



A BRIEF CASE STUDY ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM

Nilakshi Deka

Research Scholar Department Assamese, MSSV

Abstract

Women empowerment means empowering women with all their rights they should have in the family, society, school, college and country just like a man. It is to make them able so that they can make own independent decisions for their personal development. Women empowerment was introduced as a concept at the third International women's conference at Nairobi in 1985 which aimed at redistribution of social power and control of resources in favor of women, the control of resources related to society deals with education, employment and roles in the political field. It also emphasis on taking care of the home duties like income, property, health, nutrition and decision making. However, economic situation, education background and politically awareness plays a very crucial role in the development of women empowerment. Assam is one of the eight states of North East India. Assam is the largest state in the region in terms of population and second in geographical area. Therefore, women status is not very good in Assam. Because, in the education area position of women, strength of economic condition and politically aware of women in Assam is weaker and less than the other state of the country. Therefore, women empowerment can success through the politically, economically and educationally in Assam.

Keywords: Women, Empowerment, North East, ASSAM, Challenges. Etc.

Objectives:

- 1) Discuss about the role of economic, politics and education to empowerment of women's in Assam.
- 2) Find out some challenges of women's empowerment in Assam.
- 3) Find out some suggestions towards empowerment of women's in Assam.

Methodology: During the research it collected data through secondary sources like various Books, E-books, Articles, Internet etc.

Findings and Discussion :

Assam is one of the eight states of North East India. It is the largest state in the region in terms of population and second to Arunachal Pradesh in geographical area. Assam is free from some of the social evils like dowry, sati pratha, female feticide and infanticide because of the prevalence of tribal and indigenous culture, other forms of gender discrimination. In certain respects the



position of women in Assam is weaker than that in other states of the country. For instance there is need of Women Empowerment. Women Empowerment refers to the creation of an environment for women where they can make decisions of their own for their personal benefits as well as for the society. Women empowerment has other views as freely live their life with a sense of self-worth, respect and dignity; have equal rights for social and economic justice; to make their own choices and decisions; get safe and comfortable working environment and have equal rights to participate in social, religious and public activities. For instance women empowerment has been done through educationally, economically and politically

Educational Empowerment of Women:

It means empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. It means making women aware of their rights and developing a confidence to claim them.

Education is the pinpoint of basic change in the status of women. It is key factor in overcoming the barriers that women face and the basic tool for empowering women. In Assam, educational status of women is lagging for behind as compared to the other states of the country. The educational attainment of women of Assam at district level can be analyzed through female literacy rate and female enrolment rate at different stages of education. Female literacy rate is highest in Upper Assam 60.35% which is quite higher than state average 54.61% Central Assam and Lower Assam show the poor performance in the field of female literacy rate compared to the Upper Assam. These rates are 52.61 and 52.53 percent respectively.

Attainment of higher literacy rate alone does not make a community educationally advanced. Completion of primary stage of education and continuation of school upto 16 years, etc. are taken as guide of educational attainment. Therefore, drop-out is a negative indicator of educational attainment. Drop-out rates of both Boys and Girls in Assam remained higher than all India average from 2001 to 2011. Basically drop-out of girls from education is increased. In Assam drop-out is still increasing. Therefore various reasons are playing to negative role regarding educational attainment. Drop-out reasons are as follows-

- a) Conservative mind
- b) Economic backwardness of the rural people
- c) Lack of educational facilities
- d) Lack of women teachers in schools especially in rural areas
- e) Lack of proper guidance

The greatest factor which can incredibly improve the status of women in any society. Because education makes the women empowered personally, economically, politically, socially etc. Education is the foundation of everyone. For instance educated women acquired self confidence,



self esteem, boldness and independence. Education provides women access to knowledge in areas like health, childcare, nutrition and family planning. Through education women develop interpersonal skills and problem solving skills which are day by day facing. Higher educated women's are economically empowered. So, education plays an important role regarding empowerment of women.

Economically Empowerment of Women:

It implies a better quality of material life through sustainable livelihoods owned and managed by women. It means reducing their financial dependence on their male counterparts by making them a significant part of human resource. Economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information.

In case of Assam, misconceptions that women's are not economically contributors. Therefore, female work participation is another indicator of women's economic status in the society. Assam is not the worst among major states of Indian Union in terms women's participation in work. Assam has a largely rural agrarian economy, which is symbolized by high rate of work participation of women. On the other hand the work participation rate of the women in Assam is considerably lower than that of men in general except in the primary sector where the rates are in favor of women. According to Economic Survey, Assam 2009-10, women constitute 32.5% of all organized sector workers, as opposed to only 19% for all India in the same sector. Interestingly, since 1990's women's employment in the organized sector has been approximately around 30% where majorities of women employed in this sector are employed by Tea Industry which is one of the largest in Assam, either as permanent, temporary, casual labour.

