



Women's Studies and Empowerment

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Women's Studies and Empowerment



Refresher Course
(6th August to 26th August)
UGC-Human Resource Development Centre
Gauhati University
Guwahati



PURBAYON
publication

Women's Studies and Empowerment

A collection of articles on various aspects published by Purbayon Publication, Satmile, Guwahati-14, Assam on behalf of Refresher Course (6th August to 26th August, 2018); UGC-Human Resource Development Centre; Gauhati University, Guwahati- 14

Email- purbayonindia21@gmail.com

First Edition : August, 2018

Rs. ₹ 500/-

Women's Studies and Empowerment

First Edition:

August, 2018

ISBN : 978-93-87263-72-7

© Editors

Price: 500/-

Cover Art:

Chayanika Senapati

Cover Design:

Sanjib Bora

Published by:

Purbayon Publication

Satmile, Near Gauhati University

Guwahati- 14, Assam, India

Email- purbayonindia21@gmail.com

website: purbayonpublication.com

Contact No. +91- 9864422157

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Preface

This book is a collection of papers on the theme *Women's Studies and Empowerment*. It deals with conceptual and theoretical issues of the discipline of Women's Studies and connects it with different aspects of Empowerment as an enabling process. Aspects such as health, education, economic, political and societal are sought to be addressed through this collection of select papers. The papers attempt to interlink theory with practice in specific contexts like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bengal in particular and India in general. The papers deal with the women's question in Literature, Religion, History, Polity, Economy, Media and Community.

However, in spite of our best efforts, there might be omissions and commissions that might have remained in the publication. We sincerely apologise for such inadvertent errors.

We anticipate that this publication would be of much benefit to those who wish to understand the perspectives and issues of the discipline of Women's Studies and the process of Empowerment.

We are grateful to all the learned contributors for their valuable contributions. We also extend our gratitude to the publisher *Purbayon* without whose sincere effort this book would not have been possible on time.

Dated: 26th August 2018

Prof. Alpana Borgohain
Prof. Jogen Chandra Kalita

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Women's Studies – Its Relevance In Contemporary Theory And Practice <i>Laltlanzuol Khawbung</i> | 9 |
| “Women's Studies”: Tracing the growth of the Discipline with particular reference to India <i>Anjali Devi</i> | 18 |
| Amartya Sen's Perspective on Women Agency and Development <i>Ngahpi Lhouvum</i> | 25 |
| Practice of Women Studies and the Question of Sexual Harassment <i>Dr. Anannya Gogoi</i> | 30 |
| Literature and Women Empowerment: Theory and Practice <i>Sumi Bora</i> | 39 |
| Women in Ancient Sanskrit Literature: An Approach <i>Dr Indrani Deka</i> | 46 |
| Women's Right of Property in The <i>Dharmasastras</i> <i>Rajib Sarmah</i> | 53 |
| Women Empowerment and It's Challenges in India <i>Jayanta Borah</i> | 59 |
| हिन्दी साहित्य में नारी <i>डॉ० दानचा तोंगलुक</i> | 65 |
| Current Status of Women in India from Educational Perspective <i>Dr. Nabanita Sarmah</i> | 69 |
| Empowering Women through ICT in Science Education <i>Rita Sinha</i> | 77 |
| Physiological Response of Girls and Women to Exercise and Physical Training: An overview <i>Awashes Subba</i> | 82 |
| Status of Women In Ancient Assam on the Basis of Inscriptions <i>Indrani Choudhury</i> | 91 |

