

# CONTEMPORARY WOMEN ISSUES A REFLECTION

Edited by  
Mina Choudhury



# Contemporary Women Issues : A Reflection



**Editor**  
**Mina Choudhury**

**Contemporary Women Issues : A Reflection** Is a collection of articles related to contemporary women issues sponsored by UGC edited by Mina Choudhury, published by Dr. S. U. Ahmed Principal, ADP College, Nagaon : Assam.

First Edition : Aug, 2015

Price : ₹ 599/-

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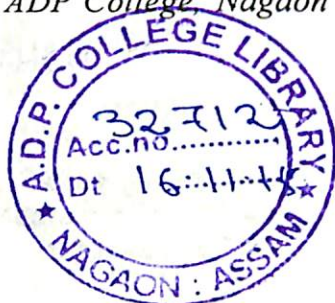
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Printed at : Ajanta Press, Nagaon (Assam)  
Phone : 94350-61745

## *Dedication*

**This book is dedicated to all the women of this world who relentlessly struggled for their existence.**

## **Acknowledgment**

The Editorial Board is grateful and indebted to UGC for the financial support in the publication of this book. The Board is also grateful to the contributors without which the publication of the book is impossible. At last but not the least, the Board acknowledges the staff of the Ajanta Press for their efforts.

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## From the Desk of the Principal

It gives me immense pleasure to know that the UGC sponsored Women Study Centre is bringing out a book in collaboration with the Women Study and Welfare Centre of ADP College highlighting the issues related to Women's Right and Empowerment with special emphasis on the conditions of women in Assam as well as North-East. Due to low percentage of literacy and unawareness about their right, the women in Assam suffers the most.

In the present day society the devaluation of girls and discrimination against them manifests in a no. of ways. Discrimination begins even before birth if it is a girl child. Of course there has been significant progress and change in the status of present day women, yet our society is infested with certain evils like child marriage, killing of female foetus, dowry, domestic violence, witch hunting and honour killing. A young women is even denied the right to assert her autonomy.

Women Study was never a thrust area in our country before independence. UGC, since its inception is playing a significant role to promote women study. Assam deserves and requires some special attention and financial packages from UGC. We appreciate the role of UGC in this regard and hope more and more efforts can be made from different quarters to uplift and make our sisters and mothers empowered.

This book deals with various aspects and issues related

to women. I am privileged to acknowledge the efforts of the members of the Women Study Centre and Women Study and Welfare Centre of the College who worked passionately on writing this book.

Hope this book may change the discriminatory mindset of the concerned and lead us to understanding what might trigger a change attitude towards girls and women.

I wish this endeavour of the Women Study Centre and Women Study and Welfare Centre of ADP College all the success.



**(Dr. S. U. Ahmed)**  
*Principal*

## *Editorial...*

"I hate to hear you talk about all women as if they were fine ladies instead of rational creatures. One of us wants to be in calm waters all our lives."

*Jane Austen, 'Persuasion'*

Though Women constitute almost half of the World population, yet the distortions and maladjustments along with gross inequalities are very much acute in women. The nature of distortions and the intensity of inequality give so painful environment that the balanced development between men and women is alarmingly seen absent. Because of gross violation of human rights on women, the concepts like empowerment or emancipation are coming in to force.

UNICEF has adopted the Women's Empowerment Framework, developed by Sara Longwe, as an appropriate approach to be used in mainstreaming gender. The framework states that women's development can be viewed in terms of five levels of equality of which empowerment are an essential element at each level.

The levels are:

1. **Welfare:** this addresses only the basic needs of women, without recognising or attempting to solve the underlying structural causes which necessitate provision of welfare services. Women are merely passive beneficiaries of welfare benefits.
2. **Access:** equality of access to resources such as

educational opportunities, land and credit is essential for women to make meaningful progress. The path of empowerment is initiated when women recognise lack of access to resources as a barrier to their growth and overall well-being and take action to redress this.

3. **Awareness-raising:** for women to take appropriate action to close gender gaps or gender inequalities there must be recognition that their problems stem from inherent structural and institutional discrimination. They must also recognise the role that women themselves often play in reinforcing the system that restricts their growth.
4. **Participation:** this is the point where women take decisions equally alongside men. Mobilisation is necessary in order to reach this level. Women will be empowered to gain increased representation, by organising themselves and working collectively, which will lead to increased empowerment and ultimately greater control.
5. **Control:** The ultimate level of equality and empowerment, where there is a balance of power between women and men and neither has dominance. Women are able to make decisions regarding their lives and the lives of their children and play an active role in the development process. The contributions of women are fully recognised and rewarded.

(Source: UNICEF, 1994)

The Human Development Report 1995, stresses that empowerment is about

**Participation: Empowerment.** Development must be by people, not only for them. People must participate fully in the decisions and processes that shape their lives. (UN, 1995 b: 12) but at the same time promotes a rather instrumentalist view of empowerment; Investing in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself but is also the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development (UN,

1995b: iii) In this present world empowerment of women is a branded concept for development of women. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves in the empowered developing confidence in their capacities.

Empowerment is probably the totality of the following or similar capabilities:

Having decision-making power of their own.

Having access to information and resources for taking proper decision.

Having a range of options from which you can make choices (not just yes/no, either/or.)

Ability to exercise assertiveness in collective decision making.

Having positive thinking on the ability to make change

Ability to learn skills for improving one's personal or group power.

Ability to change others' perceptions by democratic means

Involving in the growth process and changes that is never ending and self-initiated

Increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma  
Beijing Conference (1995) approves "An Agenda for Women's Empowerment". To redress this imbalance, the Platform urges governments to "commit themselves to establishing the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, as well as in public administrative entities, and in the judiciary, including, inter alia, setting specific targets and implementing measures to substantially increase the number of women with a view to achieving equal representation of women and men, if necessary through positive action, in all governmental and public administration positions."

As a crying need of empowering women in this world we have to understand the whole matter is concentrated to power. It has four connotative segments:

- ❖ Power over- conflict and direct confrontation between powerful and powerless interest groups

- ❖ Power to- capacity building, supporting individual decision-making, leadership etc.
- ❖ Power with- social mobilisation, building alliances and coalitions
- ❖ Power within- increasing self esteem, awareness or consciousness raising, confidence building.

There are some pertinent issues relating to women of the World like poverty, education, health, violence against women, armed conflict, economic structures, power sharing and decision-making, mechanisms to promote the advancement of women, human rights, the media, the environment, the girl child etc. Though the present World is going for rapid development in terms of quantitative framework, yet the qualitative framework will not be ensured without the balanced development of men and women. For the qualitative development a harmonious development between men and women is essential must. Hence, Platform for Action, Fourth World, and Conference on Women clearly cited, "Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace."

This book 'Contemporary Women Issues : A Reflection' is a collection of research based articles written by the faculty members of ADP College. The subject matters of these articles cover a wide range of literature, social science, women rights, politics, economics, and women health. More than that other women related areas are also touched by the writers.

This is the third book on women issues published by ADP college and we hope it will work as a torch bearer and lend a helping hand to the development of the society. ❧

# What is Women 's Studies? Why Women's Studies?

**Diganta Kumar Boroowa**

Women are the integral part of the social set up and any study of the society be it a social science or human science it would definitely involve a basic component on women and issues concerning women. A huge mass of literature on the history and issues relating to women has already appeared in the western world. In India as well there have been good numbers of studies conducted on women. In the contemporary India, the subject has received so much of attention that it has virtually become a burning topic of discussion for the academicians. Women may have projected a lot in their economic and social situations, they have yet to break with all the traditions of an authoritarian and patriarchal past. Today women throughout the world are confronted with socio-psychic problems, largely emerging disharmony between a demanding present and an unmastered past. (Sahai S. N, 1985)

Women Studies can be defined as a body of literature that embodies its concern for women's equality and development and seeks to find explanations and remedies for the unequal position of women in the society. It is a set of research and analysis, which enquires into the origin and basis of these discriminatory practices against women. (Kausik. S, 2000)

The UNESCO meeting of Experts on Women's Studies and Social Sciences in Asia held in New Delhi in October, 1982 defined Women's Studies in terms of the objectives that such studies sought to achieve as:

1. To promote better and balanced understanding of our societies and how they are responding to the process of change
2. To contribute to the pursuit of human rights
3. To assist both men and women in understanding , recognizing and giving due importance to the roles actually played by women and men
4. To investigate the causes of disparity
5. To empower women in their struggle for equality and for an effective presence in all areas of society and development

The Women's Studies should not be narrowly defined as 'Studies about women or information about women, but a critical study for analyzing the social reality'.

Question on Women have surfaced into discussion during the last 15 to 20 years resulting in holding of various seminars, workshops, conferences etc. that focus on varied dimensions of women's life. Campaigns on women issues and awareness programmes cannot be organized without documentation.

In India, Women's Studies has emerged more as an off-shoot of the concern of the society towards women's position and problems. Its birth can be traced to the recognition of a failure on the part of the Social Scientists to enquire into women's issues, their lack of questioning of the assumptions, theories and tools of analysis borrowed from the West and the glaring gap in terms of the needed data that might help orient policy changes. This was mainly because most of the educational planners and social scientists had not found it necessary to re-examine the concepts

and methodological approaches in terms of the social reality that obtained in India, particularly in the context of the weaker sections like scheduled castes and women.

Women's Studies in India hence started as a part of a social movement and of the growing concern among some academics with the widening issues of poverty, unemployment, inequality and decline in human values. It gradually evolved the aims of bringing about greater knowledge on the roots and social basis of women's inequality, their marginalization in development and above all their exclusion from the power structure. Women's Studies in India hence was viewed as a critical social instrument leading to social action and social transformation through academic activities, both by way of generating data and clarifying perspectives as well as by leading to greater social awareness among the teachers, students and the general community alike.

Following these recommendations, the UGC extended financial assistance and invited proposals for curriculum development in Women's Studies, both for the undergraduate and post-graduate courses from these seven universities. The UGC had also invited proposals from other universities for organizing Centres for Women's Studies as a priority area during the VIIth Five Year Plan period. Simultaneously, the Guidelines for Development of Women's Studies were sent to all Universities. Several Universities have responded to it by submitting proposal.

In the meantime the National Policy on Education has provided a new note of urgency and direction to these efforts.

It is now imperative to climate any confusion or misunderstanding, regarding the objectives, the structure or organizational pattern of Women's Studies and to co-ordinate these various efforts at curriculum development, so as to climate duplication and to maximize the utilization of the resources of the University system in achieving the national objectives. A mutual

exchange of opinions and review is thus imperative.

### **Objectives of Women's Studies**

The objectives of Women's Studies may be elaborated as:

- i) To conscientise both men and women by helping them to understand, recognize and acknowledge the multi-dimensional roles played by women in society.
- ii) To promote better understanding of processes of social, technological and environmental change;
- iii) To contribute to the pursuit of human rights;
- iv) To investigate the causes of gender disparity - analyzing the structural, cultural and attitudinal factors;
- v) To empower women in their attempts for equality; and to facilitate their effective participation in all areas of society and development;
- vi) To render 'invisible' women visible;
- vii) To help develop alternates concepts, approaches and strategies for development; and
- viii) To promote the construction of a better, more balanced and equitable society.

Defined thus, Women's Studies is an academic discipline, which has its own identity, and autonomous existence. It has over a period of time developed its own theories based on feminist concepts, and evolved its own methodology that is distinguished from the varied precepts and methodologies adopted by 'mainstream' disciplines. As part of the critical theory it is an instrument that questions the traditionally held premises, theoretical categories and methods in the same way as social sciences and has brought out the glaring absence of gender as a social category, in addition to class, ethnicity, colour, religion and caste as tools of analysis and understanding of social reality. It has highlighted the role that patriarchy and gender bias have played historically in

shaping the knowledge system. Thereby it has questioned the well-known ideologies of conservatism, liberalism and socialism and pointed out to the need for reexamining the traditional and inherited knowledge from the gender/women's perspectives.

### **Relevance to the University System**

The objective for incorporating Women's Studies within the university system is obvious.

1. It will revitalize university education, by bringing it closer to burning social issues. Using class rooms as for value based education, and attitudinal changes, awareness raising, it can seek to train boys and girls towards gender equality, gender justice, removal of patriarchy, and discrimination. This will bring about better human beings and lead to an equitable society based on egalitarian values. Universities, colleges and schools have always played and are expected to play this role.
2. Through research and documentation it will work towards the solution of women's issues.
3. It will produce sensitive persons who are able to play more committed and meaningful roles in development activities for women in all sectors.
4. It will produce trainers, teachers, administrators and social leaders trained and equipped to handle women's issues and disseminate the values of equality and empathy, formulate and implement policies based on above values.

By bringing about such innovations and promoting changes in higher education not merely higher education will get strengthened, but will also become socially relevant.

### **The universities can, in turn, achieve these objectives:**

- a) By helping to update university curricula by incorporating

the results of new scholarship and the issues raised by the latter as they challenge some of the established theories, analytical concepts and methodologies of various disciplines.

- b) By fulfilling a special responsibility - to produce for all levels of the educational system, teachers who are aware of the need for a non-sexist education, and who would actively pick up the challenge to promote values of social equality, including gender equality, secularism, socialism and democracy.
- c) By developing curriculum redesigning it, changing syllabi effecting examination reforms, teachers' training and orientation, orientation of educational administrators etc.;
- d) By linking academic pursuits with extension activities aimed at social action and bringing about close collaboration between theory and practice and between Women's Studies and women's development.
- e) By promoting collaboration between different disciplines in teaching, curriculum designing, research and community and extension activities since women's studies are interdisciplinary by nature.
- f) By helping to generate new and organic knowledge through intensive field work, leading to produce data essential for evaluation and correction of development policies and programmes and in extending the areas for academic analysis, into hitherto neglected sectors. This would help for a better understanding and investigation of problems being experienced by women at the grassroots and institutions of higher education, and a closer contact between institutions of higher education and groups directly involved in action. Such contact would also help universities and colleges to design their

extension activities in a more meaningful manner.

- g) By reviewing and revising status, policies and other provisions from the perspectives of gender equality, with empathy and sensitivity.»»

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# Satire as chosen mode of narration in some of the short stories of Mamoni Raisom Goswami and Pratibha Ray : A comparative study

**Nityananda Pattanayak**

Satire is a literary mode in which wickedness or folly is censured with an aim for the "amendment of vices", which what Swift says, "is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own, which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it." Thus the satirist is a kind of self-appointed guardian of standards, ideals and truth; of moral as well as aesthetic values. Prevailing follies, ills and vices of the society are censured and ridiculed by a satirist with an aim to bring contempt and derision upon aberrations from a desirable and civilized norm. Satire thus, according to Cuddon, is a kind of protest, a sublimation and refinement of anger and indignation. As Ian Jack has put it succinctly, "Satire is born of instinct to protest; it is protest become art."

Many celebrated writers of the world have taken this literary mode as their forte to vent their anger against the aberrations prevailing in their respective societies, with an aim to exercise their pen for the betterment of the society, for the good of human beings.

Mamuni Roisom Goswami and Pratibha Ray are such writers who, pained at the ills, cruelty, corruption, superstition, loss of human values in the society, take upon themselves the task of a crusader so as to expose all these evils through their writings and set the society in order according to the norms as envisioned by them. Both are celebrated writers, writing in regional languages, one in Assamese and the other in Odia and the chosen literary mode of the both is prose. Both have excelled in the genres of novel and short story and bagged the highest literary award of the land, i.e. the Jnanpith Award. This paper is a humble attempt at understanding Goswami and Ray's focus on the satirical mode adopted in their short stories to vent their anger against age old evils prevalent in respective societies.

Both are accomplished short story writers. Through this genre they have tried to establish total and undivided relationship with a larger section of the humanity creating in one the interest for another, creating one's interest in life. Both have tried to explore through this genre the cruel and harsh reality for purposes of truth, goodness and beauty, not for the ugly, vulgar and violent outcomes. Both have taken it as their aim for building a better, happier and more logical world.

Writings of both the artists are deeply committed at the level of social reforms and individual upliftment where not imposition but involvement works the desired goal. Both are conscious of their role as writer -their writings aiming at producing that intellectual stir that in its sincerity and seriousness is likely to relate man to man and again man to the world, to the life-his own and that of the rest with which he must feel at home. This power of the art to relate beings and belongings is at the core of both Goswami and Ray's artistic considerations.

Goswami is one of the most sensitive writers. In her writings we find psychological analysis of an individual mind, picture of the

contemporary society and also her sincerity to point out the ills embedded in it and her wish to bring a change into it.

Of multi-layered experiences that one gets from Goswami's short stories her social consciousness is one. To quote Nandita Basu, "Mamuni gives a vivid picture of life in different strata of society. The sufferings of people come alive in her writings. But she abstains from giving any solution. Neither does she condemn those who are causing or perpetrating these sufferings. One strength of her writing is that the readers tend to believe that yes, people in a given situation lived like this. A Damayanti of 'Sanskar', a Toradoi of 'Udong Bakso' or a Padmapriya of "Devipithir Tej" do not bank upon their relationships with men. They have both accepted, and fought against their situations in life." (p.14).

Yes, this situation in life that the characters in Goswami's short stories face are not what God has made of man but what man has made of man. In "Sanskar" Pitambar Mahajan's heart's cry for a son to perpetuate his family name may be born out of an individual's desire but Damayanti's abortion of the foetus formed by her union with the former under financial hardship is due to social constraint or to say shaped by the age-old orthodox beliefs. She does not want to give birth to a baby who is not from a high pedigree Brahmin father but from a low caste despite assurance of economic security and social identity given to her. She refuses to play the role of a surrogated mother. Her conscience opposes to carry the baby of Pitambar in her womb since it is shaped from her deep hatred towards lower caste- a social fact that most parts of India still experience. Damayanti's reluctance is due to currents and cross currents of social forces working upon her mind. In Goswami's language, "She has aborted it. She does not want to carry the seed of a sudra. She belongs to sandilya Brahmin gotra. She has aborted it. Pitambar...She has aborted the foetus, she has destroyed your child." Here castigation of casteism is not loud yet

is more powerful. The writer in a very subtle manner shows how caste factor even denies economic independence provided to a helpless person.

In her story "Devipithar Tej" (Blood at the shrine of Goddess) the writer has satirized very subtly the attitude of men towards women. Padmapriya's husband deserted her alleging that she was suffering from white leprosy since there appeared a little white speck on her back. Padmapriya was beautiful yet her husband left her because he desired to marry another girl. He took the plea of the white scar growing on the back of Padmapriya. He knew and the society too knew that it was gross injustice for a woman. Yet then no one protested. Everyone remained silent. And Padmapriya took it as her fate.

"Padmapriya did not remain more in that place. She rushed to her room and bolted it from inside. Yes everybody knows it. People close to the temple and of far off places, no one is there who does not know.

She brought down the mirror hung on the wall, unloosened her blouse, removed her long semiz stitched from coarse white cloth and put it at one corner of the bed and in a kneel down position tried to look at the white patch appearing at the back of her body. Too difficult! Too difficult! It is not clearly visible... Mother had stripped her naked and seeing the spot had screamed- oh! oh! is it that white scar for which they left you here?"

But the same person in the life of Padmapriya turned again to her when he saw her bright body, her body with bridal make up because as her friend Labanya told her, "many people are like wolves! If any body ever gets taste of your body he behaves like a man-eater. You know sure that a man-eater chews even the blood-stained clothes of a hunter! There is a taste in human blood! Man eating another man derives the highest pleasure." Here Goswami satirizes the attitude of males towards the women in the

society, how in a drop of hat they disown their better half. In the same story she in a veiled way criticizes the casteism prevalent in the society. After the three village workers left Padmapriya's house giving her hope how to remain self-reliant by weaving cloth following Babu's blessings the writer says, "While returning they washed tea glasses with wild grass and manimuni sak (some kind of herb) at the bank of the riverlet so fine that it glazed like gold". Thus Padmapati as a Brahmin girl did not wash the tea glasses of her guests rather because they were of low caste hence they themselves washed it.

Pratibha Ray presents contemporary social life of Odisha through satirical modes. She is pained and angered at the rotten state of affairs in our social life. As a humanist and a sensitive person she closely observes gradual erosion of values that makes us poorer human beings. Her anguish at the loss of morality in public and individual life pains her at every moment and her short stories bear testimony to it. In short stories like Apar?dhi (The Criminal), Rishta (The Fatal Risk), Amar (The Immortality), Maunsa (The Flesh) etc. she exposes social ills, vices and superstitions that bring sufferings to human life. Her pronouncements in her various short stories like we don't know to sympathize; we allow the morality to vanish so that wrong deeds can multiply; we partake orthodox and superstition-ridden order; we perpetuate the features of poverty, starvations, misery and death in a casual manner without ever trying to bring the right interventions for the desired results; we live in a system where nepotism, favoritism and corruption perpetuate which makes life burdensome and living difficult in present society are very loud. In the same vein she says how we are totally blind to others well-being, have no mentality to serve our neighbours or others or we have no fellow feeling even if we take up the profession of a physician or even we in the garb of a doctor try to suck the blood of patients as vampires suck the

blood of the living beings. We run after money, do not think of others except our selfish ends. We even do not think of our old parents, do not give them their due honour or attend to their old age needs. A few excerpts from some of the selected short stories of Ray will illustrate the point how she was most sensitive to the ills of the society.

'In a thundering voice he shouted "No". Sandhu Nayak's startling voice surprised us. His voice came immediately when we first saw the dead body. However, he relented when the police gave him threats. He was frightened. The real abominable task is to be done by him. The doctor will only write the report and put his signature. The police is there to collect the paper as soon as the doctor will put his signature. Neither the doctor nor the police will touch the dead body. Why should Sandhu cut down his charge. If the doctor and the police will receive their due share then why should he not? If at this moment he will not insist on his due then in future he will suffer. And it will go on for ever Lachhama Kirsani placed one hundred twenty ruppes at the feet of Sandhu Nayak and folding his hands entreated, " I swear, I don't have more money. Were it there, I would have given you. Please accept this much and for God's sake help me. Next market days I will however give two jack-fruits and a cock" ( Maunsa (The Flesh) from Ray's short story collection "Harit Patra").

Here Ray is more sarcastic about the attitude of the elite of the society towards the low caste people of the society. How they thrive at the toil of this lower section and how they do their things done even by threatening. Again another section in the society like Lachhama suffers at the hands of the people like Sandhu. This sort of exploitation goes on in the society and every person having whatever little authority in his hands exploit the other.

In another short story Rishta (The Fatal Risk) Ray rues and at the same time satirizes conventional attitude of rural people who

are ignorant of the benefit of education. Under the influence of superstition they do not allow their children to take education since they believe it short cuts their life. When the younger generation is eager and interested to get education the older generation does not allow them under the false belief that it would ruin their wards. This false belief is crystallized over times, may be due to economic hardship or due to discouragement that they receive from the higher caste.

"Not education but long life is of greater importance, my child. Will life span ever increase when one gets school education? If you remain with me I have everything in life. . . If my son is illiterate and ignorant, how does it concern others?" says the mother.

The child is confused. He understands nothing. He looks gaping at his mother- he does not understand how getting education is related to length of life. The argument does not enter his head.

Maganta steals his way to the school. His parents have no idea of it. He does not carry any study material. He sits beside his teacher, practices the lesson on the slate of other students. He entreats his teacher, "Sir, please make my parents convinced. They are reluctant to send me to school. My playmates tease me as an illiterate and an ignorant fool. I want to shed this castigation. I want to read- I will read- I will not be ignorant- I will be educated".

The teacher looks at the boy in his helplessness. He feels sorry for him. Two curiosity-filled eyes of Maganta made him to discover the whole world; as if the universe of all essential knowledge descends down there.

But how can a teacher ensure Maganta's presence in a school? Can he hold him by compulsion? What authority has he got? Who is he to decide whether the child should come to school to study or go to the field to supplement his parents' income or beg for his living? Whether he would ride the horse or cut grass, would be a master or a servant? xxx "Who are you to make my son study at

your school? Your lessons would not make my son wise, your teachings are borne out in the examples of unemployment, thefts and robberies. Who has the right to teach me whether my son should study or not, will be educated or illiterate?" (Rishta- The Fatal Risk).

Here Ray silently disapproves the attitude of the elite towards the education of the illiterate people of the rural areas. They neither disapprove nor approve the stand taken by a section of rural mass towards education of their children. The teacher in the above story could have tried to convince Maganta's father about the need of education for his son. He could have taken the social responsibility of motivating the rural ignorant people towards the benefit of getting education? But he preferred not to take the risk. He was not even moved by the pleas of the child. So Ray has here castigated the whole society for their callousness towards education of village ignorant people.

The following excerpts from the story "The Undying" tells vividly the abysmal gap between the reality and the romance in the sense as nurtured by the haves in the society. In the style of a folk-tale she says,

The King was delighted as he said, "O, My Minister in Chief: Did you hear it in your own ears? My state does not witness any starvation death". Then he turned around and said to his people, "Have you ever gone through the pains of hunger in your village? Have you heard the word "hunger" in your villages?" The lips of an old woman quivered and trembling laughter came out from her. She said: "Hunger! O King, how can one know what hunger is if he lives only half-fed through out his life, hunger remaining the only friend for him in his life. Life does not wait for hunger. One cannot easily feel the burning in another's belly. How could these people show hunger to you ? O King!"

" And Poverty ?

People being poor ?"

" In our village areas all are like-all equal-Why should one think the other poor ? Where is the time for one to think so ? Where is leisure for any one?" ( Amar-The Immortal.

The above excerpt shows how Ray satirizes the attitude of the rich and powerful towards the poverty. These people do not know the pangs of hunger raging in the belly of the hungry. They even do not care to know it. They are callous. The stark reality of the kingdom, nay the present day society and the vast attitudinal gap between the ruler and the ruled is beautifully presented here.

Goswami is a prolific and powerful writer. So also Ray is. Both have excelled in the genre of prose. Both have highlighted in their prose fiction the contemporary issues in life. But Ray is more ironical, more caustic, more sarcastic where as Goswami is less biting and in a very subtle manner presents ills of the society. It is because Ray takes upon herself consciously to educate the "readers, it is this education of the self that she (Pratibha Ray ) wants to impart through her art as practiced in her short stories (Mishra,31)." »

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Excerpts from the short stories of Pratibha Ray are taken to a great extent from the translation of the writer's stories by Dr. K.C. Mishra.

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# Subject - Woman, Subject - Creativity

**Arindam Borkataki**

A couple of days back, I have read in the newspaper about the retrieval of a 2600 years old twelve-lined poem in a manuscript form, composed by the Greek poetess Sappho and written on a papyrus paper, which was kept wrapped around an Egyptian mummy. That Sappho was a lesbian is a widely held belief in intellectual circles. Prof. Martin Best of Oxford University, who has translated this poem soon after it was retrieved, has expressed the opinion that Sappho had a profoundly emotional relationship with her contemporary fellow women, a fact which becomes explicitly clear from a reading of the poem. In this poem, the poet has apparently expressed her agonizing anguish, when she compares the gradual decay of her and her companions' physical beauty with impending senility. Sappho, who was born in between 615-612 B.C. started to live in the island of Lesbos. In the foreword of a book titled *The Love Song of Sappho*, published in the year 1966, Paul Roche, a prominent translator of Sappho's poems, has expressed the opinion of the distinctive characteristic trait of the island of Lesbos thus-Lesbos was the famous center of women of refinement. The ladies of Lesbos were far from being mere appendages of their husband's and seem to have comforted

themselves with the freedom that was not to be seen again until the days of the Roman Empire; a freedom not unlike our own.

In so far as taking woman as the theme and substance for the creation of literature by women is concerned, there is a recurring question that used to pop up in our minds during our adolescence; and whenever we initiate deliberations on women, we invariably bring in Sappho as a point of reference for our discussion. The question is-in the fecund grounds of literature, why is it that we cannot find a woman playwright or a poetess, whom we can think of as someone with an equal caliber as an eminent male writer. (In the domain of short stories and novels, this discrepancy is not very pronounced). The counter to this query, like what has been published in the first chapter in the book about the likelihood of the expression of one's endowments during the times of Sappho, lies hidden in the environment that has provided with the two noteworthy ingredients, one of 'independence' and the other of something that can be savored by one self-'self-respect and self-dependence'; and the responsibility of awarding these two rest on the society at large. It may be pertinent to mention in this context that it was only after five hundred years have elapsed since the death of Sappho that Audid has linked her with lesbianism. Prior to this, people used to pronounce her as pure and holy Sappho in the same vein as Alcaeus, one of Audid's contemporary poets.

Since the time the responsibility of recognizing women's purity and holiness fell into the hands of men, we presume that the contours of the creative powers of women have been redrawn to give them an altogether different form. And it was considered that the manner in which the center-stage has been occupied by the male-centric edifice for the last two thousand years has relegated the creative faculty of women primarily to just child-bearing. Victimized by the unilateral decisions of men for so long, women themselves started to be unjust to the versatile traits and beauty,

possessed by their own ilk. And this is precisely the *raison d'être* for our failure to perceive the persona of a poet in women the way we do in the case of their male counterparts. With the passage of time, the consciousness of male chauvinism continued the process of procreation of negative opinions which imposed certain decisions on women and this further constricted the growth of talents in women. The history of feminism was launched as a reaction to these events and starting with writers like Mary Wollstonecraft and Simon de Bevoire to Juliet Michel or Julia Kristeva and many others, they all have readily accorded a completely separate status to feminist sensibilities. In this regard, the findings of the psychological analyses of Jacques Laca or Michel Foucault are quite revealing. Feminists like Stevi Jackson and Sue Scott have emphatically stated that while referring to the body of a woman, it is extremely important to replace the word SITE with the word SOURCE and recognizing this importance, they further stated that the challenge to which feminists are now responding is to develop a theory of the body as itself socially constructed which being experienced as a natural, physical presence. The significance of human consciousness, which is doubtlessly at the root of the faculty of creativity, needs to be underscored. Acknowledging de Bevoire's statement that Women are not born, Wollstonecraft too has said-everything that they see or hear serves to fix impressions, call forth emotions and associate ideas that give sexual idea to the mind. But the magnitude of the realms of creative psychology is wholly dependent on all possibilities of imagination. In this regard, Peter Barry has mentioned (The notion of penis envy need not be taken as simply concerning the male physical organ itself but as concerning as that organ as an emblem of social power and advantage which go with it.) that the consciousness of the phallus has, without an iota of doubt, been engaged in playing a very vital role all throughout. Women started to be increasingly

acknowledged as an object since the time they began to distance themselves from concepts like Male possession. When the possibilities of imagination did not materialize, there was a social castration of women, as mentioned by writers like Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert and this frustrated the creative powers of women to blossom in their entirety.

Women, in modern Assamese stories, bring to mind a couple of stories by Saurav Kumar Chaliha—the only writer in whose stories, we can feel the existence of the woman even in the absence of women characters in them. This kind of a characterization of women in material absentia is markedly pronounced in Chaliha's stories like Bina Kutir (Bina's Hut), Ratir Rail (Night Train), Basantika or Sihoteu Pahar Bogale (They Too Climbed the Hills). In these stories, women are used as a medium of feeling—they are not corporal entities of flesh and blood. There are no dynamic women characters in them. These stories have been elevated to the exalted status of sublime poetry because the writer has comprehensively made us aware and experience the existence of women as painfully higher standards of beauty. As readers, we realize that writers with the mindset of an Assamese simply cannot think about coming anywhere near the prolificacy of stories that Saurav Kumar Chaliha or the poems of Ajit Barua have. In this context, mention may be made of the character of the race; because at the root of how the image of a woman has been projected lies class character and the impact that Assamese as a race exerts and both of these factors play significant roles. Reading women-centric novels written in English, one after the other and then reading a novel written in the same language either by an African writer or by a Black American writer will jolt the reader into experiencing this very same feeling of being shaken to the core.

Assamese women live a cocooned life in a patriarchal society and whenever we think about a woman character, the name that

strikes our minds first is Togor (1), a character in the novel Jibanor Baatot (On the Road of Life). There is a flower by the name Togor, whose softness, whiteness and fragrance impel a search for an Assamese young woman even today, and closely connected with this search is the consciousness of the attractiveness of man, along with the right and the earnest yearning to acquire these subliminal qualities in a woman by man. Sneha Devi, a writer of a bygone era and Monorama Das Medhi, a contemporary writer have been successful in holding together a delicate world with these rare attributes, and it is precisely because of this, that they are extremely popular amongst readers like us. On the one hand, Menaka, a character in Homen Borgohain's 'Matsyagandha', who has a similar mindset and Damayanti, a simple village girl in Mamoni Raisom Goswami's 'Sanskar' are indeed characters powerful enough to draw our profound admiration; but on the other, they are characters with distinctive traits which we simply cannot dare to think about finding in our own maternal or paternal aunts. Coming across characters like Menaka or Damayanti all of a sudden while reading the regular kind of Assamese novels is analogous to reading the novels of the African or Black American novelists, who make us experience the feeling of being shaken to the core.

It is only the male writers who are basically capable of experiencing the traits of feminist consciousness, and they get a vent in the poetic construction of literature in general. Mousumi Kandali's 'Sirantan', Kabyashree Mahanta's 'Aprakashya' and Nabanita Gogoi's 'Apadaartha' are Assamese short stories, in which we find an explicit expression of the life-long burden of, inter alia, physicality and sexuality that women, for better or for worse, bear from the cradle to the grave; or in other words, throughout their lives. The journey of these three women writers is essentially inward-bound. Since they are not complacent with the experiences of stalwarts of Assamese literature like Mamoni Raisom Goswami

or Nirupama Borgohain, they have expanded the horizons further. A couple of examples of character-sketches of women, that can be possibly delineated by women in the modernist Assamese stories are given below-the kind of women, who have surmounted their conventional positions, as shown in Bani Baruah's Togor-like character, who could say 'red beak of the kaam (2) bird'/pitadeu (3), pitadeu, don't marry me off afar' to an upper-middle class woman character, brought up in a brutally consumerist society of Anuradha Sarma Pujari and a character found in Bonti Sensua's stories, who is caught between the conflicting interests of the traditional and the modern-

I must acknowledge one thing. There is a bizarre kind of an obsession in the murky secrets of my inner-self, kept surreptitiously for a prolonged period. This obsession of mine is related to breast-fetish. Although I am a woman myself, an adult woman, it has become instinctive for my eyes to minutely observe the body of a woman the way a man would. Whenever I see a woman in front of my eyes, I scrutinize the shape and size of her breasts. The virgins stay standing in an upright and firm posture. How innocent and beautiful their postures are! Whenever I see a pregnant woman, I am reminded of ripe and juicy wood apples. Each one a mature, full-grown and protuberant wood apple. And those thoroughly wrinkled, twisted sagging breasts of old women? They give the impression of two shrunken, long bags of dried leather. The fact of the matter is that breasts are perceptible to me as a symbolic representation. The harsh drudgeries of life slowly but surely smother the upright breasts of a virgin and eventually they sullenly start to droop. Ah! I cannot stand this ultimate truth of life. I cannot stand this at all!

(Sirantan: Mousumi Kandali)

'What do I think, honey? A voice, nine year old, came reverberatingly from the middle of the open album. It is primarily

sexual discrimination which is responsible for most of the crimes committed in the world today. Think about a solution. In the twenty-first century, will there be an innovation in the domain of science of setting up of Sex booths on the edges of the streets of the cities and the metros? As soon as the carnal desire is aroused, one can head for one of those booths and with the aid of the machine, he can satisfactorily consummate his desire. Where there can be no questions of social sanctions and sanctities raised'.

(Aprakashya: Kabyashree Mahanta)

Isn't the adoption of a mode of expression of this kind even by an Assamese woman writer, a protest against the practice of considering woman as an object, era after era? »

# The Indian Women in the Vision of Vivekananda: A Short Reanalysis

**Ajit Kr. Singha**

The identity of the whole structure of mankind may be broadly classified in two forms from the physical point of view; yet the basis of the identification of soul can't be two. Human soul has been always one and only one in all bodies and forms. In other words, which one appears at this mundane field after a journey in mother's womb one is easily identified on the basis of gender. But from the angle of soul or spirituality such an external or physical identification is absolutely impossible. But since time immemorial in the male-dominated social structure male and females have been assessed from quite different and almost opposite points of view. Males are the supreme lords with unquestioned and unchallenged authority and females are just their sub-ordinate subjects, just toys of their whims. They have to lead their life solely in accordance with the norms and standards, set by the males. It seems as if the world of females were marginalized world. Considering it marginalized is not enough. Females were described and defined by a number of so-called ancient religious scriptures as the worms of hell. They were kept far away from being imparted education

and more specially formal education. It was because there was a false assumption even till the later part of nineteenth century that females would be granted very early widowhood if they acquired knowledge and wisdom. No peace and tranquility would be there in the domestic environment if women are given education in that household. Such dogmatic attitude towards life was also reflected through the psycho-behavioural activities in the monk-society. The monks and sanyasis used to be in thousand miles away from any female company because of their firm assumption that females were 'maya' and consequently they are more of a hindrance than a help in this spiritual pursuits for the attainment of sainthood or salvation. But a matter of relief is that there were also some differences of opinion on women inside the monk-society.

Regardless of the thoughts and attitudes of the Indian monks and sanyasis towards womanhood, Swami Vivekananda's opinion on women is absolutely different, constructive and progressive. He urged women to stand on their own feet instead of being totally dependent on males. He said, "Women must have to acquire such skills and ability so as to solve their problems in their own way."

The only means for the attainment of this great ability is education. True education can only bring radical changes in human mental make-up and enable one to have transcendental experiences on life. New and bright light of cultural refinement and spiritual enhancement starts flashing in the eye-ball. Swamiji puts utmost emphasis on the spread of true education for the social development. Besides this female education is also greatly emphasised because our social progress will be ensured only when the female community can be upgraded to the level of the male community. Moreover, women will themselves identify their own positive qualities and harmful drawbacks and choose the right path of life. Our age-old social structure will be de-construction of the society. That is why he assures all - "... Then there will be no need

of any construction or destruction of any system, prevalent within the social setting with the help of force."

Actually no existence can be whole and complete alone. To be complete in all respects a self requires the co-operation and company of another self. In the words of Bakhtin - "Every being is always co-being." Therefore even if in the male-dominated world, females are often looked down upon on various petty issues, a male can never be complete without a female. If the Male community desires to stand with head held high, they must show equal respect and reverence for their counterpart. It is needless to mention that till now it is believed that women are far behind the rest of male-community in the horizon of mental progress and mental strength. In those days of far bye-gone years girls were denied all school education. At that critical juncture of denial and darkness, Swamiji resolved to setup separate schools or religious centres exclusively for girls' education and mental development. Such a measure of action was a must for the sake of female progress and enhancement of strength.

The male dominated society had knowingly or unknowingly kept girls in the cage of perpetual darkness and dirt. They were not allowed to set admission into an educational institution of lower primary level on different excuses. The more horrible and harmful thing is that deep-rooted fear was injected into the mind of those so-called illiterate and uneducated women. Swamiji urged women very passionately to withstand and overcome all such fears and devote themselves whole-heartedly and full-bloodedly to the service of the country and countrymen. He discovered Margaret alias Sister Nivedita to lead the Indian women in the mission of social services, charged with patriotism. Imparting perfectly complete education and training, Swamiji engaged her in the service of the country. She was entrusted with the special task of developing the women class of the society. On the otherland, sister Nivedita

also left no stone unturned to materialize the dream of Swami Vivekananda. He appealed to the Indian women with this poignant question - "Don't you see - in spite of being an English girl, Nivedita has learnt to serve you? And can't you do the same for your own countryman?"

Besides sister Nivedita there was another ideal woman. She was none other than Mother Sarada Devi. Vivekananda has highlighted Mother Sarada before the society as the source and fountain of all inherent and dormant energy and strength. To him Mother Sarada was no less important than his spiritual guide and guru Ramkrishna Paramhansa Dev. He requested his fellow disciples to try more and more for knowing and understanding the vision and teachings of Mother Sarada. To see and consider women as mother is an integral part of the Indian society and it is more specially appropriate in the context of the Indian culture and religion. Thakur Ramkrishna also considers every woman as a mother. Whatsoever, Vivekananda sought equal contribution from both males and females for the noble cause of social upliftment. He also patronized the perfect development and perfection of the feminine spirit and strength. Pointing out the extra-ordinary feminine personality and calibre of the greatly talented ancient Indian women - Maitreyee, Khana, Lilabati and others Swami Vivekananda inspired the women of his days and also those of the subsequent eras - "Don't be dependent on me, I may continue to live or may pass away, you, soon spreading and excelling."

