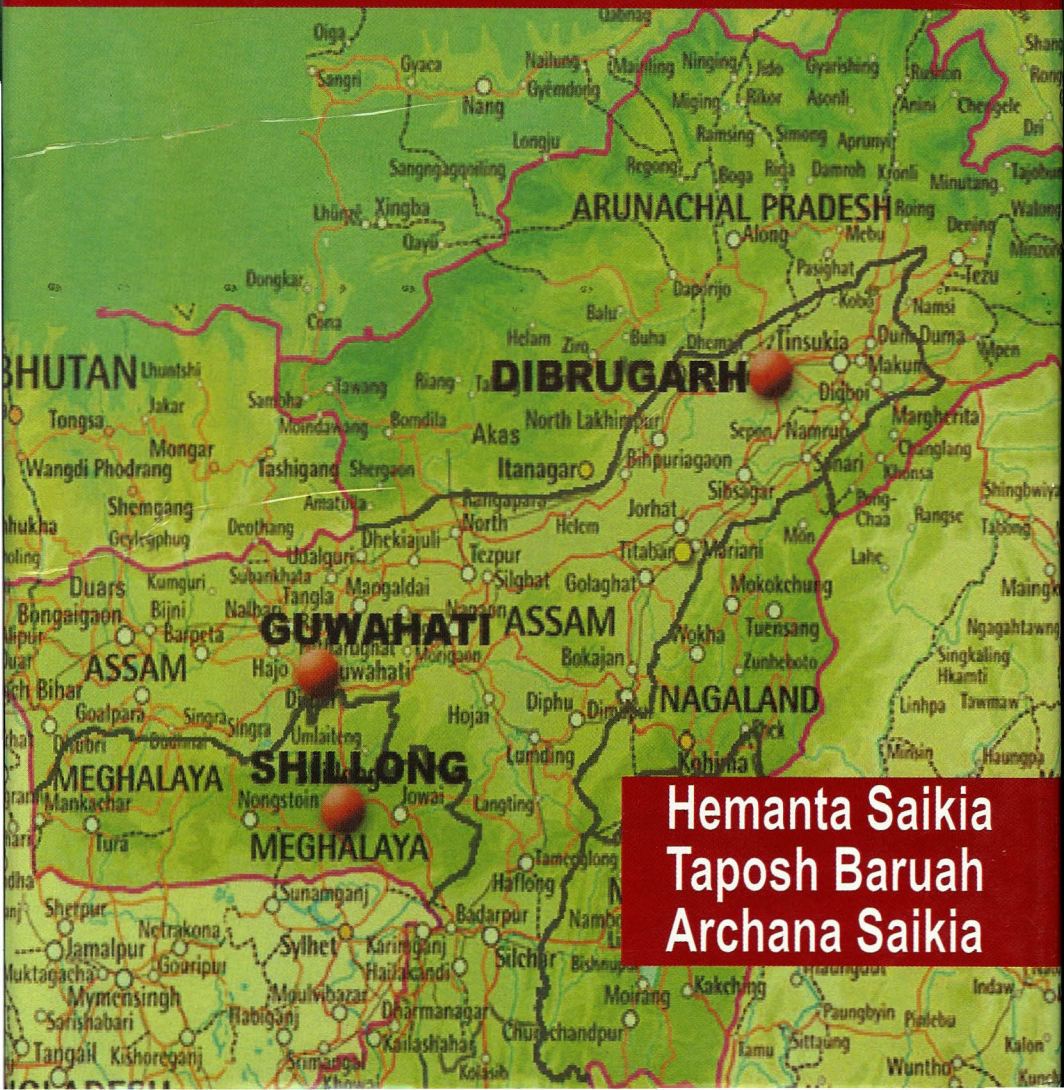


Socio-Economic Empowerment of Women in North East India



**Hemanta Saikia
Taposh Baruah
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Women in
North East India**



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Preface

Change is a natural process whether it is in nature or in the society. But most important is what kind of change it is? How much it is changing? And lastly how such change is taken place? Changes may have positive as well as negative effect. In the context of the gender the noted point is how society is transformed to discriminate or gendering the females. The word gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman and the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles and values. Gender is perceived closely associated with the roles and behaviour assigned to women and men based on their gender differences. All gender discrepancies are created by society and so gender inequality is therefore a form of inequality which is distinct from other forms of economic and social inequalities. It resides not only outside the household but also centrally within it. It follows not only from pre-existing differences in economic endowment between women and men but also from pre-existing gendered social norms and social perceptions. Gender inequality has adverse impact on development goals as it reduces economic growth. It hampers the overall well being because blocking women from participation in social, political and economic activities can adversely affect the whole society. Many developing countries including India have displayed gender inequality in education, employment and health.

Optimum utilization is the main aim of every society whether it is physical capital or human resource for attaining its real development. So for attaining these objectives, the role of men and women must be viewed from a complementary relationship point of view. But gender discrimination has been practical in our society despite of different steps taken by Government to ensure economic, constitutional, educational and other social qualities to the women is varying degrees specially to the folk women. The role of the men and women are indispensable in the development process both being unavoidable part of human society. But women unduly are discriminated in all walks of life even though biologically they are equal. Women empowerment can enhance the degree of rural development in India. India has been a welfare state ever since its

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independence and the primary objective of all governmental endeavors have been the welfare of its millions of people. Planning has been one of the pillars of the Indian policy since independence and the country's strength is derived from the achievement of planning. The policies and programmes have been designed with the aim of alleviation of rural poverty which has been one of the primary objectives of planned development in India. It was realized that a sustainable strategy of poverty alleviation has to be based on increasing the productive employment opportunities in the process of growth itself. Elimination of poverty, ignorance, diseases and inequality of opportunities and providing a better and higher quality of life were the basic premises upon which all the plans and blueprints of development were built.

