

Gender Discrimination in Education and Economic Status of Women in Rural Area: A Geographical Analysis of Goalpara District of Assam.

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ABSTRACT

Gender discrimination in rural areas of Assam is the main reason that affects the socio- economic development of women. It is true that women in rural areas are not getting proper education and employment opportunity for their empowerment. Generally, it is recognized in the rural society that women are housewives and they do unpaid labour in the society. Rural women are still most deprived and neglected section of the society in respect of education, health, nutrition, political participation, etc. women are still lagging behind than men in every aspect of life. The constitution of India has provided for equal right and opportunities to both men and women. The present paper investigates the role of women in the rural society through literacy and their involvement in economic activities. At present gender discrimination has been creating a varied problem in the rural areas of Assam. It is increasingly viewed that empowerment of women is an essential prerequisite for poverty alleviation and upholding human rights and for sustainable human development. Jawaharlal Nehru said “to be awoken the people, it is women who must be awakened, once she is move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves.” For this reason a study was done to observe the socio economic condition of women and women empowerment in rural areas of Goalpara district of Assam. But it was seen that most of the women are deprived of from education and employment opportunities. It was also observed in the study that in rural areas of Goalpara district, girls are used to help in household activities as unpaid worker. Since most of the families are poor, they cannot afford to provide education to all children of a family and hence girls child are forced to keep in household works. It is high time to empower rural women economically, socially, politically, and then sustainable development of rural Assam could be expected.

KEYWORDS: *Gender discrimination, Sustainable development, human development.*

I. INTRODUCTION:

Gender discrimination in Assam is the main reason that affected the sustainable socio- economic development of women. It is known that women in rural areas are not having proper facilities and education for their development. The existence of inequality between men and women is seen in the aspect of health, education, economic, political which is one of the most vital obstacles in the economic development of Assam. Most of the rural women have less access to health care. Women in villages are mostly house wives and work in farms or fields for their livelihood. In the lower socio-economic level of society, women do more hazardous manual labour than men. Women do more than half of the agricultural works in India (Vijaya Raj: 2016). Still men are considered to be the “bread winners “in a family. This sense of women being inferior is passed on from one generation to another through psychological conditioning. Another result of the social condition is that man either as father; brother or husband considers women as socio-economic gift of his household. A woman’s value judged, not so much in terms of her worth as a person with rights and dignity as in terms of her utility to man. A geographical study has been done to observe the socio-economic development of rural women and empowerment in Goalpara district of Assam. It is observed from the studies that most of the women’s earning from working in agricultural fields, tailoring, selling vegetables, fruits and working as daily wage labourers, part time workers, sweepers, etc. Hence, it is understood that most of the women are not educated, so it is necessary to empower socio-economic development of women in each village by giving value education.

Goalpara district is extended on the south of the Brahmaputra river in between 25°07’30" and 26°13’15" north latitude and 90°07’00" and 91°06’30" east longitudes. It is bounded by the district of Bongaigaon and Barpeta on the north, Kamrup district on the east, by the state of Meghalaya on the south and the Dhubri district on the west. Total area of the district is 1824 Sq. Km. The district is situated on the north western corner of the state to the south of the Brahmaputra River. The total population of Goalpara district as per census 2011 is 1,008,183. Male comprises 513,292 while female consists of 494,891. Out of the total population of the district, 870,121 falls under rural and 138062 are under urban areas of the district. In rural

areas 443,244 and 426,877 are males and females respectively. Accordingly, in urban area of this district 70,048 are males and 68014 are females. The percentage of urban population in the district is only 13.7. So it can be clearly seen that most of the population dwell in the rural areas of the district.

Objectives:

The study has been undertaken with the following objectives –

- to analyze the block wise literacy rate of rural women in the study area and empowerment.
- to analyze the economic status of rural women in the study area and empowerment.
- to know the problems faced by rural women in attaining education and obstacles of poor economic status of rural women in the study area.
- to analyze the measures how to improve women’s economic status.

II. METHODOLOGY:

The study is based on primary and secondary data. Primary data have been collected through field observation, enquiry and conducting informal interview with the respondents. The secondary data have been collected from books, journals, official records, newspaper, published articles, statistical hand books, internet, electronic media, etc.