Vivekananda puts utmost stress and importance on education specially on female education and child-education. He proposed to the parents that their children should be given full opportunity and freedom to think freely in their own way. Originality in thought is extremely needed for the all-round development of children. The sheer want of these originality and uniqueness in thought is at the root of the constant deterioration of India's vast human

resources. Above all, the education that Vivekananda always refers to is never mere reading books or acquiring bookish knowledge on various subjects. He does not recognize any mechanical knowledge as education. In the language of Vivekananda real education is that education by which spontaneity of human will-power get well balanced and well-restrained and ultimately yield good and welfare to society. Again he asks all to impart at least some preliminary knowledge on such unavoidable but much useful subjects as religion, art, industry, science, cooking, hygiene, embroidery and exercise. Just reading dramas and novels or learning the art of ritualistic practices can't be sufficient. Everyone must endeavour to possess more or less a fairly satisfactory level of knowledge on all such subjects of day to day life. It is earnestly desired that the student community ought to be absolutely just, truthful, righteous and dutiful. The modern feminists may not perhaps proceed in this path, shown by him. Yet then they repeatedly emphasise the development of the female-personality in the right direction. Women have to take initiatives themselves to extract whatever are due to them in the society. To have utter dependence on males or the male-dominated society is no more the need of the hour. They have to set up and also strengthen their own legitimate existence themselves. In this context, Simone De Beauvoir's comment is quite appropriate - "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman, ... it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. One intervention of someone else, can establish an individual as on other."

Though Swami Vivekananda talks much about the self-dignity and development of the women-class, he neither exaggerates their miseries nor looks down upon the males. The social system, based on Brahminism always deprived women from the light of education. Even in the Vedas whatever dignity and status, given to

womanhood was only due to their ability to give birth to sons and thus to continue the tradition of the male-domination in the society. And whenever a woman can not give the birth of a male-child, much torture, insult, punishment and humiliation are inflicted on her heartlessly. Males can treat women very wrongly and roughly in the most whimsical way just because women are quite unaware of the great significance of their own existence in this world. Again the lack of due spread of proper education is responsible for this awful unawareness. That is why Swamiji always urges women to engage themselves more and more in acquiring knowledge and wisdom. They must have to feel and understand their own existence and the great role, they have to play for the real upliftment of entire human race. It will be passable only when women are blessed with complete education in all respects. Swamiji also assures this by saying - "Whatever degree of strength or assistance you long for are certainly within you. So now you have to shape and construct your own future by being strong with the strength of knowledge."

Vivekananda has already told us from what perspective women should be seen. Generally in the male-dominated society women are considered the worst degenerated beings. But he appeals to all for not considering a woman or a girl as merely a woman or a girl. Rather she ought to be counted as a man, standing in the society on the same footing with other males. We must wipe out from mind all the sense of sexual discrimination. Otherwise no progress in the real sense can occur in the society. As long as there is the seed of discriminatory attitudes towards women in the mindset of males, the society will remain a monological society with the sole dialogue voice. On the otherhand, women will also continue to be just game-toys at the hands of their male-partners. Their heart won't be won. To win the heart of women there should be dual conversation. In spite of the enactment of such laws, means

solely for the benefits and protection of women, several malpractices like rape, torture of women, dowry system, child-marriage, etc. can not be stopped or minimised. The only thing that is responsible for all such evils is the shameful lack of education and more appropriately, the lack of value-based and moral education. To say in the words of Swamiji - "If education is devoid of religion, there must be defects in it." The female education should be spread, keeping religion at the centre of it. In other words, the female education should be based on religion. Perhaps the modern feminists may not accept this theory of Vivekananda because to them religion is secondary and the prime thing for women is their enjoyment of un-restrained life-style in the name of women rights. But to form a healthy society both the males and females have to lead their life in some distinctly set norms and restrictions. In the oriental society and also in the modern social setting there is the rise of radical, intolerant and violent feminism. It is certainly a subject of judgment to see how far the greater women-society is benefited from such impractical and unethical feminism.

Vivekananda has made much significant comments on the issues of women's marriage or their adopting sanyas, that is, becoming nuns. Women should be let loose after being imparted with proper education and skills. Then they will themselves select their own path of life. The educated girls, after their marriage will inspire their husbands with lofty ideals and ideas and also become the mother of brave sons. This concept of becoming the mother of 'brave sons' focuses the dormant but all-pervading psyche of male-domination. It can be safely assumed that women are considered to be no better than mere the son-begetting machine. Yet it is true that along with being educated women should also develop their power of judgment to assess their existence in this world and also to analyse both the good and evil sides of thing in life. Herein Vivekananda is a pioneer of the spread of the female education in

India and the patron of the free thinking of women. Besides this he makes severe criticism of our social construction - based on the orthodoxy of the Brahminism. This Brahmin-centred social policies have snatched away all the rights of women. He said- "The root-cause of India's downfall is due to the Bhattacharyas Brahmins. No sooner had they directed that all the prople of sub-ordinate to the Brahmin community are not entailed to study Vadas than they also crushed all the right of women."

Swamiji is against the casteism and the social system divided on race and creed. In spite of his opposing such things, he is in favour of the marriage between a man and woman of the same religion. Vivekananda always gives top most priority to the self-dignity of women. If needed, women should keep themselves vigilant and also prepared to lay down their life for the sake of their self-dignity and self respect. It is not desirable that women will weep whenever they face any challenge or trouble in life. The possession and also the nourishment of the courageous self is very essential to lead a healthy and honourable life. He was ever vigilant to bring girls and women at the front in the field of education. He lays more importance on getting the widows self-dependent and self-sufficient than their re-marriage. If the widows can stand on their own feet, society will recognize and respect them. But he was not against the remarriage of widows.

The 'marriage of widows' is a reformative measure of the society. But poverty is an extremely horrible and painful curse in our society. The rhythm of our national life is found beating in these poor folks. So first of all there should be the provision of employment of earning money for these helpless widows. Only then they must also be turned into well educated. Swamiji said - "The path of the formation of the national life is to make common people educated and then developed and progressive... come, let us infuse ideas into their brain - they will do themselves the rest.

It means, the spread of education is to be done among general people."

Swamiji has recognized different qualities among the women of the East and the West. According to him a woman of the west is mainly a 'wife' and her womanhood manifests primarily as a wife. But to the common people of the East and more particularly of India the whole energy and strength of womanhood is concentrated on motherhood. A wife of the west is the house-wife and in an Indian family a mother is the house-wife or even head of the family in the absence of her husband. Even the Indian monk society, without cherishing any discriminatory attitudes addresses every female as 'Mother'. All the qualities and virtues of a mother are incorporated in a woman. The degree and height of moral character, devotion, affection, kindness, generously, contentment and ever readiness to serve, found among the Indian women are not seen in the women of any other country. The western girls stand at quite contrary position in this regard. They drive cars, go to offices and teach in the schools and colleges. Now-a-days the women of our country are not also behind anybody else in such jobs. The principal reason is that the women-class of today is no longer more backward than the male-class in education. Rather it can be professed that the girls are more advanced than the boys in education. The desires and dream of Swamiji is about to be fulfilled today. He wanted that our girls should adopt and absorb all the best qualities and virtues found in the women of both the East and West for the greater course of uplifting the women community. He wrote - "In this age on one hand people have to be very quick and industrious in works and on the other there will be the rise of a new era out of the assimilation of the Indian and the western civilization."

The sole reason of the position of women being under developed in our social structure is the show of excessive honour

to them. Actually in the male-dominated society women are not allowed to go outside the four-walls of the room. It seems the more they keep themselves locked up inside the house and consequently remain unseen and unheard the more they deserve reverence. They must be far away from other people's company all the time. If they come out from their narrow domestic boundaries, mix with others, smile and share jokes and enjoy the charms of pure and unstained life, they start being marked as women of doubtful characters. This same society once prohibited women from going to school and acquiring knowledge. It was because they feared that if women became wise and learned, there would be much possibility of social unrest and instability. Along with this social lawlessness, women would soon have widowhood. Many other superstitions were set in the already frightened psyche of women. But Vivekananda has taken education as the sharpest weapon for the purpose of helping the marginalised womenfolk to overcome their narrow and confirmed boundaries of life, set by the conservative male-dominated society. His aim was also to bring such unfortunate marginalised women to the open and pure air of the outside world. That is why he reiterated his conviction that women should be let free after being imparted proper and profound education. Only then they will be able to find out their own course of life. They will also be able to solve their problems themselves. Swamiji's desires and words, and more accurately, his prophecies are getting materialised to the full. That is why, it is seen today that hardly an educated girl is compelled by her parents to get married to an underserving bride-groom in haste to repent in leisure. Parents even cannot dare arrange the marriage of such an educated girl against her will or opinion or before proper time. Today girls not only adopt the teaching profession but also excel in the jobs of bank officials, administrative officers, pilots and other challenging fields of action. In all works girls have been found at the front

lines. It seems all the girls are gradually getting self-confident and self-dependent. They will select the right track of life with the help of their own free thoughts and then start their life-journey on that chosen track fearlessly. We hope that Swamiji's prediction of the women's freedom of salvation from the clutches of conservative social norms will soon turn into reality. »»

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# The Female Protagonist Nirmala in Premchand's Novel *Nirmala* : A study

**Abdul Mannan**

Dhanpat Rai, better known as Munshi Premchand occupies a significant place in Hindi literature as a versatile and prolific novelist. Effected by the prejudice and prevailed in Indian society from the ancient times. Premchand authored many writings which are directly related to human lives and permanent effects on the life of the individuals in the society. Through his writings, he has focused on the contemporary situations of the people. Further, he has introduced the realities of human lives through his writings.

Premchand has carved a niche as a novelist concerned with social and contemporary issues. He authored over 250 short stories, some valuable novels like *Kayakalp*, *Sewa Sadan*, *Rangbhumi*, *Karimbhumi*, *Nirmala*, *Gaban*, *Godan* and several number of essays, letters and plays. One of Premchand's most popular novels in India, *Nirmala* (virtuous or pure) is a Hindi novel which was published in 1927. It is a poignant novel on the theme which deals with the question of dowry and consequently mismatched marriages and its related issues. The story uses fiction to highlight the need of social reforms and to uprise the status of woman which were

needed in the Indian society of 1920's where it taken place.

Among his novels, concerning with social issues, *Nirmala* occupies a dignified and significant place concerned with the social issues. In this novel, Premchand depicted Nirmala in different roles as a daughter of a helpless woman, a wife of a middle aged person, an introspective and sensitive woman, an ideal housewife, a victim of the suspicious of her husband and a step mother. Along with it, through the character Nirmala, the novelist concentrated on the evils of Dowry system and the consequences of mismatched marriage, the superstitions prevailing among the Indian middle class and the orthodoxy very skillfully.

*Nirmala* written by Premchand, the Hindi novel king, is a novel of character, where Nirmala is the central and pivotal character. The theme of the novel revolves round her character from the very outset of the novel to the very end. All the characters, incidents and references of the novel, some way or other are related to Nirmala's life. Prior to the marriage Nirmala was a jolly and candid girl. She was highly charmed by the tales and stories. She always tried to get away from her domestic work. But when her marriage was finalized, a sudden change had come over to her character. All the fickleness and wantonness disappeared and she became extremely thoughtful, grave, introspective and shy. But due to the sudden death of her father, Nirmala's marriage was cancelled. This is the starting of all troubles and miseries in her life. Her widow mother Kalyanee, being unable to pay dowry, fixed her marriage with an aged person named Munchi Totaram. Thus, Nirmala was compelled to marry a person who was much older to her, just the age of her father.

Nirmala was not satisfied with her married life. As Nirmala was literate and understanding, so, the main duty of her was to keep her husband happy so much at the home. Totaram, who was well-versed in domestic affairs, tried to make his tender-aged wife

Nirmala happy. He always brought something as a gift for Nirmala which saddened young Nirmala more. Totaram's words of love tortured her as the flames of fire. She likes to adore and beautifully herself and romantic feelings but could not express such feelings before her husband. The more Totaram tried to console her and develop closeness with her, the more her mind fled away. Premchand has expressed her mental pain and agony in the following words:

“लेकिन निर्मला को न जाने क्यों तोताराम के पास बैठने और हँसने-बोलने में संकोच होता था। इसका कदाचित्त यह कारण था कि अब तक ऐसा ही एक आदमी उसका पिता था, जिसके सामने वह सिर झुकाकर, वह देह चुराकर निकलती थी। अब उसकी अवस्था का एक आदमी उसका पति था। वही बातें जिन्हें किसी युवक के मुख से सुनकर उसका हृदय प्रेम से उन्मत्त हो जाता, वकील साहब के मुँह से निकलकर उसके हृदय पर शर के समान आघात करती थी। वह अपना रूप और यौवन उन्हें न दिखाना चाहती थी, क्योंकि वहाँ देखनेवाली आँखें न थी।”<sup>1</sup>

As Totaram's passion and attraction towards his life increased, Nirmala's indifference also increased which finally led to hatred and negligence in her mind. When Nirmala clothed herself with beautiful dressed and ornaments and saw herself in front of a mirror, she left :

“उसका हृदय एक सतृष्ण कामना से तड़प उठता था। उस वक्त उसके हृदय में एक ज्वाला-सी उठती। मन में आता इस घर को आग लगा दूँ।”<sup>2</sup>

Through these lines Premchand has beautifully portrayed Nirmala's dis-satisfaction with her married life indicating her disturbed state of mind.

In this painful story, Totaram's effort to look much younger provides comic laughter and humour to the readers. His friend advised :

“यह ढीली-ढाला कोट फेकों, तंजेब की चुस्त अचकन हो, चुन्नरदार पाजामा गले में सोने की जंजीर पड़ी हुई, सिर पर जयपुरी साका बँधा हुआ, आँखों में सुर्मा और बालों में हिना का तेल पड़ा हुआ। तौंद पीचकना भी जरूरी है। दोहरा कमरबंध बाँधें। जरा तकलीफ तो होगी, पर अचकन सज उठेगी। खिजाब मैं लगा दूँगा। सौ पँचास गजले याद कर लो और मौके मौके से शेर पढ़ो।”<sup>3</sup>

Nirmala tried to forget for a while her sadness playing and making fun with the young kids. But her sister-in-law Nandini forbade the boys to mix-up with her. She always followed Nirmala like a spy, which annoyed Nirmala much. Though Nirmala was the step mother of the young boys, she had motherly affection for them besides having childlike feeling of her own :

“ईश्वर जानते होंगे कि मैं बच्चों से कितना प्यार करती हूँ।  
आखिर मेरी ही बच्चे तो है।”<sup>4</sup>

Nirmala was an ideal woman who possessed the ability to cope-up with the surroundings that she lived in. Finally, a sensibility aroused in her mind at the measures adopted by her husband to gratify her. So, she altered her behavioural attitude and began to make her a able company of all the joys and sorrows of her husband. She could sacrifice her personal interest, hence, she decided to dedicate herself whole-heartedly to her duty. She pacified herself with the thought that every one may not be happy on the earth. As she was born with an unfortunate life, she was bounded to tolerate all the miseries. Henceforth, she waited at the door for her lawyer husband with a sweet smile on her face. She started to call her husband with words of love and care. But her husband mistook it. She began to learn English from the eldest one of her step sons *Mansharam* to make her husband feel happy. On the contrary, Totaram's mind filled with suspicious, which polluted her childlike affection and inherent love. Gradually his suspicious reach such a climax that he sent Mansharam to school hostel :

“मंसाराम से हँसते-बोलने में उसकी विलासिता कल्पना उत्तेजित भी होती थी और तृप्त भी। ...प्रत्येक प्राणी को अपने हमजोलियों के साथ हँसने-बोलने की जो एक नैसंगिक तृष्णा होती है, उसी की तृप्ति का यह अज्ञात साधन था। अब वह अतृप्त तृष्णा निर्मला के हृदय में दीपक की भाँति जलने लगी।”<sup>5</sup>

Mansharam could not tolerate the blemishes put on him which resulted in serious illness. Finally his premature death put to an end to the suspicions of his father.

At the untimely death of Mansharam, Totaram was disheartened and frustrated. Due to his indifference to his profession, his income decreased day by day. A radical change is noticed in Nirmala with the seizure of their home and the birth of her daughter Asha. She prepared herself to take responsibility of her family and tried to lessen the expenses required for the family. But at that moment, her second son Jiamram had stolen her mother's jewellery. As a result she became poor like a beggar. When police came for enquiry, she did not complain anything showing her tolerant nature. She gave the police the few money she had, and thereby saved honour and dignity of the family.

After the suicide of Jiamram, the third son of the family Siaram, being annoyed with the state of things, also went away with a saint leaving behind their home. Totaram also left his home in search of Siaram. As a result, depression and despair engulfed her heart completely. Now, for Nirmala the only means of survival was her little daughter though nothing was left for the future of her child. In those troubled days, she got a little help from her intimate friend Sudha. She relieved her heart to some extent expressing her feelings to her. But once when she visited Sudha's home, Dr. Bhuwan Mohan Sinha tried to seduce her taking advantage of his wife's absence. She always considered Totaram to be all in all in her life and tried her life to carry on. But due to intolerable mental agony

and sadness, she could not live long. She handed over her only daughter to Rukhmini, the daughter-in-law and left for her eternal heavenly adobe. In this way, Nirmala was compelled to sacrifice her life due to the evils of dowry system in the society that resulted in mismatched marriage in her life. So, she expressed her wish at the last breath of her life to Rukhmini :

“बच्ची को आपकी गोद में छोड़े जाती हूँ। अगर जीती-जागती रहे तो किसी अच्छे कुल में विवाह कर दीजिएगा। मैं तो इसके लिए अपने जीवन में कुछ न कर सकी, केवल जन्म देने भर की अपराधिनी हूँ। चाहें क्ववारी रखिएगा, चाहे विष देकर मार डालियेगा, पर कुपात्र के गले में न मढ़ियेगा, इतनी ही आपसे विनय है।”<sup>6</sup>

### **Conclusion :**

After this heart-beating discussion, we may say that with the advent of Premchand in Hindi literature the original modern Age of Hindi novel was started. In Nirmala, he conveys messages on social evils like dowry, mismatched marriage, poverty and other issues related to marriage system. He also points out the painful and tragic status of women which appeared the middle class people in the Indian society. Moreover, Nirmala is the true picture of social life. It is the first Hindi novel of the twentieth century to bring reality in modern Indian literature. So, we may conclude that a realistic picture of the helpless and pitiable state of women in the middle class Indian society is presented through the character of Nirmala in this novel. The story of her life is portrayed as tragic and heart-rending which arouses readers sympathy and brings tears on our eyes. Many films were also produced based on the theme and the story, like Tahreer Munchi Premchand ki, which was directed by Gulzar and aired in Doordarshan. Nirmala's role was played by the Marathi actress Amruta Subhash to receive many accolades. »

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# Women's Emancipation in Indian Society: A journey for the space- An inquiry in to Rama Mehta's "Inside the Haveli"

**Archana Talukdar**

"The wives in India sit apart  
They do not drink  
They do not talk  
Of course they do not kiss"

*- Nissim Ezekiel*

Though the role of woman is indispensable in the course of civilization and the woman bears the equal status in the history of human beings, yet the situation is far away in the practical world which is full of gross inequalities and distortions between the sexes. Women have been subjected to oppression for centuries in the patriarchal society. Aristotle distinguishes women on account of "a certain lack of qualities." St Thomas Aquinas calls woman an "imperfect man". Philosophers like St Thomas Aquinas, Rousseau, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Sartre have also considered women morally inferior. Feminism emerged as an organised movement for women's

rights and interests, and the political, economic and social equality of sexes in the male-dominated society. As a result of all odds Feminist criticism which is concerned with "woman as the producer of textual meanings with the history, themes, genres and structures of literature by women... have been emerged. It is an attempt to revalue the literature of the past from a gender perspective. Feminist criticism is regarded as deconstructive in spirit and method in as much as it aims at a revisionist reading of literary history and typology. Simon de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) has provided the theoretical foundation for feminist criticism by pointing out the basic asymmetry between the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine'. Man as viewed as 'One', while woman, the 'Other'. One is not born a woman, but rather becomes a woman.

The recent Indian women novelists have reflected variously on the gender issues through their powerful portrayal of man-woman relationships in their writing. To mention a few novels- Kamala Markandaya's -*Two Virgins* (1973) Anita Desai's -*Fasting, Feasting* (1999), Nayantara Sahgal's- *The Day in Shadow* (1971), Shashi Deshpande's -*That Long Silence* (1988), *The Binding Vine* (1993), *A Matter of Time* (1996), *Moving On* (2004), Shobha De's- *Socialite Evenings* (1989), *Uncertain Liaisons* (1993), Githa Hariharan's- *The Thousand Faces of Night* (1992), *When Dreams Travel* (1999), Jai Nimbkar's *Temporary Answers* (1974), *A Joint Venture* (1988), Bharathi Mukherjee's- *Jasmine* (1989), *Desirable Daughters* (2003), Uma Vasudev's *The Song of Anasuya* (1978), Arundhati Roy's- *The God of Small Things* (1997), Rama Mehta's- *Inside the Haveli* (1977), Namita Gokhale's -*Paro: Dreams of Passions* (1984), Anjana Appachana's -*Listening Now* (1998), Indu K. Mallah's- *Shadows in Dream-Time* (1990), Manju Kapoor's- *Difficult Daughters* (1998), Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's- *Sister of My Heart* (1999), *The Vine of Desire* (2002), Shauna Singh Baldwin's *What the Body Remembers*

(1999). Women in these novels- "question, analyse and try to open out the gender roles, male power and relationships that are important to all men and women." (Gupta-35).

Fictional literature serves as a social document portraying life in all its hues and providing an accurate image of the sensibilities of people and their social cultural ethos. Indian women's writings since 1960s have served as social documents by picturing the status of women, and the different social and cultural forces acting upon them, impeding their progress. Modern Indian women writers have shown great interest in portraying the struggle of the modern educated middle class women to tide over the oppressive forces of tradition and culture.

Anuradha Roy, in her critical work on *Patterns of Feminist Consciousness in Indian Women Writers*, talks about the modern Indian woman thus: "The Indian woman of the mid- and late twentieth century is placed in a rather different, more complex situation. The Indian socio-cultural environment has felt the impact of the forces of modernization, education and the mass media. Economic compulsions have led to a significant widening of the horizons of a woman's life without a corresponding redefinition of social values, placing her in the proverbial horns of a dilemma. This is particularly true of the middle and upper-middle-class woman. Educated, enlightened, demanding more from herself and life than her predecessors, conscious of an identity apart from that which links her to a male, she is yet faced by numerous age old assumptions about the temperament she is expected to possess, the attitudes to be displayed and the role to be played. Her experiences, her psychic turmoil, are an epitome of the uneasy transitional phase through which Indian society is re-defining itself in keeping with the changing times. Her outlook broadened through education and a greater exposure to the outside world, she has to confront many demons, both external and internal which still demand

from her an unswerving allegiance to an ideal of womanhood forged through centuries of patriarchal impositions. Unquestioning acceptance is now beyond her".... (71)

Women emancipation and the exploration for 'space' were beautifully presented in the acclaimed novel *Inside the Haveli* by sociologist cum novelist Rama Mehta. Geeta, the woman protagonist of Rama Mehta's *Inside the Haveli*, finds herself as a displaced person, uprooted from her home where she had been exposed to the fresh air of modern and liberal ideas and where she had imbibed the values of independence and individuality. The unexpected transition that occurs in her life through her marriage reverses her role from an autonomous and assertive woman into an accommodating and adjusting wife, bearing mutely with the long established traditions and conventions of the aristocratic family into which she is married. It is really interesting that how Geeta is enlightened by the social and cultural ethos inside the haveli and how Geeta becomes an agent for effecting certain changes and modifications in the prevailing traditional and cultural practices. *Inside The Haveli* (1977), the only novel by the sociologist writer Rama Mehta, raises certain pertinent issues that need immediate attention and examination. John Kenneth Galbraith says that the novel presents ? "A wonderfully interesting account... women should not miss it; neither should men." The title of the novel itself throws ample light on the issues and aspects that the novelist promises to explore in the novel that won the Sahitya Academy Award in 1979.

Geeta, the protagonist is a girl born and brought up in Bombay. She had studied in co-educational college and had an exposure to metropolitan life. She comes to Udaipur as the nineteen-year-old bride of Ajay Singh, a professor of science. Ajay's ancestors were the ministers of the Ranas of Udaipur and their haveli, Jeevan Niwas, was one of the biggest and the most

prestigious havelis of Udaipur. It is an immense cultural shock for an impulsive, spirited and educated girl like Geeta to adjust and adapt to the stringent and traditional ways of the haveli, wherein women kept inside the purdah. The moment she lands in Udaipur, she is made careful for being bare faced and made to realize that she is an outsider even by the maids of the haveli who had come singing to the railway station to receive the new bride:

One of them came forward, pulled her sari over her face and exclaimed in horror, 'Where do you come from that you show your face to the world?' (P.17)

Geeta finds herself suddenly enclosed and engaged in a huge haveli where she is all the time surrounded by women. From a micro and educated family she has come to find the maids, their children and women from other havelis who keep visiting one another even on the slight reason in addition to her mother-in-law and grandmother-in-law.

Geeta finds another peculiar and stimulating factor is that there are different apartments for the males and females of the haveli. The servants have their separate quarters. The upper class women observe strict purdah and do not interact with their men folk during the day. The males conduct their business from their own separate apartments and their visits are announced beforehand. But interestingly, no such rules are applicable to the maids and husbands. They intermingle freely and do their jobs:

?In their courtyard there is no dividing wall, the maids are free to talk to their husbands; they don't have to wait till the darkness of night settles over the haveli to share their thoughts with them. (P.06)

It is surprising fact that even after two years of her marriage, Geeta has seen neither her father-in-law nor her grandfather-in-law, yet the whole haveli revolves round their needs and demands. Their presence is felt every moment in every nook and corner of

the house.

Gradually, Geeta learns and comes to respect some of the traditions, yet her occasional outbursts are clearly indicative of the fact that she is not prepared to surrender her individuality completely. Though she is adjusting, she did it under compulsions occurred in the environment. A distinct conflict between modernity and traditions comes up beautifully.

Gradually, Geeta finds herself trapped and a prisoner in the haveli with only a ray of hope that her husband might shift to Delhi, as has been promised to her. But time passes and Vijay, Geeta's daughter is now a school going girl. Desirously, Geeta decides to also send Sita, the daughter of the maid Lakshmi, to school. Sita is a motherless girl and exactly of Vijay's age. Her mother Lakshmi had rebelled against her husband's false allegations and had left the haveli never to come back. It is for the first time that Geeta comes in direct confrontation with the conventions of the haveli.

Sending to school for education for a servant girl is a very bold decision by Geeta. She gets the support of her father-in-law, while all the servants and the maids of the haveli and her mother-in-law criticize her for this decision. The going on haveli culture in Udaipur required complete and unquestioned submission to its rules and conventions, so the women were kept covered within the huge walls and marriages are arranged at their young age so that opposition could be made. As Rama Mehta herself observes that the educated women are less keen to uphold older values that they find repressive, harsh and mostly meaningless. Mehta says:

The younger generation is looking to maximum opportunities of prosperity and status and is less concerned with maintaining the socio-religious obligations towards caste- community. (159)

In spite of having lots of criticisms and disorientations, Geeta succeeds in sending Sita to school and the attitude of the maids and the haveli women became soft and adorable. She does not

stop here and starts classes for the haveli maids and their children. Ajay and her father-in-law praise her for her efforts:

you did the right thing; I am proud of you. It is time for new ideas to enter the haveli.-Said Ajay Singh with conviction. (P. 137)

But for Geeta's mother-in-law was not in the mood of accepting the changes over time. She said to Pari,

Let Binniji amuse herself .Her enthusiasm won't last long; she will soon get tired of the women. Then let us see what she starts next. (P. 161)

Geeta continues her classes for bringing some changes in the haveli and accordingly trying to develop the position of women inside the haveli. But some kind of oppositions come up by some of the women like Manji Bua, cousin- in-law of Geeta who plays the role of a critical lady with contradictions. She ridiculously went out from Geeta's side and informed wrongly to mother -in-law about the classes of Geeta in the haveli. She finds the behaviour of the maids who attend Geeta's classes disobedient and expresses her fear about the future of the haveli culture. The change that the protagonist Geeta is trying to bring about is neither welcome nor acceptable to these women who find social security in the old patriarchal culture and rigid customs and traditions of the haveli.

Despite all the odds and criticism Geeta's classes continue and, in fact:

Geeta knew that some of the maids were forced to leave the classes, but even those havelis which tried to threaten or discipline their servants encouraged their own daughters and daughters-in-law to go and learn something useful from the classes. (P.179)

The situations started to change to some extent. Geeta's efforts bear fruit and she is appreciated by all when Sita is married to an educated boy who has a pucca house, land and bullocks along with a promising future. Gradually Geeta, too, is able to penetrate the outer shell of rituals and customs and finds underneath it a

deep reserve of warm love, care and affection. She learns to respect the continuity, validity and strong emotional ties of the haveli people.

Her initial fear of parents-in-law turned into respect and devotion towards them when she finds them considerate, affectionate, flexible and accommodative. All her defences give way and she finds herself a willing prisoner in the haveli when they give Ajay and Geeta permission to shift to Delhi if they wish to do so.

K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar's remarks are quite appropriate here: Although Geeta gradually gets used to its life changing her in the process, she also subtly changes her immediate environment and the people concerned. (753)

The novel progresses in a cyclical pattern. Geeta enters the Haveli as a bride, then there is Vijay's birth followed by the birth of two sons, and the deaths of her grandmother-in-law followed by the deaths of her grandfather-in-law and her father-in-law, Bhagwat Singh Ji. The major crisis that Geeta faces in her fifteen years of stay in the haveli is the proposal for her daughter Vijay's marriage. Vijay is just thirteen-year-old school going girl and proposal of Vir Singh from Daulat Singh jis family who have been the richest people in Udaipur, is made by his mother. Geeta was totally dissatisfied and out rightly rejects the proposal:

Bhabhi, whatever happens, Vijay can't get engaged at this age; ... this was the first time that Geeta had spoken in a raised voice to her (mother-in law). (P.205)

She even laments her decision of staying in Udaipur: What a mistake I made to stay on here; I could have easily persuaded Ajay to leave. This had to come sooner or later. Now I am really trapped and cannot escape. But on this point I will never give in, whatever happens. If I have ruined my life, the children are not going to ruin there. (P.206)

This outbreak clearly indicates Geeta's total dissatisfaction and resentment towards her own life. It also highlights the fact that Geeta could never accept the rigid and rigorous rules along with customs and traditions of haveli life completely. In the process she lost her confidence. She grew dull, shy and diffident. Being a Hindu girl who has been taught by her mother at the time of her marriage:

Keep your head covered; never argue with your elders; respect your mother-in law and do as she tells you. Don't talk too much. (P.16)

Geeta makes her maximum efforts to adjust and to adapt to her new home and haveli culture. Yet she cannot sacrifice herself completely at the cost of marriage. With anger she exploded her husband: "I have put up with enough in family, and I am not prepared to bend any more. I won't ever agree this criminal act of deciding who Vijay will marry when she is still a child." (P.206)

Ajay's silence and her father-in-law's sympathetic understanding towards Geeta's concern for her daughter make her revise her decision. After having seen Vir Singh and listening to the wise and experienced words of her father-in-law, she was no longer sure of herself. (P.201). Before his death Bhagvat Singh ji declares that under no circumstances would Vijay be dropped out of her school. Her marriage will take place only after the completion of her studies. Throughout the novel, Geeta's attitude towards the haveli is ambivalent and indecisive. Sometimes she appears to appreciate the depth and solidarity of the relations that these people value, while at others she is full of scorn and hatred for the hypocrisy behind such facades. In the process she realizes that the women of the havelis are kept enclosed within the gigantic walls and thresholds, and shrouded in the veils because:

... The men have no problems in this world of Udaipur. (P.53)

She once tells her husband:

... You are all pampered. You lead your lives and think women are mere chattels. (P.53)

In this way of ups and downs of a non-haveli Bombay girl is transformed into the mistress of the haveli and is entrusted with the duty of continuance of its traditions. This climatic event symbolizes her final resignation and submission to the haveli and her fear of failing to match the expectations and demands of the haveli clearly indicate that she has already been preparing herself for the final show, though unconsciously.

Interestingly, Mehta has portrayed Geeta's journey methodically. In section one of the novel her movements are awkward and clumsy. She is frightened and fascinated by the life of the haveli at the same time. Though she feels suffocated yet she dares not have a whiff of fresh air. She gains some confidence by the time the narrative reaches section two, yet her fascination and her fear of the haveli life turns into resentment and a subtle streak of hatred is also visible in her remarks. Her initial awkwardness is replaced by the assertion of her individuality and by the time the narrative reaches Section three, she is confident, serene yet a subtle rebel whose existence is reckoned with by the haveli people.

Finally she emerges as the new lady of the haveli. Though the novel here ends abruptly, yet there is a promise of a future woman who would look towards the brighter and progressive side of life; would try to maintain a balance between the centuries old haveli traditions and the demands of modern life. Dr. A.G Khan points out that Geeta could obtain the "right of the girl for education irrespective of their class distinction, and, right of the mother to have a say in deciding marriage of her daughter. ... Similarly, child marriage was also delayed considerably --- a marvel in Rajasthan even today." (44)

In her novel Inside the Haveli, Rama Mehta acknowledges modern thoughts valuing traditional roots. It not only displays the

helplessness of the protagonist but also expresses the injunction of modernization in the haveli, making the advanced thoughts more durable to the traditional foundation and peace. The novel depicts how Geeta, a city bred girl of Bombay, well to do and educated has to marry a young man of Udaipur and live in a tradition bound haveli. She has to struggle much to carve out her own identity in the male dominated world. The elimination of Geeta's victimhood at the end makes her more adoptable to the design of the haveli as her efforts were showing colors of a new beginning which she has. Thus, the victory and fulfilment of Geeta too lies in the fact, that she liberates herself from the strangulating traditions, and she embarks triumphantly on her flight towards emancipation in spite of being caged in the Haveli. As an amalgamation of tradition and modernity, Geeta is definitely a role model for thousands of women who are caught in the complexity of dilemma of traditions and modernity even today.

As Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak points out in her famous essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" the voice of subaltern woman remains silent and irreclaimable. For speaking and searching the spaces subalterns knowingly and unknowingly goes for searching some agents. Geeta is such an agent who knowingly or unknowingly worked as agent for searching the respective spaces... which is the woman's own space. Rama Mehta in her novel Inside the Haveli, beautifully portrays the protagonist Geeta as an agent for the very goal of emancipation of women. Hence, the novel can be called as a successful novel in its intrinsic goal of women emancipation. »

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# Woman in a Bowl : A Critical Study

**Raizuddin Alom**

Woman in a Bowl is a collection of short stories written by Laila al-Othman, a famous Kuwaiti writer and novelist and this is her first attempt towards short story, published from Dar al-Mada, Damascus, 1976. By this collection, Laila al-Othman entered into the world of fiction. The original book is written in Arabic and named as *Imratu fi Ina'*. In this book, Laila al-Othman imaged the women in Arab Society, especially the Kuwaiti women and gain prior preference from the readers since its first edition.

Laila al-Othman is considered as one of the most successful short story and fiction writers of Kuwait. She occupied an important position among the contemporary writers who have concentrated on short story, drama, fiction, travelogue and auto-biography. Her name flourished in the field of literature and culture not only in Kuwait but also in the Gulf States and Arabian countries. She dedicated herself for the development of Arabic Language and Literature and she played a vital role in the field of its literary movement.

Laila al-Othman was born in Marqab area of Kuwait in 1943 and brought up in a well known Arab family. Her father Abdullah al-Othman was a renowned poet who published his poetics in

Diwan al-Othman and he had a great literary forum and well equipped personal library having foreign newspapers and translated books of world literature.

After completing her secondary education from Marqab School for Girls, Laila al-Othman left her formal education and concentrated on world literature. She began her literary output when she was a small kid and started writing articles on moral values and social issues for the local journals. Within a short spell of time, she got many appreciations for her talent. She published her first major work *Whispers* in 1970, which includes the thoughts on the literary and poetic pieces and it was reprinted by the Ministry of Culture and Information of Kuwait in 1972. Then she released her first literary criticism *My Thought on Poetry*. As a result her name was spread away among the men of words for her emotional writings where she highlighted the social evils, religious vices like inferior position of a mother in the society, oppression of women by the men, Arab Society and social uplift of poor, slavery system, discrimination between men and women, inequality, customs and traditions, charity and righteousness. She also highlighted her own experiences of bitter life from her childhood.

Before the invasion of Saddam Hussain on the land of Kuwait, some female writers enjoyed a great deal of freedom. Laila al-Othman was outstanding among them who started her creative works as a poet but lately became a short story as well as a fiction writer. She served the Kuwaiti Nation towards the historical role of women in civil institutions in general and especially in the marital institutions. She called for the advancement of the Kuwaiti Society which was optimistic in activating the role of women.

### **Women in a Bowl :**

*Women in a Bowl* of Laila al-Othman consists of fourteen short stories belonging to women's problems especially the place

and status of women from different angles as the man handled society uses a woman as a lover, as a wife, as a mother, as a divorced and widowed ones that already have taken place in the world of women. A clear gender feeling is often reflected on her writing style itself. According to Laila al-Othman, women have no personal dreams because men oppress them like anything. Her book *Woman in a Bowl* has a mark of the advantage of writing about women and attention to the world of female characters and it highlights the suffering that reflected upon what afflicts her life through the injustice, persecution and refraction.

All the fourteen short stories of *Woman in a Bowl* involved in a string of intellectual and emotional one as reflected this disparity and a dramatic effect on the ability to capture the problems, although the firm artistic sensitivity enjoyed by Laila al-Othman, which stand out in anecdotes.

In the first story *Curiosity* the writer Laila al-Othman peruses the face of woman who has made great strides in their ability to possess the initiative and act, it is a girl that can get out from the house and sit in the cafe with a young man did not know him except that he invited her for coffee. More than that, this girl complaining of boredom, monotony multiple options open and freedom to conduct which smells the Western culture and freedom.

In the story *Kitten* the author compares a woman with a cat. Sometime women chattering about her past days which ended spinsters single, and Cat laying on the grass, and women hold a comparison between the women and the cat and reach the paradoxes of the way. In the story *Next Season* Laila al-Othman wants to provide an honest picture of sermon in the Kuwaiti society, because girls in Kuwait are subjected to the bitterness of life and misery and deprived of the joy of the holidays.

In the story *Woman in a Bowl* she reflects the facts and old traditions that exist in the Kuwaiti society, which is leading to

misunderstandings and sandals friendliness and cause this to a lack of reflection before the occurrence of the act. In the story Last Message Laila al-Othman points out towards raising children and tried to educate them as well. The Kuwaiti society has created the best image of child-care and child-education, because only a child can develop the nation and the society. If the guardians educate and motivate their children then the next generation may reward after death. She also stresses the nation and the society must be concerned towards the mothers to sensitize moral character and honesty.

In The Second Filament Laila al-Othman highlights the hateful and envious deeds prevailed in the Kuwaiti society, pointing out towards the Multi National Companies (MNCs) where a large number of people works and earns livelihood but the girls were deprived from jobs in MNCs due to hatred and enviousness, which led to public killings in the Kuwaiti Society. While the author convicts a man in the story Red Light who became kindles to his sister-in-law due to some unsocial deeds. The writer cannot forget the portrayal cruelty when he is about to kill her, in addition to its torment and submissiveness between a cat and a wife. It is also shown in this story about the diets of the city that lacked flow and harmony.

In the story The Other Dress the writer reports that the heroine of the story purifies herself from falling in love and finds her husband after he sold dozens of time. Moreover, she points out in this story that it is also the part of the condemnation of the city and what may come by the diets sick, a cosmetic or superficial symbol image where the symbol manifested, after resorting personal information to purity and satisfaction, and above all this, love which values had contaminated by her husband decides to take off her robe which shadowy businesses.