Man and woman are both equal and both plays a vital role in the creation and development of their families in particular and the society in general. Indeed, the struggle for health equality has been one of the major concerns of the women's movement all over the world. Rural women in Asia are among the most disadvantaged people in the world in terms of their health status and access to accurate and appropriate health information and comprehensive, adequate and affordable health services. Sexual and reproductive health is a particular concern for rural women as a host of social, cultural, political, and economic factors increase. Asian rural women are often vulnerabilities to pregnancy and childbirth-related deaths and disabilities, unsafe abortion, and reproductive cancers. Generally the rural women are not achieving their fundamental sexual and reproductive rights such as their right to exercise control over their bodies and sexual and reproductive lives, which encompasses their right to decide upon such issues as contraception, marriage and abortion. Further, their overall health status is diminished by the lives they are forced to lead – lives that pivot around the harsh realities of malnutrition, illness, injury, and fatigue, frequently the consequence of long hours of demanding physical labour in unhygienic and dangerous conditions; the strains of childbirth and caring for multiple children; and not having enough to eat, which is often the result of more and better food going to male household members.

The present status of women in North East Region (NER) is satisfactory in terms of those women who are blessed enough to avail each and every opportunity of the modern world which are

belonged to the middle class or upper middle class. On the other hand there are still a major portion of women who belong to the category called 'Below poverty line.', and these women are to be perceived anywhere in the urban places as well as villages. The present book is an effort to analyze the status of women and their empowerment in terms of various indicators such as access to education, employment, household decision making power, economic autonomy, autonomy of movement, coverage to media, political involvement, practice of domestic violence etc in the state of NER, using both primary and secondary data obtained from various sources. On the other hand the development process in the NER is not gender neutral; women enjoy quite inferior status as compared to the average women in India. Percentage of women in the command services and their political participation is quite low and does not show any sign of significant improvement. Sex ratio though not in favor of women is improving over time. Therefore women enjoy better status in the NER as compared to women in India in terms of decision making power at the household level while the situation is reverse in case of their financial autonomy and sexual violence. Equally, inter district disparity is rampant in the NER. For example in Assam, districts like Kamrup and Tinisukia in spite of having high per capita DDP have not been able to transform the development effort to bridge the gender gap. Districts with high literacy rates are having high proportion of main and marginal female workers and low proportion of non-workers. Higher the literacy, higher is the female workforce participation rate. Female enrolment rate is below fifty per cent in spite of universalisation of primary education and provision of mid day meal schemes. Although Government has undertaken a number of steps the situation has remained gloomy mainly because the educated women are not forward looking. There is a need to create awareness towards achieving the desired goal of women empowerment in the state.

