like men.

2.0. Objectives of the paper:

The main objectives of this discussion are -

- ❖ To highlight the different programs related to women empowerment.
- ❖ To understand the impact of different programs in empowering women in the present social context.
- ❖ To suggest a few measures for women empowerment.

3.0. Methodology:

In this study, basically descriptive method has been used for discussion or highlighting of the main features. The data have been collected from secondary sources such as scholars' views written in different books, qualitative books, journals, periodicals and from internet, and provided in this paper after through self analysis.

4.0. Concept of women empowerment

As soon as India got independence measures were taken in the constitution of India to strengthen the position of women in the society. The Indian society was contaminated with lots of inhuman rites, superstitions, unhealthy orthodox practices, and a general sense of disbelief regarding women. Women were segregated in the society and their role was determined by their male partners. So, the Government of India has tried to reform the status of women providing them good education and social privileges. But after sixty years of this endeavour women are still considered weak and the social concept is still lamentable. The Govt. still introduces new bills and laws to protect the rights of women and this suggest how unsuccessful the earlier effort has remained. One can see change in the condition of the women. But that is very marginal and only materialistic. In rural India, the picture is not so encouraging. In the urban area also the slum-women or the working women go through horrendous mental and physical atrocity. The birth of women is still considered omen in many places of India. Girl students are stopped in the mid-way from pursuing

education. The working women face difficult time in their office hours. The house wives are often fall prey to the rage of their domestic partners, male or other women. Such is the plight of women in the present society also. As a matter of fact, the concept of women empowerment has been introduced. With a view to empowering women socially, economically and educationally and to strengthen the processes that promote all round development of women through coordination and convergence of schemes/programmes of participating Ministries/ Departments, the National Mission for Empowerment of Women was launched by the Government on 8th March, 2010. The purpose of this mission is to give the women a sort of confidence which would enable them to live with dignity and value. The National Mission for Empowerment of Women has a mandate to achieve inter-sectoral convergence of all pro-women and women centric programmes across Ministries. The Mission aims to provide a single window service for all programmes run by the Government for Women under aegis of various Central Ministries. It is an attempt by the Government to put women's concerns at the very heart of public policy and governance.

Women empowerment is the most effective way to secure the rights of women. The rights of women refer to the right of a woman to live a life with dignity and freedom. Often the social system or the patriarchal attitude hurt the dignity of women and consequently their rights are obstructed. Hence special safeguard is required for securing the rights of women. When women are

empowered they enjoy the bliss of liberty from all sorts of fear and dependence. This liberty paves the way of securing women rights with faith and courage.

5.0. Different Programs for Empowerment of Women

5.1. Constitutional Provisions related to Women Empowerment

The Constitution of India is a controlling machinery of Indian Democracy. It promises to bring social, economic and political justice and guarantees to establish equality by equal status and opportunity for all. Indian Constitution contains a number of provisions for women's welfare and protection. These are –

Article 14: Equality before law

This article is related with the idea that State shall not deny equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws to any person within the territory of India.

Article 15: Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth

- ❖ The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth or any of them.
- ❖ No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to-
 - a) Access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment; or

- b) The use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or dedicated to the use of the general public.
 - ❖ Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.

Article 16: Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment

- ❖ There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.
- ❖ No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.

Article 21: Protection of life and personal liberty

No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.

Article 23: Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour

- ❖ Traffic in human beings and beggar and other similar forms of forced labour are prohibited and any contravention of this provision shall be a punishable offence in accordance with law.
- ❖ Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from imposing compulsory service for public purposes, and in imposing such service the State shall not make any discrimination on grounds only of religion, race, caste

or class or any of them.

Article 39: Certain principles of policy to be followed by the State

The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing-

- ❖ that the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;
- ❖ that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women;
- ❖ that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength
- ❖ that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.

Article 42: Provision for just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief

The State shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.

Article 45: Provision for free and compulsory education for children

The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all

children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

Article 46:

The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation

Article 47:

The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people.

Article 51(A) (e):

This article is related to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

Article 243 D (3):

Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

Article 243 D (4) :

Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to

be reserved for women.

Article 243 T (3):

Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality.

Article 243 T (4) :

Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may provide by law.

5.2. Legal Programs related to Women Empowerment

To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women. Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as 'Murder', 'Robbery', 'Cheating' etc, the crimes, which are directed specifically against women, are characterized as 'Crime against Women'. These are broadly classified under two categories.

- (1) The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)
 - (i) Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)

- (ii) Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363-373)
 - (iii) Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC)
 - (iv) Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC)
 - (v) Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)
 - (vi) Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)
 - (vii) Importation of girls (up to 21 years of age)
- (2) The Crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL)
- Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and interests are:
- (i) The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948
 - (ii) The Plantation Labour Act, 1951
 - (iii) The Family Courts Act, 1954
 - (iv) The Special Marriage Act, 1954
 - (v) The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
 - (vi) The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 with amendment in 2005
 - (vii) Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
 - (viii) The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 1995)
 - (ix) Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
 - (x) The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
 - (xi) The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976
 - (xii) The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
 - (xiii) The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
 - (xiv) The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983

- (xv) The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1986
- (xvi) Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
- (xvii) Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
- (xviii) The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

5.3. Some special initiatives for women empowerment

5.3.1. National Commission for Women

In January 1992, the Government set-up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary.

5.3.2. Reservation for Women in Local Self - Government

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure one-third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.

5.3.3. The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000)

The plan of Action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.

5.3.4. National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001

The Department of Women & Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a "National Policy for the Empowerment of Women" in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.

6.0. Impact of Different programs on Empowering Women

The Constitution of India cited about the gender equality in its Preamble through Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure equal rights for women. Key among them is the ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1993. Besides different Constitutional provisions, and endeavours of the Government and NGOs the conditions of women in India is still alarming. They face harassment in their day to day lives whether she is working women or non-working women. Though some women have occupied a renowned and the highest position in Indian politics and other sectors, a huge number of women are living a life full of

struggle, insecurity, disgrace and indignity. Violence or harassment against women may be classified as (i) Criminal violence (ii) Domestic violence and (iii) Social violence. Criminal violence include rape, abduction, witch-killing, murder etc. Domestic violence is dowry death, wife battering, sexual abuse, maltreatment of widow and elderly women etc. Social violence includes wide range of activities, such as forcing the wife or daughter-in-law going for female foeticide, eve-teasing, deprivation from property, and refusal to provide chance to participate in the matter of decision making in family as well as in the society. This type of violence against women both inside and outside of their home has become a crucial issue in present society. Article 14, 15(e) and 16 of Indian Constitution tries to ensure equality among the masses irrespective of their sex, religion, cast etc. Article 21, 23, 39 and 42 provide equal liberty, employment opportunity and some special provision to women related to their personal and social life. Article 45 is directly related with empowerment of women. It is related with providing free and compulsory primary education free of cost. The constitution of India has also empowered State through some articles, e.g. 46, 47, 51(A) (e), 243 D(3), 243D(4), 243T(3), 243T(4) etc. But the general social status of women and thinking regarding women has not gone through much change. The patriarchal attitudes, poverty, illiteracy, lack of right awareness among the common masses are the vital reasons of this ailing status of women. It's an irony to see that most of the both literate men and illiterate men consider women from almost the

same perspective. Women is broadly considered as a source of entertainment commodity, as some tool to get wanton pleasure, as the bonded unwaged worker of the family, as a submissive inferior witless creature. It's an irony to see that women are worshiped as Goddess in this country and killed and humiliated sometimes for money, and sometimes for sexual pleasures; in the time of every social, national or even family-crisis woman falls prey to any sort of atrocity; women are targeted with evil intention. The constitutional provisions and other programs have changed the economic and social condition of many women. Obviously, the literacy rate of women has increased highly. No doubt, women can feel freer to earn their livelihood, to have their education, to engage themselves in any sector of profession. But it is noteworthy that the crime rate against women has also increased highly in this period. Women are materially developed now-a-days, but so far individual right is concerned, they are still subjugated.

7.0. A few suggestions for Women Empowerment

- i) Social attitude towards women should be changed.
- ii) Strong effort should be taken to stop witch killing. People should be conscious and think logically about different religious and social matter.
- iii) Dowry system should be abolished and the people who take and give dowry should be punished. Awareness should be increased against dowry. Every family should understand that material resources are temporary assets and therefore importance should be given to the girl, not to the dowry.

- iv) Parents should pay importance to the education of the girls. Education is the only mean by which the fate of a girl child can be changed positively. Education can empower a woman and provide her a life of dignity.
- v) The NGOs and other social organization should be vigilant in monitoring that woman are being benefitted by the constitutional provisions properly. They should make the women aware about their constitutional rights and legal safe-guards.
- vi) Women should be given preference in all employment sectors and the society should come together to boost her confidence.
- vii) An environment should be created in every household where women are given due respect, their sacrifice is adored with appreciation. This sort of environment in the family will mould the character of a child with positive thinking for women.
- viii) The mass-media, electronic media, and other public relation media should take the great responsibility to create awareness among people about women's problems and make them sympathetic to help them. They can also play a vital role to focus the people who engage in the crimes against women.
- ix) Stories of great women should be included in the curriculum to give the students an idea of the abilities of women.
- x) Women should increase their participation in social, economic, and political sectors to reinforce their voice against social discrimination.

8.0. Conclusion:

Women are the most significant constituents of the society. In spite of their certain physical limitations in comparison to their male counterpart, they have a more determined temperament and greater power to endure. They should not be treated as second class citizen of the nation. They are constitutionally and legally protected. But it should be the responsibility of every individual to ensure them those constitutional and other safe-guards. The criminals against women should not be accepted in the civilized society and initiative must be taken for their rectification. Women are the wonderful creation on this earth. They should be given their part of open sky to breathe freely.

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The History of Women's Resistance during the Taliban's regime in the 20th Century : A Tale of Double Marginalization

Anansha Borthakur

Abstract:

The community of Afghan is frozen in a matrix of male domination wherein the inequality of the genders is both a heavenly requirement and a cultural construct. This patriarchal tyranny emerged in 1996 with the Taliban taking control of Afghanistan's capital city of Kabul, which signalled the beginning of the end for Afghan women's human rights. The regime imposed some extreme fake fundamentalism rules to monitor and control the behaviour of the women, disrespecting which may lead to punishments and even deaths. Hence, resistance became their only solution as every female citizen of the country, who has to and ought to respect these instructions without any further obligations. The Afghan women are more prone to be altogether double marginalised- through

phallogocentric norms and Taliban dictatorship. This paper looks at the unbearable condition of Afghan women under the Taliban regime, who were and are still the victims of traditional gender relations that support a gender hierarchy where men are put above women.

Keywords- Taliban, Double Marginalization, Women, Afghanistan, Resistance

Introduction:

No other country in the world has experienced a war on women as starkly as Afghanistan. Whether in the late 20th century or in the post-pandemic era, violence against women and their resistance has become a ritualized part of this war. When the US military forces started leaving Afghanistan in the early part of 2021, the Taliban once again took over the country on 15th August 2021. After fully seizing their power, the Taliban's opening statement included assurance that all women can exercise their rights within Islamic laws, including their education, mobility, and employment. However, despite these assurances, women were experiencing the reversal of these rights every day. There were increasing levels of gender-restrictive norms, impacting women's freedom of movement, speech, expressions, and methods of their livelihood. Even in 2021, these restrictive norms have further added up to the cultural perceptions of the family's 'honour' anchored by the age-old patriarchal norms. Hence, we can say that Afghan women are more prone to be altogether double marginalised- through phallogocentric norms and Taliban dictatorship. These

women mount a resistance against both these inequalities, though the first kind of resistance is perhaps stronger. This paper looks at the unbearable condition of Afghani women under the Taliban regime, who were and are still the victims of traditional gender relations that support a gender hierarchy where men are put above women. Alongside this, it will analyze how these women show resistance to different oppression in different forms and manners.

A Historical Review:

Afghanistan's treatment towards women significantly improved in the early 20th century. During the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan (also known as The Iron Amir) from 1880-1901, efforts were made to modernize the country. To improve the position of women in society, he attempted to change some of the customary laws, including raising the marriageable age for women, granting women the right to divorce under specific circumstances, and banning the practice of forcing a widow to marry her husband's next of kin. In order to continue his father's progressive agenda, Amir Habibullah Khan after Abdur Rahman's death brought Mahmud Beg Tarzi back from his exile. "Educated in Syria and Turkey, Tarzi was strongly influenced by modern interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence and by the liberties afforded to women in these countries." (Ghosh, 3). Tarzi, known as the founder of Afghan journalism, used his newspaper *Seraj ul Akhbar* to advocate for social reforms that supported women's rights and democracy. There was one section of the newspaper that was specifically designed

to 'Celebrating Women of the World.' After Habibullah's assassination, his son Amanullah emerged victorious in the third Anglo-Afghan war in 1919 after defeating the British. He then focused on freeing women from tribal cultural restrictions and modernizing Afghanistan. Amanullah's efforts included public campaigns against the veil, giving women the right to choose their own partners, and promoting education for women across the country. These actions were met with resistance from a coalition of opponents, which eventually led to Amanullah's forced exile from the country. As Farzanah Rabbani stated, "The central issue of women's rights was the main reason behind the fall of the monarchy in Afghanistan." (Rabbani, 28)

According to Huma Ahmed Ghosh, "The 1940s and 1950s saw Afghani women becoming nurses, doctors, and teachers. In 1964 the Constitution allowed women to enter elected politics and gave them the right to vote. The first woman Minister was in the health department, elected to the Parliament along with three other women. In 1965, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), a Soviet-backed socialist organization, was formed. The same year the first women's group, the Democratic Organization of Afghan Women (DOAW) was formed." (Ghosh, 6). However, this was the situation for a tiny group of metropolitan women who had a lot of freedom in their movements, access to education, and various professional options. Contrarily, this emancipation process excluded the majority of women who lived in rural areas. Similarly, those in power did not represent

the majority. Nancy Tapper in one of her articles suggests that “the reform of women’s law in this period was not much different from the reforms of earlier regimes since the 1880s, in the sense that none of these reforms resolved the harsh reality of the majority of the people living in the rural area and all were formulated by the male Afghan elite, based on western models.” (Tapper, 14). A communist regime was established as a result of the Soviet Union’s invasion in 1979. During their rule in the 1980s, the communists oppressed political dissidents, but they also advanced women’s rights and created new opportunities and roles for women. These advancements, which were highlighted as notable achievements, were part of a larger nationalist ideology of modernization in which women’s emancipation was a central theme.

