

SINO-351

U.G.C. SPONSORED SEMINAR

THEME : WOMEN AND SOCIAL CHANGE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM SINCE INDEPENDENCE

**ORGANIZED BY
SUREN DAS COLLEGE , HAJO**

Sub-themes

- (1) Women and literature
- (2) Women and politics
- (3) Women and socio-economic development
- (4) Women and social justice

DATE: 19 th and 20th November, 2004.

Theme- Women and social change with special reference to Assam.

- Sub-theme-**
- (1) Women and literature.**
 - (2) Women and politics.**
 - (3) Women and socio-economic development.**
 - (4) Women and social justice.**

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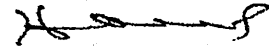
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Message

I am glad to know that a U.G.C seminar on “ Women and Social Change” will be held on 19th and 20th November, 2004 in Suren Das College, Hajo. I wish the seminar a grand success.



Dr.Haren Das
M.L.A

From the Principal's Desk

It is well - known that practically in all countries the world over, women are not accorded equal status with men, and that compared to men, women have very limited opportunities in most spheres of economic and social activities. However, it is being increasingly recognized that the status or position women enjoy in a society has a far-reaching impact on the overall development of the society. However, a systematic study of the interrelationship between various aspects of development and the status of women is hampered by the absence of an unambiguous definition of "status of women". Theoretically, woman's status has been defined, for example: "as the degree of woman's access to (and control over) material resources and to social resources (including knowledge, power and prestige) within the family, in the community and in society at large", or as " the ranking in terms of prestige, power or esteem, according to the position, in comparison to those given to the position of men ". " Woman's status " is a multidimensional phenomenon or a composite of several different and perhaps interdependent variables.

The principle of gender equality and gender equity has been basic to the traditional Indian thinking. This is amplified by the religious dualism and deification of male and female Gods. Indeed the plethora of Goddesses continues to occupy pivotal places in Indian mythology. The concept of woman as Shakti, the primal energy force finds expression in the epics which exalts women as a light of the house, mover of the universe and supporter of the earth and all its forests. During the Vedic period women participated fully in the religious rituals, enjoyed freedom of movement, had the same inheritance and other rights and access to education as men, married later and had a choice in the choice of their marriage partners.

Over the years however the honoured position that women enjoyed in the family and society began to undergo radical changes, particularly since the pronouncement of Manu, the Hindu law giver regarding a woman's changing position through her life cycle: " In childhood subject to her father, in youth to her husband and when her husband is dead to her sons, she should never enjoy Independence ... " The imagery of women created by the Hindu lore thus became paradoxical and contradictory ; on the one hand she was hailed as the embodiment of purity and spiritual power and on the other she was treated as an essentially weak and dependent creature needing constant guardianship and protection of man. Marriage, motherhood and service to the husband came to be regarded as the most valuable attribute of woman and in course of time inhuman traditions such as Child -Marriage, the Dowry System, Purdah or Seclusion of women and Sati, the immolation of widow on the dead husband's pyre, came to be piled against women.

Despite the various socio - cultural handicaps, Indian women have played a very active role in the economic, social and political development of the country. Yet, for various reasons, in India, women have not been accorded equality of status with men in almost all aspects of social, cultural, economic and political life. The profound concern with the rights and status of women and the recognition of the need to bring women into the mainstream of development has underpinned national policy and planning since Independence. The contribution of India (Article 14) confers equal rights and opportunities on men and women in political, economic and social spheres. The condition further imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to uphold the dignity of women.

Over the years, strenuous efforts have been made towards mainstreaming women

into the national development process by enhancing their socio – economic, legal and political status. Significant gains have been achieved in areas relating to women’s rights, education, employment and health. There has been a distinct orientation in favour of women’s equality and empowerment and consequently a greater awareness and understanding of rights and responsibilities. Today, women have expanded access to needed education, health services and participation in a variety of socio – economic development programmes. In spite of this, gender discrimination and gender disparities still persist in several areas. By and large women are still being excluded from the decision – making structures and processes at all levels : government, corporate, societal and household. Violence against women, both societal and domestic continues unabated which is not only a violation of the basic human rights of women but also involves health burdens, intergenerational effects and demographic consequences. Both tolerance and experience of domestic violence are significant barriers to the empowerment of women.

However, development cannot be attained without the overall development of the women. According to Mahatma Gandhi, the freedom of a nation was the sum total of the freedom of all individuals and “ woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities..... and she has the same right of freedom and liberty as he ”. According to UN Human Development Report, 1992 “ if the development is not engendered the development will itself be endangered ”.

Nishi Kanta Deka
Principal

“Women and Social Change with Special Reference to Assam Independence” is the theme of the State level Seminar organized by Suren Das College, Hajo on 19th and 20th November 2004. The objective of the Seminar is to bring together academics, and teachers on a common platform and discusses about women’s development; find out some solutions through discussions and deliberations from different perspectives. We have given special emphasis on our home state Assam because we have seen that the advent of Independence ushered in a new era in the expansion of women education and revolutionary changes have taken place in this field. Post Independent Assam finds women searching for her identity. Identity means self-assertion, where she tries to free herself from age-old conventions and asserts her position.

For a methodical approach to our discussion we have divided the main theme into four following sub themes:

- a) Women and Literature.
- b) Women and Politics.
- c) Women and Socio-economic Development
- d) Women and Social Justice.

A study of ‘ Women and Literature ’ is necessary because Literature is an interpretation of life and it highlights its values. It throws life on the spirit of the age. Art for Arts Sake was never the norm for Assamese novelists, their works are a reflection of society. Through their novels we can form ideas about the position of women ; their hopes and fears.

Political participation and political awareness of women may be said to be the true index of a nation’s development. By political awareness among women we mean a process by which they keep themselves at least of the socio – economic and political realities. “ Women and Politics ” is an important aspect of study.

On the same lines “ Women and Socio – Economic Development ” is an issue that calls for much speculation. We have seen that despite strong denial of social privileges the Indian Women has felt the need to take part in the home economy. In Assam too women have managed to come out of the muddy world and chalk out for herself the role of a worker, mother, spouse, and homemaker. Women should be encouraged to take up administrative jobs which demands a high level of decision – making, which was thought to be, at one time, only the prerogative of the male.

Dowry, rape, battering, physical and mental harassment are the crimes against women that continue to plague society till date. Though women of Assam were not easy targets to dowry death and rape, yet its ugly face is slowly surfacing in the Assamese Society which is very unfortunate : A detailed discussion under the sub theme “ Women and Social Justice ” will surely highlight our problems.

The interactions in the seminar will all hope brings forth solutions and throw more light on the issue “ Women and Social Change ”. This souvenir is a collection of the abstracts of the papers submitted by the participants. In this context, we would like to say that if funds permit, we hope to bring out a book by compiling all the semi. This will help in placing our views and interactions in a concrete manner.

Manjushri Baruah

Gender Budgeting: The need of the day

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Introduction : Gender Responsive Budgets (GRB) refers to the analysis of actual government expenditure and revenue on women and girls in comparison to that on men and boys and in comparison to the need. Attempts to engender the budget or GRBs are getting priority among the policy planners all over the world. It started in Australia, followed by South Africa and UK. (Patel:2003). It has been felt that without adequate budgetary support, gender equality cannot be achieved.

