

**WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN ASSAM:
A HUMAN DEVELOPMENT APPROACH**

A Thesis submitted to NEHU
for
Partial fulfillment of M. Phil Degree in Economics

By
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Under the Supervision of
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December 11, 2008

Thesis

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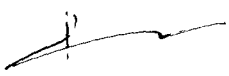
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Women Empowerment in Assam: A Human Development Approach**”, being submitted by **Miss. Bidisha Mahanta** to the **North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong** for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is a bona-fide research work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance. Ms. Mahanta has successfully completed the other course requirements in accordance with the Ordinance and Regulations of the University. In my opinion, the thesis has reached the standard fulfilling the requirements of the Degree in accordance with the Ordinance of the University. The results embodied in the thesis have not been submitted to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.

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Shillong

Date..11..12..08....

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Chapter - I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Concept of Women Empowerment:

In the last five decades, the concept of women empowerment has undergone a sea change from welfare oriented approach of women empowerment to equity approach. This started to change during the international decade of women when it became increasingly clear that empowering women is about more than just improving their material conditions. The concept of 'women in development' emerged at that point of time, shifting attention to enhancement of the role and status of women. Then 'equity and empowerment' approaches merged to form the gender and development concept (George Mathew, 2003).

Although many researchers made attempts to explain the concept of empowerment, the most relevant definition is one provided by Sen and Batliwala (2000). According to them, "Empowerment is the process by which the powerless gain greater control over the circumstances of their lives. It includes both controls over resources and over ideology [Includes, in addition to extrinsic control] a growing intrinsic capability- greater self confidence, and an inner transformation of one's consciousness that enables one to overcome external barriers...." [Quoted by Kishor and Gupta (2004)]. This definition mainly emphasizes on two important aspects. Firstly, empowerment is not a power over others but it is a power to achieve desired goals. Secondly, idea of empowerment is more applicable to those who are powerless, whether they be males or females, or group of individuals, or class or caste. Hence, the concept of empowerment is not specific to women alone. Nonetheless, women's empowerment or lack of it, is unique in that and it cuts across all types of class and caste, and unlike class and caste powerlessness, is played out also within families and household (Malhotra et al, 2002).

Women empowerment is also defined as "a change in the context of a women's life, which enables her increased capacity for leading a fulfilling human life. It gets reflected in external qualities such as health, mobility, education and awareness,

status in the family, participation in decision making, and also at the level of material security. It also includes internal qualities such as self awareness and self confidence” [Human Development in South Asia, 2000, as quoted by Mathew (2003)].

Empowerment has been identified as an important element of reducing poverty and as a primary development assistance goal even by the World Bank (Malhotra et.al, 2002). Women empowerment is one of the essential factors that promote human development. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development stresses that the empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status is both a highly important end in itself and necessary for sustainable human development (UNFPA, 2007).

1.2 Concept of Human Development: The concept of human development has evolved out as a broader measure of socio-economic progress of nation. Since its launch in 1990, ‘Human Development Report’ by UNDP defined human development as a process of enlarging people’s choices, the choices covered social, political, psychological and other aspects of human life. Human development is measured in the form of a composite index called as Human Development Index (HDI). Although, HDI was widely extolled as a major policy instrument and a useful policy tool a few year after its emergence, it was recognized first as a measure of average achievements in human development. It neither reflected the deprivation nor the distributional aspects of development, particularly the issue of inequality. The current focus on human development has, however, served to highlight the gender dimension and continuing inequalities confronting women. In 1995, the Human Development Report introduced the concept of Gender related Development Index (GDI) including other indices such as Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). GDI while measures the achievements in the same dimensions and variables as the HDI, it also takes into account inequality in achievement between women and men (Anand and Sen, 1995). The greater the gender disparity in human development, the lower is country’s GDI compared to its HDI. The GDI is the HDI adjusted downwards for gender inequality. On the other hand, GEM indicates whether women are able to actively participate in economic and political life. As is well known, the women being the less privileged

class needs special attention for their development. Contrary to the general belief that development is gender neutral, statistics show that women lag behind men all over the world in almost every aspects of life. It is for this reason that Human Development Report (1995) gives special emphasis on this issue and notes that without empowering women overall development of human beings is not possible. It further stresses that if development is not engendered, is endangered.

1.3 Construction of GDI and GEM

As we know HDI is a composite index of three basic components of human development such as longevity, knowledge and standard of living. The index is constructed by using the following formula:

$$(1).....HDI_j = \frac{1}{3}(I_1 + I_2 + I_3)$$

Where I_1 (Education Index) and I_2 (Health Index) are constructed by using the formula:

$$(2).....I_j = \frac{X_y - Min(X)}{Max(X_i) - Min(X_i)}$$

And the I_3 (Income Index) is constructed by using the formula:

$$(3).....I_3 = \frac{Log(X_y) - Log\{Min(X_i)\}}{Log\{Max(X_i)\} - Log\{Min(X_i)\}}$$

Thus, while HDI reveals the average achievement in life, GDI adjusts the average achievement to reflect the inequality between men and women in the same dimension as HDI. As against this the construction of GDI involves the following three steps:

1.3.1 Construction of GDI

Step-I: Female and male indices in each dimension are calculated according to the general formula as shown in equation (2);

Step-II: The female and male indices in each dimension are combined in a way that penalizes differences in achievement between men and women. The resulting index referred to as the Equally Distributed Index (EDI), is constructed as follows:

$EDI = \left[\left\{ (Female\ Popn.\ Share) (Female\ Index)^{1-\epsilon} \right\} + \left\{ (Male\ Popn.\ Share) (Male\ Index)^{1-\epsilon} \right\} \right]^{\frac{1}{1-\epsilon}}$
 where ϵ measures the aversion of inequality. In GDI, $\epsilon = 2$, thus the general formula becomes:

$$(4) \dots \dots \dots GDI = \left[\frac{Female\ Popn.\ Share}{Female\ Index} + \frac{Male\ Popn.\ Share}{Male\ Index} \right]^{-1}$$

Step-III: GDI is calculated by combining the three equally distributed indices in an unweighted average.

1.3.2 Construction of GEM:

Gender Empowerment Measure as we know focuses on women’s opportunity rather than their capabilities. The GEM captures gender inequality in the following three key areas:

- a. Political participation and decision making power as measured by women’s and men’s percentage shares of parliamentary seats;
- b. Economic participation and decision making power as measured by two indicators- (1) women and men’s percentage shares of position as legislators, senior officials and managers; and (2) women and men’s percentage shares of professional and technical positions; and
- c. Power over economic resources as measured by women’s and men’s estimated earned income.

For each of these three dimensions, an Equally Distributed Equivalent Percentage (EDEP) is calculated as a population weighted average according to the following general formula:

$$EDEP = \left[\left\{ (Female\ Popn.\ Share) (Female\ Index)^{1-\epsilon} \right\} + \left\{ (Male\ Popn.\ Share) (Male\ Index)^{1-\epsilon} \right\} \right]^{\frac{1}{1-\epsilon}}$$

As in GDI, $\epsilon = 2$ for GEM, then, the formula becomes:

$$(5) \dots \dots \dots EDEP = \left[\frac{Female\ Popn.\ Share}{Female\ Index} + \frac{Male\ Popn.\ Share}{Male\ Index} \right]^{-1}$$

The EDEP for political participation and economic participation are each divided by 50 to construct the corresponding indexed EDEP whereas for economic resources simple EDEP is taken into consideration. All these three indices are averaged to construct the GEM.

1.4 Women Empowerment and Human Development

The Governments at different levels have undertaken numerous efforts to empower women including making constitutional provision, formulation of various plans and policies, training programs, celebration of decades of women empowerment and many such programmes. In spite of all these initiatives over the years, there has not been remarkable improvement in the lives of women. The crime and violence against women have increased enormously throughout the world. The female political participation is quite low. They are the most vulnerable class in respect of wage employment. Poverty is most frequent among women. All these probably led to the emergence of the concept of feminization of poverty. Human Development Report (UNDP, 2002) singles out the quota system as the key factor for enhancing women's political participation and further mentions that reservation of seats is not enough; creating an enabling environment for women is of equal importance.

Human development and women empowerment, both are mutually reinforcing. In fact empowered women can contribute to human development through household and community activity and at the same time progress in human development is expected to promote women empowerment through improved health, nutrition, education, social security, political freedom, availability of employment and a decent standard of living. Female education is an important input of the production function, i.e., "Human Development Improvement Function" which explains the effectiveness of expenditure directed to human development. Female education has important bearings on child health and their survival. Moreover a study in Cote de Ivoire reveals that increased female share over household income leads to increased spending on human development enhancing items like food, healthcare etc and reduced spending on tobacco (Gustav Ranis et al., 2005).

But evidences show that a high level of human development in terms of HDI is not necessarily linked with highly empowered women. Many countries having high HDI are having low GDI. This reveals the fact that there is a gap between men and women in achievement in human development. This gender gap is mostly seen in five critical areas viz., economic participation, economic opportunity, political empowerment, access to education and reproductive healthcare as mentioned in the

report of World Economic Forum (2005) which is based on the findings of United Nations Development Fund for Women on global pattern of inequality between men and women. According to the report, the large populous nations such as India, Pakistan, Turkey and Egypt hold some of the lowest ranks in respect of gender gap. The study puts Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Denmark and Finland at the top of the list as countries with the minimum gender gap. These countries are characterized by strong liberal society, with an impressive record of openness and transparency in government and comprehensive safety net, which provides security to vulnerable groups in the population. As a result, women in this part of the world enjoy greater access to education, work opportunity and a higher standard of living. Although no country has yet succeeded in eliminating the gap, it is narrowed in case of Nordic countries. In case of China which is one of the highest ranking nations in Asia in respect of HDI, and a neighbor to India, the Chinese government's gender equality objective falls far short of expectations with a rank of 33 among 58 nations in gender gap study. However its position regarding gender gap is highest among Asia, followed by Japan. The report, while ranking the countries according to the level of advancement of their female population and identifies successes and failures based on economic, political, educational and health based criteria, maintains that, "Our aim is essentially to allow countries to identify their strength and weaknesses in an area of critical importance for the development process and to provide opportunities to learn from the experiences of others that have been more successful in promoting the equality of women and men" (August Lopez Carlos, Chief Economist and Director of Global Competitiveness Programme, World Economic Forum, 2005).

It is increasingly viewed that empowerment of women is an essential prerequisite for poverty alleviation and upholding human rights and for sustainable human development. Therefore, strategy is needed to ensure that women's empowerment and gender equality are activity pursued in the mainstream of all developmental objectives. However, "empowerment has multiple interrelated and independent dimensions- economic, social, cultural and political. It can be well understood in relation to resources, perception, relationship and power" (IFUW, 2001). Resources are not treated as empowerment per se, but as catalyst for

empowerment. So, these factors should be viewed as 'enabling factor' i.e. critical inputs to foster an empowerment process. In this context, education, employment etc which have traditionally been used as 'proxies' for empowerment should be better described as enabling factors or sources of empowerment (Kishor, 2000a). Empowerment is a process which is different to different groups of women and varies according to the level of development in a particular society. Although various efforts have been made to empower women and to eliminate the gender gap, these are not to that extent successful in achieving its goal. So there are some hidden constraints that check the process. Giving property rights, access to employment or educational opportunity will not change the picture. A revolutionary change in the social and cultural values and behavioral pattern is necessary to foster the process. When women feel that they can operate the society at the same terms as men, then we can call women as empowered and empowered women can move the wheel of economic development more rapidly by ensuring greater human development. Thus from this point of view the study on women empowerment is the need of the hour.

1.5 Review of Literature

A number of studies have already been undertaken both on women empowerment and human development. Books have also been published on gender issues and its relationship with development. But a very little effort has been made to combine the two strands and to present it in one analytical framework.

Wallace and March (1991) explained the effects of global issues on women lives and explored the conceptual basis of gender awareness planning and implementation of development project. Moser (1993) focused on the interrelationship between gender and development, the formulation of gender policy and the implementation of gender planning and practices. The work of Lourene E. Shields (1995) provided an exploratory framework to understand and develop the concept of empowerment both from a theoretical and practical perspective with a particular focus on women's perception of the meaning of empowerment in their lives.

R.Chattopadhyay and E. Duflo (2001) in their paper used a policy of political reservation for women adopted in India to study the impact of women's leadership on

policy decision. They found that women were more likely to participate in policy making process if the leader of the village community was happened to be women.

The edited volume of Aparna Mahanta (2002) sought to explain the question of women's access to or deprivation of basic human rights as the right to health, education and work, legal rights, rights of working women's, besides issues like domestic violence, all the while keeping the peculiar socio-cultural situation of the North East in mind.

Institute of Social Sciences and South Asia Partnership, Canada organized a workshop in 2003 which dealt with women's empowerment through political participation wherein presentations were made on various theoretical works and case studies. The workshop addressed issues like "Proxy Women" which was the shorthand term used by some who perceived that women elected to *Panchayat* bodies were merely 'proxies' or puppets in the hands of their husbands, relatives and other male *Panchayat* members. So deconstructing the idea of proxy women, the workshop emphasized on training programme for elected women for their capacity building. In the keynote address Mathew (2003) viewed that the equity and empowerment approaches merged together to form the 'gender and development concept'.

Assam Human Development Report (2003) threw light on inequality in the achievement between men and women of Assam in different spheres of life. The report viewed that poverty, violence and lack of political participation were the main issues of concern for South Asian Women, and Assam was no exception.

Findings of Sunita Kishor and Kamla Gupta (2004) revealed that average women in India were disempowered absolutely relative to men, and there had been little change in her empowerment over time. The authors viewed that there were several cogent and pressing reasons for evaluating, promoting and monitoring the level of women's empowerment in India, not the least of which was that household health and nutrition was generally in the hands of women and their empowerment was necessary for ensuring not just their own welfare, but the wellbeing of households. They also asserted that empowerment was critical for the very development of India, as it enhanced the quality and quantity of human resources available for development.

Brinda Karat (2005) a noted social activist, in one of her books discussed the

various issues relating to women's survival and emancipation. This book was an outcome of author's practical experience when she was associated with All India Democratic Women's Association. In this book she elaborately discussed the women's movement at different point of time, effect of globalization on the survival of women, women's political participation, violence against women etc.

A paper presented by M.Vatts (2005) in a study seminar on Gender and Society, organized by Women's Studies and Development Centre, University of Delhi held the view that women lived and grew up in a male dominated society and majority of Indian women's place was strictly within the family. The paper discussed various phases of women movement in India.

Pradeep Panda and Bina Agarwal (2005) focused on the factor like women's property status in context of women's risk of marital violence. Based on a household survey in Kerala, the authors assessed the prevalence and correlates of both physical and psychological violence– long term and current. Women with property like house or land are found to face a significantly lower risk of marital violence than property less women. They further opined that if development means expansion of human capabilities, then freedom from domestic violence should be an integral part of any exercise for evaluating developmental progress.

Neera Desai and Usha Thakkar (2007) in their book discussed the role and status of women in the threshold of new millennium. They discussed elaborately women's political participation, legal rights, education as a tool for women empowerment.

I.C. Figueras (2008) in her paper, studied the effect of female political representation in State legislature on public goods, policy and expenditure in the context of India and it is found that politicians gender and social position matters for policy.

Human Development Report (1995) put special emphasis on women empowerment. It mainly concerned on formulation and utilization of measure of gender equality and inequality and the identification of efforts and contribution made by women that go unrecognized in standard national income and employment statistics. The concepts of GDI and GEM evolved out in this report.

Anand and Sen (1995) in their work in the edited volume of Fukuda Parr and A.K. Shiv Kumar, tried to develop measure of gender inequality. Bardhan and Klasen (1999) criticized GEM as an inadequate index of measuring women empowerment at aggregate level. In a paper prepared for the World Bank by Malhotra et.al. (2002), tried to highlight the methodological aspects of measurement and analysis on women empowerment.

J. Ram. Pillarisetti and Mark Mc Gillivray (1998) mainly emphasized on the methodological side of Human Development and Gender Empowerment. Their article mainly highlighted the construction, composition and determinant of UNDP's Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). Although the authors recognized the importance of inclusion of GEM in HDR, they pointed out some of the drawbacks of the measure

Tandley Omprakash Sridevi (2005) in her paper provided a scientific method to measure the process of empowerment. Her study was based on the women post graduate trained teachers in the city of Chennai. She further vied the importance of women empowerment for sustainable development.

Deepa Narayan (2007) made an attempt to measure empowerment by using self assessed points on a ten steps ladder of power and rights, where at the bottom of the ladder stood people who were completely powerless and without rights and on the top stood those who had a lot of power and rights. By asking various questions relevant to women empowerment to the respondents the author tried to find out the position of different countries and regions on this ladder of empowerment.

Abul Barkat (www.goodgovernance.org) while discussing the present status of women in Bangladesh opined that although women as mother are held in high respect at the individual level, there was an unclear understanding of empowerment of women as a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation in decision making and control over her own life.

Parashar (2004) examined how mother's empowerment in India linked with child nutrition and immunization and the findings suggested that women needed to be empowered simultaneously along several different dimensions if they and their children were to benefit across the whole spectrum of their health and survival needs.

Gustav Ranis and Francis Stewart (2005) in their article mentioned that a study in Cote de Ivoire reveals that increased female share in household income leads to increased spending on human development enhancing items. They also viewed female literacy as an important input of the production function (i.e. human development improvement function).

Rae Lesser Blumberg (2005) viewed that economic empowerment of women was the key to achieve gender equality as well as wealth and well being of nation. The author opined that financial autonomy would enhance women's capacity of decision making in various arenas of life. Moreover, it would lead to less corruption, less armed conflict and less violence against female in the long run.

In the January 2008 issue of '*Kurukshetra: A Journal on Rural Development*', focused mainly on women's empowerment and opined that although women were the active agents for sustainable development, and their empowerment was very important for the process of development, they had not actively participated in their own emancipation mainly due to low economic independence.

Thus, from the above review of literature it is evident that quite a number of studies have already been undertaken on women empowerment and related issues. Entire gamut of literature have been centered around mainly on three issues such as concept and measurement of women empowerment (WE), relationship between WE and HD and constraints to WE by taking into consideration various aspects like economic and political participation of women, their nutrition and child health care, human rights, etc across countries and geographical regions including studies undertaken in India. But no such study has been undertaken so far in this regard in the state of Assam. This justifies the need for undertaking such a study and the present one is a humble attempt in this regard.

1.6 Area of Study

Assam, a constituent State of India, is situated in North Eastern part of the country. Located south of the Eastern Himalayas, the state comprises the Brahmaputra and the Barak river valleys and the Karbi Anglong and the North Cachar Hills. Total geographical area of the state is 78,438 sq. km. The state is surrounded by rest of the seven sisters' states viz. Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland and

Arunachal Pradesh. These states are connected to the rest of India via a narrow strip in West Bengal. The economy of Assam is mainly agrarian in nature. The population of the state is 26.66 million according to 2001 census of which 12.85 million are females. As regards sex ratio, it is 935 females per 1000 males. Basic data on the position of women in the state vis-à-vis men reveals that there is a glaring inequality between them. Although during 1991-2001, annual average growth rate of female literacy (1.3 per cent) was more than that of male literacy rate (0.997 per cent), the enrolment rate of women in higher education segment was less than 33 per cent. The female work participation rate which was 4.66 per cent in 1971 increased to 21.61 per cent in 1991 and declined to 20.71 per cent in 2001 (Assam Human Development Report, 2003 and Govt. of Assam). When the GEI for India was 0.620 in early 1980s it was below 0.499 in Assam (G.O.I., 2002). During 1990s the GEI for India was increased to 0.676 as against 0.575 in Assam. Thus position of the state of Assam and India as a whole improved marginally in terms of GEI in the above mentioned period. However close examination of figures reveals that both in 1980s and 1990s the position of Assam was far below the national average. Assam was ranked in 29th position among the 32 States and Union Territories according to GEI measure and was ranked below Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland (Assam Human Development Report, 2003). This showed that women of Assam were more deprived than that of any other State in North Eastern Region and India as a whole. All these points again justified to undertake a study in Assam at the disaggregate level based on secondary data.

1.7 Objectives

The main objectives of the present study are to:

1. Examine the status and trend of women empowerment in Assam vis-à-vis India in terms of various indicators such as economic participation, political participation, access to education etc;
2. Explore the link between various dimensions of women empowerment with human development; and
3. Identify the hidden constraints on women empowerment in Assam in spite of the fact that many programs are launched and policy initiatives are undertaken

by the Government; and suggest measures to bridge the gap between men and women.

1.8 Data and Methodology

The study is based on secondary data. Mainly the following documents are consulted:

1. Human Development Report of UNDP, National Human Development Report of Govt. of India and Assam Human Development Report.
2. Proceedings of various international conferences on women and human development.
3. Other reports of Government, NGOs and various other agencies on women issues.

After collecting data, these were compared and analyzed in a suitable manner using simple statistical tools. The study area, Assam, though comprises 27 Districts, information is not available for her newly formed districts under BTC area and Kamrup rural and Kamrup metro separately. Hence we had to use the old classification of 23 Districts of Assam for our present study. We grouped the districts on the basis of geographical region, literacy and district domestic product and studied each group separately with the help of various empowerment indicators like female literacy, sex ratio, employment status, education level etc.

Grouping of Districts:

I. On the basis of Geography:

Group	Geographical Region	Name of Districts
I	Upper Assam	Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar Jorhat, Golaghat, Dhemaji and Lakhimpur
II	Central Assam	KarbiAnglong, Nagoan, Morigoan, Sonitpur N.C.Hills, Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi and Darrang
III	Lower Assam	Kamrup, Nalbari, Barpeta, Bongaigoan, Goalpara, Dhubri and Kokrajhar

II. On the basis of Literacy:

Group	Literacy Rate (2001)	Name of Districts
A	< 50	Dhubri
B	50-60	Kokrajhar, Darrang, Barpeta, Karbi Anglong Goalpara, Morigoan, Hailakandi and Bongaigoan
C	60-70	Sonitpur, Bongaigoan, Tinsukia, Dhemaji, Nalbari, Karimganj, Nagoan, N.C.Hills, Cachar, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Golaghat
D	> 70	Kamrup, Sibsagar, Jorhat

III. On the basis of Gross District Domestic Product:

Group	Per Capita DDP (Rs) (2005-06)	Name of Districts
1	Below 15000	Karimganj, Dhubri, Goalpara, Kokrajhar, , Nalbari, Darrang, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Nagoan, Morigoan, Hailakandi,
2	15000-25000	Barpeta Bongaigoan, Jorhat, Golaghat. Karbi Anglong, Cachar. Dibrugarh,
3	Above 25000	Kamrup, N.C.Hills. Tinsukia, Sibsagar

For measuring women empowerment we have used the methodology adopted by Sunita Kishor and Kamla Gupta (2004). Three indicators of women empowerment such as (1) Evidence of Empowerment, (2) Access to Potential Sources of Empowerment, and (3) Setting for Empowerment are used in the study. These three indicators are detailed out in the introductory part of Chapter II.

1.9 Chapter Plan

The dissertation is divided into the following chapters:

Chapter – I: Introduction

Chapter- II: Women Empowerment in India

Chapter- III: Women Empowerment in Assam

Chapter- IV: Women Empowerment and Human Development in Assam

Chapter- V: Findings and Suggestion

The first chapter is mainly an introductory one which provides an over all idea about the study including various objectives set and methodology followed in the work. A review of literature is also done briefly in the same chapter.

The second chapter deals with the present status of women empowerment in India. By using the data of NFHS-3 and latest Census report an attempt is made to measure the level of empowerment of Indian women both in absolute term and relative to men.

The third chapter deals with women empowerment in Assam at disaggregated level. Districts which were categorized into various groups on the basis of geographical region, literacy and DDP were compared on the basis of performance of empowerment indicators. Women's political participation at state level was examined over time using the indicators like percentage of women voter and percentage of elected women member of Legislative Assembly.

The fourth chapter examines whether there is any relationship between women empowerment and human development especially in context of Assam.

