

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351302710>

Status of women in North–East India.

Article · May 2020

CITATIONS

3

READS

12,268

3 authors, including:



Meetu Khosla

DRC University of Delhi

95 PUBLICATIONS 195 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



Tsering Yangzes

University of Delhi

1 PUBLICATION 3 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



religious commitment culture health and wellbeing [View project](#)



Values Optimizing Lifestyle [View project](#)

Status Of Women In North East India**1. Akanksha Singh***Daulat Ram College , University of Delhi*agujsingh2599@gmail.com**2. TseringYangzes***Indraprastha College for Women , University of Delhi**Department of Psychology, University of Delhi*tyangzes7@gmail.com**3. Dr. Meetu Khosla***Associate professor , Department of psychology , Daulat Ram College , University of Delhi*meetukhoslaphd@gmail.com**Abstract**

The women in general play a very important role in every community. The status of women in India differ in each region. In most parts of India women are considered as a weaker section of the society due to various reasons like gender differences, customs, traditions, attitudes and also due to patriarchal nature of the society. However, today in most parts of the country women are outshining, and enjoying equal rights as men and striving for the best. This paper seeks to bring in some of the frames of the women in Northeast India. The idea of Northeast is too contested, at the same time constitutes a very large area, to bring into the ambit of this paper. Therefore, what it attempts to do is to take a view from afar and see from a broader lens touching the status of women in north east India with respect to dignity, rights, education, roles in the family and society, opportunities, occupation, and violence. The regions selected for the study were Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Assam Meghalaya and Tripura. The age group was approximately 12 to 40 years of age. The methodology of this paper is descriptive and required information were collected from different secondary sources like books, research articles, different government documents, etc. The implications of the study is to bring awareness about the condition of women of north east communities. Both the positive and negative aspects that they live in are explained, which provides a more comprehensive and clear picture about the overall status of women in the North East Indian regions.

Keywords: *North-East, Women, Status, Equality.*

Introduction

India is known for its heritage. The country has been hailed as one of the most mosaic combinations of various cultural identities. Northeast India is the distinct region with its language and customs. The entire region of North East is known for its ethnic and religious diversity. Buddhism occupies an important place and is followed by a large number of people in comparison to other religions. Petroleum and tea are two compelling resources harnessed in the region.

Arunachal Pradesh is the largest among the north-eastern states in India. Ethnic and linguistic array is a noticeable feature of the state.

Assam is a land of scenic beauty with rivers like Brahmaputra and Barak. It is the second largest but most populous and developed state in North-East. The state yields some of the finest tea in the world. Bihu is one of the most popular festival in Assam.

Manipur is located on the eastern boundary of the northeast, bordering Myanmar. 'Ras-Lila' a dance form of the state is recognized as one of the classical dance forms of India.

Meghalaya with Shillong as its capital is a plateau with different altitudes and has been known as the 'Scotland of the East'.

Mizoram is a hilly state and is symbolized by the presence of homogeneous tribal population. The prevalent language spoken in Mizoram is Lushai.



Nagaland is the tribal state on eastern border. Most of the festivals revolve around agriculture in the state of Nagaland.

Tripura has significant cultural linkages with Bengal and Assam. The tripuris are the largest tribal community in the state and constitute the crux of its society.

Sikkim's Himalayan flora and fauna and Buddhist monasteries distinguish it from other states. The state is famous for producing unique tea- Temi tea.

These states are called the 'seven sisters'.

Manipur

The Manipur's geography composed of rivers, lakes, hills, small mounded valleys and flatlands. With more than 60% of the land placed under cover in deep tracts of forests of teak, pine, oak, bamboo and cane, the state is affluent in flora and fauna.

Manipuri's has a rapport for arts in the form of handlooms and handicrafts. A high proportion of women in Manipur work as cultivators and in households industry.