In India also such initiatives have started since the ninth five year plan.

In this paper an analysis of social sector spending in Assam is done with a view to have glimpse of the gender component of the state budget.

Budgetary support to social sector schemes can be taken as an expenditure on women's development because of the very positive role played by this sector on women's lives. However, all the social sector schemes are not meant only for women and girls. Some of these are targeted at boys and men also.

In Assam, Social sector receives around 35-40% of total planned expenditure. As per the proposed outlay for the ninth plan also 40.7% of total planned expenditure has been allocated for social services. In addition to that, 9.0% has been allocated for rural development and 0.4% for special area programmes. Out of the social services, education has been allocated the major share, 25.53% of total expenditure. Medical & Public Health receives only 4.28% and Water Supply & Sanitation receives 4.84%.

The total allocation for social services was Rs. 1, 68,231 lakh for the eighth plan. The ninth plan allocation of Rs. 3, 65,803 lakh is more than double the eighth plan allocation. The per capita allocation also has increased by 83% from Rs. 751.03 in the eighth plan to Rs. 1, 375.20 in the ninth plan.

Social Sector Spending in Assam compared with the rest of India: Rural and Social Sector expenditure has increased over time at the State level and also at the all India level between 1981-82 and 1997-98, whereas Plan expenditure on agriculture and irrigation has decreased considerably at both the levels. In Assam expenditure on infrastructure also decreased considerably although at the all India level, there was only a marginal decline in the infrastructure expenditure. In 1997-98, Rural and Social Sector accounted for 57.3 per cent of total plan expenditure in Assam while Social Sector alone had shared 45.89 per cent of the total expenditure. At the all India average, these percentages were only 23.40 and 14.80 respectively. Although the share of the social sector in the State plan allocation is higher than the all India share of the social sector, the per capita expenditure on social sector in Assam is lower than that of the average expenditure of all States.

Expenditure on Health and Education: Public spending on education and health were respectively 3.46 per cent and 1.48 per cent of SDP for Assam in 1980-81 and for education it increased continuously to reach 5.23 per cent in 1998-99. But the expenditure on health decreased to 1.05 per cent. In all these years, the proportion of GDP spent on education and health by the Central Government continued to be much lower, for health between 0.20 to 0.25 percent and for education between 0.40 and 0.60. At the all India level, the proportion of expenditure on health increased between 1980-81 and 1990-91 and stagnated between 1990-91 and 1998-99, while in the case of education, it increased between 1980-81 and 1990-91, and then decreased between 1990-91 and 1998, although the proportion of expenditure on education in 1998-99 was higher than that of 1980-81.

A comparison of the per capita expenditure on health and education for the North Eastern States shows that there has been a continuous increase in the per capita expenditure on both health and education in all the North Eastern States, the per capita expenditure on education being much higher. But all throughout the period, Assam had the 5th or the 6th rank among the six states compared in terms of per capita expenditure on health and the 7th rank among the seven states compared in per capita expenditure on education.

Women Component Plan: Women Component Plan was adopted as a strategy of Ninth Five Year Plan. As per the women component Plan a minimum of 30 per cent plan funds from each sectoral programme need be earmarked for women/women related programmes. Assam Government also allocated for funds for Women Component Plan in the Ninth Plan. However, expenditure pattern of the ninth plan funds does not show that the promise had been fulfilled in all cases. Whereas in the SGSY and PMGY (RS) programmes, more than 40 % of the funds went to Women Component Plan, in the total allocation for Rural Employment Programmes, only 14% of the funds went to the Women Component Plan. In a number of cases, the actual expenditure was much lower than the allocated expenditure, that was due to the financial crisis in the State. It demands the attention of all concerned for no financial crisis should hamper the social sector schemes for this sector provides the required social opportunity for development of women and children and also of the economically weaker section of the society. In the list of social sector/rural development, in addition to the women targeted schemes, a host of schemes are under operation, which is expected to benefit women. This list includes programmes like Tribal Area Sub plan, Scheduled Caste Component Plan, Education of Tea Garden and Ex-Tea garden Tribes etc. No information on the actual expenditure incurred on the women component of these schemes is available.

The actual investment on women can be judged only if a gender analysis of the present schemes is done meticulously.

¹ This paper is based on a UNICEF sponsored study on Social Sector Schemes in Assam done at the WSRC, GU.

Muslim Women and their contribution to Life and Literature of Assam

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"Of man's first disobedience and the fruit of that forbidden tree.
Whose mortal taste brought death into the world". — Milton

It is the worst of time for women ; it is the best of time for women that Adam and Eve are going to divide the apple equally. 'Eve who was supposed to be of a small piece of Adam's bone, is now getting due attention . In view of the changing scenario all over the world, women studies have been getting a new momentum in India also.

Same is the case with Assam which is a land of Sati Jaymoti, Kanaklata and Mula Gabharu . There are thousands of women who contributed a great deal towards the development of life and literature of Assam.

The main thrust of this paper is to focus on the contribution of Muslim women towards Assamese literature. Muslim invaders came to Assam in 1205 A.D for the first time. Thereafter more invaders entered into this land. They came without their wives and some of them stayed here and married converted women here. Muslim women are none but sisters and nephews of Assamese people. So there is no specific difference in their dress, food, songs and music. Still they have been problems such as illiteracy, poverty, early marriage, purdah system, parent's attitude and as they are closely associated with Agriculture , Weaving , Politics , Net Producing Industry , Mat Producing Industry and Construction work.

Besides there are hosts of Muslim women who come forward to raise their voice in literature in post – independence era. Besides Zikris Zaris , marriage song and Ainam etc. Ali Ahmed , Alimun Nisa Piar, Litfa Hamen Selima Begum and Kasena Khatun , popular figures in this field . Parveen Sultana, Mrs. Nelima Khatun , Parveen Rahman are few repeated names in music. We cannot ignore the name like Syeda Anowara Taimur , Nazneen Narah) established their position in sports . Thus the Muslim womrn in Assam contributed a great deal in every walk of life.

'The Feminine Self' in the Novels of Anita Desai Shashi Despande And Indira Goswami

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Women have always occupied a contrasting position in Society. Various epithets have been used to drive home the notion of a weak, fragile and not so steadfast character. Where Shakespeare had commented, 'Frailty, thy name is Woman !', it has also been said that ' behind every successful man , there is a woman '. Battles and wars have been fought over women (be it Sita, Draupadi or Helen of Troy). The picture of Damayanti undergoing all sorts of travails to reclaim her husband from Death is evergreen in our minds. On the contrary, there is the woman who has emerged from the shadow of her husband or the ' male' . Pushing aside the male – dominance, she celebrates the courage to live life on her own terms. Expectedly, this has, at times , created the problem of the ' self' .

This theme is found extensively in the writings of Anita Desai , Shashi Deshpande and Indira Goswami . My paper, therefore, seeks to focus on this problem of the ' self' vis – a – vis the traits of feminism found in the novels and short stories of these writers.

"O Learned Lady All life is dependent on you , because you impart education to all".