The fifth chapter is the concluding chapter which contains the summary and findings with some suggestions to bridge the gender gap that prevails in the state at present. A bibliography is added at the end.



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Chapter - II

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA

“To awaken the people, it is women who must be awakened; once she is in move , the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves” [Jawaharlal Nehru]

2.1 Introduction

In the last few decades the issue of empowerment of women in any development dialogue has been getting immense importance. It is well established that empowered women can transform the whole society and pave the way for rapid development. Although women’s right, empowerment and emancipation are comparatively a new concept in the modern world, the seeds of gender equality were rooted during the French Revolution. The issues like gender justice, women’s right etc assumed its importance during World War I and Vietnamese War. In consequence United Nations declared the period 1975-85 as the International Decade of Women and towards this cause three international conferences were organized during the same period.

As far as India is concerned, the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution and finds a place in the Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women but also empowers the States to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Historically the status of Indian women has been influenced by their past. There is evidence to show that women in the Vedic age got most honored positions in the society (Mira Seth, 2004). They had the right to education. They were free to remain unmarried and devote their whole life to the pursuit of knowledge and self realization. The married women performed all the works and sacrifices equally with their husbands. They were educated in various discipline of knowledge such as astrology, geography, veterinary sciences and even in martial arts. There were instances of women taking part in wars and fights. They were highly respected within and outside home. Gradually due to several socio-political changes, especially during the middle age, the glorious status of women declined. The urge for equality on the

part of Indian women started getting momentum during the colonial times. Noted social reformers and national leaders like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Annie Besant, Sorojini Naidu and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar made selfless efforts to create awareness among women about their status and were quite successful in removing various social evils such as *sati pratha*, child marriage, and polygamy. They also encouraged widow remarriage and women education. The reformers were successful in creating a base for development of women and theirs strive for equality. In course of time Indian society got transformed from traditional to a modern one. Consequently women have become more liberal and are now aware of various ways of life. They are quite capable of breaking the traditional barriers imposed by the society and are now challenging the patriarchal system.

Since independence, the Government of India (GOI) has been making various efforts to empower women. In various plan periods, the issues regarding women empowerment has been given priority. From fifth five year plan onwards there has been a remarkable shift from welfare oriented approach of women empowerment to development approach. The National Commission for women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights' of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India have given the opportunity to women to take part in active politics. The year 2001 was declared as the year of women's empowerment for enhancing their status. To achieve the goal, the government introduced different programmes, identified strategies, established different institutions and made various legal provisions. In spite of all these efforts and actions, women in India still lag behind the men. According to 2001 Census, female literacy rate in the country was 54.16 per cent as against 75.85 per cent in case of males. The situation was much worse in the rural and remote areas of the country. In spite of women going for higher education they face exclusion from their male counterparts and are alienated in various positions in governance. The incidence like early marriage, female feticides and infanticide, dowry, bride burning, rape, molestation, kidnapping etc are very frequent. In recent times, the record of crime against women indicates an increasing trend. The position of women in the country in the social, economic and political fields is by no means equal to that of their male counterparts.

Besides low female literacy, there are many other factors that have contributed to gender biasness. Girl child is still given less priority in certain parts of India. Past studies indicate that it is the people's perception in general that the birth of a girl child is less desirable and evokes less happiness than that of a boy child. It is ingrained in the Indian psyche, cutting across religion, caste and region (Mira Seth, 2005). Since her birth she is victimized in all spheres including education, employment, nutrition and social status.

The present chapter is a humble attempt to provide an elaborate picture on the status of women in India using NFHS - III and Census data.

2.2 Indicators of Women Empowerment: Theoretical Issues

The OHCHR – Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Right defined empowerment as the process “of giving people the power, capacities, capabilities and access needed to change their own lives, improve their own communities and influence their own destinies” (IFUW, 2001). Given that the term ‘empowerment’ has acquired a certain cachet in the development community; there is a tendency to use the term loosely, without embedding it in a larger conceptual framework. Thus programmatic reports often describe mothers as empowered merely because they bring their children in for immunization, attend a health education lecture or other training or participate in women's NGOs and other micro credit groups, without examining the circumstances or outcome of these actions (Malhotra, et al 2002). Various studies suggest that there are a number of indicators of women empowerment. These indicators are different at different levels of social aggregation- the household and the community level, as well as regional, national and global level. At the individual or household level, the two most frequently used indicators of women empowerment found in empirical studies are domestic decision making and access to or control over resources. In fact a person's ability to make decisions about life is closely linked with her access to and control over economic and other resources. Other less frequently used indicators of women empowerment at household level studies are: (1) Economic contribution to household (2) Division of domestic labor (3) Freedom from violence (4) Management/Knowledge (5) Public space (6) Marriage/Kin/Social support (7) Couple interaction and (8) Sense of self worth. On the

other hand the aggregate level indicators of women empowerment used in some empirical studies are: (1) Labor market (2) Education (3) Marriage and kinship system (4) Social norms and practices (5) Political and legal awareness etc. The main problem in measuring women's empowerment at aggregate level analysis arises due to lack of consistent and adequate data on a comprehensive set for most of the developing countries. In India NFHS II & NFHS III provide a very large number of alternative indicators of women empowerment. The NFHS III collected information on several dimensions of women empowerment in India from 1, 24,385 women within the age group of 15-49 years. In the present chapter we used the methodology adopted by Gupta and Kishor (2004) to measure empowerment in terms of indicators of evidence, source, and setting for empowerment.

2.2.1 Indicators of Evidence of Empowerment

The indicators such as participation in decision making and freedom of movement measure women's degree of control over their environment. The indicator like acceptance of unequal gender role measures women's attitude towards the social biasness regarding gender. For instance, it tries to find out women's attitude towards preference for son, education of male and female children, wife beating etc. If women accept wife beating by husband as justified or think that male child should be given more nutrition and other facilities than that of the female child, then such type of attitudes are itself indicators of women's acceptance of lower status relative to men.

2.2.2 Indicators of Source of Empowerment

Exposure to mass media, access to education and gainful employment are the major indicators of source of empowerment. Education and employment are in fact considered as the enabling factor to boost the process of empowerment (Kishor 2000a). Education paves the way of emancipation by endowing women with ability to control their life, accomplished their dreams and enhances their status. Education empowers women to achieve many social, psychological, economic and political dreams which are denied to them customarily. Education actually accords women certain advantage in areas where they have traditionally lacked access or differential rights. But welfare schemes and policy measures are just not enough to promote

education among women. Structural and attitudinal change across section is desired in order to enhance educational and consequently socioeconomic status of women in India (Sharma, 2008). Employment opportunity is another important source of empowerment. If women become financially independent they can raise their voices not only in household decision making but also in public sphere. Financial autonomy enhances their self esteem, confidence and realization. Exposure to media is also a powerful source of empowerment as it helps the women to have access to information. Women, through media, can easily know the things around the world.

2.2.3 Indicators of the Setting for Empowerment

These types of indicators address the issues relating to the circumstances of women's lives and reflect the opportunities available to them. Important among them are age at first marriage, age and educational difference between husband and wife, women's experience of violence etc. An early age of marriage has a negative impact on women empowerment as it restricts the opportunity of formal education. Similarly higher difference between husband and wife in terms of their age and education puts women in a relatively disadvantageous position regarding household decision making. As we all know violence against women is a violation of human rights. Under conditions of continuous threat of such violence women's ability to control or even access to resources reduces.

2.3 Status of Women's Empowerment in India: Empirical Results

The development plans, policies, programs, laws etc in India within its democratic framework have been aiming at enhancing the status of women in different arenas of life. It is true that conditions of women in the country have improved since independence in terms of literacy, life expectancy and maternal mortality. Still they continue to occupy a subordinate position vis-à-vis men in all spheres of life such as economic, social and political. Even the gains in terms of basic human development seem to have accrued only to women from privileged groups and are more pronounced in South India. Landless women laborers, *dalits* and tribal women have seen only marginal improvement in their day to day conditions. The World Economic Forum, in its first gender gap study placed India at 53rd position among 58 nations, which shows

a significant gap in male and female achievements. In the same study, the rank of India in terms of political empowerment was 24th at both primary and grassroots level. The National Population Policy 2000 specifically identified the low status of women in India as an important barrier to the achievement of goals towards maternal and child welfare (Ministry of Health and Family welfare, 2000). NFHS-III collected information on large number of indicators of women empowerment such as relative earnings of wives over their husbands', control over the use of these earnings, participation in household decision making, freedom of movement, gender role attitude, freedom from domestic violence, etc. Data on some of these indicators of women empowerment are examined and findings are presented in the following paragraphs.

2.3.1 Evidence of Empowerment

2.3.1.1 Decision Making Power of Married Women

Decision making in household by women is one of the important indicators of women empowerment by evidence. It is found that nationally only 37 per cent of currently married women participate (make the decision alone or jointly with their husband) in making decisions on their health care, large household purchases, purchases for daily household needs and on visiting their family members and relatives. Forty three per cent participate in some but not all decisions and 21 per cent do not participate in any of the decision. Data on household decision making and segregated information according to the background characteristics of women are presented in Tables 1 & 2. Women's participation rate on household decision making not only varies from rural to urban areas but also gets affected by their background characteristics like age, educational status, husband's education, employment status etc. Urban married women are observed to be more empowered than that of the rural women. Empowerment of women increases with the increase in their age. Women who are more educated and employed are relatively more empowered.

Table - 2.1
Married Women's Participation in Decision making, 2005-06

(Figures in per cent)

Decision on/Decision by	Mainly Wife	Mainly Husband	Husband and Wife jointly	Some one Else	Other	Missing
Urban						
Own Health Care	29.7	39.1	26.5	3.5	1.1	0.1
Major household purchases	10.4	51.5	26.8	8.7	2.5	0.1
Purchases of daily household needs	39.9	28.9	19.8	8.8	2.5	0.1
Visits to her family &Relatives	12.2	57.3	22.0	6.6	1.8	0.1
Rural						
Own Health Care	26.0	33.4	31.7	7.6	1.3	0.1
Major household purchases	7.6	41.2	34.6	13.5	2.9	0.1
Purchases of daily household needs	29.1	27.1	26.9	13.9	2.9	0.1
Visits to her family &Relatives	10.0	46.4	28.9	12.1	2.9	0.1
Total						
Own Health Care	27.1	35.1	30.1	6.3	1.3	0.1
Major household purchases	8.5	44.4	32.2	12.0	2.8	0.1
Purchases of daily household needs	32.4	27.7	24.7	12.3	2.8	0.1
Visits to her family &Relatives	10.7	49.8	26.8	10.4	2.2	0.1

Source- NFHS-3

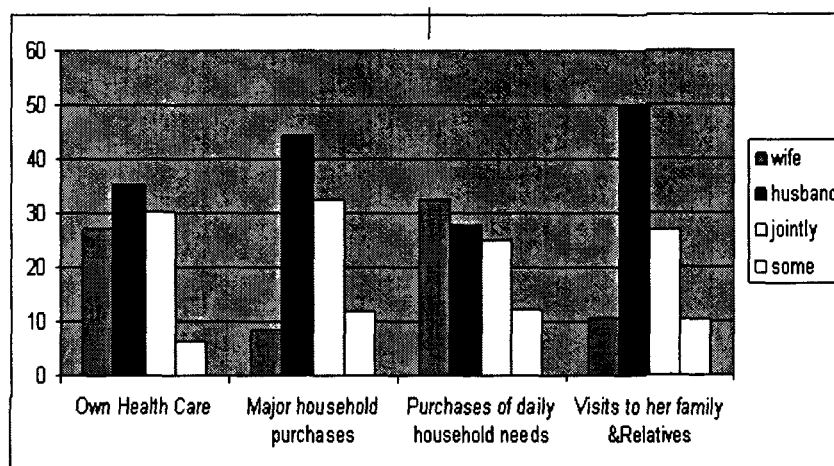


Fig 2 1 Women's Household Decision making in India 2005-06

From Table 2.1 it is found that as high as in 32.4 per cent cases the decision regarding the purchase of daily household needs is taken mainly by respondents whereas the decisions like visit to her relatives are in most cases taken alone by

husbands (26.8%) or jointly (49.8%). Decision like major household purchases is taken jointly in most of the cases (44.4%). A very less number of women alone take this type of decision. About twenty seven per cent of total respondents take their own health care decision alone.

Table – 2.2
Factors Affecting Women's Participation in Decision making, 2005-06

(Figures in Per cent)

Background characteristics		Own health care	Making major household Purchases	Making purchases for daily household needs	Visits to her family or relative	per cent who participate in all four decisions	per cent who participate in none	Number of women
Age	15-19	40.4	25.1	29.1	33.5	15.1	46.1	6726
	20-24	52.5	39.2	44.6	47.5	25.2	31.1	16782
	25-29	62.2	50.7	58.7	58.9	34.3	20.4	18540
	30-39	67.7	60.7	6.8	67.1	42.8	14.1	30952
	40-49	69.3	63.6	71.2	71.6	46.3	12.8	20089
Residence	Urban	68.8	61.9	68.8	69.5	45.0	13.9	28604
	Rural	59.3	48.9	56.2	56.5	33.0	23.4	64485
Education	No education	59.4	51.5	59.5	57.5	34.9	22.7	43931
	Less than 5 yrs	61.2	51.4	60.1	60.4	35.2	20.3	7776
	5-7 yrs	61.0	50.6	58.4	59.8	35.7	21.7	14018
	8-9 yrs	63.6	52.2	58.3	60.7	36.2	19.7	10735
	10-11 yrs	67.2	56.3	61.6	65.9	40.5	16.8	7704
	12 or more yrs	73.1	62.6	66.3	71.6	46.1	12.1	8921
Husband's education	No education	61.6	53.0	61.5	59.1	36.6	21.3	24918
	Less than 5 yrs	61.1	52.3	60.5	60.9	35.7	20.3	8366
	5-7 yrs	62.0	52.2	60.3	59.7	36.5	20.8	14793
	8-9 yrs	59.5	50.1	56.8	58.3	33.7	21.8	14615
	10-11 yrs	62.5	51.3	58.0	60.2	36.1	21.3	13144
12 or more yrs	66.2	57.3	60.2	65.2	40.6	17.3	17100	
Employment	Employed	63.0	55.3	63.7	69.2	38.8	19.0	39835
	Employed for cash	67.7	61.0	69.5	68.0	44.3	15.0	25601
	Employed not for cash	54.6	45.1	53.2	53.7	29.0	26.1	14234
	Not employed	61.7	51.1	57.4	58.7	35.1	21.6	53225
Household structure	Nuclear	67.7	62.2	70.4	68.7	44.3	13.6	47851
	Non nuclear	56.4	43.0	49.2	68.7	28.7	27.7	45238

Source: NFHS – 3

Table 2.2 presents women's decision making power with their background characteristics like age, educational status, employment etc. Women's ability to participate in all the four decisions increases with age, education, employment, place of residence besides others. About forty six per cent of total women in the age group 40-49 participate in all four decisions compared to 15.1% belonging to the age group 15-19. Similarly with 12 or more years of education, 46.1% of total women participate in all four decisions as compared to 34.9% with no education. With this educational background 12.1% participate in none of the decisions. With higher spousal educational status women's participation in decision making increases. About 21 per cent of women with no spousal education do not take part in any decision making at all as compared to 17.3% of women with spousal education of 12 years or more. Employment also provides an advantage to women regarding their ability to decision making power. Employed women are more likely to participate in all decision makings constitutes 38.8% as against 35.1 per cent in case of unemployed. Similarly place of residence, household structure etc are the important parameters which influence women's decision making capacity. In urban setting and in nuclear type of family, women have more autonomy in household decision making. The data presented in Table 2.2 reveals that in nuclear family 44.3% women participate in all the four decision making while in non nuclear family only 28.7% take all the decisions.

2.3.1.2 Freedom of Movement of Married Women

Free mobility of women is another indicator of women empowerment. The required data on women's access to free mobility and segregated information according to their background characteristics are presented in Tables 2.3 & 2.4. Table 2.3 shows that overall only about half of women are allowed to go to the market (51.4 per cent) or to the health facility (47.7 per cent) alone. Only 38 per cent are allowed to travel alone to places outside the village or community. While not all women are allowed to go to these places alone, only a minority are not allowed to go at all. Thirteen per cent are not allowed to go to the market at all, 9 per cent are not allowed to go to the places outside the village and community whereas 5 per cent are not

allowed to go to the health facility. Compared to urban women, rural women have less mobility.

Table – 2.3
Freedom of Movement of Married Women in India, 2005-06

(Figures in per cent)

Places	Alone	With somebody else	Not at all	Total
Urban				
To the market	66.2	26.8	7.0	100.00
To health facilities	60.3	36.2	3.5	100.00
To outside the village/community	45.5	48.0	6.6	100.00
Rural				
To the market	44.3	40.4	15.3	100.00
To health facilities	41.5	53.0	5.5	100.00
To outside the village/community	34.0	56.6	9.4	100.00
Total				
To the market	51.4	35.9	12.6	100.00
To health facilities	47.7	47.5	4.8	100.00
To outside the village/community	37.7	53.7	8.5	100.00

Source- NFHS- 3

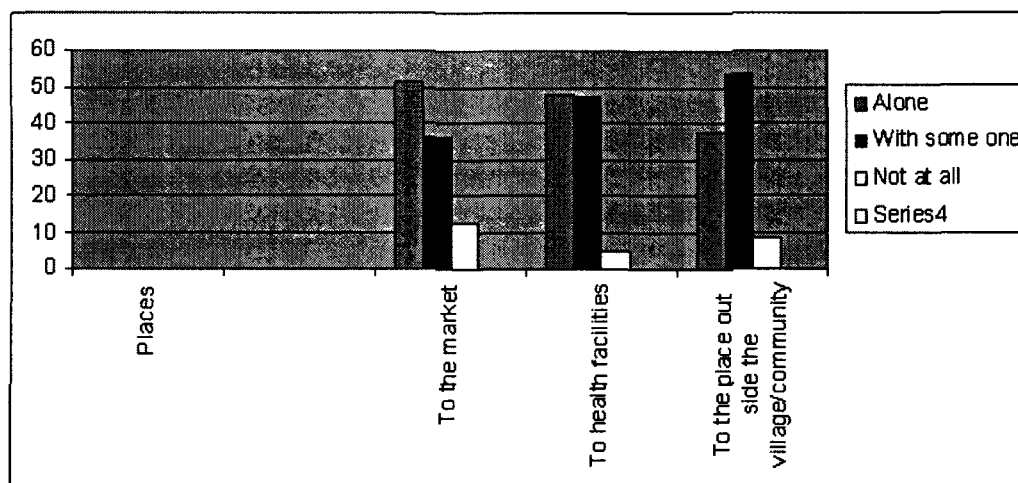


Fig2.2: Freedom of Movement of Married Women in India, 2005-06

Women's mobility is also affected by their background characteristics like age, education, marital status, type of family etc. Table 2.4 presents data on women's freedom of movement by background characteristics. It is found that freedom of

movement increases with age; however, even among women in the age group of 40-49 years, only 51 per cent are allowed to go alone to all the three places as mentioned.

Freedom of movement does not vary linearly with education, although women with 12 or more complete years of education are much more likely to have free mobility. The greatest differential by education is seen for going to the market alone. Seventy per cent of the women of the highest education group are allowed to go alone to the market as against 49 per cent of women with no education.

Employment is associated with greater freedom of movement. Only one in five never married women go to all of the three places compared with about one in three currently married women and two in three formerly married women. Nuclear residence and urban setting are also associated with greater freedom of movement. Women of urban areas (42.8 per cent) are freer than that of the rural women (28.9 per cent). Similarly as high as 37 per cent of women of nucleus families are freer regarding their movement as compared to 29.5 per cent in case of the non-nucleus families.

Table – 2.4
Factors Affecting Freedom of Movement of Married Women, 2005-06

Background Characteristics		Percentage allowed to go alone to				Percent not allowed to go any of the three places
		Market	Health Facility	Places outside the village /community	All the three places	
Age	15-19	29.7	23.1	16.8	12.8	5.7
	20-24	40.7	36.3	27.8	23.1	4.6
	25-29	52.4	49.8	38.0	33.4	3.0
	30-39	62.9	60.3	48.1	43.6	2.5
	40-49	68.2	65.2	55.6	51.2	2.4
Residence	Urban	66.2	60.2	45.5	42.8	2.5
	Rural	44.3	41.5	34.0	28.9	4.1
Education	No education	49.0	45.9	36.3	32.0	3.5
	<5 yrs	47.2	45.9	37.3	32.1	4.1
	5-7 yrs	46.4	43.2	33.8	30.0	4.4
	8-9 yrs	47.9	43.2	33.7	28.9	3.7
	10-11 yrs	55.0	49.2	38.5	34.1	3.4
	12 / more yrs	70.2	64.3	51.9	48.1	2.6
Employment	Employed	57.1	53.0	44.4	39.8	2.9
	Employed for cash	63.2	58.9	50.0	45.4	2.5
	Employed not for cash	44.7	41.0	33.0	28.3	3.5
	Not employed	47.2	43.7	32.8	28.7	4.1
Marital Status	Never married	40.1	32.3	25.0	20.3	4.7
	Currently married	52.8	50.2	39.3	35.0	3.4
	Widow/Divorced	76.1	73.5	68.6	65.6	2.5
Household Structure	Nuclear	56.6	52.4	41.5	37.0	3.3
	Non nuclear	45.9	42.6	33.6	29.5	3.9

Source: NFHS – 3

2.3.1.3 Women's Acceptance of Unequal Gender Role

Women's protest against unequal gender role in terms of their attitude towards preferences for son, wife beating etc. is another indicator of women empowerment. The data presented in Table 2.5 reveal that 54 per cent of women in India believe wife beating to be justified for any of the specific reasons. Similarly 35 per cent women believe it to be justified if they neglect their house or children. However, agreement with wife beating does not vary much by women's age and household structure, but decline sharply with education. It is to be noted that even among the most educated women, at least one in three agrees with one or more justifications for wife beating. In rural areas women are generally more agreeable to wife beating than in urban areas.

Agreement is lower among never married women as compared to ever married women.

Table - 2.5
Women's Attitude towards Wife Beating in India, 2005-06

Background Characteristics		Percentage who agree that a husband is justified in beating wife if							
		She goes out without telling him	She neglects the house or children	She argues with him	She refuse to have sex with him	She doesn't cook properly	He suspects she is unfaithful	She shows disrespect for in-laws	Per cent who agreed for one specific reasons
Age (yrs.)	15-19	25.7	32.7	28.6	11.3	19.4	23.1	39.1	52.9
	20-24	26.7	33.6	28.4	12.5	18.2	22.6	39.5	52.5
	25-29	28.9	34.0	30.4	14.1	19.5	25.0	40.0	54.0
	30-39	31.1	36.0	31.5	15.5	21.6	26.4	41.3	55.5
	40-49	39.9	36.8	32.7	16.5	22.5	28.0	42.7	56.7
Residence	Urban	20.6	28.5	21.2	8.9	13.4	16.3	32.2	44.2
	Rural	33.1	37.7	34.8	16.6	23.8	29.4	44.6	59.4
Education	No Education	36.4	38.7	38.1	19.3	26.4	33.2	47.3	62.3
	<5 yrs	34.7	41.4	35.6	17.4	24.7	28.0	46.0	61.8
	5-7 yrs	30.0	36.5	30.7	13.9	20.5	25.0	42.1	56.3
	8-9 yrs	25.8	34.5	26.7	10.6	17.4	19.9	37.7	51.8
	10-11 yrs	19.7	29.9	21.3	8.1	13.1	17.1	33.4	45.8
	12 /more yrs	10.7	18.8	11.9	3.8	6.8	8.9	21.3	31.1
Employment	Employed	33.8	39.4	34.9	17.3	24.9	29.3	45.1	59.5
	Employed for cash	33.7	40.1	33.8	17.1	24.0	28.0	44.2	58.6
	Employed not for cash	34.2	38.0	37.1	17.6	26.8	32.0	47.0	61.4
	Not employed	25.4	31.2	26.9	11.7	17.0	21.9	37.2	50.6
Marital status	Never married	22.3	30.7	24.5	9.0	16.6	19.2	35.7	48.4
	Currently married	30.5	35.5	31.7	15.2	21.1	26.5	41.7	55.9
	Widow/Divorced	34.2	39.1	34.3	18.6	24.3	28.4	43.7	57.6
Household structure	Nuclear	29.9	36.3	30.8	14.4	20.7	25.2	41.3	53.3
	Non nuclear	28.0	33.0	29.8	13.7	20.0	25.0	39.8	53.5
Total		29.0	34.7	30.3	14.1	20.4	25.1	40.6	54.4

Source- NFHS -3

2.3.2 Sources of Empowerment

2.3.2.1 Women's Access to Education

Women's access to education which is one of the important sources of empowerment can be measured by gender gap in literacy rates and enrolment in different stages of school education. The literacy gap between men and women was as high as 21.7 per cent in 2001 (Table 2.6). Though the gap was fluctuating from 18.3

per cent in 1951 to 23.9 per cent in 1971, it has been showing a marginal declining trend since 1981.