Women's awareness about micro credit programme and formation of Self Help Groups also guide women's effort for women empowerment as well as status. It is a significant step for empowering women. And it uplifted the women's economic conditions. The formation of SHGs has benefited its members by increasing their assets, incomes and employment opportunities and there has been a significant shift in the use of the loans from personal consumption to their being used for income generating purpose. Percentage of women SHGs to total SHGs from 1999 to 2006 was observed to be highest in Upper Assam 68%. Central and Lower Assam showed poor performance as compared to Upper Assam in this respect. On an average Central Assam highest number of women SHGs formed since 1999 followed by Lower and Upper Assam.

Politically Empowerment of Women:

It means the existence of a political system favoring the participation in and control by the women of the political decision-making process and in governance. Women's political



participation is the actual and equal involvement of women in the governance of the communities they belong to whether via elective, appointive or merited positions. It means the recognition and value attached to the contribution of all including women in the governance system of any community or country. It is important to have both quantity and quality in the women taking part in governance. It is important to raise women's engagement in politics by raising their awareness of opportunities available, building confidence and skills. Ultimately all are related with women's empowerment.

In case of Assam, It is worst in terms of their position in decision-making bodies. Women's political empowerment through political participation in the context of Assam poses sometimes doubts. In history of Assam Legislative Assembly, participation of women's in politics since independence it does not cross even 15% of total members of Assembly. In 1972 there was not even a single women MLA. The situation however, has changed and in 2006 about 10% of MLA are women. In 13th Assam Legislative Assembly election the mandate comes with absolute majority. Among the cabinet ministers has been given to women namely, Ajanta Neog and Pranati Phukon. In 2016 women make up an abysmal 8.6 percent of the total candidates in the elections and all the major parties given fewer tickets to women this time as compared to the 2011 polls. Out of a total 1064 candidates in the fray for the 2016 Assembly polls in Assam, there were 91 women candidates. 8 women candidates have been elected to the new Assam Legislative Assembly which is six less than the 14 figure in the last Assembly. On the other hand, positive seen has been growing involvement of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. There are many elected women representatives at the village council. Yet women do not occupy a position of equality with men in every profession. Naturally it is witnessing the same gloomy picture of women in politics in Assam Legislative Assembly. Political parties can play a vital role in promoting women politics regarding women's empowerment. This can be done in providing party tickets in contesting the elections. Participation of women is low not only in the elected bodies but also in administrative. So, women's empowerment happened through the active political participation.

Challenges of Women Empowerment:

- 1) Perspective: The most widespread and dehumanizing discriminations on the basis of the biased perspective. The discrimination against girl child begins from the birth itself. Boys are preferred over girls; hence, female infanticide is a common practice in India as well as Assam. The ordeal that an Indian girl faces at birth is only the beginning of a lifelong struggle to be seen and heard.
- 2) Economic Backwardness: Women constitute only 29% of the workforce but forms majority of the destitute in the country. There has been a failure in transforming the available women base into human resource. This, in turn, has hampered not only the economic development of women but also of the country as a whole.



- 3) Lack of Political Will: The still-pending Women's Reservation Bill underscores the lack of political will to empower women politically. The male dominance prevails in the politics of India as well as Assam and women are forced to remain mute spectators.
- 4) Early Marriage: In Assam early marriage is one of the chief challenges which hinder the girl's further studies and other activities. Concern of the parents about their girl child's future is the main reason for their early marriage. It has been traditionally prevalent in India and continues to this day in every state of the country. It is basically seeded in the rural areas where the percentage of literacy is bitterly poor.
- 5) Replacing 'Patriarchy' with parity: A strong patriarchate society with deep-rooted socio-cultural values continues to affect women's empowerment. The need of the hour is an egalitarian society, where there is no place for superiority. The Government should identify and eliminate such forces that work to keep alive the tradition of male dominance over its female counterpart by issuing inhumane and unlawful diktats.

Suggestions: Women's empowerment is directly related with national development. Development of women's abilities, skills and other potentialities as well as empowerment of women's education, active political participation and strong economic condition are of great importance for the development of a country. There are some suggestions as follows-

- 1) End of all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere and violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- 2) Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- 3) Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.
- 4) Government should take appropriate steps with the participation of masses in order to bring the girl child to the main stream of education.
- 5) To create a positive image of women in the society and recognizing their contribution in educational, economic and political life.

Conclusion:

From the above analysis the discussion, it is found that education, politics and economic have influenced much in women empowerment. But still rural women are lagging behind in comparison to women living in urban areas. So there is must need of equality and vulnerability of women in different manners- economic, educational and political. All are the key factor for women empowerment in Assam.



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