Rig Veda

Feminism in Nirupama Borgohain's Novels

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The attainment of Independence in 1947 brought jubilation to Indian people as their long cherished dream was fulfilled at last. But soon disillusionment prevailed at the disparity between the expectations and the reality. On one hand, there were welfare programmes and projects for a prosperous future, on the other hand, were numerous problems like unemployment, inflation, and corruption cropping up day after day as a result of the changing pattern of the society.

Assamese literature like its other counterparts of regional literature of India reflected the dilemmas – the dilemmas of faith and uncertainty, the dilemmas of tradition and change. New trends of thought and techniques have been introduced and used time to time by Assamese literature to delve into these complexities of life. Feminism is one of the prominent trends in Assamese literature of Post – Independence era. This paper attempts to discuss Feminism as reflected in Nirupama Borgohain's novels. Borgohain's novels like "Iparar Ghar Siparar Ghar" (1979), "Anya Jibon" (1987), "Champabati" and "Abhijatri" (1996) portray the rights of women in the male – dominated society and the incessant struggle of the female protagonists to change the prevailing system not only for their own benefit but for the betterment of the entire women of the society. Unlike the radical feminists, they believe in the harmonious relationship between man and woman to create a healthy atmosphere for life.

"You educate a man, you educate an individual. Educate a woman, you educate a family."

Gandhiji

'Woman' and Identity in Indira Goswami's Devipithor Tej (Blood Stains on the Shrine)

and

Patrick Whites "The Aunt's Story"

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Emerging from two different continents, of two diametrically opposite hemispheres, each hiring a gamut of conflicting cultures and socio-economic conditions, the Assamese novel "Devipithor Tej" (Blood Stains on the Shrine) by a woman writer Indira Goswami and the Australian Novel, "The Aunt's Story" written by a male author, Patrick White, have both come curiously close to each other in constructing the "identity" of the "woman" in their respective works.

This paper makes an attempt to locate the "identity" of the woman at the intersection and inter-subjectivity of an Assamese woman writer and a male author in the 21st century. Julia Kristeva has made a pertinent observation when she says, "What can 'identity' even sexual identity mean in a new theoretical and scientific space where the very notion of identity is challenged?" This is exactly what the emerging identities of the protagonists of Goswami and White wish to answer and that is the exploration made in this paper.

"Man's power lies dormant so long as he has not touched the spark of woman's love and affection. The wheel of the world cannot move in the absence of women."

Manu Smriti, Ch IV, Sloke 27 & 28

Some Avante – Garde Practitioner in Assamese Short Story

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The status of woman has always been determined by various socio – cultural and economic factors. Woman has been considered as the carrier of culture and religion in society and the secret of literature is the ‘sincerity of imagination’. Besides being the reflection of society, both fantastic and realistic, it gives us the culture of understanding. Adaptation of new ideas is a human tendency. It gives a liberated consciousness. within has Assamese literature is remarkable since Independence. They are illuminating ‘half of the sky’ of Assamese short story. Most of them are strikingly new in their approach and treatment of the subject. This paper endeavours to discuss some avant – garde women writers of Assamese short story.

“The status of women indicates the character of a country”.
Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru

Women’s Participation in Political Decision Making : An Analysis of Parliamentary and Assembly Elections in Assam

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Women form an integral part of the society traditionally occupying only a subservient position. Women are said to have much stronger biological makeup than men, yet continue to remain in a position lower than that of men in and outside the family, in economic and political strength and also in every aspect of life. This gender inequality in different spheres of life has been identified as one very important obstacle to the development of a nation. For overcoming such obstacles women’s empowerment is indispensable. Women’s empowerment refers to educational, economic, societal as well as political empowerment.

Thus any policy for empowerment of women needs a holistic approach. But all this is possible only if women can participate in decision making both in and outside the household. If participation in decision making inside the household can be improved with more education, economic independence, societal attitude, participation in decision making in public and political life depends also on some structural and political factors. Therefore, to increase women’s participation in decision making, women not only need to be educated and be given economic empowerment but also some structural reforms are necessary.

Indian Constitution has made provisions for non – discrimination on the basis of sex. The 23rd and 74th Amendments to the constitution have ensured the space for women in the Panchayats, but representation of women in the parliament and the state assemblies still remain very low. While analyzing the representation of women in the assembly and the parliament, it has been observed that, given the present political scenario of the country, although reservation cannot be a panacea, this is necessary in the initial stages to ensure the entry of women in the higher strata of political decision making bodies of the country.

WOMEN AND POLITICS

Women in Panchayats : A New Horizon for Women Politics after Seventy Third Constitutional Amendment Act – A Study with reference to Assam

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The Seventy third Constitutional Amendment Act (1992) has added a new dimension to local self government in many respects including reservation of seats for women in different tier in Panchayat Raj institutions. In accordance with the seventy third amendments the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 was adopted and it came into practice by the Panchayat Elections held in December 2001. The Assam Panchayat Act 1994 has widened the scope of women leaders to participate in politics by providing reservations of one third seats in different tier of panchayats i.e. Zila Parishad, Anchalik Panchayat and Gaon Panchayats .

This paper is an attempt to study the provisions of reservations of seats for women in Seventy Third amendments and the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994. An attempt is also to be made in this paper to examine the general perceptions about the women leaders in Panchayats and problems faced by them .

“Where women are respected, there the Gods delight, and where they are not there all work and efforts come to naught” .
— Manu Smriti

Assamese Women and Politics Since Independence – Its background and difficulties

**Mrs. Binita Das
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Generally speaking, in our patriarchal social system women's position is lower than men. At present political empowerment of women is granted by the civilized world. Through this paper, an attempt is made to draw a picture on the role played by Assamese women in politics since Independence. To realize it better, attempt is made to highlight the background, i.e. the history of the socio – economic status of women folk of Assam. It also deals with the cause of the political backwardness of Assamese woman.

In conclusion, it suggests to break the traditional mentality of the society regarding women, and to welcome women's political empowerment to make our democracy more strong and meaningful in proper sense.

“A woman's education and good health are assets for society as she is the builder of the future citizens”

Political Participation of Women in Assam

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Women of Assam have their glorious history right from the ancient times. Of course, in the twenty first century, women of Assam find themselves comparatively more aware about various aspects of life and society than their counterparts of earlier centuries. However, despite being sufficiently educated and alert, most of them are yet to enjoy the status as complete individual and free citizens.

Women are increasingly viewed as an important segment of our political activity. The political behaviour of women can be studied through certain basic concepts namely politicization, political participation and political awareness.

In the 19th century, certain changes were brought to the society by granting the rights to property, right to remarriage after widowhood and abolishing child marriage. These reforms however had little effect on the elevation of the political status of women. Indeed, the government of India Act, 1935 provided for reservation of a seat for women in Assam Legislative Assembly. It was a great achievement.

After Independence, the constitution of India has the most undoubted bearing on the position of women. Infact, the aspiration of Indian women to have the right to franchise and to have equal status in politics has been fulfilled by this Supreme Law of the land. Here, provision has been made for Universal Adult Franchise without any discrimination on the basis of caste, colour, creed, sex or wealth. Surprisingly, enough the number of woman candidates in Assam after Independence is not at all satisfactory. After 73rd Amendment to the constitution of India, women came forward to contest elections to the local bodies.