Table – 2.6
Trend of Literacy Rates in India, 1951 to 2001

(Figures in per cent)

Census Year	Persons	Males	Females	Male-Female gap in literacy rate
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.98
1981	43.57	56.38	26.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	65.58	75.85	54.16	21.70

Source: Census of India 2001

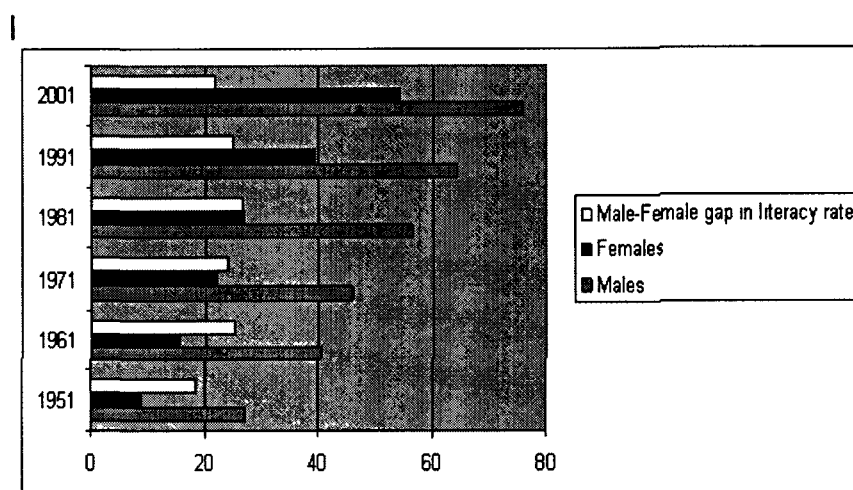


Fig 2.3 Gender Gap in Literacy

Table 2.7 shows enrolment by stages from 1951 to 2001-02. It is clear that participation of girls at all stages of education has been steadily increasing over time. However, the overall performance of participation has not been satisfactory as it had been below 50 per cent at all stages of education

Table - 2.7
Trend of Enrolment by Stages in India, 1951 to 2001-02

(Figures in Million)

Year	Primary (I-V)			Middle/Upper Primary (VI-VIII)			High/Hr. Sec./Inter/Pre-Degree (IX-XII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1950-51	13.8	5.4	19.2	2.6	0.5	3.1	1.3	0.2	1.5
1955-56	17.1	7.5	24.6	3.8	1.0	4.8	2.2	0.4	2.6
1960-61	23.6	11.4	35.0	5.1	1.6	6.7	2.7	0.7	3.4
1965-66	32.2	18.3	50.5	7.7	2.8	10.5	4.4	1.3	5.7
1970-71	35.7	21.3	57.0	9.4	3.9	13.3	5.7	1.9	7.6
1975-76	40.6	25.0	65.6	11.0	5.0	16.0	6.5	2.4	8.9
1980-81	45.3	28.5	73.8	13.9	6.8	20.7	7.6	3.4	11.0
1985-86	52.2	35.2	87.4	17.7	9.6	27.1	11.5	5.0	16.5
1990-91	57.0	40.4	97.4	21.5	12.5	34.0	12.8	6.3	19.1
1991-92	58.6	42.3	100.9	22.0	13.6	35.6	13.5	6.9	20.4
1992-93	57.9	41.7	99.6	21.2	12.9	34.1	13.2	6.9	20.5
1993-94	55.1	41.9	97.0	20.6	13.5	34.1	13.2	7.5	20.7
1994-95	60.0	45.1	105.1	22.1	14.3	36.4	14.2	7.9	22.1
1995-96	60.9	46.2	107.1	22.7	14.8	37.5	14.6	8.3	22.9
1996-97	61.4	46.8	108.2	22.9	15.2	38.1	15.3	8.7	24.0
1997-98	62.3	48.0	110.3	23.6	15.9	39.5	16.1	9.3	25.4
1998-99	62.7	48.2	110.9	24.0	16.3	40.3	17.3	10.5	27.8
1999-00	64.1	49.5	113.6	25.1	17.0	42.1	17.2	11.0	28.2
2000-01	64.0	49.8	113.8	25.3	17.5	42.8	16.9	10.7	27.6
2001-02	63.6	50.3	113.9	26.1	18.7	44.8	18.4	12.1	30.5

Source: Selected Educational Statistics, 2002-03, Ministry of Human Resource and Development, Department of Elementary Education, Govt. of India, (as quoted in Kurukhetra – a Journal on Rural Development)

2.3.2.2 Women's Access to Employment

Table 2.8 shows the employment and cash earnings of currently married men and women. NFHS – 3 data as presented in the table reveal that only 43 per cent of women in the age group of 15-49 years are employed as against 99 per cent of men in the same age group. It also reveals that gender inequality exist in the arena of employment. As compared to 51% women employed for cash only, the corresponding figure for that of the males is as high as 72.5%. Similarly a very few males are

employed for kind only (3.4%) as compared to females engaged for kind (11.6%). Twenty four per cent women are not paid at all for their work whereas this proportion is as low as 5% for men. For women earning cash is not likely to be a sufficient condition for financial empowerment.

Table – 2.8

Employment and Cash Earnings of Currently Married Men and Women, 2005-06

Age	Percentage Employed	Percentage distribution of employed respondents by type			
		Cash only	Cash and in kind	In kind only	Not paid
Women					
15-19	31.4	39.1	15.9	13.6	31.4
20-24	32.5	45.6	12.4	13.3	28.6
25-29	41.0	34.1	12.5	11.5	21.9
30-34	47.9	52.1	14.0	12.0	21.9
35-39	49.8	53.0	13.6	10.2	21.1
40-44	49.4	51.3	12.6	11.1	25.0
45-49	45.3	49.2	12.7	11.5	26.5
Total	42.8	51.0	13.2	11.6	24.1
Men					
15-19	87.6	60.7	23.8	6.8	8.7
20-24	97.6	69.7	20.5	4.2	5.5
25-29	99.0	73.1	19.4	3.1	4.4
30-34	99.3	75.0	17.8	2.9	4.3
35-39	99.3	73.8	18.5	3.4	4.3
40-44	98.9	71.4	19.1	3.9	5.6
45-49	98.6	70.5	19.9	3.4	6.2
Total	98.6	72.5	19.0	3.4	5.0

Source: NFHS-3

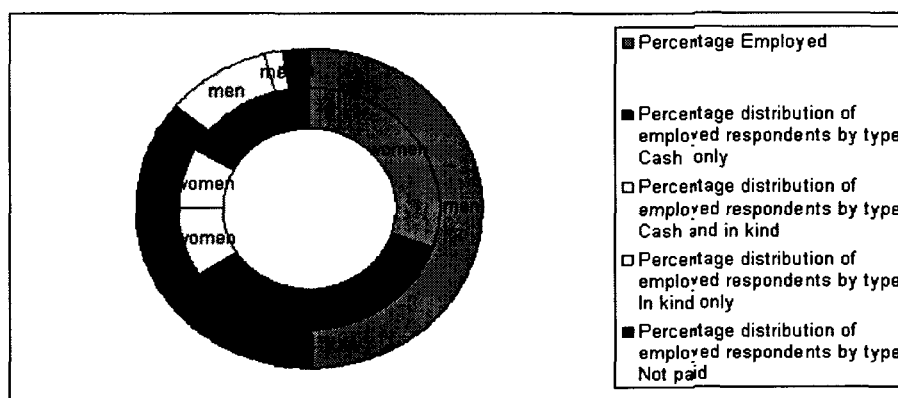


Fig: 2.4 Employment and Cash earnings of Currently Married Men and Women in India 2005-06.

Employment and cash earnings are more likely to empower women if women make decisions about their own earnings alone or jointly with their husband rather

than their husband alone and if these earnings are perceived by both wives and husbands to be significant relative to those of the husbands. Table 2.9 in this connection shows the extent of women's control over earnings on the basis of background characteristics like age, education, place of residence, household structure etc. It is seen that women's control over cash earnings increases with age. In the age group 15 - 19 years only 17.7 per cent women alone take decision about the use of their cash earnings as compared to 28.3 per cent in the age group 40-49 years. Similarly husband mainly takes such decision in case of 20 per cent women in the age group 15-19 years in comparison to 12.7 per cent in the age group 40-49 years. Influence of other person in making such decision decreases with the increase in age of respondents. It varies from 18.6 per cent in the age group 15-19 years to as low as 0.4 per cent in 40-49 age groups.

Place of residence also affects women's control over their cash earnings. Generally women in urban areas have more control over their earnings than that in rural areas. About thirty three per cent take decision alone about the use of their own earnings in urban areas as compared to 21 per cent in rural areas

Education is one of the important factors that affects greatly in women's control over earnings. About 23 per cent women with no education have more control over their earnings whereas it is 28.6 per cent in case of women completed 12 or more years of education. Other persons' influence on the decision about the use of earnings reduces significantly with education. It is as high as 8.3 percent in the case of respondent with no education as compared to 4.9 per cent respondent with secondary level education.

Household structure has an important role to play in affecting women's financial empowerment. In non nuclear family structure, influence of others is more in making such decision. In case of 6.4 per cent women in non nuclear family, the decision about the use of their own cash earnings are taken by others as compared to 0.6 per cent women in nuclear family.

Table - 2.9
Control over Women's Cash Earning in India, 2005-06

Background Characteristics		Person who decide how women's cash earnings are used				
		Mainly Wife	Wife and Husband	Mainly Husband	Others	Missing/ Don't know
Age	15-19	17.1	42.1	20	18.6	1.6
	20-24	19.1	52.7	18.6	8.1	1.5
	25-29	22.5	58.5	16.2	2.7	1.3
	30-39	25.5	58.5	13.5	1.0	1.4
	40-49	28.3	57.2	12.7	0.4	1.4
Residence	Urban	33.3	55.2	8.6	1.6	1.8
	Rural	21.0	57.0	17.3	3.4	1.3
Education	No education	22.7	54.9	18.3	2.6	1.5
	<5yrs	24.0	58.0	13.5	3.3	1.2
	5-7yrs	26.5	55.4	12.5	4.3	1.4
	8-9yrs	27.4	58.7	7.9	4.6	1.4
	10-11yrs	28.2	59.4	9.0	2.6	0.8
	12/more yrs	28.6	63.7	4.9	1.3	1.6
Household Structure	Nuclear	24.4	59.0	14.5	0.6	1.4
	Non nuclear	24.4	52.6	15.1	6.4	1.4

Source: NFHS-3

2.3.2.3 Women's Exposure to Media

Table 2.10, which presents data on women's exposure to media reveals and noteworthy to highlight that percentage of women not exposed to media is more than double that of men. The table reveals that 71 per cent of women are exposed to media as compared to 88 per cent in case of men. Twenty nine per cent of women do not have access to media regularly. Since it is an important source of empowerment, greater proportion of women without having access to media reflects the relatively disadvantageous position of women in relation to men with regards to empowerment.

Table – 2.10
Women’s Access to Media, 2005-06

Percentage of men and women of the age group of 15 - 49 years regularly exposed to Print Media Television , Radio or Cinema		
Men	Women	Gender Disparity
88	71	19
Percentage of men and women of the age group of 15 - 49 years not regularly exposed to Print Media Television , Radio or Cinema		
Men	Women	Gender Disparity
12	29	(-)17
Source-NFHS-3		

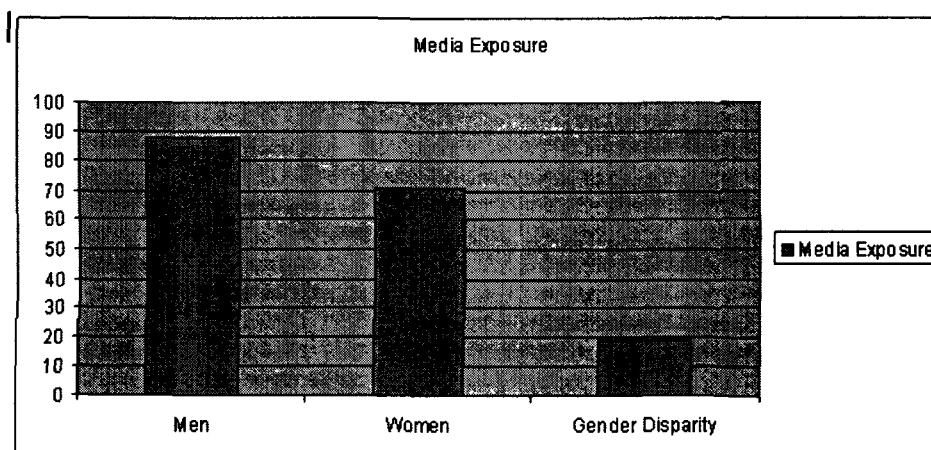


Fig2.5: Gender Disparity in Media Exposure in India, 2005-06

2.3.3 Setting for Empowerment

2.3.3.1 Domestic Violence

Table 2.11 shows percentage of women who have experienced different forms and combinations of physical and sexual violence according to selected background characteristics. It is observed that extent of violence is not lessened by age. In the age group of 15-19 years, 22.5 per cent women experienced physical or sexual violence in India as compared to 39 per cent in the age group 40-49 years. Both types of violence are higher for ever married women than for never married women. Almost 40 per cent ever married women experienced physical or sexual violence as against 16.9 per cent never married women. Extent of domestic violence is higher in rural areas as

compared to urban areas. About thirty eight per cent women in rural area faced either physical or sexual violence as compared to about 29 percent women in urban areas.

Table – 2.11
Women’s Experience of Different Forms of Violence

(Figures in per cent)

Background		Physical violence only	Sexual violence only	Physical and sexual violence	Physical or sexual violence
Age (Years)	15-19	18.0	1.8	2.7	22.5
	20-24	24.7	2.4	6.2	33.2
	25-29	29.7	1.9	8.4	39.9
	30-39	30.8	1.7	8.5	45.0
	40-49	30.5	1.3	7.2	39.0
Residence	Urban	23.5	1.1	4.8	29.4
	Rural	28.5	2.1	7.6	38.3
Marital Status	Ever married	29.7	2.1	8.3	40.1
	Never married	15.7	0.8	0.3	16.9
India		26.9	1.8	6.7	35.4
Source: NFHS – 3					

2.3.4 Women’s Political Participation: Women’s political participation is one of the important issues in the context of empowerment. In conventional analysis it means activities related to electoral politics like voting, campaigning, holding party office and contesting election. But in broader sense it encompasses all voluntary actions intended to influence the making of public policies, the administration of public affairs and the choice of political leaders at all levels of government. Political interventions by women of India today range from movement for peace and good governance to protest against dowry, rape, domestic violence, food adulteration, price rise etc. [Desai et al, 2007]. However in this section we discuss participation of women in formal politics by analyzing the indicators like women voters and women elected members in the first twelve general elections in India.

2.3.4.1 Women and Voting: The following Table 2.12 shows the voting percentage of men and women in the first twelve elections of independent India. In the very first

election the percentage of women voter was significantly low (37%). Many women were left out as their names were not properly registered. The gender gap in voting though has been narrowing gradually significant gap between male and female voters still exists.

Table – 2.12
Percentage of Voters in India, 1952-1998

Year	Voting percentage		
	Total	Male	Female
1952	60.5	53.0	37.1
1957	63.7	56.0	39.6
1962	55.0	62.1	46.6
1967	61.0	66.7	55.5
1971	55.1	69.7	49.15
1977	60.0	65.62	54.91
1980	75.9	57.69	51.29
1984	62.4	63.61	68.17
1989	62.0	70.09	43.09
1991	53.05	52.56	47.43
1996	57.94	62.47	53.41
1998	62.04	66.06	58.02

Source: Desai & Thakkar (2007)

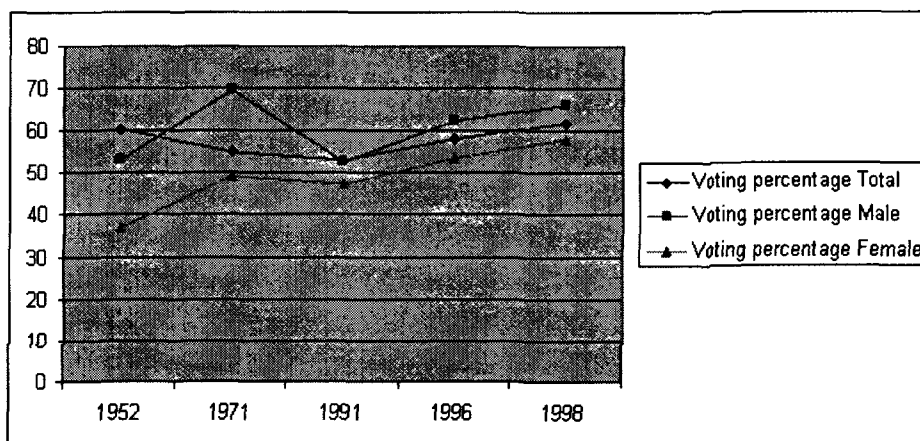


Fig 2.6: Percentage of voter in India, 1952-1998

2.3.4.2: Elected Women Members: Many factors are responsible and decisive in the election of women candidates such as literacy, financial position, liberal family background, support of other members of the family, strong personality etc. Since

most of the women lack access to these, few women get tickets and even fewer get elected from this handful of women candidates. Table 2.13 shows the elected women Members in *Lok Sabha*. From the table it is clear that percentage of women members to the total members has been consistently less than ten per cent in each *Lok Sabha* starting from 1st to 12th one. This shows poor participation of women in political field.

Table – 2.13

Percentage of Women Parliament Members in India, 1952-1998

Lok Sabha	Year	Total Seats	No of Women contested	No of Women elected	Percentage of Women Parliament Members
First	1952	499	-	22	4.4
Second	1957	500	45	27	5.7
Third	1962	503	70	34	6.7
Fourth	1967	523	67	31	5.9
Fifth	1971	521	86	22	4.2
Sixth	1977	544	70	19	3.4
Seventh	1980	544	142	28	5.1
Eighth	1984	544	164	44	8.1
Ninth	1989	517	198	27	5.2
Tenth	1991	544	325	39	7.18
Eleventh	1996	544	599	40*	7.18
Twelfth	1998	544	271	44*	8.8

*One member nominated by the President of India

Source: Desai & Thakkar (2007)

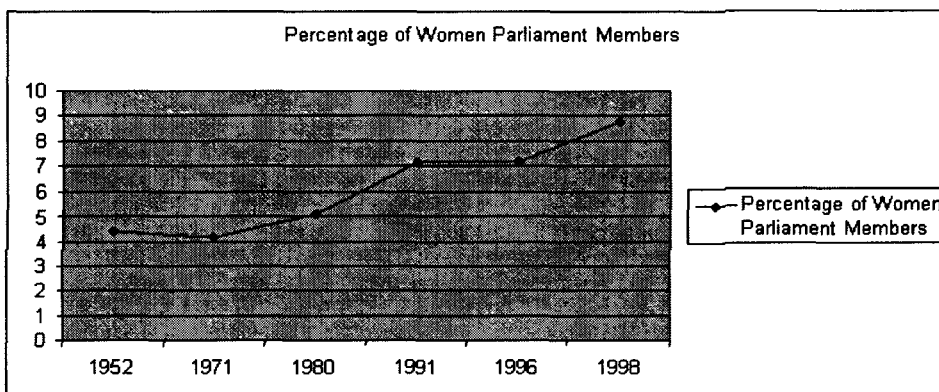


Fig2.7: Percentage of Women Parliament Member in India, 1952-1998

Thus it can be concluded with information provided by NFHS - III and others that women of India are disempowered relative to men in respect of decision making power, freedom of movement, education, employment, exposure to media, political participation etc and face domestic violence to a considerable degree and occupy the subordinate status both at home and in the society even in the 21st century.

2.4 Constraints to the Process of Empowerment in India

There are several constraints that check the process of women empowerment in India. Social norms and family structures in developing countries like India, manifests and perpetuate the subordinate status of women. One of such norms is the continuing preference for a son over the birth of a girl child, which is present in almost all societies and communities. The hold of this preference has strengthened rather than weakened and its most glaring evidence is in the falling sex ratio (Seth, 2005). The society is more biased in favor of male child in respect of education, nutrition and other opportunities. The root cause of this type of attitude lies in the belief that male child inherits the clan in India with an exception in Meghalaya. Women often internalize the traditional concept of their role as natural, thus inflicting an injustice upon them.

Poverty is the reality of life for the vast majority of women in India. It is another factor that poses challenge in realizing women's empowerment. In a poor family, girls are the main victims; they are malnourished and are denied the opportunity of better education and other facilities. But if they are financially independent or they have greater control over the resources then they exhibit greater autonomy both in the household and in public sphere and are no longer victims of poverty.

Lack of awareness about legal and constitutional provisions and failure in realizing it, is another factor that hinders the process of empowerment. Most of the women are not aware of their legal rights. Even women who are aware lack the courage to take the legal step. The legislation which affects women most is their situation in marriage and inheritance. As far as the rights of inheritance are concerned, women generally do not try to inherit land left by their parents if brothers are alive (Seth, 2005). The traditional belief that land should not go outside the patriarchal

family operates. The provision of Act like (1) *Child Marriage Resistance Act, 1930*, (2) *The Suppression of Immoral Trafficking of Women Act, 1987* and (3) *The Indecent Exposure of Women Act*, have not led to the suppression of practice indicated in them. Of these three, the first one is by and large successful in restraining child marriage. The legislation almost failed in case of immoral trafficking and indecent exposure to women. There are numerous incidence of indecent exposure of women in all forms of media with hardly any prosecution. Although the legal rights are in place to create an enabling atmosphere these have not been very successful in realizing women's empowerment.

2.5 Summery and Findings

Various indicators of women empowerment are analysed using the data collected by NFHS-3 and Census of India 2001, while discussing women's present status in India. The main emphasis is given to the indicators like women's household decision making power, financial autonomy, freedom of movement, women's acceptance of unequal gender roles, exposure to media, access to education, women's experience of domestic violence etc. Women's political participation is also analysed by using indicators like percentage of women voters and women MPs. After analyzing the data it is found that household decision making power and freedom of movement of women vary considerably with age, education and employment. Freedom of movement of widow or divorcee is more than ever married or never married women. Similarly it is found that in the society the acceptance of unequal gender norms by women themselves are still prevailing. More than half of the women believe that wife beating is justified for any of the specific reasons like not cooking properly, not taking proper care of household and children, refuse to have sex with husband, showing disrespect to in-laws etc. However, this attitude is not varying much with age or household structure but decline sharply with education and places of residence. While studying women's access to education and employment it is found that gender gap exist in both the situations. A large gender gap in literacy exists and participation of girls at all stages of education is below 50%. Similarly less than 50% of women are employed and a significant portion of them are not paid for their work. However, having access to employment does not mean that women have full control over their

earnings. Fewer women have final say on how to spend their earnings. Control over cash earnings increases with age and with place of residence in urban areas and education, but not vary significantly with household structure. Women's exposure to media is also less relative to men. Women's experience of domestic violence shows that violence is not lessened by age. Rural women are more prone to domestic violence than urban women. Regarding women's political participation it is found that large gender gap exists in voting and less than ten per cent of total member in Lok Sabha are Women. This is because most of the women lack desired level of financial autonomy, literacy, strong personality, own decision making capacity, family support etc. Thus we see that these mutually interdependent factors reinforce each other and put women in a disadvantageous position relative to men. Various constraints in achieving the desired level of empowerment are also identified. Important among them are poverty, social norms and family structure, lack of awareness about legal and constitutional provision etc.