Taliban’s War on Women :

Gayatri Spivak mentioned in her book *Can the Subaltern Speak?* - “Taliban run-down women from expressing desire and finally led them to voiceless deaf and dumb puppets. Afghan women are also subalterns and silent who are unable to speak for their rights and her voice won’t be heard if she speaks” (Spivak, 194). Afghan women’s human rights came to an end in 1996 when the Taliban took over the country’s capital, Kabul. The Taliban’s leaders originated from the most conservative Pashtun areas of Afghanistan, where most of the people were illiterate and their financial condition was the poorest. To combat all these minimalities, they foregrounded their religion as their greatest defence.

Hence, their treatment and behaviour toward the common mass were based on the lessons and the conservative norms that were taught to them by their religion and in their *madrassas*. Immediately after the installment of their regime, the Taliban imposed some of the most notorious ‘gender apartheid’ and fake fundamentalist rules over women. They established the Department for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (al-Amr bi-al-ma.ruf wa-al-nahy an almunkar) to monitor and regulate the actions and movements of women. “Daily, Radio Sharia (the only broadcasting media permitted at that time) reminded the Citizens of their duty to the country and Islam, and listed the changes men and women needed to make to conform to the new fundamentalist regime.” (Ghosh, 8). Khaled Hosseini, in his award-winning novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, clearly mentioned those new changes that were broadcasted every morning on Radio Sharia-

“You will stay inside your homes at all times. It is not proper for women to wander aimlessly about the streets. If you go outside, you must be accompanied by a male relative. If you are caught alone on the street, you will be beaten and sent home. You will not, under any circumstance, show your face. You will cover with a burqa when outside. If you do not, you will be severely beaten. Cosmetics are forbidden. Jewellery is forbidden. You will not wear charming clothes. You will not speak unless spoken to. You will not make eye contact with men. You will not laugh in public. If you do so, you will be beaten. You will not paint your nails. If you do so, you will lose

a finger.” (Hosseini, 142)

During the Taliban regime, access to education and employment was nearly impossible for women. Moreover, the Taliban went so far as to outright forbid girls and women from attending school. In an attempt to work around this restriction, humanitarian organizations established covert schools in private residences, but the Taliban responded by shutting down more than 100 of these schools in 1998. On May 24, 1997, the Taliban declared it will not permit women to be public employers. Foreign companies were told not to work with Afghan women. Male doctors were either not allowed to treat women or were required to do so without touching them, while female doctors were not allowed to practice. “The prohibition on employment had such a devastating effect that by 1998, researchers “saw a city of beggars-women who had once been teachers and nurses now moving in the streets like ghosts under their enveloping burqas, selling every possession and begging so as to feed their children.” (Roshan, 6). In order to provide for their family, some destitute women who lacked male carers turned to prostitution. “The prostitutes were in great demand by the Taliban. The Commanders usually abduct young women. Some of them even have ten wives, although Islam allows only four. They have enough food, so it is no trouble for them to maintain such a large household or harems” (Das, 17)

In refugee camps near the towns, there were women whose husbands had either perished in the civil war or while the Taliban were in power. They were

frequently referred to as *Zanane bee Sarparast*, which means “unprotected ladies,” a derogatory term. Sexual Violence and Rape has always been a ritualized part of the war, and during the Taliban regime, this turmoil has forced many families with young grown-up daughter to leave the country. Young girls who were either routinely raped by the other Taliban or sold outside the towns as “sex slaves” were brought home as wives by the regime’s officials. Racial tension-related rapes and sexual assaults were a daily problem. The local leaders, Taliban youth, and border guards singled out refugee women from the Hindu and Sikh communities and accused them first.

For the Taliban, Islam is a rescuing religion that determines the specific dignity of women and also it has valuable instructions for women too. Therefore, every female citizen of the country has to and ought to respect these instructions without any further obligations. Moreover, in the name of religion, they created the religious police that had the authority to torture and punish women anywhere, anytime who seemed to outbreak their regulations. Taliban’s diction of Religious Police as mentioned by Povey-

“We request all family elders to keep tight control over their families and avoid these social problems. Otherwise, these women will be threatened, investigated, and severely punished as well as the family elders by the forces of the Religious Police. The Religious Police have the responsibility and duty to struggle against these social problems and will continue their effort until evil is finished” (Povey, 24)

Despite the difficult circumstances and societal expectations, women have demonstrated great bravery in finding new ways to survive and pursue their objectives with limited resources and cultural barriers. Women collaborated in groups and organisations, creating networks, standards, and a sense of trust in their neighbourhoods. They solidified their position as social actors and held out enormous optimism that, with the Taliban gone, things would become better and they could work toward extending democracy in their country.

The Phallo-Centric Norms:

Wali M. Rahimi, the author of *Status of Women: Afghanistan*, argues: "The position of women in Afghanistan has traditionally been inferior to that of men. This position has varied according to age, socio-cultural norms, and ethnicity. In fact, Afghan women, even until the beginning of the 20th century, were the slaves of their fathers, husband, father-in-law, and elder brother. Her most valued characteristic was silence and Obedience". (Rahimi, 6)

In the Afghan community, the ideal woman is often portrayed as subservient to her husband and his family. She is considered one of his possessions, and her husband's dominance over her is expected. He has the power to control her behaviour, belittle her beliefs, and impose his own views on her. A good wife is expected to serve and please her husband above all else. In traditional Afghan society, the importance of a woman's identity is so closely tied to the standard definition of a man that

she cannot be recognized without him. This patriarchal attitude is deeply ingrained in the culture and is reinforced by both religious and cultural resources that further marginalize women. Men use this mentality to dominate women, treating them as nothing more than a means of reproduction and as slaves to their husbands and in-laws. Failure to fulfil these duties can result in extreme physical violence, such as being shot and buried alive by one's husband or in-laws or even having one's toes and fingernails cut off as punishment. Hence, as Gayatri Spivak mentioned, "Colonialism, patriarchy, and ethnocentrism work on the same model of oppression by using power, hegemony, and ideology. The weaker sex is controlled and colonized by their own phallogocentric society in their domestic circle" (Spivak, 297)

Conclusion:

Even in the twenty-first century, women in Afghanistan are treated freely by both male colonisers and male colonised subjects as puppets, and objects other than people. It has become clear from the above facts that women have historically been viewed as second-class citizens in traditional Afghan culture which is abundantly obvious. "Being second class in all aspects of life is somehow internalized in women's mentality; women have no right to ask for equality. In such a system, some choose to endure the social and domestic violence and become the victim of a misogynistic society, whereas others choose to resist the familial, political, cultural, and religious institutions which develop the woman's identity"

(Shabanirad, 273) Whether it is during the Taliban regime or the domestic circle, each woman shows resistance to the oppression in a different way. "But the very act of resistance, especially their transgressions of standards and aims, epitomizes the distribution and individuality that unifies them as resisting bodies"(Choudhary,9)

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Women's Participation in Unpaid Domestic Duties in Assam

Annesha Mech

Abstract :

Women's domestic duties often remains invisible, non-accountable and non-remunerative. Domestic duties often limit women to get engage in the labour market. This study makes an attempt to analyse women's participation in unpaid domestic duties in Assam vis-à-vis All-India. The estimates revealed that engagement of women in domestic duties is more in rural areas of Assam than urban areas and they generally spend most of the time in performing domestic duties as there is no other member to carry out the duties. Women also perform various activities such as maintenance of garden, engage in poultry, dairy farming, collection of fish, firewood, preparing of cow dung cakes, sewing, tailoring and fetching water from outside household premises etc. along with domestic duties. They have to bear a double work shift as they have to simultaneously carry out paid

employment related activities along with unpaid domestic services. In order to set up an egalitarian society changes must undergo at household, state, market and societal level which encourages women to equally participate in paid economic activities along with their male counterparts.

Keywords: participation, domestic duties, unpaid, women, Assam

Introduction:

Unpaid domestic duties are an important aspect of economic activity which is essential for the well-being of individuals, households and in fact for the economy as a whole. Women throughout the world bear the prime responsibility for unpaid work which includes housework and taking care of people at home and in communities for which they do not obtain any monetary benefits. Unpaid work limits women's ability to participate equally with men in the labour market and reduces the time available to them for self-care, human capital investment, socialization, political participation and relaxation (Cagatay et al., 1995). Women tend to perform different activities which varies across regions but remains under counted. They spend more time in animal husbandry, fetching water, forestry, collection of firewood, fodder, fruits and vegetables, climb the hilly terrain. But this contribution of women is not taken into account while assessing National Accounting Statistics as it is often believed that activities in which women are engaged in are not considered as economically productive (Desai,

1994). Unpaid work of women often is a consequence of rigid patriarchal norms stemming from historical sexual division of labour prevalent in class societies and continuing into the capitalist society, albeit in different forms. Presence of unpaid work of women act as a barrier for women to freely access labour markets, reduce income earning potential and also lead to persistent inequalities. Unpaid work of women forms the core of double burden that women experiences over a lifetime. Increased freedom in making life choices that includes entering the labour market has resulted mostly in an increased workload as it has not been accompanied by a reduction of their obligations in the domestic domain. The differences in the duration of paid and unpaid shifts of men and women do not follow the logic that longer the paid shift the shorter is the unpaid shift and vice versa. As a result, women tend to bear a double work shift. Hence on an average women's workload is more as women are shouldering a double work shift which has meant less time for achieving life goals like time for education, resting, engaging in social relations and health. This study makes an attempt to analyse women's participation in unpaid domestic work in Assam.

Methodology:

The present study is based on secondary data from National Sample Survey 68th Round, 2011-12 and Time Use Survey 2019. It largely draws information from NSS Report on Participation of Women in Specified Activities along with Domestic Duties. The NSS unit level data has

been taken into consideration for assessing women's participation in domestic duties. Estimates from Time Use Survey provides a framework for measuring time dispositions by the population on different activities. It is used to capture time dispositions on different aspects of human activities, be it paid or unpaid. The estimates have been calculated considering all the activities in a time slot for the age group 15-59 years.

Discussion:

Engagement of women in domestic duties

Unpaid work of women is not a matter of choice for women but it is a restraint imposed by the society and patriarchal norms that women are expected to carry responsibility for work at home impeding their socio-economic empowerment. Domestic unpaid work involves performing routine household odd jobs such as cooking, cleaning, fetching food, collecting water and firewood and looking after household members. It has been observed in the table 1. that participation of women in unpaid domestic duties in the age group 15-59 years in 2011-12 was found to be high in rural areas of Assam (75.8%) in comparison to urban areas (72.3%). But in case of all India average participation of women in unpaid domestic work is high in urban areas (65.1%) in comparison to the rural areas (61.6%). With regard to time spend on domestic duties it was revealed that in Assam 93 percent of women in rural areas spend most of the time in domestic duties in comparison to 92.3 percent in case of all India level. But in case of urban areas 89.3

percent of women in Assam and 93 percent at all India level spend most of their time on unpaid domestic duties. The reason for this is mainly due to the existence of socio-cultural norms which emphasizes male domination and female subordination. Women's current low status in the Indian economy is linked to their disproportionate share of unpaid care work and lack of access to paid employment. The recognition of women's role in nourishing families is often denied and undervalued (Palriwala and Neetha, 2011). They are engaged in unpaid activities not by choice but rather they are constrained by the existing faulty institutions which includes both market and state.

Table 1: Engagement of women in domestic duties in the age group 15-59 years per 100 females

State/ Country	Rural/ Urban	Number of females engaged in Domestic Duties per 100 females in the age group (15-59)	Number of females to spend Most of the Time in Domestic Duties per 100 females engaged in Domestic Duties
Assam	Rural	75.8	93
	Urban	72.3	89.3
All India	Rural	61.6	92.3
	Urban	65.1	93

Source: NSS Unit Level data, 2011-12

Reasons for participating of women in Domestic Duties

Women's current low status is linked to their disproportionate share of unpaid care work and lack of access to paid employment. In order to understand the different prospects of spending Most of the Time on Domestic Duties a number of inquisitions has been put forwarded by NSS. The estimates of this study revealed that in case of Assam about 59.3 percent reported that there is no other member to carry out domestic duties; 20.6 percent reported other reasons; 14.2 percent claimed that it is due to social or religious constraints and 5.9 percent reported that they cannot afford hired help. On the other hand, in case of all India about 62.1 percent revealed that they have to do so due to the reason that there is no other member to carry out the domestic duties; 15.4 percent reported that they have to carry the domestic duties due to social and religious norms and constraints; 13.9 percent stated other reasons and 8.6 percent viewed that they cannot afford hired help. This inequality in performing domestic duties arises even if she is employed or unemployed due to the existing patriarchal norms and customs which supports women subordination and women are recognized to perform the domestic chores which includes nourishing families and caring after elders and infants which are often undervalued and denied. Within the household the redistribution of unpaid work requires change in the present patriarchal norms and customs.

Table 2: Reasons for Spending Most of the Time in Domestic Duties in the age group (15-59 years)

State/Country	Reasons for Spending Most of the Time in Domestic Duties in the age group (15-59 years)			
	No other member to carry out the domestic duties	Cannot afford hired help	Social and religious constraints	Other reasons
Assam	59.3	5.9	14.2	20.6
All India	62.1	8.6	15.4	13.9

Source: NSS unit level data 2011-12

Various activities performed by women along with unpaid domestic duties

This section tries to examine the extra work performed by women along with domestic activities. These activities listed in the table 3, falls within the unpaid work according to Indian System of National Accounts and even if these activities are performed, they are not considered as worker.