Here also in most cases candidates did not volunteer themselves for candidature in the elections, they were persuaded mainly by the men folk to contest elections.

This paper is an attempt to study the role of political participation of women in Assam at national, state and local level enjoying various political rights under the constitution of India. Besides, an attempt is also to be made to discuss various problems faced by them as well as some suggestions are made to enhance their participation in politics.

Women and Social Justice: Some facts with Special reference To Assam

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Since ages women folk in India, has always been subjugated to immense physical and mental torture by the society. It is often argued that this happened because women were not educated and were not given any rights. After Independence, our constitution has guaranteed equal rights to the women and the judiciary has also laid down laws for the protection of these rights. But the vital question is that have these laws been able to reduce the rate of crimes committed against women? Have women been provided proper social justice? Has these rights been able to uphold her position in the society?

In this paper, an attempt has been made to discuss these issues and other related issues by presenting a true picture of what problems women face in getting justice.

"I am no longer afraid of the deep sea .I can swim now"

Human Rights of Women and Development

Mr. Jyotiraj Pathak
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Women constitute half of the total population hence development in any society needs women's participation. Unfortunately in our society crime against women are increasing day by day. Although in India we have enough legal and constitutional safeguards to protect their rights but in practice these are often violated. The male dominated society refuses to recognize women's rights as human rights. Low literacy and sex ratio coupled with low conviction rate against law breaker reveals the true picture of women's position in our society. Among the crime against women dowry related crime and female foeticide is increasing, infact these are incidence of domestic violence.

Empowerment leads to development, of late both government and non – governmental organizations starts various projects relating to empowerment of women. To realize the goal of development for women a radical change in our outlook is the need of the hour. Here both the government and the community will have to support each other. For this matter universal education, awareness programme and proper training are needed. Infact, without realizing women's rights we can not hope for socio – economic development for women and for this matter gender justice should be treated as the starting point.

“Woman is the companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities. She has the right to participate in the minutest details of the activities of man. She has the same right of freedom and liberty as he”.

— Gandhij

Women's Rights and Their Position under the constitution

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Human rights are the inherent rights attached with human being, irrespective of their sex. Hence the women's human rights should include the rights mentioned within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 and all the subsequent international documents adopted later on. The concept women's human rights is a social concept which arise to give the justice to the weaker section of the society. As being the weaker section of the society, women have been neglected and prejudiced at all sectors of the society. The Assamese women cannot be differentiated from rest of India. Justice to women can be given nationally or internationally if Constitution permits it. Just like the opposite part of a coin, social justice is nothing but the social rights, which is recognized by the Constitution and verified by the judiciary about their implementation. All these subjects are discussed in details within this paper.

Women and Social Justice :
With special reference to Assam

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In ancient India women occupied a very honourable place in society. Even in Vedic age, women enjoyed a high position in society; especially they enjoyed freedom for spiritual progress and intellectual development. But momentous change from freedom to bondage and from honor to disgrace. Again during the period of Mughal rule the position of women slumped.

The general condition of women has improved only after Independence. The efforts of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru towards the up-liftment of the position of women in India are equally important.

In this paper we are trying to elaborate the social justice enjoyed by the women of Assam from ancient to present day social system because during the last few decades, a number of legislation have been passed to ensuing equality of status and opportunity.

Women and Social Changes:
With special reference to Women of Assam since
Independence

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Assam

Amongst the much talking issues of the recent time "The Women and Social Justice" remains most striking. Not to speak of since Independence, but from the time of Epic Age to this 21st Century, women, the better half of the society, have not been given due social justice.

Our Independence has already completed 57 years. Since Independence to the present time what has been given were excluded from inheriting paternal property. They are, till this day, not welcomed to take part in the parliamentary politics. The demand for seat reservation in the State Assemblies and Parliament is a mere cry in the wilderness. The birth of a girl is regarded as a source of misery. Inter-caste marriage is looked down upon. In case of job opportunities no reservation is made so far. Re-

marriage of widow has been confined in the speeches of so called leaders of the society only. In spite of a legal ban, dowry is very much in practice. Dowry related crimes are increasing day by day. Raping of minor girl child has not been spared. Molestation of young girl and women in broad daylight has become the order of the day.

However, till recent times, the Central Government as well as the State Government has introduced some legal provisions towards providing social justice to the women such as imparting free education to the girls upto XII standard, Property Inheritance Right, 33% reservation in the Panchayat Election etc. but all these are a drop of water in the Pacific.

**Social Justice :
A Myth for Women**

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Social justice is essential for the proper growth and development of personalities of every human being. It is mainly based on the idea that all persons are equal in society without any discrimination distinction. The constitution of India ensures social justice to both males and females. The Constitutional provisions on equality no doubt have enabled a few women is far from satisfactory. The disparity between the proclaimed equality and the prevailing discriminatory practices is so great that for most of the women, the constitutional assurance does not make any meaning. All women share a common degradation, indignity and oppression because of the prevalence of gender discrimination in society. Apart from the injustices faced by women in general, women of specific religious communities have to confront injustice due to the existence of gender based discriminatory provisions in the personal laws. The personal laws discriminate not only man and woman but woman and woman. Thus, in reality women do not have access to social justice.

In this paper an attempt has been made to point out that in spite of the theoretical assurance, social justice has remained a far cry for women.

**Women and Social Change:
With Special Reference to
Women of Assam since
Independence**

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Justice as we understand it is the quality of being right and fair. In legal parlance it refers to the law and its administration as practiced in a Court of Justice. Right from the 19th century, social reform movements through the period of nationalist struggles down to the Contemporary Women's Movement the law and legal reforms have always been relied upon to initiate changes in the social order towards a gender just and egalitarian society. Building a gender just society was perceived as part of the task of nation building, of development and social reconstruction. However, the dominance of patriarchy in all matters of the state, including the framing and dispensation of justice by the Judiciary and its functionaries leaves little hope for law becoming a potent force for change in the existing social structure. To hope for gender justice through legal sanction seems to be an almost impossible dream.

The main areas of discrimination against women are those of property, dowry, maintenance, divorce, adoption and guardianship of minors, decision making, poverty alleviation, female infanticide and child prostitution. Dr. B.R.Ambedkar, while codifying the Common Civil Code for the Hindus (which was applicable to other sections of Indian women) through Article 25 of the Indian Constitution, rationalized and restored the dignity of Indian women in respect of marriage, divorce and succession. The Hindu Succession Act 1956 went a long way towards ensuring social justice to women in India.

The social history of the Women's Movement in India and Assam in particular is a tense struggle between the Liberalist strain of thinking of the Pre - Independence era which followed Indigenious Traditions. In Assam we have a very long tradition of social reforms carried on by our saints and other social reformers. Studies reveal that the Contemporary Women's Movement in Assam has in fact, coalesced into one by mobilizing public opinion around the need for legal reforms for redressing individual cases of atrocities against women.