| | | | |
|---|-----|--|-----|
| Media Intervention and State Role in Changing Gender Stereotype: A Critical Study of The Media's Intervention in bringing Gender Equality for Women <i>Pallavi Devi</i> | 97 | Educational Status among Tribal Women: A Case Study of Sonowal Kachari Women of Lakhimpur District, Assam <i>Minakshi Baruah</i> | 175 |
| महिला अध्ययन एवं महादेवी वर्मा <i>डॉ. चंदना शर्मा</i> | 106 | An Assessment of Implementation of Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (Jssk) in Nalbari District of Assam <i>Jutirani Devi</i> | 181 |
| Status of Women in Ancient Assam <i>Rumi Barlow</i> | 110 | Job-Home life Balance: A Study on women working in banking sector Guwahati <i>Dr. Chayanika Senapati</i> | 196 |
| Socio-Economic Status of Assamese Women in 19th Century And In The Beginning of 20th Century – With special reference to their Participation In Freedom Struggle of India <i>Malina Boro</i> | 117 | Descent and Inheritance among the Dimasas: A Gendered Perspective <i>Kunjalata Brahma Bathari</i> | 206 |
| Understanding Political Empowerment of Women: With Special Reference to the Participation of Women in Assam Legislative Assembly <i>Jahnabi Devi</i> | 123 | Women in Religion: A Study of the Anis' of Tawang <i>Sukmaya Lama</i> | 212 |
| Inclusion of Women's Rights in Indian Constitution and Enjoyment by Rural Women in Assam with special reference to Tipling Gaon Panchayat, Dibrugarh, Assam <i>Minoti Hazarika', Deepanjali Bora²</i> | 131 | Education and Autonomy in Decision Making of Bodo Women- A Reflection of Tamulpur Sub-Division of Assam's Baksa District. <i>Namita Barman</i> | 220 |
| Reproductive Health- A Key to Women Empowerment: An Illustration of Prevailing Obstetrics Morbidity in the Slums of Guwahati City <i>Dr. Aditi Das</i> | 138 | Role and Status of Women in Mising Community <i>Indreswar Pegu</i> | 231 |
| Gender Discrimination in Health Care : A Study on the Plain Tiwas of Morigaon District, Assam <i>Dr. Srijani Das</i> | 153 | Social Status of Women in Arunachal Pradesh: A Study of Change and Continuity <i>Chalit Sumnyan</i> | 237 |
| Empowerment of Women through Self Help Groups in Barhampur Development Block, Nagaon, Assam <i>Nandita Bhuyan</i> | 162 | Women in Tourism Sector: Opportunity and Challenges- A Case Study of Alipurduar District <i>¹Mrinal Kanti Basak, ²Dr. Chandrashakher B. Gandigudi</i> | 244 |
| A Study on Women's Education as a Tool to Moderate Population Growth <i>Madhumita Deb</i> | 169 | Domestic Violence and Human Right : A violation of Human Rights against Women in India with special reference to Assam <i>Dr. Anowar Hussain</i> | 250 |
| | | "Women Education and Empowerment, Issues & Challenges – Special Reference to Assam" <i>Kurban Ali</i> | 255 |
| | | Women and Legal Provisions in India <i>Seema Nath</i> | 260 |

Women's Studies

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Empowerment

ISBN : 978-93-87263-72-7

Educational Status among Tribal Women: A Case Study of Sonowal Kachari Women of Lakhimpur District, Assam

Minakshi Baruah*

ABSTRACT

Education is the most powerful means of empowering women and protecting them from the violation of their human rights. It also can transform, and even save the lives of women and their families and communities. It unlocks a women's potential and is accompanied by improvements in health and nutrition. The present paper is trying to find out the educational level and problems facing among the Sonowal Kachari women. The Sonowals are the 3rd largest plain tribal groups of Assam. This paper is based on the data collected through personal interview and schedule method. For the study 385 women from Kadam Kachari and Gagaldubi Goan of Lakhimpur district, Assam has been selected as sample for collecting data.

KEY WORDS : Tribal women, Education, Educational Level, Sonowal Kachari,

INTRODUCTION

Since Independence, Indian Government is continuously striving to fulfil basic needs i.e. food, shelter, health and education. But even after 72 years of independence, government is still struggling and unable

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to enhance the living standard of its citizens. According to 2010 data from the United Nations Development Programme, approximately 29.8% of Indians live below the country's national poverty line. One of the most important basic needs that can change the complete scenario is 'Education'.

Education is necessary for social, political, economical, psychological and legal empowerment of women. It is crucial to empowering women and girls to participate in economic, social and political life of their societies. Education unlocks a woman's potential, and is accompanied by improvements in health, nutrition and well-being of women and their families.

A tribal women occupies an important place in the socio-economic field of her society but the formal education has very little impact on them. Most tribes live in abject poverty. It is not easy for them to send their girl child to schools. The formal schools do not hold any special interest for them. Several tribal communities all over India have been facing various problems. Among them, the tribal women are a majority. Especially the tribal women are not kept away from the impact of socio-economic changes affecting the society. In this process of change the tribal women is forced to adhere to certain norms which may even take away her freedom. In fact, a large number of tribal women have dropped their education at different stages. But in order to empower them, there is a great need of opportunities so as to enable them to assume leadership qualities for socio-economic transformation. However, in order to develop their level of aspiration, adequate educational opportunities are to be provided so that they get motivated to participate, support and also ultimately learn to initiate their own programmes of development. Education gives them decision making economic status and empowerment.

In India, the total literacy rate is 74.04%. The male literacy rate is 82.14% and the female literacy rate is 65.46%. The literacy rate in Assam is 72.19%, with the male literacy rate is 77.85% and the female literacy rate is 66.27% (census of India, 2011).