The hero of the story A Passenger without Bags finds total

freedom from the depression and he spares his days. Perhaps he dreams a new horizon and comprehensive discovery for the rest of his days, while he falls asleep in the waiting in a railway platform. He remembers his dreaming and forgets, then awakes to shoot his body in a new travel. And in the story *The Heart and the Smell of Burnt Bread* the bread seller collides with the first encounter with the man whom he loves.

In the story *My Other Childhood* the writer discloses her self experience of child's dream that separated from her father and who never saw the face of her mother before the death of her father. But she forgot all those except the sympathy that she received from her maid servant. So, she tried to dive in, and highlights the bitter exposing, which is also headed in this story that child involved in a hunger strike in her condemnation of them to punish her mother for those miserable hesitations.

In the story *In the Neighborhood of a Girl*, the writer responds to the need of consolidation of the society to enter the world of the popular neighborhood, and keeps attention to the images of social traditions. In the story *The Urgent Case* the writer looks for the components of the human psyche and spots a boon to whispers in the depths and constitutes a recognition of bitter final words tipping point to the idea of self-time present and in this way constitutes a unique solution to a solution no sense, but the psychological future, as in the expression, "How much time has passed since decided not to go back to the doctor, until this moment, the popular. I do not remember! May be it is long months! Sounds around me are still important to them in tears". In the story *A House in the Memory* the writer shows a picture of moral value of the stolen code to retrieve Palestine and was ordained in the story successfully in the game parallelism of art.

### **Conclusion:**

Laila al-Othman is one of Kuwait's most famous authors and columnists. She has written a number of short stories and novels

and covers themes, which often challenge traditional norms. She has faced conservative resistance to her work. Women occupy a large arena in the short stories of Laila al-Othman beginning with the sense of injustice and oppression, then the sense of revolution and rejection of reality and the insurgency as a result of the development mainstream, then the end of the proof of its social role in the society.

Laila al-Othman is inclined towards the developments of Modern Arabic Short Story in Kuwait. For which she concentrated the oratory style of sermon where she picked up the religious and social reformation ideas in education. She also picked up the issues from the society where she brought up. She furnished the problems in Kuwaiti society like the clashes between castes and classes, social faiths and believes. She explains the basic features that emerged in the pilot phase of the short story in Kuwait as well as in Arabian Gulf in her literary works. The rhetoric tended to preaching the merits concerning with the religious and social reform and educational counseling. In terms of language, she characterized the linguistic structures. »»

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# Women and Human Rights in Present Day World Context.

**Geeta Devi Bhattacharya**

Women and human rights is a high profile issue in present day context. It is a beautiful curriculum. Women's rights are actually human rights. In the past women's rights are tended to treat as separate right. But due to rapid socio, economic and political change of the society such an attitude has changed. There are over twenty three main UN conventions relating to human rights in general, and five are especially for women. The specifics are :-

- 1) Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against women.
- 2) Convention on the political right of women.
- 3) Convention on the consent of Marriage, Minimum age of Marriage and Registration of Marriages.
- 4) Convention on the Nationality of Married Women
- 5) Convention on the Recovery Abroad of Maintenance

These conventions are international human rights treaty ratified or acceded to by the almost countries for the practical realization of women's rights. It is a comprehensive bill of right for women. The convention is monitored by CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women). The conventions guarantee the equality and non discrimination as

principle to promote the right of women. CEWAW is the human right treaty that affirms the reproductive right of women.

But the question arises why women's rights should be treated separately. After the Second World War when women's participation in the war effort and the freedom struggle of the erstwhile colonies could not be ignored that the women's right movement was accepted as a part of the international human right agenda for the protection of women's right all over the world. The UN set up; In 1946 a commission on the status of women (CSW) to monitor the situation and to promote women's rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was drafted by the UN commission on Human Rights chaired by first lady Eleanor Roosevelt. The UDHR was adopted by the 56 member nations of the general assembly on the 10th December 1948. There are five primary categories of human rights. These are civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Human Rights are some inherited right which are very essential for the all-round development of every individual. Some of the basic rights are Right to work, Right to move freely, Right to speak and Right to live. These basic rights are called Natural Rights. Later it becomes legal rights of men. But after the Second World War in some places the human rights were violated. Hence it became the responsibility of the UNO to protect human rights. Therefore, a commission was established to frame human rights. The commission drafted the International Bill of Human Rights.

The UN report on women (1945-96) clearly states that 'the world's 2.8 billion women remain humanities' largest marginalized group.' In 1945 feminists succeed in having the equal rights of men and women written into the United Nations Charter and in establishing the commission on the status of women (CSW). Thus, the prohibition of discrimination against women was included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The CSW, though

hampered by unfunding and the opposition of culturally conservative states, was responsible for the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979. Many states have ratified CEDAW, but it is weakened by numerous reservation. The committee charges with implementing CEDAW are also under resourced and relatively inaccessible to NGOs'.

Although there is a formal recognition of women's right and legal acceptance of women's equality with men, extensive data gathered by the UN show that women continue to face discrimination. They have less education, lower status, less money. Lower self-esteem and less power. They are still segregated mostly in women's jobs which are low paid, face violence at work place, at home and at public arenas. Growing dissatisfaction among women's group and members of the commission about the slow pace of progress led to the Decade for women 1975-85, which included three world conferences, held in Mexico city. Copenhagen and Nairobi. The declarations and programs of action adapted by these conferences were endorsed by the UN General Assembly. The issues thus officially recognized included political participation, education, employment, health nutrition, agricultural productions and marketing, access to credit, housing, industrial development and the special vulnerability of refugees, the disabled, the elderly and many others. The Women's Decade led to a shift of emphasis from activities specifically related to women to 'mainstreaming' that is incorporating women's issue in all UN planning. It was also recognized that the situation of women would not be improved unless women empowered through participation in decision making.

But now-a days women all over the world have launched powerful movement named as Feminism to reverse centuries of discrimination and injustice. They are mobilizing against violence,

oppression, They are demanding equal right, greater opportunities for development, equitable laws and control over their earnings and bodies. Feminism is a global movement and at the same time it symbolizes an awareness of oppression on domestic, social, economic level accompanied by a willingness to struggle against such subjugation. Feminists have challenged dominant interpretation of human rights, arguing they addresses violations by state, and ignore the violations that women suffer at the hands of men in the private sphere. In classical natural rights theory, natural rights are held by all human beings, but the obligations not to violate those rights are borne mainly by states.

The Universal Declaration imposes obligation on states, group and person. Article 2 (e) of CEDAW (To take all appropriate measure to eliminate discriminations against women by any person, organization or enterprise) imposes on states the obligation to eliminate discrimination against women.

Vienna Declaration acknowledged that gender based violence and all forms of sexual harassment and exploitation were human right violations, and Article 4 (c) of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women requires states to exercise due diligence to prevent and punish acts of violence against women.

Feminists argue that women suffer much more than men from justification of the violations of almost all their human rights by appeals to cultures. Reproduction and child bearing usually considered to be activities par excellence are typically regulated by men to form male and female identities so as to ensure the subordination of women. Some recognized human rights violations such as torture are experienced by women in a distinctive way, for example sexual violence or humiliation.

Feminism has energized the cause of women's rights and drawn the attention of the UN, governments and human rights NGOs to the serious human right violations that are suffered exclusively by

women. This cause was advanced at the Fourth World conference on women held at Beijing in 1995 despite oppositions from various conservative groups, religious institutions and states.

But now-a-days numerous international and regional institutions have drawn attention to gender related dimensions of human rights issues. In 1993, 45 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted CEDAW entered into force. The UN conference on Human Rights in Vienna confirmed that 'Women's rights are human rights'. That is the statement was even necessary in striving women's status as human beings. The world has recognized that the human right of women and girl child are an inalienable integral and invisible part of universal human rights. Women's equal dignity and human right as full human being are enshrined in the basic instruments of today's international community. There can be no peace, security or sustainable economic development in societies which deny human rights including that of women. Fighting for women's human rights is a positive struggle which recognizes the quality of women's contribution in every aspect of the community, in politics, industries, commerce, education, academic, agriculture and the home. Women are also true peace makers and peace builders at negotiating tables in war torn communities everywhere where women make up almost 50% of the human resources of every society. Human resources and especially the women power needs to be assigned a key role in development strategy. Trained and educated on sound lines, they become an asset in accelerating economic growth and ensuring social change in desired directions as education develops basic skills and abilities and fastens a value system conducive to national developmental goals.

Therefore every woman and girl is entitled to the realization of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural on equal terms with men free from discrimination. Women and girls

also enjoy certain human rights specially linked to their status as women.

The Beijing Declaration and platform for action organized into critical areas of concern, raises issues involving fundamental human right of women. These are mentioned below :

### **1) Women Human Right and Poverty :**

More than I billion people live in poverty around the world, and a great majority of them are women. Women's poverty results in wide spread violations of their human rights. When a woman faces a lack of access to adequate housing, food and health care, her human rights are violated. A life of dignity is every persons' human right. When a women lives in a unsafe and unhealthy environment or lacks of access to clean water, she is not enjoying fundamental human rights to a life of dignity and to an adequate standard of living. Poverty can also be caused by violations of human rights, particularly to women's human right to non-discrimination. When women are denied equal access to employment opportunities, are paid less then men for equal work, or are prevented by law or custom from owning or inheriting land, they are made vulnerable to poverty. When women are denied equal access to education, when they do not have the equal right to decide the on the number and spacing of children, or when they have an unequal share of responsibility on raising children, their ability to earn an income is greatly compromised.

### **2) Women and Human Right to Education :**

Every women, men, youth, child has the human right to education, training, information and to other fundamental human right depends upon realization of the human right to education but despite widespread argument that all people have the fundamental human right to education, 180 million children, at least 60% of them girls, do not have access to primary education. 960 million

adults in the world are illiterate, and more than two-thirds of them are women. Women and girls continue to face discrimination at all levels of education, a fact which poses tremendous obstacles to their advancement.

### **3) Women and Human Right to Health :**

Every women, men, youth, child has the human right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Enjoyment of human right to health is vital to all aspects of person's life and well-being. Many women and girls face serious obstacles to realization of their human right to health including inequality of access to health care, food and nutrition, and customary practices detrimental to their health and well-being. All inequalities relating to health and practices harmful to women violate their fundamental human rights.

### **4) Women Human Right and Violence :**

Violence against women violates fundamental human right and is an affront to women's inherent human dignity. Physical, psychological, sexual violence against women and girls both public and private, plague all societies and classes and poses tremendous obstacles to the achievement of equality, development and peace. Government has the obligation not to engage in any form of violence against women and to prevent violence against women whatever it occurs.

### **5) Women, Human Right and Peace :**

Human right of every women, man, youth and child to peace and absence of conflict lies at the heart of the realization of all human rights. The human right to peace is inextricably linked to all other human rights - rights that are universal, indivisible interconnection and independent.

**6) Women and Human Right to Full and Equal Participation in Power and Decision Making :**

Issues of women empowerment and their full and equal participation in public life are human rights issues. Human rights norms and standards generate women the human rights to non-discrimination in all aspects of political, economic, social life, and to full and equal participation in decision making and access to power at all level. Human rights for women depend on women's full and equal participation in decision making.

**7) Women and Human Right to a Healthy and Safe environment :**

Healthy and safe environment is necessary pre-condition to realize other fundamental human rights. Every women, men, youth and child has the human right to a safe and healthy environment.

International Instruments and Mechanisms for the Enforcement of Women's Rights :

Numerous mechanisms have been created at the international level for the promotion and protection of human rights, including women's human rights. The United Nations human rights system includes two main types of mechanisms : bodies created under the UN charter, including the Human Rights Council and its subsidiary bodies and mechanisms, and expert monitoring bodies established under the international human rights treaties. The adoption of UN charter-provision for equal rights of men and women are :

- 1) **1947** : Formation of the Commission on the Status of Women. Function is to prepare recommendations and reports on promoting women's rights.
- 2) **1948** : Universal Declaration of Human Rights
  - a) All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.
  - b) Everyone is entitled to the rights and freedoms set forth

in the Declaration, without discrimination of any kind, such as sex (Art. 2)

- 3) **1952 (1954) : Convention on the Political Rights of Women**
  - a) Right to vote without any discrimination.
  - b) Right to run for public office on equal terms with men.
  - c) Right to hold public office on equal terms with men.
- 4) **1957 (1958) : Convention on the Nationality of Married Women.**
  - a) Celebration or dissolution of marriage of a national and an alien, or a change of nationality by the husband during marriage shall not automatically affect the nationality of the wife.
  - b) Voluntary acquisition of the Nationality of a state or the renunciation of the nationality of a nation shall not prevent the retention of the nationality of the wife.
- 5) **1962 (1964) : Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages.**
  - a) Free and full consent of partner.
  - b) Legislative action to specify minimum age for marriage.
  - c) Registration of marriage.
- 6) **1966 (1976) : International Convent on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.**
  - a) Article 3 : Equal rights of women and men to enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.
- 7) **1966 (1976) : International convent on Civil and Political Rights.**
  - a) Article 3 : Equal rights of women and men to enjoyment of civil and political rights.
- 8) **1967 : Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against women.**

- a) Discrimination against women is fundamentally unjust and constitutes an offence against human dignity.
- 9) **1979 (1981)** : Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- a) Comprehensive Bill of Rights for Women.
- 10) **1993** : Declaration on Violence against women.

In 2005, the Commission on the Status of Women will review and appraise the implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth world Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000). As part of the preparations for this process, the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality is organizing a series of online discussions on various critical areas of concern laid out in the Beijing Platform for Action. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights will facilitate the online discussion concerning critical area of concern I, Human Rights of women. The Beijing platform for Action (PFA), on the Human Rights of Women, addresses some of the substantive aspects of women's human rights, but the emphasis is on the means and strategies for guaranteeing women's human rights, It contains three strategic objectives.

- Promote and protect the human rights of women, through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the convention on the elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW);
- Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice; and
- Achieve legal literacy.

**Achievements/ Obstacles** : The outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000), otherwise known as the Beijing +5 outcome document, reviews

achievements and obstacles in implementing this critical area of concern.

### **Achievements :**

The Beijing +5 outcome document recognized that many achievements had been made between 1995 and 2000. Some of these include :

- Elimination of discriminatory provisions in national laws governing marriage and family relations, violence against women, women's property and ownership rights, women's political rights, and women's labour rights;
- Steps towards creating an enabling environment for women to claim their rights such as adoption of policy measures, improved enforcement and monitoring mechanisms, and development of awareness raising campaigns;
- Increased ratification of the CEDAW Convention and the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention by the General Assembly;
- Efforts to mainstream a gender perspective across all activities and policies of the UN system.

### **Obstacles :**

With the persistence of gender discrimination, the Beijing +5 outcome document also identified obstacles to the full realization of women's human rights. Some of the obstacles cited are that :

Many discriminatory laws remained on the books and some new laws, which discriminate against women, had been introduced;

Many women had insufficient access to justice;

Some countries still had not ratified the CEDAW Convention and many maintained reservations;

Women from minority ethnic groups, and other vulnerable groups, suffered from the effects of multiple discrimination.

Separating the human rights of women from the other critical areas of concern in the PFA is conceptually difficult as women's human rights are relevant throughout the PFA. In all of its activities, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasizes the interconnected and interdependent nature of all human rights. The office aims to achieve gender equality and promote women's human rights by working towards the elimination of discriminatory laws and practices, ensuring women's effective access to justice, and enhancing women's utilization of international human rights instruments and mechanisms, among other activities. Thus, the office proposes to organize this online discussion in preparation for the Beijing +10 review and appraisal in the following manner, keeping in mind that flexibility is key to responding to the interests of the participants :

- Week 1 : legislative and policy reform at the national level
- Week 2 : access to justice
- Week 3 : international human rights instruments and mechanisms
- Week 4 : strategizing for the future

**Suggestion :**

United Nation, Government and Civil society can take concrete step to relize the women's human right. International agencies, regional organization, academic institution and NGO community should work to promote and protect women's right and to translate these right into better quality of life for all. But it should be remembered that women should not misuse it. The convention has to be activated women must claim their right in a positive way not in a negative way. To understand human rights three things are required :

- 1) Human sensitivity
- 2) Dialogue
- 3) Persuasion (reasoning)

## Conclusion :

We can conclude from over all discussion that concerted effort for protecting human rights of women is required on a large scale. Leadership by advocacy group, supportive legislation from the government, improved implementation, legal literacy courses will go a long way in actualizing women's right. It should be observed as a positive struggle because equality is important for effective enforcement of human right without discrimination of cast and creed. »

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# Why do Women demand Equal Rights in India?

**Boby Bhuyan**

Human rights are some inherent rights which are very essential for the all round development of every individual. Some of the basic rights are Right to work, Right to move freely, Right to speak and the Right to live. These basic rights are called as Natural Rights. According to Dr. Jjotimati Samantaray human rights are what each human beings is entitled to allow her/his freedom to live a dignified and secured life of choice. We can understand the importance of human rights only when we are confronted with violations of our own rights. Human rights include rights related to the safety of the person, the right to be free from coercion by other individuals, groups or governments, the right to social benefits, rest and leisure, and the right to a good basic education.

Equality is important for effective enforcement of human rights. The constitution of India guarantees the equality of rights of men and women. However, in the sphere of women's human rights in India, there exists a wide gulf between theory and practice. Indian society is a male dominated society where men are always assumed to be superior to society.

About half of the world population is constituted by women, but yet they have not treated equally as men or they have not

enjoyed equal rights in the society. Gender differences, customs, traditions, social attitudes etc., are mainly responsible for the inequality between men and women. Women in traditional patriarchal society have always been considered as weaker section or inferior section of the society. Today, all the members of the society have an equal right to live, to enjoy equality, to be treated justly and to live in peace. The women in India very often have to face discrimination, injustice and dishonor. Women in India face a lot of social inequalities ranging from gender specific abortions, mistreatment by their spouses, to eve teasing etc.

The universal Declaration of human rights which was adopted by the United Nations general assembly in 1948 outlined the fundamental consensus on human rights of everybody in relation to such matters as freedom of movement, religion and assembly, protection of the law, rights to work, health, education, and citizenship. It clearly points out that these rights are to apply equally to all without distinction of any kind for instance race, color, gender or any other status . This means that these rights are to apply to women as well.

The Independent India witnessed many forces of social change particularly towards women. Realizing the sufferings and hardships of women, the Government of India passed many legislation to remove the injustice done to women. These legislations paved the way for the upliftment and progress of women. Constitution of India guaranteed the equality of sex and special favour to women. Besides the constitutional guarantee, the Government also passed much social legislation for the welfare of women. Following are the social legislations for woman:

1. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 specifies the marriageable age as 18, but now amended to 21 for women.
2. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 ensures the right to

inherit their parental property.

3. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 gives severe punishment with imprisonment for dowry seekers.
4. The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act of 1956 legalized the widow remarriage.
5. The Hindu Marriage Act (Tamilnadu Government Amendment Act) of 1967 gave legal sanction to the self respect marriages.
6. The Hindu Succession Act of 1989 (Tamilnadu Government Amendment Act) provides right to have equal share in the inheritance property.
7. The Indecent Representation Act (Tamilnadu Government) of 1999 prohibits the indecent representation of women in magazines, newspapers, posters, handbills, etc.

Law is being used as an important instrument for the upliftment and progress of women. The complex interaction between law and public opinion must be explored to understand the true impact of public policies and the position of women. Women all over world have lanced powerful movements to reverse centuries of discrimination and injustice. They are mobilizing against violence and oppression; they are demanding equal rights, greater opportunities for development, equitable laws, etc. Today women demanding equal rights because:

1. Women have the same ability as men and should therefore have the same rights as men. For a long time human rights have been based on gender, whereby most human rights are only guaranteed to men. Women rights therefore help women get acquire the same rights as their male counterparts
2. Nowadays we often say about women empowerment and therefore women's rights help in empowering women.

Through women's rights, women can access same educational facilities as men. Before women's rights came into being, women were not allowed to go to school and own businesses since their role to stay at home and take care of the children.

3. Women's rights are important to help stop torture and inhuman debridement of women. For a long time women have been degraded, tortured hence there was a need for women's right to protect women from torture and inhuman degradation.
4. Women deserve the same degree of respect as men.
5. To help stop marginalization. Traditions, cultures, political, social, and economic interests have excluded women from the general human rights and have instead placed women to a secondary or special interests status within human rights. This marginalization of women across the world has resulted to gender inequality. It has contributed to the perpetuation of women's subordinate status. Women's rights are therefore essential to stop the marginalization of women.
6. No one should be denied their rights or have their rights infringed no matter what their sex is. Women have often been treated unequally in respect of men hence the need for women's rights
7. Women are oppressed in most institutions; hence need to be liberated through various women's rights such as the right to work among others.
8. Even in this century women's rights are still important because we haven't achieved real equality.
9. Women are more subjected to violence than men hence the need of women's right such as the women's right to be protected from violence and sexual assault.

From all the above discussion we can conclude that concerted effort for protecting human rights of women is required on a large scale. Leadership by advocacy group, supportive legislation from the Government, improved implementation, and legal literacy course will go a long way towards actualizing women rights, especially in India. Moreover, positive attitude towards the position of women and their rights should be increased from all spheres.»

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# Human Rights in the turmoil years of Assam...

## A brief report highlighting the ordeal of women

**Pranjal Hazarika**

India's North-East is a misshapen strip of land , linked to the rest of the country by a narrow corridor just twenty kilometers wide at its slimmest which is referred to as the Chicken's Neck. The region has been the battleground for generations of sub national identities confronting insensitive nation-states and their bureaucratic as well as of internecine strife. It is a battleground that continues, of ideas and arms, new concepts and old traditions, of power, bitterness and compassion.

In Assam , the gross violation of human rights by the security forces have taken place to curb the insurgency problem created by the United Liberation Front of Assam( ULFA), which is the product of the Assam Movement. The two army operations namely operation Bazarang started from 28<sup>th</sup> November, 1990, and operation Rhino from 15<sup>th</sup> September 1991 was launched to combat ULFA . What are the ultimate result of these operation in curbing the insurgency movement in Assam is another subject of study, but the basic fact is that these two operations resulted in the gross violation of human

rights of the common people of Assam in the form indiscriminate killings of innocent youths in the name of fake encounters, inhuman torture. Women are also not spared. Rape, molestations became a normal incident in any Army combating operations. It is heartening to observe that an army can create so much havoc upon the citizens of their own country. Armed with the Special Armed powers Act, TADA, which provides special powers to army to kill or arrest any suspect without any warrant, the security forces to a great extent mis-use their powers and violated the human rights of the common people.

Asia Watch report on Assam , April 18, 1993 writes

“ ...in attempting to crush the ULFA organization and several other groups, the Indian government has launched counter insurgency campaigns that have fraught with widespread human rights violations. The Indian Army has conducted massive search and arrest operations in thousands of villages in Assam. Many victims of abuses committed during the operations are civilians, often relatives or neighbors of young men suspected of militant sympathies. Villagers have been threatened, harassed, raped, assaulted and killed by soldiers attempting to frighten them into identifying suspected militants. Arbitrary arrest and lengthy detention of young men picked up in these periodic sweeps, or at random from their homes and from public places is common, and detainees of the armed forces are regularly subjected to severe beatings and torture. Deaths in custody have occurred as a result of torture, and in alleged encounters and escape attempts.”

In this article I have just want to refer two cases as samples where atrocities were committed upon women by the army who was supposed to provide security to the people instead.

Case – 1

Name – Tulumoni Devi.

Age – 23,

W/o Mr Harkanta Nath

Vill. Kōpahera Ghmatigaon

P.S. MIikirbheta Police Station of erstwhile Nagaon district,

Date---24/4/1997

Perpetrators----- Indian Army operating in that area

Mrs tulumoni Devi, age 23, w/o Mr. Harakanta Nath, of Kopehera Ghamatigaon was raped on the evening of April 24, 1997, by a group of Army stationed at Barapujia Army Camp. While cordoning off Kopehera Ghumatigaon residence of Mr. BHabananda Choudhary and detained him to question about his brother, Mr. Bul Choudhary, an Ulfa activist. There after they entered several houses in search of the ULFA activist. Around that time 8 army men entered the house of Mr. Harakanta Nath, an employee with a private concern and taking advantage of his absent raped Mrs. Tulumoni in presence of her two year old child. Mrs Tulumoni lost her sense and hearing the cries of her child, neighbors rushed to her house to find out the incident.

Her husband along with the villagers admitted her to the Marigan civil hospital the next day. They also filed a case at the Mikirveta Police station as case no31/97. On hearing of the development, army men rushed back and threatened the villagers. On 27<sup>th</sup> April women from the 40 local villages brought out a rally and submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Committioner, Marigaon demanding a judicial inquiry. several democratic organizations including Anchalic Mahila Sajagota Samity( a women organization), AASU, AJYCP, KSU, TSF and others demanded punishment to the guilty, but in vain.

#### · Present status

I personally interviewed the lady on 12/ 4/2007,. But she was reluctant to speak, and when persuaded her husband told that the police threatened them to withdraw the case. He said that they are common people and cant fight with the govt. As they had lost their

faith in the government to provide necessary security and protection, they refused to pursue the matter further. I inquired about the case in the Mikirbheta Police Station , where I was informed that the case was closed.

Case No – 2

Name-Mrs Jope Dewri

Age – 20

w/o – Mr Midhan Deori

Vill. – Tegheria Gaon,

P.S. – Jagioad

Date – 22nd April, 1997

On 22April, 1997, a group of army men went to Tegheria Village at midnight and beat up the villagers. After beating, the villagers were compelled to stand in front of the village headmen's house. At that time, two army jawans entered the house of Mr. Midhan Dewri, a farmer, and brutally raped his wife Mrs Jope Dewri, who was alone that time in the house. She became unconscious and the perpetrators fled from the house after committing the crime along with the army company. she was admitted to the Jagiroad parthamic sasthya Kendra and later in Nagaon civil hospital.

A case was filed by the Tegheria Karbi Mohila samity( a local women organization) on behalf of the victim. but the police showed no interest in the case as usual and preferred ignorance, AASU, MASS, AJUCP, KSU, ATSU, and TSS and other local women organizations demanded punishment to the accused army personal.

Present status – I tried to meet the family on 5/6/2011 to know about the incident and follow ups. But they refused to talk about the incident now. All I come to know is that the case was closed and no action was taken against the guilty army personal, nor any compensation was given the family.

These two cases are just a trailer. There were numerous cases of such violation against women during those periods of Assam that

can be documented and analyses. these case clearly indicates that Indian Army and Para military forces had significantly violated the human rights of the people in Assam. Human rights activist and journalist have been arrested for reporting on human rights abuses in Assam or for criticizing the government's reliance on security legislation. As the Army is free from normal legal restraints on arrests and detention, they show complete lack of accountability for its abuses in Assam. From these cases, we have found that the hall mark of the Indian Army's counter insurgency efforts in Assam is the 'cordon and Search" operations.

During these search operations, civilians are routinely subjected to threats, harassment and assaults. Molestations and rape frequent in these operations. moreover the suspected youth is either killed on spot, or detained in army camps and interrogated. Often no charges are brought against them, and if they are released, they returned with life threatening injuries resulting from beatings and other forms of torture which include kicking, administering electric shock in private parts, starvations, keeping naked in a dark room without toilet facility, crushing the nails of hand and legs etc. According to US Department of State, human rights groups in Assam reported that as many as 40 people were killed in army custody in 1991 and early 1992 .

It is not like that the atrocities of against women have taken place only by the state agencies. The so called liberation groups are no exception in this regard. In the name of fighting for the cause of freedom they also indulge in to rampant killing, kidnapping, torturing, of innocent common people including women , even school girl children. We can mention the kidnapping and murder of 16 year old girl Rasmi Bora, Raidingia , Nagaon by ULFA militants in this regard. In all these cases, no action is taken against the perpetrators, even if the organization ultimately accept that there have been some wrong doings by its members.

ULFA emerged in the political scenario of Assam during the last phase of Assam movement. It was formed in the deserted pavilion Rang-ghar in Sibsagar, once the seat of Ahom kingdom, in 7th April, 1979 by seven youths, who became the household name of Assam a decade later. ULFA began as an expression of opposition to more than 100 years of exploitation. They believed that that Assam Agitation initiated by All Assam Student Unions's AASU will not going to solve the problems of Assam. They are of the view that a long term solution was needed and that Delhi would not listen to mere peaceful protest or Satagraha but a more militant voice. ULFA talked about the need for a Swadhin (free) Assam, where scientific socialism would be the way of life and where its natural resources would be exploited for the benefit of its own people, and not to benefit unscrupulous power elites in Delhi.

In the initial years, ULFA somewhat develops a Robin hood image, enjoying full and unconditional support of the common rural people. It indulged in number of welfare activities, village reform programs, developing road and ponds, encouraging farming, punishing the black marketers, eve-teasers, drunker etc. Even the support of intellectuals were growing to their cause. But with its growing power and influence, specially after the formation of Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) in 1985, when it nearly run a parallel government in the state, its nature of functioning also changes. It started to demand extortion money from all most all the major business establishments in the state. Those who refused, bore the brunt of ULFA brutality. It started to intimidate critics, and resorted to unabashed terror. In the first five years of AGP rule, the ULFA killed nearly 100 people who had been branded as 'enemies of the people of assam'. Girdharilal Harlalkar, the head of Kamrup Chambers of Commerce and Industry, was an early victim, who was killed in his home by ULFA boys in 1988. it was followed by the killing of a leader of United Minority Front(UMF), a grouping of non-Assameses communities, including

Muslims and Bengalis. A sense of fear ruled the Brahmaputra Valley. The Killings of Social activist and congress leader Manabendra Sarma, Journalist Kamala Saikia further expose the brutal face of ULFA. ULFA used a combination of selective terror, assassination and parallel taxation to build up an organizational base.

In fact the 'modes operandi' of ULFA at that time include, "Propaganda aimed at embarrassing the elected government, Anchal Committees with the help of armed cadres carry out extortion, intimidation and abduction for ransom, use coercive influence over the print media to articulate ULFA's interests, eliminate civilians refusing to toe ULFA's line and among others detonate explosive devices on roads and culverts, causing the death of innocent people and creating a fear psychosis."

When the Operation Bazrang was launched in 28 November, 1990, to restore the law and order situation in the state, ULFA used the guerilla tactic and refrained from directly confronting the Indian Army. Operation Bazrang could not succeed to tackle ULFA- as it remained an elusive force for the Army. It was followed by Operation Rhino, causing gross violation of human rights all over Assam, specially in the Brahmaputra Valley. In an interview, then ULFA leader Sunil Nath said, 'we want the army to come to enter villages, then they will commit atrocities because people will turn against them. ULFA will not have to do very much to make the uniform hated in the villages. Then the people will turn to us and we will be ready....'. But the fact is that though the uniform had become a hated figure in the villages, ULFA equally became an allergic figure for the villagers in the same areas, where it once enjoyed the Robin hood image. Its brutality, rampant extortion and interfere in the democratic and civil rights of the people made ULFA a hated figure soon there after. The cases of ULFA atrocities and brutality were many in Assam and it also significantly contributed towards the gross violation of human rights of the people of Assam including women. »

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# Women's India Association (WIA) And Political Rights For Women

**Alpana Baruah**

In India during the period late 19th and early 20th century, the rights and wrongs of women became the major issues. The early attempts at reforming the conditions under which Indian women lived, were largely conducted by men. By the late 19th century their wives, sisters, daughters and the others affected by campaigns, such as that of women's education, had themselves joined in the movement. Women started forming their own organizations from the end of the 19th century first at the local and then at the national level. In the years before independence (between 1917-45) there were two main issues that the women's movement took up were (1) Political rights for women and (2) reform of personal laws.

When Lord Edwine Montague, secretary of state for India, came to survey the political scene in with a view to introduce constitutional reform, Indian women saw an opportunity to demand political rights. This led to the foundation of the women's India Association on 8th May 1917 in Madras (Adyar) by Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins and Dorothy Jinarajadasa. All three were Irish women theosophist and had been suffragettes in their own country. They were joined by Indian women Malati Patwardhan, Ammu

Swaminathan, Mrs. Dadabhoy, Mrs. Ambujammal, Dr. Muthulakhmi Reddy, Lady Nilkanth, Sarojini Naidu, Rameswari Nehru etc. The organisation developed 48 branches with a membership of 2700 by 1921 and 3000 by 1926. WIA was regarded as the first truly feminist organisation in India and it strongly supported Home Rule Movement.

In respect of women taking lead for the cause of other women, establishment and functioning of Women India Association (WIA) could be regarded as the first attempt to organize women on an all India basis. The main goal of WIA was to secure voting rights for women and women representation in the legislatures. They started their movement with the following objectives -

- i) To present to women their responsibility as the daughters of India
- ii) To secure for women the rights to be elected and
- iii) To Bring women into a group for the purpose of self-employment and education .

The rise and rapid growth of political agitation for Self Government in the country from the early years of the twentieth century made the women of India also conscious of their exclusion by British law from any share in the government of their land. Apart from the fact that women form half of the population of their land. Apart from the fact that women form half of the community, the fact that this country was passing through a phase of women's emancipation from ancient social and economic bondages had made women conscious of their political rights. The Home Rule Movement of Annie Besant was also instrumental in creating a general political consciousness among the educated women of India. The result was the formation of the Women's India Association. The question of women's right to vote in the political sphere was the question of women's right to vote.

Voting is the basic activity by which the citizen gets assimilated

into the political process. 'Politics' was a word that scared a large number of women. To attend a political meeting, to enter into a political work seemed to them to be an adventure only to be undertaken by, for woman to be interested in politics was to be unwomanly! It had traditionally been viewed as a male domain. So women's Indian Association thought it necessary to impart political training to women. It was conscious that the mistake made by the western countries of leaving women out of the democratic and representative system should not be repeated in India. As an association it wanted to do political work of a nonparty but national in character on constitutional lines. It enabled the association to attract women of all shades of opinion whom all wanted.

Annie Besant and Margaret E. Cousins linked it with the suffragette movement in the west. Margaret E Cousins was one of the pioneers of the women's suffragette movement both in the Ireland and in England and suffered imprisonment twice for that cause in both the countries. She identified herself with the cause of India's political struggle and the with the cause of women in particular. Both wanted the Indian women also to gain the same rights as the women in the west. Though the women's problems in England and its solution were bound to have an effect in India, the situation in India was different. Since India was under the control of the British Government, even if the Indians were ready to grant political rights to women, they could do so only in the Home Rule Government. Hence the nationalists wanted India to attain Home Rule first and sidelined women's issues, whereas WIA wanted nationalist movement and women's movement to go simultaneously.

The campaign for political representation in India had two phases, Since women had no political rights and the basic political right was voting, in the first phase (1917-1926) the issues were enfranchisement of women and eligibility for the legislatures. In the second phase (1927-1947) the movement was for adult

franchise and increasing women representation in the legislatures.

The first phase dealt with the various steps taken by the women to attain voting rights and the eligibility for the legislatures. Getting voting rights in the Indian context was not an easy task. Various arguments were advanced by the opponents of women's suffrage such as "women are naturally unfit for the proper exercise of the franchise", "it is unfeminine" "It is contrary to nature" etc. The British Government was also against granting voting rights to women, because it thought, it would have a great effect on the people of India who did not happen to know anything about that question. Lord Curzon openly opposed it by saying that Britain would lose India if Indian women were given voting rights.

It was the situation when the chief members of the women's India Association (WIA) presented an address to E.S. Montague. On 1st December 1917, when he was in Madras, the memorable All India Women's Deputation consisting of fourteen women headed by Sarujini Naidu asked him women's franchise in India on the basis of sex equality. Leading Indian women gave for the first time public expression of their feeling. The crux of the demand of the deputation was that when franchise conditions for India were being drawn up women should be recognized as people. It really marked the beginning of a conscious women's movement in India. Since then Women's India Association identified itself with the cause of women's suffrage and the removal of sex disqualification for election to all the governing bodies. A memorandum signed by 23 women from different parts of the country, demanding votes for women on the same terms as men, was submitted to Sir Montague and Chelmsford. Women also sent representations to the Indian National Congress to consider a resolution in favour of the enfranchisement of Indian women.

The Indian National Congress at its session in Calcutta in 1917, over which Annie Besant presided, supported the demand

for votes for women. It was stated that "Women should not be disqualified on account of Sex that the same tests be applied to women as are applied to men with regard to franchise and eligibility to all elective bodies". Subsequent annual sessions of the Indian National Congress as well as many Congress committees also passed resolutions recommending the removal of sex disqualification in voting. Thus the Congress endorsed the resolution for women's equality with men in matter of franchise. The Muslim League also passed a resolution in 1918 saying that women should be given the power to vote. Women's organisation held meetings all over India to express support for women's franchise. Behind the scene, Margaret Cousins and few other members work hard to make their case. Petition politics was the main way of making an impression on the Government.

When the Southborough Franchise Committee toured India in 1918 to examine the question of franchise, members of WIA carried on propaganda and constant agitation to acquaint the committee with their demands. Resolutions passed by the forty-five branches of the women's India Association expressing their demand for vote was sent to the committee by them. The Committee accepted women's petition but was initially reluctant to grant franchise to women as it felt they were not yet ready for it. The custom of secluding women was specially mentioned as one of the many problems in recording and registering voters. In consideration of the conservative sections of the population and the social customs of the country, the committee felt it was not advisable to extend the suffrage to include women. But WIA continued their agitation. Local branches of WIA held meetings, passed resolutions and forwarded them to London to give a certain measure of franchise to Indian women in the reform scheme which was under consideration. After the introduction of the Government of India bill in the parliament in 1919, on behalf of the Women's

India Association, a committee consisting of Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant and Mrs and Miss Herabai Tata gave evidence in London before the joint Select Committee for the extension of the franchise to them. On behalf of all the branches of the Women's India Association a cablegram was sent by its General Secretary Dorothy Jinarajadasa to the Joint Select Committee, London asking voting rights for the women of India. Members of the Women's India Association were also conscious of their dependence on the British Government for a change in the electoral laws. Hence they conducted campaigns to educate British public opinion on the needs of such reforms. Public meetings were held in many parts of Great Britain and many women's associations in England showed sympathy and interest in the cause of India women.

As a result, the Joint Parliamentary committee of parliament finally agreed to remove the sex disqualification in case of right to votes but left it to the Provincial Legislatures to decide how and when to do so. Since the power shifted to the provincial legislatures, Women's India Association put pressure on the members of the Madras Legislative Council to sponsor resolutions for the same purpose. Finally, Travancore Cochin, a Princely State, was the first to give voting rights to women in 1920 followed by Madras and Bombay in 1921. Other states followed. Regarding the right to enter into legislatures, the Reforms Enquiry Committee on Franchise Reforms recommended to empower the legislative assembly and provincial council to legislate in this regard. As a result, the Government of India accepted the resolution in 1926 passed by the Madras Legislative Council which was admitting women into the Legislative Council by nomination and by election. Thus the Madras Presidency threw open the legislature to women. Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya though defeated was the first lady who stood for the Madras Legislative Council elections in 1926 from Mangalore. In 1925, Assam Legislative Council as a first one

permitted women to seek election. Other legislative councils in India followed. Thus the effort of the women's India Association was successful and to achieve the goal, the association had a journey of struggles.❧❧

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# Fundamental freedom of women in India and constitutional safeguard

Sabita Devi

## Introduction

India is a country which has its rich cultural diversity and almost all kind of religions are being practised by different section of people. Still there are some unique features which finally bind all the people, irrespective of caste, creed and gender. Compared to other neighbouring nations, India has made a significant progress in almost all sectors. Yet there are some vital issues which the country still could not resolve even after Sixty-seven years of independence. This kind of issues often creates threats to the glory of our country. India has not yet been able to come out of the unrealistic caste system and there are in numerous examples of discrepancies at socio-cultural level against the people from so called 'low caste'. Another serious obstacle to our development process is the gender inequality in the social system, because of which very often we witness the incidents of violence against women. Women throughout the world live in constant fear and conditions of deprivation very often for their simple reason that they are women. Violations of women's rights are systematic and condemned. In other words, women in India are not able to enjoy

complete fundamental freedom due to faulty social structure. Human rights to a woman mean her liberation from the traditional bonds and discrimination, improvement in her concept of self and in relation to the environment and the people around her. It means a matter of provision of social justice in relation to resources, organisations and structural opportunity of women. Therefore human right expect a change in the perception and the value characteristics of Indian culture. But in reality women are often denied social justice and hence are not allowed to enjoy human rights. Living free from violence is a fundamental human right but millions of women around the world are suffering from continuing violence and as a consequence are not able to enjoy this right. In India the existing social structures are influenced predominantly by the religious principles followed by a particular community and the age-old traditions. Failure of government and society to recognize properly the human rights of women leads to gender based parity and that is well reflected in the gender ratio of several states like Haryana where violation of women fundamental right is a very common practise.