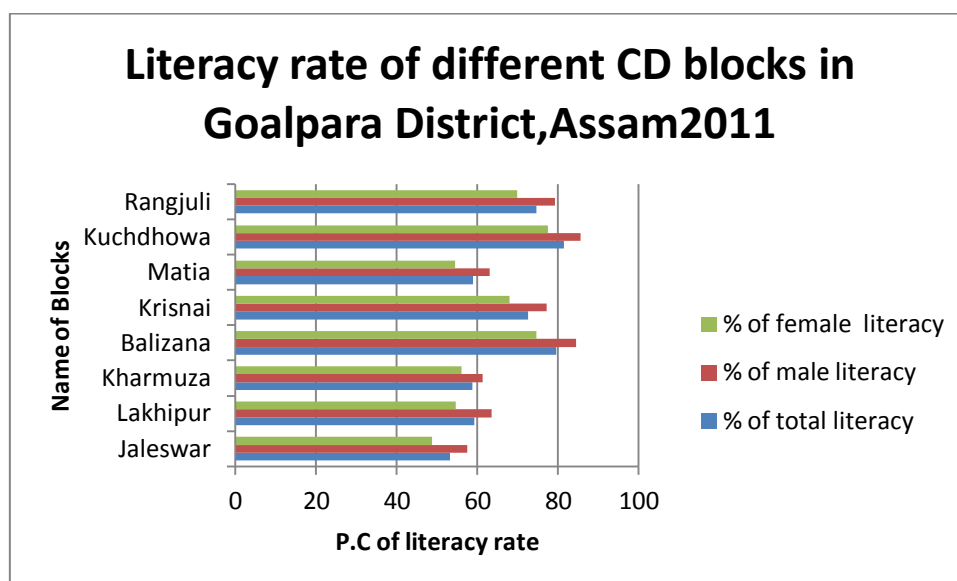
Gender discrimination in reference to Education of rural women:

Dr.Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan remarked that there cannot be an educated people without educated women. He said that knowledge gives us power. If general education had to limited to men or to women, than opportunity should be given to women for then it would most surely be passed on to the next generation. Jawaharlal Nehru said “to be awaken the people, it is women who must be awakened, once she is move, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves.” Education provides knowledge, social security, job opportunity and helps in intellectual, social and economic development. Education is a big force that reduces the gender inequalities so education is crucial for development of women. Rural women’s access to education and training can have a major impact on their potential to access and benefit from income-generating opportunities and improve their overall well-being. Women education is very important for their welfare. Education has direct effect on income level. Studies have shown that an extra year of primary school increases their wages by 10-20 percent. Again education encourages girls to marry later, have fewer children, and educated girls are less likely to experience violence at home. This is even more relevant for rural women. According to 2010 report by FAO, IFAD and ILO, women make up over two-thirds of the world’s 796 million people who are illiterate, and many of these live in rural areas. Low literacy among rural women is a challenge for development in many parts of Africa. Many rural women and girls in India as well as in Assam also do not know how to read and write as compared to male counterparts. This gives rise to gender disparities and gender related violence. Actually, if we educate a man, we educate only one person but if we educate a woman, we are going to educate a nation. This development quote is quite applicable in relation to rural women’s education in developing countries. Educating women is widely felt and has strong spread effect in form of development to community. An educated woman is able to educate her own children who in turn are more likely to receive school education themselves. Economically also education to rural women has effect in form of increase in savings and investment in rural areas. The educated women are gainfully employed and they can assist their husband in financing for a better living and education to their children. There will also be increase in agricultural productivity due to adoption of technology by women. Educated women can be asset as they are more innovative and also optimize on use of resources.

Table 1: Literacy rate in CD block (rural) in Goalpara District, Assam 2011,

Name of C.D Block	% of total literacy	% of male literacy	% of female literacy	Gap of male and female literacy rate
Jaleswar	53.22	57.46	48.76	8.7
Lakhipur	59.27	63.6	54.72	8.88
Kharmuza	58.77	61.38	56.02	5.36
Balizana	79.59	84.4	74.65	9.75
Krisnai	72.63	77.16	67.98	9.18
Matia	58.91	63.02	54.56	8.46
Kuchdhowa	81.5	85.55	77.5	8.05
Rangjuli	74.57	79.19	69.85	9.34
Goalpara District	65.93	70.02	61.69	8.33

Source: District census hand book of Goalpara District, Assam, 2011



Source: District census hand book of Goalpara District, Assam, 2011

From the table it is clear that the lowest literacy rate is found in Matia CD block with 58.91 percent, males are 63.02 percent and females are 54.56 percent. From the table, it is also noticed that Balijana CD block is the highest with 9.75 percent and Kharmuza block is the lowest with 5.36 percent in reference to gap in male-female literacy rate.