Generally speaking the women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men. In spite of so many efforts undertaken by government and NGOs the picture at present is not satisfactory. Mere access to education and employment can only help in the process of empowerment. These are the tools or the enabling factors through which the process gets speeded up. However, achievement towards this goal depends more on attitude. Unless the attitude towards the acceptance of unequal gender role by the society and even the women themselves changed women can not grab the opportunity provided to them through constitutional provision, law etc. Till then we can not say that women are empowered in India in its real sense.

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Chapter – III

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN ASSAM

3.1 Introduction: Assam is one of the eight states of North East India. It came under British rule in 1826 by the Yandabo Treaty that ended the Anglo Burmese war. A time was there when entire North Eastern Region (NER) was known by a single name 'Assam'. It is the largest state in NER in terms of population though not in terms of area. The State is rich in its natural resources, but is far behind the country in terms of development. Huge amount of mineral and water resources are either under utilized or unutilized in Assam. Proper utilization of these resources may bring the required pace of development in the state. The socioeconomic set up of the state is also not conducive for development. The state has been experiencing insurgency for the last three decades or so due to various ethnic strife and other demands of the local people which has been affecting the economy of the state severely. It is a multiethnic state with a heterogeneous cultural background and is different from mainstream homogeneous culture. Due to the prevalence of tribal and indigenous culture it is generally perceived that women of Assam including North East are relatively much liberal than rest of the country. The general presumption is that women of Assam are the equal partners with their husbands in different spheres of lives. This type of belief or ideas are rooted because unlike North, West or Eastern part of India, Assam and entire North Eastern Region are almost free from social evils like dowry, *sati pratha*, female feticide, female infanticide etc. But various gender gap studies reveal a different view. A study by A.K.Shivkumar in 1996 focused the differential in gender attainment among 16 major Indian states. His study highlighted the fact that high human development, economic prosperity and progress does not necessarily mean that women's position have improved in the society. Assam was ranked at the 10th position in that study. Similarly NHDR (2002) estimated GEI as high as 0.676 for India and 0.575 in Assam in 1990s. This implies that gender inequality in Assam was higher than all India average whereas it was fairly satisfactory for most of the Southern States (varying within the range of 0.7 to 0.9). Assam was ranked 29 among 32 States and Union Territories. According to Assam Human Development Report (2003), the state

in comparison to the other North Eastern States, ranks below Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland. It is contrary to general perception that women of Assam are as disadvantageous relative to men as rest of the country and in some ground their position is even weaker than that of the sister states in other parts of the country. It seems that there is a long way to go to bring women of Assam to an equal partner of men in the development process. Moreover, in the last few decades insurgency has been the part and parcel of the lives of people of Assam. Various ethnic strife, rebels, militancy has been affecting the normal life of the people in general and women are the worst victim in particular. Assam, along with other northeastern states has been witnessing the violation of human rights for the last few decades. Due to armed conflict and militant activities, condition of women in the state has become more vulnerable. All these justify the need for such an analysis highlighting the present status of women of the state of Assam at the disaggregated level.

3.2 Status of Women Empowerment in Assam: Let us examine various indicators of women empowerment in Assam using data at the disaggregate level. The indicators taken to measure empowerment are (1) employment status (2) educational status; and (3) demographic status (4) political participation of women across different district groups categorized on the basis of geographical location, literacy and district domestic product. Moreover we analyse women's political participation in the state over time using indicators like percentage of female voter and elected women member of Legislative Assembly.

3.2.1 Employment Status: To analyze the present status of women on the basis of their employment status, we have considered in this section percentage distribution of workers (main, marginal and non workers), workforce participation rate, and formation of SHGs across different districts in the state.

Let us have a look on the percentage of main, marginal and non workers belonging to both the sexes in respect of Assam in 2001 on the basis of geographical location (Table 3.1). These data throw light on the gender structure of workforce in the economy of the state. In case of main worker, percentage of male is much higher than that of female irrespective of districts whereas more female are engaged as marginal

and non worker as compared to male counterparts. This shows the relative disadvantage of Assamese women in respect of employment. From the table it is clear that all the Upper Assam districts have higher proportion of female main workers and female marginal workers and relatively lower proportion of female non workers. The districts in Central and Lower Assam exhibit almost same pattern of having low proportion of female main and marginal workers and high proportion of female non-workers.

Table – 3.1
Area wise Percentage of Main, Marginal and Non-Workers in Assam, 2001

(Figures in per cent)

Area	Main Worker		Marginal Worker		Non Worker	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Lower Assam	43.23	7.31	5.59	7.85	51.34	84.84
Central Assam	42.38	8.33	6.96	9.50	50.65	82.15
Upper Assam	41.68	15.62	11.47	39.55	47.63	66.90
All Assam	42.45	9.82	7.41	10.89	50.13	79.28

Source: Census of India, 2001; For details of data see the Appendix

Table 3.2 presents data on main, marginal and non workers across different districts on the basis of literacy. Data reveal that there is a positive relationship between overall literacy rate and percentage of female main workers. Dhubri, the low literacy rate district in Assam, shows highest proportion of female non workers (91.96%) and lowest proportion of female main workers (4.27%) and marginal workers (3.85%). High Literacy rate districts are having highest proportion of female main and marginal workers and lowest proportion of female non workers. It is important to note that proportion of main workers is relatively high and non worker and marginal workers low among male population which is not true in case of female population.

Table 3.3 shows distribution of main, marginal and non workers across districts based on the level of DDP. Data reveal that there is a positive relationship between the level of DDP and percentage of female main workers. Almost same pattern is observed in case of male main workers. However the same relationship is not observed in case of female marginal and non workers. We can see from the table

that High DDP districts have lowest proportion of female marginal workers and Moderate DDP districts have the lowest proportion of female non workers. As usual proportion of main workers among male population is relatively higher than that of female counterparts. Similarly marginal and non worker proportion of females exceeds that of males

Table – 3.2
Literacy wise Percentage of Main, Marginal and Non Workers in Assam, 2001
(Figures in per cent)

Literacy Level	Main Worker		Marginal Worker		Non Worker	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Low	44.37	4.27	4.81	3.85	51.76	91.87
Moderate	42.56	8.48	6.17	10.61	51.25	80.90
High	41.91	11.09	8.45	12.04	49.62	76.76
Higher	43.39	10.68	7.62	10.74	48.97	78.56
All Assam	42.45	9.82	7.41	10.89	50.13	79.28

Source: Census of India, 2001; For details of data see the Appendix

Table – 3.3
Per Capita DDP wise Percentage of Main, Marginal and Non Workers in Assam, 2001
(Figures in per cent)

Per Capita DDP	Main Worker		Marginal Worker		Non Worker	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Low	42.51	8.60	7.42	10.92	50.17	80.47
Moderate	42.01	10.75	7.54	11.38	50.44	77.70
High	43.30	11.77	7.20	9.99	49.48	78.22
All Assam	42.45	9.82	7.41	10.89	50.13	79.28

Source: Census of India, 2001; For details of data see the Appendix

Now let us analyze the work force participation rate in Assam. If we analyze on the basis of geographical location, we find that most of the upper Assam districts show high proportion of total workforce participation as well as high female workforce participation implying the area to be a relatively developed one (Table 3.4). Further, Lakhimpur district in Upper Assam exhibits highest percentage of total workforce participation (55.99%) and high percentage of female workforce

participation (49.87%). However, male workforce participation rate does not differ much throughout the state. The districts in Lower Assam and Central Assam show almost same pattern of low workforce participation rate as compared to Upper Assam.

Table – 3.4
Area wise Workforce Participation Rate in Assam, 2001

(Figures in per cent)

Area	Districts	Person	Male	Female
Lower Assam		32.49	48.66	15.16
Central Assam		32.23	49.05	14.42
Upper Assam		42.98	52.36	32.90
All Assam		35.78	49.87	20.71

Source: Census of India, 2001; For details of data see the Appendix

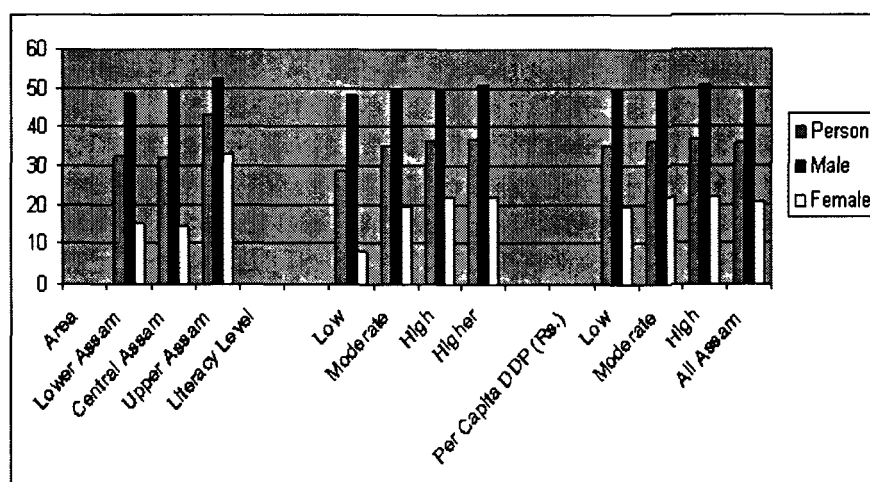


Fig. 3.1 Area, Literacy and DDP wise Workforce Participation Rate in Assam 2001

In Table 3.5, we present the workforce participation rate by grouping the districts on the basis of literacy rates. Male workforce participation rate does not vary much with the literacy rate. However percentage of female workforce participation significantly varies and it is positively related with the literacy rate. Dhubri, which exhibit low literacy i.e. below 50 per cent, shows a very poor participation of females (8%) in total workforce. High and higher literacy rate districts show relatively high percentage of female workforce participation.

Table – 3.5
Literacy wise Workforce Participation Rate in Assam, 2001

(Figures in percent)

Literacy Level	Person	Male	Female
Low	28.73	48.23	8.12
Moderate	34.36	48.74	19.09
High	37.20	50.37	23.13
Higher	36.89	51.02	21.43
All Assam	35.78	49.87	20.71
Source: Census of India, 2001; For details of data see the Appendix			

Table 3.6 shows variation of Per Capita District Domestic Product with the variation in workforce participation in the state. Data reveal that there is a positive relationship between the level of DDP and percentage of total workforce participation rates. The same pattern is observed in case of female workforce participation rate as long as the per capita DDP level is not reached to the extent of above 25000. However in case of males it does not differ much according to DDP.

Table – 3.6
Per Capita DDP wise Workforce Participation Rate in Assam, 2001

(Figures in percent)

Per Capita DDP (Rs.)	Person	Male	Female
Low	35.11	49.82	19.52
Moderate	36.29	49.55	22.13
High	36.83	50.51	21.77
All Assam	35.78	49.87	20.71
Source: Census of India, 2001; For details of data see the Appendix			

Thus from the above analysis it is clear that the upper Assam districts which have higher literacy rate and higher DDP show relatively better female employment status.

Table - 3.7**Distribution of Government Women Employees in Assam**

Category of Employees	No. of Employees in 1994		Percentage of Women Employee in	
	Total	Women	1994	2006
Class I	8,145	713	8.75	NA
Class II	6,242	374	5.99	NA
Class III	2,36,916	41,025	17.31	NA
Class IV	53,532	3,582	6.69	NA
Total	3,04,835	45,694	14.98	16.65*
Source: Assam Human Development Report, 2003 * Statistical Hand Book of Assam, 2007				

To examine the nature and status of women employment in the Public Sector (Govt.) of the state it is important to know their class wise distribution. Table 3.7 shows the number and percentage of total women employee in 1994. Data reveal that only 14.98% of total government employees were women. They were mostly employed in class III category of government services. This shows a very disappointing picture about status of women employment in Assam. Since class wise distribution of up to date data are not available for women employees we had to depend only on aggregate information on percentage of women govt. employee in the year 2006. As per the statistics of Govt. of Assam (2007) there were only 16.65% of women employees in the govt. jobs. There has not been any significant increase in the per cent of women govt. employees in a period of 12 years from 1994 to 2006.

Women's awareness about micro credit programme and formation of women Self Help Groups also indicate women's effort for economic emancipation. Table 3.8 presents data on the formation of women SHGs across different geographical regions in the state. It is seen that 61 per cent of total SHGs formed from 1999 to 2006 were women SHGs which was reduced to 5.19 per cent during 2006-07 in the state. Percentage of Women SHGs to total SHGs from 1999 to 2006 was observed to be highest in Upper Assam (68%). Central and Lower Assam showed poor performance as compared to Upper Assam in this respect. On an average Central Assam districts had highest number of SHGs formed since 1999 followed by Lower Assam and Upper

Assam. Similarly number of women SHGs formed since 1999 was highest in Central Assam districts followed by Upper Assam and Lower Assam. Average number of women SHGs taking up economic activity during 2006-07 was much lower in Upper Assam as compared to Lower Assam and Central Assam. It was highest in Central Assam.

Table – 3.8
Area wise Physical Achievement under SGSY in Assam

Area	Districts	No of SHGs formed during		No of Women SHGs formed during		No of women SHG taken up economic activities during 2006
		1999 to 2006	2006	1999 to 2006	2006	
Lower Assam	Total	39617	4911	21895 (55.26%)	982 (20%)	303
	District Average	5660	702	3128	140	43
Central Assam	Total	60118	21930	35791 (59.53%)	438 (1.98%)	408
	District Average	6680	2437	3977	48	45
Upper Assam	Total	35887	10904	24437 (68.09%)	555 (5.09%)	188
	District Average	5127	1558	3491	79	27
All Assam		135622	37745	82123 (60.55%)	1959 (5.19%)	912

Source: Annual Reports of PNRD Dept., Govt. of Assam, 2006-07; For details of data see the Appendix

Table 3.9 shows number of SHGs formed in different districts categorized on the basis of literacy. From the table it is clear that with increase of literacy, intensity of SHG formation increases from Moderate literacy district onwards. With the increase of literacy the percentage of women SHGs to total SHGs formed from 1999 up till 2006 increases significantly. As an exceptional case, highest number of SHGs was formed in the low literacy district, Dhubri. The number of women SHGs taken up economic activity was also the highest in this Low literacy district

Table – 3.9

Literacy wise Physical Achievement under SGSY in Assam

Literacy	Districts	No of SHG during		No of Women SHG during		No of Women SHG taken up Economic Activities during the Year
		1999 to 2006	2006	1999 to 2006	2006	
Low (Below 50%)	Total	9453	57	4773 (50.49%)	4 (7.02%)	65
	District Average	9453	57	4773 (50.49%)	4 (7.02%)	65
Moderate (50%-60%)	Total	38057	531	22388 (58.82%)	287 (54.04%)	257
	District Average	4757	66	2798	36	32
High (60%-70%)	Total	66991	30070	41231 (61.55%)	966 (3.21%)	446
	District Average	6090	2734	3748	88	41
Higher (Above 70%)	Total	21121	7087	13731 (65.01%)	715 (10.08%)	131
	District Average	7040	2362	4577	238	44
All Assam		135622	37745	82123 (60.55%)	1959 (5.19%)	912

Source: Annual Reports of PNRD Dept., Govt. of Assam, 2006-07; For details of data see the Appendix

Table – 3.10

Per Capita DDP wise Physical Achievement under SGSY in Assam

Per Capita DDP (Rs.)	Districts	No. of SHGs during		No. of Women SHGs during		No of Women SHG taken up Economic Activities during the Year
		1999-2006	2006-07	1999-2006	2006-07	
Low (Below 15000)	Total	84934	26736	48526 (57.13)	869 (3.25)	544
	Average	7078	2228	4044	72	45
Moderate (15000-25000)	Total	30649	575	19685 (64.22)	371 (64.52)	194
	Average	4378	82	2812	53	28
High (Above 25000)	Total	20039	10434	13912 (69.42)	732 (7.02)	161
	Average	5010	2608	3478	183	40
All Assam		135622	37745	82123 (60.55)	1959 (5.19)	912

Source: Annual Reports of PNRD Dept., Govt. of Assam, 2006-07; For details of data see the Appendix

Table 3.10 shows the data on formation of Self Help Groups on the basis of DDP. Data reveals that SHG formation, be it total or women, decreases first with

increase of DDP up to moderate level of DDP and then it increases with DDP. Similarly if we see the percentage of women SHGs formed from 1999 to 2006 we find that it varies positively with DDP. But percentage of women SHGs formed during 2006-07 is significantly higher in Moderate level of DDP.

3.2.2 Educational Status: The educational attainment of women of Assam at district level can be analyzed through female literacy rate and female enrollment rate at different stages of education.

All the Upper Assam districts have high female literacy above state average except Tinisukia. Female literacy rate is highest in Upper Assam (60.35%) which is quite higher than state average (54.61%). Central Assam and Lower Assam show almost same performance in the field of female literacy rate which is far below Upper Assam. These rates are 52.61 per cent and 52.53 per cent respectively. Similar pattern is also observed in case of total literacy.

Table – 3.11
Area wise Female and Total Literacy Rate in Assam, 2001

(Figures in per cent)

Area	Literacy Rate	
	Female	Total
Lower Assam	52.53	61.19
Central Assam	52.61	61.16
Upper Assam	60.35	69.23
All Assam	54.61	63.25

Source: Census of India, 2001; For details of data see the Appendix

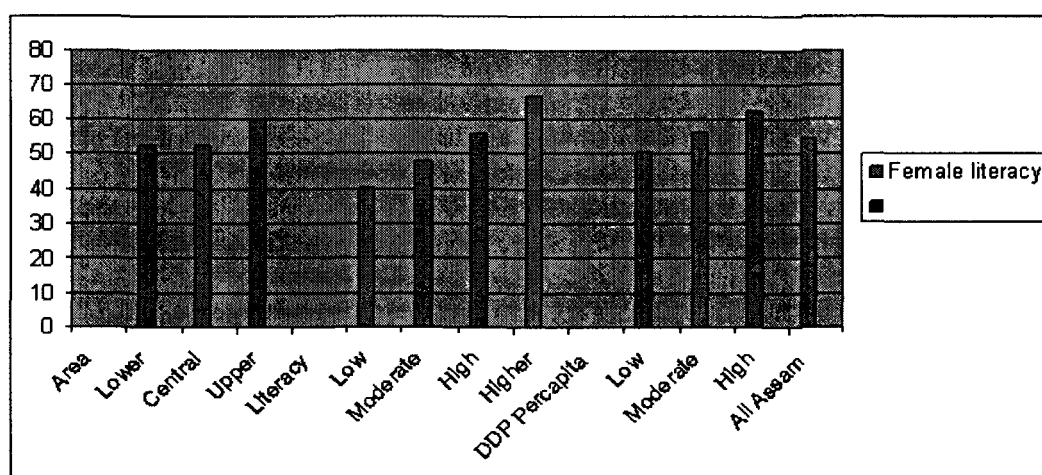


Fig 3.2: Area, Literacy and DDP wise Female Literacy in Assam, 2001

Now let us analyze the pattern of female literacy across the groups when classification of districts is made on the basis of total literacy. Female literacy rate increases across the districts along with the increase in total literacy rate. If we examine the Table 3.12 we find that it is lowest (40.04%) in Low Literacy district and highest (66.91%) in Higher Literacy districts. Wide variation in female literacy rate is seen across the districts which range from as low as 40 per cent to as high as 68 per cent.

Table – 3.12
Literacy wise Female and Total Literacy Rate in Assam, 2001

(Figures in per cent)

Literacy Rate	Literacy Rate	
	Female	Total
Low	40.04	48.21
Moderate	47.87	56.71
High	55.96	64.85
Higher	66.91	74.71
All Assam	54.61	63.25

Source: Census of India, 2001; For details of data see the Appendix

If we examine female literacy rate according to DDP, we find a positive relationship. Female literacy rate is increasing with the increase in district domestic product. It is lowest (51%) for Low DDP districts, 56 per cent for Moderate DDP districts and highest (63%) for High DDP districts.

Table – 3.13
Per Capita ^{DDP} wise Female and Total Literacy Rate in Assam, 2001

(Figures in per cent)

DDP	Literacy Rate	
	Female	Total
Low	50.80	59.38
Moderate	56.16	64.99
High	62.54	70.94
All Assam	54.61	63.25

Source: Census of India, 2001; For details of data see the Appendix

Let us now examine the proportion of female enrolment in different stages of education on the basis of our previous classification of districts. District wise enrolment of females by stages of education gives an insight about the educational status of women in the state. The information presented in Table 3.14 tells us that enrolment is highest in primary level, slightly lower in middle level. The proportion of enrolment decreases with the increase in the stages of education. In almost all the districts, in primary level, enrolment rate is almost fifty per cent. In middle and high school level also the percentage of enrolment is around 45%. However in higher secondary and junior colleges the female enrolment is much lower i.e. below 40%.

Female enrolment in primary level in the three regions –Lower, Central and Upper Assam are almost equal i.e. around 49-50 per cent. In middle level, enrolment rate is slightly lower in Lower Assam in comparison to Upper and Central Assam. Enrolment rate at high school level is much higher in Upper Assam (46.52%) as compared to Lower Assam (42.53%) and Central Assam (43.47%). Female enrolments at higher secondary and at junior college are also significantly higher in Upper Assam than Lower and Central Assam. The corresponding figures for higher secondary and Junior College are around 41 per cent and 43 per cent in Upper Assam as compared to 33 per cent and 38 per cent in Lower Assam and 37 per cent and 39 per cent in Central Assam.

Table - 3.14

Area wise Enrolment of Females by Stage in Assam, 2005-06

(Figures in per cent)

Area	Pre Primary	Middle	High School	Higher Secondary	Junior College
Lower Assam	49.69	45.52	42.53	33.30	37.93
Central Assam	49.43	46.97	43.47	36.51	39.29
Upper Assam	48.54	46.78	46.52	40.48	42.63
All Assam	49.32	46.38	44.11	36.27	39.53

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam, 2007; For details of data see the Appendix

Table - 3.15**Literacy wise Enrolment of Females by Stage in Assam, 2005-06***(Figures in per cent)*

Literacy	Pre primary	Middle	High School	Higher Secondary	Junior College
Low	49.86	45.14	40.15	30.46	29.03
Moderate	49.71	46.21	43.56	38.69	39.18
High	48.99	46.84	44.62	36.26	38.38
Higher	49.27	45.83	44.41	35.08	41.86
All Assam	49.32	46.38	44.11	36.27	39.53

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam, 2007; For details of data see the Appendix

Table 3.15 presents the status of female enrolment when districts are classified on the basis of total literacy. At pre primary and middle level the rate of enrolments are almost similar for all the groups. However in higher level it varies positively with literacy. High School enrolment rate is comparatively lower (40%) in Low Literacy district and almost same (44% approximately) for moderate, high, higher literacy districts. Enrolment in higher secondary level is highest in Moderate Literacy districts (38.69%). It is lowest (30.46%) in Low Literacy group and in all the groups it is much lower than pre primary and middle level enrolment. Since enrolment rate is decreasing with the level of education, it can safely be concluded that high drop out of girl students is associated with higher level of education. If we see the enrolment rate at junior colleges we find that it is highest in Higher Literacy district (41%), almost same for Moderate and High Literacy district and lowest in Low Literacy district (29%).

When we examine the relationship between the stages of enrolment with Per Capita DDP from the information provided in the Table 3.16, we find that no such variation of enrolment at primary level is seen along with DDP among the groups. At high school and in Junior College, enrolment positively varies with DDP whereas at middle level it varies negatively with DDP. If we analyse the female enrolment at higher secondary we see that it is highest for Moderate DDP districts and lowest for High DDP districts.