Table 3: Various activities performed by women along with unpaid domestic duties

Activities	Assam		All-India	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Maintenance of garden, orchards etc	84.4	37.8	23.5	7.8
Work in IHH, poultry, dairy etc	69.8	12.0	21.6	2.4
Free collection of fish etc	67.0	7.8	18.8	1.8
Free collection of firewood etc	59.8	5.0	43.5	5.3
Preparing of cow dung cakes	22.5	2.3	41.1	4.6
Sewing, tailoring etc	53.7	46.6	27.6	23.6
Free tutoring of own/others' children	14.9	22.2	6.9	12.1
Bringing water from outside HH premises	14.2	12.0	30.5	9.6

Source: Calculations of data done by authors based on 68th Round, 2011-12 of NSSO

The results revealed that there exists huge variation

in participation of women in all the specified domestic unpaid activities across the rural and urban sectors in case of Assam and all-India average. It has been observed that 81.4 percent women are engaged in maintenance of garden, orchards within the household premises in rural areas compared to 37.8 percent in urban areas in Assam in 2011-12. On the contrary at all India level, it has been reported that 23.5 percent in rural areas and 7.8 percent in urban areas are engaged in maintenance of kitchen garden within the household premises. Likewise, 69.8 percent in rural areas and 12 percent in urban areas are engaged in poultry and dairy activities in Assam and in case of all India level 21.6 percent in rural areas and 2.4 percent in urban areas are engaged in poultry and dairy activities. Practice of Animal husbandry is essential as it helps in supplementing household income and also provides a cushion in times of distress. Women have to perform animal feeding, breeding, milking, caring of new born calves, sick animals etc which contributes to the major burden of livestock management. They also have to supply feed and fodder for the cattle. They also have to look after the poultry birds and eggs (Shiva, 1991; Patel et al., 2016). They are also engaged in collection of fish for consumption purposes. About 67 percent of women in rural areas and 7.8 percent in urban areas of Assam and 18.8 percent in rural areas and 1.8 percent in urban areas at all India level, are indulged in fishing activities. Further it has been reported that 59.8 percent of women in rural areas and 5 percent in urban areas of Assam and 43.5 percent in rural areas and 5.3 percent of

women in urban areas of India are engaged in collection of firewood for which she has to walk several miles. About 53.7 percent of women in rural areas and 46.6 percent in urban areas in Assam and 27.6 percent in rural areas and 23.6 percent in urban areas at all -India level indulges in sewing, tailoring activities. About 14.9 percent of women in rural areas and 22.2 percent in urban areas of Assam and 6.9 percent in rural areas and 12.1 percent in urban areas of India indulges in tutoring own children along with domestic duties. Women are also engaged in fetching water from outside household premises for which she has to walk several miles on foot.

A large degree of feminization is observed in the above-mentioned activities as the market economy has failed to recognize the existence of unpaid work and women perform these activities in the form of non-market services.

Gender Differentials in participation in various activities

There exists discrepancy in participation in different activities among males and females. Estimates of Time Use Survey is used for measuring time dispositions by male and female on different activities which helps in capturing time dispositions on different aspects of human activities, be it paid or unpaid. The estimates have been calculated considering all the activities in a time slot for the age group 15-59 years.

Table 4: Average time (in minutes) spent in a day per participant in different activities

Description of the activity	Assam		All-India	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Employment and related activities	366	326	470	343
Production of goods for own final use	163	88	198	115
Unpaid domestic services for household members	99	357	95	315
Unpaid caregiving services for household members	66	126	73	137
Unpaid volunteer, trainee and other unpaid work	97	77	103	100
Earning	425	430	421	414
Socialising and communication, community participation and religious practices	160	133	146	136
Culture, leisure, mass-media and sports practices	124	123	144	151
Self care and maintenance	712	691	711	704

Source: Time-Use in India, 2019

The time spent in employment and related activities is more in case of males than females. It is 366 minutes for males and 326 minutes for females in Assam and 470 minutes for males and 343 minutes for females in case of all-India level. Women have to bear a double work shift as they have to simultaneously carry out both employment related activities and domestic services. The average time spent in a day for production of goods for own final use is more in case of males than females in Assam and all-India level. The predominance of women in domestic work keeps them out of economic activities, puts unpaid domestic work under the shadow of invisibility though she spends majority of the time in performing such works (Singh and Pattanaik, 2020). The mean time spent in domestic services for males is 99 minutes and for females is 357 minutes in case of Assam whereas in case of all-India level it is 95 minutes for males

and for females' average time spent is 315 minutes. Unpaid domestic work remains outside the purview of economic activities and economic policies. Women provide majority of unpaid caregiving services to spouse, parents, parents-in-law, friends and neighbours. They act as predominant providers of informal care for family members with chronic medical conditions or disabilities which includes adults and elderly people with mental illnesses. Several societal and cultural beliefs demand women to adopt the role of a family-caregiver. On an average male spent 66 minutes and females spend 126 minutes in Assam whereas in case of all-India level male spend 73 minutes and females spends 137 minutes in providing caregiving services to household members. Men's involvement in unpaid volunteering and other unpaid work is more in case of Assam and all-India level as they are less liable to household chores. The average time spent in learning is more in case of females (430 minutes) than males (425 minutes) in Assam, on the contrary it is more in case of males (421 minutes) than females (414 minutes) in case of all-India level. On an average the daily time spent in socialising and communication and related activities such as talking, conversing, chatting, participation in community celebration and religious practices is 160 minutes for males and 133 minutes for females in Assam and 146 minutes for males and 136 minutes for females in all-India level. There exist differences among males and females in participation in cultural activities, leisure, mass-media and sport practices etc. The mean time spent

in a day for activities related to self-care and maintenance such as sleeping, eating, personal hygiene and care is 712 minutes for males and 691 minutes for females in case of Assam and 711 minutes for males and 704 minutes for females in case of all-India level.

Conclusion:

Engagement of women in unpaid domestic work is not a matter of choice but rather it is a restraint imposed by the societal practice which results in large degree of feminization in domestic services. Societal norms further restraints women in actively participating in labour market. So, to achieve an egalitarian and inclusive society efforts should be made at household, state, market and societal level. Societal norms and beliefs needs to undergo change and males should equally be taught to participate in domestic works along with their female counterparts which shall help in reducing mental and physical stress faced by women. This will enable them to actively participate in economic activities which shall help in accelerating the household income. Moreover, the educational status of women and girls should be improved in order to make them competent to participate in the labour market. Investment should be made at the state level for provisioning of basic essentials and generation of employment avenues for women.

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Economic Empowerment of Women : A Brief Overview in Context of Rural Assam

Malobika Gogoi

Abstract:

Empowerment in the perspective of women's development is a way of recognising, confronting, and removing obstacles from a woman's life by giving her more control over her surroundings. It's a dynamic, multifaceted process that ought to help individuals achieve their full potential and strength in every sphere of life. Women's empowerment has been cited as a necessary prerequisite for eliminating poverty in emerging nations of the women with privileges and rights equivalent to those which men have so far enjoyed. Despite the severity of the issue, there are a number of roadblocks that prevent it from being easily solved. The study's primary goals were to evaluate rural women's empowerment situations and investigate the associations between particular features of the women with

empowerment. With an assessment of rural women's existing economic circumstances, this study article aims to investigate effective strategies for economic empowerment of rural women in Assam.

Keywords: Empowerment, Rural Women, Economy, Rural Assam.

Introduction:

Empowerment is a dynamic process, which enables women to actualize their individuality and strength in every spheres of life. It allows women improved time management skills, wider access to knowledge and resources, and freedom from the shackles of outdated built-in norms and habits. The word "empowerment" is often used to refer to women who play equal roles in the growth of society and the country. If given the same opportunity and prestige as males, women, a substantial human resource, may perform their function efficiently. They require the ability to use more advanced technology in their daily tasks, thus they must receive the same level of instruction and training as men do. However, access to opportunities and status are just two aspects of empowerment, which is a means of identifying, confronting, and removing obstacles from one's life so that one can develop her capacity to influence her surroundings and her own life. The economic, educational, social, and political empowerment of women would quicken the pace of societal progress because they are the foundation of the human infrastructure. The most reliable approach to contribute to economic progress and

global development is by investing in women's "abilities" and giving them the freedom to pursue their "decisions" and "opportunity". In order to build robust economies that promote sustainability and quality of life, it is crucial to enable women to actively engage in economic life across all sectors. However, employment is multifaceted, multidimensional, and multi-layered notion, which requires women to undertake greater share of control over resources, including those that are both material and intellectual, such as knowledge, wisdom, and notions. It also includes financial resources, like money, which gives women access to and control over decision-making at all levels and helps them acquire "power".

Objectives of the study:

1. Evaluating the current economic situation of women in rural Assam.
2. To identify the economic problems that women in rural areas are facing.
3. To assess various government initiatives for women's economic empowerment in rural Assam.
4. To offer some suggestions for the economic empowerment of rural women.

Research Methodology:

This study used a qualitative content analysis methodology. The data and information were acquired from secondary sources such as books, journals, newspapers, magazines, periodicals, websites, Ph.D. theses, etc.

Economic Empowerment of Women that Governs in Assam:

Assam is one of India's eight northernmost states. In terms of population, it is the most populous and second largest state in the area after Arunachal Pradesh in terms of size. Despite possessing a wealth of natural resources and a vibrant culture, the state lags behind the rest of the nation. The socioeconomic makeup of the state has not been favourable to general advancement. As a result of multi-ethnic makeup and diverse cultural heritage, it has experienced ethnic war and insurgency over the last three decades, jeopardizing both its social fabric and economy. Women are the worst casualties of the process. Due to the predominance of tribal and indigenous culture, the region as a whole is free from several social ills like dowry, sati pratha, female infanticide, but other forms of gender discrimination do still exist as evidence by several gender gap studies. According to Assam Human Development Report (2014), the unemployment rate for women is 33.9 percent, compared to 8.0 percent for men.

Rural Women and Their Potential Role in Economy:

Although women form 48% of India's population, their role in economic development cannot be understated. Comprising nearly half of the population, women form a significant human resource base. The unprecedented degree and diversity of female labour force participation significantly contribute to the expansion of the economy. Rural women, notably indigenous women, play vital roles and make incredible contributions to

ensuring food security, reducing rural poverty, and advancing agricultural and rural development. The nation's agricultural workforce is mostly supported by rural women. The contribution of women to creating economic activity starts at home, where they work from early in the morning until late at night, while also taking care of their families, farming activities (particularly dairy husbandry), and other jobs like horticulture and floriculture. Farming, weaving, cottage industry, and other village-level industries that contribute greatly to the development of the economy are heavily reliant on their domestic labour. In order to raise and educate their children or to ensure that they receive training in a variety of skills that are utilized to generate income and productivity in agriculture and industry, women must invest significantly more in human capital. The procedure is seen to have a good effect if the women have access to economic opportunities, control over the financial advantages of those chances, and the knowledge and abilities to employ those opportunities to make tactical decisions that improve their lives. Economic independence instantly improves the position of women. It is widely agreed upon that socioeconomic programmes should be adopted and put into action to help poor and rural women build their economies. This necessitates both effective government action and a shift in societal perspective.

Issues faced by Rural Women in the path of economic empowerment:

Contrary to popular belief, however, gender inequality has prevented society from giving women the recognition they deserve, depriving them of chances and preventing them from realising their full potential for the sake of the community. Extreme poverty, misery brought on by gender-inequitable socio-economic-political structures that leads to gender stereotypes and gender inequity, and other acts of violence against women are the main reason why rural women in Assam endure greater hardship than their civic counterparts. Regrettably, rural women are still oppressed by men who control the economy of their community and have lesser socioeconomic position. Generations have been stuck in this situation. Women in rural areas frequently encounter obstacles while trying to engage in economic activity because of social moral and gender-grounded demarcation, their disproportionate involvement in overdue work, and their lack of equitable services like financial and other services. They are typically viewed as being weaker than men, They have been kept within the four walls of the home, overworked with household duties, and deprived of their mobility and personal liberties by the males of the home since the dawn of civilization. As a result, they've fallen behind in the areas of education, skill development, and employment. In accordance with our Constitution, men and women are entitled to equal rights and opportunities. Although being crucial to society's reproduction, they nonetheless have to overcome a number of obstacles, such as lack of accessibility to a nutritious food, competent healthcare, institutional delivery facilities, among others.

The biggest obstacle to rural women's economic development is illiteracy. Women in remote areas are robbed of an education because they are either married off at a young age, drop out of school to care for their siblings, or participate in domestic work because of poverty. Girls face a variety of educational obstacles, and it is incredibly difficult for them to advance economically through higher-skilled work. In addition to education, health and wellbeing are essential. Another significant barrier for rural women is the lack of access to adequate nourishment, healthcare, and reproductive facilities, as well as concerns with basic safety and integrity. Healthy women will undoubtedly be in good physical and mental health, which is a prerequisite for empowerment.

Despite participating in practically all agricultural operations, women still lack or have insufficient technical skill and knowledge because of their limited mobility. This has forced them to continue using the traditional methods employed in farming and agriculture, which has led to ineffective work and tedium. In general, decisions about tasks requiring technical expertise and financial matters are made and taken into consideration by male family members only, and women do not actively engage in these decisions. Enhancing technical knowledge and abilities as well as increasing participation in diverse farm operations are necessary because education and financial independence are the defining characteristics of women's empowerment.

Findings and Discussion:

Govt Initiatives: In light of society's patriarchal structure, the government has demonstrated growing concern for women's rights by implementing a number of laws and programmes aimed at empowering women as a whole. Women's issues, particularly those affecting rural women, have received attention from international institutions like the World Bank, the United Nations, and non-governmental organisations. The Indian government has been implementing programmes constantly to improve the precarious situations of rural women, particularly through the adoption of Five Years Plans. The main goals were to increase women's economic independence, increase their job capacities, reduce poverty, promote employment and justice, increase women's self-reliance in agriculture, and improve women's and children's health.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), later known as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, was one of the successful initiatives that was put into place in 2006. (MNREGA). It was designed with the dual objectives of boosting rural employment and development, and because of its triple effects on social protection, subsistence reliability, and democratic and economic empowerment, it has been considered as a formidable weapon for inclusive growth in rural India.

The Swayamsidha Program encourages the creation of women's self-help groups, that will empower women by giving them greater access to the resources

they are denied, as well as by raising their awareness and developing their abilities. The socioeconomic condition of rural poor women has significantly improved as a result, and it has made it easier to increase their skills so they may engage in income-generating activities.

The Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) initiative was intended to offer microfinance services that would help rural women's socioeconomic status. Women receive professional, skill-based education that is certified, such as instruction in sewing, computer literacy, and other practical courses, giving them the ability to live independently and with dignity. Bharatiya Mahila Bank was founded with the goal of serving the banking requirements of women and providing services that are primarily for women to encourage economic development. This is an all-women's bank and provides services to women and women-run businesses, supporting women's self-help and their livelihoods to promote further financial inclusion.

The government has created a number of programmes for the benefit of women- the "UJJAWALA" is a comprehensive programme for stopping trafficking and saving people, and it also aids in the rehabilitation of those who have been the victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. "GREH" is a programme for rehabilitating women who have been abandoned, who have been the victims of domestic abuse, who are former prisoners, and who lack any kind of social or financial support.

