

Women Status in Education System of Assam: A Brief Study

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Abstract: Women of our country have been facing discrimination in various forms. Any denial of opportunity, equality in terms of gender is gender discrimination. Nature does never discriminate women from men. But women have been victims of inequality worldwide not only in case of social and political right but also on ground of education and employment opportunities. Women are being made habitual of discrimination in male dominated society of India, because of which women fails to understand their own freedom and rights. Discrimination against women starts from their birth and it will continue until die. With the help of sex determination technique an unborn girl child is aborted. Birth of a girl child in a family is seen as a burden for parents and equal treatment is not given as boys of the same family. As the girl child grows, she is either denied of right to education or it is limited to elementary level in some cases. The females both illiterate and partially literate which have limited access to job opportunity and health care facility, remain confine to the boundaries of household core, looking after family, child rising etc. Better qualification or a good education does not bring women at par with men. Still women are deprived from many work opportunity because of the believed of men are more capable than their female counterpart having similar qualification. The present article made an attempt to study about the women status in different level of education in Assam and the reasons behind it.

Keywords: Women Status, Education, Assam etc.

1.0 Introduction:

In North East Region of India, Assam is one of the eight states of the region. Assam is the largest one among the all states of the region and Arunachal is the second largest in terms of geographical area. In spite of rich culture and natural resource, still Assam is lagging behind as compared to rest of the country. The socioeconomic set up of Assam for overall development has not been conducive. Since the state is a multiethnic with heterogeneous cultural background which has been experiencing ethnic strife and insurgency because of that not only in economic but the social fabric is also under threat. Though the state Assam including NER in some extent free from social evil such as dowry, *sati pratha*, infanticide and female feticide due to appearance of tribal and intrinsic culture, another form of gender disparities do exist as express in different studies of gender gap. On the other hand to the common perception is that female of Assam are disadvantageous as compared to the female of the country as a whole. In some aspect, women position in Assam is lower than that of the other states of the country. In the study of Shivkumar (1996), rank of Assam was in the 10th position of differential gender attainment of 16 major states of India. National Human Development Report (2002) reported gender inequality in education was higher in Assam as compared to the nation. Among the 32 States and union territories Assam got 29th rank in the country. According to the report of Assam Human Development (2003), the state lagged behind Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland. Now a day though women become empowered and getting opportunity regarding employment, education facility and income earning, but still status of majority of them is far from satisfactory. Though discrimination against women in many aspects is prevailed, but this study focuses on present status of women and factors responsible for it.

2.0 Women Literacy Rate of Assam:

Education of women is a prime essential which makes woman empowered socially and economically. It is said that if you educate a woman, then entire family will be educated, because role of women in a family is very significant. But due to some kind of problems in our society such as preference of son, dowry, dominating the girl child etc., women is not getting education equally with male. Following table-1 shows the present position of women in literacy of Assam:

Table-1: Literacy rate Assam: 2001 and 2011 (in %)

	Assam 2011			Assam 2001		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Male	78.8	76.5	91.8	53.7	46.1	72.9
Female	54.6	50.7	80.2	54.6	50.7	80.2
total	73.2	70.4	88.9	63.3	59.7	85.3

Source: Assam Human Development Report, 2014.

The above table-1 shows that literacy rate of Assam in 2011 was 73.2 percent and among that percentage of male is 78.8 percent and percentage of female was 54.2 percent which is less than 24.2 percent. Educational status of women in rural area is not good as urban area. In urban area percentage of educated male is 91.8 percent and female percent is 80.2 i.e., approximately 10 percent difference in education of male and female but in rural area percentage of literate women is very less as compared to rural literate male. One another important picture is shown by the table i.e., 2001 there was no any discrimination in education against woman, because literacy rate of woman both in rural and urban area was higher than male.

3.0 Enrollment at different ages:

One important aspect of educational status of women is that enrollment at different ages. The following table-2 shows that initially at lower age groups, more girls are enrolled in school; their presence gets reduced with age in the subsequent higher levels, because preference of son for higher education push the parents to send girls child for higher education. Moreover people think that girls have to go other house through marriage. Therefore it is meaningless to send girl for higher education. Consequently, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) (ratio of the number of female students enrolled to the number of male students enrolled) exhibits a decline trend for successive age groups. It is also a serious concern that for both males and females more than half of the post-

secondary school age children are not pursuing education, while at least one-fourth of the secondary school age students are not in school (Table-2).

Table-2: Age specific enrolment rates (in %)

	Male	Female	Total	GPI
6 to 14 years	93.59	94.13	93.85	0.95
15 to 16 years	71.17	78.49	74.57	0.87
17 to 18 years	53.24	52.07	52.71	0.82
19 to 14 years	20.33	15.19	17.70	0.79
6 to 24 years	54.84	53.28	54.07	0.92

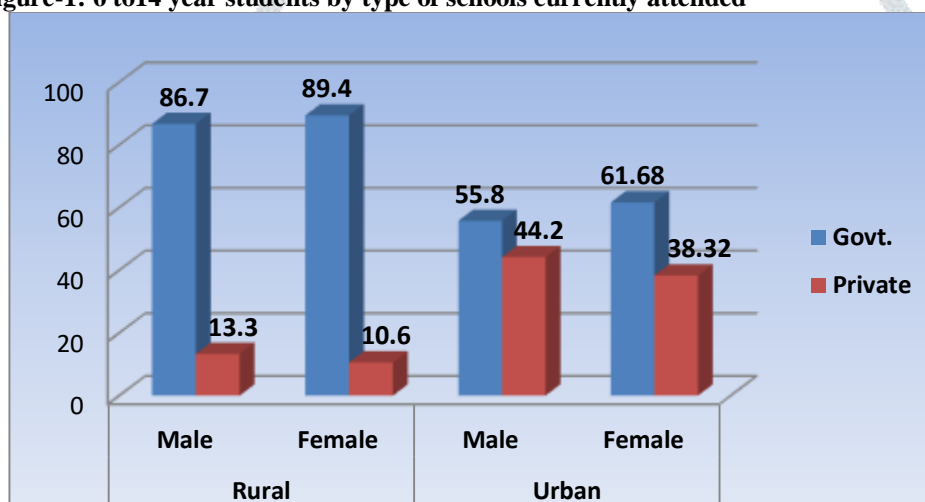
Source: HDR Survey, Assam (2013).