Table - 3.16**Per Capita DDP wise Enrolment of Females by Stage in Assam, 2005-06***(Figures in per cent)*

Per Capita DDP (Rs.)	Pre primary	Middle	High School	Higher Secondary	Junior College
Low	49.62	46.78	43.86	33.64	38.00
Moderate	48.78	46.06	44.25	41.70	38.2
High	49.34	45.88	44.45	35.18	41.86
All Assam	49.32	46.38	44.11	36.27	39.53

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam, 2007; For details of data see the Appendix

3.2.3 Demographic Status

Sex ratio is one of the important demographic factors that indicate the status of women in a particular society. A social system with higher sex ratio itself shows the higher status of women. In the Table 3.17, district wise sex ratio for the year 1991 and 2001 is taken into account to study the demographic status of women in Assam. The sex ratio of Assam is estimated to be 935, which is slightly higher than all India average of 933. The sex ratio in the state has increased from 925 in 1991 to 935 in 2001. But at the same time it has shown a declining trend at the all India level. Relatively speaking for Assam it is indeed a positive development.

Now let us examine the pattern of variation of sex ratio in 1991 and 2001 according to geographical location. Table shows that Central Assam has the highest sex ratio and is higher than that of the state average for both the period followed by Lower Assam and Upper Assam.

Table - 3.17**Area wise Sex Ratio in Assam, 1991 & 2001**

Area	Sex Ratio	
	1991	2001
Lower Assam	928	933
Central Assam	930	940
Upper Assam	915	931
All Assam	925	935

Source: Census of India, 2001; For details of data see the Appendix

Now let us examine the variation of sex ratio across the districts when classification is made on the basis of literacy. Table 3.18 shows sex ratios in both the periods (1991 and 2001) decrease with the increase in the literacy rate which is in fact a disturbing trend in a developing society. It is observed to be highest in Low Literacy district and lowest in Higher Literacy districts

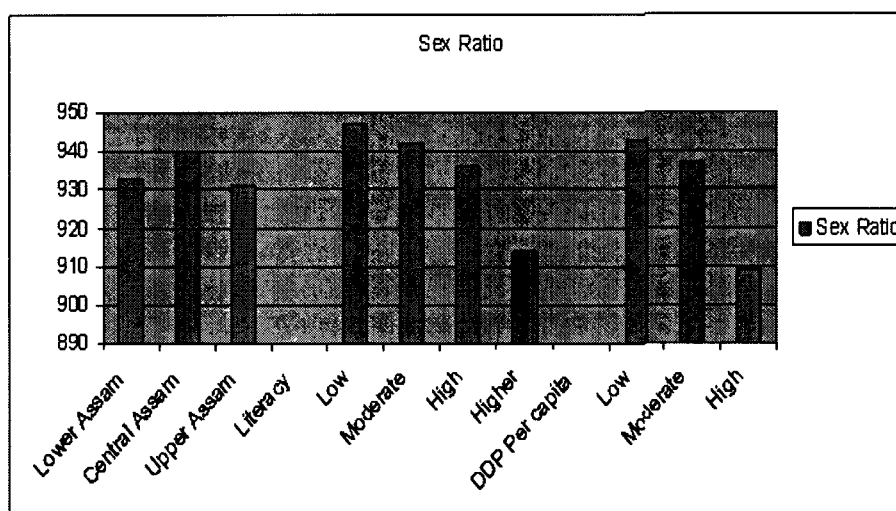


Fig. 3.3: Area, Literacy, DDP wise Sex Ratio in Assam 2001

Table - 3.18
Literacy wise Sex Ratio in Assam, 1991 & 2001

Literacy	Sex Ratio	
	1991	2001
Low	951	947
Moderate	940	942
High	924	936
Higher	897	914
All Assam	925	935

Source: Census of India, 2001; For details of data see the Appendix

Table 3.19 shows that in both the period sex ratio show a declining trend with the increase in DDP. It is highest for Low DDP districts and lowest in High DDP districts. Moderate DDP districts have an average sex ratio.

Table - 3.19
Per Capita DDP wise Sex Ratio in Assam, 1991 & 2001

DDP	Sex Ratio	
	1991	2001
Low	937	943
Moderate	926	937
High	891	909
All Assam	925	935
Source: Census of India, 2001; For details of data see the Appendix		

3.2.4 Political Participation Status:

Women's political participation is another input to their empowerment. It is one of the important factors that contribute to their well being. Empowered women have political freedom which in turn translates into their decision making capacity both at the community and national level. Women's representation in political field even in its most modest form of local government has the ability to transform and reinterpret the practice of politics (Workshop Report, 2003). It helps to create better village communities based on harmony and cooperation achieved through gender balance and justice.

However, measurement of women's political empowerment through their political participation in the context of India and her constituent states including Assam poses sometimes doubts on the efficacy of the empowerment variable. This is because of the fact that strong family-based structure of Indian politics makes it difficult for women to assert independent political choices, as distinct from the male headed families. Therefore, judging women's political agency on the basis of their representation in political bodies is hazardous; women standing proxy for men are quite common in India (Assam Human Development Report, 2003). In the absence of any other alternative we had to depend on indicator like elected women Members in Legislative Assembly in Assam from 1972 to 2006. Table 3.20 presents data on percentage of women voters and elected women members of Legislative Assembly in Assam during this period. From the table it is clear that the percentage of female voters has increased steadily over time. However it has been less than that of male

voters. Though percentage of women MLA has increased during this period it has been quite small in number and percentage. In 1972 there was not even a single woman MLA. The situation, however, has changed and in 2006 about 10 per cent of MLA are women.

Table - 3.20
Trend of Women Voters and MLA in Assam

(Figures in percentage)

Year	Voters in Assembly Election		Elected Women Members of Legislative Assembly
	Male	Female	
1972	58.46	41.53	0
1978	58.08	41.91	0.8
1983	58.43	41.56	1.83
1985	54.10	45.89	3.97
1991	54.07	45.92	3.97
2001	53.82	46.15	7.94
2006	52.08	47.84	10.32

Source: Election Commission of India

When we analyze the percentage of contestants and winners across districts and areas we observe some degree of disparities (Table 3.21). Though percentage of voters across districts does not vary much but gender gap is observed in this respect. Table also reveals that Upper Assam performs well as regards percentage of women contestants and winners are concerned. However percentage of electors does not vary significantly across the regions.

Table - 3.21
Area wise Contestants and Winners in Legislative Assembly in Assam, 2006

(Figures in percentage)

Area	Voters		Contestants		Winners	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Lower Assam	51.74	48.25	93.57	6.42	90.70	9.30
Central Assam	51.63	48.36	94.56	5.43	91.84	8.16
Upper Assam	51.34	48.65	88.88	11.11	88.24	11.76
Assam	51.6	48.4	92.97	7.02	90.48	10.52

Source: Election Commission of India, 2006; For details of data see the Appendix

Similarly from Table 3.22 we find that percentage of women contestants is high for higher literacy district and vice versa. However, percentage of winners among women varies positively along with literacy up to high level beyond which it shows a decline. It is worth mentioning that there women with low literacy rate did not win in election.

Table - 3.22

Literacy wise Contestants and Winners in Legislative Assembly in Assam, 2006

(Figures in percentage)

Literacy Rate	Voters		Contestants		Winners	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Low	51.38	48.61	93.24	6.75	100	0
Moderate	51.79	48.20	94.69	5.30	89.47	10.53
High	51.51	48.48	92.37	7.62	88.14	11.86
Higher	51.56	48.43	90.72	9.27	95.45	4.55
Assam	51.6	48.4	92.97	7.02	90.48	10.52

Source: Election Commission of India, 2006; For details of data see the Appendix

From Table 3.23 it is clear that percentage of women contestants and winners vary more or less positively along with DDP per capita. It increases from low level to moderate level and then decrease at high level of DDP. However, percentage of voters does not show any variation across per capita DDP.

Table - 3.23

Per Capita DDP wise Contestants and Winners in Legislative Assembly in Assam, 2006

(Figures in percentage)

DDP	Voters		Contestants		Winners	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Low	51.42	48.57	93.95	6.04	92.06	7.94
Moderate	51.78	48.21	90.61	9.38	85.37	14.63
High	51.77	48.22	94.33	5.66	95.45	4.55
Assam	51.6	48.4	92.97	7.02	90.48	10.52

Source: Election Commission of India, 2006; For details of data see the Appendix

3.3 Status of Women- A Comparison between Assam and India: NFHS-3 pertains to data collected on various indicators of women empowerment. On the basis of these data the status of women both in Assam and India can best be understood. As explained in Chapter II, various indicators like women's capacity of household decision making, their access and control over resources, acceptance of unequal gender role, media exposure, freedom of movement etc is the key to the process of women's empowerment.

Decision making is the foremost step to the ladder of empowerment. In this regard data presented in Table 3.24 shows a comparison between Assam and India in respect of household decision making. The percentage of total women in Assam who participate in all the four decisions like decision about own health care, major household purchases, visiting relatives or friends and making purchases for daily household needs are much better in Assam i.e.60.5% as compared to37% in all India level. In respect of each of the four decisions also, greater percentage of women in Assam are involved as compared to all India level. For instance only half of the total women in India have the ability to take decision like major household purchases as compared to almost three fourth in Assam.

Table - 3.24
Women's Household Decision Making in Assam and India

State/Country	Percentage of Women who Usually Make Specific Decisions Alone or Jointly with their Husband				
	Own Health Care	Making Major Household Purchases	Making Purchases of Daily Household Needs	Visit to the Family or Relatives	Participating in all the Four Decisions
Assam	80.0	72.0	70.6	80.9	60.5
India	62.2	52.9	60.1	60.5	36.7

Source: NFHS -3

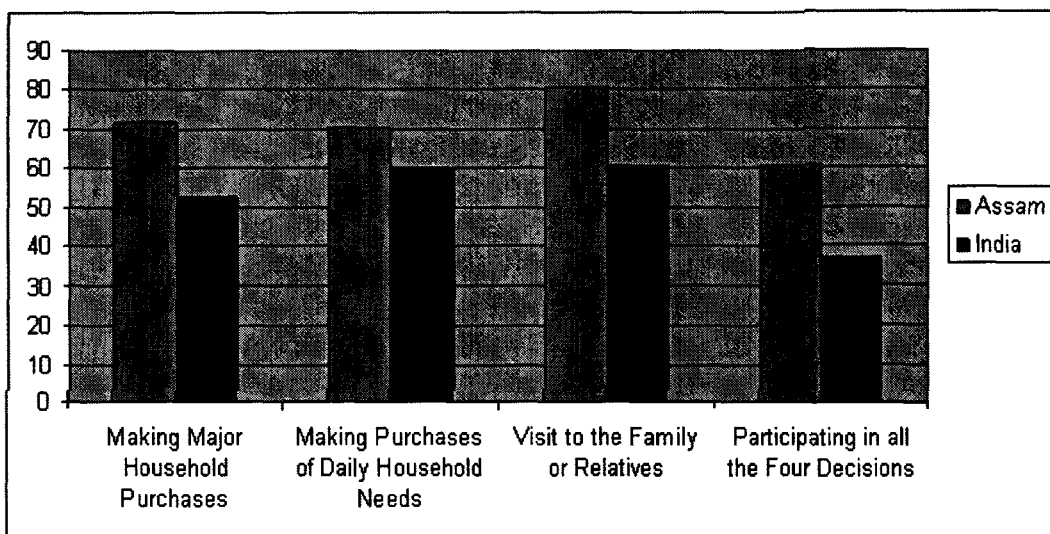


Fig. 3.4: Women's Household Decision Making in Assam and India, 2005-06

Employment is another important indicator of empowerment. If we see the percentage of non workers in Assam and India as shown in Table 3.25 we find that higher proportion of females are non workers in Assam as compared to India. But in urban areas the percentage of female non workers is almost same both in India and Assam. If we look at the rural urban divide we find that female non workers are more in urban areas as compared to rural areas both in Assam and India. As is obvious a wide gender gap is seen in this respect in the state.

Table - 3.25

Percentage of Non Workers in Assam, 2001

(Figures in per cent)

India/ State	Total			Rural			Urban		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
Assam	64.12	50.0	79.20	63.55	50.23	77.72	68.02	48.97	89.71
India	60.74	48.07	74.32	58.03	47.64	69.02	67.77	49.15	88.45

Source: Assam Human Development Report, 2003

Workforce participation rate shows the number of persons employed per 1000 persons. Data for the year 2001 reveal that it is lower for Assam as compared to India as a whole (Table 3.26). The rate is much lower in rural Assam (36.4%) as compared to rural India (42%). However the gap is narrower in case of urban areas, be it in India as a whole or in Assam. Further we find that it is lower for females both in absolute and relative terms. About half of the male population is engaged in workforce in Assam but in case of women, the rate is much lower, about a fifth are engaged in work. In rural areas, the rate is higher for women than that in urban Assam.

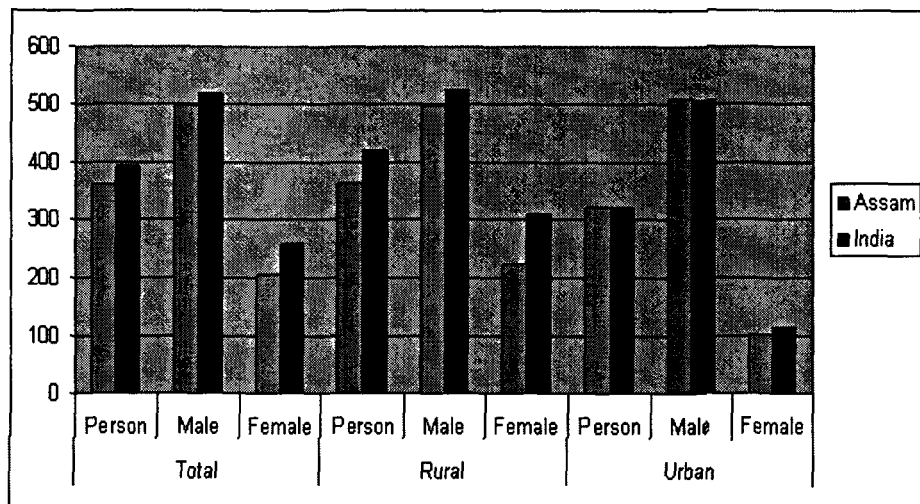


Fig. 3.5: Workforce Participation Rate in Assam and India, 2001

Table - 3.26**Workforce Participation Rate in Assam and India, 2001***(Per 1000 Persons)*

State/Country	Total			Rural			Urban		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
Assam	359	499	205	364	498	223	320	510	103
India	393	519	257	420	524	310	322	508	115

Source: Assam Human Development Report, 2003

Women's access to monetary resource and credit is another important element of empowerment. Employment opportunity of women is necessary but not sufficient condition for financial empowerment. For economic empowerment control over resources is more important. Table 3.27 shows women's access to these resources in case of India and Assam. From the table it is clear that in Assam, women have less financial autonomy as compared to all India level. Only 26.9% of total respondents in Assam take decisions by themselves about the use of their own earnings as compared to almost 50% in case of India. However, awareness about micro credit programme is slightly higher in Assam (41.7%) than in India (38.6%). Yet, an insignificant percentage of women have availed loan from micro credit programme both in India (4%) and Assam (1.4%)

Table - 3.27**Women's Access to Money and Credit in Assam and India, 2005-06**

India/states	Percentage of Women			
	Who have Access to Money and can Decide how to Use	Who have Bank Account and can use themselves	Having Knowledge of Micro Credit Programme	Who have taken Loan from a Micro Credit Programme
India	44.6	15.0	38.6	4.0
Assam	26.9	11.7	41.7	1.4

Source: NFHS-3

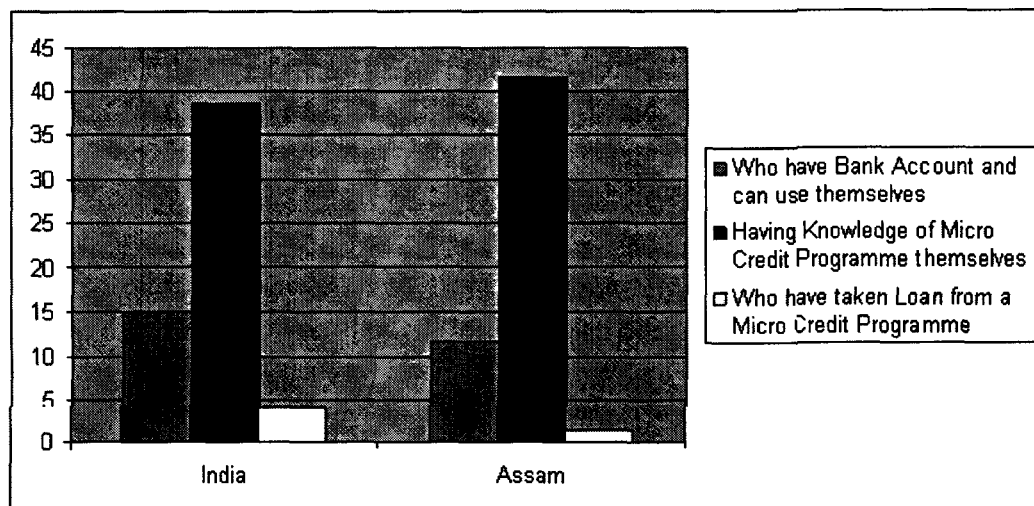


Fig. 3.6: Women's Access to Money and Credit in Assam and India, 2005-06

Another important evidence of empowerment of women is their attitude towards unequal gender role that prevails in the society [Gupta & Kishor, 2004]. If women believe that wife beating is just or only male child should be given all the opportunities including better education, nutrition etc and female child should be taught to make sacrifice from very childhood so that she would be a so called ideal woman then it indicates that women accept their subordinate status by themselves. Table 3.28 shows women's attitude towards wife beating in India and Assam. Less number of women in Assam believes that wife beating is justified in comparison to India as a whole. In Assam, women justify wife beating if they neglect their home and show disrespect to in laws.

Table - 3.28

Women's Attitude towards Wife Beating in Assam and India, 2005-06

State/ Country	Percentage of Women who believe Wife Beating to be justified for any of the following Specific Reasons						
	Not Cooking Properly	Neglecting Children /Home	Disrespecting In Laws	Suspected by Husband as Unfaithful	Refusing to have Sex with Husband	Going out of Home without Permission of Husband	At Least One of the Specific Reasons
Assam	11.0	31.4	32.4	16.4	11.5	23.4	44.6
India	20.4	34.7	40.0	25.1	14.1	29.0	54.4

Source: NFHS-3

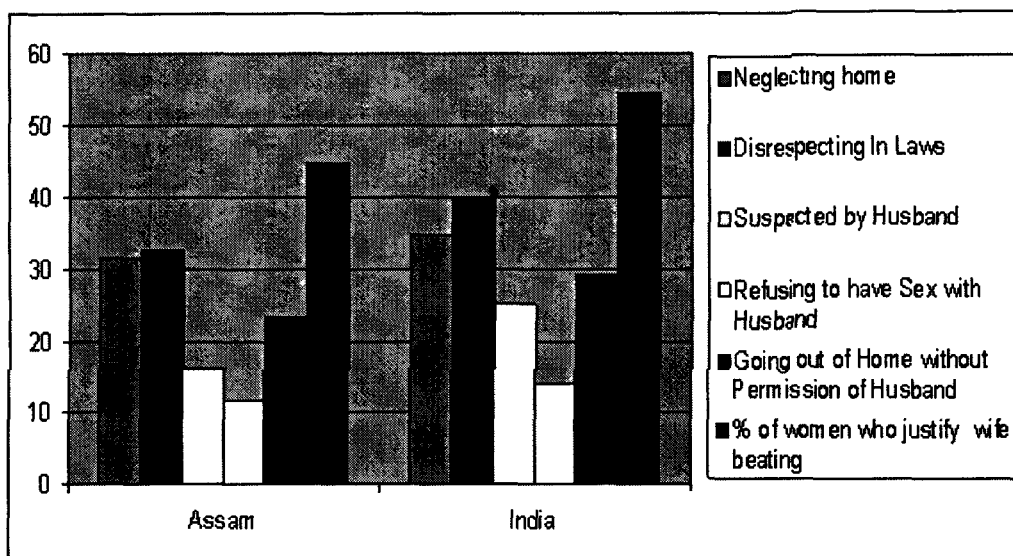


Fig 3.7: Women's Attitude towards Wife Beating in Assam and India, 2005-06

Domestic violence is one of the factors which affect the process of women empowerment. An environment in which women are under threat of continuous violence curtails their ability to control, or even access resources [Heise, Ellsberg and Goitmoeller, 1998]. Unfortunately domestic violence is prevalent in Assam. Table 3.29 shows women's experience of different forms of violence in the state vis-à-vis India in 2005-06. Relatively less women (24.7%) in Assam experience physical violence as compared to all India situations (26.9%). However women of Assam are more prone to both physical and sexual violence (36.5%) than India as a whole (35.4%).

Table - 3.29

Women's Experience of Different Forms of Violence, 2005-06

State/ Country	Experience of different Forms of Violence by Women in the Age Group 15-49 Years			
	Physical Violence only	Sexual Violence only	Either Physical or Sexual Violence	Both Physical and Sexual Violence
Assam	24.7	2.2	9.6	36.5
India	26.9	1.8	6.7	35.4

Source: NFHS-3

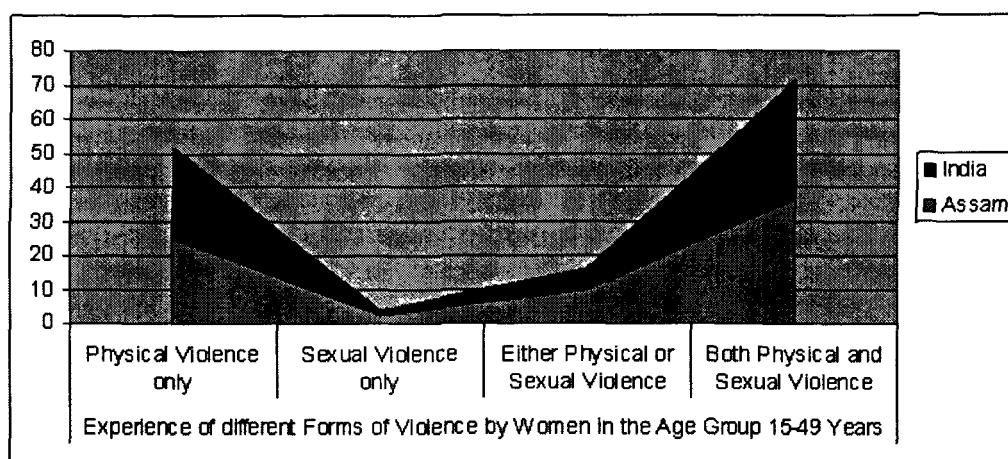


Fig 3.8: Women's Experience of Different Form of Violence in Assam and India, 2005-06

3.4 Summery and Findings: Thus from the above analysis it can be said that in the areas of employment and education, generally most of the upper Assam districts have performed well. Both Lower and Central Assam have low employment and educational status. Similarly we find that employment and education status increases with literacy rate. The Low Literacy districts show poor performance in the field of employment. The employment indicators like female workforce participation rate and proportion of female main and marginal workers are low in Low Literacy district (Dhubri). In other words, Dhubri shows highest proportion of female non workers. Similarly Low Literacy district Dhubri is not only witnessing low female literacy rates but also accompanied with low female enrolment at higher level of education. Similarly we have found that employment and educational status vary positively with per capita DDP. It is seen that total work force participation rate, proportion of female main, marginal and non workers, female literacy and female enrolment rates are low in Low DDP districts and high for High DDP districts.

The percentage of women employee to total employee in the Govt services in the state is also very poor. There has not been any significant improvement in this regard in the last decade.

Formation of SHGs from 1999 to 2006 is highest in Central Assam. However percentage of women SHGs to total SHGs is highest in Upper Assam during the same

period. SHGs formation varies more or less positively with literacy rate and DDP Per Capita.

As regards sex ratios, it is high both in Lower and Central Assam. Upper Assam has sex ratio which is far below the state average. Sex ratio shows a declining trend with the increase in literacy rate and DDP per capita.