The World Bank is aiding the Indian government in expanding a women's empowerment program in India in aim to greatly enhance the welfare of rural women, their families, the economy, and society. In several Indian states, the National Rural Livelihoods Project (NRLP) has aided women's economic emancipation. In addition to helping women form patron groups for cooperative learning and skill development, aggregating their yield, and controlling quality, this programme supports rural women producers by advancing livestock productivity, value chain advancement, and non-farm activities. As government initiatives continue, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have increased their impact in the field of women's empowerment. NGO's like CARE India are committed to fostering an environment that is supportive of women's empowerment, especially for those who reside in rural areas of the country and are members of marginalised communities.

Suggestions for Economic Empowerment of Rural Women:

The earliest and most effective way for empowering women in society and the first step towards economic empowerment is literacy, or giving women access to high-quality education. In order to encourage more girl students, especially those from BPL households who are stigmatised, to enrol in mainstream schools, the government and several Organizations have been working hard and providing a package of incentives. Vocational and specialised training, as well as other learning

programmes, are implemented to help women develop employable skills and better decision-making capacities, improving their access to mainstream work.

The access of rural women to resources like land and credit is supported through concerted initiatives. To promote women's access to land, strategies for distributing land to landless women are taken into consideration. Fiscal and monetary policies must be looked at from a gender perspective in order to be changed because they will soon have an influence on women's life. The gender-affirming role of direct taxation needs to be increased by a variety of incentives, including a reduction in stamp duties for women if assets are registered in their names, a reduction of income tax brackets, a reduction of interest rates on loans for women, etc.

Policies for financial inclusion must be normalised so that rural females develop better fiscal individualities. They must also be directed at improving access to financial services for rural women, including pensions, insurance, loans, and credit sources. Special financial literacy programmes must be planned for rural women's coverage, as well as their use of government-offered transfer benefits and subsidies. All financial inclusion initiatives must include systems for monitoring and evaluating how well women, especially those who belong to vulnerable and excluded groups, are doing. There may be identified district-level nonprofit groups that could aid in creating and establishing organizations for women's empowerment in rural areas. In order to effectively assist

rural women, credit organizations should streamline and clarify their policies, and lending practises should be geared toward women.

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In order to appropriately reflect women's concerns and ensure that they share equitably in the benefits of development, significant macroeconomic policies must be developed and mainstreamed. It's important to close the gender wage gap in all types of employment, including regular and temporary work, agricultural and non-agricultural jobs, and rural and urban areas. A key aspect in reducing workplace insecurity for women, especially in formal employment, is ensuring pay equality and favourable working circumstances. There needs to be a serious effort made to address the increased informality and casualization of women's job and labour in rural areas.

In order to support female entrepreneurs in rural areas, microfinancing must be used, and their goods and services must be incorporated into forcechains. Information and communication technology (ICT) can create a need for connected women who can connect to marketable prospects by enhancing women's access to the most current digital media.

Conclusion:

The study provides insights across many economic issues that rural women have to deal with. In reality, women encounter challenges as they work toward empowerment. In order to overcome them, society must actively work to lessen gender-discriminatory norms and practices and make sure that public institutions are held responsible for upholding gender equality. With economic empowerment, women's access to valuable resources and opportunities is consequently improved. They include things like employment, financial services, real estate, and other productive methods, skill development, and market intelligence. Previous academic research on topics relating to women's emancipation was not sufficiently concentrated. Women in Assam encounter a variety of issues in their daily lives due to the state's multi-cultural, multilingual, multi-racial, and multi-religious makeup. Different societies and locations just have different dimensions. Women are still abused, stigmatised as witches, and subjected to other forms of social and psychological torture in the twenty-first century; as a result, economic empowerment for women is crucial to

eradicating these societal ills. In light of this, there is a need for increased global focus on the problem of women's economic empowerment. Thus, it is now more important than ever for women to participate in diverse economic and developmental activities. The goal is to create a society where everyone has a voice, participates more actively in all aspects of society, and where women feel comfortable participating in mainstream social activities.

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Pattern of Social Status Development among Women : in the North-Eastern Region of India

Mridusmita Patowary

Abstract:

Women's changing status is closely related to how society is developing socially. Even if social and economic indices in the state have grown quickly, there are still differences in women's standing. Women's social status differences are deeply shameful and extremely worrying. The falling sex ratio is a cause for severe concern because it will soon result in a serious population imbalance and negative social repercussions. The discrepancies in sex ratio, literacy rate, and labour force participation in favour of men versus women were shown by the unequal distribution of power and rewards. The current paper explores inter-state inequalities in the sex ratio, literacy rate, and female labour force participation in the North-Eastern Region of India. According to the study's findings, there are significant differences amongst the

eight North-Eastern Regions in terms of the sex ratio, literacy rate, and labour participation. High levels of literacy and educational performance result in gender equality and provide women more economic power. To stop all forms of discrimination against women and girls and to secure their empowerment and gender justice, the government of India has been putting in place a number of programmes for the socioeconomic growth and development of women.

Keywords: Social Status, Sex Ratio, Literacy Rate, Labour Force Participation, North-Eastern Region.

Introduction:

India is a diverse nation in terms of its economy, society, and culture, as well as in terms of the differences in gender between its many states. Women have more obstacles and disadvantages than men do in every profession, particularly when it comes to education, workplace involvement, and violence against women. Kofi Annan once stated “When women prosper, all of society benefits, and subsequent generations are given a better start in life”(Gender Composition Sex Ratio, Census of India 2011). Women’s changing status is closely related to how society is developing socially. Even though the state’s social and economic indicators have grown quickly, there are gaps in demographic indicators due to a lack of healthcare and educational resources. One of the harshest types of violence against women may be female foeticide, which involves depriving a woman of her most fundamental and basic right—“the right to life”

(Rani.G, 2014). A society’s socio-economic and cultural patterns can be seen in several ways through changes in the sex ratio. The falling sex ratio is a cause for severe concern because it will soon result in a serious population imbalance and negative social repercussions. According to the World Development Report 2012: “Gender Equality and Development,” Haryana has the highest ratio of female to male child death worldwide. The state’s unequal distribution of power and rewards revealed differences in the sex ratio, literacy rate, and labour force participation that favoured men over women. It is crucial to pinpoint the exact regions within the States where the issue is most concerning (Nisha, Raj & Kumar, 2015). It must be combated using suitable, efficient, and long-lasting measures. Before we can stop this process, the problems must be identified, the sacredness of a girl child’s right to birth and life must be acknowledged, the mindset must be altered, legal measures must be invoked, and the root causes must be found and eradicated. The analyses presented in this paper thus show the differences between states in the sex ratio, literacy rate, and female labour force participation among India’s eight North-Eastern States.

Objectives of the Study :

The objectives of the present paper are:

1. To examine the gender differences between States literacy rates in India’s North-Eastern Region.
2. To investigate the female labour force participation in India’s North-Eastern region.

Data and Methodology :

The study is based on data collected from different secondary sources such as Census reports of 1991, 2001 and 2011, Handbook of Statistical on Indian States, 2018-19, Nedfi databank, Indiastat and NSSO Reports. The study considers the time period from 1961 to 2011. The study is descriptive in nature.

Findings and Discussion :

An important measure for assessing the status of women in society is the sex ratio. Sex differentials in mortality, sex selective migration, sex ratio at birth, and occasionally sex differentials in population enumeration are some of the factors that influence variations in sex ratio. However, the high rate of induced abortions and steep drop in the infant sex ratio over the past ten years demonstrate unequivocally that female foeticide is a practise. In India, the ratio of girls to boys in the 0-6 age group has dramatically decreased as a result of the rising rate of female foeticide. One of the primary causes of the unfavourable child sex ratio is said to be the practise of killing female foetuses. Pre-birth elimination of females (PBEF) appears to be more common in urban than rural regions, but this disparity is rapidly reducing as sex determination tests are more widely accessible. The dilemma arises at the location where a proposed law would make pregnancy registration mandatory. It will be required to register within the first three months of pregnancy (Yasmin, 2022). A major demographic

imbalance in the female population will result from the diminishing sex ratio, which is a serious topic of worry. The discrepancies in the sex ratio among the eight North-Eastern regions of India are displayed in the following table.

Table 1: Disparities in Sex Ratio among the North-Eastern Region of India from 1961 to 2011

States	1961	1991	2011
Arunachal Pradesh	894	859	938
Assam	869	923	958
Manipur	1015	958	992
Meghalaya	937	955	989
Mizoram	1009	921	976
Nagaland	933	886	931
Sikkim	904	878	890
Tripura	932	945	960
All India	946	927	943

Source: Handbook of Statistical on Indian States, 2018-19.

From table 1, it is quite clear that over the years certain progress is observed among the eight North-Eastern States of India. In 1961, except Manipur and Mizoram, all the other States of North-Eastern Region are below the national average in sex ratio. In 1991, Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura were above the national average in sex ratio. The scenario is quite progressive which is depicted in 2011 data, were except Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Sikkim all the other North-Eastern States were above the national average.

Table 2: Female Literacy Rate in the North-Eastern Region of India from 1991 to 2011

States	1991	2001	2011
Arunachal Pradesh	29.7	43.5	59.57
Assam	43	54.6	67.27
Manipur	47.6	60.5	73.17
Meghalaya	44.9	59.6	73.78
Mizoram	78.6	86.7	89.4
Nagaland	54.7	61.5	76.69
Sikkim	46.7	64.4	76.43
Tripura	49.6	64.9	83.15
All India	39.29	53.67	65.46

Source: Census Report 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Table 3: Female Workforce Participation Rate in the North-Eastern Region of India from 1991 to 2011 (in percentage)

States	1991	2001	2011
Arunachal Pradesh	37.5	36.6	35.44
Assam	21.6	20.8	22.46
Manipur	39	39.02	38.56
Meghalaya	34.9	35.2	32.67
Mizoram	43.5	47.6	36.16
Nagaland	38	38.06	44.74
Sikkim	30.4	21.08	39.57
Tripura	13.8	25.7	23.57
All India	22.3	25.7	25.51

Source: Census Report 1991, 2001 and 2011.

According to the most recent census in 2011, female workforce participation decreased in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura, while it climbed in Nagaland, Sikkim, and Assam. According to the table, FWPR in Arunachal Pradesh has consistently decreased. It is clear from the chart that the FWPR in Nagaland for the year 2011 was 44.7, the highest

of all the Northeast Indian states. Additionally, the percentage of women working is trending downward in Mizoram. According to the table, the ratio in Mizoram was 47.5% in 2001 and 36.2% in 2011. Manipur's FWPR has been determined to have consistently maintained the same level, with the exception of 2011, when it marginally decreased. In general, the FWPR in the North Eastern region has been higher than the national average. Based on Census 2011 data, Table 2's presentation of female literacy and Table 3 presentation of FWPR for NER and India reveals that overall literacy rates have increased over the past two decades (1991-2011). While the literacy rates of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Tripura increased from 2001 to 2011, a declining trend in female labour force participation rate has been seen in these north-eastern states, according to a comparison of tables 2 and 3. Manipur's employment rate essentially stays the same. The average female population in all of India's north-eastern states is in between 48 and 49 percent. Arunachal Pradesh has the lowest rate of literate citizens among the north-eastern states, whereas Mizoram has the highest rate at 89.4%. Nagaland is ranked first in the FWPR but third in the rate of female literacy. Mizoram, on the other hand, is ranked first in the FWPR but fourth in the female literacy rate.

Table 4: Female Workforce Participation Rate in Rural and Urban Areas of North-Eastern States according to Census of 2011 (in Percentage)

States	Combined	Rural	Urban	Gap
Arunachal	35.4	39.5	21.3	18.2
Assam	22.5	23.7	14.9	8.8
Manipur	39.9	41.2	33.2	8
Meghalaya	32.7	35	23.6	11.4
Mizoram	36.2	41.9	31.1	10.8
Nagaland	44.7	52.3	25.9	26.4
Sikkim	39.6	44.6	24.8	19.8
Tripura	23.6	26.3	16	10.3
All India	25.51	30	15.4	14.6

Source: Census of India, 2011.

Table 4 shows the North-Eastern States' female workforce participation rate broken down by place of residence. According to the 2011 census report, Assam has the lowest female participation rate (23.7%) and Nagaland has the highest female workforce rate (52.3%) in rural areas. Assam has the lowest rate of female workers (14.9%) and Mizoram has the highest rate (31.1%) in urban regions. The findings show that Assamese women have the lowest rates of engagement in the rural and urban sectors when compared to women in other north-eastern states and India. In comparison to the national average, female work participation has increased in all of the north-eastern states (apart from Assam).

Conclusion:

The paper comes to the conclusion that a nation cannot achieve prosperity without improving the socioeconomic conditions of its women. The first step in achieving success there is to raise awareness and give women more influence. Despite the fact that there has been improvement in every field throughout this period

of globalisation, the situation for women remains unchanged. The results demonstrated that there are significant differences between men and women in terms of sex ratio, literacy rate, and labour involvement. The state's steadily dropping kid sex ratio highlights socioeconomic imbalances and their negative causes and effects. People need to realise that sons and daughters are treated equally in society and cease favouring sons. For this, it is necessary to improve the working and educational opportunities for women. High levels of literacy and academic achievement result in gender equality and provide women more economic power. To stop all forms of discrimination against women and girl children and to secure their empowerment and gender justice, the state government has been putting in place a number of programmes for the socioeconomic growth and development of women in the state. As a result, the government launched effective policies and programmes to encourage people to change their negative attitudes toward females and recognise their importance. Women's social status disparities are abhorrent and extremely worrying. We should fight to eradicate this threat from society and create a balanced demographic structure for the nation; else, the distortion will become apparent soon.

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A Study on Delayed Marriages among Educated women and their Psychological conditions : An Evidence from Nagaon district of Assam

Kabyasri Hazarika

Abstract:

Marriage is one of the toughest decisions to make. It is not just a ceremony of celebration but is a lifetime commitment to share, care, love, understand, trust, console etc. It is seen in most parts of the world, women now a days are getting married in their mid or late 30's. Many say completing their education and getting a job is the first priority rather than getting married. This sounds fine. However, late marriage is not something that is desirable as it can call grounds for misbalances in the physical and mental aspects of women. The study therefore, focuses to find out the reasons behind late marriage among women, and also attempts to investigate the psychological conditions of educated unmarried women. The investigator uses a descriptive survey method

with an interview as a tool for collecting information from the sample. The findings of the paper aim to provide new knowledge and data along with some suggestions to cope up with the problems that may arise due to late marriage.