Political Role of Women

All along the ancient period women contributed in the administration of the Kingdom. It has been found that in 33 A.D there existed a women's court in Manipur called 'Pacha' where women related problems were taken up, and settled. This court was headed by the chief queen Laisana, who was also a representative of the council of ministers.

Kim Gangte is the first woman MP(Member of Parliament) of Manipur. HangmilaSaiza is the first woman to be named in a Legislative Assembly. Lianganeng Gangte, W.Leima and K. Apabi Devi were former Member of the Legislative Assembly. OkramongbiLandhoni Devi is the present Member of the Legislative Assembly from Kangabok constituency(Kumar, 1998).

Women's Role in Society

Women's role in the society can be accredited to the contribution they are making to end alcoholism and drugs abuse in the state. Two women's movements namely Nisha-Bandh &MeiraPaibi are examples of women's keen participation in controlling social evils in the society.

Due to the rise in the sale of liquor and the menace created by the drunkard husbands to their wives, the NISHA-BANDH movement emerged in the 1970s.

In 1980, a sudden collective act called MeiraPaibis emerges immediately to shield the youth from atrocities by the security forces like arrest without issue of any warrant, killing or beating them up for nameless reason. The usual conflict situation in the state has resulted in the killing of numerous innocent people, the case of rape, molestation, abduction, extortion is so high that women sense the need to bring an end to such a kind of human rights violations. (Kumar, 1998).

Art & Culture

The beautiful Ras Lila, LeimaJagoi, MaibiJagoi are eminent all over the world. Nat Sankritan is a form of folk song primarily practised during marriage, death, and Na Hutpa ceremonies. Women are also seen taking lead part in times of wedding ceremony as Jatra-Pubi and even at Swasti Puja.

Economic Role of women

The contribution of women in the economic facet is so large whether in the organized or unorganized sector they have been making their existence felt everywhere. There are many women who are holding high ranking posts as Indian Foreign Service, Indian Police Service, and judges in civil courts and pilots. A generous number of women are working as doctor, professor, architect, film producer, journalist, air-hostess, and teacher, making a difference not only in the valley itself but also outside the state and abroad. (Brahmacharimayum, 2018).The intricately woven handicrafts and handloom items is popular even outside the state(Kumar, 1998).

**Arunachal Pradesh**

Arunachal Pradesh, is a wild and mountainous province situated along the north-eastern frontier of India. Among the tribes of Arunachal there is no inequity between girls and boys. Both boys and girls are welcome and brought up in the same way giving preference to both the sexes. But boys are favoured because the son is to take over the ancestral property and for the continuity of the family line. (Dawar, 2010), (Sarkar, Duarah, 1997).

Role in the family:

The head of the family is the male who plays the authoritative role. Women are not traditionally entitled to the succession of the family. Sometimes the husband may go for second or third wife too if in the family no male child is born. The role of married women is limited to the maintenance of house, cooking, brewing liquor, working in agricultural fields. The unmarried girls help their mother in house and fields alike and take care of the minor ones. In the Hill Miri society the wives have very decisive effect. Their position is as though the wives (Bharali, 2010).

Women and inheritance:

The inheritance laws do not grant women to inherit property. Women have no right to movable or immovable property other than some share of their mother's ornaments among the Tani groups of tribes. Among the Hill Miris and Tagins, a part of immovable property is given to daughters during the time of their marriage. The Women in these communities also have rights to possess and enjoy husband property earned during her married life. Among the Gallongs it is found that if a daughter gets married the plot of land given to her is taken back. In the PadamMinyong society the most prized properties are inherited by sons or equally divided among both sons and daughters (Bharali,2010).

Place of Widow:

As far as the custom of inheritance of property of widow is concerned the rules vary from tribe to tribe. Among the Nishi and Hill Miris widow does not get share of her husband property. She is the guardian of the property of her deceased husband till her children grown up (Lal, 2010).

Political role of women:

Women are generally barred from taking any part in the functioning of the village councils among Adis, Nishis, Tagins, Hill Miris, Apatanis. Women have no share in the administration unless some women are involved in the particular cases concerned. The male members are the vigorous participants as the decision making always entirely remained restricted to the men only (Dawar , 2010).