In this book by identifying and quantifying the gender gap, we hope to provide policy-makers with a tool offering direction and focus for the work of significantly improving the economic, political and social potential of all their citizens. In addition, we hope that this book provides the impetus for policy-makers to strengthen their commitment to the idea of women's empowerment and to concentrate the political will, energy and resources with aid agencies and civil society organizations to make gender equality a reality.

We request our colleagues in the teaching profession, research scholars and all others who are interested in the studying the gender related issues as well as the problems of the women in Assam to send their suggestions and constructive criticism for further improvement of the book. The intimation of errors and serious misprints will be mostly gratefully received and duly incorporated in the subsequent edition.

**Hemanta Saikia
Taposh Baruah
Archana Saikia**

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**Hemanta Saikia
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List of Symbols, Abbreviations and Nomenclature

\$	Dollar
AAPA	All Assam Progressive Women's Association
AMSS	Assam Mahila Samata Society
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
C	Celsius
CBR	Crud Birth Rate
CDR	Crud Death Rate
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Central Statistics Organization
DDP	District Domestic Product
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Gender Empowerment Index
GES	Gender Equality Strategy
HDI	Human Development Index
Japi	Headgear
m	Meter
max	Maximum.
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
Muga Silk	A kind of traditional Cloth
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organization
ORT	Oral Rehydration Therapy
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
SHG	Self Help Groups.
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme.
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIFEM	UN Development Fund for Women
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

“Women is a companion of man gifted with equal mental capacities, she has the right to participate in the minutest details of the activities of man; and she has the same right to freedom and liberation as of man” —Mahatma Gandhi.

The word gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman and the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles and values. The division between sex and gender was introduced to deal with the general tendency to attribute women's subordination to their autonomy. For ages it was believed that the different characteristics, roles and status accorded to women and men in society are determined by sex, and they are likely and therefore not changeable. Gender is perceived closely associated to the roles and behaviour assigned to women and men based on their gender differences. As soon as a child is born families and societies begin the process of gendering. For example, the birth of the son is rejoiced, but the birth of a daughter crammed with pain; sons are showered with love, respect, better food and proper health care. Boys are encouraged to be tough and outgoing; girls are encouraged to be homebound and shy. All these differences are gender differences and they are created by society. Gender inequality is therefore a form of inequality which is distinct from other forms of economic and social inequalities. It resides not only outside the

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household but also centrally within it. It stalks not only from pre-existing differences in economic endowment between women and men but also from pre-existing gendered social norms and social perceptions. Gender inequality has adverse impact on development goals as it reduces economic growth. It hampers the overall well being because blocking women from participation in social, political and economic activities can adversely affect the whole society. Many developing countries including India have displayed gender inequality in education, employment and health. It is common to find girls and women suffering from high mortality rates.