### **Women's fundamental right violation in India**

Because of the existing gender parity in India, women are usually exploited physically and mentally. Till today, in many places even girls are not allowed to go to school. Overall, the situation of Indian women is still miserable and this issue must be emphasized with due attention. However, Indian constitution has provided several provisions to protect the fundamental freedom of women. Proper utilization of this sort of legislation will definitely help in ensuring safety for Indian women. Violence against women is in fact a violation of human right and is a great obstacle towards gender equality. Women are entitled to enjoy every sort of fundamental freedom and protection of human rights. They are

entitled for the right of life and equality, right to enjoy equally the judicial means for protection, right to liberty, the right to be free from all forms of discrimination, the right to attain the highest possible standard and so on. They have the right to claim favourable conditions of work and to protest against any type of inhuman physical or mental torture. Indian constitution does not maintain any kind of gender parity. The only concern of the government machinery should be to monitor properly the execution of the constitutional provisions so that nobody dares to indulge in activities like violation of women's fundamental right.

Violence against women in India has assumed terrifying proportions, both within the family and outside. In the family the woman is often subjected to all forms of domestic violence, harassment for dowry, and sometimes rape. Outside the family rape, molestation and sexual harassment at work, women trafficking, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, infanticide of baby girls and many more, among other forms of violence. Existing faulty social practices such as genital mutilation, honour killing, child marriage etc. are also other forms of violence against women usually came into discussions. Recently rape has appeared as a serious kind of violence against women and this kind of incidence are increasing at an alarming rate. The prevailing gender inequality within society and existing structures of power in gender relations has greatly influenced the incidence of violence against women. The problem is rooted in the cultural pattern and religious beliefs, among other traditional practices. In many cases violence against women is learned within families from relationship with other people as well as from media. No need to mention that violence against women is a serious obstacle towards development practices as well as peace. Violence against women creates obstacle for women in effectively participating in social life and services to the nation whereas they have equal potential to contribute towards each and

every development activities in the country. Violation against women is also contributing to poverty of women and children.

### **International scenario of violence against women**

However violence against women is observed in different other parts of the globe. For example in Slovenia it is due to several reasons, a woman compels to live with an abusive partner. These include financial insecurity, housing problem, lack of employment, lack of protection by state institutions, inadequate social and healthcare security and so on. All these are vital factors and hinder the process of curbing violence against women and make women to feel more insecure. They are basically lowers their social status and increase the chances of domestic violence. Africa is another instant example where gross human right violation against women is reported. In Africa too, violence against women starts right from their childhood. For example female genital mutilation which is an extremely painful practice, is a highly accepted tradition in many African countries. In African societies there is always preference for a boy child rather than a girl. The existing societal norms set girls to grow in a humiliating atmosphere with low self-esteem. More pathetically during many political conflicts, rape has been used as a potential "weapon of war". Of course nowadays many non-profit groups are actively working to bring such cases into limelight and to find out ways to reduce such kind of inhuman happenings. More surprisingly study indicates that about a third of all women in the European Union have experienced either physical or sexual violence since the age of 15. The survey was conducted by European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. It has been found that one in 10 women has experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 15 and one in 20 has been raped. Therefore violation of human rights against women is an international issue.

## **United Nation's initiatives against women's human right violations**

United Nation defines violence against women as "any act of gender - based violence that results in, or likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering of women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life". UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993, considers violence against women as a social problem related to economy, health, welfare and politics and not as a private problem of each individual woman or a family. Any kind of activities which can lead to physical, sexual or psychological harm to women are referred to as violence against women. Threats, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life are also categorized as violence against women. (UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993) This declaration advocates for effective implementation of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrepancies of human rights, the international covenant on Civil and political rights, the international covenant on Economics, Social and Cultural rights, the convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against women and the convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. It is considered that violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace.

Several ways are there for bringing individual complaints relating to violence against women to the United Nations bodies. There are committees for elimination of discrimination against women or Human Right Councils or Commissions on the status of women etc. to whom such cases can be forwarded. Complaints forwarded should contain complete factual details of such incidents with adequate supporting documents. Whatever be the case, use

of abusive languages are always discouraged. Certain mechanisms are operational to address such complaints and to take up appropriate measures. The existing procedures are quasi-judicial and if the committee finds the complaints genuine it may request the state party concerned to provide redress to the victim. These special initiatives of the United Nations have created great relief to many such victims. The entire procedure involves human right experts who can help the council with logistic mandates for resolving such issues. In fact the complete details of such procedure are beyond the scope of such discussions.

It is also possible that any individual or non-governmental organization, group or network may submit their grievance related to any sort of women right violation that affect the status of women in any country, to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). CSW is also a functional commission of the United Nations Economics and Social Council (UNESCO). The commission consists of one representative from each of the 45 member states which compose it and which are elected by the Council on the basis of equitable geographical distribution. CSW identifies the emerging trends and patterns of injustice and discriminatory practices against women for purpose of policy formulation.

### **Constitutional safe-guard for women in India**

Indian constitution has already created provisions for gender equality and the same can be understood from its preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive principles. The constitution empowers state authorities to adopt positive discrimination in favour of women. Within the logistic framework provided by Indian constitution, government agencies are encouraged to frame laws and develop policies for women encouragement. India has also ratified various international conventions and human rights instruments committing to secure

equal rights of women. For example ratification of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1993.

Documentation of details constitutional provisions for women in India is beyond the scope of this chapter. However a sincere effort has been made here to provide a concise idea about these constitutional provisions. Constitution of India has granted equal rights to women and directs the state government agencies to adopt positive discrimination in favour of women and so that women can enjoy equal socio-economic, social and political benefits. Indian constitution always insists on protection of fundamental rights for every citizen irrespective of religion, caste, creed and gender. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard. Some of the constitutional privileges provided by these articles are listed below:

### **Constitutional Priviledges**

- (i) Equality before law for women (Article 14)
- (ii) The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i))
- (iii) The State to make any special provision in favour of women and children (Article 15 (3))
- (iv) The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))
- (v) To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A)

- (vi) The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)
- (vii) To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e))
- (viii) 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(3))
- (xi) 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 D (4))
- (x) 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 (3))
- (xi) 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 by law provide (Article 243 T (4))

Besides some legal provisions are also enacted for protecting fundamental rights of women. Any sort of crime against women such as 'Murder', 'Cheating', Rape etc. are broadly under two categories. First one are the crimes identified under Indian Panel

Code (IPC) like 'Rape', 'Kidnapping', 'Abduction', 'sexual harassment', 'Dowry related torture', 'Girls trafficking' etc. Other category includes the crimes identified under the Special Laws (SL). Although all laws are not gender specific, the laws affecting women significantly are periodically reviewed and amended as per the requirements. Examples of some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their 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

Time to time, government has also set up some statutory bodies to study and monitor all matters related to constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women. Even constitutions are

amended sometimes to ensure these kinds of fundamental rights. Thus 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. Apart from this several plan of actions are taken up time to time for benefit of the girl child and empowerment of women. The current 'Beti Bachao' scheme of Indian government is the most appropriate example of this kind.

### **Conclusion**

Violence against women violates fundamental human rights and is an affront to women's inherent human dignity. Physical, psychological and sexual violence against women and girls, public and private, plagues all societies and classes and poses tremendous obstacles to the achievement of equality, development and peace. Realising the sufferings and hardships of women, the Government of India passed many legislations to remove the injustice done to women. It is important to work for creation of social climate with no tolerance for violence against women or any other form of violence. It is the fundamental duty of all citizens to create awareness among different communities and religious groups about the necessity of fundamental right of women so that all of us can initiate appropriate measures to ensure a world without any gender based violence and if there are few, victims always receive the compassion, support and justice they deserve. Nationwide we should institute public awareness campaign uniquely focused on the public and government response to any sort of violence against women in India. It is the primary necessity of a government and society to provide effective protection to women from any sort of violence and constitutional safeguards available can be important tool for the purpose. »»

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# Women Right and Their Position in Globalization Era

**Jalin Chetia**

## **1.0. Introduction:**

If there is inequality, gender-based discrimination, prejudice and violence against women persist, that there is no Modernity. So, United Nations accepting equality and rejecting gender stereotypes in favor of Society.

Now everyone accepts that twenty 1st century is an important and progressive Era for the World people. Under this context whole man and women spirit are marching towards their thoughts as well as trying to achieve their goals. Therefore, in modern age World Women are also not lagging behind so far and they are trying to focus their actual position which is not providing by the rigid groups of the World Man. In Modern light Women are the most reliable part of every society. They are the inevitable part of a country to progress in every field. But some people or society reluctant to certify them due to their illiteracy and Superstitious fear. At present status Women right or Feminism concept touching everyone and Female also showing interest or awareness towards it. Hence they are accelerating their foot prints on the World Women rights field and protecting boldly against the dominated groups. Once upon a time they were counted as weak, enigmatic,

undeserving for the outer World by the restricted groups. But it is evident that they have the another instinct power to accelerate the home, village, state as well as nations of the World. Yet they are not able to coming out fully according to their will. Their outer involvement growth graphs are under satisfactory in every expanded field. This is another hidden factor and causes of their life. Most of the women still don't like to involve themselves in public fields and they don't want to expose themselves. In remote area of the Nation, there are such villages where high backwardness and shyness of the female are upgrading. They don't want to rise up before the World community. Government schemes also unable to touch their Backward Women Society. Especially they are legging behind from each other groups and unable to catching the new rights in favor of them. Therefore such backward women are urgently needed to deliver proper education, facilities, economic support, communication etc. to enjoy new method of government policy, constitutional rights as well as Women rights awareness. In comparison some women of the World getting chance to focus themselves and in a position of highly progressiveness in modern Era. And they are the new inspiration cause for another new generation Women and Childs. They are acquiring Women right and Child Right with full confidence. But in another scenario like Slum area, the dwellers don't have any right to live or survive with full economy and security. Most of the times Women and Childs are getting ready to earn money unlawfully. So, now days there are two types of position of Women and Child in all over the World.

## **2.0. Women's Status and Ideology :**

Generally whole women or people are not fully acquaintance with their availing rights and duties. The greatest degree or extent possibility of hope and thought are still waiting. Therefore their

progressive status is not up to the marks for the society. But this types of woman status needs to change rapidly with the help of other people of the world. Public need a collective mood to aware them. The movements are essential from the lower class to middle class stealthily. Because there are child and women workers primarily in the concern fields of every nations. Some of them are young workers in category, some are old, some are very single women, some are poor married and some are divorcees for the cause of dowry system or others reasons. In order to resist their poor situation most of the women continuing to work hard in every fields like urban hotels and private home, agricultural fields, various technical factories and sometime as domestic servants , and also going to a prostitution fields. In many countries like India, America, South Africa, Europe etc. particularly they are working as a dominant servants in a large numbers.

### **3.0. Women's Position in search of Right :**

At the end of nineteenth century In Europe, America, Asia, South Africa By most measures, there are many religiously tolerant places, but in public school like Pakistan, Afghanistan, especially in middle school, can't be a testing ground for the young Muslims. They are still lust for their provided rights. Now modern World watching their right liabilities and trying to defend the opposite factors. Under this circumstances Syria is suffering from terror fever and thousands of women losing their birth rights. Thus Women's status is a complex issue and a hard-to-define. Around the world, women's status in each society and culture varies in different ways. In this society, women's status improved gradually, while in other, it remained unchanged. This Discrimination affects the women's status in every society. Men and women are born with these different thinking patterns. We do encourage this difference from the moment of birth. There is nothing wrong with

the way men think about their rights. The problem arises when we don't understand the different thinking processes of the Women about their rights also.

#### **4.0. Women's Work Behaviour in the World:**

Every woman's have the ability to survive. If there is financial independence for women, it would impress women's status in most of the societies. In progressive country People will provide more respect to them if their contribution will be for the social welfare factors. Because there is a co-relationship between national wealth and women's status. In some country women have more chances to learning and working than before. They are holding a good position and contributing to the World Nations. But some countries eye on Women is very harmful to till date. Keeping in mind their thinking pattern, we must be aware and try to reword their thoughts and working pattern through the International Women Organizations as well as United Nations.

At the end of nineteenth century in Europe, women's were considered as the moral guardians. They are the main protectors of the home. This is another behavior for them from a normal respective sight. But some people mislead it and began to exploit them. In home, Exploitation or domination towards the Childs also emerging day to day life. The reformers sometime express that in order to protect the home, the world women should move into the public sphere, where they could exercise the modern freedom outlook and new moral education and ethics exercise. Those female, who is affecting in homeland and outside, their own behavior should not limit into mentioned fields only. Because some eye-opening Idealistic efforts often seen from the conscious female of the World that they are conducting all round works, research, assuring on the issues of right of women and political, corruption, issues on education, lobbying for legislation, organizing working

groups, adventures, international issues of right or humanities and even economic opulent of the Nations.

From the great historic view point, in the middle part of nineteenth century there was a movement of women suffrage. Actually this movement began in 1848 in New York. This was against the unlawful behavior towards women. And it was the wide concerning mirror or windows for all the world women's. Besides this there was another women's rights convention held in Seneca Falls, in America, which was first women right convention of National women History of the world. The supporters also felt the deftness of that women's right convention and they worked to educate the victimized women as well as the public also aware about the importance and valid view point of the women's rights gradually. But in the Government sector, many politicians behavioral ideology was opposite towards the women supporters and they unwilling to listen to enfranchise of women. Therefore finally there took placed a women suffrage movement and later it became a mass movement in favor of the Women.

In America, in the edge of 20th century focused two groups of suffrage movement under some leadership. One was known as the National American Women Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and the other was National Women Party (NWP). Actually NAWSA was a moderate organizations led by Carrie Chapman Catt. And NWP was under the leadership of Alice Paul. Later they both combined their efforts and raised 'slogan' like - "Mr. President how long must women wait for liberty" or "what will you do for woman suffrage" etc. In 2000, women work behavior had increase only for social consciousness. It was admirable. In many countries they worked in vivid fields for half an hour to almost night hours, which affect much on the women health. Some country finally launched rules and regulations for how many hours to work during their healthy period in 1980. Further, married women's work

hours also became less in respect of them. Because in this modern World, Married women apparently are becoming accustomed to working outside the home not only for their economic opulent, but also to serve the society from their sight. In Europe many women like having their own careers at their own risk. Another point of view is that they maybe worry that, with a high divorce period in post-modern society, they might split from their husband and so, they think that they need a separate income source from concern fields within the country. Whatever the cause may be, women in the 1990s were less likely to leave employment or to reduce their annual work hours. Though their husbands got trouble or become employed, yet more hours they worked in many private sectors. In other words, their labor supplied their decisions whether it may be sensitive to their husband or not. In working and income factors they had been equally interesting to work outside. In some rigid country like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and others, this types of women's decisions became much or less sensitive to their high or mediocre country than before.

### **5.0. World Women's effort to Rise:**

In the early 20th century or the later parts of nineteenth century, there was another African American reform ethics arrived. The black women were suppressed and finally 'black women movement' began for right. Eventually they opened 'National Association of Colored Women's club' (NACW), which was under the leadership of Mary Church Terrell. Actually the "NACW's motto was "Lifting as we climb". Later they founded (Black Women) mutual benefit societies, schools, settlement houses, some black female workers, laundries and so on. They also tried to provide more services for those black women. Besides they included one woman, who finally founded the National Council of Negro Women's. The name of leader was known as Mary Mcleod

Bethune. There is more example of women effort like Maggie L. Walker, Nannie H. Burroughs etc. Walker was the head of most successful black mutual benefit societies and was first 'American Women Bank' president. They were the notable reformers and most effective black women in the global status. After all this was the notable introduction and ethics of African, American women reformers who marked their footprints for the future world Women's.

### **5.01 Women's Effort Fighting in some places:**

In every places in the world, women accelerating their work effort to place themselves in a successful field. There is some organization where no any traditional views . In Uganda now women marching for attractive social work. For that purpose there is seen Youth and Women's Effort Fighting groups. Youth and Women's Effort Fighting AIDS (UYWEFA) aims to mitigate the challenges associated with HIV/AIDS in the community of Kazo, northwest of Kampala, Uganda. The organization providing education opportunities to orphans and vulnerable children, economic opportunities and home based care for HIV positive individuals. These are another scene of women reform.

In the women reform edge there focused another children bureau organization in New York by Florence Kelley along with Lillian Wald. They both working through the national child labor committee (NCLC). They undertook programs to reduce material and infant mortality. As a result in America the congress finally passed an Act to support child position, which was known as maternity and infancy Act. And this was the first social welfare measure. The aim of this Act was to provide federal funding to health care programs for mothers and infants. Thus they deserved them for humanist activities.

In western country, gradually female rights activist took a

position and they began to work in every fields to serve the society directly or indirectly. Even women started working in huge factories also. But often they faced terrible treatment. Later this type of working class had been seen in Asian countries with their low conditions as well as low wages, facilities and respects. Under such circumstances there improved another WTUL - means the women's trade union league. They tried to represent the partnership between the middle class and low working class women to raise wage and improve working conditions. This was stated against the Exploitation as well as bad treatments of working class women in various industrial fields. In the early 20th century WTUL started to serve as organizational allies and trying to focus on unionizing women workers and protecting or supporting women's strikes. As a result in New York and Philadelphia more than 20,000 workers firstly walked out over the course of the strike. After 1st decade of 20th century the WTUL focused on enacting protective legislation for women, and increasingly, supported women suffrage as a means to active gains for working class women of the Era, where feminist and renowned labor activist Pose Schneiderman became an important member of the women Trade Union league.

5.2. Another side, women of the world tried to involved in the peace movements also. Generally in Europe when the war threat loomed, then the women increasingly involved not only other fields but also in peace movement in entire field of Europe. Most of the time they protest against Militarism and involved themselves in American Union against Militarism. Later some activist formed and placed them in women's peace party and also sent delegation to international congress of women. Thus, with France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Belgium, Great Britain, Switzerland delegates developed a plan to peace among the world's wary nations. Many women of the World also involved and able to stave off a war between the Mexico and United States in 1916

also. But in 1917 the women of American Union against militarism as well as women's peace party (WPP) unable to prevent the United States from involved in World War 1914 to onwards in favor of British and French. Yet the women's effort to survive in many way was admirable and imitable.

5.03. As a result the position of women in World War-I was noticeable. In 1917, under United States fully entered in concerning war then the women could not remove away them. Under such circumstances they are continuing their homework regarding to war, reforms of works. Including all parties like club movements women's reformers, women's suffrage movements reformers, settlement house movements reformers etc. conserved food and then sent relief supplies to the suffering Europeans in that context. The women's tried to achieve coordination as well as wanted to serve as the nurse from their potentiality and attitude. They also entered in workforce in new methods and served navy and marines fields also with limited coordination's. The women's also worked in all round factories and in print, public sectors also to raise their equal rights in global status.

### **6.0. Women's Empowerment sight:**

Now days every government of world Accepting very strongly the women empowerment policy. Every nation trying to deal fight with the modern position and poor situation of the women conditions. In Europe, Asia and America targeting to eliminate of gender disparity. Generally American's goal is to reduce child mortality, improve of women health as well as mothers.

In India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan etc. countries - the empowerment of women and their strengthening position in society is very poor. There for in every historical era these country women playing or facing a crucial role and fighting against hunger position as well as extreme poverty.

They are lag far behind and others (boys or men) progressing towards new achievement. But without the reasonable participation of every world women, it will be impossible to ensure their environmental sustainability also.

In African, Asia as well as Latin American countries, it is widely noticeable that the whole women have to work harder. In rural area, normally women maintaining traditional gardens of fruits, vegetables; raising domestic animals and farming. Besides they are many responsible for their child. They look after the child, feed them, collect foods, fire wood and water, supervised the children and their education, house cleaning, product agricultural goods etc. But despite of that they don't feel secure in every social status in day to day life. Their domestic income is very low even in government sectors also, as they at best able to get service in clerical sectors only. So the scholars or writers will to change their position through better education, income, property and decision making process. Their status should be in every field like education, business, politics and every community organizations. Though this task should be very difficult yet they must be highly active in every field with the help of social sectors. Initially this will empower them to overcome their concern fields and will developed the self-confidence in society also. So, the world women's organizations now - "seeking to ensure the representation of women's voice, experiences, needs and capacities, as women are still underrepresented in planning and decision making at all levels, including parties and observer organizations to the UNFCCE".

In another quote the Ana Agostino of ICAE means - International council for Adult Education cleared that women's are the human rights. No agreement, decision or mechanism on climate change will be effective or successful without the full respect of women's rights and the recognition of our valuable knowledge. In Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and many other countries,

women status differences that there are so many disadvantages for long period in every fields due to the rigid society. Already in school system girls' are not allowed reading independently. Now days girls' are less likely to attend in some school but they almost need to leave school in a earlier age. In Pakistan Government right now the outcome of girls' study report is very poor. Yet there is International Islamic University, Islamabad's Allama Iqbal Open University etc. Which will through the women societies respect and modern important positions in fast moving world.

#### **6.01. Other Activist in favor of woman status:**

There are many notable women's rights activists in favor of women in the world. They are individually or socially encouraging the affected women from every side .In America (United States) Jane Addams (1860-1935) - major social activist, president Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) - prominent civil rights leader, played a pivotal role in the 19th century women's rights movement to introduce women's suffrage into the United States; Jacqueline Ceballos - feminist and founder of Veteran Feminists of America; Elisabeth Freeman (1876-1942) - suffragist and civil rights activist, participated in the Suffrage Hikes; Emma Goldman (1869-1940) - Russian-American campaigner for birth control and other rights; Maud Wood Park (1871-1955) - founder College Equal Suffrage League, first president League of Women Voters etc. In Australia- Eva Cox (1938 - ) is sociologist and feminist active in both the political and social services sectors. She is Long-time member of the Women's Electoral Lobby and social commentator on women in power, women and work and social justice; Anne Summers (1945-) is women's rights activist, prominent in political and media spheres and also Women's advisor to Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating and editor of Ms. Magazine (New York). In Belgium-

Marguerite Coppin (1867-1931) was an woman poet laureate of Belgium and advocate of women's rights. In England, Dora Russell (1894-1986) - progressive campaigner, advocate of marriage reform, birth control and female emancipation. Alice Vickery (1844-1929) was physician, supporter of birth control as means of emancipation of women, Dora Russell (1894-1986) was progressive campaigner, advocate of marriage reform, birth control and female emancipation.

In Canada- Jamie McIntosh (21st century) is growing as a lawyer and women's rights activist; Anna Leonowens (1831-1915) was writer, educator, social activist etc. In Denmark Astrid Stampe Feddersen (1852-1930), who chaired the first Scandinavian meeting on women's rights. In Egypt Qasim Amin (1863-1908) was jurist and early advocate of women's rights in Egyptian society, Engy Ghozlan (1985-) was Coordinator of campaigns against sexual harassment in Egypt.

In French- Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793) became the famous playwright and political activist who wrote the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen in 1791. Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) was also great philosopher and writer of French. In Germani Ruth Bre (1862-7-1911) was writer, advocate for matrilineality and women's rights. She also founder of the Bund fur Mutterschutz. In India there Jyotiba Phule (1827-1890) was social reformer, critic of the caste system and founded a school for girls, a widow-remarriage initiative, a home for upper caste widows, and a home for infant girls to discourage female infanticide etc. Sunitha Krishnan (1972-) is also Indian social activist and chief functionary and co-founder of Prajwala. Besides she has the institution that assists trafficked women, girls and transgenders in finding shelter, giving education and employment.

In Iran Parvin Ardalan (1967-) is famous women's rights activist and Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh (1958-) is another

women's rights activist who founder of ZananTV and NGO Training Center (ZTNTC). Sheema Kalbasi (1972-) is well known writer and advocate for human rights and gender equality. Anna Haslam (1829-1922) an Irish and major figure in the early women's movement in Ireland and founded the Dublin Women's Suffrage Association. In New Zealand also there seen many activist like Kate Sheppard (1847-1934). She was suffragette; influential in winning voting rights for women in 1893 (it was the first country and national election in which women were allowed to vote). In Pakistan Malala Yousafzai (1997-) is most energetic child of Pakistan who currently becomes women's rights activist and shot in the head and neck in an assassination attempt by the Taliban terrorist groups for advocating for girls' education. In Sweden Anna Sandstrom (1854-1931) was educational reformer for their country. Ellen Anckarsvard (1833-1898) was also women's rights activists in that country. Funmilayo Ransome (1900-1978) Foremost Nigerian women's rights activist and fought for their women from early period. Ayaan Hirsi Ali (1969-) is also Somali and Dutch feminist and atheist activist, writer and politician, who is fighting for long.

In India there are many women's right activists and supporters, like child rights (present renowned) campaigner Koilash Satyarthi and in neighbour country like Pakistan Malala Yousafzai. Honorable K. Satyarthi is recognized for a thirty five years battle to free thousand of children from virtual slave labor, who finally able to achieve the Nobel Prize in 2014. Malala Yousafzai also got the Nobel peace prize for her child rights campaign at the same time and she delivered a bowl comment against the Taliban Terrorist groups who totally opposed or banned their child right towards education movement. In world top most BBC channel she expressed her statement- "I want to serve my country and my dream is that my country becomes a developed country and I see

every child get an education". Malala Yousafzai was fifteen years old when Taliban gunman shot her in the head as she traveled on a school bus in response to her campaign for Muslim girls' educational right.

Kailash Satyarthi also expressed in front of the reporters that there are many children in the world who are brought and sold like animals. According to him "this is very important for millions of children who are denied their childhood, who are denied their freedom, who are denied their education and health". According to ILO (International Labor Organization) there are 168 million child laborers globally and still it is increasing gradually. Kailash Satyarthi's (movement to save childhood) organization 'Bachpan Bachao Andolan' prides itself on liberating more than 80,000 children from bonded labor in workshops as well as factories across India and has reliable networks of activists about hundred of countries. The pairing of Mr. K. Satyarthi and Malala Yousafzai works had the extra symbolism in the world.

Malala Yousafzai is the symbol of Pakistani Child's right. She is active and dared represntators not only for Pakistan but all over the world. She began her life from a protest field Swat. Her father Ziauddin Yousafzai sai, "I was surprised that there is little girl in swat who can speak with at a lot of confidence, who's very brave, who's very articulate". Ziauddin also active social and educational activist and had sensed that the Taliban would move from the tribal areas of Pakistan. Malala Yousafzai also said, "I want to speak up for my rights and also I didn't want my future to be just sitting in a room and be imprisoned in my four walls and just cooking and giving birth to children". This was a strong symbolic messege from her, which inspiring and concerned about the Child or women rights position in 21st century global status. Thus Malala's voice was powerful not only in swat region, but also all over the world. Malala Yousafzai understood very early age - "life is normal for

normal people, but for those people who had raised their voice. It was now a risky time". After Nobel Prize and girl summit 2014 Malala Yousafzai known for female education activism. Now she become the activist for rights to child education as well as for women.

Under this situation, on 15 October 2012, there was a United Nations petition submitted to Pakistan. This was submitted by Gordon Brown (former British Prime minister) to see the real position or status of child. This was handed over to president Zardari where three demands included - (i) we call on Pakistan to agree to a plan to deliver education for every child. (ii) We call on countries to out law discrimination against girls' and (iii) we call on international organizations to ensure the world's 61 million out of school children are education by the end of 2015. This was bowl support for every forthcoming, discriminating child. Because this type of vague situation raising another status of world women.

### **7.0. Other Right Thinkers:**

In this bigger World there is another senior women activist to raise woman right status in all over Country. They are Bella Abzug, Shirin Ebadi, Lucy Stone, Mary White ovington, Dorothy Height, Mary Walker, Mary Church Terrella etc.

Bella Abzug was US representative, women's rights activist, Anti war activist and Lawyer. She was a leading liberal activist. In 1970s , especially see known for her work for women's rights and involved in the antinuclear and peace movements and also helped organize the women for peace. She also defended many people who had been accused of communist activities by senator. After noticed the then position of women she said - "maybe we weren't at the last super, but we were certainly going to be at the next one".

Shirin Ebadi (1947) is Iranian human rights and was the first

formal judge in Iran and also won the Nobel peace prize in 2003. Shirin Ebadi Quote in his age a practical sign-"Anyone who fights for human rights in Iran lives in fear. But I have learnt to overcome my fear. I Iran anything could happen to anyone. My fight is to make sure that only good things happen to my people". Though Ebadi practiced law yet she began or likes to take only human rights cases and finally founded the association for support of children's rights in 1995. She also founded human rights defense centre in 2001. Because she dreamt a big dream and for that purpose she expressed her comment like- "I sound like a dreamer, I know. The challenge facing us today is to think like dreamers but act in a pragmatic manner. Let us remember that many of humanities accomplishments began as a dream". Shirin Ebadi thus became an strong activist of women's rights, children rights as well as civil rights activist in all over the world. Like Shirin Ebadi, Lucy Stone also contributed for women's empowerment. Lucy was also energetic, leading activist and pioneer of the abolitionist and women's rights movements. Actually she dedicated her life improving the rights of American women and was elected president of New Jersey Women Suffrage Association.

Journalist Mary White Ovington was another activist for women's right as well as children right. Who born on April, 1865 in New York and died in 1951. She and many of members of her family had been active in the abolitionist as well as women's rights movement to change the downfall status of current women. Dorothy Height (1912-2010) born in Verginia and also a good civil rights leader. Dorothy always focused primarily on improving the circumstances of and opportunities for African and American women. Dorothy was a good leader in addressing the rights of both women and African as the president of National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). Later she wanted to change the mindset of every woman and drew young people into her cause in the war

against drugs, illiteracy and unemployment. She also showed her great talent in social and political fields. Dorothy always showed her talent in social and political issues and stood close to Martin Luther King Jr. when he delivered his famous 'I have a dream' speech. After retired from the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) she continued NCNW for two more decades and focused on strengthening the African-American family and also helped found the National Women's Political course with G. Steinem, Betty Friedan and Shirley Chisholm.

Mary Walker's status was as a surgeon, nurse and women's rights activist and received the Medal of Honor for her service during the civil war. She went on to lecture on women's rights, dress reform and suffrage in America. Mary Walker quotes that - "let the generations know that women in uniform also guaranteed their freedom".

Mary Church Terrell was another early advocate of civil rights and the suffrage movement in favor of African and American people. She was an influential educator and activist. Church Terrell was the first president of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW). When she went on to attend Oberlin College in Ohio in 1884, she became one of the first African-American women to earn a college degree. Later she spoke out frequently about the issues and with some fellow activists founded the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) in 1896. Especially she involved in the women's rights movement and focused much of her attention on securing the right to vote. Thus towards the end of a life that witnessed fantastic civil-rights changes, she saw the U.S. Supreme Court's historic *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling in 1954, which ended segregation in schools. Under such circumstances her home in Washington DC has been named a National Historic Landmark (NHL) and conveying a good message of inspiring to move forward for the world women's as well as children also.

This all are the noticeable and primary status of the world women. In this huge globalization era these are legend workers for the every dominating and discriminating woman and they are opening new update windows for them and accelerating the new generation's thoughts and works of the world to fight against olden sights, which will place them and their country in a better position like Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan in those forthcoming situations. »»

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# Domestic Violence Against Women in India and Law

**Parag Dutta**  
**Phool Kumari Kalita**

## **Introduction :**

Domestic violence is a type of abuse. Also known as spousal abuse, it occurs when one person in an intimate relationship or marriage tries to dominate and control the other person. Domestic violence may have different forms, including physical, emotional, sexual and economic. Men are sometimes abused by partners, but domestic violence is most often directed towards women. It occurs across the world, irrespective of society, culture and class.

## **Domestic Violence against Women in India :**

In India, domestic violence is a serious threat for a major proportion of the female population of the country. Pivotal reason for it being so prevalent in the country is the orthodox and idiotic mindset of the society that women are physically and emotionally weaker than the males. Women today have proved themselves in almost every field of life affirming that they are no less than men. Yet, the reports of violence against them are much larger in number than against men. According to United Nation Population Fund Report, around two-third of married Indian women are victims of

domestic violence and as many as 70 per cent of married women in India between the age of 15 and 49 are victims of physical assault, rape or forced sex. Another statistics estimates that in India, altogether 70 percent of the women suffer from domestic violence. The greed for dowry, desire for a male child and alcoholism of the spouse etc serve as the key factors of domestic violence against women in the country. A recent study has concluded that violence against women is the fastest-growing crime in India. According to a latest report prepared by India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), a crime has been recorded against women in every three minutes in India. Every 60 minutes, two women are raped in this country. Every six hours, a young married woman is found beaten to death, burnt or driven to suicide.

Traditionally, domestic violence has been mostly associated with physical violence. However, it may occur in many forms. These may include -

### **Physical Violence:**

Beating, slapping, hitting, biting, kicking, punching, pushing, shoving, or causing bodily injury or pain.

### **Sexual Violence :**

Forced intercourse, force a women to look at pornography or any other obscene pictures or materials, any act of sexual nature to abuse, humiliate or degrade a women or which is otherwise violative of her dignity or any other unwelcome conduct of sexual nature, child sexual abuse.

### **Verbal & Emotional Violence:**

Insults or accusations on character or conduct, insults for not having male child, insults for not bringing dowry etc., yelling and screaming, preventing a women from taking up a job, forcing her to leave job, preventing her or the child in her custody from leaving

home, preventing a women from meeting any person in normal course of events, forcing a girl to marry when she is not willing to, preventing a girl from marrying a person of her own choice, forcing a girl to marry a particular person, threat to commit suicide, any other verbal or emotional abuse.

### **Economic Violence :**

Not providing a women money for maintenance of herself and her children, not providing food, shelter, medicines etc, stopping a women from carrying on her employment or disturbing her in carrying on her employment, not allowing a women to take up an employment, taking away her salary, income, wages etc., forcing a women out of the house she live in, stopping a women from using or accessing any part of the house, not allowing use of clothes, articles or things of general household use etc.

### **Consequences of Domestic Violence:**

Consequences of domestic violence vary depending upon the age of the victim and the nature, intensity and frequency of the torment. Living under a constant fear, threat and humiliation are some of the most common symptoms developed in the victims as consequences of a dreadful violence.

Most of the women however, have tendency to remain quiet, tormented and emotionally disturbed after the occurrence of the agony. A psychological set back and trauma arising out of domestic violence affects women's productivity in all forms of life. The suicide case of such victimized women is also a deadly consequence and the number of such cases is increasing in our country.

As a result of the ill-treatment at home or office, a working Indian woman loses her inefficiency in work at her work place. Some women leave their home immediately after first few atrocious attacks and try to become self-dependent. However, in most instances, their survival becomes difficult and painful. Some of

them who leave their homes are forcefully involved in women trafficking and pornography.

Domestic violence against women also affects on the children very adversely. When the violence against women especially their mother is openly done in front of them since their childhood, it may have a deeper and gruesome impact in their mindset. They get used to such happenings at home, and have a tendency to reciprocate the same in their lives. It's common in especially in rural homes in India which are victimized by the evil of domestic violence.

In cases of Intimate Partner Violence, violence against women leads them to maintain a distance from their partner. Their sexual life is affected adversely. Many of them file for divorce and seek separation which again affects the life of children.

The results of domestic violence or abuse thus, can be summarized as:

- Suicide
- Depression
- Anxiety attacks
- Low self-esteem
- Lack of trust in others
- Anger
- Degradation of mental and physical health
- Inability to work
- Poor relationships with their children and other loved ones
- Death resulting from extremely severe physical abuse
- Development serious emotional, behavioral, developmental, or academic problems in children who witness such abuse in their family

Legal Provisions against Domestic Violence against Women in India:

Prior to the mid-1800s, most legal systems viewed physical

assault of wife by her husband as a valid exercise of the husband's authority over wife. However, during the 19th century political agitation led to changes in both popular opinion and legislation regarding domestic violence against women beginning from the U.K., USA and thereafter other countries.

The response to the phenomenon of domestic violence is a typical combination of effort between law enforcement agencies, social service agencies, the courts and corrections/probation agencies. Domestic violence, at present, is considered as a public health problem and all over the world many public, private and governmental agencies are seen making huge efforts to control it.

India has adopted the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, both of which ensure that women are given equal rights as men and are not subjected to any kind of discrimination. In 1983, domestic violence was recognized as a specific criminal offence by the introduction of section 498-A into the Indian Penal Code. This section deals with cruelty by a husband or his family towards a married woman. The punishment under this act was imprisonment for up to three years and a fine.

The Indian Penal Code also addresses dowry deaths in section 304-B. If a woman dies of "unnatural causes" within seven years of marriage and has been harassed for dowry before her death, the Courts will assume that it is a case of dowry death. The husband or in-laws will then have to prove that their harassment was not the cause of her death. A dowry death is punishable by imprisonment of at least seven years.

On 23rd June 2005 the cabinet approved the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Bill, after which it received assent from Parliament. This approval brings to the fore a new civil law on domestic violence, which provides immediate emergency remedies for women facing violence

The Constitution of India also guarantees substantive justice to women. Article 15 of the Constitution provides for prohibition of discrimination against the citizens on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth or their subjection to any disability, liability or restriction on such grounds. Article 15 (3) empowers the legislature to make special provision for women and children. In exercise of this power, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act was passed in 2005. Article 16 provides equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. Article 21 of the constitution ensures protection of life and personal liberty of the citizens irrespective of gender. Article 39 of the constitution attempts to provide the citizens equal justice and free legal aid. Article 51A of the constitution defines the fundamental duty of each and every citizen of the country 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 insulting to the dignity of women.

### **Laws Regarding Violence Against Women :**

In India, violence, injustice or discrimination against women is being addressed by the following sections of legal acts.

- I. Sections 125, 126, 127, 128 and 198 of the Criminal Procedure Code of India, 1973 recognize violence against women as a criminal offence and deal with such offences.
- II. The Indian Penal Code, 1860 and the following sections of the act illustrates different forms of violative acts against women
  - 1) Section 304B - Dowry death
  - 2) Section 312 - Causing miscarriage - A woman who causes herself to miscarry, is within the meaning of this section.
  - 3) Section 313 - Causing miscarriage without consent
  - 4) Section 314 - Death caused by act done with intent to cause miscarriage

- 5) Section 315 - Act done with intent to prevent child being born alive or to cause it to die after birth
  - 7) Section 317 - Exposure and -abandonment of child under twelve years, by parent or person having care of it
  - 8) Section 318 - Concealment of birth by secret disposal of dead body
  - 9) Section 354 - Assault or criminal force to woman with Intent to outrage her modesty
  - 10) Section 375 - Rape
  - 11) Section 376 - Punishment for rape
  - 12) Section 376A - Intercourse by a man with his wife during separation
  - 13) Section 377 - Unnatural offences
  - 14) Section 494 - Marrying again during lifetime of husband or wife
  - 15) Section 498A - Husband or relative of husband of a woman subjecting her to cruelty
  - 16) Section 509 - Word, gesture or act intended to insult the modesty of a woman
- III. Indian Evidence Act of 1872 also illustrates different forms of violence against women and its consequences
- 1) Section 113 A - Presumption as to abetment of suicide by a married woman
  - 2) Section 113 B - Presumption as to dowry death
  - 3) Section 114A - Presumption as to absence of consent in certain prosecutions for rape
- IV. Personal Laws:
- There are different acts under Personal Law and a few selected clauses or sections of these acts are related to different forms of violation against women. These are -
1. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 defines and illustrates various issues regarding conditions for a Hindu marriage (Section 5),

ceremonies for a Hindu marriage (Section 7), registration of Hindu marriage (Section 8), restitution of conjugal rights (Section 9), judicial separation (Section 10), void and voidable marriages (Section 11 and 12), divorce (Section 13), petition for divorce to be presented within one year of marriage (Section 14), remarriage of divorced person (Section 15), punishment of bigamy (Section 17), prohibition on printing or publishing the marriage proceedings (Section 22), permanent alimony and maintenance (Section 25), custody of children (Section 26), maintenance of wife and widowed daughter-in-law (Section 18 and 19)

2. Sections 6, 10, 14, 15 and 16 of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 guarantee a woman of her share of property in her family and section 23 of the same act provides her some special provisions respecting dwelling houses.
3. Section 3 of the Muslim Women (Protection of Right on Divorce) Act, 1986 provides a Muslim woman right over deferred Dower, Maher and other properties given to her at the time of her marriage and also for maintenance allowance during the Iddat period. Section 4 of the same act makes provision for maintenance of a Muslim woman by relative on divorce and orders payment of maintenance.