Keywords: *Delayed marriage, educated women, psychological conditions.*

Introduction:

Marriage is a beautiful, auspicious and life changing occasion. It is a day to celebrate love, life and laughter. Just like birth and death are inevitable parts of our life, marriage to a great extent is considered as a necessity for both men and women. Education may help us to know the right age of getting married, how to do proper family planning, how to raise a child and so on. However, many educated women irrespective of knowing the consequences of late marriage prefer to give commitment only in their mid or late 30s. Living an independent life, working day and night, owning houses, cars, taking responsibilities are incredible as it enables women to realize their potential, caliber and capabilities. But at the same time a partner for life is needed, not as an obligation or rule but as a way of life. No matter how far men and women exemplify the stories of successful unmarried people. It is not only "success" that humans thrive for, we as social being need company, commitment, peace and love.

Most of us know the outcomes of delayed marriage on the physical and mental health of women. Women however, choose late marriage. Mohd Irfan Wani(2022)

in this regard throws light on the reasons and causes of late marriage in Kashmir. He found that completing higher education (e.g Ph.d) , heavy expenses of marriage, dowry are some of the factors of late marriage in Kashmir. Akanshsha A. Mar phatia, Gabriel S. Anbale and Alice M. Ried(2017) in the article "Women's marriage age matters for public health and social implications in South Asia" aims to provide broader evidence on the reasons why the age of women's marriage is a crucial issue for public health. It discusses the severe health problems that may arise due to late marriage. Manjot and V. Santhalakshmi(2016) in the article "A Descriptive study to assess the bio psychological consequences of Late marriage among Late married couples Residing in Selected Area of District Mohali, Punjab of India", discusses the psychological and biological consequence of late married couples such as hypertension in male, physical problems after marriage, problems during pregnancy, intrapartum complications, postpartum problems etc. Baishali Goswami(2012) made an investigation into the pattern of delayed marriage in India. She found numerous factors responsible for delayed marriages like many finding physical distance as a constraint in terms of finding the right partner, caste and religion issues, place of residence, education etc. Hence, it is clearly observed that various researches have been done all over the globe to know the causes of late marriage. Studies are also conducted to investigate the bio psychological consequences of late marriage on both the sexes . As no study was conducted on the reasons for

delayed marriages and the psychological conditions of educated unmarried women of Nagaon district of Assam, the investigator conducted the study in an attempt to investigate the matter in that area.

Objectives of the study :

The main objectives of the study are:

- i) To investigate the causes of delayed marriages among educated women.
- ii) To study the psychological conditions of unmarried educated women.

Methodology of study:

For the present study, Descriptive Survey Method has been used to obtain pertinent and precise information of the present phenomenon.

Population and Sample:

The population of the study consists of all the educated unmarried women of Nagaon district of Assam. Considering the feasibility of the study, a total of 50 samples (age group 34 to 44) was selected from the population using a purposive sampling method.

Data collection Tool:

For gathering data, an interview method was applied to collect in depth information. For the present study, the investigator not only collected factual information but also sought their personal point of view and opinions.

Treatment of Data:

In the present study the investigator has employed a simple percentage (%) of the data gathered.

Results and discussions:

The results of the study are presented and discussed according to the objectives of the study:

Objective no.1: To investigate the causes of delayed marriages among educated women of Nagaon district, Assam.

According to objective no.1, it was found that the majority of the sample i.e 68% chooses late marriage as they want to continue further studies. 64% of the women consider that there will be too much work pressure on them after marriage which they fear may affect their career. 42% of the sample shares that due to family disagreements on caste, religion etc, their marriage is getting late. 84% of the sample says they are not getting married as they are unable to find the right person of their choice. 38% of the sample fears to give commitment as they went through serious heartbreak in the past. 48% of the women fear marriage as they have seen their close friends and relatives ending up with unsuccessful marriages. 32% of the sample expresses that marriage is a huge responsibility which they are not yet ready to take. 28% of the women consider too much attachment with their family can be a reason for which they are not willing to marry. Only 22% of the sample considers the financial crisis as a reason for delayed marriage. Only 18% of the

sample states that there are dowry demands which they didn't wish to fulfill and preferred not to get married. Only a few women i.e 6% of the sample feels they are not good looking enough to find a partner for marriage.

Objective no.2: To study the psychological conditions of educated unmarried women.

According to objective no 2, it was found that only 16 % of the sample selected are happy. 64% of the sample feels lonely most of the time. Majority of the sample i.e 82% and 84% of the sample expresses that they are emotional and sensitive respectively. 76% of the women state that most of the time they feel frustrated and get easily irritated. 62% of the sample feels sometimes they have anger issues. 56% of the sample feels disappointed in life. Majority of the sample i.e 74% feels anxious and have anxiety attacks. 88% of the sample i.e majority have mood swings and feel helpless about it.

Suggestions and conclusions:

The present study reveals various reasons and factors for which educated women choose having late marriage. Everyone has the right to choose when to marry or in fact whether to marry or not. But if one decides to get married but is delaying it for several factors like education, job, distance etc. should be aware of the outcomes that they may face. Education not only teaches us to be independent but also provides knowledge that enhances our rationality to take the righteous decisions in life. Pregnancy complications, mood swings, body

aches, headache, vision related issues, pins and needles, hormone imbalances etc are some of the problems related to women and their biological traits. Thus in order to lower down such complexities, that also increases the risk of various psychological disturbances such as anxiety, frustration, depression, sadness, disappointments etc. one should prepare themselves for marriage with a mentality of acceptance as well as adjustments. Marriage is not a forced decision but if one wishes to, should be ready at the right time.

People may say, "there is no right time of getting married, but one must try to avoid tensions, further complications and worrisome married life in future."

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The Managerial Issues of Women Library Profession in Present Context : An Analytical Study

**Dr. Nijumoni Changmai
Mrs. Swapnali Saikia**

Abstract :

The invasion of digital information in our era is affecting and changing every single aspect of our lives, such as information exchange, teaching or learning, interacting, and libraries are converting from traditional to digital libraries. In ancient time, women were responsible for spinning and weaving yarn and making cloths. But today's women are much more confident, knowledgeable, and very talented; women in India now participate in all activities such as education, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science, and technology, etc. This digital environment has affected libraries and librarians. We cannot stay away from change, which is inevitable. It presents several challenges for a

female librarian. Because today's librarians do not sit behind desks and wait for faculty, students, research scholar and staff to approach them, libraries are now considered as information resource centers. Now, librarians are introduced as "data librarians." The present study has focused on management issues and challenges faced by women librarians at their workplace.

Keywords: Women; Library; Librarian; Women Library Professionals; Women Librarian.

Introduction:

The library of the twenty-first century is active, vibrant, a living foundation of positive influences, and a service-oriented institution with specific goals to achieve through transformative technology. This new perspective was sparked by the formal education provided to women, which opened the door for talented women to prove themselves. The advancement of digital technology helps facilitate the effective participation of women in the decision making and implementation processes related to science and technology, including planning, and setting priorities for research and development. On the threshold of a new millennium, librarians are getting involved in new activities in the computerization of libraries, combining in a balanced manner the execution of traditional activities. The librarian of today is concerned with the processing of primary information. It is related to activities providing all areas of research, teaching, and practice with precise, systematic, comprehensive information on the latest achievements, experiences,

viewpoints, theories, and hypotheses. The librarian's role has evolved into that of an information disseminator who acquires, processes, and disseminates information. He or she is a true friend and a real guide for the seekers of knowledge in an institution. Although librarianship is a profession, a librarian possesses all the essential characteristics of a professional. A librarian's is an occupation that demands specialized knowledge and skills. Its study is based on a systematic theory that delineates and supports the skills that characterize the profession. It has its professional institution, which promotes excellence in the work of the members, influences public sentiments and support, and tries to raise it to a position of dignity and social standing. As a result, being a librarian can be a rewarding profession. A librarian should be able to organize people and materials in their library in order to provide the most benefit to readers. In this case, women librarians are frequently unable to establish themselves as equals comparable with male librarians due to safety concerns, impact of children and family issues. Now, women library professionals are playing an active role in their profession and participate in professional activities to enhance their communication, managerial, and leadership skills.

Literature Review:

Sultana and Begum (2012) identified the job satisfaction of women professionals. The study investigated the role of independence, variety of work, social status of the job, supervision-human relations,

supervision-technical, moral values, authority, ability utilization, library policies and practices, the scope of advancement, relationship with coworkers. Yousaf, Tariq, and Soroya (2013) investigated the current position and job-related issues of professional and academic women librarians at Pakistan's top-ranked University of the Punjab, Lahore. The study pointed out general hindrances and stoppages faced by females in librarianship; and suggested possible solutions that aid in their progressive development. Karmakar, Bose, and Majumder (2022) conducted a study on the sociological aspects of women professionals in Assam. According to the study, many women library professionals are highly qualified and have computer knowledge. They are satisfied with their jobs despite facing some administrative problems. The study also discovered that women face very little discrimination in the library profession in Assam.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To determine how appropriate and acceptable women librarians' managerial styles are to the development of the specific institution.
2. To identify the issues and challenges of women librarians face in their institutes.

Methodology:

The methodology applied in this paper is descriptive. It tries to understand the various challenges of women librarian and various problems confronting women at the work front.

Discussion:**1. Scenario of Women in the Present Context:**

According to the Indian Constitution, women are legal citizens of the country and have equal rights with men. Because of a lack of acceptance from the male-dominated society, Indian women suffer immensely. Women are responsible for bearing children, yet they are malnourished and in poor health. Women are also overworked in the field and complete all the domestic work. But women in India now participate in all activities such as education, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science, and technology, etc. The constitution of India guarantees to all Indian women equality in the (Article 14), no discrimination by the state in the { Article 15, (1)}, equality of opportunity in the (article 16), and equal pay for equal work in the {article 39 (d)}. In addition, it allows special provisions to be made by the state in favor of women and children in the {article 15(3)}, renounces practice derogatory to the dignity of women article in the {15(A), (E)} and allows for provisions to be made by the state for securing just and humane working conditions and for maternity relief in the (article 42). The women of today are much more confident, knowledgeable, and very talented. They are rocking the world. In every aspect of life, they are moving ahead. May it be education, media, professions, or personality development; they are doing just the best. They are not only thinking new, but they are implementing that entire new staff into their practical lives. Whether it is running a family, bearing children, acquiring top ranked

professions, educating people, or serving the community, women are not at a loss. Women are shining like stars in diverse fields. In every aspect of women life's, they are getting titles of "good home manager," "successful entrepreneur," lady of courage," and so on.

2. Required Skills for Women Librarians in the Digital Era:

The advancement of digital technology helps ensure effective participation of women in the decision making and implementation processes related to science and technology, including planning, and setting priorities for research and development and the choice of acquisition, adoption, innovation, and application of science and technology for development. Information technology has emerged as the center of attraction and attention for not only industries, but also political leadership, business, and, the country's youth as they begin their professional careers. The technical revolution has also generated many visions that have been focused on concepts like the information society, the information superhighway, virtual organizations, etc. Women present half of the resources and half of the potential in all societies. It has been clear for decades that women in many parts of the world make key contributions in areas of development. In their nature to shoulder an entire burden of responsibilities and handle everything, producing a perfect result. The inherent qualities of women, like abundant patience, exceptional communication skills, and the habit of giving everyone

an equal say in every crucial matter, make them different from men. The library needs smart professionals who are skilled, knowledgeable, and experienced. Now, in the digital era, women are highly qualified to run a library, easily handle all housekeeping computerization activities, act as mediators between users and library books, and act as knowledge distributors in the society. Women are traditionally treated as weak in society because of a lack of education and a lack of opportunities in the job market. They face social discrimination and are denied employment in a variety of professions. Women library professionals should play an active role in their profession and also participate in professional activities to enhance their communication, managerial and leadership skills.

3. Issues and challenges for women library professionals :

There was a time when the librarian was a document custodian. The role and responsibilities of a librarian have now been redefined as those of a data librarian. Thus, in this changing environment, the librarian will be a highly skilled professional whose sole focus will be on the processing and dissemination of information in order to provide an effective and efficient service to the user community in the shortest amount of time. It became essential that librarians make a conceptual shift by focusing on their own skills and activities rather than on their libraries to cope with the digital change. As a result, in order to adapt to the changing environment, modern library professionals are expected to serve as a facilitator,

advisor, consultant, instructor, navigator, searcher, refresher, evaluator, organizer, researcher, promoter, communicator, and technological expert, in addition to being a good manager, leader, entrepreneur, and visionary. Libraries are just buildings, or gathering of objects, or an abstract diagram on an organization chart, but libraries do not do everything—people do. It is the librarians and their professional and paraprofessional colleagues who get things done. Today's academic librarians do not sit behind desks and wait for teachers, students, and staff to approach them; they go to them instead. On the other hand, a major challenge confronting librarians today is - Providing library spaces that fulfil the needs of digital native users. In most cases, the library infrastructure does not accommodate new trends. The increased emphasis on collaborative and group learning has created an increased demand for flexible learning spaces that provide access to the most up to date information technology. Libraries are the storage of creation, control, and preservation of digital resources. Support new users, libraries need to bring all new technological devices to their users and provide information in their preferred medium. Example, Web 2.0, where blogs, wikis, social networks, dynamic programming scripts, cloud based technology, etc. Due to the institutional financial crisis, it is impossible to support the new users. In these circumstances, women librarians often face significant challenges balancing work and family. Their family responsibilities can limit their ability to pursue a leadership position. That's because

despite the fact they have a full-time job, they also frequently have the lion's share of household responsibilities, such as caring for young, sick, or elderly family members. The expectation that women librarians balance roles at home as carers as well as their jobs, combined with covert biases within institutions, means that their careers do not always pan out in the same way as those of their male counterparts. On the other hand, gender bias and stereotyping work against professional women's leadership aspirations. Staff tend to interpret male assertive behavior in the library as strong, commanding, and direct, but when female librarians display the same assertiveness, their staff often see them as aggressive, pushy, and shrill.