The development of a society is judged by the status of females in the society and that is why women are recognized as input and well-known contributors to the society. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India once said, "You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women". India's attitudes toward women range from respecting them as the heavenly form of power to near heartless overthrow. According to Sen:

'Gender inequality survives in most parts of the world — from Japan to Zambia, from the Ukraine to the USA — but inequality between women and men can take very many different forms. Indeed, gender inequality is not one homogeneous phenomenon, but a collection of disparate and interlinked problems.' (Sen, 2001)

The Indian government gifted women and men equal rights in its constitution; however, in socio-economic life, women live in a worst condition. Even though women empowerment and gender equality are identified as a goal in the Millennium Declaration which identifies the need to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development, but women in world is still in front of risk of inadequate healthcare, cultural pressures, ignorance etc (UNDP, 2003). Since the last few decades women condition has been getting special attention the world over, but women in India especially those in rural areas bearing double burden on their shoulders, have never liberally articulated their sorrow over socio-economic needs. Even in urban areas where immunities and extensive access to women empowerment services is relatively far better, women get a rare transaction. Even women general upper classes need not get the necessary attention. Women carry a high burden of chronic diseases which is due to absence of care or total neglect of illnesses. This situation represents that women's position is getting the least priority

in the family. Gender unfairness in nutrition and health care in youth, early marriage and lack of voluntary check on family size and poor state of pre-natal and post-natal maternal health care services only intensify women's poor status and discrimination problems. Even the negative effect of poverty is even more sensitive because of the existing gender bias against women. Due to poverty, illiteracy and lack of awareness, children are worsening health conditions of women. In this book, an attempt is made to discuss the gender inequality and women empowerment in North East India with special focus on Assam in particular along with the socio-economic, cultural factors affecting the women.

India remains a country that is perpetually coping with sweltering poverty and its caste system. Most of the Indian women continue to practice a flow of responsibilities such as fiery marriages and relationships and deficiencies on access to various wealth, including those which would have been acceptable by the full exercise of residency. They have seen themselves neither in the autonomist nor in the statement of their country nor in the modern communication systems. The typical female advantage in life expectancy is also not seen in India which suggests that there are regular problems with the condition of women health. Indian women have high mortality rates, particularly during childhood and in their reproductive years. The health of Indian women is intrinsically linked to their status in society. The contributions of women to families often are disregarded and instead they are viewed as economic burdens. On the other hand, there is a strong son preference in India, as sons are expected to care for parents as they are aged. This son preference, along with high dowry costs for daughters, sometimes results in the ill-treatment of daughters. Further, Indian women have low levels of both education and labour force participation. They typically have little autonomy, living under the control of first their fathers, then their husbands, and finally their sons (World Bank, 1996). All of these factors exert a negative impact on the health status of Indian women. Poor health has consequences not only for women but also for their families. Women in poor health are more likely to give birth to low weight infants. They also are less likely to be able to provide food and adequate care for their children. Finally, a woman's health affects the household economic well-being, as a woman in poor health will be less productive in the labour force. Thus due to the wide variation in cultures, religions, and levels of development among India's states and union territories, the empowerment of women is one of the central issues in the process of development of India.

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The Government of India has made empowerment of women as one of the principal objectives of the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) and also declared 2001 as the year of 'Women's Empowerment'. Constitution of India has bestowed and guaranteed equality before law and equal opportunities for men and women as fundamental rights. Thus, the essential of gender partnership in matters of development has been recognised. In order to give a stimulus to women and appropriate institutional apparatus and interference have been consciously built into the development design. Separate institutions for women and child development, departments at the central and state levels, creation of the National Commission for Women and also state commission for women in several states are some of the important developments for the betterment and prosperity of women. The launching of 'Rashtriya Mahila Kosh', 'Indira Mahila Yojana', 'Mahila Samridhi Yojana', reserving of one third of the number of seats in Panchayats and the local bodies are programmes launched with a view to improve and empower women socially, economically and in political frontiers. But there is a great disparity in the socio economic status as well as empowerment activities of women among the states of India as the culture and tradition of the people are different which makes the differences in women status and development.