The National Commission for Women in 1992, stipulated that women should be allowed to think, breathe and act independently, be free from the shackles of slavery and not be an object of possession for the pleasure and satisfaction of men. Political empowerment of women as envisaged in the Women's Reservation Bill is a must but only after imparting the much-needed social and academic education, so necessary for the enlightenment of women. Women's rights Groups, spearheading the agitation surely stand to make headway in this field mainly by mobilizing public opinion and awareness. With the evolution of Women's Organisation "Social Justice" is slowly but irrevocably being replaced by openly feminist agendas bent on delivering long overdue justice to women.

Women And Socio-Economic Development

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It is an inarguable fact that our society is going through a change in every sphere, be it economic or social. Scientific achievements and modernization has become a way of life. This change instead of coming in incremental doses, is now taking by leaps and bound.

India is floating by the tide of "LPG" (liberalisation, Privatisation, Globalisation). With urbanisation there has been a huge change in the society. Assam is also experiencing this phase of transition.

Another sphere in which a paradigm shift of tectonic proportion has taken place has been in the way women view themselves. It was in 1945 that UN announced gender equality as a fundamental right.

"Assam", which is presumed by many outside the state as a terrorist infested jungle, is undergoing a swift and drastic change, which in many ways has positively touched the society. It has ushered in the era of women emancipation.

In this background, my paper tries to find:

1. Whether with such socio-economic development, has there been a true development of women of Assam in the same pace.
2. Whether such development or progress is lopsided, that is, touching only the urban women.
3. Whether such socio-economic development has also led to mental and psychological development of women.
4. Last but not the least whether we are advocating, "Equal but different. Long live the

ISSUES BEFORE WOMEN : THE URBAN EXPERIENCE

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The Assamese women is passing through a transition, particularly the educated and employed. The economic stability she provides to the family is well appreciated, but the liberal thoughts are best kept under restraint. The urban middle class women are quite aware of their rights yet they are in general unwilling to assert them. Beginning from the workplace to their homes, the women constantly does a balancing act; giving the greatest priority to her family which again has its own dynamics of operation. Young women are now foraying into non-traditional arenas with the surge in television channels and exposure to glamour and fashion. Even though there is an apparent increase in opportunities, there is also a cynicism attached to these. The urban women who are educated but unemployed face a different challenge altogether, the first within themselves and the second in the society for recognition of their contribution to the family which is in no way less than their male counterparts. However, the notion of women rights or equality is not absolute, it can't have a standard save for the economic and political; the social rights are determined by other factors that are beyond the purview of any law. At the same time a society is adjudged from the level of development its women folk enjoy.

GENDER DISPARITY AND DEVELOPMENT

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Gender equality is considered as one of the basic requirements of economic development. Generally economic development of a nation is measured by the per capita income of the nation; an economy with higher per capita income is considered as a developed nation. But gender equality has hardly anything to do with the per capita income. In other words, gender equality is not a concerned factor for measuring per capita income. But the society as a whole contains a strong relationship between gender equality and development. Therefore both the social and economic status of the women of a nation is taken into consideration while expressing the human development status. However it is observed that gender inequality is a leading feature of a less developed economy. In this context, the most confusing question is that whether development affects gender equality or gender biasness hampers development! Which one is the cause, which one is the consequence?

An attempt has been made in this paper to carry out a modest study of relationship between gender biasness and development of a nation.

Women and Socio-Economic Development (With Special reference to tourism Industry of Assam)

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Women and tourism industry has a positive relationship in Assam. There is a greater possibility of developing Adventure, cultural and Eco-tourism in Assam. Assamese women both from rural areas and urban areas can play a significant role in the tourism industry. If it is developed, women can be financially independent by rendering services to the tourists in the form of providing local foods, local accommodation in the remote areas, popularise the local songs and dances and traditional Assamese dresses. Therefore, it is expected that the socio-economic position of the local Assamese woman will be changed through self-employed or by getting various job opportunities in transport and communication organisation, tourist resort and other tourist spots.

Woman And Social Change: Post Independence Scenario in Assam

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It women who are capable of building such children who may lead the country to the path of progress and prosperity. The women of the country have an important contribution in the progress of the country.

Changes is natural for every society. It is law of the life and with the passage of time every society must change. change is a continuous process and social change is law of society and inevitable. In some cases the process may be slow, while in others it may be first, but the change is always going on. According to Gillin and Gillin, "Social changes are variations from the accepted modes of life; whether due to alterations in geographical conditions, in cultural equipment, composition of the population or ideology and whether brought about by diffusion or invention within the groups.

Women in Assam plays an important role in every aspects of social change such as in education, business, politics, fashions, sports etc. Through this paper I would like to show how women in Assam have come forward to bring about changes in Assam in different way.

Importance of women education in the socio-economic development of Assam

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Women have an important role to play in the advancement of a country. It is only through education that the level of women can think about the development of the nation or the country. "Education of boy's is education of one person, but education of girl is the education of the entire family." said Jawaharlal Nehru while underlying the importance of women's education.

In the words of the Indian Education Commission (1964-66) - "For full development of our human resources, the importance of homes, and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of infancy, the education of women is of even greater importance than that of man.

Women constitutes 48% of the total population of India. It was in 1945 that UN announced gender equality as a fundamental human right, but even today the women in India, specially the women of rural and backward areas of India and particularly in Assam are subject to gender oppression and gender discrimination. Even after 56 years of our Independence some women continue to live in a state of neglect and exploitation. The knowledge of science and technology and the process modernisation are yet to reach them.

The advent of Independence ushered in a new era in the expansion of women education in Assam and within a decade revolutionary changes takes place in the field. According to the census of 1951 the women literacy percentage was 9 and in 1961 it increase upto 16 which increases upto 43.7% in 1991 census.

Although the position of women education is increasing day by day in Assam, but still women are far behind to that of men. That means still more is needed to be done for the education of women in Assam. But to do more on this line we should know the actual problems of women education existing at present in Assam.

Major problems of woman education in Assam at present-

- a) Prevalence of age of old superstition, and tradition and conservatism.
- b) Illiteracy among masses.
- c) Wastage and stagnation.
- d) Poverty of parents.
- e) Early marriage and child labour among girls.
- f) Lack of separate educational institutions.
- g) Death of female teacher
- h) Lack of residential facilities.
- i) Employment of girls in domestic works.
- J) Lack of suitable means of communication.
- k) Lack of publicity.
- l) Inadequate finance.
- m) Lack of suitable means of communication, etc.

After knowing the major problems of women education in Assam, we should take the following measures for the improvement of women education in Assam.

Remedial measures -

- a) Universal enrolment of girls.
- b) Period of free education for girls may be made longer
- c) Part time education for girls.
- f) Strong action against child labour and early marriage.
- e) Vocational courses for girls.
- f) Appointment of women teachers.
- g) Adequate and competent inspection.
- h) Facilities like free text books, free - dress and free mid - day meal for girls.
- i) Help of women's organisation may be obtained
- j) Construction of staff quarters for women teachers and girls's hostels.
- k) publicity programmes for women education etc.