Conclusion:

From the above discussion, we come to know that the library field is unique from other professions, because it is associated with a history of deliberate financial moves and feminization. Women came to dominate the library field in the nineteenth century, when the library director and another leader realized the need for more library staff but had limited funds. At that moment, women were just beginning to leave the home and join the workforce; they were willing to work for low pay. Hiring women was a good financial choice for the survival of libraries. This unique opportunity continues to this day, and librarianship remains a field in which women are driving the workforce. Women have made an indelible mark in their efforts to overcome past limitations that sought to confine them

permanently to the kitchen and bedroom, and they have become aware of their rights as they have continued to compete with men in all areas of human endeavor. There is a present-day female majority in the field of library science. It is only now, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, which a woman serves in the highest leadership position in our country. Today's women librarians have unprecedented opportunities and play role models at their institutions as well as in our society. The librarian must pursue concrete strategies to improve the situation for ambitious women, and invest in research on the effects of negative gender perception. On the Other hand, Women in the library profession are very capable, and they can run a library, as most of the women library professionals in Assam are serving as librarians in different institutions. They are also skilled persons and have knowledge of computers so they can manage the automated library system.

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Women's Mental Health With reference to the Workplace Environment

Gitika Talukdar

Abstract:

Women empowerment can be defined as the expansion in women's ability and freedom to make these strategic choices, a process that occurs overtime and involves women as agents who have the ability to formulate choices, control resources and take decisions affecting important life outcomes. Empowerment definitely helps women to take decision regarding arising problems and proceed towards life. They become self-dependent through empowerment. But, at the same time, mental health is also an important for women in the workplace. Having good mental health is a key factor for working better in any workplace. On the other hand, absence of this, it definitely affects women's mental health as well as working outcome.

Key words: Women empowerment, mental health, working environment.

Introduction :

Women empowerment indicates equality and improving the life in areas that is health, economic sides, politics as well as breaking stereotypical thinking imposed by the families and the society that restricts the women in achieving some goal and become independent.

Earlier the most hindering reason for participation of women in any activity was social prejudices. Now-a-days, we can see that women are engaging themselves into work whether it is private sector or government sector. Workplace environment leaves a great mental impact on women's mental health and well being. It can either boost or setback their productivity of work.

Objectives :

The main objective of this paper is to highlight whether the women's mental health is affected by the workplace environment.

Importance of mental health:

According to WHO, mental health can be defined as "a state of well being in which an individual realizes his or her on potential, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to and to make contribution to her or his community". But if the mental or mental health is disrupted then the work productivity lowers down.

Women are already burdened with various works like looking after their family, home as well as balancing work life. Both the jobs and responsibilities of family is a challenging thing. If the working environment is good then the mind of the working person is relaxed enough but disturbances can lead to certain misbalances in a person's both physical and mental well being.

Impact of workplace environment in women's mental health :

A rapid employment rate in working place is seen in term of women. Depending on the current time complexities and hectic schedules of working place is also increasing the work related stress than the earlier times.

Some of the impacts of workplace environment on mental health are as follows –

a) Hectic schedules : If the schedule for work is hectic and more time consuming then it becomes difficult for them because they become tired which affects their work efficiency and mental stability. Too much of hectic schedule can disrupt the family life which in result can affect the peace of mind of the women.

b) Inequality of pay : Inequality of pay in the workplace can demoralize the women. If men are doing the same range of work similarly like women then the pay must be equally given to the workers. Not getting equal pay can demotivate the women workers to do work more inefficiently and mental exhaustion will result in dissatisfaction in whatever she does.

c) **Sexual harassment** : Sexual harassment or eve teasing in workplace can also lead to disruption in women's mental health as it can leave a deep trauma in their mind which is really difficult to be recovered from i.e. if a woman is continuously harassed by a male member in their workplace she will be frightened to go the place of work.

d) **Disturbance from the colleague**: Continuous disturbance from colleagues like criticism and imposing power and quarrelling without any legitimate reason can also lead to mental disturbances of the women which can act as barrier in their work efficiently. The focus in their work will not be present if there is no peace of mind.

e) **Expectation** : Inability to meet the performance expectation can also lead to stress and as a result, women turn up irritating and sleep pattern gets imbalanced.

Coping and management strategies of workplace stress :

We all know that if there are problems then there are surely solutions for that too. Some of the coping and management strategies are-

- I. Practicing meditation and yoga can result in balancing our mind from all the stress.
- II. Keeping a positive attitude towards life is important to sideline the stress from workplace.
- III. Adopting healthy food habit can also affect in a woman's health.

- IV. Engaging into stress busting activities like listening music, reading novels, outing with families can also help in relaxing from stress.
- V. If the stress is high and uncontrollable one must try to talk with the family members but if it is not possible then it is better to approach any mental health supervisors.

Conclusion :

Women face lots of challenges in their life because the working women play an active role between family life as well as working life. Therefore, it is very important for them to have good mental health to maintain both sides equally. Job satisfaction definitely can lead them more productive in this regard. To balance the healthy mental health, applying some coping strategies can somehow manage the stress being exerted on women.

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The Reason Sugar Tastes Sweeter : An Incredible Journey of Janaki Ammal!

Pranati Gogoi

Abstract :

In an era, where most women of India make it to their high school, Janaki Ammal made her way to become the first woman PhD in Botany in India. She did not just receive a PhD at one of the prestigious universities in America but also made several scientific contributions in the field of science. Women scientists play a crucial role in the development of a country. This is evident from the great contributions made by the women scientists towards the scientific growth of the country for over more than 100 years. It is therefore important to celebrate the journey of every women scientist in India. They should be remembered and acknowledged for their immense contribution on International Women's day.

Keywords: Janaki Ammal; Botany; Scientific; Contribution; Women scientist.

Introduction:

Edavaaleth Kakkat Janaki Ammal was one of the first women scientists in India to receive the Padma Shri award in 1977. She is also one of the few women in Asia to be conferred a honorary doctorate (*DSc honoris causa*) by the University of Michigan, her alma mater, way back in 1931. Being a pioneering botanist and a cytogeneticist, Dr. Ammal is remembered for her contribution in putting sweetness in India's sugarcane varieties, hydro-electric project of Silent Valley in Kerala and the chromosomal study of numerous species of flowering plants [1]. A flower called *Magnolia Kobus Janaki Ammal* was named after her. She has contributed immensely to the Indian botanical research which remains unknown to many. She has set an example of an extraordinary Indian woman to brave a highly patriarchal, ultra-conservative society in order to fulfil her academic goals.

Discussion:

Early Life, Education and Career:

EK Janaki Ammal was born on 4th November, 1897 in Thallassery in Kerala. Her father was a sub-judge in Madras Presidency. Dewan Bahadur EK Krishnan was a man with a keen interest in natural sciences. His love for learning and curiosity influenced his daughter Janaki, the tenth child of his second wife Deviammal. Janaki completed her schooling in Thallassery and moved to Madras to obtain her bachelor's degree from Queen Mary's College. She also obtained her honours degree in botany from Presidency College of Calcutta. After her

graduation, she started teaching at Women's Christian College, when she received the Barbour Scholarship from Michigan University, USA. In 1925, Ammal obtained her Master's degree and doctoral from University of Michigan. Returning to India, she became Professor of Botany in Maharaja's College of Science, Trivandrum where she continued her teaching for two years [1, 2, and 3].

A glimpse of her Life and Work:

Janaki next joined the sugarcane breeding station at Coimbatore as a scientist. During that time, the sweetest sugarcane was *Saccharum officinarum* from Papua New Guinea. India imported this variety from Southeast Asia in order to improve India's indigenous sugarcane varieties. In the laboratory, polyploidy cells were manipulated through cross-breeding of hybrids. This has helped Janaki to create a high yielding strain of sugarcane and analyze the geographical distribution of sugarcane in India. She also established that *Saccharum spontaneum* had originated in India [4]. Ammal made several intergeneric hybrids: *Saccharum x Zea*, *Saccharum x Erianthus*, *Saccharum x Imperata* and *Saccharum x Sorghum* [5, 6, 7 and 8]. Ammal's pioneering work at the Institute on the cytogenetics of *Saccharum officinarum* (sugarcane) and interspecific and intergeneric hybrids involving sugarcane and genera such as *Bambusa* (bamboo) is remarkable [9]. Besides working on medicinal and other plants, Ammal worked on some of the most important genera: *Solanum*, *Cymbopogon*,

Mentha, *Datura* and *Dioscorea*. In 1935, she was selected as a research fellow by the famous scientist and noble laureate CV Raman in Indian Academy of Sciences. But coming from a backward caste and being a single woman, she faced caste and gender based discrimination among her male peers at Coimbatore. So, Janaki left for London and joined the John Innes Horticultural Institute as a cytologist. She worked there from 1940 to 1945, at a time when German planes were bombing London. Sharing her experience with friends revealed how she continued her research work by diving under her bed during the night bombings. The Royal Horticulture Society invited Janaki to work as a cytologist at their institution in Wisley. At Wisley, Janaki met some of the talented botanists, cytologists and geneticists around the world. In 1945, a book entitled "The Chromosome Atlas of cultivated Plants" was co-authored by Janaki along with her mentor, CD Darlington. At Kew gardens, she worked on one of the plants called Magnolia. In the Society's campus, there is still *Magnolia* shrub growing till date that was planted by Janaki Ammal. Among the growing plants is a variety with small white flowers named after her. This flower is made up of fused petals and sepals called "tepals" which is commonly used for celebration in Japan and China. In 1951, Jawarhal Nehru personally invited Janaki Ammal to return back to India and to restructure Botanical Survey of India (BSI). She was appointed as the officer in BSI, in which she recognized the Calcutta office in 1954. She has travelled some of the remote areas of the country and visited the indigenous people in search of medicinal

plants. She had also been an ardent environment activist too, who studied about ecology, biodiversity and sustainable agriculture at high altitudes. She made protests against construction of a hydro-power dam across Kunthipuzha river in Kerala's Silent Valley. She was the only woman invitee to the International Symposium on "Man's Role in changing the face of the Earth" at Princeton. After her retirement, her love for research continued. She worked at the Atomic Research Station at Trombay for a short period of time before serving as an Emeritus Scientist at the Centre for Advanced Study in Botany in Madras University.

During her last working years, she was interested in rearing large family of cats and kittens. Being an expert geneticist, she even discovered the differentiations in the characteristics of her kittens. On February 7, 1984; at the age of 87, she passed away while working in her research laboratory. Her obituary stated "Janaki was always devoted to her research until the end of her life". She was an incredible woman who spent her life in the pursuit of science. For her remarkable contribution in science, she was awarded the most prestigious award Padma Shri in 1977. In 2000 the National Award of Taxonomy was created in her name by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry. There is also collection of 25,000 species of specimen stored in Jammu Tawi herbarium, named after the pioneering women scientist [1]. Recently, Janaki was honoured by the John Innes Centre in England by promoting a new scholarship to the post graduate students across the developing countries in her name. Janaki

believed that people should remember her for her work. So, when we use a spoonful of sugar cultivated by Indian farmer, we must not forget that it was Dr Ammal who added that extra bit of sweetness in sugar!

Conclusion:

With the advancement in Science and Technology, there is socio-economic growth of a nation. For a better society and welfare of a nation, the women should be provided with more opportunities in the field of education, mentoring, training and entrepreneurship development. It is the need of hour to showcase and share the success stories of women who overcome obstacles on their path of progress. There are many inspiring stories that are unknown to the mass. By showcasing women scientist and their great contribution and give very promising results which will also generate enthusiasm and encourage the youths in future. Women scientists since time immemorial have been playing a very important role towards the scientific growth of our nation. Their contribution in Science and development of society has been remarkable. Apart from acknowledging and creating public awareness of their contribution, we must try to implement their footsteps in our own lives. However, the participation of women remains even low today due to several reasons.

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Importance of Political Awareness among Tea Garden Women of Assam : An overview

Abhita Gogoi

Abstract :

For any democratic country like India political awareness and participation are necessary hallmark. Without Political awareness and participation of the people in the political process, a political system cannot operate. By the term political awareness means a process through which people participate in the decision making or policy formulation process of government like showing interest in politics, participation in voting rights, making political decision, attending meetings and holding any political positions. At present political awareness and participation is very important for any democratic set up. Political Awareness among people is increasing but tea garden women are still in deprivation because they are the marginalized people who remain dominated, deprived and discriminated in various aspects of their day to day life. Therefore in this paper an attempt is made to study

the degree of political awareness among tea garden women of Assam and its factors affecting their participation in the political process of Assam.

Keywords: Women, participation, awareness, political, Assam.

Introduction:

Assam is the hub of tea within the country and is also well known globally since long back. In these tea industries mostly the tea pluckers are women and they are engaged in tea gardens to earn their livelihood in Assam. Tea garden women plays a very vital role in this regard. As a part of the society tea garden women are also needed to be politically aware because the stability of any given democracy will largely depend on awareness and active participation of each and every citizen in the political process. Democracy will not succeed if women citizens lack equal opportunities to participate in the government decision making process. They are to be equal partners in the nation building and political development (Baishya 2016). Despite empowerment of women tea garden women are one of the marginalized groups of people who remain dominated, deprived and discriminated in various aspects of their day to day life. Therefore this paper attempts to study the degree of political awareness among tea garden women of Assam and the factors affecting their participation in the political process.

The Objectives of this paper is -

- a) To study political awareness among tea garden women of Assam
- b) To study the reasons which are obstacles in political participation of the tea garden women.

Methodology:

The present study is mainly based on secondary sources. Relevant books, e-books, journals, articles, websites etc have been used in this academic exercise. A descriptive cum analytical method is used in this paper to find out the objectives of the study.

Discussion:

Assam is a land of tribal people where the main source of earning is agriculture and the role of male and female is almost same. But in the political sphere their role has been limited because they do not think politics as their field. They think politics as male field and in the contrary with the non-tribal people where women have been facing a lots of hierarchy in every field. Although women empowerment is perceived in the advanced society but still there are obstacles that debarred women from Political participation in a developing country like India and particularly Assam tea garden women. Compared to developed countries females are participating actively in political life but in developing countries females participation is less because they are tied with cultural, religious, and social beliefs which generates many constraints for them to participate in

political life. Basically tea garden women conditions are not good at all from this perspective. The living conditions of the tea garden people are very pity and they are less aware about their rights specially among the tea garden women. The tea garden women have to face twin dominations ever since they started living and working in Assam's tea garden. With the Universalization of Education some tea garden women are coming up for education that has helped them to be aware of constitutionality ordained rights for their overall development. The constitution of India guarantees its citizens the right to freedom of speech, to form associations, the right to be elected and vote. It also attempts to remove inequalities by banning discrimination based on sex and class, prohibiting human trafficking and forced labour, and reserving elected positions for women. A number of socio cultural organizations among tea garden women have been found such as Chah Janajati Mahila Samiti, Adivasi Mahila Samiti, Chah Mazdoor Mahila Samiti etc (Saikia 2007). But despite all these tea garden women still remain dominated, deprived and discriminated in their day to day life. Moreover, working women of tea plantation have no role in the decision making process and therefore their participation in the political process is low (Bhadra 1992).