Assam, the gateway to the North Eastern part of India is located in the heart of country's north eastern region. The total land area is 78, 438 sq.km. The total population of the state is 26.6 million (2001 census). Density of population is 340 per sq. km. Sex ratio is 932 females per 1000 males (2001 census). The state presently has 23 districts and has 2.7 percent of the total population of the country. The life expectancy is projected to be 57.3 years for males and 58.8 years for females in Assam as compared with 62.4 years for males and 63.4 years for females in all-India. Moreover half of married women in Assam report some type of health problems. Among these women only 25% sought any advice or treatment. Domestic violence is also common. In this book an attempt has been made to analyze the nature and status of gender discrimination in rural areas and its transition along and women empowerment.

Significance of Study

Optimum utilization is the main aim of every society whether it is physical capital or human resource for attaining its real development. So for attaining these objectives, the role of men and women must

be viewed from a complementary relationship point of view. But gender discrimination has been practical in our society despite of different steps taken by Government to ensure economic, constitutional, educational and other social qualities to the women is varying degrees specially to the folk women. The role of the men and women are indispensable in the development process both being unavoidable part of human society. But women unduly are discriminated in all walks of life even though biologically they are equal. Women empowerment can enhance the degree of rural development in India. India has been a welfare state ever since its independence and the primary objective of all governmental endeavors have been the welfare of its millions. Planning has been one of the pillars of the Indian policy since independence and the country's strength is derived from the achievement of planning. The policies and programmes have been designed with the aim of alleviation of rural poverty which has been one of the primary objectives of planned development in India. It was realized that a sustainable strategy of poverty alleviation has to be based on increasing the productive employment opportunities in the process of growth itself. Elimination of poverty, ignorance, diseases and inequality of opportunities and providing a better and higher quality of life were the basic premises upon which all the plans and blue-prints of development were built.

The present status of women in North East Region (NER) is satisfactory in terms of those women who are blessed enough to avail each and every opportunity of the modern world which are belonged to the middle class or upper middle class. On the other hand there are still a major portion of women who belong to the category called 'Below poverty line.', and these women are to be perceived anywhere in the urban places as well as villages. The present book is an effort to analyze the status of women and their empowerment in terms of various indicators such as access to education, employment, household decision making power, economic autonomy, autonomy of movement, coverage to media, political involvement, practice of domestic violence etc in the state of NER, using both primary and secondary data obtained from various sources. On the other hand the development process in the NER is not gender neutral; women enjoy quite inferior status as compared to the average women in India. Percentage of women in the command services and their political participation is quite low and does not show any sign of significant improvement. Sex ratio though not in favor of women is improving over time. Therefore women enjoy better

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status in the NER as compared to women in India in terms of decision making power at the household level while the situation is reverse in case of their financial autonomy and sexual violence. Equally, inter district disparity is rampant in the NER. For example in Assam, districts like Kamrup and Tinisukia in spite of having high per capita DDP have not been able to transform the development effort to bridge the gender gap. Districts with high literacy rates are having high proportion of main and marginal female workers and low proportion of non-workers. Higher the literacy, higher is the female workforce participation rate. Female enrolment rate is below fifty per cent in spite of universalisation of primary education and provision of mid day meal schemes. Although Government has undertaken a number of steps the situation has remained gloomy mainly because the educated women are not forward looking. There is a need to create awareness towards achieving the desired goal of women empowerment in the state. In this regard in August 1990 the parliament of India had passed the 'National Commission for Women Act' in response to the demand of women's organizations and social workers. Accordingly on 31st January, 1992, the 'National Commission for Women' was set up. On 24th November, 1993 on the occasion of Women's Day during the "Quami Ekta" week the Assam Government also promulgated an ordinance for constitution of the 'State Commission for Women'. Finally on 25th January, 1994 the State Government had passed the Act in the State Legislative Assembly and the State Government constituted a nine member committee for a period of three years. Hence the 'Assam State Commission for Women' came into existence in the year 1994. However still half of currently married women in Assam report same type of unfairness practices.