Education is a measure of the stage of development of the nation in general and

PRESENT SCENARIO OF WOMEN TECHNICAL MANPOWER IN ASSAM

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Women component of technical manpower has become more important because technology is expected to provide advantage in the international trade after liberalisation. Without an adequate women technical manpower strength a sustainable development of the country can not be achieved. Assam, which is an economically backward state in India needs more women technical manpower for its rapid development. Technical manpower is generally produced by the technical institutions like IIT, NIT, Engineering Colleges, Polytechnics etc. Assam has now a total of four degree level and ten diploma level institutions within its geographical boundary which imparts technical education to women. The present paper is aimed at the analysis of participation of women in technical education in Assam from 1985-2001 on the basis of the present scenario of technical education. For the analysis relevant data have been collected from the annual report of the National Technical Manpower Information System, Nodal Centre for Assam, some relevant journals, papers etc. The percentage of women intake in 1985 was 4.4 in degree level and 10.9 in diploma level, whereas in 2001 it is of 13.8 and 15.9 respectively. Similarly, the percentage of outturn in 1985 was 1.9 in degree level and 4.9 in diploma level which increases as the year progresses. However, the women participants are less in number in comparison to men. Some reasons for less participation have also been discussed.

Women and social change : with special reference to women of Assam since Independence.

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Introduction :

Women and social change are closely related. It has rightly been said that society is an aggregate of individuals and perhaps much more than that. Individuals are growing and developing beings, they are constantly and changing. So, their society too can not be static. The modern society is really a dynamic one and women play a pivotal role in this regard. Because it is women who are capable of building such children who may lead the country to the path of progress and prosperity. Manu has rightly remarked that God resides at the places where women are worshipped. Here, "worship of women" means where women are respected freedom is given. In Assam, women are now given a high water mark in education as well as other spheres of life. Most of the women are employed in banks, industries, civil services and other departments. Social evils could be uprooted by educated women.

Inter-caste marriage :

Now women equipped with modern education are no longer superstitious and prejudiced. As a result, intercaste marriage are seen among them and for the "Pardah Pratha" is completely eliminated. Contributions of Assamese Women : the Assamese women who have contributed a lot towards the development of society in various fields are Nalinibala Devi, Jamuneswri khatanar, dharmaswari Devi, Aidew Handique, Indira Miri, Reuka Devi Barkatoky, Dr. Dipali Dutta, Pratima Pandey, Nirupama Borgohain, Mamani Roisom Goswami and Anuradha Sarmah Pujari.

Contributions of Male Writers in Changing the Society :

A large number male writers contributed a lot for the welfare of the Assamese women. They are Bezbaruah, Rajani Kt. Bordoloi, Jyotiprasad Agarawala and Jogesh Das.

To Remove Social Evils : The dowry system must be eliminated from the Assamese society. It is a matter of pride that dowry was not prevalent in the Assamese society, On the contrary, bridegroom's had to present some gifts to the bride in ceremonies called "Khatirbhar" and "Telarbhar". Now, dowry which is prevalent in other states of India has influenced the Assamese society to a great extent. As a result, many dowry deaths have been caused. Women themselves are not liberal towards their fellow women leading to the sufferings niseries.

When a girl gets puberty a ceremony is held for that purpose to inform the people about the matter whether this ceremony could be abolished from the Assamese society is a matter of controversy.

Conclusion : Though women play a pioneering role in changing the society they are also not free from anxiety. They can not move alone at night. So many gang raps have been reported very often the newspapers. It was Napoleon who boldly and loudly told - "give me a good and educated mother, then I could provide thousands of good citizens for the welfare of the country". Perhaps, regarding the necessity of women a country is called "motherland", not as "fatherland".

"The changing role of the Bodo Woman in the Socio-economic Development of the Bodo Society."

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The Bodos or the Bodo-kacharis are a very distinct tribal group settled in althroughout the Brahmaputra valley within some scattered pockes. Racially, they belong to the Mongoloid stock of the Indo-Mangoloid or Indo-Tibetans.

Traditionally, the Bodos are very simple, peace-loving people with a rich cultural heritage. They are the follower of patriarchal family pattern. Ofcours, the women have a very respectable position in the family.

In post-independent Assam, compared to the women in the non-Bodo society the pace of change and development of Bodo women was less. But in last two decades or so the situation has been changed. In recent years it is observed that the Bodo women has sub stantially increased their contribution towards the family and thereby help in the process of socio-economic development. They are now academically advanced, socially conscious, aware of the ongoing issues in the society. Apart from the traditional household works now Bodo women works outside the private domain as an entrepreneur, as agovt. servant or as keen professional hand. Even they are playing a very big role in expanding education in community life, initiating socio-reformative activities against all social evils and superstitions. Now they are no more confined within, rather engaged themselves in all possible avenues to support family as well as the society. As a result, their position in the society has gone u p and the overall socio-economic condition of the community has also improved.

Atytempt is made to highlight the role of women in bringing about socio-economic changes in the community life of the Bodos through the present paper which is based on the findings of the Bodo dominated villages encompassing the Rangia town.

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Women faces various struggle in their life from birth to death. Their path of existance are not smooth as their male counterpart in the society. they are dominated, exploited in the society, especially in the underdeveloped and developing countries. woman's participation of socio-economic development process is also not upto the mark as this part of humanbeing is always undeprivileged. Though there is no any lack of their capabilities to contribute on social building innumerable barriers have come in the way. Gender based inequality, social prejudice have kept their voice tapped that lead the situation to a vicious circle of stagnancy that social reform measures are quite unsuccessful in this regard as that are not adequate in some extenant to break the established condition. New wave of thinking as well as steps need ton be taken to remove the problems of women. Women's capabilities to sort out their problems are always considered very instrumental in the crisis. Their voice, so far neglected, has to be strengthened in the present social set up. In this study we will make an assesment on the problems and prospects in this field.

Finding new methods to empower woman are very essential to change the stagnant situation. Removal of gender based inequality should get top most priority in social policy formulation. In this study, we have thrown some light upon the problems to empower women. For this purpose we have taken the help of secondary data available in UNDP Report, IMMR Report etc. Scanning of the available reports also shows the urgency of women agency to raise their voice to wipe out their problems. In the paper, some suggestions are made to enhance women participatiuon in their own empowerment programme. Suggestions and measures are also prescribed to revamp the situation and bring enthusiasm among women members of the society for their own development.

THE PROGRESS AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN NORTH-EAST SPECIALLY IN ASSAM SINCE INDEPENDENCE.

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The Indian culture has been built on the concept of male superiority and subordinate status of the women. But the economic of a country depends on the human factor. There can not be an educated people without educated women. To educate and empower it is the need of the hour. The women need to be empowered both in the ownership as well as management aspect of the agricultural and elite services.

This paper focus a picture of the progress of women empowerment in the North-East, especially in Assam.

“WOMEN EMPOWERMENT” An Important Issue of Development.

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The growth and development of status of women in the world in general and India in particular has passed through various ups and downs. Traditionally women in almost every society have played second fiddle to men. Ofcourse in Vedic India the women had a very high status in the society. But gradually their status eroded and they had to dance to the tune of males in all spheres of human activities. To cure the diseases it is observed that economic empowerment is the most important means for the enhancement of the status of women. It means giving legal and moral power to an individual in all spheres of life : social, political, economic, psychological and spiritual, which are essential for the survival and overall development of the mankind.