To bring out their cause the leaders among the tea garden people can play an important role in making awareness about various problems and issues in tea garden areas. But in spite of the increasing number of leaders the problems remain same. The leaders are not

interested and conscious about the problems of their own community.(Rabidas 2001). Following are some of the reasons for low awareness and participation among the tea garden women:

Reasons for low awareness and participation among tea garden women of Assam :

There are various reasons which hurdles tea garden women to participate in the political process basically the type of society which carve up on the basis of class, gender, and caste cannot maintain the same level of awareness among its members. Those are mentioned below-

1. One of the most important reasons of so less political awareness among tea garden women is the structure of our society which is patriarchal in nature that makes tea garden women more deprived. Because women are thought as less capable for political activities.
2. Female are always double burdened with managing both household and professional activities. Alike tea garden women worker have to go to work in the garden and coming back home they have to look after children, husband, other members and also they have to perform household activities. In their busy schedule they hardly find time to participate in the political activities.
3. Tea garden women have poor educational attainment for which they are less aware about politics. Mostly tea garden women prefer to earn because of their poor economic condition.
4. Tea garden women cannot take major decisions due to

social, economical, psychological and educational reasons.

5. They hesitated to join politics due to their shyness, illiteracy and this results in low awareness and participation of tea garden women in the politics of Assam.
6. Tea garden women sometimes lack interest to actively participate in the political process. They believe that politics and leadership are not for women.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

From the above discussion it can be stated that for increasing the participation of women in politics, government has been taking various measures and there are constitutional provisions but still not at a pace that the majority finds acceptable. Tea garden women should be included in all levels of political spheres and institutions. Following are some of the recommendations which will be helpful for increasing political awareness among the tea garden women :

1. First of all illiteracy among tea garden women have to be minimized and government has to take necessary steps towards improving illiteracy of tea garden women.
2. Tea garden women should be encouraged to come forward and speak about societal issues and problems, the issues they face on their day to day life and ways to resolve those issues.
3. Tea garden women should be encouraged to come forward to vote their leader as per their choice without

any outside interference and also they need to be encouraged to stand in elections.

4. Awareness among tea garden women should be made by organizing special campaigns and workshops. So that they may be able to know their rights and such campaigns should be held at times when women can attend.
5. Tea garden management should take necessary steps for eradicating the problems such as poverty and illiteracy among tea garden women of Assam along with the government.

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Indian Women in Science and Technology

Parishmita Konwar

Abstract:



Gender equality has been one of the most debated topics even today in 21st centuries. Women deserve equal rights and opportunities as men, yet there have been many challenges that woman has to face regularly. Contribution of women in any field has been as worthy as men but somehow their contributions are not much talked about have been forgotten with time. This is true even in the field of science and technology. While we know about the priceless contribution of great scientists like C.V Raman, Meghnad Saha, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, many of us are unaware of the contributions of Indian women in the field of science. This article represents the contribution of women in the science and technology field which can empower her especially in science and technology. Women in science from being a minority are now occupying the most important positions. From winning

Nobel Prizes to heading NASA, women scientists have etched their names in history.

Keywords: Women, science, technology, contribution, scientist, opportunities.

Introduction:

Women have played an important role in the development of science and technology but there is an insufficient number of women in those career fields. Technology change has affected the roles of women and gender role ideas. Women without doubt came a long way improving the numbers and increasing the percentages in the workforce of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) but the statistics say numbers are still less than those of men. Women have been struggling since the early ages trying to advance in knowledge.

Many people think there was no women scientist and engineers until the early modern times. But actually women have participated for over 300 years in those fields of study. It is known that women have been part of activities relating to science dating back about 600 years. Science time immemorial, India is famed for its rich contribution to the field of STEM. In fact the concept of 'ZERO' as a number and decimal system were inventions of brilliant mathematicians of ancient India. India's rich history is replete with examples of several great scientists who have brought immense pride to the nation. When we think about the scientific developments in India, we somehow forget the important contributions of the female

achievers. In this article, the role of Indian women scientists has been discussed who left an indelible mark in the history of Indian science and technology.

Objectives of the study:

- Example of women scientists from early to modern times.
- The main objective of the study is to know about the role of women in STEM.

Methodology:

In this study secondary data has been used. The information has been collected from secondary sources like books, journal and articles from magazines and internet sources.

Discussion:

Although technology has evolved and advanced to a great extent, we often forget to give credit to the minds that contributed to it behind the scenes. Here are some such Indian women who have made notable contributions in various fields of science and technology but remain largely unknown to the world. Some of those names are -

Leelavati: Leelavati was the daughter of great Mathematician Bhaskaracharya who wrote a book in her name to console her when her marriage got cancelled. She is also said to be a gifted mathematician and astrologer.

Anandi Gopal Joshi (1865-1887): [*first Indian women to study medicine in America*] Anandi Gopal Joshi became a mother when she was only 14 years old. Her baby died in 10 days due to lack of medical facilities. This huge trauma triggered her desire to do something for the healthcare in India.

In 1883, Anandibai began her medical training in the United States of the Women Medical College of Pennsylvania and thus became first Indian to study medicine from abroad.

Kadambini Ganguly (1861-1923): [*a doctor who broke the myth*] Kadambini Ganguly from Bengal practiced as an independent physician in 19th century India breaking into primarily male bastion. She graduated in western medicine from Calcutta Medical College in 1886. Ganguly became one of the first women in India to be eligible to practice medicine, the other being Anandi Gopal Joshi.

Janaki Ammal (1897-1984): [*the pioneering botanist*] Janaki Ammal's notable work is the development of a sweeter variety of sugarcane. Every time we take sugar, Janaki Ammal lives on in spirit because her research is what added extra bit of sugar to our sugar. She received a D.Sc in 1931 after her stint as the first Oriental Babour Fellow at the University of Michigan. She also joined the John Innes Horticultural Institute at London during 1940 to 1945. She served as the Director General of the Botanical Survey of India. She was conferred the Padma

Shri in 1977.

Irawati Karve (1905-1970): [*studying humans*] Irawati Karve was a stalwart of Indian sociology at a time when it had just been institutionalized in the country. Irawati Karve's study on the 'Kinship Organization in India' revolutionised and simplified future research on the subject. She used language patterns and geographical divisions to study the variations in kinship structures across the expanse of the country.

Kamala Sohoni (1912-1998): [*the nutritional values of plants*] She was an Indian biochemist who in 1993 became the first Indian woman to receive a Ph.D in a scientific discipline. Kamala Sohoni discovered an enzyme in potato called cytochrome C and explained its role in plant respiration.

Asima Chatterjee (1917-2006): [*chemist Par Excellence*] Asima Chatterjee was noted for her work in the fields of organic chemistry and phytomedicine. Her most notable work includes research on vinca alkaloids, the development of anti-epileptic drugs, and development of anti-malarial drugs. She was the first woman to receive a Doctorate of Science from an Indian University in 1944.

Anna Mani (1918-2001): [*pioneer Indian Meteorologist*] Anna Mani was an Indian physicist and meteorologist, who made significant contributions to meteorological instrumentation, conducted research and

published papers on solar radiation, atmospheric ozone and wind energy measurements.


Rajeshwari Chatterjee (1922-2010): [*first woman engineer from the State Karnataka*] Rajeshwari Chatterjee was an Indian scientist and academic, and the first woman engineer from Karnataka. She contributed to the scientific and engineering communities, and served as a venerable educator. She became the Chairperson for the Department of Electro-communication Engineering at the Indian Institute of Sciences.

Darshan Ranganathan (1941-2001): [*organic Chemist*] Ranganathan was known for reproducing natural biochemical processes in the laboratory. She was a specialist in designing proteins to hold wide variety of different conformations and designing nanostructures using self-assembling peptides.

Kalpana Chawla (1962-2003): [*first Indian-American astronaut*] Kalpana Chawla was the first Indian-American astronaut and first Indian woman in space. She first flew on Space Shuttle Columbia in 1997 as a mission specialist and primary robotic arm operator. The NASA chief called her a "terrific astronaut".

Dr. Indira Hinduja: She was the first Indian woman who delivered a test tube baby on August 6, 1986. She has also pioneered the Gamete Intra Fallopian Transfer technique resulting in the birth of India's first IVF baby on

4 January 1988.



Raman Parimala : Raman Parimala was an Indian mathematician known for her contribution for her Algebra. Parimala has several awards to her name – Bhatnagar Award, Srinivasa Ramanujan Birth Centenary Award, TWAS Prize. She was also a member of Indian Academy of Science and American Mathematical Society.

Archana Sharma : Archana Sharma was an Indian women botanist, a Cytogeneticist, Cell Biologist and Cytotoxicologist. She was the founding editor of the Nucleus, which is an international journal of cytology. She researched chromosomes of reproductive plants, pesticides and other environmental agents.

The global science community has recognized that the gender gap in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) has existed for many years. In the past fifteen years, there has been ongoing effort to promote and inspire women and girls to practice in STEM fields. Research has indicated that gender inequality partially impacts the advancement of a woman's career.

Recommendations:

- ☐ Women needs to contribute more in science and technology and hold higher positions than men.
- ☐ Women and girls should be empowered not only to participate but also lead in the profession of science and technology.


☐ We must support and fund basic scientific teaching and research for women at every level.

Conclusion :

In recent times, Indian women have made big strides in several frontline sectors like Information Technology (IT), Biotechnology, and on corporate levels. More recently, organizations including the Indian government, have been promoting an awareness of gender equality in various fields including nuclear technology. It is clearer than ever that women in STEM have great potential to change the world. All that is expected out of teachers, parents, and society as a whole is to urge and motivate girls to grow up to be proud women in science.

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Educational and Social status of women in the Vedic Period

Mousumi Daimari

Abstract :

In ancient times, Hindus considered education as a process of life. It was believed that education should prepare an individual to attain the main objectives of life. Therefore, education was given to the women as it is directly related to the improvement of the society, economic prosperity, their social status and for good family relation. The status of women was high in Indian society in the Vedic period. But it was seen as a change from early Vedic to later Vedic period. The patriarchal system of that period never deprived the privilege and rights of the women. This paper has been prepared to trace the educational condition and social status of women in Vedic period.

Keywords : Social Status, Vedic women, education, patriarchal, Vedic period.

Introduction:

In Vedic period education was given to the women for their improvement of the knowledge, social status and economic prosperity. Indian womanhood and their education have gone through several changes. From 4th century B.C to 3rd century B.C girls and women were given education which helped them to acquire self respect and self confidence. In Vedic times, good education was provided to girls for their better future. A.S. Altekar mentioned that “education was regarded as very essential to secure a suitable marriage.” In Rig Vedic society “the practice of child marriage didn’t exist.” So girls were able to study and education was given an utmost importance. Even the women were provided opportunity to attain high intellectual and spiritual standard. There was no sati system or early marriage. But from enjoying free and esteemed positions in the Rig Vedic society, women started being discriminated against since the later- Vedic period in education and other rights and facilities. Child marriage, the purdah, widow burning and polygamy further declined the position of woman. No doubt the Rig Vedic women in India enjoyed high status in society and their condition was good.

Methodology and objectives:

The methodology of this paper is purely descriptive and required information are collected from different secondary sources like books, articles and websites etc. The main objectives of writing this paper are -

- i) To identify the educational condition of girls and women in the Vedic age.
- ii) To examine the social status of women in the Vedic period.

Discussion:

The social status and educational conditions of women were much better in early Vedic period than later Vedic. If women wanted to pursue their education and knowledge, they were allowed to do so without any bindings. In the Vedic age girls had been given equal opportunity to study and they were not considered as the burden of the family. Women had all rights similar to men. Women enjoyed equal liberty and freedom in their pursuit of knowledge in ancient India similar to men. Though the Vedic society was patriarchal, but women also had some position in the entire household. There are few examples in which we can see the equal position of men as well as women. For example in the Vedic sacrifices, rituals were performed jointly by the husband and wife. Women could attend assemblies and offer sacrifices along with their husbands. Therefore in Vedic period, women enjoyed equal status with men. R.S. Sarma mentioned the widow remarriage in Vedic period. There are no examples of child marriage and the marriageable age Rig Veda sums to have been 16 to 17.

During this period the Upanayan (initiation ceremony) were organized for both the girls and boys. There was never any kind of prejudices against women education and woman had a proper place in the society.

The Vedic period has witnessed many women scholars and they were well-versed in sacred texts and Vedas. They not only composed hymns but they also learnt music and dancing. The women who belonged to the lower caste they had technical skills like spinning weaving etc.

In the Vedic period there were two groups of women brahmavadinis and sadyodvahas. Brahmavadinis were the life long student of philosophy and theology. Sadyodvahas were debarred from studies until they got married at the age of 16-17 years. On the other hand parashara smriti says about brahmavadinis and sadyodvahas. According to this smriti brahmavadini who studies Vedas after Upanayana and then gets married and sadyodvahas were who gets married immediately after Upanayana ceremony and then studies Vedas.

There were many women poets and philosophers in Vedic period. The Vedic age has witnessed many sagacious women like Apola, Ghosha, Visvavara, Gargi who used to compose mantras and were said to be rose to the rank of rishis or sages. Lopamudra, one of the female preachers of Vedic period, is believed to have preached as many as 179 hymns of the first book of the rig Veda along with sage Agasthya.

In Vedic culture women took part in various religious rituals and ceremonies. In the case of acquiring highest knowledge, even the position of a man which properly proved by many saying in Rig Veda. There were numerous examples of Vedic rishies who were female. Several Vedic hymns were composed by Gargi, Visvavara and many others. In Brihadaranyaka Upanishad there are

several examples of highly educated women who played a great role for social achievement. Gargi, one of the eminent participants, who challenged Rishi yajnavalka with various questions about the soul which confounded that learned human being. Another highly educated women like Apala and Atriya suggested women that marriage was not compulsory.