#### V. Allied Acts and Civil Laws

A number of acts under civil law have been enacted to ensure protection of the women in Indian society from different forms of violence including domestic violence. These are -

1. The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 includes various legal provisions and penalties against demanding or giving and taking dowry.
2. Commission of Sati (Prevention Act), 1987 identifies the "Sati" system as a criminal offence and makes punishment provision for each and every offences relating to Sati.

3. The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 and various sections of this act prohibit the traditional system of child marriage in our country and make it a punishable offence. However, no woman is punishable under this act.
4. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 identifies the following activities against women punishable: keeping a brothel or allowing premises to be used as a brothel (Section 3), living on the earnings of prostitution (Section 4), procuring, inducing or taking person for the sake of prostitution (Section 5), seducing or soliciting for purpose of prostitution (Section 8)
5. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 makes statutory provisions for termination of pregnancies by registered medical practitioners under some defined special conditions.
6. Female Infanticide Prevention Act, 1870 is an act for the prevention of the murder of female infants. This act empowers the provincial governments to take measures to formulate, confirmation and publication of rules, punishment for breach of rules, saving of prosecutions under other laws and also to place neglected children under supervisions
7. Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994 declares all gynecological or obstetrical or medical procedures and diagnostic tests as well as advertisement relating to pre-natal determination of sex as cognizable, non-bailable and noncompoundable offence for each and every person or company related to the offence.
8. The Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act; 2005 provides an effective protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the Constitution who are victims of violence occurring within the family. The Act is completely beneficial to women only. According to the Act any harm, injury to

health, safety, life, limb or well-being or any other act or threatening or oppression, etc. by any adult member of the family, constitutes domestic violence. Any woman who is or has been in a domestic or family relationship, if it is subjected to any act of domestic violence can complain. Aggrieved or affected woman can complain to the concerned Protection Officer, Police Officer, Service Provider or Magistrate. Aggrieved has a right to be informed about the available services and free legal services from the protection officer etc. Shelter home and medical facilities can be provided to aggrieved woman. The proceedings of the complaint can be held in camera. Every aggrieved woman has a right to reside in shared household. The protection order by Magistrate can be given in favour of aggrieved woman. The monetary relief can be given to the aggrieved woman to meet expenses or losses. The appeal can be made to Sessions Court within 30 days from the order of concerned Magistrate. The imprisonment can be made upto 1 year or a fine upto Rs. 29,000 or both for breach of protection order by the opposite party. The Protection Officer can be prosecuted upto 1 year imprisonment or with a fine upto Rs, 20,000 or both can be imposed for failure of his duties.

This Act covers those women who are or have been in a relationship at a point of time and both parties have lived together in a shared household and are related by consanguinity, marriage, or through a relationship in the nature of marriage or adoption. In addition, the relationship with the family members, living together as a joint family is also included. Even those women who are sisters, widows, mothers, single women, or living with the abuse are entitled to legal protection.

This Act has been enacted keeping in view the rights guaranteed under "Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution of

India besides the provisions made under sections 304B and 398A of Indian Penal Code Sometimes in the history of judiciary in India and elsewhere the judge interprets the law on many grounds viz., social customs, relationship of parties, legislative intend etc.

This Act represents a major victory for women's rights in India. Importantly, this law criminalizes the abuse of a woman by her spouse, partner or other males in the household and recognizes the abused woman's right to secure housing. Sections 18-23 are the soul of this Act, these sections of the Act provide a large number of avenues for an abused women to get relief. She can get through the courts, Protection orders, residence order, monetary relief order, custody order, for her children, compensation order, and interim/expert orders.

#### **Suggestions and conclusion :**

Strong laws and public policies are essential steps toward combating such violence. But the real solution lies in a culture shift, in the world, and in each of our homes. A wide variety of agencies like family court, police station, family counseling centre, women's commission, people's council for social justice, religious institutions, government and non-government organizations, health care providers such as doctors, nurses, and paramedical staffs etc. may play a major role in awareness generation and sensitization regarding gender discrimination, women right and also violence against women. Domestic violence should be recognized as a health issue and the prevalence and the health consequences of domestic violence should be documented. Pre-marital counseling should be made compulsory and post-marital counseling is to be arranged as follow-up, in order to prevent breakdown of families.

Women should be made aware of Women's Commission and offices of the Women's Commission should be opened at the district and lower levels. Police and media also have a very important

role to be played at the eradication of this menace especially in a country like India. Police should be trained to be respectful and courteous to women in distress.

A separate wing of police in all police stations consisting of only women officials may be opened for dealing with women's issues. To give a new venue to the airing of the complaints and finding solutions to the offences discussions on women issues with victims and key personnel could be promoted through the media. Media should be used to sensitize the officials and the public about domestic violence so as to develop a positive attitude towards women in general, and women victims, in particular.

Domestic Violence is a problem for society, not individuals. The varying causes which can spark the violence within the four walls of homes thus, need to be analyzed carefully and a wise study of the factors causing the violence may prevent a family to suffer from the menace of domestic violence. »»

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# Empowerment of Women Through Entrepreneurship : Problems and Prospects - A Case Study of Nagaon Municipal Area

**Kakali Boruah  
Aparna Bairagi**

## **I. Introduction :**

Empowerment of women and Gender equality are the buzz word of today's society. The empowerment of women is recognized globally as a key to achieve over all progress of the society.

Empowerment in its simplest form is a process of change by which individuals gain power and ability to take control over their lives. It helps in building capacities and confidence in taking decision about ones own life. It makes individuals aware of their own rights, responsibilities and socio-economic cultural opportunities. It puts individuals in a position to challenge and remove the obstacles that come in the way of progressive development.

For women, empowerment is the restructuring of gender relations within family and society. The former Prime-Minister Jawaharlal Nehru rightly said, "When women move forward, the

family moves, the family moves, the village moves". It is recognized that only when women are in the mainstream of progress, then any economic and social development be possible in a society. The development of women mainly depends upon the economic status of women. Empowerment of women cannot happen unless they are provided with adequate income generating activities through wages and self development. The involvement of women in various economic development programmes will help in solving various social, economical and political problems. The problem of unemployment and poverty can be controlled by intensifying efforts for generating income.

## **II. Entrepreneurship- a way to economic empowerment :**

Entrepreneurship has been acknowledged as one of the essential factors for economic growth and social development. Entrepreneurship and economic development is very closely related phenomenon in recent eras. The emerging great worldwide business environment need strong entrepreneurship as it can serve as important strategy for economic development, especially in underdeveloped economy.

Entrepreneurship creates job opportunities, provide self employment and can be regarded as a major source of invention and innovation. It also raises income and standard of living, creates competitive environment, solves social problems like unemployment, exploitations and gender conflicts etc. It allows fulfillment of one's dream and helps self expression and creativity to set up or run an enterprise. An entrepreneur is a person who organizes, manages and takes the risk of an enterprise. As a responsible and rational person, he or she has to arrange everything required to set up an Enterprise. i.e. all factors of production. The common traits of entrepreneurs are independence, motivation, optimistic, dynamic, and innovating and risk -bearing ability.

Now a days, it is an accepted fact that women have to play a prominent role in the over all economic development of our nation as they constitute around 50% of total population. In India the entrepreneurial world is still dominated by men. For the proper utilization of potential skill & talent of women, there is a need to develop entrepreneurship among them. Women as entrepreneur are successfully gaining importance in men's world because of their economic independence combined with the challenge of doing something of their own and encouragement they get from the members of the family.

It is said that when a man starts business he only become entrepreneur while when a woman takes entrepreneurship the whole family becomes entrepreneurial in its nature.

Present Day Women - showing interest in entrepreneurship, which is the creative process of identification of opportunities, innovating ideas, managing products and services and finally marketing them covering every risk for growth. They can set up their own small or large business or an enterprise to cultivate minimum profits.

### **III. Objectives of the study.**

The present study is an attempt to analysis the details about the different problems, barriers related to women entrepreneurship development in the Nagaon Municipal area. The main objectives of the study:-

- a) To identify the general profile and nature of the business.
- b) To know the motivational background behind the business.
- c) To assess the support they get from family and society.
- d) To identify different problems they have faced.
- e) To know the level of economic self-sufficiency.

### **IV. Methodology and the area of study**

The universe of the study is the women entrepreneurs of Nagaon District. The survey is conducted with 91 sample women

entrepreneurs, from Nagaon Municipal area. The data are collected by direct personal observation. The sample is consists of both registered and non-registered entrepreneurs with different Govt. Department and Agencies.

**V. Major Findings of the study :**

**V.i General profiles of the sample women.**

Table : General information of the respondents

SI No	Particulars	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Age		
	(i) 18—25	32	%
	(ii) 26---35	29	31.9%
	(iii) 36—45	18	19.8%
	(iv) 46----55	09	9.9%
	(iv) 56 and above	03	3.3%
	Total	91	100
2.	Marital Status		
	(i) Married	55	60%
	(ii) Unmarried	24	26.4%
	(iii) widow	08	8.8%
	(iv) Divorce	04	4.4%
	Total	91	100
3.	Religion		
	(i) Hindu	52	57.1%
	(ii) Muslim	36	39.6%
	(iii) Others	03	3.3%
	Total	91	100

*Continued...*

Continued...

4.	Caste		
	(i)General	46	50.5%
	(ii)SC/ST	21	23.1%
	(iii)OBC	16	17.6%
	(iv)Others	8	8.8%
	Total	91	100
5.	Education level		
	(i) Upto class 10 <sup>th</sup>	04	4.4%
	(ii) Upto college	59	64.9%

It is observed that the age of sampled women ranges between 18 -57, where 32.3% entrepreneurs are in the age group of 18-26, 29(31.9%) are in the age group 26-35, 18(19.8%) are in the group of 36-45 age and 09(.9%) belong to the age group of 45-55 years and only 03(3.3%) are above 56 .It is observed that most of the entrepreneurs are belonged to young group.

In case of education level, 59(64.9%) of the Entrepreneurs completed their college education, 06(6.6%) have completed post graduate and only 04(4.4%) had education up to 10th standard. It is found that 22(24.2%) have completed different formal training and diploma in their respective fields.

In the marital status, 55(60%) respondents are married and leading economically sound life. 24(26.4%) of them are unmarried,

08(8.8%) leading a widowhood life and 04(4.4%) are divorce.

Among the sample entrepreneurs, 52(50.5%) women are followers of Hinduism and 36(39.6%) are of Muslims and only 03(3.3%) are belonged to other religion. In case of caste, majority of women 46 (50.5%) are belonged to general caste, 21(23.1%) are ST/SC and 16(17.6%) are OBC group and 08(8.8%) are in the group of others category.

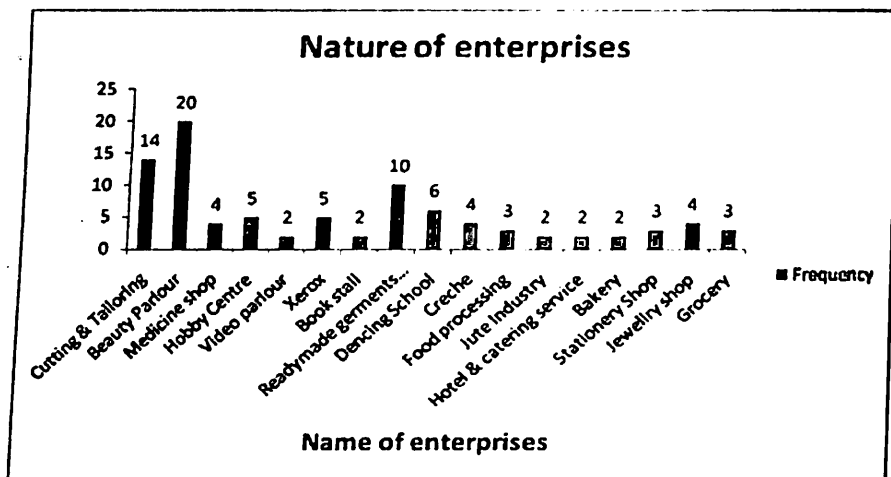
#### **V. ii. Types of enterprises:**

The nature of the business as per sample, belongs to various categories like Cutting and Tailoring 14(15.4%), Beauty Parlour 20(22%), Medicine shop 04(4.4%), Hobby Centre 05(5.5%), Video Parlour 02(2.2%), Xerox 05(5.5%), Book stall 02 (2.2%), Readymade garment shop & Boutique 10(11%), Dance School 06 (6.6%), Creche 4(4.4%), Food processing 03 (3.3%), Jute industry 02 (2.2%), Hotel & Catering services 02(2.2%), Bakery 2(2.2%), Stationery Shop 03(3.3%) and Jewelers shop 04 (4.4%) and Grocery 03(3.3%).

Almost all the entrepreneurs have started their business before marriage and two joined already established business after death of their husband. Majority of the entrepreneurs are housewives, and running their business under proprietorship. They have total control over the affairs of the enterprise, and hence managing the business is easier for them.

During survey, it is observed that all entrepreneurs are engaged some specific business, which are purely women oriented. Most of them are very successful in their respective enterprise and feel very happy. The following figure represents the nature and types of business.

Figure: Nature of Enterprise



From the survey, it is found that Twenty two entrepreneurs have started their business for more than fifteen years, Nineteen entrepreneurs have been in business for more than eight years, Ten are in five years and eight have started for six years Fifteen have started for less than three years and the rest has newly open their business. Thus a major number of these entrepreneurs are found quite experienced, robust and straight foreword enough to endure against unfavorable business conditions besides tackling various type of probable customers and clients.

Thus all sample entrepreneurs are found engaged in the areas most of their feminine tests and knowledge and this is one of the reasons for their sustained growth. They can easily take up their activities without ignoring their responsibilities towards the family.

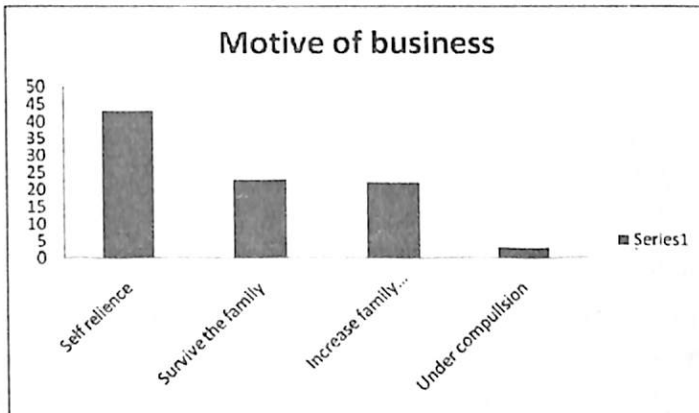
### V.iii. Moto of business :

It is very important to know the reasons why the women entrepreneurs have started their business and adopt as a profession

instead of doing any private job or any Government service. During survey an attempt has made to know their motive why they have started the business.

From the following figure, the motive of female entrepreneurs can be easily understood.

**Figure: Motive of business.**



The major part of respondents 43(47.3%) have started their business with a motive to attain self reliance in life.23 (25.3%) women have started their enterprise for survival of the family and 22(24.2%) become entrepreneur to increase the family income and as well as to attain self reliance.03 (3.3%) women joined the business after the death of their husband, as the only bread earners to the family.

#### **V.iv. Support of the family**

It is said that behind a successful man there is a woman, but every successful women there is a family. To gain economic empowerment and to become a successful entrepreneur, every woman needs moral support from her family.

From the survey, it is found that almost all the women entrepreneurs reveal that they get full moral support from their family members, parents, husband and children. One married

entrepreneur express that though she had started her business before marriage, the spouse and the other in laws want her to be confined at home doing house hold chores for the family and relatives.

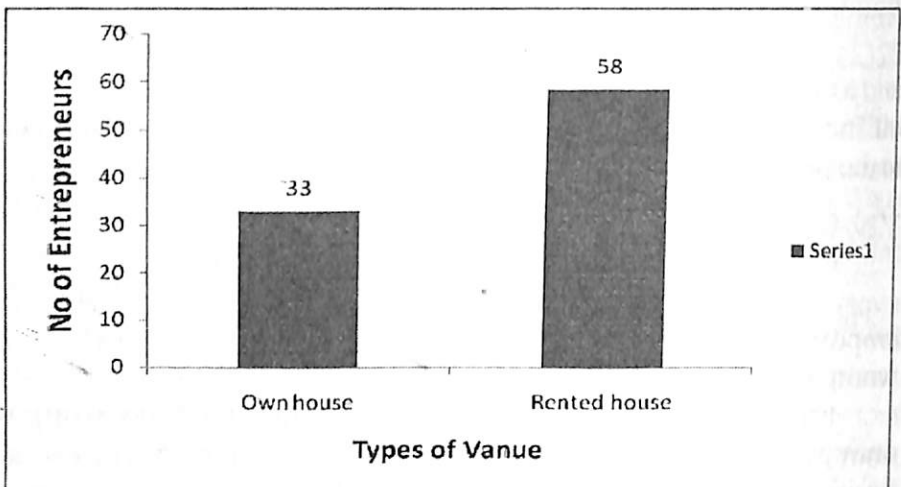
#### V. v. Venue of enterprise:

It is very important for an entrepreneur to locate his/her site for enterprise, because proper location is core way for success. Therefore, during survey an attempt has been made to know the place, where the entrepreneurs have selected their place or venue for business.

33(36.3%) sample women have started their business in their own houses saving precious capital whatever how it is, from paying in rented house and other mental anxieties in preparing agreements, searching for shed or houses etc. Another 58(63.7%) sample women reported that they have started in rented house and in search of proper place to change their business venue for development.

The following figure has shown the types of venue of enterprise of sample entrepreneurs.

**Figure : Venue of enterprise**



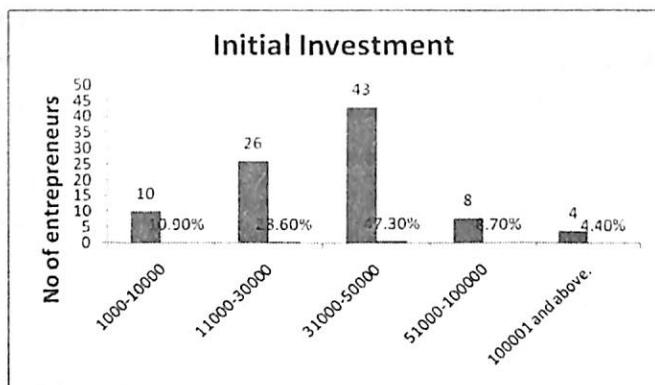
### V.vi Initial Investment :

The initial investment of capital is very much important to open an enterprise. The financial ability of an entrepreneur makes the business small, medium or large one.

During survey, an attempt has been made to know about the initial investment and the sources of funds .It is found that almost all sample women arrange the initial investment from their own funds and relatives. Family members and relatives constitute a major source of capital for their enterprise without interest. Only 06(6.6%) women borrowed capital from Nationalised Bank to start their business. But 32(35.2%) women take loan from Non Banking Financial Institutions (Private) for the expansion of their business later.18 (19.8%) women avail some governmental stipend and subsidy.

It is found that the capital investment of these entrepreneurs is very tiny.10 (10.9%) women have invested capital between Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 10,000, 26(28.6%) between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 30,000, 43(47.3%) between Rs. 31,000 to Rs. 50,000.( highest group). Another 08(8.7%) women invested between Rs. 51,000-100000 in initial stage. Only 4(4.4%) women initially invest more than 100001 and above. These women fall in the group of newly started entrepreneurs.

**Figure: Initial investment of Entrepreneurs.**



### **V.vii. Profit & Employment generation :**

Regarding the profits earned by the entrepreneurs, 22(24.2%) earn above Rs. 60,000 yearly while 29(31.9%) respondents earn profit between Rs. 40,000 to Rs. 60,000. From the rest 14(15.4%) earn between Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 40,000 and 20(23%) earn between Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 20,000. 6(6.5%) women are earning Rs. 5,000 to 10,000 per annum. The business ventures are found highly rewarding considering the efforts and investments made by the individual units towards it.

The numbers of employment provided by the respondents are 1 to 8 persons from different category. One entrepreneur provided employment as many as 60 persons, most of them are found to be women.

### **VI. Problems :**

The greatest barrier to women entrepreneur is their being a woman. They have to face economic problems, social problems and family problems. 03(3.3%) respondent faced family problem-their husband, in laws are less understanding and less cooperative. They are opposed to economic independence as this may lead to domestic indiscipline and disobedience. Because once a woman becomes self-reliant, the traditional superiority of the husband or in laws will be stake, as she will no longer depend upon them for food, clothing etc.

28(30.8%) of them have plans for the expansion of their business for the future. But due to lack of money they could not do so. Financial Institutions are moved but the strict norms, unnecessary formalities, paper works along with the insistence of guarantee, high security stand on their way create problems. Only 12(13.2%) respondents are helped by the government scheme especially for women entrepreneurs and they participate in different

extension market like trade fair at state and national level.

The women are having basic indigenous knowledge, skill, potential and resources to establish and manage an enterprise but the lack of knowledge regarding accessibility to loans from various funding agencies, lack of awareness on government welfare programs make problems to some respondents.

Some of entrepreneurs face problems due to absence of formal and informal training for entrepreneurial skill development. Some of them faced problems specially marketing their products.

### **VII: Economic Empowerment -**

The study revealed that all most all the women entrepreneurs are quite happy and have satisfaction being a lady entrepreneur. They enjoy the economic freedom and social independence. They gained more experience as year goes by and these help them to solve different problems intelligently. They can take decisions; acquire risk bearing capacity for their business. They are confident about the future prospect of their ventures. The devotion and dedication towards their duty make them economically and socially empowered. They feel proud that their enterprises not only made themselves independent, but have opened opportunities to many other families, whom they have employed in their business and this make them confident to earn their livelihood saving many hours of precious labour, had they been unemployed. Their enterprises make many something of their own and set example inspiration of standing on their own feet with confidence, endurance and challenge.

### **VIII. Suggestion:**

- a. All the women should have economic independence so that their social status can be improved.
- b. The awareness about entrepreneurship should be

- developed from the childhood so that they can easily take some activities which can relieve the parents from economic hardship, thus creating urge to work for money.
- c. They should have hard working attitude, self confidence, self control and dedication towards their work.
  - d. Women should have some vocational and technical knowledge so that they can start some business in future when necessary. These can be started as hobbies first and later to business. Gardening, toy making, tailoring, pickle making, Jam and Jelly making, Knitting, Handloom weaving are some aspects they can take. The entrepreneurs should employ modern technology where ever possible which saves time, energy and enhances efficiency. Quality, innovation and customer satisfaction are most important.
  - e. Apart from this adequate arrangement of finance must be made available without many restrictions so that viable project does not suffer for want of institutional credit. The different agencies may come forward to provide short term training program for the requirements of these entrepreneurs.
  - f. Special training facility for different courses should be offered for women entrepreneurs to improve their skill in different fields.
  - g. The district administration can help women entrepreneur in marketing their product at various level.
  - h. Educational Institute in collaboration with various Govt. and non Govt. agencies can organize different entrepreneurship development programs specially for women.
  - i. Making provision of micro finance and enterprise credit system to women entrepreneur at local level.

- j. Women entrepreneur should try to upgrade themselves in changing time by using different advance technology so that they can compete with other.

### **IX. Conclusions:**

Though women play a major role in different sectors their contribution is hardly recognized. The attitude towards women must be changed. In the male dominated society more and more women should take up entrepreneurship as their career in both traditional and non-traditional products and services. But the majority of them are not interested and frightened of the problems; they are likely to be faced in course of entrepreneurship. Education about different problems of business and managerial skills is essential. Most of the women entrepreneurs are not aware of the incentives, assistance and subsidies provided by Government. The different Govt. authorities should give wide publicity in this regards. The banks should provide financial assistance to the women entrepreneurs without many formalities.

In order to accelerate the growth of women entrepreneurs there should be proper co-ordination among the banks, financial institutions and District Industries centers in the District.»

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# Wage and Employment of Female Labour in the Char Areas of Assam

**Farheena Rahman**

## **I. Introduction:**

Agriculture is the main activity of char villages since opportunities of other off farm activities are marginal in these areas. These people settled in the riparian areas lead a life of marked isolation from the main land. These people are mostly restricted by the physical barriers as well as extreme socio-economic backwardness. They suffer from lack of transport and communication facilities. The people here survive in the hostile natural environment of flood and erosion and without basic amenities of life (Rahman F, 2011).

The landlords basically linguistic minority dominated char areas own and control the largest landholdings. They do not participate in the major manual activities in agriculture and depend entirely on the labour of others for their living. The level of living of Agricultural labourer is entirely dependent on the wages in these areas. The female agricultural labour which is not equally visible in all char areas is found to be the lowest stratum of the char peasant society. The women in the char areas of Assam having linguistic minority dominance found to be less involved in the agricultural activities due to some socio-cultural reasons. However, the char area of

tribal dominance shows a different scenario. There is high participation of females in agricultural activities in these areas. As there is lack of modernization of agriculture in these areas, the female labourers are hired in almost all the activities like sowing of seeds to hand weeding, harvesting and post harvest operations except ploughing. Ownership of land is almost non-existent for female workers. They also do not have the right over their own earnings. Moreover, although the female worker's contribution to the household income is significant in the char areas, they are found to be more disadvantaged and discriminated against their male counterparts.

While studying about status of female workers and woman's role in agriculture, literature reveals that, female workers constitute 90 percent of the total marginal workers of the country. The gender division of labour ensures that women get on average 30 percent of lower wages than men (Goswami N., A K. Bordoloi 2013). Another study of Mehra and Gammaye (1999) highlighted that the increased involvement of women in agriculture may be due to out migration of males from low paid agriculture to high paid industry. The low wage informal sector continues to be the important employer of poor women in developing and transition countries. Agarwal's (2013) study reveals that countries of Africa and Asia are experiencing feminization of agriculture where women disproportionately depend on agriculture-based livelihoods. A study of Krishnaraj M and A. Kanchi (2008) finds that women continue to get discriminated in the agricultural sector.

In this scenario, the present paper is a study of char wages and employment situation of the female agricultural labourers and thereby studies the status of this least privileged section of the society. The study reveals that the real wages of the female agricultural labourers in these least developed areas are set at the level which is inadequate for subsistence of the female workers.

## **II. Methodology:**

Two sample villages are selected purposively from two different char areas with Missing Tribe dominance namely Balijan Chapori and linguistic minority dominance Bandhali char. The sample unit consisted of female agricultural labourers who are engaged in agricultural operations, not in their own field but in other's field against wages.

A total of 150 sample households are collected from the sample villages. Focus group discussion has been used to derive the data. The mean and the standard deviation of total full days of employment are calculated in the analysis. The high value of standard deviation indicates the high uncertainty of getting a job and low standard deviation indicates less uncertainty.

## **IV. Empirical Results and Discussions:**

The large landowners create maximum employment for agricultural labourers in the char areas. Sometimes, landless agricultural labourer who leased in small portion of land also hire in labour but this is very much minimal.

Although char agriculture can be said as family based peasant agriculture, but if we study wage labourers, basically two types of agricultural labourers are observed. They are casual labourers and attached labourers. Share cropping is also commonly found in the sample villages. Landless peasants, marginal and also medium peasants supply labour power in the char labour market. Female agricultural labourers are found as both casual and attached labourers. Casual labour is a dominant form of agricultural labour found among both men and women. Casualisation of female labour is mainly due to unprofitable crop production and migration of male labourers from the char areas to mainland areas for employment. Migration of men has been noticed to other rural areas and to cities of highly labour-exploitative sectors like

construction. The poor, illiterate landless female wage labourers are involved in agricultural activities as a response to their low socio-economic conditions. The female casual labourers work on daily basis for eight hours and the wage is paid either in cash or kind and sometimes both in cash and kind.

The sample villages are dependent mainly on hired casual labour. But family labour use in agriculture is also very distinctly important. Among the hired labour, the casual labour is distinctly more important than the attached labour in both the sample villages. The agricultural season is divided into three main seasons namely, summer and rabi and kharif. Kharif season is a season of inundation in the char areas.

Female agricultural labourers are also found in irregular employment. Since a recognised feature of char employment is its seasonality. Intensity of employment varies according to seasons. A large portion of labour remains unemployed or under-employed during the slack season. The following table shows the average number of days of employment for female casual agricultural labourers.

**Table 2**  
Average number of days of employment of female casual agricultural labourers during 2007-2010

Village	Summer		Kharif		Rabi		Total Mean Days
	Mean days	SD	Mean days	SD	Mean days	SD	
Bandhali	34	4.92	21	5.78	23	5.04	78
Balijan Chapori	48	4.87	33	5.52	29	4.96	110

*Source: Primary Survey*

It is observed from the above table that mean days of employment is quite low for female workers but it is fairly evident

that female participation in agriculture in tribal dominant char area is relatively high. In some farm activities, female labourers are preferred to male workers due to nature of the work and low wage payment made to the female labourers. Socio-cultural norm is found to be a determinant of female participation of farm activities in Bandhali char which is dominated by linguistic minority.

The average number of days each female agricultural labourer gets employment in each village is not similar in all the seasons. In summer season, the female agricultural labourers get maximum days of employment. They get maximum number of days of employment in weeding followed by harvesting and post harvest operations. Although uncertainty of getting a job is less in both summer and rabi seasons than kharif season, the casual labour market is relatively risky market in all the seasons. The risk element is exacerbated by regular flood and erosion. Kharif season generally generate less employment due to normal flood. Again, Casualisation of agricultural work leads to seasonal employment without any contract. This causes woman to suffer from excessive working hours and insecurity of not knowing if they will receive employment tomorrow. Since the agricultural labourers in all the areas are unorganized, there is minimum difference among the calculated standard deviations of the villages.

It is seen that majority of the female agricultural labour in the char areas work on a casual basis and the most important wage system happens to be the daily wage rate. The wages of the female agricultural labourers are paid either in cash or in kind or both in cash and kind. The Tables 4, 5 and 6 reveal the nominal wage variation of the female agricultural labour across different activities. Wage rates are found low in these sample villages. This indicates the female agricultural labour has very little bargaining power. In the sample villages of Balijan Chapori a part of wage is also paid

**Table 6**

Wage Rates (cash + kind) of Female Agricultural Labourers in the Sample Chars (in Rs) at a point of time

Village	Land preparation	Sowing	Transplanting	Harvesting	Boiling and drying
Bandhali	80	80	90	90	80
Balijan Chapori	80+15	80+15	100+15	100+15	80+15

*Source: Primary survey, 2009-10*

**Table 7**

Wage Rates (cash + kind) of Male Agricultural Labourers in the Sample Chars (in Rs) at a point of time

Village	Land preparation	Sowing	Ploughing	Transplanting	Harvesting	Boiling and drying
Bandhali	110	110	120+ 10	120	120	110
Balijan Chapori	100+15	100+15	120+ 10	120+15	120+15	100+15

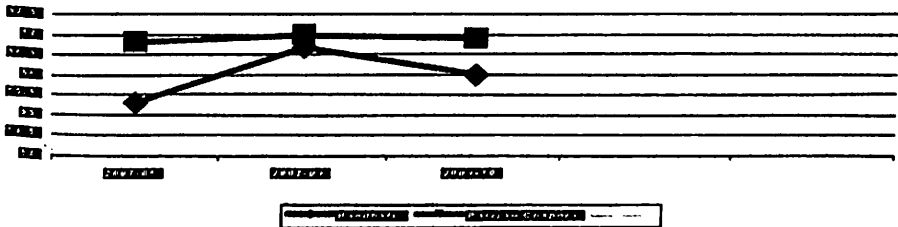
*Source: Primary survey, 2009-10*

Although the wage income of the female labourers increases in the peak agricultural seasons, payments are always lower than the minimum wage decided by the government in all the seasons. A comparative study of wages (Table 7) and the seasonal variation of the nominal wage income of the male labourers who are involved in all agricultural activities including muscular activities like ploughing reveals that the wage rate of male labourers are found relatively higher than the wage rates of the female labourers in all the activities. This may be due to the nature of the activities and the better bargaining power of the male labourers. Normally, the demand as well supply of the male labourers is higher than the female labourers in the sample char villages. It has been found that the female workers

often lack the information necessary to even negotiate a fair wage and do not possess bargaining power. Low level of livelihood, rampant poverty, lack of employment alternatives, weak bargaining power, no control over own wage are the powerful evidences against the socially sanctioned subsistence wage of female agricultural labour in the sample villages. The female agricultural workers in the char areas have limited access to medical, social and governmental services as a result of the physical and geographical, cultural and language barriers, discrimination and seclusion from society. These add to women's lack of safety at the workplace and their inability to claim their rights. It has been found that female agricultural workers contribute significantly in household income in all sample villages and their earnings are crucial for the small and landless households. But they do not possess control over their income. The following diagram reports the changes in the real wage rates of the female casual agricultural labourers in different villages.

### Diagram 1

Graphic representation of the variation in the real wage



The real value of the cash component of the wage rates recorded presents the real value of cash component of wage rates using CPIAL as deflator. As the real wage varies in between 55.3 to 57, the days of employment increases by 2 to 3 percent in the sample villages. This analysis of the real wage and employment in

char agriculture of Assam show that there is an insignificant increase in the real wages in first two years which follows slight decrease. The rise in their wages and levels of consumption has been meager in char agriculture. It clear that the rise in money wages lagged behind price changes leading to reduced real wage rates. The erosion of the real wage rates indicates that the material condition of the female agricultural labourers has worsened over the years.

As regards decision-making, status of female agricultural workers is found to be poor. It is found that in the sample villages, the participation rate of women in agriculture is mostly governed by the economic condition of their family. Women from poor families accept any economic work to assist their family even under very inferior working conditions. They are mainly supplementary earners. Based on the analysis on wage and employment, the status of the female agricultural workers is found to be deprived. The female labourers do not have ownership of land. They also do not have the right over their own earnings. Women agricultural workers get low wage compared to the male workers for equivalent work. The sample char lands are home of the labourers consists of the poorest and most vulnerable women living constantly under natural, social and economic threats. As the female labourers do not have right over the wage money to spend, therefore access to wage employment does not have any impact in improving the status of these marginal workers. Although women have increased their share in the labour force but gender discrimination remains strong in the agricultural labour ground. Gender gap is viewed to be shrinking in the labour force participation in some of the sample areas, however, poor and depriving situation of female labourers are visible particularly in the economically backward char areas. In such context, feminization of agricultural labourers is crucial to make women access to productive assets. However, women's domestic status is also to be looked after in this regard to rework the gender relation within and outside household. »

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# Status of Women in Islam and Present Scenerio

**Roselin Jahan  
Abu Hanifa**

## **Introduction :**

In ancient time there was no place for women in society. Girl child was buried alive and female infanticide also prevalent in that age. Even in Europe and other comparatively advance countries also the position of women is not improved remarkably. But gradually their position was improved and now they are equal to men and in some cases they are more than equal compared to their other halves.

These dark days for women were common at the time of birth of prophet Mahammad. Muslim believed that Quran and Hadiths were the main guiding factors for Muslims. Not only people belong to Islamic faith but all human beings may follow the teachings of Quran. Muslim also believed that God created all human beings not only the Muslims.

It is clearly mentioned in Quran that Almighty created both Men and Women and in His eyes both are equal.

## **Position of Muslim Women :**

Women were not enjoying any honourable position at that

time when Hazrat Mahammad came to this earth about fifteen hundredths years ago. But Mahammad gradually engaged himself to spread the teachings of Islam among the common people. Let us mentioned some of them.

The first word in Quran is IQRA means read. With this word Quran not discriminate the men and women. It called upon both men and women to read. It is also mentioned that for earning knowledge if necessary go to China and going to China from Mecca or other places of Arab country was a painstaking journey and it is also true that there were no Islamic teachings in China but China cultivating modern education and for that persons belongs to Islamic faith were advised to go to China. And in that calling both men and women were advised to go not only men.

People belongs to Islamic faith believes that Adam was the first human being created by God and from him He created Eve as a life partner of Adam. They were at the beginning passed their days in Heaven. But disobeying the order of creator they have taken forbidden fruits and thrown away from Heaven. In no where it is mentioned that Eve was responsible for taking forbidden fruits but both were responsible for that incident.

At the time of marriage the consent of bride is an important condition. Nobody can force a girl even her parent to marry a person without her consent. During this modern age also Dowry is common especially in India. To fulfil the dowry demand some parent has no alternative but to sale their property and if they failed to provide dowry then committing of suicide by girl is also reported. But in Islam not the bride but the bridegroom used to give some amount of money at the time of marriage and that too with the consent of bride which is called Mahr.

Muslim women has proper share in her ancestral properties. These are her own property and she is sole authority of this property.

Divorce is allowed in Islam but there are some conditions are attached to it. It is not the rights of husband alone who can divorce his wife but women have equal right.

Polygamy is allowed in Islam and it was restricted to four wives. This was mainly allowed when it was observed that percentage of men is decreasing due to mainly war. But at the same time it is also attached that give equal treatment to all wives.

Female infanticide and burying alive the girl child is also a custom in Arab world during Dark Age before Mahammad was born. But Hazrat Mahammad said that if a father takes care of her two daughters equally with son then Mahammad will be personally with him on the day of judgement and God will permit him to go to Heaven. It was also clearly mentioned that female infanticide or burying girl child alive is a sin like murder.

Women are allowed to take any honourable employment even in battle field. Nobody including her husband can claim over her earnings. But on the other hand it is responsibility of husband to take full care of his wife even working wife.

Women have to perform Namaj, Haz etc as their men counterpart. Even they were allowed to enter mosque during the life time of Hazrat Mahammad. Eid prayer is compulsory for men and optional for women but women are not disallowed to offer Eid prayer.

### **Present Scenerio :**

Though comparatively modern society is advanced yet in some places they are not allowed to earn modern education. It was reported in Media that few years back in Bangladesh a husband chopped the limbs of his wife as a punishment to go to school. Choosing profession also restricted by society in our country also.

Working women has no control over her own income in some

so called educated families also which is totally against the teachings of Islam.

Divorce is allowed in Islam but there is some restriction and divorcee should get proper maintenance. But we observe in our society that it is sole authority of husband to divorce his wife at any time and not interested to pay the maintenance.

Let us mention the Sahebanoo case. Sahebanoo a resident of Indore, Bhupal was divorced by her advocate husband Md Ahmed Khan when she was 62 years old and having five children. When she approached Supreme Court for proper maintenance from her husband under section Cr PC 125 then Supreme Court allowed her petition. But Muslim orthodox section opposed this judgement and bowing down to this orthodox Muslim then Rajib Gandhi Government enacted a law christened as Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act 1986 which barred Muslim women to approach the court for maintenance U/S 125 CrPC. At this age where a Muslim Women divorced if not provided maintenance by her husband - this question was not addressed by parliament at that time.

Muslim is allowed to marry four wives at a time but our society ignored the condition attached to it. How can a person give equal treatment to all his four wives because as a human being we can't give equal treatment to all our children? But in our society beggars also have more than one wife.

Women are not allowed to offer prayer in mosque but were allowed during the time of Hazrat Mammad. Even during pilgrimage women are allowed to enter in Mosque, they are allowed to enter Jame Masjid, Delhi or Hazratbal Masjid in Kashmir. Orthodox Muslim clerics have no satisfactory answer to this question.

Begging is not encouraged by Islam. When person went to Mahammad for some help then Mahammad give an axe to him to earn money through his labour. But now beggars are increasing

day by day in Muslim society.

Most of Muslim women failed to get inheritance right on her ancestral properties or on properties of her husband.

**Conclusion :**

The educated people of the society come forward to explain the Quran and Hadiths but Muslim religion is controlled by persons having no knowledge of modern education. These orthodox sections have no scientific explanation on any problem but by force they are going to establish their points. ❧❧

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**Acknowledgement :**

The authors are grateful to Hrishikesh Bhuyan, Librarian ADP College Library for allowing us to use the college library.