Empowerment is the phenomenon of the nineties and is defined as – “ giving power to” , “creating power within” and “enabling” . It is a multidimensional process which enables individuals and groups to utilise their full identity and powers in every activities of practical life. According to the Human Development Report, 1995, “ poverty has a women’s face” . Of 1.3 million (Approx.) people in poverty, seventy percent (70%) are women. This paper tries to highlight the related issues of women empowerment in general for the overall development of the society.

ROLE OF SCHEDULED CASTE WOMEN TOWARDS THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF NIZ HAJO AREA.

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The theme of the abstract may be classified as follows for convenience of proper discussion:

1. The role and contribution of women belonging to the "Malis" towards the socio-economic development.
2. The role and contribution of Namasudra and Kaibarta communities for the socio-economic development of the societies surrounding Niz Hajo area.

The whole discussion may be held under the following heads :

- i) Area and population.
- ii) People belonging to scheduled castes that concentrated by Niz Hajo Area.
- iii) The Malies or Malakars of Hajo Area.
- i) The kaibartas and Namasudras of Hajo Area.
- oo) The role and contribution of women belonging to the both Malies and Kaibarta communities towards the development of Niz Hajo.

The following data may be discussed for both the Malies and Kaibartas.

- i) Total population of (a) Male (b) Female
- (ii) Main profession or trade.
- (iii) The flower and fishing industries may be brought in to the discussion concerning the respective communities.

WOMEN AND EDUCATION IN TEAs WOMEN WORKERS OF ASSAM

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Women empowerment is a global issue and discussion on women's economic and political rights are at the forefront of many formal informal campaigns worldwide. The issue of gender equality is moving to the top of the global agenda.

Mother's education is considered as most important factors for the development of quality of work-life and the society. A child can not be a complete man without the proper guidance of an educated mother. This paper is an endeavour to highlight some of the issues pertaining to women education amongst the working women TEAs of Assam.

This paper includes educational facilities in TEAs of Assam Govt. role in spreading education amongst Tea Tribe, literacy percentage of women workers, various measures and subsistence used by concerned authorities for improving the potentialities of women workers.

After analysing all the information collected authorities through sample survey a conclusion has been drawn. Some suggestions are also offered for improving the literacy percentage as well as quality of work-life.

WOMEN AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES

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Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru said that the greatest revolution in country is the one that effects the status and living condition of women. Women like, Madam Curie, Golda Meir, S. Bandar Naik and Indira Gandhi came to prominence in changing the profile of the character of women. Likewise, women can contribute to the economic development of a country and even formulate the destiny of a country.

Women constitute nearly 50% total population of India. But only 8% of the enterprises are owned by women. In developed countries like U.S.A. & Canada women own one third of the small business. When we talk about the workforce of the women, Britain has seen an increase over three times than that of man. There, women are employed in farm and business initiated by women. In China, in case of starting a business women are outnumbered by men by at least two times. The five million women entrepreneurs constitute the one fourth of all the entrepreneurs in China. In Japan also the number of women entrepreneurs is in an increasing trend. The percentage of women entrepreneur increased from 2.4 in 1980 to 5.2 in 1995.

The participation of women in entrepreneurial activities in India started in 1970s, but because of the Indian society suffering from variety of mis-conception, the picture of the participation of women entrepreneur is not encouraging. Inadequate dissemination of information about female entrepreneur and dearth of documentation have made a stereotype image of women in business. Typically, women entrepreneurs are portrayed as those undertaking business along the predictable line of three Ps, i.e. manufacturing pickle, Papad & Powder Masala.

Being on a matriarchal line, the North-East can boast of their involvement in income generating activities. Kei duh (Bara bazar) in Shillong or Khairamband in Imphal is totally dominated by women entrepreneurs. The second all India Census of S.S.I. Unit revealed that in North-East 12.5% of the enterprises are managed and controlled as against 7.0% in the country.

The Crux of the issue is that the women in Assam were never idle. History reveals that they excelled in weaving from the remote past. At present also out of 34 lakhs of weavers all over India 50% of them are from Assam. Women constitute the 48.31% of the total population of Assam. The role of women in the economic sector in Assam is not undeniable. According to the Statistical Handbook Published in 1991, the participation of women in work force increased from 5.45% in 1971 to 21.5% in 1991. More and more of the women are participating in entrepreneurial activities. This says, given the will power and determination to do something women can never be behind and they can be as good and in cases if it need be can be better than men.

WOMEN'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS IN ASSAM SINCE INDEPENDENCE

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Since independence our country has made a lot of progress in science and technology. The progress in the field of agriculture and industry is a matter of pride. Due to the process of liberalisation and deregulation there has been considerable changes in the economic scenario. But in the field of development the picture is pretty grim. The first step to eliminate the social evils is education. The first Human Development Report brought out by UNDP in 1990 starts with the following words: "The real wealth of a nation is its people and the purpose of development is to create an enabling environment for the people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. This simple but powerful truth is too often forgotten in the pursuit of material financial wealth." The human society is composed of both males and females. Women constitute half of the population and thus a significant segment of every society, in fact contribute more than half of the wealth of the nation, and yet they are denied economic social and even legal rights and privileges. Education, and more specifically women's education, only will make these evils disappear automatically.

Indian society has had an ambivalent attitude towards female education. After independence education of women progressed considerably. But disparity between the education of boys and girls still continued. The reasons for this disparity are lack of understanding of the value of girls' education by the parents, want of money for school dress and books, the necessity of keeping the girls at home for taking care of the younger children, or to help the parents in domestic works, etc.

Education is the key to unlock the door for rapid growth and development of a country. No country can progress if it is not proactive in its action which can come only through education and learning. The greatest challenge today is to educate the woman who constitute half the population of the country. They have an important role to play in the advancement of a country. It is only through the education of women that the level of culture of a nation can be raised. In the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, "education of a boy is education of one person, but education of a girl is the education of the entire family."

This paper is an attempt to highlight some features of women status, like literacy rate, social and economic status of women in Assam, as well as to put forward some suggestions for improvement.

ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE AND POSITION OF WOMEN

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Man and Woman are complimentary to each other and their common involvement only can contribute to the overall development of the society. Women constitute nearly 50% of the total population of India and obviously they are having an important role in socio-economic development. Literary and historical records reveal that women held a position of equality to a good extent during the Vedic period (2500 BC-500 BC). Degradation began in the Brahmic period (1500 BC-500 BC), and in the succeeding period i.e. the age of the sutras and Epic (500 BC-500 AD), women had to face a deplorable situation. This is rather a dissatisfying index to development.

The very term 'development' is taken to mean 'human development', which is defined as "a process of enlarging choice for all people not just one part of the society." Productivity, equality, sustainability and empowerment are the four elements which contribute to human development. Hence human development cannot be achieved without gender equality. As such, equality of women is one of the pre-requisites to the social, economic and political development of a nation. Therefore, high position of women in the society denotes the overall progress of it.