Women and education:

In the traditional Tani society, girl's education is not given much consideration. From their childhood they learn household work and weaving from the elders of the family, friends and mother. A girl is married at a tender age and she gets hardly any chance to have education both in their parents as well as her husband's house. However nowadays due to governmental steps and schemes to provide education to both girls and boys the parents are motivated to send their girl child to schools.

Assam

Assam has a various culture of a number of ethnic groups and native communities of various origins. The ethnic groups of Assam can be grouped into hill tribes and plain tribes, each with their clear-cut languages and culture. Assamese culture is largely an incorporation of various kingdoms that have governed the land powerfully over the ages.

Women Role in the family

Women play different types of roles in a family such as mother, wife, adviser, cook, and a honourable host for the guest etc. The faith of the home also depends on her. As a mother, she is



chiefly responsible for domestic care and love and the socialization of her children. As a wife, she not only helps her husband in some of his work but also provides moral support to her husband.

Violence

Violence against women is a explanation of the historically unequal power relation between men and women, which have led to dominance over and inequity against women by men. Although both men and women face violence, an astounding majority of victims of sexual assault and domestic violence are women. Assam is the second state in the country with the highest account on crimes against women. Domestic Violence, kidnappings, rape and other crimes which fall under sec 498 of IPC are being the most certified cases in Assam (Lyngdoh, 1997).

Educational Aspects of Women

In the range of education, women in Assam are in a improved position than the all-India average. The educational fulfilment of women in Assam can be interpreted through female literacy rate and female enrolment rate at various stages of education. According to Census 2011, it highlighted an encouraging lift from 54.61 percent in 2001 to 67.27 in 2011, showing a sharp climb of about 31 percent in female literacy rate.

Political Aspects of Women

It is a reality that the status of women in Assam is the worst in terms of their situation in resolution making bodies. In Assam in 1977, out of 3 female aspirants who contested for the Lok Sabha, 2 aspirants were voted. In 1980 out of the two female contenders who contested for the Lok Sabha, none were elected. In 1991, 7 female contenders contested for the Lok Sabha but none were elected. No woman from the State of Assam competed in the 1984 and 1989 poll. These continuous degraded remarks shows us that women are not much active an privileged in the political scenario (Lyngdoh, 1997).

Mizoram

The state of Mizoram is located in the north-eastern part of the country and is bordered by Myanmar (Burma) to the east and south and Bangladesh to the west and by the states of Assam to the north, Tripura to the northwest, and Manipur to the northeast.

Role in the family

Among the Mizos women had a very low status and could not achieve true membership in the politico-jural field either in their native home or in their husband's family (Nunthara, 1996). Even after the delivery of the first child, they were referred to as 'monu' (bride) in the marital family. In fact as long as the couple lived with the native family of the husband, the wife would not, normally, achieve the status of full membership and she was always referred to as monu (Colbert, 2008).

Economic aspect of women

Until lately the economic role of women did not attract much scrutiny in Mizoram because much of women's work was done at home or outside the established economy. Even though women constitute an important part of the workforce in Mizoram their participation in the process of economic advancement was not given due importance (Colbert, 2008).

Educational aspect of women

A unique feature of the state of Mizoram is its high literacy rate. Mizoram has shown impressive figures in literacy percentages as compared to her neighbouring states. Journals of North East India Studies with a total literacy of 88.4% in 2001; male literacy being 90.69% and female literacy being 86.13% (Lalhriatpuii, 2010).

Political aspects of women

The village political institutions like village council and its different political offices are exclusively occupied by male member of the society. Practically there was no 'scope for a Mizo woman to participate in village administration'. They, therefore, did not have political status and their role was confined to domestic activities (Gangte, 2011).

All the political and village administrations are still controlled by men (Gangte, 2011).