The present study was carried out among the Sonowal Kacharis of Lakhimpur district, Assam to find out the educational level and problems facing among them. The Sonowal Kacharis are the indigenous ethnic group of Assam, North East India. Though they widely scattered

over several districts of upper Assam like Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, at present the major bulk of the population is concentrated in the district of Lakhimpur. The Sonowal Kacharis belong to the Mongoloid race. Agriculture is the main occupation of the Sonowal Kacharis. They are mostly cultivators. So, their economy is mainly based on agriculture. Rice is the staple food of the Sonowal Kacharis. The Sonowal Kacharis are Hindus. They are basically followers of 'Mohapurushia Baisnav Dharma'. Bihu is the main festival of the Sonowal Kachari.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the educational level of Sonowal women.
2. To examine the facilities available in the villages.
3. To study the role of present education system for improving the quality of women education among Sonowals.

Methodology

For the purpose of the present study, both the primary and secondary data have been used. For the primary data, a standard schedule has been prepared. The data were also collected through direct interview. The secondary data were collected from books and journals.

Area of the study

The fieldwork for the present study was carried out in two Sonowal Kachari villages of Lakhimpur District, under Boginadi Development Block i.e. Kadam Kachari and Gagaldubi. Both the villages are located about 8 km and 10 km respectively from Lakhimpur town. In both the villages there are Primary and M.E. schools. Most of the girls of these villages have been studying in those schools. For the higher studies they have to go to either Boginodi or Lakhimpur.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Age wise distribution among the Sonowal Kachari women of Lakhimpur District, Assam

| Age Group | Number of women | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 0-5 | 30 | 7.79 % |
| 6-10 | 37 | 9.6 % |
| 11-15 | 48 | 12.46 % |
| 16-20 | 43 | 11.16 % |
| 21-25 | 61 | 15.84 % |
| 26-30 | 41 | 10.64 % |
| 31-35 | 27 | 7 % |
| 36-40 | 22 | 5.7 % |
| 41-45 | 14 | 3.6 % |
| 46-50 | 19 | 4.9 % |
| 51-55 | 10 | 2.59 % |
| 56-60 | 11 | 2.86 % |
| 61-65 | 9 | 2.33 % |
| 66-70 | 9 | 2.33 % |
| 71 and above | 4 | 1.03 % |

Table 1 shows the age wise distribution of total women. The age of the total women is divided into 15 age groups with an interval of 5 years. From the table it is seen that among the 15 age groups, highest women is in the age group 21-25 that is 61 (15.84%) followed by 12.46% and 11.16% are in the age group 11-15 and 16-20 respectively. Least of the women that is 1.03% are in the age group 71 and the above.

Table 2. Distribution of women according to educational status-1.

| Educational status | Number of women | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Too young to go to school | 30 | 7.79 % |
| Up to class IV | 83 | 21.5 % |
| Class V- VII | 83 | 21.5 % |
| Class VIII-X | 98 | 25.4 % |
| H.S | 21 | 5.45 % |
| B.A/B.Sc/B.Com | 4 | 1.04 % |
| Higher Education | 3 | 0.78 % |
| Total | 385 | 100 % |

Table 2 shows the educational status of the Sonowal women. 7.79% of the total population are too young to go to school. The highest numbers of educated women are in the category of class VIII-X which is 25.4% followed by primary and M.E which is equally 21.5%. The percentage of educated women in H.S. and graduation are 5.45% and 1.04% respectively. Educated women at higher education are only 0.78% of the total women.

Table 3. Distribution of women according to educational status -11.

| Educational status | Number of women | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Too young to go to school | 30 | 7.79 % |
| Illiterate | 63 | 16.36 % |
| Literate | 292 | 75.8 % |
| Total | 385 | 100 % |

Table 3 shows the educational status of the Sonowal women. It shows that 16.36% of women are illiterate (63 no.) while 75.8% are literate (292 no.). 7.79% are too young to go to school (30 no.).

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT AMONG THE WOMEN OF SONOWAL KACHARI-

1. Prevailing education system should be revised.
2. For improvement of women education, a healthy political environment is needed.
3. Government as well as their Autonomous Council should monitor the problems. It can be predicted the future of Sonowal women will be quite bright in upcoming days.
4. Government and civil societies should create awareness among the tribal people about the governmental programmes, needs of education among tribal women.

CONCLUSION:

Sonowal Kachari women are in recent time very much interested in their education. but it has been observed that like other community they are also faced some problems from their society. It is seen from the study that most of the Sonowals are poor. They have to face with the great obstacles like economic condition, social attitude, lack of knowledge of the old age people etc. in the path of their development.

But the modern education system helps the parents to realize and they send their girl child to higher studies. As a result the literacy rate of female considerably increasing than before.

This paper is based on the primary data collected from two Sonowal villages of Lakhimpur district, Assam which tries to highlight the educational status of Sonowal women. It is seen from the study that though the educational attainment of female is not satisfactory, the literacy rate is considerably increasing than before. The reason is that modern education system and most of the parents aware of the importance of education for building their children's future life.

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Purbayon

Publication

Guwahati | Assam | India

purbayonindia21@gmail.com

www.purbayonpublication.com

ISBN 978-93-87263-72-7



9 789387 263727