In this book by identifying and quantifying the gender gap, we hope to provide policy-makers with a tool offering direction and focus for the work of significantly improving the economic, political and social potential of all their citizens. In addition, we hope that this book provides the impetus for policy-makers to strengthen their commitment to the idea of women's empowerment and to concentrate the political will, energy and resources with aid agencies and civil society organizations to make gender equality a reality.

Background

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) cannot be completed without progress towards gender equality. Gender inequality resides

alive in all societies and at all levels of society. Urban women, while generally giving out specific gender interests arising from a common set of responsibilities and roles, constitute a fairly diverse group. There are elderly women, working women and women whose major accountability is in the domestic sphere. There are also women who balance manifold roles at the same time. Poor women living in slums and low resource areas face disadvantages which are very different from those faced by women from middle class families. Slum dwellers also experience an unequal level of service; women are doubly disadvantaged from poor access. Experience has shown that women not only bear the brunt of poverty, but their empowerment is a precondition for their progress. Urban development is generally assumed to be 'Gender Neutral' i.e. providing equal access to men and women. This idea however is misplaced and physical infrastructure projects that seemingly respond to diverse standards for men and women may actually have very dissimilar impacts on the two groups. Infrastructure development which appears to benefit women in a broad-brush way does so effectively only if gender specific interventions are planned, budgeted, implemented and monitored. Crucial adjustments are needed in urban project designs and planning processes to ensure equal gender benefits.

Empowerment is a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional concept. It is a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources - material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and financial resources like money - and access to money and control over decision-making at home, community, society and nation and to gain 'power'. According to the Country Report of Government of India, empowerment means moving from a position of enforced powerlessness to one of power. Empowerment of women is crucial for the development of the rural India. Bringing women into the mainstream of development is a major concern for the Government of India. The programmes for poverty alleviation have a women's component to ensure flow of adequate funds to this section. The National Maternity Benefit Scheme extends financial assistance of Rs. 500 to pregnant women, who are living below the poverty line and are 19 years of age or above, up to first two live births. The Government of India has made Empowerment of Women as one of the prime objectives of the Nine Five Year Plan and also declared 2001 as the year of 'Women's Empowerment'. Constitution of India also has bestowed and assured equality before law, universal adult permit and equal opportunities for men and women as

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fundamental rights. The imperative of gender partnership in matters of development has been recognised. In order to give a boost to empowerment of women and appropriate institutional mechanisms an interventions have been consciously built into the development design. Separate institutions for women and child development departments at the central and state levels, creation of the National Commission for Women and also State Commission for Women in several States are some of the important developments for the betterment and prosperity of women. The empowerment of women is one of the central issues in the process of development of countries all over the world. A significant development in recent years has been the rapidly increasing of community-based organizations and initiatives at the local level for women development. In this context the women empowerment programmes in the form of women development and gender equality have emerged as influential contributors in changing the lives of poor women, enhancing incomes and generating positive externalities such as increased self-esteem of women. In this book an endeavor has been made to determine the factors that leads to the development of the women status and helps in reducing the gender discrimination in rural areas. An attempt has also been made to understand the nature and changes in gender inequality in rural areas.

Objectives of Study

The following are the main objectives of this study:

1. To access the transformations in the status and gender inequality of rural women.
2. To analyze the factors that leads to the development of women status and gender discrimination.
3. To study the nature and status of female literacy in NER.
4. To examine the status of women in NER.
5. To analyze the inter linkage between women status and rural development.

Hypothesis or Research Questions

The following hypothesis will be taken for during the course of the study:

- a. Sex ratio is more sensitive to income of female.
- b. The self help group is not the significant factor in enhancing women income.

Research Methodology

Research Methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. The present study is being carried out with following methodology.

