



# Familial Status of Anganwadi Workers

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**Abstract:** The role of both men and women is pivotal for societal development, with the status of women serving as a crucial indicator of societal health. Various factors, such as their roles in the family and society, their economic participation, and their engagement in different spheres of activity, contribute to determining their status in a society. Anganwadi workers, for example, assume multifaceted roles as earners, caregivers, and social workers, impacting both their families and the broader community. Their level of involvement in domestic and societal affairs is instrumental in defining their status within the community.

**Key words:** Status, Anganwadi worker.

**Introduction:** The term "status" denotes the position that an individual holds within the social structure. It is preferable to use a similar word, "position". In our social structure, "status" denotes a form of social stratification where social positions are ranked and organized based on legal, political, and cultural criteria. Sociologist, Max Weber defines status as the "effective claim to social esteem." In reality, status or position confer both negative and positive privileges, typically based on a specialized lifestyle and formal training. Kapur (2019) observed that during that era, women primarily bore the burden of household responsibilities. They were often constrained from expressing their ideas and viewpoints. Additionally, prevalent societal practices such as polygamy, sati, child marriage, and female infanticide exacerbated gender disparities. Kapur described thus: "Before Independence, there were women belonging to lower castes and socio- economically backward sections of the society, who did not enjoy equal rights and opportunities and their living conditions were not adequate. They were dependent upon the male members and were required to follow the rules, policies and norms implemented by them." So, during that period, the position of women was relatively low, marked by their exclusion from meaningful participation in social, economic and political spheres. Their roles primarily revolved around managing household duties and catering to the needs of their families.

However, during the British era, efforts were made to remove these evil practices from Indian society. The British emphasized female education and introduced various socio-cultural, political, and economic reforms. In the 19th century, significant changes were also driven by social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Dayanand Saraswati etc. After Independence, the position of women comparatively improved by their reformative thoughts. Political freedom came with economic and social rights for women, extending their employment opportunities. These increased opportunities for education and employment have brought about changes in women's roles both at home and in society.

The role of men and women is equally important for the development of society. Therefore, the status of women is a crucial parameter to consider when evaluating a society. The legal position, decision-making opportunities, participation, nature and extent of work all determine the status of women in society. The position of women encompasses elements such as their roles in the family, society, economic contributions and spheres of activity etc. Anganwadi workers, for example, play significant roles both as earners and as wives or mothers, as well as social workers in their communities. Thus, their participation in both the home and society defines their status.

**Methodology:** It is the qualitative nature of the study. The universe of the study is Dhemaji district of Assam. I used primary and secondary both types of data for this study. In the secondary sources of data collection I have used some books, articles and government reports. In the primary data, the method of data collection was "Interview" and I have used Interview schedule as a tool of data collection, sampling procedure was the technique. The respondents were only married Anganwadi workers who have child.

**Discussion:** The Indian family largely exists in the framework of patrilineal descent. Some families put great emphasis on adjustability in the socialization of girls. Many problems for women are linked with marriage, divorce, separation, widowhood, remarriage and so on and all of them play a significant role in determining the status of women. Female worker families of Anganwadis in the Dhemaji district of Assam also follow the patrilineal descent. Houseknecht and Macke (1981) stated, "Sometimes having a supportive husband seems to be a major factor, i.e. one who is willing to quit his job and move to advance the wife's career; one who doesn't insist that the wife quit her job and move to advance his career; and one who shares similar values and beliefs. Therefore, it can be observed that the cultural understanding of childbearing and homemaker with their outsider work as Anganwadi it's affected their status. They also suffer from some special problems. In the changing society, there is also a process of adjustment in its social value system which results in various forms of behavior. They are viewed as sex objects. The respondents also said that they accepted that women are an object of sex but in terms of their physical relationship with their husbands they think that it is their duty or one of the responsibilities of a married woman.

Bendix and Lipset (1957) define that status as the rank position with respect chiefly to income, prestige and power - one or all of these still looking at it may be in terms of regulating the interaction between the members of any social system. So based on this definition, Anganwadis status in Dhemaji district; income are in the central position. Because of their income source most of them enjoyed liberty for outside works. As an earner, it impacts their position inside the household. So among the Anganwadi workers, their occupation is one of the factors which influence to upgrade their status in their social system. One reason is that they have good communication with people in the society or as social workers they are doing various kinds of multiple works. Michael Tharakan(1975) said like - Status of women in any society examines the social organization of that society where it is based on primary economic relations. Thus status has a relationship with the economic and social structure of society. Pamila Kapur (1970) said like, married women want jobs not only for economic necessity but other socio-psychological situational reasons too. However, women's status is very closely linked with their economic position. Marx said

"The emancipation of women and their equality with men are impossible and must remain so as long as women are excluded from the socially productive work and restricted to a housework, which is private." By the way, women's participation in the labor force is necessary for societal development. Now, women's labour is increasing in both organized and unorganized sectors.