As regards women's political participation it is found that percentage of women voters has always been less than that of male voters in all the years under study but the gender gap is not very significant. But percentage of women elected members is very less compared to male counterparts. It was almost 10% in 2006. This shows very poor participation of women in Assam in the state politics.

Study at the disaggregate level reveals that percentage of women contestants and winners in the Assembly Election in the state was relatively high in Upper Assam and it varied more or less positively with Literacy and DDP per capita. No Such variation was seen when we examined the percentage of voters. However gender gap existed in all the situations.

Similarly if we examine the factors like household decision making, control over resources, freedom of movement, workforce participation rate, women's experience of violence, attitude towards unequal gender role etc in the context of both Assam and India, we find some interesting result. Higher percentage of women in Assam participates in all the four household decision making as against India. Proportion of women taking decision jointly with their husband or alone in any of the decisions is also higher in Assam than in India. Female workforce participation rate is lower in Assam than that in India. Rural urban gap in respect of employment is seen both in Assam and India. Minor differences are seen in this regard in case of rural female employment in Assam and India; however urban female employment is almost same for both Assam and India. Regarding female non worker, it is higher in Assam than in India. More women of Assam are prone to sexual violence in comparison to India; however physical violence is more in India than in Assam. When we analyse women's attitude towards wife beating, we find that less women of Assam support the cases of wife beating as compared to India. Women access and control over resources

is far less in Assam in comparison to India. However awareness about micro credit programme is more in Assam than in India.

Thus we find that status of women both in Assam and India are not satisfactory and position of Assam is even worse. Inter district disparity is also observed in the state regarding the degree of empowerment. Districts like Kamrup, Tinisukia etc in spite of having high DDP per capita, could not transform the development effort to bridge the gender gap. Hence development is not gender neutral in the state. Female enrolment rate is below fifty per cent in the state in spite of universalisation of primary education and provision of mid day meal schemes. Although Government has taken number of steps the situation has remained gloomy mainly because the educated women are lacking scientific outlook and they cherish the baseless customs without a second thought. For the success of government plan and policies scientific outlook must grow within the people especially within the women that ultimately would help in uprooting the age old superstition and social customs. Much needs to be done to make women of Assam an equal partner of men in the process of development. More so, there is a need to create awareness among people towards this effect for achieving the desired goal of women empowerment.

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Chapter - IV

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN ASSAM

4.1 Introduction:

Till the declaration of the International Decade of Women in 1975, the development approach by the Indian Government towards women had been welfare oriented. This approach mainly concentrated on material welfare of women by treating them as aid recipients rather than participants in the development process. The development process put much emphasis on short term practical needs of women such as child care, water supply, efficient cooking, and training for domestic duties etc. and too little on their long term strategic interests like participation in decision making process at various levels. In other words the government till then did not visualize the importance of the role of women in the achievement of overall economic development and human welfare. In the later period empowerment approach evolved as a better alternative to development approach and concentrated on control over life and levels of power which depended to a large extent on access to resources, education and awareness, and through participation in decision making (Rajasi Clerk, 2003). The Human Development Approach which evolved as a broader measure of welfare of a nation was based on the premise of development of people irrespective of gender through enhancement of three essential human capabilities such as long and healthy lives, knowledge and income and assets needed for a decent standard of living besides the other choices, viz. political freedom, self respect, guaranteed human rights etc. These choices, on the other hand, are important indicators of women empowerment. The development theorists believed that a high level of human development would lead to empowerment of women and conversely highly empowered women would bring high level of human development through their contribution to the development process. Thus researchers started empirically examining the two-way relationships between women empowerment and human development. For instance, Von Braun (1985) conducted a study among Gambian households and he found that larger the proportion of food under women's control, the larger is the household's calories consumption. Similarly a study conducted in Philippines revealed that consumption of

calories and proteins increase with the increased share of income accruing directly to the women (Garcia, 1990). Another study in Cote de Ivoire reveals that increased female share over household income leads to increased spending on human development enhancing items like food, health care etc and reduced spending on tobacco. (Ranis et al, 2005). Gustav Ranis and others through empirical analysis tried to find out the two way linkage between economic growth and human development. According to them, female education is an important input of the production function (i.e., Human Development Improvement Function) which explains the effectiveness of expenditure directed to human development. Female education has important bearings on child health and their survival. To understand the significance of the link between female education and human development they used data of (35 to 76) developing countries and applied regression technique. In a similar way Sen (1995), Agarwal (1997) and Pillarisetti & Mc Gillivray (1998) used fertility and percentage of females in the total labor force as the variables to study the change in the level of women empowerment. Pillarisetti and Mc Gillivray further utilizing the cross section data on 116 countries estimated several models and their analysis revealed that both fertility and female employment significantly affect women empowerment. Keeping all these studies in view, the present chapter is an attempt to explore the linkage between women empowerment and human development in the context of the state of Assam.

4.2 Women Empowerment and Human Development: An Empirical Analysis

Women are said to be empowered when they have control upon their own lives, which enable their increased capacity for leading a fulfilling human life. Empowered women can contribute to human development by household and community activities. When women have greater say and control over resources, better education, and health status not only her family but also the entire society develops. For instance, an educated mother is more likely to take care of her family in issues like health care and sanitation. School dropout rate of girl child will be less if mothers are empowered. Regarding nutritional aspect of a child there is less gender biasness if mothers are empowered. Adult female literacy as well as average consumption levels are significantly correlated with life expectancy at age one. Infant mortality rate is also correlated with adult female literacy, though not as significantly

as in case of life expectancy at age one. It is also observed that adult female literacy has a strong positive correlation with the kind of medical attention that is sought at the time of delivery (National Human Development Report, 2001). So a high level of women empowerment is both a necessary and sufficient condition for improved level of human development. Let us analyze whether inputs to women empowerment have any significant link with the human development.

4.2.1 Education

Education is one of the key factors that enable women empowerment. Education enhances the social status of a woman and is invariably linked with her economic status. Countries committed to universal primary education for boys and girls have been far more successful in escaping poverty and recording high rate of growth and socio economic development (Sharma, 2008). Educational attainment is one of the components of composite index of human development. So empowering women through education automatically enhances human development. However, in the context of India females are having a lower literacy rate of 54 per cent as against male literacy of 76 per cent showing a huge gender gap (Census 2001). Assam in this regard is no exception. The gender gap in literacy in the state is as high as 17 per cent. This low level of literacy not only has a negative impact on women's lives but also on their families and overall economic development and prosperity of the state (Sharma, 2008)

Now let us analyze whether the women empowerment indicators like female literacy has any association with human development index using cross section data. Table 4.1 reveals that there exists a significant positive relationship between female literacy and over all human development in the state. Thus there is a need to take more steps on the part of the government to ensure higher female literacy which would lead to higher human development.

Table - 4.1

Female Literacy Rate and HDI in Assam in 2001

District	FL	HDI	Correlation Coefficient
Dhubri	40.04	0.241	r=0.64 (Significant at 5%)
Kokrajhar	42.40	0.354	
Bongaigoan	50.44	0.263	
Goalpara	50.85	0.308	
Barpeta	47.07	0.396	
Nalbari	57.26	0.343	
Kamrup	66.31	0.575	
Darrang	46.40	0.259	
Sonitpur	49.73	0.357	
Lakhimpur	59.59	0.337	
Dhemaji	53.51	0.277	
Morigoan	51.51	0.494	
Nagoan	54.74	0.356	
Golaghat	60.99	0.540	
Jorhat	68.49	0.650	
Sibsagar	66.81	0.469	
Dibrugarh	59.95	0.483	
Tinsukia	50.78	0.377	
K. Anglong	47.30	0.494	
N.C.Hills	58.39	0.363	
Karimganj	57.28	0.301	
Hailakandi	50.46	0.363	
Cachar	59.41	0.402	

Source: Assam Human development Report, 2003

4.2.2 Economic Participation and Economic Opportunity

Economic independence is one of the important inputs of women empowerment which enhances human development. When women have better control over resources, they utilize it more rationally in productive uses as compared to men. Unlike men they do not utilize it in gambling, drinking etc. When they have control over their own income their confidence and self esteem increases and they participate in decision making process both in households and at the level of community. If women along with men are economically sound, they can lead a decent living and their choices and wishes are more likely to be fulfilled. Around the globe almost half of the population is women. They contribute two thirds of world's working hours but they receive only one tenth of world's income and own only one percent of world's wealth. This is because most of women's work remains unpaid and what is worse is

unrecognized (Rajasi Clerk, 2003). Women are the worst victim of poverty. So when women are empowered their access to and control over resources increases which in turn leads to reduction of poverty. World Bank also emphasized the importance of women empowerment as an effective weapon of poverty elimination and for promotion of sustainable development. As regards let us examine whether there exist any link between female work participation rate and human development in Assam. Correlation analysis reveals that the female work force participation and human development are weakly associated (Table 4.2). This may be due to limited role of women in controlling over their earned income in terms of its spending.

Table - 4.2
Female Workforce Participation Rate (FWPR) and HDI in Assam, 2001

DISTRICS	FWPR	HDI	Correlation Coefficient
Dhubri	8.12	0.241	r=0.18 (Not significant)
Kokrajhar	25.23	0.354	
Bongaigoan	15.46	0.263	
Goalpara	17.74	0.308	
Barpeta	14.07	0.396	
Nalbari	17.83	0.343	
Kamrup	14.66	0.575	
Darrang	19.38	0.259	
Sonitpur	24.18	0.357	
Lakhimpur	49.87	0.337	
Dhemaji	37.68	0.277	
Morigoan	16.54	0.494	
Nagoan	12.55	0.356	
Golaghat	30.21	0.540	
Jorhat	30.21	0.650	
Sibsagar	29.72	0.469	
Dibrugarh	28.87	0.483	
Tinsukia	29.49	0.377	
K Anglong	31.62	0.494	
N.C.Hills	24.56	0.363	
Karimganj	24.56	0.301	
Hailakandi	11.67	0.363	
Cachar	16.53	0.402	
Source: Assam Human development Report, 2003			

4.2.3 Health and Demographic Status

Health and demographic status are important inputs to women empowerment. Improved health and demographic status of women implies less maternal mortality, less infant mortality, reduced malnutrition and improved sex ratio etc. Empowered women are more conscious about their own health and nutritional status as well as that of their children which in turn enhance human development. Good maternal health in turn reduces the rate of maternal mortality and infant mortality and thus creating an enabling environment for healthy workforce in future. Life expectancy at birth is one of the components of the composite index of human development. The national human development report 2001 reveals that in the present decade the LEB of women exceeds that of the men. LEB in Assam is below that of the country as a whole and is one of the lowest among major Indian states. In the 1970s men could expect to live longer than women. This has since been reversed; women now expect to live longer than men. This is a trend that began to take place initially in urban areas, but is now true of rural areas as well. Infant mortality rate (IMR) has declined from 81 per 1000 live births in 1991 to 71 per 1000 live births by the end of the decade (1999) in Assam. This is a positive development. But the IMR in Assam is higher than national average. The rural urban gap in IMR is extremely high. The rural urban divide is also apparent in the data on under-five mortality, which measures the probability of dying before the fifth birthday. Under-five mortality is substantially higher in rural areas. Not surprisingly there were other significant correlations most tending to confirm the view that children of disadvantaged parents were more at risk. Such disadvantaged group, for example includes illiterate mothers and low income households (Assam Human Development Report, 2003). Similarly adverse sex ratio indicates a society where women are in the most vulnerable position. An empowered woman itself implies healthy and educated mother and thus contribute to human development. Let us now analyze whether there is any link between sex ratio as indicator of women empowerment and human development. Table 4.3 reveals that there is a negative relationship between these two variables. However, this relationship is not statistically significant.

Table - 4.3
Sex Ratio and HDI in Assam, 2001

Districts	Sex Ratio	HDI	Correlation Coefficient
Dhubri	947	0.241	r = -0.4 (Not significant)
Kokrajhar	943	0.354	
Bongaigoan	945	0.263	
Goalpara	956	0.308	
Barpeta	941	0.396	
Nalbari	939	0.343	
Kamrup	901	0.575	
Darrang	944	0.259	
Sonitpur	929	0.357	
Lakhimpur	951	0.337	
Dhemaji	941	0.277	
Morigoan	946	0.494	
Nagoan	944	0.356	
Golaghat	930	0.540	
Jorhat	933	0.650	
Sibsagar	928	0.469	
Dibrugarh	931	0.483	
Tinsukia	913	0.377	
K Anglong	926	0.494	
N.C.Hills	884	0.363	
Karimganj	947	0.301	
Hailakandi	935	0.363	
Cachar	945	0.402	

Source: Assam Human development Report, 2003

Let us now analyze the link between women empowerment and human development from the data presented in the Table 4.4 using regression technique.

Table - 4.4
District wise FLR, FWPR and SR in Assam, 2001

Districts	HDI	Female Literacy	FWPR	Sex Ratio
	2003	2001	2001	2001
Dhubri	0.241	40.04	8.12	947
Kokrajhar	0.354	42.40	25.23	943
Bongaigoan	0.263	50.44	15.46	945
Goalpara	0.308	50.85	17.74	956
Barpeta	0.396	47.07	14.07	941
Nailbari	0.343	57.26	17.83	939
Kamrup	0.575	66.31	14.66	901
Darrang	0.259	46.40	19.38	944
Sonitpur	0.357	49.73	24.18	929
Lakhimpur	0.337	59.59	49.87	951
Dhemaji	0.277	53.51	37.68	941
Morigoan	0.494	51.51	16.54	946
Nagoan	0.356	54.74	12.55	944
Golaghat	0.540	60.99	30.21	930
Jorhat	0.650	68.49	30.21	933
Sibsagar	0.469	66.81	29.72	928
Dibrugarh	0.483	59.95	28.87	931
Tinsukia	0.377	50.78	29.49	913
K Anglong	0.494	47.30	31.62	926
N.C.Hills	0.363	58.39	24.56	884
Karimganj	0.301	57.28	24.56	947
Hailakandi	0.363	50.46	11.67	935
Cachar	0.402	59.41	16.53	945

Source: Assam Human development Report,2003

To analyze the link let us construct a simple linear regression model of the form:

$$(HDI)_i = b_0 + b_1(FL)_i + b_2(FWP)_i + b_3(SR)_i + U_i, \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

The variables such as HDI, FL, FWP, SR and U respectively in the above equation refer to human development index, female literacy, their work force participation rate, sex ratio and disturbance term. From the raw data as presented in Table 4.4, the following estimations are made:

Table - 4.4.1
Regression Summary

	b_0	b_1	b_2	b_3
Coefficient	1.154	0.5790	-0.0400	-0.2000
Standard Error	1.164	0.1944	0.1829	0.1832
t - Value	0.9916	2.7981*	-0.2011	-1.0842
*Significant at 5% level of significance; $R^2 = 0.4403, \bar{R}^2 = 0.3519, F = 4.982, N = 23$				

The estimated regression line therefore is,

$$(HDI)_i = 1.154 + 0.579(FL)_i - 0.04(FWP)_i - 0.2(SR)_i, \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

Each point on the estimated regression line gives an estimate of the expected or mean values of HDI corresponding to the chosen value of FLR, FWPR and Sex Ratio. The beta value (b_1) which is 0.579 indicates that with 1 per cent increase in female literacy rate, the HDI value increases by 0.6. Similarly from the value of (b_2) and (b_3) we can say that with 1 per cent increase in FWPR and sex ratio decreases the value of HDI by 0.04 and 0.2 respectively. The R^2 value indicates that 44% of the variation of HDI value can be explained by FL, FWP and sex ratio.

Thus we find that female literacy rate is positively related with human development. However female workforce participation and sex ratio though are negatively related with human development could not be proved to be statistically significant. This is perhaps because in Assam where economy is mainly agrarian, women engaged in work only when their families are not economically sound. So we get a negative relationship between FWPR and HDI. Similar tendency is seen in case of sex ratio, probably because when people become more educated and economically affluent they switch to one or two child norms and in such case male child gets preference. Or it may be the case that most of the women of the state, as they are relatively disempowered, could not contribute to the development process.

4.3 Human Development Vs Gender Development

A high level of human development expected to enhance women empowerment through improved health, nutrition, access to education and economic resources, political freedom, social security and above all a decent standard of living. A high level of human development invariably means improved health status, satisfactory educational attainment and a decent standard of living for the masses. As a human being, a woman is expected to get all the benefits and fruits of better human development, which in turn helps in the process of empowerment. A improved level of human development in any country must ensures better education, better health status, good environment in working place, better social security, freedom from any type of violence, better standard of living for the women which are crucial for empowerment process.

The gender related development index in this context is an important improvement in human development dialogue. GDI was constructed to see whether an improved HDI actually improves the lives of women in the areas like income, education and health as women constitute the half of the world population. So to know whether fruits of development are equally distributed between men and women and to know whether human development leads to the empowerment of women let us analyze and compare the two indices HDI and GDI both at the international level and at the district levels in Assam.

At the global level various empirical studies reveal that a high level of human development does not necessarily promote women empowerment. Many countries show vast difference in the rankings of human development index (HDI) and gender related development index (GDI). For instance HDI rank of Ireland is 5 but that of GDI is 15. So in Ireland the difference between HDI and GDI rank is negative which implies existence of a greater inequality between men and women. Similarly in Bellze the difference between HDI and GDI ranking is 21 which show gender gap is less in Bellze. However, in India the difference between HDI and GDI ranking is zero. Similarly there is also marked difference in respect of HDI rank and GEM rank. For instance Japan's HDI rank is 8 but GEM rank is 54. Switzerland's HDI rank is 7 and that of GEM is 27. This shows that women in these countries are relatively in a

disadvantageous position than men. Again Argentina's GEM rank (17) and HDI rank (38) show less gender inequality. In India only 9 per cent of the total seats in parliament are held by women and the ratio of estimated female to male earned income is 0.31. This shows that women in India are relatively disempowered. The World Economic Forum in its gender gap study measures the extent to which women in 58 countries have achieved equality with men in five critical areas viz. economic participation economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment and health and well being. The report says that countries that do not capitalize on the full potential of one half of their societies are misallocating their human resources and undermining their competitive potential. The study reveals India's position as 53 among 58 nations. It also reveals that there exists a gender gap in achievement of the benefit of human development (WEF, 2005). Gender inequality is seen in the sphere of educational attainment, female economic activities and political participation etc. Iceland is placed at top position in HDI ranking but net primary enrolment ratio of female to male rate is 97 per cent in 2005 which indicates that female rate is still lower than male rate. In secondary and tertiary enrollment ratio the same is 1.03 and 1.85 respectively. Switzerland's HDI ranking is 7th, but tertiary enrolment ratio of female to male rate is 0.84 and that of Korea is 0.62 although its rank in HDI is 26. In India primary, secondary and tertiary enrolment ratio of female to male rate is 0.94, 0.80 and 0.70 respectively. So this shows wide inequality in the sphere of education. Similarly in the sphere of female economic activity inequality is seen. Iceland's female economic activity as a percentage of male rates in 2005 is 86 per cent, although her place in HDI ranking is at first position. Spain is one of the high HDI ranking countries whose female economic activity as a percentage of male rates in 2005 is 66 per cent. Middle HDI ranking country India's female economic activity as a percentage of male rate is as low as 42 per cent. But low human development countries like Uganda, Ghana, and Tanzania etc the female economic activity as a percentage of male is above 90 per cent. Similarly in political participation also inequality is seen. In Iceland only 27.3 per cent of total member are women in government at ministerial level. In France, Switzerland like high HDI ranking countries this percentage is as low as 17.6 per cent and 14.3 per cent respectively. In

India, this percentage is only 3.4 per cent and in Bhutan, Monaco etc., women's representation in government and ministerial level is nil (HDR 2007-08). Thus high HDI does not necessarily mean less gender inequality or in other words highly empowered women.

The values of HDI and GDI in all the 23 districts in Assam and their corresponding ranks are presented in Table 4.5. The HDI value ranges from 0.650 to 0.214. Only seven districts have HDI value higher than the state average. Similarly GDI value ranges from as high as 0.877 to as low as 0.012. Like HDI, only seven districts have GDI value greater than state average. Deviation is wide spread in case of GDI as compared to HDI throughout the districts. The table also presents the difference between the HDI rank and GDI rank. Any difference between these ranks in a particular district indicates gender disparity in that district. A positive value of the difference implies that the district is comparatively better placed in terms of gender and similarly a negative value indicates that the district is better placed in the context of human development as compared to gender related development. The table shows a wide difference between the ranking of HDI and GDI across the districts. Some of the districts like Jorhat, Kamrup, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Morigoan etc are having both high HDI and GDI. Inequalities exist between men and women as revealed by the difference in the ranks. Karbi Anglong district has the highest disparity. Its rank is 4 in HDI. This means that Karbi Anglong is quite successful in translating the fruits of development into the well being of its people. But its high rank (20th) in terms of GDI speaks of disadvantageous position of women as against men. Similarly difference in rankings in districts like Tinsukia, Nagoan, Cachar and Karimganj indicates the wide gap in the achievement of men and women in the sphere of education, health and income. Again in districts like N.C. Hills, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Hailakandi, Goalpara etc show less gender inequality. These districts have high GDI ranks as compared to their respective HDI ranks which indicate that low human development does not always lead to low gender development. Ten districts having high HDI value than GDI value indicating that high HDI is not necessarily linked with high GDI and thus to a high level of women empowerment.

Table - 4.5
HDI and GDI in Assam, 2001

District	HDI		GDI		Difference of Ranks between HDI and GDI
	Value	Rank	Value	Rank	
Jorhat	0.650	1	0.701	3	-2
Kamrup	0.575	2	0.642	4	-2
Golaghat	0.540	3	0.608	7	-4
Morigoan	0.494	4	0.759	2	2
K.Anglong	0.494	5	0.260	20	-15
Dibrugarh	0.483	6	0.642	4	2
Sibsagar	0.469	7	0.468	9	-2
Cachar	0.402	8	0.409	14	-6
Barpeta	0.396	9	0.448	10	-1
Tinsukia	0.377	10	0.300	19	-9
Hailakandi	0.363	11	0.609	6	5
N.C.Hills	0.363	11	0.877	1	10
Sonitpur	0.357	13	0.397	15	-2
Nagoan	0.356	14	0.068	22	-8
Kokrajhar	0.354	15	0.418	11	4
Nalbari	0.343	16	0.357	17	-1
Lakhimpur	0.337	17	0.491	8	9
Goalpara	0.308	18	0.413	12	6
Karimganj	0.301	19	0.012	23	-4
Dhemaji	0.277	20	0.410	13	7
Bongaigoan	0.263	21	0.376	16	5
Darrang	0.259	22	0.317	18	4
Dhubri	0.214	23	0.206	21	2
Assam	0.407	-	0.537	-	-

Source: Assam Human Development Report, 2003

4.4 Summary and Findings: Factors like education, employment, health etc that affect women empowerment also contribute to human development. Districts having higher female literacy, high proportion of enrolment of female at higher secondary level also shows improved performance in case of human development. A positive relationship is found between women empowerment measured in female literacy and human development. Female workforce participation is negatively linked with human development implying the fact that more females engage themselves in work only when there is a dire need and it becomes a question of their survival. Similarly sex ratio has a negative relationship with human development. Adverse sex ratio of many districts like Dibrugarh, Sibsaagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Kamrup etc having high human

development can be explained partly by the heavy migration of male people to these districts.

The study reveals that high level of human development in a particular district does not always indicate an improved situation of its women. The wide divergence between the HDI and GDI rank clearly shows it. N.C. Hills which has the highest rank in respect of GDI has a low rank of HDI (11th). Female workforce participation rate, sex ratio etc are also adverse in this district implying the fact that low human development is not always associated with low gender development. Similarly the case of Karbi Anglong is a testimony to high human development being accompanied with low gender development. All these imply that high human development does not always lead to high gender equality.