Meghalaya

Located in the subtle hills of eastern sub-Himalayas is Meghalaya, home to three native tribes, the Khasis, the Jaintas and the Garos.

Role in the family

The structure of the family (Khasi) in the village demonstrated that authority within the family was male-centered. The role of women in the village were confined to the caring and nurturing of children, cooking food, washing clothes and other domestic chores. Women also enjoy great freedom and independence. Many women also look after their own interest and earn their livelihood with success. Despite the fact that as a rule they have no direct say in communal matters, in their own families, they exert a good deal in influence.

In the matrilineal Garo society mother or the wife is not the head of the household. It is the father or the husband who is the head of the family.

Women in economic and employment field

Agriculture is the primary occupation of the residents of the village (Khasi) as over 90 percent of the village is involved in agricultural pursuits and livestock for their daily livelihood.

Garos society in general and women in particular are becoming aware in different activities of life due to development of education, and technology. Khasi women enjoy a high social status and play a significant role in socio-economic matters and household management. Many Khasi women have taken up career in civil services and in industries apart from agriculture. Women of the Khasi tribes are enterprising and running small businesses well. In Shillong's oldest market, the Lewduh, women run almost all businesses.

Political role of women

Women's role in the village council does not exist. Although women play role in the traditional political organization of the State of Meghalaya, their involvement in the modern political institutions, like the District Council elections, the State Legislative Assembly and the Lok Sabha elections, is at its maximum. The recent trends of active female participation in politics can be highlighted from the fact that the State has its first lady Home Minister to the Government of Meghalaya.

Women do participate actively in modern politics both at regional and national levels. During elections, they participate in political campaign :such as procession, public gatherings, giving public speeches and others. Women turn out in large number to exercise their franchise and women voters exceed that of men in some polling booths many a times.(Lyngdoh, 1997).

Women and education

Meghalaya's performance in respect of literacy is below the national average. However, female literacy rate in Meghalaya are higher than the all India female literacy rates. The gender gap is significantly lower in Meghalaya. The Government of Meghalaya has played a key role in developing the system of education in the state. According to 2001 census report, the state has a literacy rate of 63.31 percent. The literacy rates for males and females are 66.14 percent and 60.41 percent respectively. In order to ameliorate the academic scenario of the state, Meghalaya has introduced mandatory and free education for students up to 14 years of age. It follows the 10+2 pattern of



education and the state schooling system includes primary schools, middle schools, secondary schools and higher secondary schools.

Nagaland

Nagaland is one of the smallest states of India. Agriculture is the most important economic activity in Nagaland. Other notable economic activities encompass forestry, tourism, insurance, real estate, and varied cottage industries.

Women hold a comparatively high and honorable position in Naga society. They work in the fields on equal terms with men and have substantial influence in the tribal advisory board.

Education and women

Education always plays a liberating role in the way women are looked at. The female literacy rate in Nagaland today stands at an impressive 62%. The notion of working professional women is a very common feature in Naga society. To the women in rural areas of Nagaland, modern education is a passage to a comfortable lifestyle from laborious working conditions. Women anticipate security in old age and in difficult situations by enabling children to receive education and getting into salaried employment.

Women in economic and development fields

Traditionally the Naga society is agrarian depending primarily on forest and cultivated produces for subsistence living, therefore their primary occupation basically revolved around agriculture, crafts making, hunting, fishing and collection of non timber forest produces. Men and women are both praised and adorned if they are excellent in any skills.

Political role

Women are still experiencing exclusion in electoral process. There is a trend of men dominating the political terrain across all the areas, whereas the representation and presentation of the female gender is still blurry and invisible. Therefore the women are outside the graph of decision making and their status falls with respect to men (Amer, 2013).

Tripura

Tripura is among the India's smallest states and is located in an isolated hilly region of the country, with various local peoples—or tribes—accounting for a significant portion of the population.