There are some difference between urban level Anganwadis and rural level Anganwadis. Educational progress in the vulnerable sections of society impacts another level of change in the status among Anganwadi workers. They are related to children's education. Before going to school they do mental growth and development of children. So, as a teacher it is a significant portion of the society. However, most of Anganwadi workers believe in freedom for women and they have attitude towards girl child education. In their social situation, some of the common issues had found like - Drop out from school, discrimination against girls in education.

Social work participation is considered necessary for raising their status. Their status has been seen at different levels - from families decision-making to social work participation in different positions or different levels. Economically independent women have a good status in the social order of these societies in the Dhemaji district. Therefore socio-cultural setting is one of the factors to look at the status of women in that particular society. A few of the respondents have said about their clashes in their families. The problem of conflict took place in various ways such as husbands who have no such income as wives that situation most of the family have a normal situation and the wives have a good status in the family because they are an earner but the wives find adjustment difficulties. As an earner of the family they have multiple responsibilities as a wife or as a mother that they are facing adjustment difficulties but they have the power of decision-making and freedom. But obviously, they are trying to live a life as societal construction as a good wife or a good mother. Where wives have lower income jobs than their husbands, In these situation has found a clash between husbands and wives because husbands are not happy about their wives to work in that lower income job. In that time it is found that the Patriarchal norms of society's character. Some of the husband of the respondent said that the salary is very low in the job so why she is wasting her time in that work.

In the contemporary era, economic globalization is associated with improved women's status. For example; women's status also refers to the differences among women in power, prestige or resources. There are private and public aspects of several dimensions of status. It may be Economic, political or social. Many of the researchers can identify various constructs resulting from cultural differences. Therefore, Anganwadi workers' economic aspects, and social aspects are related to her status. Social activities or social work is one of the essential parts which reflect the familial status of an Anganwadi. In terms of economic aspects in a rural section of society and if the other family members have no such income source, then the Anganwadi worker's familial status is in a good position. Other hand one of the real facts is that they are scared to give an opinion in a public place. The lack of women to express their opinion is one of the major factors which create order in a secondary position in society. That's why the traditional attitude towards the status of women in a patriarchal society (man-dominated) is still prevalent. However, the legal status of women regarding divorce, abortion or marriage, guardianship of children property protection of them has improved. But the reality is most of decision making inside the family have taken by the male members. But now, most of the Anganwadi workers in the Dhemaji district have said that they have the power of making decisions over what they want. Therefore the social attitudes towards women have been changing.

The socio-cultural setting is determined and values of the social order are concerned with the status of an Anganwadi worker. A majority of the respondents still enjoy their rights and opportunities in their social system. The social structure requires norms or institutions for women to have multiple roles they are expected to play. An Anganwadi worker's economic roles and opportunities of their participation in the economic activities as a mother or as a wife role in the family are negotiated socio-cultural attitudes in the society. Social ideology also concerns basic components of status. The capacity of work is related to status. Now the development of society requires full participation by all sectors of the population and opportunities given for women's participation. This is a keynote related to their participation and status of them. Modern trends in social change and demographic changes, for example; Small families, age of marriage, urbanization, migration, and industrialization are the elements which helped to changing their status.

#### **Status of Anganwadi worker as a wife:**

Socio-economic condition and the contribution as a wife to the family's economy, the value of their effort in the household and doing all domestic responsibilities, all things have impact on status. Status as a wife and how her dual role (as a wife with as an Anganwadi worker) influences her status in the family setup is one of the significant factors. It has found that the majority of them are having proper adjustment as a wife and as an Anganwadi worker. They have tension for the family but are trying to mutually adjust all these things. The majority of them are satisfied with their husband and their husbands also support them but a few of them are dominated by their husbands and clashes also happen in their families. Most of the relationships between husband and wife is reflected that husbands are more adjusting than their wives. However, overall as wives they have a good position in their family. As an earner in the family, it reflects her status as a wife, where husbands try to adjust various things. For example, husbands help them with household work, cooking, cleaning and so on, because they took the major responsibilities of income for the family. This occupation, as Anganwadi workers, impacts their positions or statuses in their families as wives. Where they are in a good position and also they have a good status.

#### **Status of Anganwadi workers as a mother:**

One of the most important roles for a woman is being a mother. A mother plays so many roles such as: caring for child, as a financial planner and being a teacher. Being a mother, all factors inside the home create child's personality. All factors affect the environment of a child and it influences the children's personality in the future. Within the family, the mother role is one of the most important roles for a child. Children depend on the overall structure of a mother. A mother also provides emotional background to her children. In the social structure of the Anganwadi workers as a mother, social status provides for giving birth and bringing up male members of the family. Therefore, those who have no son, their status are comparatively low in their family. However, most of the respondents said that they think they are successful mothers. They tried their best for their children. No matter how much tension or how much pressure they have, they are trying to educate their children, actively participate in the activities of children as well as they are satisfied with their role as a mother.

**Conclusion:** The familial status of an Anganwadi worker is generally favorable. Regardless of their income level, they benefit from a strong social network in their community and among their family members, making it a reliable source of income. These factors significantly influence the status of an Anganwadi worker. Additionally, it has been found that an Anganwadi worker plays multiple roles in her social context, such as being an earner, a mother and a wife.

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