As we know a higher level of human development creates an enabling environment for empowerment by providing access to education, employment, health facilities etc. These are only the enabling factors which act as a catalyst in the process of empowerment. But these cannot be considered as evidence of empowerment because there is no guarantee that the powerless will use or in a position to use these tools to become empowered (Kishor and Gupta, 2004). Various studies suggests that in case of women, rising income does not necessarily translate into improved status as some indicators of development like degree of violence against women, son preference etc. may not differentiate at all income level. Similarly increase in education does not have definite positive impact on dowry demands. Sometimes economic prosperity resulting in higher social class status brings even greater seclusion, rigidly defined gender roles particularly from the point of view of control over sexuality and mobility (R. Clerk, 2003). Thus although a cause and effect relationship exist between women empowerment and human development, the strength of the relationship depends upon socio cultural and economic background of the individuals as well as of the society.

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Chapter - V

SUMMERY AND FINDINGS

5.1 Summery:

In the preceding chapters of this study an earnest endeavor is made to highlight the status of women empowerment in Assam vis-à-vis India by using human development approach. In course of the study various indicators of women empowerment are analyzed and a comparison of the status of women as depicted by these indicators is made in the context of both Assam and India. District wise analysis of the status of women empowerment in Assam is made by using indicators like education, employment and demographic status. By using same indicators an attempt is made to find out the linkage between women empowerment and human development in the state at the disaggregate level. The chief objective of this concluding chapter is to consolidate and present the important acceptable deductions making close scrutiny of the findings of the previous chapters considerably in a systematic and precise manner.

In the Introductory chapter we have made an attempt to describe briefly the concept of women empowerment and human development. Various definitions of women empowerment as proposed by various researchers are discussed; most of these researchers assert that women empowerment is a change in the context of women's lives so that they can have greater power and control over their lives. On the other hand human development is evolved out as a broader measure of development as it encompasses various choices of people. In Human Development Report (1995) the concept of GDI and GEM are introduced with the assumption that development is not gender neutral. And now-a-days women empowerment is thought to be an important dimension of human development. The methodological aspects of the construction of

GDI and GEM are also shown in the chapter. Review of related literature; objective and methodology of the study and chapter layout are also presented briefly in the chapter so that reader can have a clear idea about the study.

Chapter II deals with the status of women in India. In this chapter various indicators of women empowerment are analysed by following the methodology of Gupta and Kishor (EPW, 2004). Women empowerment in India is measured by using indicators of the evidence of empowerment, indicators of the sources of empowerment and indicators for setting of empowerment which includes sub-indicators like participation in decision making, freedom of movement and women's attitude towards unequal gender role; exposure to mass media, access to education and gainful employment; domestic violence respectively. Mainly the data from NFHS-3 and Census data of 2001 are used to measure the level of women empowerment with the help of above mentioned indicators. The decision making power of women, freedom of movement of women, women's attitude towards wife beating, women's control over resources, women's experience of different forms of violence etc are explained by taking the background characteristics like age, education level, household structure, place of residence, marital status etc in consideration. Women's political participation is also analysed by taking into account the two indicators like percentage of women voters and percentage of elected women MPs. The constraints to achievement of desired level of empowerment are discussed in this chapter. Poverty, lack of legal and constitutional awareness and most importantly deep rooted social customs against the favour of women are considered as important constraints of women empowerment in India.

Chapter III discusses the status of women empowerment in the context of the study area Assam. The level of empowerment of both India and Assam are compared with the help of the indicators explained in the second chapter. At district level women empowerment is measured by using indicators like female workforce participation rate, percentage of female main, marginal and non workers, and percentage of women employees at government services, female literacy, and female educational enrolment at different stages, sex ratio and political participation. Mainly the data from Census Report 2001, Statistical Handbook of Assam 2007 and Assam

Human Development Report 2003 are used to measure the level of women empowerment in Assam. Districts are classified into different groups according to geography, total literacy and district domestic product. After that, the variation of each group of districts with the above mentioned indicators are analysed elaborately in the chapter.

The chapter IV measures the linkage between women empowerment and human development in the context of Assam. To know whether there is any association between women empowerment and human development, various indicators of women empowerment like female literacy, female workforce participation rate and sex ratio are considered and association of these indicators with human development index are analysed with the help of correlation and regression techniques. HDI rank and GDI rank of each district are also compared.

Chapter V is the concluding chapter which provides a brief summary of all the previous chapters as follows:

5.2 Findings:

Chapter II reveals that the women of India are disempowered both absolutely and relatively in comparison with their male counterparts. The indicators taken to measure women empowerment clearly show this. Household decision making power and freedom of movement are low for Indian women. However these vary gradually with the age of women, their education and place of residence. For instance 41.1% of women of the age group 15-19 years do not take part in decision making at all, while it is 12.8% for the age group 40-49 years. Similarly with more education and more control over resources the decision making capacity and freedom of movement of women increase. Approximately 54% women believe that wife beating is justified. This means that attitude towards unequal gender role is largely prevailing in the society. Attitude towards wife beating does not show any relationship with age and household structure but decline with education. For example 62.3% women with no education believe that wife beating is just as compared to 31.1% with higher secondary level or more education. Women's experience of domestic violence is alarming in Indian society. It is more for rural women than for urban women. Exposure to mass media is less for women relative to men. Gender gap in this area is

almost 19%. Similarly huge gender gap is seen in the area of literacy. Female enrolment is also below 50%. Employment status of Indian women is absolutely low much lower as compared to men. Most of the women do not have final say about how to use their own cash earnings. Women's political empowerment is also far below the satisfactory level. Less than 10% of women got elected in Lok Sabha and percentage of female voters is less than male voters in subsequent elections.

As regards Assam, relatively most of the Upper Assam districts performed well in the area of empowerment. Total literacy, female literacy, DDP, female workforce participation rate, female enrolment rate etc was higher in these districts. However these districts showed adverse sex ratio. The Lower Assam districts exhibited improved sex ratio but other indicators of empowerment were significantly lower in these districts. Central Assam showed almost same performance in respect of these indicators. However sex ratio was lower in Central Assam as compared to Lower Assam. Kamrup belongs to Lower Assam but was having highest DDP, high total and female literacy, and low female workforce participation rate, low enrolment rate of females, low proportion of women employees engaged in government services and adverse sex ratio. Again one of the districts in Central Assam, i.e., N.C. Hills was having DDP almost at par with Kamrup showed high total and female literacy and enrolment rate, but low female workforce participation rate and adverse sex ratio. Central Assam districts like Sonitpur and Karbi Anglong also showed adverse sex ratio. Similarly, when we examined the performance of the districts categorized on the basis of literacy and DDP, we found that indicators like female literacy, female enrolment at higher level, sex ratio, proportion of female main, marginal and non workers, female workforce participation etc varied positively with literacy rate and per capita DDP. However, regarding male main workers or male workforce participation rate no such trend was observed.

It is evident from the Chapter III that most of the women of Assam were denied of employment opportunity. Only 14.14 per cent and 16 per cent of total government employees were women in 1994 and 2006 respectively. This means that the proportion did not improve even after 14 years. Less than 10% women were engaged as main workers and almost 80% women were non workers. Most of the

districts of Assam had adverse sex ratio; and enrolment of girl at primary level was below 50%. Enrolment at higher secondary level was even less, approximately 36%. So it can be said that development that took place in Assam failed to translate itself into the welfare of women. The women of Assam were observed to be relatively disempowered in the area of education, employment etc.

Regarding political participation we find that percentage of women elected members of Legislative Assembly was very less till 2006. Percentage of female voters was less than that of the male voters but the gender gap in voting was reducing over time. Similarly we find that percentage of women contestants and winners in 2006 election was relatively higher in Upper Assam compared to other parts of Assam and also varied positively with Literacy and DDP per capita with significant gender gap. No such variation was however seen regarding percentage of male and female voters.

When we compared the relative position of India and Assam in the level of women empowerment, we found that women of Assam were in disadvantageous position in respect of household decision making, control over resources, employment status and experience of sexual violence as compared to the women of India as a whole. However attitude towards wife beating and experience of physical violence were less in Assam as compared to India.

It is seen that female literacy has positive relationship with human development but same relationship is not found in case of female workforce participation and sex ratio. However, correlation analysis shows that a positive though not significant relationship is found in case of female work participation and human development index. Difference between HDI rank and GDI rank across the districts reveals that high HDI has not always been associated with high women empowerment through high human development of women.

5.3 Constraints to Women Empowerment:

From the findings of the preceding chapters it is clear that empowerment in true sense is yet to take place in the state. There are a number of constraints that act as hindrance to the process of women empowerment. Poverty, lack of education, employment and control over resources and lack of awareness about legal and constitutional rights are identified as the major constraints to women empowerment.

Even it is observed that many women having access to all these are not significantly empowered. Government has also undertaken many efforts including gender budgeting to empower women. But the real scenario is not improving. The basic reason behind poor empowerment is the lack of self realization on the part of women. To be really empowered, women must understand and realize that gender relation can be changed and gender equality is possible. The main hindrance is the mindset of the people that cherish age old traditions, customs and superstition. If women do not have sufficient courage to change themselves then no policy issue and no development effort can bring the desired level of change.

The present study paves the way for further prospects for the future researchers. The study of women empowerment at the disaggregate levels in the state of Assam opens various new and interesting facts which can be used for further research. The prospects of the study are mentioned below:

- The study reveals that most of the districts which shine in human development have adverse sex ratio. This requires further probing.
- The study also reveals that female workforce participation rate increases up to a critical level of DDP Per capita of Rs.25000/- after which it shows a declining trend. Some study can be undertaken to further examine the relationship with primary data.
- Experience of physical violence is less and that of sexual violence is more in Assam as compared to India. The reason for this can be explored in the light of prevailing insurgency problem in Assam.
- The two way linkage between human development and women empowerment can be studied more elaborately to explore various new dimensions using primary data.
- This study opens up the prospects of undertaking similar type of study in specific backward districts using primary data.

5.4 Suggestions and Policy Implications: The present study throws light on the status of women empowerment in India and Assam and also its relationship with human development. It is found that women of India and Assam are disempowered, both in absolute sense and relative to men. Although they have education, employment

and political participation to some extent, but do not have decision making capacity to a satisfactory level, most of the employed women do not have final say about the use of their own earnings and in the field of political participation; they are just the puppet in the hands of their husband. So education, employment etc may create the environment but these can not transform the lives of women at an instance. These factors may or may not lead to women empowerment unless powerless use these weapons to gain power. In spite of taking so many programmes by the government for empowerment of women, the wide gap between the achievement of men and women in the field of human development is also alarming. Some suggestions are given here which may help to bridge such gap.

- To become empowered urge should come from one's heart. So women must realize their subordinate status and should long for emancipation.
- This realization does not necessarily come from mere degree-oriented education but through the change in the mindsets of both males and females.
- Enlightened women need to organize awareness camps in the interior and remote areas to make their sisters aware of their rights in the society.
- College students, particularly the girl students, also through their community activities can bring a lot of change in the life of women by making them aware of the constitutional and legal rights and help them to achieve their desired goal.
- Though government of India has introduced various schemes to reduce poverty and guarantee employment, it has failed to ensure whether it benefits the actual beneficiaries. Hence, the government and NGOs have a larger role to play in this regard.
- Value-based education should be introduced in the curriculum and imparted to children in the school so that violence and injustice against women can be reduced.
- Media which plays a major role in changing mindsets of the people and portrays women as mere commodities need to be banned.

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APPENDIX TABLES

Table – 3.1

Area wise Percentage of Main, Marginal and Non-Workers in Assam, 2001

(Figures in per cent)

Area	District	Main Worker		Marginal Worker		Non Worker	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Lower Assam	Dhubri	44.38	4.27	4.82	3.85	51.77	91.88
	Kokrajhar	39.52	11.5	8.51	13.74	51.97	74.76
	Bongaigoan	43.13	7.38	5.30	8.08	51.57	84.54
	Goalpara	42.43	7.87	5.78	9.87	51.79	82.25
	Barpeta	42.69	5.79	5.00	8.27	52.30	85.93
	Nalbari	41.49	8.25	6.58	9.58	51.93	82.17
	Kamrup	45.24	8.16	5.02	6.50	49.74	85.34
	Total	43.23	7.31	5.59	7.85	51.34	84.84
Central Assam	Darrang	44.33	8.39	5.59	10.98	50.06	80.61
	Sonitpur	42.82	11.36	7.53	12.81	49.64	75.82
	Morigoan	44.31	6.18	5.92	10.34	49.75	83.46
	Nagoan	42.20	5.65	7.05	6.89	50.74	87.45
	K. Anglong	40.98	14.98	7.99	16.64	51.02	68.37
	Hailakandi	41.57	8.23	7.09	8.29	51.33	83.46
	Cachar	41.66	7.87	7.39	6.55	50.94	85.57
	N.C.Hills	43.15	13.54	5.45	11.01	51.38	75.44
	Karimganj	40.15	5.53	7.38	6.12	52.47	88.33
	Total	42.38	8.33	6.96	9.50	50.65	82.15
Upper Assam	Lakhimpur	44.93	19.21	17.74	30.65	38.19	50.13
	Dhemaji	38.49	15.14	11.62	22.53	50.56	62.32
	Golaghat	42.09	13.92	9.75	16.28	48.82	68.47
	Jorhat	42.28	13.78	11.08	15.71	47.37	70.49
	Sibsagar	39.95	13.70	11.39	16.01	48.65	70.28
	Dibrugarh	41.09	15.85	9.67	13.01	49.89	71.12
	Tinsukia	42.12	17.60	9.33	11.88	49.34	70.50
	Total	41.68	15.62	11.47	39.55	47.63	66.90
All Assam		42.45	9.82	7.41	10.89	50.13	79.28

Source: Census of India, 2001

Table- 3.2

Literacy wise Percentage of Main, Marginal and Non Worker in Assam, 2001

(Figures in per cent)

Literacy Level	District	Main Worker		Marginal Worker		Non Worker	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Low (Below 50%)	Dhubri	44.37	4.27	4.81	3.85	51.76	91.87
Moderate (50%-60%)	Kokrajhar	39.52	11.49	8.51	13.74	51.96	74.76
	Hailakandi	41.57	8.23	7.09	8.29	51.33	83.46
	Goalpara	42.42	7.87	5.78	9.87	51.78	82.25
	Barpeta	42.68	5.79	5.00	8.27	52.30	85.93
	Morigoan	44.31	6.18	5.92	10.34	49.75	83.46
	K Anglong	40.98	14.98	7.99	16.64	51.02	68.37
	Darrang	44.33	8.39	5.59	10.98	50.06	80.61
	Bongaigoan	43.12	7.38	5.29	8.07	51.57	84.54
	Total	42.56	8.48	6.17	10.61	51.25	80.90
High (60%-70%)	Sonitpur	42.82	11.36	7.53	12.81	49.64	75.82
	Lakhimpur	44.93	19.21	16.86	30.65	38.19	50.13
	Dhemaji	38.49	15.14	10.94	22.53	50.56	62.32
	N.C.Hills	43.15	13.54	5.45	11.01	51.38	75.44
	Karimganj	40.15	5.53	7.38	6.12	52.47	88.33
	Golaghat	42.09	13.92	9.07	16.28	48.82	68.47
	Cachar	41.66	7.87	7.39	6.55	50.94	85.57
	Nalbari	41.48	8.25	6.57	9.57	51.93	82.17
	Tinsukia	42.12	17.60	8.52	11.88	49.34	70.50
	Nagoan	42.20	5.65	7.05	6.89	50.74	87.45
	Dibrugarh	41.09	15.85	9.01	13.01	49.89	71.12
	Total	41.91	11.09	8.45	12.04	49.62	76.76
Higher (Above 70%)	Jorhat	42.28	13.78	10.34	15.71	47.37	70.49
	Sibsagar	39.95	13.70	11.39	16.01	48.65	70.28
	Kamrup	45.23	8.15	5.02	6.50	49.73	85.33
	Total	43.39	10.68	7.62	10.74	48.97	78.56
All Assam		42.45	9.82	7.41	10.89	50.13	79.28

Source: Census of India, 2001

Table- 3.3

DDP wise Percentage of Main, Marginal and Non Workers in Assam, 2001

(Figures in per cent)

Per Capita DDP (Rs.)	Districts	Main Worker		Marginal Worker		Non Worker	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Low (Below 15000)	Dhubri	44.37	4.27	4.81	3.85	51.76	91.87
	Kokrajhar	39.52	11.49	8.51	13.74	51.96	74.76
	Goalpara	42.42	7.87	5.78	9.87	51.78	82.25
	Nalbari	41.48	8.25	6.57	9.57	51.93	82.17
	Darrang	44.33	8.39	5.59	10.98	50.06	80.61
	Sonitpur	42.82	11.36	7.53	12.81	49.64	75.82
	Lakhimpur	44.93	19.21	16.86	30.65	38.19	50.13
	Dhemaji	38.49	15.14	10.94	22.53	50.56	62.32
	Morigoan	44.31	6.18	5.92	10.34	49.75	83.46
	Nagoan	42.20	5.65	7.05	6.89	50.74	87.45
	Karimganj	40.15	5.53	7.38	6.12	52.47	88.33
	Hailakandi	41.57	8.23	7.09	8.29	51.33	83.46
	Total		42.51	8.60	7.42	10.92	50.17
Moderate (15000-25000)	Golaghat	42.09	13.92	9.07	16.28	48.82	68.47
	Cachar	41.66	7.87	7.39	6.55	50.94	85.57
	K. Anglong	40.98	14.98	7.99	16.64	51.02	68.37
	Barpeta	42.68	5.79	5.00	8.27	52.30	85.93
	Dibrugarh	41.09	15.85	9.01	13.01	49.89	71.12
	Jorhat	42.28	13.78	10.34	15.71	47.37	70.49
	Bongaigoan	43.12	7.38	5.29	8.07	51.57	84.54
	Total		42.01	10.75	7.54	11.38	50.44
High (Above 25000)	Sibsagar	39.95	13.70	11.39	16.01	48.65	70.28
	N.C.Hills	43.15	13.54	5.45	11.01	51.38	75.44
	Kamrup	45.23	8.158	5.02	6.50	49.73	85.33
	Tinsukia	42.12	17.60	8.52	11.88	49.34	70.50
	Total		43.30	11.77	7.20	9.99	49.48
All Assam		42.45	9.82	7.41	10.89	50.13	79.28

Source: Census of India, 2001

Table – 3.4
Area wise Workforce Participation Rate in Assam, 2001

(Figures in per cent)

Area	Districts	Person	Male	Female
Lower Assam	Dhubri	28.73	48.23	8.12
	Bongaigoan	32.41	48.43	15.46
	Kokrajhar	36.96	48.03	25.23
	Kamrup	33.39	50.26	14.66
	Barpeta	31.39	47.70	14.07
	Nalbari	33.42	48.06	17.83
	Goalpara	33.32	48.21	17.74
	Total	32.49	48.66	15.16
Central Assam	Morigoan	33.81	50.24	16.54
	Hailakandi	30.09	47.53	11.67
	Karimganj	37.32	48.61	24.56
	K Anglong	40.63	48.98	31.62
	Sonitpur	37.74	50.36	24.18
	Darrang	35.10	49.93	19.38
	N.C.Hills	37.32	48.61	24.56
	Cachar	33.13	48.66	16.53
	Nagoan	31.44	49.26	12.55
	Total	32.23	49.05	14.42
Upper Assam	Dhemaji	43.74	49.44	37.68
	Tinsukia	40.55	50.65	29.49
	Lakhimpur	55.99	61.81	49.87
	Dibrugarh	39.86	50.10	28.87
	Golaghat	41.07	51.17	30.21
	Sibsagar	40.93	51.35	29.72
	Jorhat	41.47	51.17	30.21
	Total	42.98	52.36	32.90
All Assam		35.78	49.87	20.71

Source: Census of India, 2001



Table - 3.5

Literacy wise Workforce Participation Rate in Assam, 2001

(Figures in percent)

Literacy	Districts	Person	Male	Female
Low (Below 50%)	<i>Dhubri</i>	28.73	48.23	8.12
Moderate (50%-60%)	Kokrajhar	36.97	48.03	25.23
	Hailakandi	33.14	48.66	16.53
	Goalpara	33.32	48.21	17.75
	Barpeta	31.39	47.70	14.07
	Morigoan	33.81	50.24	16.54
	K Anglong	40.63	48.98	31.62
	Darrang	35.10	49.93	19.38
	Bongaigoan	32.40	48.43	15.46
	Total	34.36	48.74	19.09
High (60%-70%)	Sonitpur	37.75	50.35	24.18
	Lakhimpur	55.99	61.81	49.86
	Dhemaji	43.74	49.44	37.68
	N.C. Hills	37.32	48.61	24.56
	Karimganj	30.09	47.53	11.67
	Golaghat	41.07	51.17	30.21
	Cachar	32.23	49.05	14.43
	Nalbari	33.42	48.07	17.83
	Tinsukia	40.55	50.65	29.49
	Nagoan	31.44	49.26	12.25
	Dibrugarh	39.86	50.10	28.87
	Total	37.20	50.37	23.13
Higher (Above 70%)	Jorhat	41.47	52.62	29.51
	Sibsagar	40.93	51.34	29.72
	Kamrup	33.39	50.26	14.66
	Total	36.89	51.02	21.43
All Assam		35.78	49.87	20.71
Source: Census of India, 2001				

Table - 3.6

Per Capita DDP wise Workforce Participation Rate in Assam, 2001

(Figures in percent)

Per Capita DDP (Rs.)	Districts	Person	Male	Female
Low (<Below 15000)	Dhubri	28.72	48.23	8.12
	Kokrajhar	36.97	48.03	25.23
	Goalpara	33.32	48.21	17.74
	Nalbari	33.41	48.07	17.82
	Darrang	35.09	49.93	19.38
	Sonitpur	37.75	50.36	24.18
	Lakhimpur	55.99	61.81	49.87
	Dhemaji	43.74	49.43	37.67
	Morigoan	33.81	50.24	16.54
	Nagoan	31.44	49.25	12.55
	Karimganj	30.09	47.53	11.68
	Hailakandi	33.13	48.66	16.53
	Total	35.11	49.82	19.52
Moderate (15000-25000)	Barpeta	31.39	47.70	14.07
	Cachar	32.23	49.05	14.42
	K.Anglong	40.63	48.98	31.62
	Golaghat	41.07	51.17	30.21
	Jorhat	41.46	52.62	29.50
	Bongaigoan	32.40	48.43	15.45
	Dibrugarh	39.86	50.10	28.87
	Total	36.29	49.55	22.13
High (Above 25000)	Sibsagar	40.93	51.35	29.72
	Tinsukia	40.55	50.65	29.49
	N.C.Hills	37.32	48.61	24.56
	Kamrup	33.39	50.26	14.66
	Total	36.83	50.51	21.77
All Assam		35.78	49.87	20.71
Source: Census of India, 2001				

Table-3.8

Area wise Physical Achievement under SGSY in Assam

Area	Districts	No of SHGs formed during		No of Women SHGs formed during		No of women SHG taken up economic activities during 2006
		1999 to 2006	2006	1999 to 2006	2006	
Lower Assam	Dhubri	9453	57	4773	4	65
	Bongaigoan	2715	95	1234	43	45
	Nalbari	3610	3610	1638	86	68
	Kokrajhar	2666	33	1706	9	13
	Kamrup	9634	766	5264	635	52
	Barpeta	6724	199	3877	110	35
	Goalpara	4815	151	3403	95	25
	Total	39617	4911	21895 (55.26%)	982 (20%)	303
	Average	5660	702	3128	140	43
Central Assam	Sonitpur	21346	21346	15596	268	213
	Darrang	11942	0	6765	0	0
	Hailakandi	2475	0	764	0	4
	K. Anglong	2947	0	2799	0	60
	Nagoan	9906	369	4480	6	13
	N.C.Hills	737	0	416	0	0
	Cachar	2861	101	1722	90	7
	Morigoan	3773	53	1840	30	75
	Karimganj	4131	61	1409	41	36
	Total	60118	21930	35791 (59.53%)	438 (1.98%)	408
	Average	6680	2437	3977	48	45
Upper Assam	Dibrugarh	4751	0	4134	0	17
	Golaghat	5485	180	3418	115	30
	Sibsagar	6321	6321	5966	67	79
	Jorhat	5166	0	2501	13	0
	Dhemaji	4134	477	2215	0	15
	Tinsukia	3347	3347	2266	30	30
	Lakhimpur	6683	579	3937	330	17
	Total	35887	10904	24437 (68.09%)	555 (5.09%)	188
Average	5127	1558	3491	79	27	
All Assam	135622	37745	82123 (60.55%)	1959 (5.19%)	912	