# A Glance on the bravery of Assamese women during the period of the Ahom Rule

**Minamuddin Ahmed**

According to Hans Kohn, there is a natural tendency in the human being to love his birth place or the place of his childhood, its climate, surroundings, hills and valleys, rivers and trees<sup>1</sup>. Such feelings of patriotism was deeply rooted in the mind of all people irrespective of male or female, from the rulers and the Great *Gohains* down to the ordinary people throughout the entire period of the Ahom rule in Assam. In our patriarchal society however, heroism of menfolk is generally highlighted in the pages of *Buranjis*. The heroic activities rendered by large number of women for the cause of their motherland finds little importance. Their work, their labour and their contribution to the society have been made invisible. Gerda Lerner had remarked, "men and women made civilisation together. Women like men have been the actors and agents in history and have been central and not marginal to the making of civilisation"<sup>2</sup>. This work presents only a very small portion of the much larger field of research to reveal patriotism and heroic deeds of some well-known and common women folk in

dealing with their enemies during the entire period of the Ahom rule.

The prolonged rule of the Ahoms extending for long six centuries beginning with the thirteenth century till the introduction of British rule in the early nineteenth century was packed with heroic deeds of Assamese women. Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom dynasty left Mongmao in 1215 AD and entered the Upper Brahmaputra valley with 'heavy arms' and 9000 soldiers in 1228 AD. He was accompanied by his three Queens, two sons and one daughter<sup>3</sup>. The Queens and daughter of Sukapha remained with him in his crucial moments of fighting the ferocious tribes. Also, they had to bear a lot in their long hazerdous journey from Mungkon to the Brahmaputra valley, covering in thirteen stages and in thirteen years. Sukapha finally established his headquarter at Charaideo in 1253 AD. Here, the monarch passed away in 1268 AD, after laying the foundation of the Tai-Ahom kingdom in the Brahmaputra valley which lasted for long six hundred years.

Since the very inception of the Ahom rule, the women had been playing remarkable role in various aspect like maintaining relation to the royal families or in matters of state's administration and in fighting with the enemies. The *Tungkhungia Buranji* contains a number of references to such women who played active role in various fields. For instance, the women of the royal or aristocratic families assisted the administration by advising the king or nobles at crucial moments. This is evidenced by the fact that the king or other officials acting on the advice of the royal women achieved political or strategic success. Also, there are number of references of the wit and wisdom of the common women, their sense of independence, courage and self respect with which they could uphold the dignity of a society. There are stories like that of Ramai and

Ratani<sup>4</sup>. Ratani, the beautiful wife of Ramai protected herself from the lustful eyes of the king with courage and showed that women had courage enough to defy even royal authority. Similarly, Rang Farpi Rong Bey, a Mikir (Karbi) woman in the thirteenth century struggled against the Kachari king while the later inhumanly tortured the women by placing baby tiger for breast feeding on them. Rong Bey protested against the autocratic ruler with axe in her hands and thus saved those women from the torture of the Kachari king<sup>5</sup>.

The valiant queen of the Chutiya king Chandranarayan named Sadhani preferred death to surrender in the hands of the Ahom army during the reign of Suhungmung Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 AD). She committed suicide by throwing herself from the top of the Chandragiri hill. During the reign of Suhungmung, Turbak khan, a Muslim general from Bengal invaded the Ahom kingdom and defeated the Ahom army where the Ahom general Phrasengmung lost his life. The *Buranjis* narrate that on hearing the death of Phrasengmung, his valiant wife Mula Gabharu herself proceeded to the battle field on horse-back along with five other women and died fighting against Turbak<sup>7</sup>.

King Suklenmung or Gargayan Raja (1539-53) while interfering the boundary dispute between Mogaung and Burma formed an alliance by marrying Chao-Sing, the daughter of the Mogaung king. This Shan princess accepted the Ahom king as her beloved husband and she showed her devotion to the Ahom kingdom. She possessed qualities of head and heart and was noted for her scholarly genius and intelligence. With her courage and personality, she could influence much on the king in matters of defence and administration of the kingdom. It was at her instance that the capital at Garhgaon was fortified with strong ramparts all round. *Buranjis* also records that it

was at her emphasis that the office of the Barpatra Gohain, the third great minister of the Ahom kingdom was created. Thus records a *Buranji*, the queen told the king, 'A cooking pot can keep its balance only when it is placed over three stools. How do you expect to maintain balance to the pot with two stools only?'

During the reign of Sukhampha alias Khora Raja (1552-1603 AD), the Ahoms after their defeat in the hands of the koches agreed to pay huge amount of money and gold and also to send the sons of the three Gohains, as hostages to the koch kingdom. *Buranjis* record that Nangbakla Gabharu, the valiant wife of Ton-khan Bargohain very bravely protested the humiliating treaty. Appearing in the court, she rebuked the king and his ministers for acknowledging subordination of the koches. She boldly uttered, 'though I am a woman, I shall fight with the koch king and let him know how a female can fight with a male.' Saying this, she snatched away her son from her husband and remaked in front of all present in the court, 'my son can be offered as hostage only when the current of the river Dikhou can be reversed'<sup>10</sup>. The king was ashamed of himself at it. Ultimately he honoured the spirit and sentiment of the valiant lady and sent the king's brother instead. Mirjumla's occupation of Garhgaon in 1662 AD and the Ahom king Jaydhaj Singha's (1648-63) flight to the jungle of 'Namruk' was severely criticised by a female hawker. *Buranjis* record that the lady accused king Jaydhaj Singha seriously in his presence when he failed to protect the motherland from the hands of the Mughals<sup>11</sup>. Ramani Gabharu, the daughter of king Jaydhaj Singha and Pakhari (Pakhari was the daughter of Mumai Tamuli Barbarua and sister of Lachit Barphukan and Laluk Sola Barphukan) was sent to the Mughal harem at her minor age and was married later to Sultan Azam Tara, the third son of

emperor Aurongzeb. She was named Rahmat Banu. Her uncle Laluk Sola Barphukan, with a view to occupy the Ahom throne sought help from Sultan Azam, as a reward for which he proposed to surrender Gauhati to the Mughals. It mourned Ramani Gabharu much who wrote a very lively and spirited letter to her uncle urging him not to take this ignoble action and stating that surrendering Gauhati means offering the heart of Assam to the Mughals<sup>12</sup>. Ramani Gabharu will always be remembered for her passionate longing for her motherland and people.

Jaymati Kunwari, the wife of prince Gadapani or Gadadhar Singha furnishes the glorious example of supreme self-sacrifice and love for her motherland. She was greatly confident that her husband was the right man of the hour to end the prevailing socio-political anarchy and terror in the country. She, inspite of inhuman torture inflicted on her, never uttered a single word about the whereabouts of her husband and at last sacrificed her life for the good of the country.

King Siva Singha (1714-44 AD) was much influenced by his three consorts; Phuleswari, Ambika and Sarbeswari who directly ruled the kingdom assuming the title 'Bar-Raja'. Phuleswari or Phulamati, who was a common dancing girl could raise herself to a position of 'Bar-Raja' because of her courage, talent and personality. She began to rule the kingdom and minted coins in the joint names of herself and her husband. She offered many important portfolios to her relatives. She had a great impact in the Ahom administration. Perhaps, she misused her power and inflicted inhuman torture on the Mayamara Vaishnava *Mahantas* both physically and morally, which served as one of the main reasons of the *Moamariya Vidruh* in 1769 AD. Phuleswari was succeeded by Ambika as 'Bar-Raja' who was a great patron of learning and education.

She was the inspiring soul behind the composition of the *Hasti Vidyarnava*, a work on elephantology of international fame.

Another valiant lady was Kuranganayani, the Manipuri queen of king Rajeswar Singha (1751-69). She was instrumental in terminating the Moamariya regime. After capturing the Ahom throne from Lakshmi Singha, Ragha Barbarua, the leader of the Moamariyas forcibly took Kuranganayani as his wife. However, the Manipuri queen of the deceased king Rajeswar Singha inflicted a ruinous blow to the newly founded Moamaria regime. Here, she showed extreme courage and intelligence. On the Assamese New Years' Day in 1770 AD, through the bravery and machination of Kuranganayani, Ragha was killed inside the palace by a *Huchary* party and the deposed king Lakshmi Singha was reinstated on the Ahom throne.

There were some valiant and talented women among the Morans, Kacharis and Koches also. Mention may be made of the two valiant wives of Nahar Khora (one of the leaders of the Moamariya *Vidruh*) named Bhatuki and Bhabuli, who very bravely fought against the mighty Ahom army during the Moamariya *Vidruh*. Towards the close of October, 1769, when Kriti Chandra Barbarua sent his men to cut timbers in the Moran area, the people of the locality led by the two wives of Nahar Khora Bhatuki and Bhabuli, who then took the names Radha and Rukmini strongly prevented the royal men from entering into the independent Moran area. The king Lakshmi Singha sent a contingent of two thousand soldiers under the command of a Tekela Bora named Bez, but the Ahom army met a serious defeat. He reported that the two female leaders were possessed supernatural powers by whose strength they could catch bullets in their *Chadars* or wrappers. Radha and Rukmini had played significant role in the Moamariya *Vidruh* who fought very courageously against the royal oppression.

Consequently, both Radha and Rukmini were put to death at Rangpur and Guwahati respectively<sup>14</sup>. In the second stage of the rebellion, women were even receiving military training under the leadership of Harihar Tati of the north bank<sup>15</sup>.

The Bodo women had shown their courage in various capacities. In this connection, we can take the name of Birgoushree, who fought bravely against the British sepoy in 1817 AD.

Thus, historical records reveal a large number of Assamese women who showed their undaunted courage, unparalleled patriotism, their capacity to sacrifice, personal interest and ambitions for the higher demands of their motherland, whom we must respect and remember in all the times to come.❧

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2. Gerda Lerner had discussed this concept that men and women built civilisation jointly, in the first two chapters of her book, *Creation of Patriarchy*, New York, 1986, p.4.
- 3 P. K. Buragohain, *Tai-Sanskriti*, ii 81. P. Gogoi, *The Tai and the Tai Kingdom in the Brahmaputra valley, Gauhati*, 1968, p. 254, 258.
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- 8 S. L. Baruah, *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, M. M. Publications, New Delhi, 3rd ed. 2007, p. 235.
- 9 S. K. Bhuyan (ed.) *Asam Buranji*, obtained from the family of Sukumar Mahanta, Gauhati, 1960, p. 27. Here, the 'two stools' means the two great Gohains, Borgohains and Buragohain, the two powerful ministers who had been functioning since the days of Sukapha.
- 10 Ahom-Buranji, Trans. 2 ed. G. C. Barua, Shillong, 1930, p. 88.
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# Women's Role In Society: An Observation

Mamoni Phukan Rajkhowa

"To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is a man's injustice to woman. If by strength it is meant moral power then woman is immeasurably man's superior. Has she not more self-sacrificing, has she not great powers of endurance, has she not greater courage? Without her man could not be. If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with women."

— Mahatma Gandhi

Women are the inherent part of our society and cannot be neglected assuming they possess less power and authority. They are created as a companion for men and men have to make her walk with them in the course of life. They play roles as a mother, a sister, a daughter, a wife. They play their roles with great responsibilities in upbringing of a healthy solid society, but women are in our so called modern world, still living in chains. The basic unit of society is a woman. As woman makes a family, family makes a home and homes make a society. So we should never think that a society would come into existence without the contribution of women. We all know that without education, no development is

possible. Here we have forgotten that the very first and best school of a child is its mother's lap. A good healthy society doesn't automatically emerge on its own and stands firm but it needs to be emerged and for its emergence women play a pivotal role. From behavioral to health education women have their hands in. It's a woman who teaches how to behave, how to speak and how to deal with different classes of people. These all are the basic fundamentals of a good society and women are the main contributors in building up a strong society.

The role of women in society has greatly been overseen in the last few decades, but now it is coming to a more perspective to people. In the early days women were seen as wives who were intended to cook, clean, and take care of the kids. They were not allowed to vote while men took care of having jobs and paying any bills that had to be paid. Soon enough it caught on that women should have a bigger role than what other people thought women should have. Women would have strikes and go on marches to prove that they should have rights just like everyone else. They faced discrimination like and other race that faced it. Women would voice their opinion in any way possible so that they could reach their goal and they did. Women have made vast improvements in their lifestyles in the past few decades from holding positions in governments to simple things like getting a job and supporting themselves. Men have a tendency to leave their wives due to the fact that they had their child and the father was not committed enough or not ready to be a father. Women are faced with more responsibility than men but also are faced with a lot more problems because they are looked at like a woman-"a bearer of children". It is a fact that men shouldn't abuse their wives and it's true, but they still are. Thousands of legal cases of domestic violence are seen throughout the country. Abortion is also another problem that women are faced with. Morality is an issue with this as women are

sometimes not ready to be a mother and their husbands or boyfriends have already left them. Men usually just walk away from the situation but women have to choose to either have the baby or have it aborted. Female foeticide is a problem unknown to none in any regions in the country. Recurrent acid throwing, wife beating, honour killings, forced prostitution, etc. are suppressing womanhood. Dowry system, the greatest curse of the Indian society is still showing its existence in some of our states and above all, rape has become one of the most serious challenges facing women in India. According to the latest government figures, a woman is now raped in India every 20 minutes. Statistics compiled by police show that there are more than 24,000 rape cases in India each year. Social workers and people involved in women's issues say these are grossly underreported figures. Most women do not report rape for fear of bringing shame to the family or being ostracized by it or even the village where they live. A global poll conducted by Thomson Reuters in 2012 rated India as the "fourth most dangerous country" globally for women, and the worst country for women among the G20 countries.

The world has treated women differently in terms of her rights and dues as compared to the men. Men have dominated the world and put the women in a separate perspective. If a woman is taught the semantics of dominating over men then it is possible for her to reverse the trends and traditions. Women only have to assert their abilities to perform all functions required of a dominant section of a society.

Looking at wisdoms in India, it is difficult to understand the discrimination of girls and women or the assaults happening on them at present. On one hand female Divinities are worshipped with greatest reverence, and on the other hand women have to deal with oppression and humiliation in political, social and economic aspects in their daily lives. An all-encompassing appraisal

considering possible reasons is doomed to failure.

The transition of woman from the past to present is worth mentioning. Woman who once considered being the masters in the art of home making are now considered to be the forces that shape a country. Modern Indian women have come a long way from playing the stereotypical role of a housewife to donning the roles of CEOs in leading Indian and foreign companies. Today, Indian companies boast of a high percentage of women CEOs. 11 per cent of Indian companies have women at the helm, a reason to cheer for India. Women like Chanda Kochhar MD and CEO, ICICI Bank, Shikha Sharma CEO, Axis Bank, Aruna Jayanthi CEO, Capgemini, Sonia Gandhi, the Congress president and many more have tried to show the brighter side. These inspiring leaders, heading companies ranging from banking, hospitality, food and beverages, pharma and information technology have turned into role models for many young women entrepreneurs and middle level managers across the country. Women are still stereotyped, many times, in regard to jobs. In many cases, a man is chosen over a woman in a particular field. Other stereotypes occur in language and in the media. Many textbooks, magazines, and other printed materials are written as "he," "him," or "man" when the intention is to be generic, such as "he/she," "him/her," or "man/woman." Other language intricacies also devalue women. In the media, women are still portrayed in television commercials, shows, and movies as the homemaker, housewife, and mother. Some have branched out to include women as a working woman; but, usually only if she is displayed as being single. In a majority of commercials, women are still in the stereotypical roles. How often do you see a man advertising a cleaning product? A woman may be shown to advertise car parts; but, this is generally done in a sexual and seductive manner--not as if she were knowledgeable about an engine.

If there is one thing I know for certain, it is that this has to stop. Traditions have to die. Change is to be brought. The world has to take a stance. We have to take a stance, you have to take a stance, and I have to take a stance. I am reaching out to you because I need your help. We have to end gender inequality - and to do that we need everyone to come up. We have to try and galvanize as many men and boys as possible to be advocates for change. This could be achieved from their homes. And we don't just want to TALK about it, but make sure it is tangible.

Feminism is defined as: "The belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes".

But my recent research has shown me that feminism has become an unpopular word. Women are choosing not to identify as feminist. Why has the word become such an uncomfortable one?

Women must be paid the same honor as my male counterparts but it is sad that no country in the world can yet say they have achieved gender equality.

No change could be possible without the participation of majority. Hence we need girls, boys, women & most importantly men. So here is my appeal to one and all, to be the change, and if not the change, be a part of the change. Here we have come across a juncture, where we might build the society which our forefathers dreamt of. The one based on knowledge and wisdom rather than based on gender. So, ask yourself-"if not you, who?" "If not now, when"?»»

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# Women in Commercial Advertisements: An Introspection

**Rajita Kalita**

Advertisement has been playing a vital role in the society. In most of the advertisements in media, it is seen that the focal point of the advs goes to be concentrated on women or women. Sometimes, the vulgarity through nude presentations, women are exploitatively used in the advertisement through media. The exploitative role played by the trading parties through advertisements. in media is really a burning issue of the society. Though media has the extraordinary role in social re-organization process, it is really a serious objection at the common's platform that women are presented almost commercially through the commoditization process. From the time immemorial in India women were considered with a subjective approach. Because women were created as a source of power. Sometimes women are represented as source of beauty, study, force, construction or destruction. The diversified and honourable roles of women in India had been beautifully presented in the written scriptures relating to Indian mythology, culture, history and society. If we relate women's role in culture and social reconstruction inspectively, we will undoubtedly face a gloomy picture.

Under the impact of western culture and materialistic pattern,

Indian age long civilization and culture have been facing lots of hurdles for their existence. Like a monster, consumerism has been going to destroy our culture and heritage. The unholy way of commercialization in media through advertisements women are dragged into the marketing hot spots and profitable situations and they are welcomed through that.

Ironically, we are observing international women's day (on March 8, of every year) on one hand for the freedom and all round development of women folk and on the other hand rescue millions and millions of women who are brutally exploited on each and every day. Under the name of marketing and trading of different consumable goods, women's bodies are shown openly in media through sensual advertisement. This 'body business' is spreading in such a way that millions of poor women have been adversely affected because of that. Commoditization of women's bodies has been adversely affecting India's age long cultural status and the great dignity towards women. Through the ill motivated marketing process affecting millions of women, some of the agencies have been yet publishing the whole process as women's liberation. But exhibition of body through commercial advertisements can never be called as women's liberation in true sense, rather it is women's subjugation or unwanted domination on women. Due to rampant poverty and unemployment, though some poor women are coming forward to take part in the advertisements of media, it is neither liberation nor development of women. It is simply an exploitation.

The history of advertisements goes back to the year 1422 AD. A person named William Caxton started the long and diversified history of advertisements through an advertisement of a particular brand of wine. With the help of advertisements different types of socially harmful commodities are opened up before the consumers and prospective consumers. The advertisers use more sensual and attractive advertisements for more harmful commodities. For

advertising different types of consumer durables women are used in different ways. For example, to advertise the commodities like washing soap, shaving cream or gel, body spray or perfume, it is questionable whether the half-naked body of women are needed. For sensitizing the uneducated groups of consumers, the companies and commercial groups are using lots of spices (in terms of dance, song, conversation) in the advertisements. And as a result, the women become the easy prey of the process. In such a critical situation, perhaps the advertisers try to forget that the particular woman is somebody's mother, sister or wife. Second important thing is that the same advertisement can be presented with the help of some men. It is really a dangerous situation of women's liberation in its true sense. Truly, women's liberation mean women empowerment. If a woman becomes empowered in her decision making procedure, then it can be said that it is the situation of women's liberation. But in our country almost 50% of total women suffered from illiteracy, unemployment and poverty. The decision making capacity of Indian women are also very miserable. Even the women are showing very bad performance in the earning field. It is not because of their weak mental status, it is caused by multiplicity of reasons. From various reports and study, it is seen clearly that women are mentally more powerful than men. But they are easily tortured and harassed by their male partners in and outside their work place. Dresses can never represent the smartness of a man or woman. But it is nasty business tactics of the companies that the women are presented with sensual dresses among the uneducated consumers. At this type of critical situations, the main responsibility goes to the younger generations. The young generations should be educated through cultural values. The mindset of the young generation should be constructed in such a way that they may project the women force with subjectivity not with objectivity. The role of media and its unrestricted movements should be reasonably analyzed by the young group of the society.

At this moment, women liberation movement is going on globally. Under the impact of Seudo liberal movement and money oriented mentality, some women wrongly interpret the meaning of women's liberation. The sensual advertisements with women's half naked bodies can never bring any kind of good results to the society. They are really one kind of unnecessary evil.

In case of dress code, it can be said that the good dress for women is that which is comfortable and useful. In the name of dresses, the companies are damaging the women's dignity.

Assamese society is a rural agriculture based Society. Presently education level has been quantitatively and qualitatively increasing. It is a good sign that literacy in general and women literacy in particular have been remarkably increasing. Under the impact of globalization, Assamese society is also not lagging behind as it is observed in different countries of the world. Because of development and modernization, each and every social indicators has been developing. But the age old cultural practices of Assamese society have its own identity. The moral strength and cultural consciousness are internal factures of Assamese society. In each and every side of development, women are going to establish their own identities. Hence the women fore should be very conscious for keeping the cultural elements undestroyed.

Our former prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru rightly observed that the education for a man is education for himself but education for a women is the education for the nation. Real education of woman can develop our society to a high heights. The women force should be always conscious enough for keeping their cultural elements. Humayun Kabir, the great writer once told that culture is the humanization of man in the society. Hence women should actively take part a their cultural upbringing. They should be conscious enough so that they cannot be used by others. The advertisers and media barons should never be allowed to use the women's body in their

ordinary advertisements. Women is not a name of commoditization process, it is a name of respectable agent of culture. Our present Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi is also campaigning for saving girls to save the country. It is right approach at right time. Hence, it is the time to fight against the ill forces with an inclusive attempt. The women should unitedly come forward for their actual liberation. It is the need of the hour.»»

*The article has been translated from Assamese in to English by Prof. Archana Talukdar.*

# Child Marriage : An Obstacle of Adolescent Girl

**Archana Das**  
**Jayanta Barman**

The term adolescence meaning "to emerge" or "achieve identity" is a relatively new concept, especially in development thinking. The origins of the term from the Latin word, 'adolescere' meaning "to grow, to mature" indicate the defining features of adolescence. Adolescents aged between 10-19 years account for more than one-fifth of the world's population. Internationally and as is with most UN agencies like WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA etc. the age group of 10-19 years is considered to be the age of adolescents.

Period	Average age	Boys age	Girls age
Pre-adolescence	10-12years	11-13years	10-11years
Early adolescence	13-16years	13-17years	12-16years
Late adolescence	17-21	18-21years	17-20years

*Source: Adopted from Hurlock E.B.(1981) Developmental psychology: A Life Span Approach*

Adolescence is characterized by physical maturation of the brain and body, giving rise to intense psychological and physical change. It represents the period of time during which a person experiences a variety of biological changes and involves dramatic transitions in the physical, social, sexual, and intellectual spheres. Adolescence is a crucial phase in the life of woman. At this stage, she stands at the threshold of adulthood. This stage is intermediary between childhood and womanhood and it is the most eventful for mental, emotional and psychological well being 18 years. The period of adolescence is a critical one, which profoundly influences girls future potential. It is a time of key transitions: from Girlhood to womanhood; from primary to secondary education; from education to work and family life. Too often, however, these transitions go wrong: with high drop-out rates from secondary school; early and forced marriage; exposure to violence, abuse and to HIV infection; and high maternal mortality. This period is cut short when marriage and adult responsibilities come too early. Adolescent girls are vulnerable. More than often, however, their predicaments are largely ignored. Very large number of adolescent girl enters matrimony and become young mothers before they have the opportunity to realize their full potential. All over the globe, violence and discrimination against women and girls violates their human rights and severely compromises young people's sexual and reproductive health. Harmful practices, including female genital cutting/mutilation, femicide, gender-based violence, and early marriage, damage girls' physical being and self-worth by reinforcing gender-based marginalization and inequality. Gender inequalities and biases pervade cultures worldwide, preventing women and girls from fully realizing their rights to reproductive health and equality.

### **What is child marriage**

The term "early marriage" is used to refer to both formal

marriages and informal unions in which a girl lives with a partner as if married before age of 18 (UNICEF2005; Forum on Marriage and the rights of women and girls 2001). For UNIFPA (2006) Early marriage, also known as Child marriage, is defined as "any marriage carried out below the age of 18 years, before the girl is physically, physiologically, and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and childbearing." In India Child marriage, is a marriage where either the woman is below age 18 or the man is below age 21 (The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006).

According to the most recent data available (DLHS 3), 43% of women aged 20-24 were married before 18. It is estimated that there are 23 million child brides in the country, approximately 40% of the child brides globally.

### **Child marriage in India**

The holy scriptures of the Vedas the sacred Hindu texts suggest that an individual should enter the phase of Grihastha " household" after his or her student life. According to the philosophy of the Vedas, there is a restriction on child marriage. The age of marriage for a boy is 25 years or more and that of a girl is 18 years or more. Child marriage, known as 'Bal Vivaha', is believed to have begun during the medieval ages of India. It was born from the same compulsions that perpetuated Sati. Child-marriage was not prevalent in ancient India. From the middle Age to the present day the custom of child marriage against Vedas persists in India. There are many reasons to believe that this custom originated in the medieval ages. The turbulent atmosphere of the medieval ages, law and order was not yet a universal phenomenon and arbitrary powers were concentrated in the hands of a hierarchy led by a despotic monarch. In India the Sultans of Delhi who held the place of the despotic monarch, came from a different type of culture.

They were orthodox in their beliefs with a fanatical commitment to their religion and a ruthless method in its propagation. Women as it is are at the receiving and during any war, arson, plunder, etc. During the reign of the Delhi Sultans these were the order of the day and the worst sufferers were Hindu women. During these dark days were spawned customs like child-marriage. The caste hierarchy also play in perpetuating this marriage system. Virginty is an important part of Indian culture, and parents want to ensure their daughters do not have pre-marital sex, and child marriage is an easy way to fix this. The practice could also have been perpetuated, especially among- the economically weaker sections, by the consideration of keeping marriage expenses to a minimum. It was believed during those times that if two persons know each other right from childhood it enhanced understanding and affection. Hence parents decided on the marriages of their children at a very early age although the daughter stayed with her parents until she attained the age of puberty.

### **Why does child marriage happen in India?**

Most child marriage involves underage women, many of whom are in poor socio-economic conditions. India has second highest child marriage (UNICEF). Traditional and cultural practices, beliefs, and negative community attitudes towards girls and women limit adolescent girls and young women from enjoying their full birthrights as citizen of the country. Women in India are comparatively backward socially, economically and politically compared to other countries. According to 2011 census the literacy rate of India 74.04% . It consists of male literacy rate 82.14% and female literacy rate is 65.46%. As girls get older, they are more likely to be asked by their families to of the family business, working in the fields and practicing child marriage. And that is the reason which pull away them from attending school every day.

States like Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh still have average age of marriage below the legal age of eighteen for females. In such remote areas age old customs and traditional are firmly anchored and in spite of the ban, child marriages are taking place without any restriction or fear. Bihar has the highest incidence of child marriage at 68% while Himachal Pradesh has the lowest incidence at around 9%.

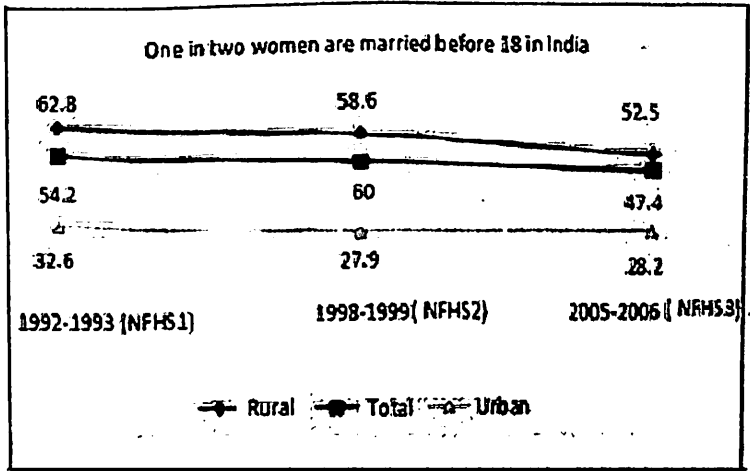


Fig.1. Trends in marriage below legal age for girls (NFHS)

Child marriage has many causes: cultural social, economic and religious. In many cases, a mixture of these causes results in the imprisonment of children in marriages without their consent.

**Poverty:** Child marriage is most common in the world's poorest countries and is often concentrated among the poorest households within those countries. It is closely linked with poverty and low levels of economic development. In families with limited resources, child marriage is often seen as a way to provide for their daughter's future. But girls who marry young are more likely to be poor and

remain poor. Where poverty is acute, giving a daughter in marriage allows parents to reduce family expenses by ensuring they have one less person to feed, clothe and educate. In communities where a dowry or 'bride price' is paid, it is often welcome income for poor families; in those where the bride's family pay the groom a dowry, they often have to pay less money if the bride is young and uneducated. Although giving or receiving dowry is a crime under the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, it is still a common practice. Gender discrimination: Child marriage is a product of cultures that devalue women and girls and discriminate against them. The discrimination often manifests itself in the form of domestic violence, marital rape, and deprivation of food, lack of access to information, education, healthcare etc.

Control over sexuality: Protecting girls against dishonor such as pregnancy outside of marriage is a frequently cited reason for child and early marriages, as a bride's worth is linked to her virginity in many cultures.

Custom and tradition: Where child marriage is prevalent there is strong social pressure on families to either conform or face ridicule, disapproval or family shame. Some parents believe that, by marrying their daughter at an early age, they are helping her to fulfill her main societal function that of wife and mother. They may also believe that they are providing her with protection by limiting sexual relations to only one partner (and therefore reducing the risk of STIs and HIV), and by ensuring some kind of financial stability for both the daughter and the family. Child marriage is a traditional practice that in many places happens simply because it has happened for generations - and straying from tradition could mean exclusion from the community. Security: Early marriage is one way to ensure that a wife is 'protected', or placed firmly under male control; that she is submissive to her husband and works hard for her in-laws' household; that the children she bears are

'legitimate'; and that bonds of affection between couples do not undermine the family unit. Parents may genuinely feel that their daughter will be better off and safer with a regular male guardian. **Trafficking:** Poor families are tempted to sell their girls not just into marriage, but into prostitution, as the transaction enables large sums of money to change hands. **Effects of child marriage on adolescent girls:** Child marriage is a violation of child rights. Whether it happens to a boy or a girl. The practice of child marriage is an obstacle to nearly every developmental goal: Eradicating poverty and hunger (MDG1); Achieving universal primary education (MDG2); Promoting gender equality (MDG 3); Protecting children's lives (MDG 4); and Improving women's health (MDG5, MDG6).

**Education:** Child brides are often forced to drop out of schools, Girls are being pulled out of school to become brides and their role in society is often limited to being wives. Being forced into an early marriage creates a lifetime of poverty. Denial of personal development and education, blocking any opportunity to gain vocational and life skills. Child brides lost their "Right to education". Child marriage is a complete violation of a child's human rights, self-worth and dignity. It denies girls participation in decision-making, recreation, and space of their own.

**Health:** Child marriage affects girl children's reproductive and sexual health. Premature pregnancy and motherhood are an inevitable consequence of child marriage. Adolescent mothers are twice as likely to die of complications arising out of pregnancy compared to women 20 years or older. The infant mortality rate (IMR) is 40 percent higher for adolescent mothers than for adult mothers 107.3 and 78.5 per thousand live births respectively according to National Plan of Action for Children (2005). Maternity-related deaths represent the largest cause of death. Childbrides are at risk of early childbearing with its inherent

health risks, domestic violence and HIV. A vast number of girls are married at the teenage. It leads to teenage pregnancy and various physiological problems. In rural India nearly 60 percent of married girls bear children before they are 19. Almost one third of all babies suffer from malnutrition, under weight and risk of mortality.

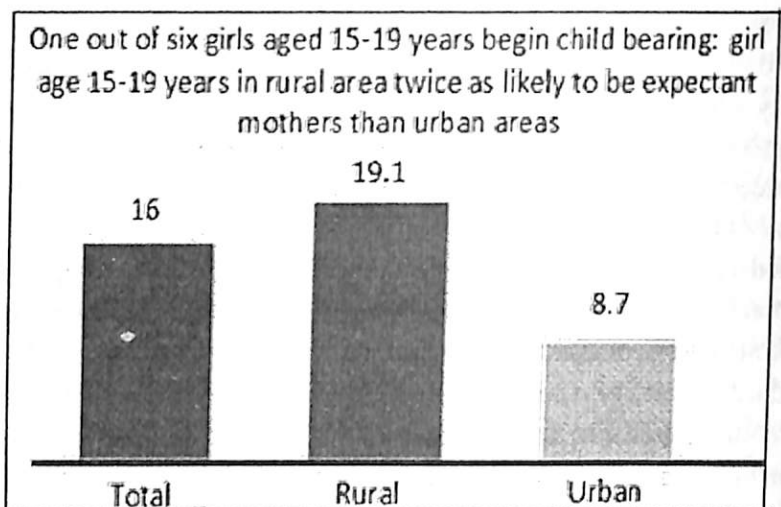


Fig.2. Young girls who have begun childbearing (NFSH2005-2006)

Because of malnutrition, over burden of work, illiteracy, ignorance of the sex-behavior these pregnant girls take high risk of life. In India, women have on an average 8-9 pregnancy and they spend around 80% of their reproductive years in pregnancy and lactation. Low income group pregnant women have deficiency of 1,100 calories and lactating women 1,000 calories.

The babies of child brides are sicker and weaker and many do not survive childhood. These young girls are at an increased risk of chronic anemia and obesity. Child brides have poor access

to contraception. Women of the lower socio-economic groups gain only around 3-5 kgs during pregnancy, which is far less than the required weight. Anemia in pregnancy accounts directly 15 to 20% of all material deaths in India. Child brides have a higher risk of being infected with sexually transmitted diseases. Married girls may be more likely to contract sexually transmitted disease, including HIV/AIDS, than unmarried girls. Young girls are more physically susceptible to STD's, have less access to reproductive education and health services and are often powerless to demand the use of contraception.

### **Violations of Human Rights**

Child marriage is a violation of a girl's sexual and reproductive rights, which include the rights to:

- \* The highest attainable standard of sexual health
- \* Be free from coercion, discrimination, violence and abuse
- \* Consensual sexual relations
- \* Pursue a satisfy in, safe and pleasurable sexual life
- \* A choice of partner and consensual marriage
- \* Seek, receive, and impact information and education related to sexual health, including information on how to protect against unwanted pregnancy, STIs, and HIV/AIDS
- \* Decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of her children, and to have the information and the means to do so
- \* Access sexual and reproductive health services (Married girls seeking sexual and reproductive health services are often turned away from health facilities because they require a husband's consent before care is provided)

Well being: Mental and emotional stress in girl brides is high because they are not old enough to cope with maternal, marital or

*in-law issues. Child marriage also makes girls more vulnerable to domestic violence. Psychological and emotional stress like forced sexual relations, denial of freedom and personal development as household chores now become a priority. Early marriage has also been linked to wife abandonment and increased levels of divorce or separation. The emotional impact of child marriage on a girl is far worse than in the case of a boy. Child brides also face the risk of being widowed by their husbands who are often much older to them or they have an unexpected death. In these instances the young bride is likely to suffer additional discrimination as in Indian culture the young widows are held responsible of the death of their husband and suffer a loss of status and may be ostracized by society and denied property rights.*

### **What can be done to prevent child marriage?**

Girls with a secondary education are up to six times less likely to marry young compared to girls with little or no education. Education delays the age at which a woman marries. Education provides an alternative opportunity for girls other than marriage. Education increases socio economic status and earning potential for girls.

Girls who earn a wage may be seen as an economic asset, not a burden, by their families. Girls who earn a wage are less dependent on others to provide for them. Providing economic opportunities to young girls. Efforts to improve the access of young married and non married girls to economic resources should focus on expanding employment and entrepreneurial opportunity. There is a need for the change in the mindset of the society which largely perceives the girl child to be a burden on the families. An enhanced role of the civil society organization in creating awareness by way of community mobilisation is important. Every child shall have the same rights. Children shall be given the opportunity to express

their voices and opinions in all matters. Empowering adolescents and especially girls contributes to raising a positive image of girls in society and creating an environment open to consulting with children and adolescents. Five programmatic strategies to prevent child marriage. From (ICRW) 1. Empower girls with information skills and support network 2. Educate and rally parents and community members 3. Enhance girl access to a high quality education 4. Provide economic support and incentives to girls and their family 5. Encourage supportive laws and policies.

**Conclusion:** Child marriage is injustice towards adolescent girls. It is the barrier of all kind of development of girls. Early marriage is intrinsically linked to low levels of education, high levels of violence and abuse, social isolation, severe health risks and harmful power dynamics and results in increased gender inequality and vulnerability to poverty for girls, young women, families and the society as a whole.

Development and well-being of an adolescent girl are strongly influenced by the safe and supporting environment they live in. The wider environment created by community. Government should provide genuine development opportunities to girl children. To evict this social issue joint effort should taken by community and government.

Ending child marriage will help break the intergenerational cycle of poverty by allowing girls and women to participate more fully in society. Empowered and educated girls are better able to nourish and care for their children, leading to healthier, smaller families. When girls are allowed to be girls, everybody wins (UNICEF).»

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# Vivekananda's view on Women's Education

**Arpana Tamuly**  
**Lalit Borbora**

Man and woman are like two wheels of a carriage in the society. The life of one without the other is incomplete. Neither man nor woman can be what it is in him or her to be, if either of them leads an isolated life. Man and woman both contribute to the development of each other's personality. Our ancient scriptures assigned woman a place higher than man. It was believed that blessed is the home where women were given due respect.

Vivekanda being a keen observer could distinguish the difference in perception about the status of woman in west and in India "The ideal woman in India is the mother, the mother first and the mother last. The word woman calls up to the mind of the Hindu, Motherhood and God is called mother. The scriptures of chistianity may grant lower status to woman as Eve was created out of a bone from Adam. Though under Hinduism, woman enjoyed a lower status in society, the scriptures always granted an equal status and even a higher status. Each God has his consort in Hinduism and the female part is always considered to be more powerful. Vivekananda and other followers of Ramakrishna Paramhansa even were avowed Worshippers of Mahakali and other

manifestations of mother Goddesses. Vivekanda constantly pointed out how our scriptures have given equal status to women.

The west was critical of the low position of women in Indian society. In fact, before the Industrial revolution, women were subordinate to men all over the world including Europe. Though in each society including India, there were brilliant exceptions mostly drawn from higher echelons of the society, generally speaking, women had no right to education and higher position. The difference between the position of women in the continent and in India was mostly due to the fact that continent had been industrialized and modernized. Vivekananda and the other thinkers of Indian renaissance did not envisage for the Indian women, the kind of mere materialistic progress, which the women in the west had achieved. They rather wanted the Indian women to retain their spiritual identity even as they completed for an equal space with men in the field of economy and polity. Further, the nationalists realized that women should also participate in the nationalist movement. Vivekananda was fairly well travelled both in the new world and in the continent and had seen for himself how women were striving to enjoy equal status with men, how they breathed in an atmosphere of freedom and the self-confidence.

The vision of Vivekananda was not to westernize the Indian women. Retaining his general stand of synthesizing the best of the west with India, he wanted Indian women to be educated, self-confident and to excel in all professional fields without sacrificing their primary role in home management and child rearing. He felt that it may not be always possible to have super women and as such as he thought of dividing the role between two groups. "Studying the present need of the age, it seems imperative to train some women up in the ideal renunciation, so that they will take up the vow of life long virginity fired with the strength of that virtue of chastity which is innate in their life blood from hoary antiquity."

Along with that they should be taught sciences and other things, which would be of benefit, not only to them but to others as well, and knowing this they would easily learn these things and feel pleasure in doing so. Our motherland requires for her well-being some of her children to become such pure souled Brahmacharins and Brahmacharinis". It is doubtful whether such a division can be traced to the vedantic age. One may even question the so called high position women enjoyed during the Vedic period. A Gargi, a Maitreyi, a Lilavati or even a Rani of Jhansi does not necessarily reflect the status of women in their own time. Not only Vivekananda but others also cited such examples in defence of India against the onslaught of christian missionaries. The changing position of women is to be related with modernization and Industrial revolution. Sister Nivedita, Annie Besant and other leading women of India were in constant touch with Vivekananda. He felt that most of Indian women was the sense of resignation, weakness and helplessness. So the prime concern for Vivekananda was to remove these shackles. And he writes "They have all the time been trained in helplessness, seville dependence on others and so they are good only to weep their eyes out at the slightest approach of a mishap or danger. Along with other things they should acquire the spirit of valour and heroism. In the present day it has become necessary for them also to learn self defence." Vivekananda wanted Indian women to be educated.