Various socio-political factors are responsible for degradation of the status of women in our country. Of these factors, lack of economic independence is said to be the most vital one. Women's role as wives and mothers compels them to remain dependent on men. It is rather a deplorable matter that males are noticed to be dominating the females, which has generated a sense of inferiority complex to the women folk. Due to this psychological setback, men are also used to doubt the capability of women. As a result women's participation in many activities is being restricted, leading to non-exposure of their personality.

In order to make the women feel comfortable in the manner the men do, women are expected to have equal opportunities and equal participation in decision making in the family as well as the community. As hinted, economic independence is one of the key factors which can ensure a high birth for women in the society. In our proposed paper efforts are made to find out the problems which stand as barriers to women's economic independence. Moreover, probable measures to check the problems are also being suggested. Women's participation in manual as well as managerial works, and the proper assessment of such works are also proposed to be scrutinized. The write-up is expected to take into consideration the relation between economic independence and social status of women, with special reference to the women of the rural areas of Assam.

BODO WOMEN & THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN HAJO REVENUE CIRCLE : A CASE STUDY

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Hajo, the famous place of Assam is situated on the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra. Its latitudinal & longitudinal extension is 26°10' N to 26°29'30" & 91°26'50" E to 91°41' E respectively. It covers an area of about 360km² with a population of about 198151. It shows a mixture of different groups of people. Bodo is one of them, which is mostly concentrated in Thaniadi, Banshar and Gondhmou areas, with a population of about 1047 (Approx.) Though Bodo population is less, but most important thing that Hajo is a Bodo place-name according to Dr. Banikanta Kakati and Dr. Upendra Nath Goswami. It is a combination of two words where "Ha" means land, and "Gojou" means high. Thus "Ha-Gojou" came to be known as Hajo.

Women had a very dignified place in ancient India. They participated in social activities, religious ceremonies and public life with hardly any positions exclusively reserved for men. But over the centuries, social and political factors combined to undermine their status. In case of Bodo society, particularly in Hajo revenue circle, women have an equal status with men in respect to their household, agricultural and other socio-economic activities. However they are unable to cope up with the changing socio-economic conditions of the modern society. In this paper, therefore, an attempt is made to highlight the socio-economic development of Bodo women in Hajo Revenue Circle, using both primary and secondary data.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF WOMEN WORKERS IN TEA INDUSTRY OF ASSAM.

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Labour is perhaps the most important factor in an industrial concern. It is labour who convert raw materials into finished goods or services. However, labour is complex and delicate and therefore it requires very careful handling. Tea is amongst the most labour intensive of all plantation crops. Very frequently it has been alleged that working class in these tea states of Assam are the most oppressed labourers in the organised sector of the economic. Exploitation of this class has been a recurring theme since the inception of the plantation complex in the state. More than half of the labourers in these tea gardens are women. Despite having to work for as many as eight hours during the plucking seasons, they attend to the household chores, nurse their children and family. Although the women workers get wages at par with their male counterparts, yet they are discriminated when they are single women. A permanent worker gets subsidised foodgrains only for herself and her children. Her husband does not get any medical facilities for her non-working parents till 1990, the women workers in Assam were even receiving lesser wages than men for the same work.

A recent trend in tea gardens is to engage more than permanent labours. Between 1986 to 1998, the temporary labour force in the gardens of Assam has increased from 78,192 to 95,668. Most disturbingly, most of these temporary workers are women. In fact women workers have been gradually shifted to the temporary labour category or breaks of service recorded before completion of the statutory period, after which a worker must be made regular or permanent. This category of workers do not get statutory privileges under the Plantation Labour Act 1951, The Assam Plantation Provident Fund Act and The Bonus Act. They are also denied housing and subsidised foodgrain supplies benefits.

It should not be overlooked that basically an industry is a group of people, it relates to human society. It is an interaction of the group aimed at welfare of these members who are jointly committed to fulfill their obligations. Keeping in mind the fact that well being of society lies in upliftment of the weaker classes, including women, and attempt has been made in the paper to project the socio-economic status of women in tea industry of Assam.

EMERGENCE OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM

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A nation can not be claimed to be developed unless its women are developed. This was the statement according to the UNDP report. With a view to develop the better half of the society the UN declared the decade 1975-85 as the "Decade of Women" and adopted various programmes aimed at promoting women in employment and their access to non-traditional skilled areas.

Women have always been an important part of economy, work and employment, and their role has been growing continuously with development and industrialisation. Yet, their contribution to the wealth of the nation have been unrecognized and unacknowledged. Economic transition have revolutionised the role of traditional Indian women. Women in India are no longer weak and remain confined to within four walls of their house. They have entered into diverse fields ranging from Govt. jobs to self-employment. Women entry into business is a recent trend. It is traced out as an extension of their kitchen activities to the three Ps, i.e. pickles powder (masala) and pappad manufacturing. With growing awareness and spread of education over the years women have started embarking to modern activities like engineering, electronic and energy.

Women in Assam is not lagging behind with their counterparts in the rest of the country. They have plunged into areas such as, printing, weaving, travel agency, transport business, etc. to mention a few. In rural Assam, women have organized themselves towards collective action through SHG's (Self Help Group) and has undertaken certain activities in, and rural handloom.

Recognising the importance and involvement of participating model of development, Govt. agencies has come forward in mobilizing, organizing and imparting training to women to start their own venture. Moreover the state government has taken special efforts to assist women entrepreneurs, both urban and rural in marketing their products by organizing "Melas" and "Craft Bazar". As a further impetus NEDFI HaT has been established in Guwahati as a permanent platform to women and other rural entrepreneurs to market their wares.

Today, there is a great awakening among women. The need of the hour is to provide an opportunities in a conducive atmosphere free from gender biasness. Toward this end, an integrated approach is necessary for making the movement of women entrepreneurship a success.

Role of Educated Women in Socio- Economic Development.

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"The word 'development' means a series of changes that uplifts an individual from an embryonic condition to maturity. Development in this perspective covers all aspects of community life. The goals of national development, economic equality, social justice, political and cultural developments will be possible only when there is maximum use of all its resources, which includes human resource also. Woman who constitutes fifty percent (50%) of the nation's population has a crucial role to play in National Development. There is no doubt that women have been included in the development processes, but mostly in a subtle way. However, in the modern world the role of women covers a much larger area than that of merely taking care of home and upbringing the children only. She is expected to share the responsibilities of developing the society which may bring about big changes in the socio-economic structure leading to a better work force and movement of the mass people. This leads to change the life style and work of women as well as the socio-economic condition of the people.

So, proper development of women have a crucial role to play. Government policies and programmes have no doubt been introduced, but most of them are a failure due to lack of proper coordination. In this context educated women working as professionals like doctors, lawyers, university and college teachers, and those interested in the welfare of women can make contributions by identifying priority areas where research, planning, policy making and implementation is necessary. While giving training to women in the traditional jobs the latest technology available should be used, so that the finished products are of high quality and thereby a better income is obtained.

Women should also be helped to develop leadership qualities; they should be made aware of their political rights, legal laws and socio-economic independence. The younger generation has also a very prominent role to play to make efforts towards eradication of illiteracy. Education is, therefore, the tool for developing woman to bring a change, both social and economic, to the society."