Source: Annual Reports of PNRD Dept., Govt. of Assam, 2006-07

Table-3.9

Literacy wise Physical Achievement under SGSY in Assam

Literacy	Districts	No of SHG during		No of Women SHG during		No of Women SHG taken up Economic Activities during the Year
		1999 to 2006	2006	1999 to 2006	2006	
Low (Below 50%)	<i>Dhubri</i>	9453	57	4773 <i>(50.49%)</i>	4 <i>(7.02%)</i>	65
Moderate (50%-60%)	Kokrajhar	2666	33	1706	9	13
	Darrang	11942	0	6765	0	0
	Barpeta	6724	199	3877	110	35
	K Anglong	2947	0	2799	0	60
	Goalpara	4815	151	3403	95	25
	Morigoan	3773	53	1840	30	75
	Hailakandi	2475	0	764	0	4
	Bongaigoan	2715	95	1234	43	45
	Total	38057	531	22388 <i>(58.82%)</i>	287 <i>(54.04%)</i>	257
Average	4757	66	2798	36	32	
High (60%-70%)	Sonitpur	21346	21346	15596	268	213
	Dibrugarh	4751	0	4134	0	17
	Tinsukia	3347	3347	2266	30	30
	Dhemaji	4134	477	2215	0	15
	Nalbari	3610	3610	1638	86	68
	Nagoan	9906	369	4480	6	13
	N.C.Hills	737	0	416	0	0
	Cachar	2861	101	1722	90	7
	Lakhimpur	6683	579	3937	330	17
	Karimganj	4131	61	1409	41	36
	Golaghat	5485	180	3418	115	30
	Total	66991	30070	41231 <i>(61.55%)</i>	966 <i>(3.21%)</i>	446
	Average	6090	2734	3748	88	41
	Higher (Above 70%)	Sibsagar	6321	6321	5966	67
Jorhat		5166	0	2501	13	0
Kamrup		9634	766	5264	635	52
Total		21121	7087	13731 <i>(65.01%)</i>	715 <i>(10.08%)</i>	131
Average		7040	2362	4577	238	44
All Assam		135622	37745	82123 <i>(60.55%)</i>	1959 <i>(5.19%)</i>	912

Source: Annual Reports of PNRD Dept., Govt. of Assam, 2006-07

Table - 3.10

Per Capita DDP wise Physical Achievement under SGSY in Assam

Per Capita DDP (Rs.)	Districts	No. of SHGs during		No. of Women SHGs during		No of Women SHG taken up Economic Activities during the Year
		1999 to 2006	2006- 07	1999 to 2006	2006- 07	
Low (Below 15000)	Dhubri	9453	57	4773	4	65
	Sonitpur	21346	21346	15596	268	213
	Kokrajhar	2666	33	1706	9	13
	Darrang	11942	0	6765	0	0
	Goalpara	4815	151	3403	95	25
	Morigoan	3773	53	1840	30	75
	Hailakandi	2475	0	764	0	4
	Dhemaji	4134	477	2215	0	15
	Nagoan	9906	369	4480	6	13
	Lakhimpur	6683	579	3937	330	17
	Nalbari	3610	3610	1638	86	68
	Karimganj	4131	61	1409	41	36
	Total	84934	26736	48526 (57.13)	869 (3.25)	544
Average	7078	2228	4044	72	45	
Moderate (15000-25000)	Cachar	2861	101	1722	90	7
	Barpeta	6724	199	3877	110	35
	K Anglong	2947	0	2799	0	60
	Golaghat	5485	180	3418	115	30
	Jorhat	5166	0	2501	13	0
	Bongaigoan	2715	95	1234	43	45
	Dibrugarh	4751	0	4134	0	17
	Total	30649	575	19685 (64.22)	371 (64.52)	194
Average	4378	82	2812	53	28	
High (Above 25000)	N.C.Hills	737	0	416	0	0
	Kamrup	9634	766	5264	635	52
	Sibsagar	6321	6321	5966	67	79
	Tinsukia	3347	3347	2266	30	30
	Total	20039	10434	13912 (69.42)	732 (7.02)	161
Average	5010	2608	3478	183	40	
All Assam	135622	37745	82123 (60.55)	1959 (5.19)	912	

Source: Annual Reports of PNRD Dept., Govt. of Assam, 2006-07

Table - 3.11

Area wise Female and Total Literacy Rate in Assam, 2001

(Figures in per cent)

Area	Districts	Literacy Rate	
		Female	Total
Lower Assam	Dhubri	40.04	48.21
	Kokrajhar	42.40	51.63
	Bongaigoan	50.44	59.33
	Goalpara	50.85	58.03
	Barpeta	4.07	56.24
	Nalbari	57.26	67.23
	Kamrup	66.31	74.16
	Total	52.53	61.19
Central Assam	Darrang	46.40	55.44
	Sonitpur	49.73	67.54
	Morigoan	51.51	58.53
	Nagoan	54.74	61.73
	Karbi Anglong	47.30	57.70
	N.C.Hills	58.39	67.62
	Karimganj	57.28	66.24
	Hailakandi	50.46	59.64
	Cachar	59.41	67.82
	Total	52.61	61.16
	Upper Assam	Tinsukia	50.78
Dibrugarh		59.95	68.96
Sibsagar		66.81	74.47
Jorhat		68.49	76.33
Golaghat		60.99	69.38
Lakhimpur		59.59	68.56
Dhemaji		53.51	64.48
Total		60.35	69.23
All Assam		54.61	63.25

Source: Census of India, 2001

Table - 3.12

Literacy wise Female and Total Literacy Rate in Assam, 2001

(Figures in per cent)

Literacy	Districts	Literacy Rate	
		Female	Total
Low (Below 50%)	Dhubri	40.04	48.21
Moderate (50%-60%)	Kokrajhar	42.4	51.63
	Bongaigoan	50.44	59.33
	Goalpara	50.85	58.03
	Barpeta	47.07	56.24
	Darrang	46.4	55.44
	Morigoan	51.51	58.53
	Karbi Anglong	47.3	57.70
	Hailakandi	50.46	59.64
	Total	47.87	56.71
High (60%-70%)	Nalbari	57.26	67.23
	Sonitpur	49.73	59.00
	Nagoan	54.74	61.73
	N.C.Hills	58.39	67.62
	Karimganj	57.28	66.24
	Cachar	59.41	67.82
	Lakhimpur	59.59	68.56
	Dhemaji	53.51	64.48
	Golaghat	60.99	69.38
	Dibrugarh	59.95	68.96
	Tinsukia	50.78	60.95
	Total	55.96	64.85
Higher (Above 70%)	Jorhat	68.49	76.33
	Sibsagar	66.81	74.47
	Kamrup	66.31	74.16
	Total	66.91	74.71
All Assam		54.61	63.25
Source: Census of India, 2001			

Table-3.13

Per Capita DDP wise Female and Total Literacy Rate in Assam, 2001

(Figures in per cent)

Per Capita DDP (Rs.)	Districts	Literacy Rate	
		Female	Total
Low (Below 15000)	Dhubri	40.04	48.21
	Kokrajhar	42.40	51.63
	Goalpara	50.85	58.03
	Nalbari	57.26	67.23
	Darrang	46.40	55.44
	Sonitpur	49.73	59.00
	Morigoan	51.51	58.53
	Nagoan	54.74	61.73
	Karimganj	57.28	66.24
	Hailakandi	50.46	59.64
	Lakhimpur	59.59	68.56
	Dhemaji	53.51	64.48
	Total	50.80	59.38
Moderate (15000-25000)	Bongaigoan	50.44	59.33
	Barpeta	47.07	56.24
	Karbi Anglong	47.30	57.70
	Cachar	59.41	67.82
	Golaghat	60.99	69.38
	Jorhat	68.49	76.33
	Dibrugarh	59.95	68.96
	Total	56.16	64.99
High (Above 25000)	N.C.Hills	58.39	67.62
	Tinsukia	50.78	60.95
	Kamrup	66.31	74.16
	Sibsagar	66.81	74.47
	Total	62.54	70.94
All Assam		54.61	63.25
Source: Census of India, 2001			

Table - 3.14

Area wise Enrolment of Females by Stage in Assam, 2005-06

(Figures in per cent)

Area	Districts	Pre Primary	Middle	High School	Higher Secondary	Junior College
Lower Assam	Dhubri	49.86	45.14	40.15	30.46	29.03
	Bongaigoan	49.85	45.95	41.67	46.41	38.53
	Nalbari	49.23	46.27	43.32	35.34	36.50
	Kokrajhar	49.26	44.01	40.85	42.34	34.15
	Kamrup	49.57	44.31	41.21	27.80	40.00
	Barpeta	49.69	46.18	44.12	35.11	38.62
	Goalpara	50.24	47.98	47.16	22.13	37.50
	Total	49.69	45.52	42.53	33.30	37.93
Central Assam	Sonitpur	48.79	47.42	49.04	22.72	35.46
	Morigoan	50.56	48.23	39.02	42.73	38.17
	Hailakandi	48.69	47.39	45.62	29.69	-
	Cachar	48.27	46.95	43.11	43.58	40.91
	Darrang	49.74	45.81	45.10	37.23	42.78
	Karimganj	48.90	47.40	45.20	32.21	34.54
	K. Anglong	49.19	44.01	44.30	44.60	35.54
	N.C Hills	50.56	47.15	45.86	40.58	-
	Nagoan	50.30	47.52	39.92	38.16	39.00
	Total	49.43	46.97	43.47	36.51	39.29
Upper Assam	Dibrugarh	48.00	46.55	48.00	50.04	37.43
	Golaghat	48.34	45.98	41.44	35.59	39.06
	Sibsagar	48.64	47.53	46.56	44.16	45.81
	Jorhat	49.26	47.20	47.59	44.86	45.51
	Tinsukia	47.30	45.57	46.97	32.72	38.09
	Dhemaji	49.70	45.72	37.50	25.91	38.70
	Lakhimpur	48.96	47.95	49.56	34.77	42.26
	Total	48.54	46.78	46.52	40.48	42.63
All Assam		49.32	46.38	44.11	36.27	39.53
Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam, 2007						

Table - 3.15

Literacy wise Enrolment of Females by Stage in Assam, 2005-06

(Figures in per cent)

Literacy	Districts	Pre primary	Middle	High School	Higher Secondary	Junior College
Low (Below 50%)	Dhubri	49.86	45.14	40.15	30.46	29.03
Moderate (50%-60%)	Kokrajhar	49.26	44.01	40.85	42.34	34.15
	Darrang	49.74	45.81	45.10	37.23	42.78
	Barpeta	49.69	46.18	44.12	35.11	38.62
	K.Anglong	49.19	44.01	44.30	44.60	35.44
	Goalpara	50.24	47.98	47.16	22.13	37.50
	Morigoan	50.56	48.23	39.02	42.73	38.17
	Hailakandi	48.69	47.39	45.62	29.69	-
	Bongaigoan	49.85	45.95	41.67	46.41	38.53
	Total	49.71	46.21	43.56	38.69	39.18
High (60%-70%)	Sonitpur	48.79	47.42	49.04	22.72	35.46
	Dibrugarh	48.00	46.55	48.00	50.04	37.43
	Golaghat	48.34	45.98	41.44	35.59	39.06
	Tinsukia	47.30	45.57	46.97	32.72	38.09
	Dhemaji	49.70	45.72	37.50	25.91	38.70
	Nalbari	49.23	46.27	43.32	35.34	36.50
	Karimganj	48.90	47.40	45.20	32.21	34.54
	Nagoan	50.30	47.52	39.92	38.16	39.00
	N.C Hills	50.56	47.15	45.86	40.58	-
	Cachar	48.27	46.95	43.11	43.58	40.91
	Lakhimpur	48.96	47.95	49.56	34.77	42.26
		Total	48.99	46.84	44.62	36.26
Higher (Above 70%)	Sibsagar	48.64	47.53	46.56	44.16	45.81
	Jorhat	49.26	47.20	47.59	44.86	45.51
	Kamrup	49.57	44.31	41.21	27.80	40.00
		Total	49.27	45.83	44.41	35.08
All Assam		49.32	46.38	44.11	36.27	39.53

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam, 2007

Table - 3.16

Per Capita DDP wise Enrolment of Females by Stage in Assam, 2005-06

(Figures in per cent)

Per Capita DDP (Rs.)	Districts	Pre primary	Middle	High School	Higher Secondary	Junior College
Low (Below 15000)	Dhubri	49.86	45.14	40.15	30.46	29.03
	Sonitpur	48.79	47.42	49.04	22.72	35.46
	Kokrajhar	49.26	44.01	40.85	42.34	34.15
	Darrang	49.74	45.81	45.10	37.23	42.78
	Goalpara	50.24	47.98	47.16	22.13	37.50
	Morigoan	50.56	48.23	39.02	42.73	38.17
	Hailakandi	48.69	47.39	45.62	29.69	-
	Dhemaji	49.70	45.72	37.50	25.91	38.70
	Nalbari	49.23	46.27	43.32	35.34	36.50
	Nagoan	50.30	47.52	39.92	38.16	39.00
	Lakhimpur	48.96	47.95	49.56	34.77	42.26
	Karimganj	48.90	47.40	45.20	32.21	34.54
	Total		49.62	46.78	43.86	33.64
Moderate (15000-25000)	Golaghat	48.34	45.98	41.44	35.59	39.06
	Barpeta	49.69	46.18	44.12	35.11	38.62
	K.Anglong	49.19	44.01	44.30	44.60	35.54
	Bongaigoan	49.85	45.95	41.67	46.41	38.53
	Jorhat	49.26	47.20	47.59	44.86	45.51
	Cachar	48.27	46.95	43.11	43.58	40.91
	Dibrugarh	48.00	46.55	48.00	50.04	37.43
	Total		48.78	46.06	44.25	41.70
High (25000-above)	Sibsagar	48.64	47.53	46.56	44.16	45.81
	Tinsukia	47.30	45.57	46.97	32.72	38.09
	Kamrup	49.57	44.31	41.21	27.80	40.00
	N.C Hills	50.56	47.15	45.86	40.58	-
	Total		49.34	45.88	44.45	35.18
All Assam		49.32	46.38	44.11	36.27	39.53

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam, 2007

Table - 3.17

Area wise Sex Ratio in Assam, 1991& 2001

Area	Districts	1991	2001
Lower Assam	Dhubri	951	947
	Bongaigoan	940	945
	Kokrajhar	942	943
	Kamrup	881	901
	Barpeta	940	941
	Nalbari	937	939
	Goalpara	956	956
	Total	928	933
Central Assam	Hailakandi	931	935
	Morigoan	941	946
	Sonitpur	911	929
	Karbi Anglong	907	926
	Darrang	939	944
	Karimganj	947	947
	Nagoan	934	944
	N.C Hills	878	884
	Cachar	939	945
	Total	930	940
Upper Assam	Dibrugarh	908	931
	Golaghat	922	930
	Sibsagar	914	928
	Tinsukia	893	913
	Jorhat	917	933
	Lakhimpur	932	951
	Dhemaji	931	941
	Total	915	931
All Assam		925	935

Source: Census of India, 1991&2001

Table - 3.18

Literacy wise Sex Ratio in Assam, 1991 & 2001

Literacy	Districts	1991	2001
Low (Below 50%)	<i>Dhubri</i>	<i>951</i>	<i>947</i>
Moderate (50%-60%)	Kokrajhar	942	943
	Darrang	939	944
	Barpeta	940	941
	Karbi Anglong	907	926
	Goalpara	956	956
	Morigoan	941	946
	Hailakandi	931	935
	Bongaigoan	940	945
	<i>Total</i>	<i>940</i>	<i>942</i>
High (60%-70%)	Sonitpur	911	929
	Dibrugarh	908	931
	Golaghat	922	930
	Tinsukia	893	913
	Dhemaji	931	941
	Nalbari	937	939
	Karimganj	947	947
	Nagoan	934	944
	N.C Hills	878	884
	Cachar	939	945
	Lakhimpur	932	951
<i>Total</i>	<i>924</i>	<i>936</i>	
Higher (Above 70%)	Sibsagar	914	928
	Jorhat	917	933
	Kamrup	881	901
	<i>Total</i>	<i>897</i>	<i>914</i>
All Assam		925	935
Source: Census of India, 1991&2001			

Table - 3.19

Per Capita DDP wise Sex Ratio in Assam, 1991 & 2001

Per Capita DDP (Rs.)	District	1991	2001
Low (Below 15000)	Dhubri	951	947
	Sonitpur	911	929
	Kokrajhar	942	943
	Darrang	939	944
	Goalpara	956	956
	Morigoan	941	946
	Hailakandi	931	935
	Dhemaji	931	941
	Nalbari	937	939
	Nagoan	934	944
	Karimganj	947	947
	Lakhimpur	932	951
	Total	937	943
	Moderate (15000-25000)	Cachar	939
Barpeta		940	941
Karbi Anglong		907	926
Bongaigoan		940	945
Golaghat		922	930
Jorhat		917	933
Dibrugarh		908	931
Total		926	937
High (Above 25000)	Kamrup	881	901
	N.C Hills	878	884
	Tinsukia	893	913
	Sibsagar	914	928
	Total	891	909
Assam		925	935

Source: Census of India, 1991&2001

Table - 3.21
Area wise Voters, Contestants and Winners in Legislative Assembly in Assam, 2006

Area	Districts	Percentage of					
		Voters		Contestants		Winners	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Lower Assam	Bongaigoan	53.14	46.85	97.14	2.85	100	0
	Goalpara	50.55	49.44	90.90	9.09	100	0
	Barpeta	52.60	47.39	93.42	6.57	88.89	11.11
	Kamrup	51.81	48.18	93.75	6.25	90	10
	Nalbari	51.80	48.19	93.10	6.89	80	20
	Dhubri	51.38	48.61	93.24	6.75	100	0
	Kokrajhar	50.38	49.61	95	5	75	25
	Total	51.74	48.25	93.57	6.42	90.70	9.30
Central Assam	Nagoan	51.54	48.45	91.46	8.53	100	0
	Karimganj	51.96	48.03	97.87	2.12	100	0
	N.C.Hills	51.15	48.84	100	0	100	0
	Hailakandi	52.99	47.00	98.07	1.92	100	0
	Cachar	51.54	48.45	93.15	6.84	71.43	28.57
	K.Anglong	51.74	48.25	96.66	3.33	100	0
	Darrang	51.58	48.41	93.22	6.77	85.71	14.29
	Sonitpur	51.38	48.61	94.23	5.76	100	0
	Morigoan	51.13	48.86	95.65	4.34	66.67	33.33
	Total	51.63	48.36	94.56	5.43	91.84	8.16
Upper Assam	Sibsagar	51.66	48.33	95	5	100	0
	Dibrugarh	51.29	48.70	83.33	16.66	71.43	28.57
	Lakhimpur	51.07	48.92	96.96	3.03	100	0
	Dhemaji	51.14	48.85	85.71	14.28	50	50
	Tinsukia	51.90	48.09	94.11	5.88	100	0
	Jorhat	50.85	49.14	77.41	22.58	100	0
	Golaghat	51.39	48.60	86.36	13.63	75	25
	Total	51.34	48.65	88.88	11.11	88.24	11.76
Assam		51.6	48.4	92.97	7.02	90.48	10.52

Source: Election Commission of India,2006

Table - 3.22
Literacy wise Voters, Contestants and Winners in Legislative Assembly in Assam, 2006

Literacy Rate	Districts	Percentage of					
		Voters		Contestants		Winners	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Low (Below 50%)	Dhubri	<i>51.38</i>	<i>48.61</i>	<i>93.24</i>	<i>6.75</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>0</i>
Moderate (50%-60%)	Kokrajhar	50.38	49.61	95	5	75	25
	K.Anglong	51.74	48.25	96.66	3.33	100	0
	Darrang	51.58	48.41	93.22	6.77	85.71	14.29
	Hailakandi	52.99	47.00	98.07	1.92	100	0
	Barpeta	52.60	47.39	93.42	6.57	88.89	11.11
	Morigoan	51.13	48.86	95.65	4.34	66.67	33.33
	Bongaigoan	53.14	46.85	97.14	2.85	100	0
	Goalpara	50.55	49.44	90.90	9.09	100	0
	Total	51.79	48.20	94.69	5.30	89.47	10.53
High (60%-70%)	Cachar	51.54	48.45	93.15	6.84	71.43	28.57
	Karimganj	51.96	48.03	97.87	2.12	100	0
	N.C.Hills	51.15	48.84	100	0	100	0
	Sonitpur	51.38	48.61	94.23	5.76	100	0
	Nagoan	51.54	48.45	91.46	8.53	100	0
	Dibrugarh	51.29	48.70	83.33	16.66	71.43	28.57
	Lakhimpur	51.07	48.92	96.96	3.03	100	0
	Dhemaji	51.14	48.85	85.71	14.28	50	50
	Tinsukia	51.90	48.09	94.11	5.88	100	0
	Golaghat	51.39	48.60	86.36	13.63	75	25
	Nalbari	51.80	48.19	93.10	6.89	80	20
	Total	51.51	48.48	92.37	7.62	88.14	11.86
Higher (70% Above)	Jorhat	50.85	49.14	77.41	22.58	100	0
	Kamrup	51.81	48.18	93.75	6.25	90	10
	Sibasagar	51.66	48.33	95	5	100	0
	Total	51.56	48.43	90.72	9.27	95.45	4.55
Assam		51.6	48.4	92.97	7.02	90.48	10.52

Source: Election Commission of India, 2006

Table-3.33
Per capita DDP wise Voters, Contestants and Winners in Legislative Assembly in Assam, 2006

DDP Per capita (Rs)	Districts	Percentage of					
		Voters		Contestants		Winners	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Low (Below 15000)	Dhubri	51.38	48.61	93.24	6.75	100	0
	Kokrajhar	50.38	49.61	95	5	75	25
	Darrang	51.58	48.41	93.22	6.77	85.71	14.29
	Hailakandi	52.99	47.00	98.07	1.92	100	0
	Nalbari	51.80	48.19	93.10	6.89	80	20
	Morigoan	51.13	48.86	95.65	4.34	66.67	33.33
	Goalpara	50.55	49.44	90.90	9.09	100	0
	Lakhimpur	51.07	48.92	96.96	3.03	100	0
	Dhemaji	51.14	48.85	85.71	14.28	50	50
	Karimganj	51.96	48.03	97.87	2.12	100	0
	Sonitpur	51.38	48.61	94.23	5.76	100	0
	Nagoan	51.54	48.45	91.46	8.53	100	0
Total	51.42	48.57	93.95	6.04	92.06	7.94	
Moderate (15000-25000)	Cachar	51.54	48.45	93.15	6.84	71.43	28.57
	Barpeta	52.60	47.39	93.42	6.57	88.89	11.11
	K Anglong	51.74	48.25	96.66	3.33	100	0
	Jorhat	50.85	49.14	77.41	22.58	100	0
	Golaghat	51.39	48.60	86.36	13.63	75	25
	Dibrugarh	51.29	48.70	83.33	16.66	71.43	28.57
	Bongaigoan	53.14	46.85	97.14	2.85	100	0
Total	51.78	48.21	90.61	9.38	85.37	14.63	
High (25000 Above)	N.C.Hills	51.15	48.84	100	0	100	0
	Tinsukia	51.90	48.09	94.11	5.88	100	0
	Kamrup	51.81	48.18	93.75	6.25	90	10
	Sibasagar	51.66	48.33	95	5	100	0
Total	51.77	48.22	94.33	5.66	95.45	4.55	
Assam		51.6	48.4	92.97	7.02	90.48	10.52

Source: Election Commission of India,2006

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