Vivekananda could easily convince the Indians that keeping in tune with the scriptures, it should improve the position of women in India. And the best tool for the same was women's education. He says "Our religion does not prevent a woman being educated at all. In this way she should be educated, even thus she should be trained and in the old book we find that the universities were equally resorted to by both girls and boys but later the education of the whole nation was neglected. Vivekananda advised, "Educate your

women first and leave them to themselves, then they will tell you what reforms are necessary for them.” He felt that every woman should have the ability to earn for a living if there is a need. In the changing circumstances one may suggest examples other than suggested by Vivekananda. But the basic principle that women should earn can not be contested. He writes, “Teach your girls fruit modeling with hardened nick. Give them artistic cooking and sewing. Let them learn painting, photography, the cutting of designs in paper and gold and silver filigree and embroidery. See that everyone knows something by which she can earn a living in case of need. In short Vivekananda laid emphasis in Religion, History, Puranas, Sanskrit, Bengali and English languages, Mathematics, Science, domestic science including house keeping and the duties of home life, sewing and culinary arts, upbringing of children, physical training, sevice to animals and the poor and vocational training.»

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# Eve Teasing A Perennial Problem For Women

**Gayatree Das**

Eve-teasing is the most arising subject in recent on the media and on social media sites such as facebook and everywhere in the world. Everyday it is present in the news papers. It is the sexual harassment or molestation of women by men (or we can say that the girls by the boys). The sexual harassment can happen to anybody, anywhere, of any age at any time. Wherever you go in India, be it the mall, the bus stand, the railway station, the theatre, colleges, schools, parks and other public places. Eve teasing is a huge issue in many metropolitan cities. Everyday Women face systematic assault on their fundamental right to free movement and personal dignity. The Indian journal of criminology and criminalistic has categorized eve-teasing into five heads like a) verbal eve-teasing b) physical eve-teasing c) psychological harassment d) sexual harassment and harassment through some objects.

Sexual harassment at public places is unwelcome, unsolicited behaviour of a sexual nature including staring, gesticulating, touching, passing comments, trailing. These may not

seem to be a big problem, but they can be quite upsetting. It makes women feel ashamed, humiliated or frightened. Even some girls take the decision to kill herself only for this insult. India is facing a major problem of eve teasing in schools and colleges. The number of cases on eve teasing is increasing day by day since it is not 'legal crime' which the police can verify and confirm as in rape. This is a first level of rape. Their coverage increases and tends them for the next level and eventually rape.

Eve-teasing is an awful act that injects shame, fear, disgust and helplessness in the victim. I donot think it would be wrong if I say that eve-teasing has become an inseparable part of every girl's life. Every man needs to be aware of 'how to treat a woman'.The traditional mindset often blames the eve -teasing incidents on women that they provoke male by wearing scanty clothes. That is actually a lame excuse. Even female wear modern dresses, it does not give men license to harass women. Many women have been found carrying pins, chilli powder, pen- knives, swiss knives and even daggers to protect themselves. Self-defense classes has mushroomed across metropolitan cities that teach martial arts and karate etc..Joining these classes will not be a bad idea. A study done by NIPPCID for Delhi police showed that 82% of the women who were part of the survey were wearing everyday non provocative clothes when they were harassed (salwar kameez, trouser top, saree). So sexual harassment has nothing to do with our clothes. Wearing western/tight/short clothes is not the reason for harassment. It has become part of their lives with the feeling of insecurity and horror at crucial times. These are merely the excuses men (and women) give to shift the blame onto the victim. Men also harass women who are 'decently' dressed, they harass all women, irrespective of their clothing or age.

In Guwahati of our state Assam, a special trained women force called 'Virangana' is introduced to tackle the growing trend of eve-teasing in the city, who sacrificed their lives to protect the society. The Virangana force is likely to have a different uniform with a sword. A cadre of the force named Bimala, who is trained in martial art said that "we can beat anyone. We are trained for restrain any kind of assault towards women. We hope this force can add a landmark in maintaining law and order in the city. We want all women to co-operate with us in protecting their modesty".

People who prefer to live in dignity with full freedom and peace, were forced to bow their heads in shame, as a 17 years old minor girl was beaten molested and stripped in public view in Guwahati. It is occurred in 13th July'12 on the outside a pub in Guwahati, the capital of Assam. The girl had reportedly opposed eve-teasing from a young man and entered in a brawl with him. The youth and his friends surrendered her and molested in public view. The girl pleaded for mercy and cried for help, but no one came to rescue her. The harassment lasted for around half an hour before police reached the spot and rescue her. The molesters included a contractual employee of Amtron, Assam Govt. ,I.T. agencies. Two others were also identified. This is only an example. Such type of eve-teasing cases are found in different states also.

Although Indian law does not use the term 'eve-teasing', victims earlier usually seek recourse through section 294 of the Indian penal Code (IPC), which sentences a man found guilty of making a girl or women the target of obscene gestures, remarks, songs or recitations to a maximum jail sentence of three months. Section 292 of IPC clearly spells out that showing pornographic or obscene pictures, books or papers to a woman or girl results in a fine of Rs. 2000/ with

two years imprisonment for first offenders. In the case of a repeated offence, the offenders may have a fine of Rs. 5000/ with five years imprisonment imposed. Under section 509 of IPC, obscene gestures, indecent body language and negative comments directed at any woman or girl or exhibiting any object which intrudes upon the privacy of a woman, carries a penalty of imprisonment for one year or a fine or both. The criminal law (Amendment) Act 2013 introduced for one year or a fine or both.

The criminal law (Amendment) Act 2013 introduced changes to the IPC, making sexual harassment an expressed offence under section 354A, which is punishable up to three years of imprisonment and or with fine. The Amendment also introduced new sections making acts like disrobing a woman without consent, stalking and sexual acts by person in authority an offence.

The Indian parliament has passed the 'The sexual harassment of women at work place (prevention, prohibition and redressal) Act 2013 which add protections for female workers in most work places. The act came into force from 9th December 2013.

The following are some preventive measures to eve-teasing :

- i) Every man needs to be aware of " how to treat a woman" and to realize that every women is some man's wife or daughter or sister or mother and must be treated with the same respect.
- ii) Girls should not go out alone without the companionship of a relative or parents or any friend.
- iii) Girls should stop wearing provoking dressess like miniskirts, minitops, tight jeans etc. (although it is not the actual fact). It is better to wear traditional dressess

- iv) Parents must teach their sons to treat women with respect.
- v) The need of the hour is to have more co-education schools, so that men are exposed to women from a very young age and grow to mutually respect each other.

In India including Assam there are so many NGO's, who are working for the cause of women on how to deal with difficult people and how to fight back against the harassment at work places also.

Eve-teasing must be stopped. Women deserve respect. Men and women are equal. Our lack of consciousness has led to a loss of many lives to say goodbye to this world. Women have the right to live freely in the world. Independence is their birth right. They have the right to lead their lives as males. On the other hand, the family and society of the victims or teased girls should have the courage and resolve to support them. Sometimes, they are misunderstood by their family whenever they inform the family members about teasing. The family and society should support them mentally. So as the government must take things seriously. The country wants both of them to be active in such issues.

For removing the term 'Eve-teasing' forever from the society, everybody should be careful about it. Here religious rules can contribute a lot. So we should obey our religious rules. And after all we should come forward to remove it from our society. If anybody makes this violation they should be punished for their deeds. If we can go this action then we will be able to remove this issue from our society.»

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# Role of Women in 'Tea Tribe' Society in Nagaon District of Assam

**Bismita Bora**

Women are the backbone of a society but it is also a well known fact that they are faced with many problems especially in Indian context. They are variably exploited, suppressed and subject to harsh restrictions, discriminatory rules and unreasonable customs etc. Therefore, the role of women has emerged as one of the core issue in prevailing social conditions. In tea gardens of Nagaon district as observed by Kaniampady (2003:130) in context of tea gardens of Assam, the fundamental rule of the family is found to have changed consequent upon the change from a traditional mode of production relations to new type of production relations of a plantation economy. She has found out that workers in the plantation have changed their economic activity from a self supporting agricultural system to a wage earning system in which many female members of the family are equal partners in earning wage. Therefore, in 'Tea Tribe' society women are generally found to have good social interactions and accordant adjustments with other members of the society caused probably for over a century of togetherness away from their original ethnic and caste moorings.

An attempt has been made in this article to ascertain the present role of women in tea gardens of Nagaon district. The selected variables include women participation in gainful economic activities, their level of education and participation in social, political organization and women's role in decision making.

**A) Women Participation in Economically Gainful Activities**

Women participation ratio in economically gainful activities in Indian context generally is found to be very low. This is evident in work participation ratio of females in the country where it is found only to be about 31.5 percent against male participation of 68.5 percent (2001). The same pattern is observed at state level in Assam and district level in Nagaon where male component of the population constitute about 72 percent and 80 percent of the workers respectively. Obviously females constitute a very low proportion of the work force. Similarly, the female participation as proportion of total female population is found to be low at 28 percent at state level and 20 percent in Nagaon district.

Table - 1

Female Participation Rate in Tea Gardens of Nagaon District  
(Figure in percentage)

Gardens	Participation Rate of Females
Nagaon District	37.8

*Source : Unpublished thesis of Bismita Bora*

As compared to the state and district averages in tea gardens of Nagaon District, the corresponding figures for female population in economic activities is found to be significantly high at 37.8 percent in the tea gardens of Nagaon. It may be attributed to special kind of functions which traditionally have been considered

suitable for the women folk. They contribute significantly to the economy not only of the tea gardens but also found to enhance family income. Women workers are engaged in different works in tea cultivation and manufacturing. Basically they are engaged in plucking, pruning, manuring and manual weeding in the tea gardens. The probable factors having such large women workers in the plantation are: i) Tea plantation is a special kind of agricultural work and is therefore familiar to Indian women; ii) facilities have been given to male workers to settle in, or in the vicinity of plantations and to have their wives and family with them; iii) many women seek employment in order to balance the family budget (Kaniampady, 2003:184-185).

**B) Educational Level of Women**

Education is one of the important indices of the social status of an individual in a society. It is not only insurance for people in times of need, but also an assurance for the full-fledged development of their personalities. Therefore, an educated woman always has more value and status in the eyes of her family and her society. Level of education, thus, may be considered to be an instrument of raising the role of women in the family as well as in the society.

Table - 2  
 Level of Education of Women in the Tea Gardens of  
 Nagaon District (Figure in percentage)

Level of Education	Percentage
Primary	40.1
High School	12.2
HSLC Passed	1.6
HS Passed	0.2
Total	54

*Source : Unpublished thesis of Bismita Bora*

Among 60 percent literate 'Tea Tribe' population in Nagaon district (source: unpublished thesis of Bismita Bora), only 27.2 percent female is educated. It implies that 54 percent of the females have attended schools to certain levels. A further analysis of female literacy suggests that 40.1 percent of the female population is educated till primary school level, 12.2 percent till high school level of which only 1.6 percent clear the HSLC examination. A very miniscule proportion is found to have education till higher secondary level.

The low literacy and educational level in case of female constitutes of tea gardens may be attributed to the fact that both husband and wife are generally wage earners. As a result, a girl child is generally assigned to look after her younger ones and also take care of the domestic works during the working hours of her parents. Therefore, it has been found that many girls are not sent to school.

### **C) Women Participation in Social Organization**

The women in the 'Tea Tribe' community, like most of the traditional societies, are the foundation of family system and play an important role to bring about social cohesion. As workers they undertake their function as the member of the Trade Union Organizations located in the tea gardens. In order to improve economic conditions they have also formed 'Self Help Groups' which offer them special status vis-a-vis the men and women who are not a part of it. They actively participate in festivals like Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Holi, Karam Puja, Tusu Puja or other major religious festivals in the community. Though their functions as organizers in a male dominated society may be very limited. It has been found that, only 18 percent (Source: unpublished thesis of Bismita Bora) women are taking part in such organizing bodies of the tea gardens. The proportion however varies from garden to garden.

#### **D) Woman's role in taking decisions**

In fact one of the important indicator of the status of women is whether women can play an active and effective role in the decision making process in the family and social sphere. In most cases, like any other traditional society it is generally found that the males particularly the husbands take the decisions and the females especially wives by and large are bound to accept the decisions.

**Table 3**  
**Decision Making Power of Women (Figure in percentage)**

Gardens	Can Take Decision	Cannot Take Decision
All	28	72

*Source : Unpublished Thesis of Bismita Bora*

It was found that 72 percent women never take part either of the decision or decision making processes. This clearly reflects that women status with regard at least to decision making processes is associated with their economic status in the family and the society. However, in case of certain vital issues like marriage, festivals, education to children etc. all the members of the family discuss together and in such discussions, the women can put forward their opinions freely and proper importance may be given to their opinions but generally they do not take part in the decisions related to finances and general domestic activities.

The above discussion reveals that though the female work participation is much higher than the state and district level, yet the working women in the Tea Estate of Nagaon district is facing some problems like low literacy level, negligible role in family decision

and low participation in social organization. The women workers lead a very busy daily life with practically no time to have leisure and relaxation. They are overburdened with their productive and reproductive and other domestic activities. Sometimes these multiple responsibilities result in role - conflict for many of them. Therefore, the garden authorities, government and NGOs should try to implement different schemes which can uplift the position of women not only in the tea gardens but also in general society. ❧

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# The changing role of women in Indian society: A review

Baby Paul

“The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”

-Albert Einstein

## **Introduction :**

As a woman in India, I find that the society is changing a lot in terms of acceptance of the many roles of women as professionals, as bread earners in families and as independent thinking individuals. The traditional Indian women has evolved to prove herself equal in many professions as well as proved better suited than men in others.

There was a time when women were just kitchen keepers and house keepers in the Indian society. Gradually women began to get educated, even highly educated and a stage came when some of them came out on the social and political field to rub shoulder with the men folk in these fields. The freedom struggle of India was the opening up of the new horizon for womanhood in India. In modern India, women have adorned high offices including that of the President, Prime minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, etc. The situation for the changing role of women is improving fast.

## **Women in India: A historical perspective-**

It is very important to know the historical background, if we are to make a study the changing role of women in India. The historical background of Indian society reveals that in Vedic times a woman was given a high status. It is an old saying, "Where women are honoured, gods reside there." She was known as "Ardhangini" - one half of husband's body. However during the course of history women lost their honoured place due to social, economic and political factors. Evil customs like sati, Purdah, child marriage, enforced widowhood, dowry system, crept in the society and this led to decline in women's status inside and outside the home. During the last few years. sexual harassment at work place, eve teasing, abduction and female foeticide has given an inclination of the horrible behaviour patterns prevailing in the society.

Man considers woman to be frail and weak by nature. She is shorter and delicate compared to the strongly build man. But man forgets that a woman is made so, so to play a specific fro in nature which a man cannot play, that is the role of the mother. In intelligence both are equal. Man is aggressive and emotional. A woman is patient, calm and receptive. She can bear more pain and has more tolerance than a man. She is stronger in conviction and in perseverance. Yet women all over the world are playing a secondary role only.

The position in India is no different. Women were glorified in epics and Puranas, for their service to their men. Serving a father first, secondly a husband, and later serving her children and grandchildren, had been her lot. Puranas mention the names of Seeta and Savitri glorify them for their devote service to their husbands. They even say that a woman can easily get salvation by serving her husband.

In those days women faced many Social Problems like Dowry, Child Marriages, Death during Childbirth, Sati and many

social problems but nowadays the status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. The year 1995, was declared as the 'International Year for Women' throughout the world. The women were made aware of their status and place in society. Women are now no longer in slumber. They are awake and moving fast.

### **The women of India present day :**

Even after a lot of struggle, there is no arena, which remained unconquered by Indian women.

### **Women in politics and economics:**

Female role models exist and existed in India not only in Mythology but also in politics. There are Sushma Swaraj, Mamta Banerjee, Sumitra Mahajan, Mayawati, Uma Bharati who are in charge either as the head of government of big states or as opposition leaders in their respective states and they are politically successful. With Sonia Gandhi as the head of the influential, nationwide operating Congress Party, we see the politically most powerful woman in India, who pulls the strings in secret as the guardian of the Nehru-Gandhi Dynasty. And Indira Gandhi, her mother-in-law, ruled the country in the years 1966-77 and from 1980-84 as Prime Minister.

The modern Indian woman is working throughout the country at all levels and virtually in all professions at different positions. She is not only visible as the top politician as seen above in politics. Even as managers in industrial firm, director of nationwide operating banks, top bureaucrats, active members of micro-credit groups or as independent fashion designers. Indeed women are also visible and valued as female heroines in Bollywood films and nationally ubiquitous in daily performances of classical Indian dance and song.

"History looks different when the contributions of women are included." ~ National Women's History Project.

We can now see women employed in all fields not only in clerical jobs but also in I.A.S., I.P.S. and Indian Air Force. There are reservations in legislatures also. The Central Government has introduced a bill in Parliament reserving one third of the seats in Parliament and other elected bodies for women. The status of women in modern India is a sort of a paradox. The modern Indian women have honed their skills and jumped into a battlefield of life fighting against social restrictions, emotional ties, religious boundaries and cultural clutches. She can now be seen working on par with men in every field.

The year 1995, was declared as the 'International Year for Women' throughout the world. The women were made aware of their status and place in society. There have been many movements in our country as well as in other countries for the advancement of women. Women are now no longer in slumber. They are awake and moving fast. They are asserting their rights. As far as India is concerned, it has already agreed to treat women as equal with men in all respects the difference, whatever now exists, is sure to vanish the coming decades when women also get equally educated and liberate themselves from superstitions and irrational traditions.

### **Special Initiatives for Women :**

Some special initiations have been taken in this regards viz: i. National Commission for Women In January 1992, 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 was set up. ii. Reservation of women in Local Self Govt. The 72nd and 73rd constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure one-third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in all Rural and Urban Local Bodies. iii. The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000AD).

The Action Plan is to ensure survival, protection and development of Girl Child with the ultimate objection of building up a better future for the girl child. iv. National Policy for Empowerment of women, 2001 The Department of Women and Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resources Development has prepared a 'National policy for Empowerment of Women' in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. At present a number of women's organizations have created a sense of consciousness for gender equality but rape, dowry deaths, humiliations, Honour Killing domestic violence and other atrocities against women have become common in our society today. Women constitute half of the population and their contribution to the country's economy is tremendous. But their number in the parliament is just around 8 percent which is highly minimal. Now the government of India has been implementing various schemes and programmes for the welfare and empowerment of women in the area of Poverty alleviation, skill up gradation, development and sustainable income generation, education. Health services, awareness generation, legal literacy and support services. Development and empowerment of women has been a thrust area in five year plan.

But even after so many implementation and provisions position of women is not satisfactory. Recently the Gang Rape in Delhi, after it gang rape in Mumbai, we heard in news every day atleast one news of gang rape, no preventative measure is present in the society still.

### **Conclusion :**

Development of our country depends on the empowerment of women. A man and a woman are like two wheels of a cart. The cart can move fast and safely too, when both of them pull it in the same direction and with equal strength. Hence no developing

country or society can afford to ignore the role of women, if they are to progress. As compared with past women in modern times have achieved a lot but in reality they have to still travel a long way. Their path is full of roadblocks. The women have left the secured domain of their home and are now in the battlefield of life, fully armoured with their talent. They must avail themselves of the educational opportunities provided and learn to empower themselves. Let the women reach the sky which is the limit.»

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# Status of Women in India : With Special Reference to Education

**Arati Bharali**

## **Introduction:**

Female constitute about half of the population of the world. Geographically men and women share the same space, yet they live in two different worlds. This half part of the world population always deprived from their right. Education is the only way to literate female to get their right and also the male to give right to female. Traditionally it was believed that only men had a right to get education and female not. If some females of the high class families got education at home it was only to literate them for how to make good wives and how to manage their home from cooking to child caring. This scenario was kept on changing with the passage of time. Between 1921 and 1931 female education institutions in India increased dramatically from 23,500 to 33,900 and their enrolment from 1.4 million to 3.1 million; although nearly all of this expansion was due to private sources funding mostly urban schools. This paper is an attempt to know the status of female literacy in India in general and Assam in particular.

## **Initiatives for women in Five Year Plan in India:**

The government of India had adopted various initiatives to

improve the status of women in the country. Article 14 of the Constitution of India guarantees equal rights and opportunities to men and women in political, economic and social spheres. The First Five Year Plan sought to "promote the welfare of women" by helping them to play their legitimate role in the family and the community but emphasized that the major burden of organizing activities for the benefit of the female population had to be borne by the private agencies. Five Year Plans continued to reflect the same welfare approach to women's interests though they accorded priority to education for both, men and women and launched measures to improve maternal and child health services and supplementary nutrition for children as well as expectant and nursing mothers.

It was the Sixth Five Year Plan in which the focus on women's interests shifted from 'welfare' and 'development'. Planners and policy makers began to recognize women not only as partners but also as stake holders in the development of the country. The Seventh Five Year Plan saw developmental programmes which aimed at raising the economic and social status of women and at ensuring that they get the benefits of national development. This is when 'beneficiary oriented programmes' extending direct benefits to women in different developmental sectors began. The Eight Five Year Plan had a Human Development focus. It tried to ensure that the benefits of development do not bypass women and it implemented special programmes for women to complement the general development programmes and to monitor the flow of benefits to women in education, health and employment. The Ninth Five Year Plan was rather ambitious. It took up 'empowering women as agents of socio-economic change and development' as a major commitment. It adopted the 'National Policy for

Empowerment of Women', which among other objectives, sought to organize women into Self Help Groups to work for their own empowerment, accorded a high priority to schemes for maternal and child welfare and most importantly, made a bid at easy and equal access to education through the Special Action Plan of 1998, plans for the free education of girls up to the college level (inclusive of professional courses) and vocational training.

In the recent year also the government is undertaking various ambitious programmes to educate girls and give equal right to girls as the boys. In this case the Sarva Siksha Abhiyaan (SSA) serves as an umbrella scheme for schemes directly and indirectly beneficial to the girl child. The programmes specifically for girls can be mentioned as National Programme for Education of Girls at an Elementary Level (NPEGEL), Kasturbha Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV), Mahila Samakhya (MS) Programme. Again the Department of Women and Child Development had been established in 1985 under the Ministry of Human Resource Development. However, it had been constituted into a separate Ministry on 30 October 2006. Since then, it has continued funding and designing several schemes- primarily the Balika Samridhhi Yojana, the Integrated Child Development Services and the Kishori Shakti Yojana.

### **Status of Women in India:**

After taking all the initiatives measures by the government of India to improve the status of female in the country, the practical scenario is not so satisfactory. Gender bias exists even in the child population in India. One reason of this gender bias is biological. But the other factors (e.g. illegal abortion is done when the baby is a girl, girls are killed after birth, some girls died due to malnutrition and ill caring etc) are more dangerous in case of gender bias.

## Child Population (0-6 years) (Unit: Thousand Children)

	1991		2001		2011		Change In 1991-2001		Change In 2001-2011	
	Total	Gender Bias	Total	Gender Bias	Total	Gender Bias	Total	Gender Bias	Total	Gender Bias
India	150081	945	163820	927	158789	914	13739	-18	-5031	-13
Bihar	17764	959	21763	948	23826	935	3999	-11	2057	-13
Uttar Pradesh	28200	928	32985	915	31057	899	4785	-13	-1928	-16
Rajasthan	8859	916	10651	909	10505	883	1792	-7	-146	-26
Madhya Pradesh	13092	952	14337	943	14132	925	1245	-9	-205	-18
Orissa	5348	967	5359	953	5036	934	11	-14	-323	-19
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	28	1013	40	979	49	924	12	-34	9	-35
Haryana	3125	879	3336	819	3298	830	211	-60	-38	11
Assam	4422	575	4498	965	4511	957	76	-10	13	-8
Goa	6502	928	7532	883	7494	886	1030	-45	-38	3
Goa	137	964	146	938	139	920	9	-26	-7	-18
West Bengal	11362	967	11414	910	10113	950	-148	-7	-1301	-10
Maharashtra	13505	949	13671	913	12848	883	166	-33	-823	-30
Chhatisgarh	829	951	793	896	764	906	-36	-55	-29	10
Arunachal Pradesh	10964	975	10172	961	8643	943	-792	-14	-1329	-18
Punjab	3306	875	3172	798	2942	846	-134	-77	-230	48
Karnataka	7478	960	7182	946	6856	943	-296	-14	-326	-3
Jammu & Kashmir	---	---	1486	941	2009	859	---	---	523	-82
Kerala	3837	958	3793	960	3322	959	-44	2	-471	-1
Tamilnadu	7448	948	7235	942	6895	946	-213	-6	-340	4
Delhi	1607	915	2017	866	1971	866	410	-47	-46	-2

Notes: Gender Bias (GB) : Female per 1000 males.

In 1991 census was not held in J & K

*Source: Census of India 1991, 2001, 2011  
calculated from NSS 50th and 61st*

Gender composition during this period changed against girls. In 1951, 17.8% of child population (0-14) consisted of boys and 17.5% girls in the age group 0-4, yielding a gender bias of 0.3%. In 1961 this declined to 0.1% because of increasing total fertility rate (TFR) (from 6.1 per thousand to 6.5 per thousand). This rise in TFR can be ascribed partly to the post-Second World War fertility surge and partly to public health efforts towards maternal health, particularly at childbirth. The gender bias in 1991 increased to 0.8% and stood at 1.1% in 2001. It is expected to decline marginally in 2026 to 1.8%. The recently reported census 2011 results on gender bias in 0-6 age group pointing out a decline in

number of girls per 1000 boys from 927 to 914 between 2001 and 2011, invoked huge response in the media. Chaudhri and Jha (2011) commenting on it pointed out that prosperity in India has met new medical reproductive technologies to give us this result. This should hardly be surprising. They concluded that there is a U-shaped curve representing number of girls per thousand boys that will eventually emerge in India. The duration and depth of the U curve will depend upon orchestrated public policies or their absence. There is a rich literature discussing proximate causes like son preference resulting in selective abortions, differential infant and child mortality rates, infanticide of girls and unequal access to nutrition and health in early years. The inference that faster economic development, education, and knowledge do not necessarily ameliorate son preference seems to be unfolding in modern India with rising prosperity. Gender bias in age-group 10-14 in percentage terms in 1951 was 1.6%, it increased marginally to 1.7% in 2001, over a 50 year period and is projected to increase to 2.1 by 2026. For the age group 5-9, it increased from 0.7% in 1951 to 1.4% in 2001 and is expected to rise to 2.1% by 2026.

### **Education for Girls:**

The girls who sustain to live after this gender bias, all are not allowed to attend schools. They have to be busy only in the unpaid household works. Government is adopting different initiative measures to attract girls to school. The year 1990 was celebrated as the international year for Literacy. After all this initiatives measures not all the girls of the country are able to attend school.

*Table on next page...*

**Table: Total and Girls' Enrolment (in percentage)  
in different states of India for the year 2012**

States	Total Enrolment	Girls' Enrolment
Andhra Pradesh	97.4	94.4
Arunachal Pradesh	97.3	96.3
Assam	95.6	94.2
Bihar	96.3	94.8
Chhattisgarh	97.4	96.2
Gujarat	96.9	92.9
Haryana	98.5	96.5
Himachal Pradesh	99.0	98.2
Jammu & Kashmir	97.7	95.0
Jharkhand	95.6	93.7
Karnataka	98.1	96.2
Kerala	99.8	99.7
Madhya Pradesh	96.9	94.8
Maharashtra	98.5	97.8
Manipur	98.5	97.7
Meghalaya	94.7	95.0
Mizoram	98.3	97.2
Nagaland	98.3	97.6
Odisha	95.9	93.4
Punjab	98.7	98.0
Rajasthan	94.9	88.8
Tamil Nadu	99.4	99.1
Tripura	99.4	98.5
Uttar Pradesh	93.6	88.5
Uttarakhand	98.2	96.2
West Bengal	96.7	95.8

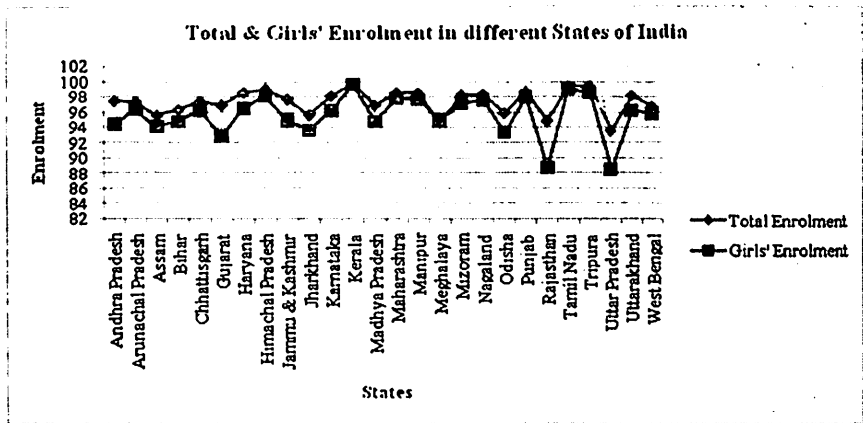
Source: ASER

From the above it is clear that the only state is Meghalaya which has higher girls' enrolment percentage in comparison with the total enrolment. The other states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu has almost equal percentage of girls' enrolment in comparison with total enrolment. The rest states have lower girls' enrolment than total enrolment. In case of Assam total enrolment is 95.6% and girls' enrolment is 94.2%. Hence Assam is also lagging behind some states of India in terms of girls' enrolment.

**Girls Enrolment in Assam:**

A through look at the girls' enrolment in Assam is seems to be satisfactory. The total and girls enrolment in Assam from the primary stage to the higher secondary level is shown below.

**Table 3.2: Students Enrolment by Gender**



Source: Statistical Hand Book, Assam from 2001 to 2008

There is an improvement in the sex ratio in various years in case of enrolment in Assam. It is very appreciable that in the last two years the enrolment of girls has overcome the enrolment of boys.

### **Conclusion:**

In spite of all the efforts taken by the government of India to improve the status of women, yet they are not having the same status as the male in all the aspects. It is the education which will ensure the improvement of status of women by educating all regarding the aspect of the status of women in the society. Hence the first issue of improving the status of women is the full literacy which has the capacity of improving the status of women in the society. Because according to Mahatma Gandhi,

Educate one man, you educate one person, but educate a woman and you educate a whole civilization. »»

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# Dowry System : Present Scenario in India

**Farhana Sultana**

Dowry system, an old but worst suffering of women is one of the greatest evils that is prevalent in almost all parts of our country. "Dowry" is an insatiable greed of groom and his family for assets such as consumer items and landed property or cash. Dowry has become first and firmest social challenge and is a major contributor towards violence against woman in India. It is said that, "In India one woman is being killed every hour for dowry". The enactment of the Dowry Prevention Act in 1961 by the Central Government has even failed to check its growth. While other social evils like caste-system, child marriage, untouchability etc are declining day by day with time, the evil of dowry system seems to be assuming a gigantic form.

The Dowry System has converted marriage into a naked commercial transaction, the parents of young men who are well-established, demand handsome dowry from the girl's parents for marriage. The people capable of offering the highest dowry can secure the most deserving husband for their daughter. If the parents fail to pay the dowry at the time of marriage or after marriage, the brides have to suffer inhuman torture by in-laws. As a result, many

newly-wed brides are put to death, some commit suicide and some are compelled to file divorce suits.

Dowry is a common practice in many parts of the world, especially in south East Asia, several Middle East and African countries. Dowry is most common in nations with inadequate male-biased inheritance laws and patrilineal societies, which expect women to live with or near their husband's family. Dowries are more common in patrilineal cultures that expect women to reside with or near their husband's family.

### **Origin of Dowry system:**

Dowry is derived from the ancient Hindu customs of 'Kanyadhan' or 'Stridhan'. While dealing about the origin of dowry, in the beginning, marriage was done by exchange and then by service then gifts and then return gifts. The return gifts later was called dowry. The main reason why people give and take dowry is because of social customs, tradition, security and caste system.

Until medieval period, dowry culture was insignificant in India. Dowry was given to protect the interest of daughter and it may have been considered a token to draw off the groom and his family from the practice of polygamy. Slowly dowry became rampant and rather than bride's family giving dowry, the groom's family started demanding it and converted marriage into a bargain.

Parents used to give wealth and valuable gifts to their daughters during marriage which provided the girl financial independence. But Prohibition of Property Rights for Women under the British Rule made husbands owner of the all wealth and property of wife. It made groom's family greedier and the traditional dowry system got converted into a menace creating an institution of greed that oppressed, victimized and suppressed women.

### **Socio- Economic Impact of Dowry :**

The main economic factors contributing to dowry systems are property inheritance systems and the bride's economic status. However, as the system evolved, dowry has become a greater financial burden on the family, and can leave families destitute based on the demands from the groom. Rich parents willingly pay for a well established bride-groom. But for the poor parents of middle and lower middle class families, the dowry system, has become a curse.

As far as the social factors are concerned, the main social factor contributing to dowry is the traditions and customs. People are biased to pay dowry at their daughter's wedding since it's being followed in their wedding tradition and rituals. Moreover, some people have a kind of mentality that a greater amount of display of wealth gives a good impression of wedding in their society and families.

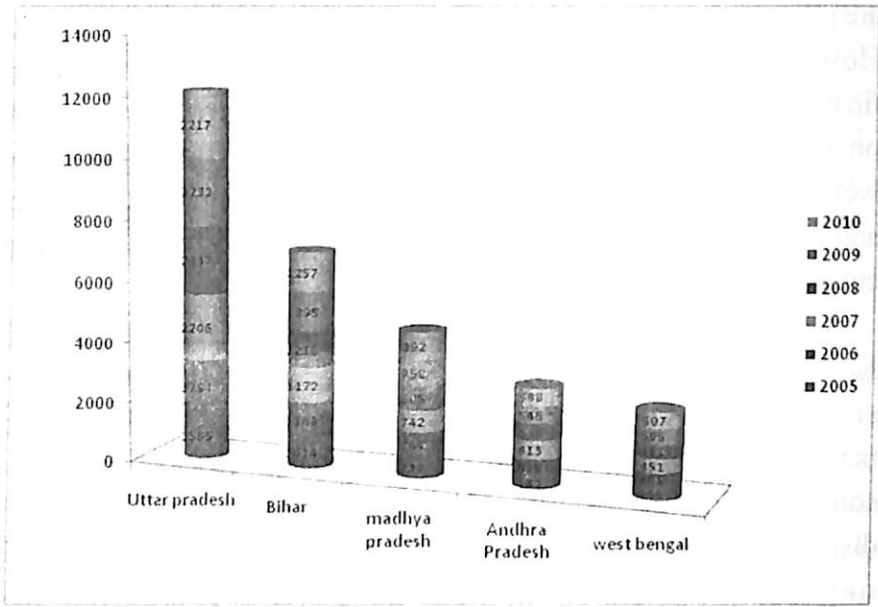
### **Domestic Violence and Killings:**

The expected value of the dowry has risen in some cultures in recent decades. If bride's family is unable to pay then they show their anger upon the bride. Thus, this never ending greed takes the shape of domestic violence on bride in the form of physical abuse, emotional abuse and in many cases even murder.

Uttar Pradesh, followed by Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, recorded the highest dowry-related deaths. The cases of dowry deaths have increased in all these states over the years. Even the all-India figures have risen every year.

*Table on next page ...*

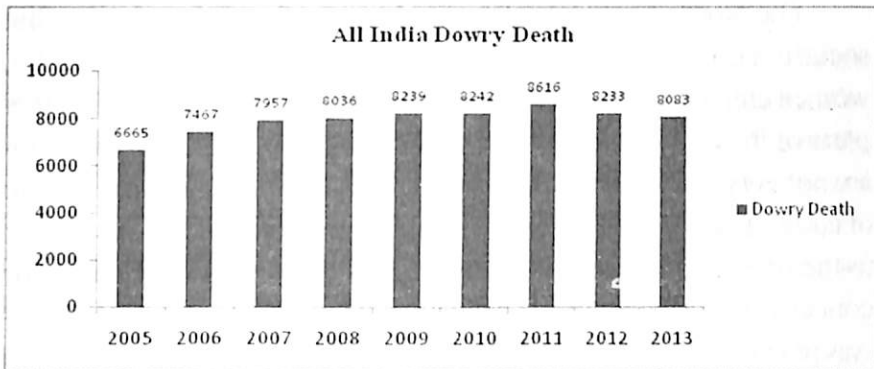
## Dowry deaths reported from 2005 to 2010



*Source: Lok Sabha*

Uttar Pradesh with total 12,254 deaths from 2005 to 2010 leads the list followed by Bihar with (7,136 deaths) and Madhya Pradesh (4,800 deaths). It must be noted that the number of dowry deaths are also driven by the population numbers. However, if we calculate the same data per-capita we see that MP is worst affected with 25.4 reported dowry deaths per million women in the state. Followed by Bihar 25.2 and then UP with 23 reported dowry deaths per million women in these states.

*Table on next page ...*



*source: Lok sabha and NCRB*

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) figures state that 8,618 dowry deaths were reported in 2011 and 8,233 were reported in 2012 and 8,083 incidents in 2013 from various states. But a total of 1,18,866 complaints of cruelty against women by husband or relatives were reported in 2013.

In the period 2005-12, the total number of dowry deaths is 63,171. So, during the last seven years, India has lost, on an average, 7,896 women per year, 658 per month, 22 per day or simply 1 woman every hour due to dowry deaths. It must be kept in mind that these are reported deaths, based on police complaints. The un-official figure, which goes unreported, may be higher.

Only 18 per cent cases registered under dowry death charges end up in conviction, statistics available with the Delhi Police reveal. Increasing number of dowry killing and poor conviction rate of cases continue to shame India.

Even in serious crimes like Section 304B 'dowry death' in practice Police is hesitant to make arrests unless pressurized to do so. This hesitation is directly correlated to the financial gains they make from the Grooms side.

## **Dowry system and status of Women in North East India:**

The North-Eastern states are known for their matriarchal society, except Assam and Tripura. In the north east of India, women enjoy greater mobility and visibility than women of other parts of the country. Practices such as dowry and bride burning are not very prevalent in the region. This often portrays a picture of equity between men and women in the area and has given rise to the presumption that violence against women is not a major concern here. Till a couple of decades back, the concept of dowry was practically unknown to the majority of the population in Assam.

However, over the past few years there have been increased reports of dowry related cases in the state. Although, among the Assamese and tribal communities of Assam dowry related violence was not directly and overtly seen, indirect dowry related violence has grown over the years.

Data collected by the North East Network (NEN) however suggests that violence against women, particularly domestic violence, is on the rise in the North-east. The high rate of domestic violence in Assam is reflected in a study conducted by the Law Research Institute, Guwahati, covering police stations in the 23 districts in Assam which reported 10,423 registered cases of violence against women (including dowry, rape, molestation and kidnapping) over the past 10 years.

Dowry has been a major cause of concern in Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj. In Silchar, the District Level Committee on Crimes involving women and Nibedita Nari Sansthan are two organisations that have been actively dealing with cases of violence against women. In NEN's recent visit to Lumding town, the Director of Ghorua, an NGO, reported that dowry deaths have become a big afflict in the area.

### **Other side of Dowry system:-**

*In addition to the stress and financial burden, dowry system* may lead to son preference, which can lead to a skewed sex ratio. For which female infanticide has reached an alarming level in many parts of the country like Haryana. This indicates the worries of parents about a girl child being a liability till their marriage and the reverse thought that a boy would take care of them, earn livelihood etc.

### **Laws in India to prevent "Dowry System":**

In 1961, dowry became prohibited by law with the purpose of prohibiting the demanding, giving and taking of dowry. To stop offences of cruelty by the husband or his relatives against the wife, section 498A was added to the IPC and section 198A to the Criminal procedure code.

### **Misuse of Dowry law and criticism:-**

In some cases brides have been found to blackmail or threaten groom's family in the name of "Dowry law" to make conditions of home favourable for her. Since this law was so much biased towards women that even this laws do not recognize cruelty and domestic violence against men & other women family members of husband & also non bail able warrant issue against groom's family members, hence amendments have been proposed later on to save men's interest too.