Universe or Population

Among the states of Assam, Golaghat district is considered or the sample study purpose. Population or universe is the aggregate or totality of elementary units, such as about which information is desired. For the present study purpose the population will be eight blocks and towns of the Golaghat district

Data Collection Method

The collected dataset are classified generally into primary and secondary data. The primary data are those which are collected afresh and for the first time and thus original in character. On the other hand secondary data are those which have already been collected by someone else and which have been passed through the statistical process. This research is based on the both primary and secondary data. The secondary data will be used to study the macro economic study purpose only and to analyze the historical perspective of research. Secondary data is collected from the publications of various organizations viz. Statistical Department, Govt. of Assam publications, Census of India, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Research Publications of individual and institutional NSSO, CSO, NFHS-I, II, III etc.

Sample Selection

A sample is a part of whole i.e. a sample is a group of items selected from the population for the purpose of getting information about the characteristics of the items of that population. The method by which a representative sample can be obtained from a population is called sampling technique.

The primary data will be collected by undertaking field study for investing the women empowerment. For present study the sample survey will be conducted following multi stage sampling method of probability sampling (Random sampling). Multistage sampling technique involves several methods of random sampling. Total sample will be collected from the rural and urban areas in about 50:50 ratios. In collecting samples from rural areas, one village is

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selected from each of the eight blocks. From these villages, 10 households are randomly selected which will generate around 80 household for this study purpose. There are 6 towns namely Bokakhat town, Dergaon town, Golaghat town, Barpather town, town Sarupather, town Numaligarh. In collecting samples from urban areas, in the first stage one ward (about 30%) from each town is randomly selected. In the 2nd stage 13 households are randomly selected from the each ward which will generate 78 households. There is two set of schedules namely household schedule and village schedule are prepared for collecting primary data. Household schedule is collected from sample households and village schedule is collected from village head or school teacher or any other educated people to study the overall status of the women. Information on the general background and other details relating to women of each household in the sample has been collected by interviewing a senior member (usually the female head of the household) of the family. For carrying out these interviews and for recording the collected information, a standard schedule of question was used. This schedule was finalized after a number of pre test in the field.

Analysis of Collected Data

Data thus collected is processed and tabulated and then analyzed using statistical and econometrics tools. For the comparison of various series of data of gender inequality average, ratios, percentage etc are used. Graphical techniques to represent the above calculation are also presented. In the process of hypothesis testing quantitative techniques are used. For testing the first hypothesis Regression analysis is conducted between the variables namely sex ratio incorporating literacy ratio of female and female women average income as explanatory variable. The other Hypothesis is also tested with similar way by applying similar procedure.

Historical Perspective of Research

In recognition of the importance of establishing gender equality around the world the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was established as a separate fund within the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 1984. At that time, the Genera Assembly instructed it to "Ensure women's involvement with mainstream activities." The Platform of action resulting from the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women expanded this concept,

calling it "Gender Mainstreaming", i.e. the application of gender perspectives to all legal and social norms and standards to all policy development, research, planning, advocacy, development, and implementation and monitoring - as a mandate for all member states. In this way, the gender factor is no longer to be only a supplement to development but central to the practice of development. As a result of the Beijing conference and the many years of work leading up to it more than 100 countries announced new initiatives to improve the status of women. In the year 2000, the follow-up Beijing conference further strengthened the application of the mainstreaming concept, and used it to highlight the need for more progress in reaching equality worldwide.

The principle of gender equality is protected in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles. The Constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women. Within the framework of a democratic polity, laws, development policies, plans and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. From the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission for Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the rights and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local levels. However, there still exists a wide gap between the goals enunciated in the Constitution, legislation, policies, plans, programmes, and related mechanisms on the one hand and the situational reality of the status of women in India, on the other. This has been analyzed extensively in the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, "Towards Equality" in 1974 and highlighted in the National Perspective Plan for Women, 1988-2000, the Shramshakti Report, 1988 and the Platform for Action, Five Years after- an assessment."