Note: Total sample between 6-24 age group: 90,699 (male: 46,472 female: 44,227).

4.0 Type of school attended:

As compared to male, attendance of women in school is not so satisfactory. Generally we think that quality of private school education is good as compared to education of government school. In this case following figure-1 indicates that enrollment of female in government school is much higher than males in both rural and urban. But in case of private school it is reversed i.e., attendance of female is less in private school as compared to male. That means parents prefer more boys than girls to give them more quality education.

Figure-1: 6 to14 year students by type of schools currently attended



Source: HDR Survey, Assam (2013).

Note: Government and private schools include government and private Madrassas, respectively

5.0 Scenario of Higher Education:

In higher education women enrollment is satisfactory in some extent. The following table-4, shows that in 2011, majority of above higher education courses percentage of male enrolment is higher than female. But in 2012-13 the picture is improved, i.e., enrollment of female become higher than male. There is some reason for such improvement. Because generally parents choice vocational education for their sons and they pressurize them to involve in such course. But this kind of privileged is not available for girl child. So girls retain on formal education. More over after completion of graduation male are trying to find jobs. But due to some kind of restriction parents do not allow girls to do every kind of job. It is also one kind of gender discrimination because of which percentage of girl enrollment become higher in higher education.

Table-4: Enrolment at various levels of higher education in Assam (%)

Education levels	2010-11		2012-13	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
PhD	0.22	0.14	0.32	0.19
M. Phil	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.02
Post Graduate	4.2	2.42	4.47	5.15
Under Graduate	46.11	44.88	42.14	43.23
P.G. Diploma	0.44	0.08	0.41	0.3
Diploma	0.38	0.63	1.64	1.65
Certificate	0.06	0.04	0.04	0.07
Integrated	0.19	0.2	0.16	0.19
Grand total	100	100	100	100

Source: AISHE- 2010-11 and 2012-13, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resources Development, Government of India.

6.0 Causes of Low Educational Status of Women in Assam:

There are various reasons for low educational status of women. These are not applicable only in Assam but also in the entire country. These are as follows:

6.1 Poverty:

Among the total population of the country 30 percent are fall below the poverty line of which 70 percent are women. The poverty of women in India directly related to absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, unavailability of economic resource including inheritance and land ownership, credit, support service and minimal participation in the process of decision making. So the women status in economic front is not better and still women are dominated by male. Because of which woman are deprived from education also.

6.2 Illiteracy:

Illiteracy itself is a reason of low educational status of women. In spite of notable effort by the countries around the world to expand education, still there are approximately 960 million adult illiterate of which two third are women. Because of which still education status of women is still not so well as compared to male.

6.3 Lack of Employment facility:

Women are still not in a position to resolve the conflict between old and new domestic role. They have to spend a large proportion of time in unpaid domestic work in both rural and urban India. The mobility trend of women is very less because of which they cannot respond to new opportunity and cannot move to new occupation due to intra-households responsibilities. Therefore parents prefer girls to stay at home instead of going to school.

6.4 Social Customs, Belief and Practice:

In male dominated society, women are not free from traditional believe, the social customs and practice. In traditional society roles of women are limited mostly to the domestic spheres. There are allocated to subordinate status, power and authority as compared to men. In a family women are playing just supporting role in the family. In very early period of Indian culture women have been dominated by men as a group and the status of women has been very low in society and family also. It is the one reason for low educational status of women against education.

6.5 Social attitude:

Though many social reformer and activities have been carried crusade against all social evils to restore dignity and honour to women, still attitudinal hunts our rural people. Despite pronounce technological advancement and social development women of our country still continue to be victims of exploitation, illiteracy supposition and social atrocities.

6.6 lack of awareness of women:

The basic capabilities, rights and freedom are still unaware for most of the women. Moreover they are not able to understand as how the political and socioeconomic forces affect them. They accept every type of social injustice which is practiced largely in our family and society only because of their unawareness and ignorance.

7.0 Conclusion:

Education for women is prime essential for a family. Without education of women a family cannot be a perfect one. Today girl will be a mother for future. If we educate a woman we educate a mother. If a mother is educated then the entire family will be educated. As compared to the other state women of Assam some extend free from some social evil such as dowry, Sati dah, early marriage etc, but still literacy rate of women is less as compared to national level. Therefore taking of some necessary steps is required to educate women by overcoming the difficulties in the path of women education. As Desai has stated, if women get equal opportunities like men, they can work in every field like men. Today if she lags behind a little, it is not her fault but the fault of traditions which have suppressed them for centuries, owing to this, her own thoughts like also hang around only familial life and her nearest environment also does not provide favorable conditions for her devotion in the outside work. In order to change the situation along with economic growth social progress is also greatly required. Hence the need of the hour is to effectively combat gender disparity as to promote gender equality by sufficiently empowering the women.

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