Gender discrimination in reference to Economic activities of rural women:

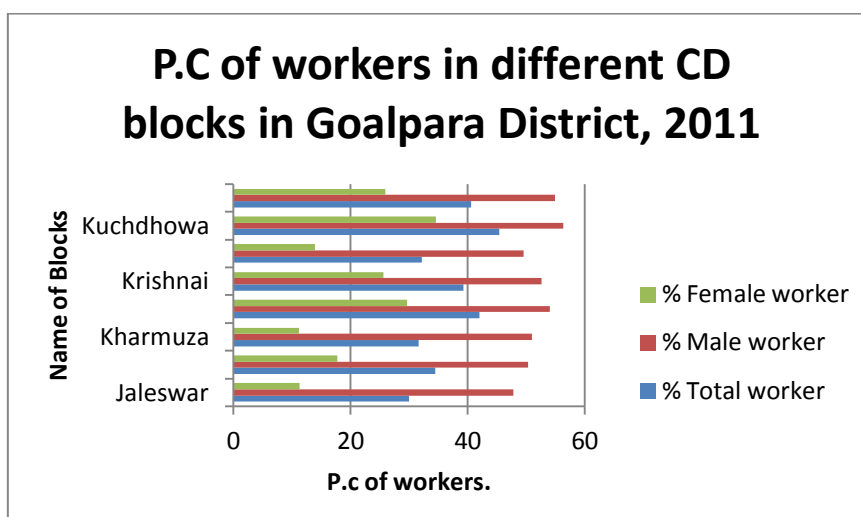
Economic empowerment of rural women is an important issue in recent time. Rural women and girls are crucial contributors, implementers and beneficiaries of sustainable development. Empowering them is important not only to the well-being of individuals, families and rural communities but also to overall economic productivity which may give women’s large presence in the agricultural workforce throughout the world. Women can play important roles in the rural economy as farmers, wage earners and entrepreneurs, etc. They also take responsibility for the well-being of the members of their families, including food provision and care for children and the elderly. Rural women’s unpaid work, particularly in poor households, often includes collecting wood and water. Women from indigenous and grassroots communities are often also custodians of traditional knowledge which is key for their communities, livelihoods, resilience and culture. Yet, women in rural areas face constraints in engaging in economic activities because of gender-based discrimination and social norms, disproportionate involvement in unpaid work, and unequal access to education, healthcare, property, and financial and other services.

The percentage distribution of the working and non-working population of the district are as follows -

Table2: Workers under different community development blocks in Goalpara District, Assam, 2011

Name of block	% Total worker	% Male worker	% Female worker
Jaleswar	30	47.86	11.27
Lakshipur	34.48	50.42	17.75
Kharmuza	31.64	51.05	11.23
Balijana	42.06	54.10	29.64
Krishnai	39.35	52.68	25.65
Matia	32.21	49.61	13.88
Kuchdhowa	45.47	56.34	34.61
Ranjuli	40.68	55.01	25.98
Goalpara district	36.10	51.64	19.96