The state follows the Hindu tradition of Patriarchy. Still it provides a place of considerable socio-economic importance to their womenfolk. Women work in hand to hand with the counterpart and are physically and socially fitted like all other hill women to lead a life in extremes (Soppit, 1885., Hutchinson, 1909., Shakespeare, 1912., Hutton, 1921., Parry, 1932).

Women and economy

In the traditional jhum economy of Tripura, tribal women usually participated in all economic activities though there was some sort of a division of labour on the basis of sex and age (Chakraborty, 1999). This resulted in making them less vulnerable to ill-treatment or suppression. It has also been argued that the higher work participation capacity of tribal girls was instrumental in fetching a "price" for them in marriage settlements (Gupta, 1993).

Nevertheless, tribal women face problems and provocation in getting a sustainable livelihood and a decent life due to environmental humiliation and the intrusion of outsiders (Sumon, 2015).

Women and inheritance

Though the system of inheritance is patrilineal among the Tripuris, the father usually gives daughters some land. This is a kind of gift and the prospective heirs do not raise any objection against the practice (Barooah, 2002). Similarly, among the Jamatias and Halams, daughters do not inherit paternal property; but in practice, the rule is not strictly adhered to. Hence, there are many instances of daughters receiving a share of the family property (Barooah, 2002) (Gupta, 1993).

Conclusion

The status of women in India has been subject to many changes over the span of recorded Indian history. The states of North East India have always experienced some or the other kinds of discrimination as compared to the rest of Indian. The women of North East India play a crucial role in various domains of life, from being in the workforce, to land cultivators and producers, house makers, running small scale businesses, and so on. Still the respect, autonomy, freedom, and value of women are a grey area and very questionable. Government Policies and shift in patriarchal trends give some hope for a better future of women in the states of North East. Life of women in North East India

Implications

The present study aims to explore the status of women in North East India. This study will hold a significant endeavour in promoting the awareness about the status that the woman of North East India beholds. It will provide a deep and clear understanding of various domains associated with Life of women in North East India.

References:

- Amer, M.. (2013). Political status of women in Nagaland. *Journal of Business Management and Social Sciences Research*, 2(4), 91-95.
- Amy,. (2018). Women's Education In India: Facts And Statistics On Importance Of Female Literacy
- Barooah,. (2002). Gender, Space and Development: Tribal Women in Tripura, Mumbai: Economic and Political Weekly.
- Brahmacharimayum, J. (2018). Role of women in Manipur.
- Bharali, K. (2010). Changing status of women in Arunachal Pradesh since Independence: A case study of Tani group of tribes.
- Chakraborty,. (1999). Empowerment and Status of Women in Tripura.
- Colbert,. (2008). The Status and Role of Women in Mizo Society.
- Dawar,. (2010). Changing status of women in Arunachal Pradesh since independence a case study of Tani group of Tribes.
- Gangte,. (2011). Into the modern mist of Gangtes.
- Gupta, D. (1993). Status of Tribal Women in Tripura ,Noida. Vikas Publishing House.
- Kumar, A.K. 1998. Women in Manipur
- Lal, J. (2010). Understanding the Construct of Consent in Arunachal Pradesh through the Experiences of the Apatani.
- Lalhriatpuii, (2010). Economic Participation of Women in Mizoram, Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
- Lalthansangi,. (2005). The Status and Role of Women in Mizo Society.
- Lyngdoh, 1997. Women in North East India.
- Nunthara, (1996). Becoming Something Else: Society and Change in India's North East, Spain. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.



Sarkar, N., Duarah, D.K. (1997). Status of Women in Tribal Society, Arunachal Pradesh.

Sen, A. (1990). Women Empowerment and Economic Development.

Soppitt 1885; Hutchinson 1909; Shakespeare 1912; Hutton 1921; Parry 1932. Gender, Space and Development: Tribal Women in Tripura.

Sumon, A. (2015) Gender development and the status of tribal women: A study of Tripura.

Wallang, C. (2012).A study of women empowerment through education in the matrilineal society of Meghalaya .