In the Vedic times marriage was considered a social and religious duty. Girls were given in marriage only after puberty that too after completing their education. Women had the right to select their life partners. But during this period women rights were very much limited in inheriting property. A married daughter had no share in getting father's property but each spinster was entitled to one fourth share of patrimony received by her brothers. Women had control over gift and property etc. received at the time of marriage. As a wife, a woman had no direct share in her husband's property. However, a forsaken wife was entitled to one third of her husband's property. A widow was expected to lead an ascetic life and had no share in her husband's wealth. Thus it could be said that the social status was not in favour of women possessing property.

Conclusion:

From the discussion on educational and social status of women in Vedic period, it can be said that women were given equal opportunities in education or in any social customs and rituals along with men when formal education was given to the women, they were required

to utter 'mantras' or verses so that it could help them to recite verses with clarity and correctness. Vedic women were given equal status in education and in the society along with men. So we can say that Vedic period is one of the richest and developed periods for the upliftment of the educational status of women.

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Women, Identity and Literature

Ankita Baruah

Abstract :

The role of women and the identity of the female world have been revealed in the English literature from the 20th century up to the modern age of 21st century. The 'women's movement' of the 1960's was not, of course, the start of feminism. Rather, it was a renewal of an old tradition of thought and action already possessing its classic books which had diagnosed the problem of women's inequality in society. These books include Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), which discusses male writers like Milton, Pope, and Rousseau; Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), which perceptibly portrays the unequal treatment given to women seeking education and alternatives to marriage and motherhood; and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), which has an important section on the portrayal of women in the novels of D.H. Lawrence. In the English literature of the early to the mid-phase of 20th century one could see the perfect differentiation between men and women that has been made by multiple feminist writers.

Keywords : *Feminism, Women's Literature, Female Identity, Feminist Criticism.*

Introduction:

The development of feminist ideology can be traced throughout the 19th and 20th centuries in English literature. The other centuries apart from this will also be taken into consideration to briefly discuss how feminism is perceived at present. Feminism is a broad phenomenon which is still a topic to be discussed. The 19th century was a period of British history, and was also a century of changes for women, and the 20th century followed the path in doing so. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, literature has developed as well as the society and the position of women with respect to men. In simple words, men and women both deserve equal rights in every fields.

Women successfully have started to fight for their rights and independence since the beginning of the 19th century, the aim was to have the same opportunity for education, occupation and life as men. The perception of an independent woman has changed throughout the centuries as well, since a woman was supposed to be a wife, mother, and keeper of a household, more precisely how Martin Luther claimed: "Women should remain at home, sit still, keep house, and bear and bring up children. A woman is, or at least should be, a friendly, courteous, and a marry companion in life, the honour and ornament of the house, and inclined to tenderness, for thereunto are they chiefly created, to bear children, and to be the pleasure, joy and solace of their husbands". Now, women are so much on themselves that they did not even need a man to find their happiness and their occupation can be whatever they want.

Objectives:

1. To study the factor that the feminist literary criticism of today is the direct product of the 'women's movement' of the 1960's.
2. To revolve women's experience.

Methodology:

The observation and analytical method is used in order to have detailed study of the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources are based on *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), *A Room of One's Own* (1929), and *The Second Sex* (1949). The secondary sources are based on websites, journals and reviews of related literature.

Discussion:

The representation of women in literature, then, was felt to be one of the most important forms of 'socialisation', since it provided the role models which indicated to women, and men, what constituted acceptable versions of the 'feminine' and legitimate feminine goals and aspirations. Feminists pointed out, for example, that in nineteenth century fiction very few women work for a living, unless they are driven to it by dire necessity.

1. Mary Wollstonecraft on Equal Rights for Women:

Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was a pioneering work of literature which still reverberate in feminism and human rights movements of today. Shedding into those subjects which is still

applicable in today's world, such as why we have male and female traits, differences in education and treatment of boys and girls, and the importance of females being involved in the democratic process. Wollstonecraft brilliantly makes a point to say that she does not believe women are superior, but rather that it would be beneficial for both sexes if they became more educated and involved in politics. Wollstonecraft argues in her essay that women deserve to be seen as having equal value as men. Women must have some sort of proficiency that they can withstand in any situation they are. Her representation on women in her essay make women themselves fit to the situation and raise their own voices and help to have a bigger voice in literature.

2. Virginia Woolf on Women and Fiction :

Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* undoubtedly questions a traditional value which is considered as an exemplary piece of modernist criticism. It assesses the topic of "women and fiction". Woolf addressed the status of women, and women artists in particular. In this famous essay, Woolf propounds that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write." Basically, Virginia Woolf argues that women should get the opportunities to have money and a room of their own to grow intellectually, so that they can lead their own lives and no longer have to be acquiescent to men. Woolf urges to permit women the same value as men. She uses the room as a symbol for many larger issues, such as privacy, leisure time, and financial

independence, each of which is essential for women to rise above inequalities. Briefly, Virginia Woolf wants women to be free in every field. She states that women should be given equal rights as men, fair wages or equal pay, having equal right in education and sex equality should be given to women, as well.

3. Simone de Beauvoir on the Concept of 'Other':

The Second Sex described the concept of men constructing woman from their own experience rather than from what women are in reality, stating that women are framed as "the Other", while men are the self and subject. Simone de Beauvoir developed the concept of "the Other" to explain that how men dominated women and gives a brief critical base of the Dominator-Dominated relation, which characterizes sexual inequalities between men and women. Beauvoir's emphasis on the fact that women need access to the same kind of activities and projects as men. She demands that women must be treated as equal to men and laws, customs and education must be altered to encourage this. Simone de Beauvoir also outlines women's difficulty to liberate themselves, economically, politically and sexually. Simone de Beauvoir suggests in *The Second Sex* that "one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one".

Conclusion :

During the Era 1890 to 1920, woman struggled to change the definition of womanhood in profound ways. The various issues relating to women were the right to

vote, to wear modern clothes, to be free from barriers, to work outside the home, and to have a place in the world beyond the domestic sphere. We have also seen that how feminism questions the long-standing, dominant, male interpretations, phallogocentric ideology and patriarchal attitude. It concerned with varied aspects of feminism. Essays like Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*, and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* are women-centric and unfolded the new women's perspectives to analyze the patriarchal society and misshape all kinds of inequality and dependency on male counterparts.

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**Woman, Quest of Identity and
Emancipation :**
**A Study of Anita Desai's
*The Rooftop Dwellers***

Dr. Anita Konwar

Abstract :

Anita Desai, a prominent Indian novelist addresses the various issues relating to women in her fictional writings. Though she ignores her link with the western feminist trend of writing, her fictional writings are studied from feminist point of view as they question the traditional notion of femininity and deal with other issues like female identity and emancipation of women. In the story *The Rooftop Dwellers*, it is shown how the female protagonist empowers herself through education and economic independence. She dares to go against the current flow of life and question the so-called conventions of society that entrap women.

Key-words : femininity; identity; emancipation; education; independence

Introduction :

Literature is a powerful medium to represent the voice of the oppressed. In spite of the fast change in the social scenario at national, international level, the matter of woman empowerment still remains a cry in the wilderness. At the national level, sincere effort to represent the female voice is seen in writers like Anita Desai. Though she herself ignores her link with the western feminist trend of writing, her fictional writings are studied from feminist point of view as they deal with the problems faced by women in different fields and the possible modes of women empowerment through education and economic independence. The female protagonist in Anita Desai's story *The Rooftop Dwellers* empowers herself through education and economic independence. She is aware of her individual selfhood and rebels against the traditional patriarchal social system.

Objective & Methodology:

The present paper is an attempt to show woman's quest for identity and emancipation in Anita Desai's story *The Rooftop Dwellers*. The methodology applied in the paper is analytical method.

Discussion:

The emancipation of women is not possible until they are aware of their own potentialities. Proper

education and economic independence can pave the way for a new horizon where woman can lead a meaningful life. By critiquing the socially sanctioned roles available to women, Anita Desai envisions alternate female responses by challenging the ways in which women are imprisoned in the various psychosexual and social constructs. The female protagonist in the story dares to go against the current flow of life and question the so-called conventions of society that entrap women.

Moyna in the story, *The Rooftop Dwellers*, represents the craving of educated women for independent livelihood. She accepts the challenges of a solitary life in a metropolitan city in order to keep her sense of selfhood intact. There are threats to her loneliness on different occasions, yet she does not lose heart. Even her parents, especially her mother is afraid of her security. In the midst of all odds, she continues to live her life. She is not ready to sacrifice her independence at any cost. Her crave for independence leads her to take the job in the office of a literary journal. Initially there was a problem for her to find a rented house but finally she gets a room on the roof of a flat. She finds it difficult to lead a life of minimalism. But Moyna is so determined to establish herself as a working woman that she is able to adjust in the midst of all hardships.

Such was her determination to make her new life as a working woman in the metropolis succeed, and such was her unexpected, unforeseen capacity for adjustment, that after

a month or so the minimalism became no longer privation and a challenge but simply a way of life. (Desai 161)

She realises that in order to survive, she must learn the skill of adjusting in any situation. Her quest for a meaningful life continues and her self-image encourages her to be economically independent and find a respectable position in the society. She is an admirer of her colleague, Tara for her fierce sense of independence. Tara asserts her independent way of life by smoking cigarettes and speaks to her colleague Raj Kumar and her employer, Ajoy Bose as if she is equal to them. Moyna considers her to be her ideal and ardently hopes to emulate her one day. Moyna has to face different problems in her quest of identity. The problem faced by a single woman is highlighted when one of her neighbour disturbs her with a lewd, suggestive song at night. Through her problem, Desai shows the dangers lying ahead of woman living alone and the threat comes especially from man.

Moyna is not afraid of the incident and she continues her life on the 'barsati'. The problems are still inherent and somebody steals her objects. She informs her owner, the Bhallas but they do not pay much attention to her problem. The feeling of homesickness envelops her mind as there is nobody to support her. At one time she feels like informing the incident to her parents in a letter, but the next time she feels confident of herself to deal with the problems by herself. She does not want to increase the anxiety of

her parents. She came to Delhi in search of an independent life, and her pride and confidence debar her from communicating her problems to her parents: "she also knew she was trying to hold onto her pride" (Desai 189). Mrs. Bhalla, her landlady does not like Moyna's habit of keeping a pet. But Moyna is very protective about her choice and confidently answers back her, "Then do you want me to leave?" (Desai 195). She is further agitated by the impudent behaviour of Bhallas' servant boy. The problems and hardships of life make her confident of her powers to adjust and struggle. Mr. Bose's decision to close the literary journal, 'Books' comes to her as a bolt from the blue. His proposal of starting development projects in rural areas and their consent to work in the project splits her mind apart. She does not understand whether she should accept the offer to work or not as Tara confirms her decision not to work there. Tara is a modern woman who stands for the freedom of women from the family bondage. She is only interested in real estate, bank loans and other financial matters. Sometimes, Moyna is fed up with her for her monotonous talks. The existential dilemma in her is finally resolved with her mother's prospect of her engagement with their neighbour's son, returned from America. Her mother asks her to come home so that she could meet Arun, their neighbour's son. Moyna laughs at her mother's letter and she emerges into her confident self in her decision to accept the offer of the project. She cannot sacrifice her independence by leaving her job and

getting married hastily: "She was free, she was determined, she had made her decision, and she sat up, laughing" (Desai 207).

Through Moyna, Desai shows the growing awareness of educated, working women to support their freedom of choice. Desai acknowledges this in an interview: "Moyna, in the story 'The Rooftop Dwellers' stay alone to represent the growing independence of women in India and having the choice of not getting married" (Desai 2). Instead of calmly accepting an imposed selfhood, Moyna emerges as a modern woman who dares to go against the current and assert her independent self. Simone de Beauvoir says, "The emancipated woman, on the contrary, wants to be active, a taker, and refuses the passivity man means to impose on her" (Beauvoir 727). Moyna becomes the representative of the emancipated woman as she refuses to play a passive role and decides to live a life of her own.

Conclusion:

The above discussion shows the need of courage, confidence and patience while searching for a meaningful life. From time immemorial, women have been confined in the cocoon of socially constructed selfhood. Even in literature and theories, women were presented mostly from male perspective. The real self of the woman was repressed under social as well as cultural pressure till she dares to speak out her mind in the familial as well as social sphere. So long a section

of women in society have been floating in the conventional stream of life without thinking about their own choices and likings. Though they have an inner mind, they never dare to reveal it as social oppression in the form of parental as well as male authority suppresses their voices. Their inner selves die and they lead a life of imposed 'selfhood'. But the change is hinted at by Anita Desai through the character of Moyna with her heroic spirit to go against the current. Helene Cixous says that woman must recover her vital forces and rise above the stereotyped roles provided by society. In an interview she says, "Woman must develop a rapport with her unconscious which is not stereotyped, downtrodden: she must revive herself, recover her vital forces, she must dare herself, she must dare to be herself" (Cixous 26). The dependence of women on their male partners for financial matters provides an extra advantage to exploit women. She shows that if women are economically independent, they will have the freedom to determine the course of their own lives. They will be able to find a meaningful life where nobody can impose any restriction on their desires. Women must utilize their capability for judging right and wrong. It requires courage on their part to point out the follies of prevalent social system and possible effort to reform it.

Marriage is genuinely considered to be an essential part of social system and only marriage is supposed to provide economic and social security to women. But Moyna chooses to remain single in order

to keep her identity intact. She is not accusing the institution of marriage. It is through gainful employment that woman has traversed most of the distance that separated her from the male; and nothing else can guarantee her liberty in practice. In Simone de Beauvoir's view, "Once she ceases to be a parasite, the system based on her dependence crumbles; between her and the universe there is no longer any need for a masculine mediator" (Beauvoir 689). Her going against the current sends the message to those women who become victims of domestic violence and silent sufferers of any type of oppression. Desai's story highlights how the individual self of a woman often tends to disappear in the facades of socially and culturally constructed female identities.

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Since the past few years women have made efficient use of the opportunities given to them and have proved time and again that they are no less than anyone else. The 21st century provides women with ample opportunities to excel in whatever field they choose. In spite of the opportunities in the changing scenario, women in the modern era have to face challenges in various fields. The book entitled *Women, Society and Beyond: Challenges and Opportunities* comprising research papers and articles has been published by Women Study Cell, Sonari College. The papers address various issues related to women such as rights of women, women resistance during the Taliban's regime, economic empowerment of women, problems of educated women, managerial issues of women library profession, women's mental health, role of women in science and technology, political awareness of women, social status of women and women in literature.

ISBN : 978-81-954970-1-0



Price Rs. 400.00



Published by -
Women Study Cell,
Sonari College, Charaideo, Assam.