Source: District census hand book of Goalpara District, Assam, 2011



Source: District census hand book of Goalpara District, Assam, 2011

Among the blocks Kuchdhowa recorded the highest percentage of workers with 45.47 percent and the lowest are seen in Jaleswar block with 30 percent. As per census report non-workers the highest percentage is seen in Jaleswar block with 70.0 percent and the lowest is seen in Kuchdhuwa block with 54.53 percent. Looking at main worker proportion, male workers with 42.76 percent dominate the female workers of only 8.89 percent. Out of total population of the district, 36.10% are workers of which 51.64 % and 19.96 % are male and female respectively. The female participation is much lower than male because of illiteracy, skill problems, lack of time due to house hold works, lack of exposures, etc. This reflects the low and pitiable economic status of women. Most of the works done by women are unpaid works, such as child rearing, household works, agricultural works in their field, works related to animal husbandry, etc. Household works are unproductive and not counted as worker. In the rural areas of Goalpara districts the educational facility for girls is deplorable and not encouraging. Amongst the immigrant Muslim community, it is seen that girls are engaged in household activities for their poverty and do not encourage for girls education. Early marriage is also prevalent in the study area. The participation of female in economic activities is very limited. Basically they don't have market-based activities. Although women are involved in their household-based activities for several hours each day, their exhausting jobs are not considered as work. Income of women is very limited and almost not existent; they highly depend on the male members in their families. Above these early marriages, negligence of girls by parents, poverty, superstitions, lack of communication facility in rural areas are the contributing factor for low literacy rate of females in the study area.

III. FINDINGS:

- The rate of female literacy and work participation of rural women are much lower than men in the study area.
- In the study area, the socio economic conditions of rural women are very unsatisfactory and deplorable.
- In the study area, the condition of women education is not satisfactory.
- The poor economic condition of women used to deprive the economic status or position of rural women day by day.
- Most of the rural women are engaged as unpaid family workers in the society. So economic empowerment could not be expected in the study area.
- Govt. schemes and plan & programmes have not able to touch the rural women in the study area due to illiteracy and communication gap.

IV. SUGGESTIONS:

In Assam, the majority of people live in rural areas. Development of rural areas is essential for national development. Women literacy in rural areas will help in sustainable development of the whole economy. Educating rural women could include variety of approaches, including formal and non-formal education, technical and vocational training, financial literacy and numeracy skills, etc. In addition, information and communication technologies (including mobile phone, print and electronic communication, etc.) supported by the right policies and institutional frameworks can enhance awareness related to their rights. Education will also help in reducing gender based violence and welfare at family level. It will also enhance savings, investment and productivity for the economy as whole.

Present study suggest that general awareness programmes should be taken among the women of rural area to sensitizes them about the modern development of science and information technology, so that they could give up superstitious believes and attitudes. Women of rural areas should be trained up in different vocational courses like handloom and textile, poultry farms, fish farming, piggery, dairy farm, nursery, food and nutrition, fashion and designing, beauty parlour, etc. Women reservation policy should strictly be maintained in all aspects like appointment in govt. and semi govt. offices, admission in to the educational institutions, participating in the politics, etc. To solve the problem and economic empowerment of rural women following measures are to be initiated-

- As far as study area is concerned, we must be able to make aware of female education.
- Govt. must take some initiatives for female education and employment opportunities for educated girls. This will encourage the girls as well as parents to continue their education and it will help to change the attitude toward girl's child. NGO can play a pivotal role in this case.
- For economic empowerment education is a must. Job oriented education; vocational course should be designed for rural women.
- Proper training, workshop, etc are essential for economic empowerment of rural women which will minimize gender discrimination.

V. CONCLUSIONS:

Gender discrimination control is the need of the hour, is to make a change in the mindset of the society and destroy the prejudices that damage the future of the girl child. It is required a concerted effort to sensitize the society in eradicating this issue of gender inequality. It is high time that every child is treated equally and given every opportunity required to grow to his/her full potential. This study concludes that mostly gender barriers still continue particularly on rural area. Research area covers more number of rural areas. Due to current socio economic constrains in rural area, the potential of women have not been fully utilized and further pushed back into the social hierarchy. Most of the educated women feel that, they can able to achieve more than men. But, inbuilt idea that women are capable of doing less work than men and less efficient than men which creating problems. The lack of education becomes the obstacles in getting empowerment. Taking an overview of all the above aspects, we come to know that the transformation is very much needed, accepting at the same time that its pace may be less than the desired pace. For giving this process a momentum, education is indispensable. Hence, if women's empowerment is to be effected, it can be carried out only through the medium of education. Hence, it is of foremost importance to raise the level of education amongst women. From this study it was seen that most of the women are deprived of from education and employment opportunities. It was also observed in the study that in rural areas of Goalpara district, girls are required to help in household activities as unpaid worker. Since most of the families are poor, they cannot afford to provide education to all children of a family and hence girls child are forced to keep in household works. It is high time to empower rural women socially, economically, intellectually and politically, and then sustainable development of rural Assam could be expected in near future.

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