### **Other measures to control dowry system :**

Dowry culture is now-a-days prevalent in educated class also. The irony is that an IAS officer who writes 500 words essay in the competitive exam for annihilation of dowry system seems to be taking 50Lakhs dowry in his wedding.

Collective awareness is the only solution to this problem. Bride's parents should not give dowry and should reject any

proposals which demands dowry. By doing this only slowly a dowry system can be eliminated from our society.

To root out this social evil we should tackle it socially. A total change in the society is necessary at this moment. Social workers and social service organizations should also come forward and organize anti-dowry campaigns throughout the country to rouse public opinion against dowry. People should boycott socially all those who accept or offer dowry. Additionally, the women should be made self-sufficient by giving them proper education and employment so that they might grow conscious of their dignity and prestige and become courageous to reject outright the proposals that demand dowry.

No doubt, the procedure has been started and a new atmosphere is being created. Let us all work together and put an end to this evil system.»»

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# Status of women in ancient India

**Malavika Baruah**

Women were considered pivots not only of domestic life but of the entire society. She was considered the creator, protector and educator of her children.

Hindu tradition have generally respected womanhood. The history of ancient India commence from the period during which the Rg-veda was composed. Vedic literature depicts a vivid picture of ancient Indian womanhood. During this vedic age Indian women reached the very high standard of learning, culture and all round progress. At that time women were considered pivots not only of domestic life but of the entire society. She was considered the creator, protector and educator of her children. The nucleus of family life was centered round her and on women dependent the prosperity and future progeny of the family. In Rg-veda, various names is found to denote a girl at different stages of her life. A girl is called variously kanya, duhita, kaninaka, kunyana, kanyala, putrik etc. Of all these terms for girls, the word duhita seems to have been in frequent use in the Rg-veda, referring to a daughter. Rituals formed a part in the vedic marriage. Marriage was a union of the two individuals of opposite sexes who had attained full physical development. Women as wife is denoted by the words jaya, jani and patni each denoting special characteristics of wifehood. Jaya

means the sharer of the husband's affections, jani, the mother of children and patni the partner in the observance and performance of religious sacrifices. The position of women was generally not unequal to that of the men during this period. Some proofs of this fact is that the Rg-veda contains hymns (suktas) by as many as twenty seven women called brahmavadinis or women seers. These facts testifies that men and women were regarded as having equally important status in the social life of the early vedic period. In Rg-vedic period, there were no divorce system in marriage. Such an idea was too almost abominable. Marriage was considered sacred and divorce was against all occult and spiritual law. During this period the society set up a high order of morality. Therefore there were hardly any instances of adultery among married women. Several restrictions were gradually imposed on the freedom and privileges towards the close of Rg-vedic period which women enjoyed earlier. Several evils crept in and this ultimately led to the degradation of women in society. The early Rg-vedic age which saw the dawn of power and influence which the Indo-Aryan women wielded in her household, gradually deteriorated during the end of the period. However at that time, a husband and wife constituted an indivisible unit in society and the duties of each towards the other which can be inferred from the nuptial hymn as depicted in the Atharvaveda. " Be thou supreme among fathers-in-law, supreme also among brothers-in-law, be thou supreme over sisters-in-law, supreme also over mother-in-law". This passages indicate the supremacy of woman of that time. She was at the helm of affairs and took part in the sacrifices performed by her husband and was ultimately a helper in the path of virtue.

In brahmanical period the participation of woman at rituals was doubted. It is said that "During this period even if one had no wife, he could offer the agnihotra, because the wife is faith, the sacrificer, the truth, faith and truth are the highest pair, by faith and

truth as a pair he conquers the world of heaven". During the period of Aitereya brahmana and Maitrayani samhita women were forbidden to go to the assemblies and regarded them as one of the major evils in human society. Taittiriya samhita and satapatha brahmana rank her as inferior to a evil man. Polygamy was quite common during this period. They were allowed to read holy texts and played the role of preceptor. They were partner in the religious life of a man, Brahmanas reflect a transitional development in the status of woman limiting her role except in the performance of religious sacrifices.

From the vedic texts it is quite evident that women played an important role particularly in religious life. A man could not become a spiritual whole unless he was accompanied by his wife. The wife was greatly honoured in the family and after marriage she was looked upon as guardian of all the members of the new family. Aitereya brahmana states it as " a wife is a comrade, a daughter is a misery and a son is light in the highest heaven".

In upanisadic period woman was viewed not as an object of sensuous pleasure but as an inseparable partner in life performing the religious obligations of a man. In Brhadaranyaka upanisad the ideal picture of a wife (patni) as the other half of the husband (pati) has been beautifully delineated by a very telling simile of the half of a shell.

During dharmasutra period with the introduction of different forms of marriage the status of women deteriorated. Dharmasutras stated that marriage was solemnized before agni which is represented as the supreme reality. Women's existence merged with that of a man through the performance of the ceremony and hence it was imperative for the couple to carry this supreme witness along with them and cherish it in their home with ardent devotion all through their lives and at death the body was to be consumed by this sacred fire. There was a definite sanction for the domination

of the husband over the wife. The notion of spiritual union of husband and wife by magic mantras gave to the idea of the transference of the ownership of the bride. Due to the introduction of lower forms of marriage the wife lost her position and dignity of grahapatni and was precluded from participating in the religious ceremonies and rituals of the husband.

During the period of the smritis women were bracketed with the sudras and were denied the right to study the vedas, to utter vedic mantras and to perform vedic rites. Marriage or domestic life became compulsory for women and unquestioning devotion to and self-effacing service of husbands their only duty. According to Manu, woman should be protected and honoured at all stages of her life. Manu starts with the fundamental principle that, "day and night women must be kept in dependence by the males of their families. Her father protects her in childhood, her husband protects her in youth and her sons protect her in old age, a woman is never fit for independence. But mothers were honoured as before, as the very pivots of their families and wives as "Sahadharminis" or spiritual partners of their spouses.

Thus with the lowering of the position of women they came to be considered unfaithful by nature.»

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# Role of Women in Society

**Sulakshna Brahma**

## **Introduction :**

Women are the inherent part of our society. They are created as a companion for men. We can't forget that women's life is a more complicated than that of a man's life. A woman has to take care of her own personal life and she plays the role as a mother, a sister, a daughter, a wife. Women play their roles with great responsibilities in upbringing of a healthy solid society, but she is still living in chains in our so called modern world .

The basic unit of society is a woman. As woman makes a family, family makes a home and home makes a society. A good healthy society is emerged due to a pivotal role of women. Like every citizen has equal right to vote so should he or she have a respectable and equal status in the society regardless of the profession or business.

Islam has taught that "paradise lies under the feet of mother." From the ages, altogether , the role of women in society was to make sure that they were obedient wives and caring mothers . They did not have an individuality of their own. Women were given the right for voting in the year 1918, while voting age for men was 18 years, it was 21 for women. This kind of gender discrimination was rampant in those times. In my view, women are the backbone.

Women have temperaments that allow for social resilience to overcome brittle discord.

Society's view of women: Throughout history and today, we women are constant victims of stereotyping from our society. Certain "rules" have to be followed and certain "ideal" women images have to be kept. Strange as it may seem, the family roles have not changed much in today's society. While girls and women have more opportunities in home based employment, the traditional roles of women are still quite evident. They are still the caring provider and nurturer of young infants and children, the comforter for the crying child and the feminine presence of the household. We are raised in away to fill certain position where the society wants us to be and as a result, the opportunities are always limited for us. Even though women gained some independence, where women can work and take various position in society, the society's idea of typical role of women never seem to change. . . [tags: Women Rights]

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From equal status with men in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion to equal rights by many reformers, women have held high offices in India.

Another misconception is that countries lacking in economic resources are more restrictive regarding women in religion. No one feels happy in the home at the birth of a female child. Even an only daughter is supposed to be curse for the family. She is regarded as a decree of lakhs of rupees on the parents. Further, as a wife, she has always to obey her husband. "Theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die" was the motto for them. Instead, Seguno's study showed that neither wealth nor lack of wealth determines if women's equality in religion will be affected. Many people assume that women no longer lose their jobs simply because they became

pregnant. Unfortunately, that is not always true. The lawsuit EEDC V. Kindred Nursing Centres West LLC was filed because an employee was disciplined and fired after informing her employer that she was pregnant. (State News Service) [Tags: Gender Issues.]

Consequently, in recent year many development organisations have prioritized pursuing gender equality goals as well as health and development goals. For example, in 2012 USAID released the Women's Equality and Female Empowerment Policy. The policy's three overarching goals are:

1. Reduce gender disparities in access to, control over, and benefit from resources;
2. Reduce and mitigate the effects of gender- based violence; and
3. Empower women and girls by increasing their capacity to realize their rights, determine their life outcomes, and influence decision making.

The changing role of women in society: A women's role has changed tremendously and is making its greatest impact in our society today. Many years ago, women's contribution to society was limited and controlled by men. Women are standing tall and are playing a major role in many important areas. Women's role has changed at an acceleration rate and have part in areas such as politics, professional training jobs, medicines, bussiness and law. Formerly they were not part of any political matter, but they have advance in many aspects. . . [Tags: Sociology History Feminism Essays].

The steady change in the position of women can be highlighted by looking at what has been achieved by women in the country. Savitribai Phule was a social reformer. she played an important role in improving women's rights in India during British Rule. In 1852 she opened a school for Untouchable caste girls.

Many women writers are prominent in Indian Literature as

poets and story writers, such as Sarojini Naidu, Kamala Suraya, Arundhati Roy, and Anita Desai. Sarojini Naidu is the nightingale of India. Arundhati Roy won the Booker Prize for her novel *The God of Small Things*. Above all Kalpana Chawla, our great Indian astronomer can't be forgotten.

Images of women in society: Throughout time, the images of women have changed. Society would like to believe that we now are in a position to say that we live in a society of gender equality. That would be ideal, but that is far from accomplished as of yet. Mass media, such as television, movies, and magazines, not only impact the men who view them. Fashion magazines are a most notorious for the ways that they portray women.

It is good to mention the term "gender equality" in today's world. But does it really mean?? Even today 98% of our women in society are suffering from problems like molestation, eve-teasing, sexual harassment etc. Each and everyday in the media there are cases of rape, dowry killings etc where only women are the victims. Girls don't have freedom to move around during the night or even day. Parents at home would not be at rest until their daughter or wife come back safe at home. Women are still devoid of the actual respect and honour in this society.

The second shift women in society: Women have pushed forward in the struggle for equality. Today women are staples in the professional world. More women are attending college than men as proved in recent studies. Women have outnumbered men on college campus since 1984. Women's rights establish the same social and economic status for women as for men. Women's rights guarantee that women will not face discrimination on the basis of their sex. Until the second half of the 20th century, women in most societies were denied some of the legal and political rights according to men. Although women in much of the world have gained significant legal rights, many people believe that women still do

not have equality with men...[Tags: Women Rights Essays research papers].

Conclusion: I write as conclusion for my project that even women played a major role as the saying goes "behind every successful man there is a women". Women have influenced the society if not directly atleast indirectly. The role of women in history remind us of the difficulties they had to face to make their voice heard. Today, it cannot be denied that the liberation of the women from domestic duties and subservient status has actually brought them an independently social equal position or superior to that of men. The ongoing changes in social, political, and economic spheres make the role of women bigger. Also , the action of many women have influenced the changing role. Gender equality is fundamental to achieving poverty reduction and socio-economic development. »

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# Marie Curie (1867-1934): The great women scientist

Dipsikha Kalita



Marie Curie was a Polish-born physicist and chemist and one of the most famous scientists of her time. Maria Salomea Sklodowska was born in Warsaw, Poland on 7th November 1867 and she was the youngest of five children of school teachers. In 1891, she went to Paris to study physics and mathematics at the Sorbonne University. It was in Paris, in 1894, that she met Pierre Curie, professor of the School of Physics and who she married a year later. It was also around this time that she adopted the French spelling of her name – Marie.

Marie Curie discovered two new chemical elements – radium and polonium. She carried out the first research into the treatment of tumors with radiation and was the founder of the Curie Institutes,

which are important medical research centres. The Curies became research workers at the School of Chemistry and Physics in Paris and began their pioneering work into invisible rays given off by uranium – a new phenomenon which had been discovered by Professor Henri Becquerel. He

Marie Curie had shown that the rays emitted by Uranium were able to pass through solid matter, fog and photographic film and caused air to conduct electricity. Marie noticed that samples of mineral called pitchblende, which contains uranium ore, were a great deal more radioactive than the pure element uranium. Further work convinced her that the very large readings she was getting could not be caused by uranium alone – there was something else in the pitchblende. Since nobody had ever found it before, it could only be present in tiny quantities, and it seemed to be very radioactive.

Marie was convinced she had found a new chemical element – other scientists doubted her results.

Pierre and Marie Curie set about working to search for the unknown element. They ground up samples of pitchblende, dissolved them in acid, and began to separate the different elements present, using the standard analytical chemistry techniques of the time. Eventually, they extracted a black powder 330 times more radioactive than uranium, which they called polonium. Polonium was a new chemical element with atomic number 84. When the Curies investigated further, they found that the liquid left behind after they had extracted polonium was still extremely radioactive. They realised that pitchblende contained another new element, far more radioactive than polonium, but present in even smaller quantities.

In 1898, the Curies published strong evidence supporting the existence of the new element, which they called radium but they still had no sample of it. Pitchblende is an expensive mineral,

because it contains valuable uranium and it required a lot of it because the new element exists in very small quantities. She got in touch with a factory in Austria that removed the uranium from pitchblende for industrial use and bought several tonnes of the worthless waste product, which was even more radioactive than the original pitchblende, and was much cheaper. Marie set about processing the pitchblende to extract the tiny quantities of radium. This involved working on a much larger scale than before, with 20 kg batches of the mineral – grinding, dissolving, filtering, precipitating, collecting, redissolving, crystallising and recrystallising.

The work was heavy and physically demanding – and involved dangers the Curies did not appreciate. During this time they began to feel sick and physically exhausted; today we can attribute their ill-health to the early symptoms of radiation sickness. At the time they persevered in ignorance of the risks, often with raw and inflamed hands because they were continually handling highly radioactive material.

In 1902 Marie eventually isolated radium (as radium chloride), determining its atomic weight as 225.93. The journey to the discovery had been long and arduous. Marie Curie made history in 1903 when she became the first woman to receive the Nobel Prize in physics. She won the prestigious honour along with her husband and Henri Becquerel, for their combined, though separate, work on radioactivity. With their Nobel Prize win, the Curies developed an international reputation for their scientific efforts, and they used their prize money to continue their research. In the same year, Marie passed her doctorate thesis in Physics. In 1906 Marie's life was struck by tragedy when Pierre was killed in a street accident after being knocked down by a horse and cart.

Her indomitable spirit, however, kept her working and she went on to succeed him in his Chair as Professor at Sorbonne, as well carrying on lecturing where he had left off.

Her determination and remarkable endeavours led to a second Nobel Prize in 1911, this time in chemistry for creating a means of measuring radioactivity. While she received the prize alone, she shared the honor jointly with her late husband in her acceptance lecture. Sorbonne built the first radium institute with two laboratories; one for study of radioactivity under Marie Curie's direction, and the other for biological research into the treatment of cancer. During the First World War, Marie Curie worked to develop small, mobile X-ray units that could be used to diagnose injuries near the battlefield. As Director of the Red Cross Radiological Service, she toured Paris, asking for money, supplies and vehicles which could be used for the purpose.

In October 1914, the first machines were ready and Marie set off to the front. She worked with her daughter Irene, and then aged 17, at casualty clearing stations close to the front line, Xraying wounded men to locate fractures, bullets and shrapnel. After the war, Marie continued her work as a researcher, teacher and head of a laboratory and received many awards and prizes.

Among them were the Ellan Richards Research Prize (1921), the Grand Prix du Marquis d'Argenteuil (1923) and the Cameron Prize from Edinburgh University (1931). She was also the recipient of many honorary degrees from universities around the world.

On 4 July 1934, at the Sancellemoz Sanatorium in Passy, France at the age of 66, Marie Curie died of pernicious anaemia, a condition she developed after years of exposure to radiation through her work. She left two daughters, Irene (born 1898) and Eve (born 1904). Irene, like her mother, entered the field of scientific research and, with her husband Frederic Joliot, worked on the nucleus of the atom and together were awarded a Nobel Prize and credited with the discovery of artificial radiation. Irene too died of a radiation-related illness – leukaemia – in 1956. Eve became a journalist and writer. Irene's daughter Dr H Langevin-

Joliet (born 1927) also pursued a career in nuclear physics and became research emeritus of the National Centre for Scientific Research in Paris. In 1995, Marie and Pierre Curie were reburied in the Pantheon – the Paris mausoleum reserved for France’s most revered dead – on the orders of French President Mitterand.

Marie Curie was the first woman to be awarded a place in the Pantheon for her own achievements. She is also arguably the first woman to make such a significant contribution to science.»

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# Women's Nutrition

**Suranjan Bhowal**

Health and nutrition are one of the most important contributory factors for a happy family. The 21st century is an era of speed. It is an era where time has become a scarce commodity.

In our busy lives & inter connected hitech world, we often miss our most important connection "The connection with nature". Today schedules are hectic coupled with sedentary lifestyle, our nutrition habits are getting changes to catch-up in the race leaving a big nutritional gap. One person in the family who especially requires special health attention is the 'woman', as she is the pillar behind a happy, 'healthier' family.

Today's women are extra ordinary, they know exactly how to keep the perfect balance, between their career and family and leave no opportunity unturned which lead them to fulfill their dreams and reach the pinnacle of their desired success. The perfect balance between their health and well-being is of vital importance.

Women have special nutritional need as they undergo various life stages such as adolescence, pregnancy, lactation, menopause. Women are found in every professional field and juggle between many roles to bring in perfect balance at home and office. As a result women need to be extra careful about their diet and the amount of physical activity.

**Omega-3 fatty acids :** Most women in their reproductive years recognize the mild cramps or slight twinge in the lower back as annoying but harmless side effects of menstruation. Some women, however, experience more trouble, either before or during their periods, in the form of severe cramps, nausea, bloating, irritability, breast tenderness, headache and constipation. Omega-3s are one way to prevent or lesser these symptoms. Population studies show that women who do not enough omega-3s have increased menstrual difficulties. Experts recommend that women with endometriosis, a condition that causes extremely painful periods, supplement their diet with omega-3s to lower the levels of prostaglandins and control inflammation.

Infants born to mothers who had high levels of omega-3 fatty acid DHA at delivery had advanced attention spans well past their first birthday. The brain accumulates large amounts of DHA during first two years of life and its known to be important for brain development.

**Protein :** Protein is one of the basic building blocks of the human body, makes muscle, hair, skin and connective tissues. It is also needed for our immune system, to synthesize neuro transmitters and for the creation and signaling of hormones.

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) recommends the protein intake for different life stages for Indian population :

Adults	1.0g / kg body weight / day
Children	1.5g / kg body weight / day
Pregnant / lactating women	1.75g / kg body weight / day

**Iron :** Iron is necessary for red blood cell formation. The amount needed is higher in women of child bearing age. Primary function of iron in the body is the formation of hemoglobin.

Iron absorbed into the blood is usually bound to protein transferring and goes mainly to bone marrow where it can be used

to make red blood cells. Iron helps maintain healthy immune system. Helps produce energy from food. It is necessary component for various enzymes. Low level of iron in the body may lead to (i) fatigue (ii) weakness (iii) lowered immune function (iv) less concentration.

**Folic acid :** Studies show that women who supplement their diet with folic acid before and during pregnancy have greater chance of giving birth to healthy babies. Experts suggest that regular dietary intake of folic acid may reduce the levels of homocysteine, a naturally occurring chemical in the blood which in high concentration may damage arteries and lead to heart disease.

Healthy hair, skin and nails are one of the reflection of your overall well-being. Biotin may help alleviate nail brittleness, promote healthy hair and improve skin condition. Collagen necessary for structure, health and growth of hair, skin and nails. L-cysteine is an amino acid promotes the formation of keratin a major protein in hair, skin and nails. Vitamin C helps as a cofactor in the production of Collagen in the skin. Glycine works in conjunction with collagen to promote skin moisturization. Grape seed extract is a powerful antioxidant reported to promote capillary health and may help in reduction of elastin degradation in the skin.

**Calcium :** Healthy bones are essential for you to achieve a life filled with enjoyment, activity and vitality. Your bones are complex living tissue. They provide structure and support for your muscles, protect your organs and store 99% of the calcium used by the soft tissues of your body for their various functions.

We reach our maximum bone strength by our early twenties. After about age 30, your body breaks down old bone faster than it builds new bone. This process speeds up dramatically as menopause approaches and for several years after. As we age, our body absorbs less of calcium and makes less bone friendly hormones. Our bones become unduly thin if anything interferes

with bones reaching their maximum strength or if bones are being chewed up more or if new bone is put back less effectively. This leads to weakening of bones. Remember, this bone-thinning calcium may also reduce the risk of preclampsia in pregnant women. Calcium is often helpful for menstrual problems.

**Magnesium** : It plays an important role in regulating calcium level in bone. It compliments calcium in building stronger bones.

**Vitamin D** : An essential component in bone health. Vitamin D is required for promoting calcium absorption from the gut.

**Ipriflavone** : Helps maximize bone mineral density.

**Chicory root** : Helps maintain bone mass, by virtue of supporting calcium absorption.

**Black cohosh** : Provides overall well being during menopause. Helps lower luteinizing hormone production, which in turn, lowers the symptoms associated with menopause. It is believed to have an estrogen-like effect, it has been referred to as phytoestrogen. Helps in improvement of both physiological and psychological symptoms of menopause.

**Isoflavones** : Supports overall well being during menopause. Supports heart health and bone mass during menopause.

Stress from noise and life styles, pollution, food choices, dieting, life stages and daily demands rob us of vital nutrients. Today's soil is suffering from its own nutrient deficiencies due to modern farming practices. Processing and refining decrease available nutrients in whole foods. If this is not enough processing storing and cooking foods withdraws more nutritional value.

These conditions have left many of us with daily supplementation needs. Unfortunately many of our food supply is not up to the job of providing what we need. The first step is to eat and live well. Step number two is to take a balanced vitamin and mineral supplement if needed. »»

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# UGC sponsored women study centre at a glance and its activities

The over all literacy rate of female education is lowest in our country in comparison to the world literacy rate of female education. The female of age group of 15 or above who are able to read and write is about 80% in the world where as the percentage in our country is lowest. This low percentage of literacy resulted in dowry death, violence and other social evils.

The condition of women in Assam is worst. The other sister states of this region like Mizoram, Meghalaya, even Nagaland are far ahead from Assam in women's education. So, to promote women study UGC has set up Women Study Centre in the universities as well as in the colleges of the country, as these centres will be able to bring about the social, educational and economic empowerment of womenhood, which it turn is most important for the upliftment of the society or country.

Taking into account a women study centre was established with the financial support of UGC and under the chairmanship of honourable Principal Dr. S.U. Amhed, in ADP College, on January, 2009. From that period the centre is organizing different programmes, such as lecture programme, extension programme, awareness programme, workshops etc. Moreover the centre also published some books and also conducted some research projects.

### **Lecture programme :**

1. A lecture programme was organized on 15th June, 2010 in the college on "33% reservation for women." Resource person was Padmashree Patricia Mukhim, a social worker and editor of "The Shillong times." The welcome address was delivered by the Principal, Dr. S.U. Ahmed. Prof. Mina choudhury, Director of the centre delivered a speech on aim and objectives of the centre.  
Mrs. Mukim in her speech gave a vivid description on 33% reservation for women She also focused on some problems of North East Women.  
The programme was attended by the college teachers of Nagaon district and several other dignitaries and participated in interaction.
2. On 29th June, 2010, another lecture programme was organised on "Women Empowerment" and "Gender Justice" and resource person was Dr. S.K. Varshney, Rtd. Prof. of Lucknow university. She also emphasized on the empowerment of women for a healthy society and also described the different legal aid relating to women. Different dignitaries including college teachers of Nagaon district attended the programme and participated in interaction.
3. On 11th May, 2011 a lecture programme was organized on "Women studies : as an Academic Discipline; Issues and Challenges" in the college seminar hall. The Resource persons were Dr. Sushila Kaushik, Co-chair person, of UGC National Consultative Committee for women studies, and Prof. Dr. Archana Sharma, the then Director and Head of the Deptt. Of Women Studies, G.U.

Both of them explained some problems of women and stressed on the importance of awareness among people.

### **Extension programme :**

1. The UGC sponsored Women Study Centre had undertaken a survey work at Dasgaon, Bengenaati, a predominately scheduled caste dominated area to study the socio economic status of the women. It was done from 13-05-2009 to 17-05-2009.  
The aim of the survey work was to find out the literacy rate, socio-economic as well as health and hygienic condition of the people of the area.
2. On 10th October, 2009, organised a programme on protection of women from domestic violence at Puranigudam, Nagaon at the primary school of Teliagaon. Prof. G.D. Bhattacharya described the aim and objective of the programme. Mrs. R. Rajkhowa, as chief guest, had spoken about the protection of women from domestic violence Act, 2005. She described the laws relating to women and also the domestic and constitutional rights of women.
3. An awareness programme on Witch Hunting (Dainy hatya) was organized by women study centre, ADP college on 15th December, 2009.  
Witch hunting is a common practice in India in general, particularly in Assam. Because of ignorance, superstitions and lack of education and communication in some region witch hunting is of common occurrence. People target the weak person to be the witch and they kill him/her publicly. It is a social evil. It claims more than 116 lives in Assam till now. In this programme Prof. G.D. Bhattacharya, Arpana Tamuly and Neeta Sharma acted as resource persons.
4. The centre organised a 'Yoga camp' from 15-09-2010 to 19-9-2010 at college. The camp was held in two shifts. The girl students of the college participated in the camp. Mr. Bhermidhar Terang, Nagar Sanghathak, Golaghat Vivekanandra Kendra imparted theoretical knowledge

while Mrs. Ritumani Dutta, Bibhag Sangathak of Tezpur Vivekananda Kendra, Gauranga Gohain demonstrated Yoga and taught the students.

5. The centre organized a Health awareness camp at Barbheti Angawadi Centre on 16 November 2011. The local women and women members of different NGO's and self help group participated in the programme. Dr. Kamal Laskar, a physician, attended the camp. Dr. Laskar has spoken about symptoms of many diseases relating to women, anti and post natal measurement, child and motherhood measures to be taken during pregnancy, reproduction and child health, polio, anaemic conditions etc.  
Prof. Arpana Tamuly Prof. M.P. Rajkhowa, Dr. Anima Bhattacharya urged the women to participate in such camps for their benefit and knowledge.
6. The Women Study Centre organised a 'Free Dental Check-up and Dental Awareness Programme" in Biswajyoti Bidyamandir School in collaboration with "Lion and Lioness Club of Nagaon Greater, D-322." Dr. Santanu Bora, Dr. Tarun Saikia and Dr. Pradip Sarkar were Present as experts. About 90 students of the school were treated. The doctors also delivered lectures on dental awareness. The guardians of the students were also present in the meeting.
7. A health-awareness programme was organised at Azarbari High School, Morigaon on 5-9-2012. Here, prime importance was given on the adolescent stage of the girls, their health-care, hygiene etc. About 165 girls and the school-teachers were present in the meeting.
8. A literacy programme was organized at Rampur Satra, Bardowa from 19-3-2013 to 25-3-2013, in collaboration with Mahila Samata Society. About 26nos. of illiterate women took part in this programme.

Books, slates, pencils and essential reading kits were distributed among the participants on the inaugural day of the programme. Mrs. Samsun Nehar and Mrs. Achiya Begum two trained demonstrators of the Samata Society acted as training teaches in the camp through informal education.

The velidictory function was held on 25th March, 2013 which was chaired by Prof. Mina Choudhury, Director of the Women Study Centre. Prof. M.P. Rajkhowa, Prof. Arpana Tamuly also participated in the function and spoke few words. On that day it was found that most of the illiterate women were able to read and write their names. They seemed to be very much pleased and requested the centre to arrange such types of literacy camp again.

9. An educational trip was conducted for girls students of the college (about 80 Nos.) and were taken to Gauhati on 3-5-13. They visited the Science Museum, Sankardeva Kalakshetra. Bhupen Hazarika museum, open theatre ground etc.
10. A carrer counselling programme was organised at the college seminar hall. The counceller were Mrs. Pratima Kaushik Baruah and Bhargab Baruah. The college students mainly the girl students took part and interacted with them.
11. The UGC sponsored Women Study Centre, ADP College and Women study and Welfare Centre, ADP College, Nagaon organized an Awareness Programme on Women-Health Care at Jamuguri Bapuji M.E. School, Jamuguri, Nagaon on 9th June, 2014. Dr. Daisy Rajbangshi, M.D. deliberately participated in the programme as the appointed speaker. About 60 (Sixty) ladies of that area participated in the programme.

At the outset, Prof. Mina Choudhury, Director of the Women Study Centre described the aim and objective of the Centre and

also welcomed all the participants. The meeting was presided over by Mrs. Bhabani Bora, Associate Professor of the college. During her presidential speech Professor Bora emphasized on prevention of diseases and to take appropriate step. The meeting was anchored by Prof. Archana Talukdar and vote of thanks was offered by Arpana Tamuly, Associate Professor of the college.

### **Workshop :**

1. In accordance with the centenary years of International Women's Day, the Women Study Centre organized a Workshop on "Cancer with special emphasis on Breast Cancer" at Arjuntal, Nagaon in collaboration with Bhaswati of Guwahati on 8th March 2010. Prof. (Mrs) M.P. Rajkhaowa has given the key note address. Dr. Jayantimala Chakraborty who herself was a victim of Breast Cancer acted as the resource person. Prof. (Mrs.) Mina Choudhury Co-ordinator of the centre had given the welcome address and explained the aims and objectives of the workshop. She said that the programme is being organized basically for the upliftment of the rural women relating to health and to stand still from the evil aspects of cancer specially breast cancer. A large number of women from the area participated in the programme. The resource person Dr. Jayantimala Chakraborty provided a vivid description of the disease. She described about the symptoms of the disease, what preventive measures to be taken and dos and don'ts of the disease. She emphasised on earlier detection of the disease and consult with doctors at the first sight of any symptoms. Early detection saved many lives with this dreaded disease. She told the women participants that this disease is curable and one should maintain mental strength whenever is effected. She cited many examples with photo graphs, paper reports and medical research findings. who survived

the disease. Dr. Jayantimala Chakraborty was accompanied with her co-worker Mrs. Swapna Chowdhury. Prof. (Mrs) Gitimalika Saikia also described the importance of such awareness programmes and thanked Dr.(Mrs) Chakraborty for her valuable presentation.

Prof.(Mrs) M.P. Rajkhowa described the fruitfulness of the programme. She emphasized on the participation of the rural women in such programmes and also state that only awareness can make the persons to resist this dreaded disease.

An interaction session was also held where the participants shared many doubts about breast cancer. Prof (Mrs) Dr. Rajita Kalita offered the vote of thanks to all the participants and guests of the programmes.

2. The UGC Sponsored women study centre, ADP College, Nagaon in collaboration with Women Study & Welfare Center, ADP College, organized a skill development programme on water hyacinth in the college auditorium from 02/03/2013 to 09/03/2013. About 47 students of 2nd and 4th Semester (TDC) participated in the workshop. Miss Minakshi Bora and Miss Jayashree Kalita were the instructors in the programme.

Different types of bags, dustbin, pen-stand, flowerpots were made from the stem of water hyacinth. In the valedictory function on 09th March, 2013, the Principal of the college, Dr. S.U. Ahmed distributed the certificates to the participating students.

The Principal, in his speech ask the students to take advantages of such programme. The function was also attended by the college teaching staffs. Mrs. Archana Talukdar, Asst. Professor of the colleges delivered a valuable speech. Vote of thanks was offered by Prof. Mina Choudhury, coordinator of the centre.

3. A three day workshop on incense stick making was organised by the UGC sponsored women study centre, ADP College, Nagaon in collaboration with Jyoitshmita Kalyan Samity, Nagaon from 23rd September to 26th September, 2014 at Simaluguri Angonwadi Kendra, Nagaon and closing function was held on 30th September, 2014. The workshop was formally inaugurated by the Director of the centre Prof. Mina Choudhury . During her inaugural speech Prof. Choudhury told that financial independence is the key indicator of women empowerment . There are some skills by learning which women can earn money even staying at home using their leisure time. The incense stick making skill is one that kind of skill. During her speech trainer Mrs. Rima Das encouraged the women specially the self-help groups to come forward to learn these types of skills to place their poor families as well as society to an economically sound position. More than 30 women from the locality participated in the programme and were successful in making incense stick. In the closing ceremony, the members from UGC Sponsored Women Study Centre, ADP College namely, Dr. Rajita Kalita, Prof. Archana Talukdar and Prof. Archana Das participated and shared their views to encourage the participants for further development.
4. The UGC sponsored Women Study Centre, A.D.P. College, Nagaon organized a workshop on Witch Hunting (Dainy Hatya) at Sagunbari Division of Kondoli Tea Estate on 12th December 2014.

Prof. Arpana Tamuly, Associate Professor of the college presided over the inaugural session of the workshop. The inaugural speech and key note address was delivered by Prof. Mina Choudhury, Director of the centre. In her speech she described the evil effects of superstitions and also requested the people not to be victimized by the superstitions like witch hunting.

After the inaugural speech, Dr. Kamal Laskar, M.B.B.S. delivered his speech on the evil effects of witch hunting. This was followed by an interesting interaction session. Prof. Neeta Sharma, Associate Prof. of the college took part in this session. She answered various queries regarding witch hunting. Prof. Arpana Tamuly emphasized on the importance of education and also the need of awareness among people to stop such incidence like witch-hunting. Vote of thanks was offered by prof. Kakali Baruah, Associate Professor of the college.

About hundred people including both male and female participated in the workshop. Several officials of the Tea Estate were also present and some of them also put their views on the subject.

### **Publication :**

The centre published two books edited by teachers of our college.

- 1) Bishoy Naree – edited by  
Dr. Ajit Bharali, *Asstt. Prof. Dept. of Assamese*  
Dr. Rajita Kalita, *Asstt. Prof. Dept. of Assamese*
- 2) Women issues and perspective edited by –  
Arindam Borkatakya, *Asstt. Prof., Dept. of English*  
Neet Sharma, *Asstt. Prof., Dept. of English*

Moreover the centre conducted research projects on–

- 1) **“A study on Adolescent school girls empowerment with special reference to Nagaon Municipality Area.”**

The investigators were–

### **Principal investigator**

Mrs. Mina Choudhury, Associate Prof., (Director, Woman Study Centre)

### **Co-investigators :**

1. Deepa Saikia, *Associate Prof.*
2. Arpana Tamuli, *Associate Prof.*
3. Aparna Bairagi, *Associate Prof.*

4. Alpana Baruah, *Associate Prof.*
  5. Anjana Devi, *Asstt. Prof.*
  6. Archana Das, *Asstt. Prof.*
  7. Archana Talukdar, *Asstt. Prof.*
- 2) A study on socio-economic status of the girl students of ADP college : An Analytical Report.”

**Principal investigator :**

Mrs. Mamoni Phukon Rajkhowa, *Associate Prof.*

**Co-investigators :**

1. Mrs. Geeta Devi Bhattacharya, *Associate Prof.*
2. Dr. Bobby Bhuyan, *Associate Prof.*
3. Dr. Sabita Devi, *Asstt. Prof.*
4. Ganga Rani Das, *Asstt. Prof.*
5. Arati Bharali, *Asstt. Prof.*

Submitted by— **Prof. Mina Choudhury**

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*Dr. Jayantimala Chakraborty interacting with a Breast Cancer patient after her speech on Breast Cancer.*



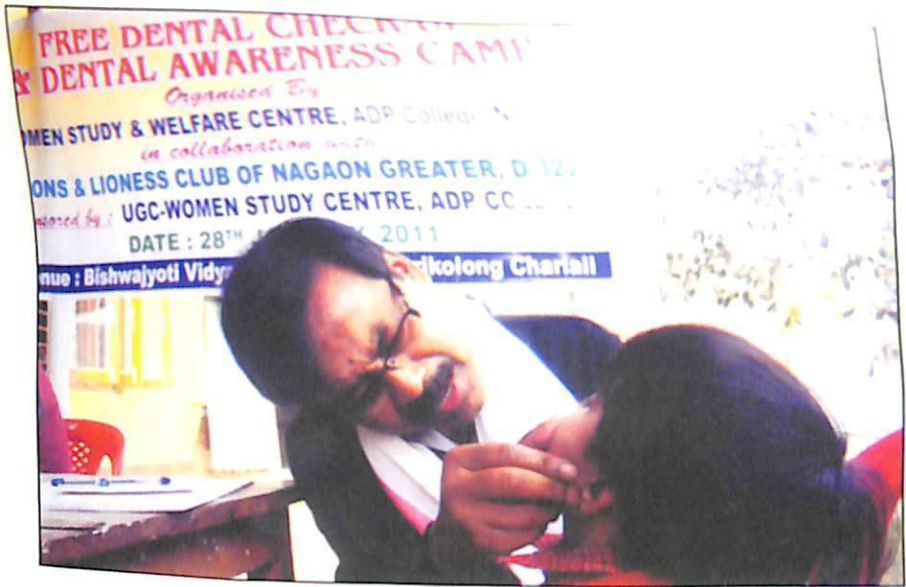
*Padmashree Awardee Patricia Mukhim delivering lecture on "33% Reservation for women"*



*Principal Dr. S. U. Ahmed in his welcome address  
in the lecture programme on  
"Women Studies : as an academic discipline"*



*Dr. Sushila Kaushik delivering lecture on  
"Women Studies : as an academic discipline"*



*Dr. Tarun Saikia B.D.S. is busy with a patient in Dental Checkup Camp*



*Head Master of Azarbari High School, Marigaon addressing the meeting on Health Awareness Programme organised by Women Study Centre for the girl-students of that school.*



*Mina Chaudhury planting a Neem Tree along with her colleagues and school students as a part of Environmental Awareness*



*Student participants of the workshop are busy in making things with Water Hyacinth*



*Students busy in the workshop on  
Water Hyacinth*



*A scene of the Literacy Programme :  
the illiterate women busy in learning  
through informal education*



*Students of economically backward group were taken to Gauhati as an Educational Trip*



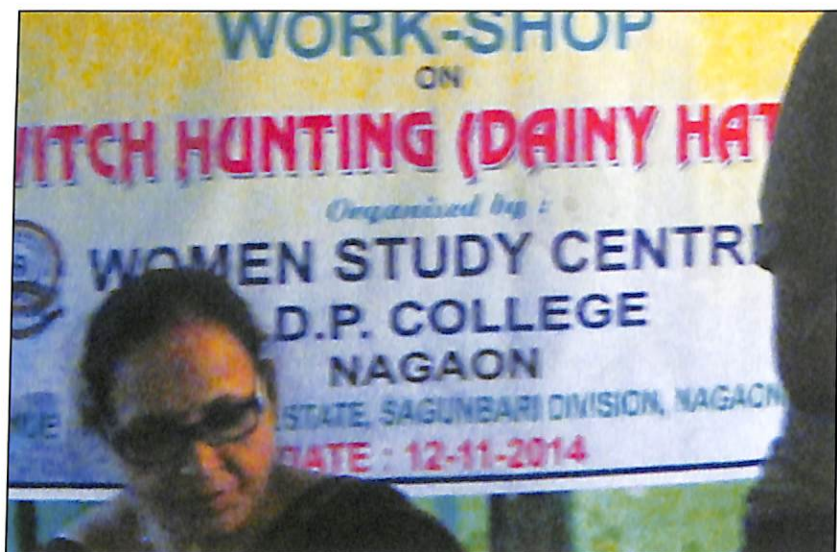
*Counsellor Pratima Kaushik Baruah addressing the students of the college on Carrer Counselling Programme*



*Dr. Daisy Rajbongshi delivering her speech on Women Health Care*



*Women and girl-participants in the Workshop on Incense-stick Making*



*Workshop on witch Hunting in Salna Tea Estate,  
Sagunbari Division*



*Participants busy in making things with  
Water-Hyacinth during the workshop*

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**CONTEMPORARY  
WOMEN ISSUES**  
**A REFLECTION**

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9 78-93-84679-18-7