Traditionally 'Sati' was prevalent among certain factions of the society in ancient India, who either took the promise or deemed it a great honor to die on the funeral pyres of their husbands. Even many times women are forced burned down with their husband. In

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the modern times, there was one instance of a Sati reported in Rajasthan (late 1980s), and another in Madhya Pradesh (in year 2002) that caused a lot of social disorder. Now a days even though this custom is banned during the time of British Government but some kind of inhuman activities are still prevalent against the women in not only India but in all over the world. When Gandhiji assumed India's leadership the average life span of an Indian woman was only twenty seven years. Babies and the pregnant women ran a high risk of dying young. 'Child

Marriage' was very common and widows were in very large number. Only 2% of the women had any kind of education and women did not have an identity of their own. Women could not go out of the house unless accompanied by men and the face covered with cloth. The fortunate ones who could go to school had to commute in covered carts. Gandhiji claimed that a woman is completely equal to a man and practiced it in stringent sense. Thousands and millions of women, educated and illiterate, house wives and widows, students and elderly participated in the India's freedom movement because his influence. For Gandhiji, the freedom fight was not political alone; it was also an economic and social reform of a national proportion. After a couple of decades, this equality became very natural in India. After India's freedom in 1947 and adoption of constitution (1950), emphasized equality of women.

Plan of the Book

This book is organized in twelve chapters. Chapter one is mostly based on research methodology; conceptual framework of the study. First part considers background, objectives of the study and the 2nd part considers the methodological framework. A brief review of the literature is also done in the 2nd chapter. Further some important concepts mostly of the gender inequality fields are depicted in the last part of the chapter. The 3rd chapter is designed to present a brief picture of the North East India. Based on the survey of available literature, 4th chapter of the book is designed to understand the nature of the problem or topic i.e. gender inequality in NER. But before going to that first an introduction to the women in North Eastern Region of India is depicted. In the fifth chapter we emphasized on the education level of women in NER and so a detail picture of educational attainment of women is presented in this chapter. The chapter 6th is also designed with similar fashion and we analyze the

educational level of women in Assam and its dimensions. The chapter 7th has covered the empowerment process of women in Assam. In the chapter 8th we have focus on the Family Structures and Family Planning. The chapter nine is grouped to focus on the self help group and empowerment process of women. The chapter 10th has analyzed the inter linkage between women technology and development. The chapter 11th has given emphasized on the tribal women especially the Nishi tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and condition of women. Last chapter is the concluding chapter is deal with the summary of findings, conclusion, and suggestions.

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About the Book

Man and woman are both identical and both demonstrate a pivotal role in the creation and development of the society in general. All gender discrepancies are created by society and so gender inequality is therefore a form of inequality which is distinct from other forms of economic and social inequalities. It resides not only outside the household but also centrally within it. In this regard the development process in the NER is not gender neutral. The present status of women in North East Region (NER) is satisfactory in terms of those women who are blessed enough to avail each and every opportunity of the modern world. The present book is an effort to analyze the status of women and their empowerment in terms of various indicators in the state of NER, using both primary and secondary data obtained from various sources. Although Government has undertaken a number of steps the situation has remained gloomy mainly because the educated women are not forward looking. There is a need to create awareness towards achieving the desired goal of women empowerment in the state.

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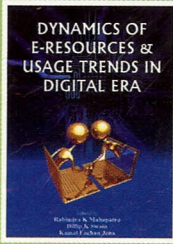
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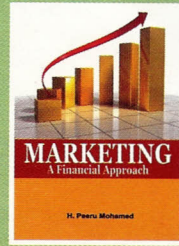


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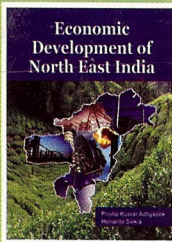
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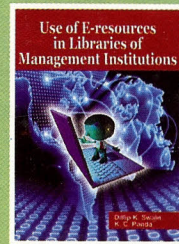
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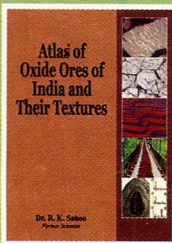
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