

SUBJUGATION OF WOMEN IN NORTHEAST INDIA

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Abstract: *The status of gender inequality still continues to be neglected in various aspects. Women are overlooked by such kinship system, discriminatory laws and social norms. Over the past decades there has been a progress for women and girls to achieve gender equality in all aspects of life however inequality still exists among every region, social class of human society. Gender inequality as a whole i.e. very complex and decentralized, prevails in every field or areas of education, mistreatment in the form of employment opportunities, income, health, cultural issues, economic issues etc. It remains as a major barrier to human development. Since from the beginning women are confronted by discrimination and inequality they face violence, abuse, and in their wider communities they are denied to lead, women are the most sufferer in any situation typically women are viewed less than men. Among the eight states of North-East India women do experience inequality in social expectations being a patriarchal society every region comprises of different culture, rules, setup of norms where the male is the head authority, women are discriminated in the form of cultural taboos and sense of traditional beliefs and practices of impurity attached to them. Women or the tribal folk women have no direct access to function their own role certain decisions are hold by head councils or the male authority. Despite the differences attempts should be made to bring awareness of the overall status of women in the North-East regions.*

Keywords: *North-East, Gender, Women, Community, Inequality, Empowerment.*

Women play an indispensable position in human community. In these era gender disparity have become an agenda of global phenomenon. There's no doubt that women of Northeast India enjoy better status as compared to the other parts of main land India. The North- East Region which is known for its diverse culture, immense geographic size and an outcome of great variety in material traits is to advance and enhance unity and integration. Yet, there is still a gender stigma connected where women are inferior to men. Women of tribal communities of North East region are deprived of their rights and privileges due to absence of facilities provided to them but however women play a vital role in building their family and society while women's empowerment should be an emergence of fundamental movement of promoting women's rights and their basic key of success in educating girls, health and nutrition facilities. It should be an empowerment of movement for women's equality rights in one global village.

The phrase 'Unity in Diversity' given by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru describes India as oneness in variety based on differences in terms of race, religion, language, basic value, culture etc. It also characterizes India as plural society. While the North-East Region of India comprises eight states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland and Sikkim. Belonging to the land of most diverse background with multi ethnicities have much to express their cultural identity to the world. Each tribe of this region or the hill tribes of Northeast has its own linguistic and cultural practices, kinship roles, history, ancestry, beliefs and life styles that are passed down from one generation to the next. The socio-economic life of the indigenous people chiefly indicates the practice of shifting cultivation. Though it is commonly observed that women's role in socio-economic and cultural aspects is

not well centered as they are deprived to participate such leadership role in the community which man does, nevertheless women play an important role in rituals and harvest festivals it is also observed that women's involvement on social platform of such celebrations and festivities would be impossible without the presence of them. Despite the difference of women being different from men there should a considerable progress in order to understand and recognize the qualities of each other.

The Human Development Report indicates that women constitute almost about fifty percent of the population in India. If traced back to the history of India women had high status equal to men in all fields during the Rig Vedic period but in the later Vedic period women's status begun to declined rapidly, this was due to importance given to sons. During the establishment of British rule their participation in the movement for national freedom was then recognized. Such provisions and laws are enacted by the Government of India for women's equality rights, discrimination against them. However, taking India as a whole, women are still discriminated, deprived of educational facilities, literacy, access to income and employment, health and medical facilities women are still on the rise of violence. As a matter of fact women of Northeast Region enjoy better life and position in the community specifically that of the tribal women as compared to the mainland. There are no such customary evil practices of widow sacrificial (Sati), Dowry and infanticide. Nevertheless tribal women of Northeast do face issues regardless of their gender superiority women being inferior to men in terms of socio-economic problems be in illiteracy, poor health, domestic violence, ownership of landholding, exploitation in different spheres of life, gender discrimination on wage, access to leadership, decision-making and the present scenario in education, involvement or participation in politics at the grass root level are some inquiry which is needed to gear up and promote community welfare.

Status inequality is not a new phenomenon between man and women which is reinforced through patriarchy and its institution. Gender is socially a constructive principle, represents asymmetrical and unequal division between man and women. In other words it simply means social ranking where typically male inhabit high profile social statuses than female. The traditional patriarchal Northeast society, women experience social expectation to fulfill domestic roles. Almost in all hill region of North-East the tribals are impacted with their oral tradition of ancestry history of warfare and headhunting. Women of these region, still continues to be neglected or aloof. Family performs an essential primary institution in society, provides patriarchal support for its members with a social identity. Unlike the indigenous community the khasi tribe in the state of Meghalaya Northeast, women enjoy special status family becomes an important unit for every khasi women. For centuries the Khasis followed matrilineal tradition, children born into the family bear their mother's names, daughter born into the khasi family marks a great piece of joy and honour it is also marked that daughters inherit their mother property, and man after marriage is assign to move to their wives home. While bringing on the contrary anthropologists view that the existing ongoing matrilineal practices and tradition might disappear soon, recent threat has been emerging of men's rights group to establish a patrilineal society a system to put an end to unfair means of special privileges on women. The major society of North-East region is rooted by patriarchal system women are encouraged to stay confine on household chores with limited socialization their contribution to occupational continuity is moved within patrilineal limits. In the customary context of traditional patriarchy, women's inheritance of property is forbidden. Women in Naga society of any tribe in Nagaland are struggling against tribal customary practices which are extremely of gender intolerance. Women in Naga society are expelled to inherit any kind of parental property no matter she is considered to be the sole child of her parents. On the other aspect, a widow woman can inherit her husband's property but with certain rules being abided to her, each community have their varied rules and regulations maybe certain community compels a widow women to hold the property of her deceased husband until the child is grown up. Nagas belonging to different ethnic groups still lack in some field of socio- cultural aspects on gender issues and woman

empowerment have become a particular discussion. Colonial encounter of British Raj in India invaded by the foreign missionaries in the land of North East India, the early history has significant Christian presence in major North-eastern states of Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya and partially some parts of Assam, Manipur, Arunachal further bordering areas of Burma[Myanmar]. The impact of Christianity along with western education have valued greatly in many fields, their immense contribution to individuals and community is greatly influenced across regions. Education became an important part across communities, children were sent to day school, whereas girls were restricted with limited primary education yet through the formal education women were able to identify their consciousness of discrimination carried out within patrilineal limits. A girl education of tribal community may also be constrained due to work demands within family and marriage market in mind. As said by many scholars the land of North-East would have been unknown or remain a land of remote without the invasion of Christian missionaries.

One amongst such prominent novelist of North-East India Easterine Kire who enjoys a special status in the literary history from Nagaland displays about the life community of Nagas culture, set of norms, identity and endowment of loss. Kire's "A Terrible Matriarchy" revolves around the social status of a little girl coming-of-age, the novel portrays different layers of being a woman in the patriarchal Angami (Naga) society with customary laws. Here, the author paints the picture of three pristine women and the part of their acculturation. It is a true picture of India's North-East society and culture specifically Nagaland and the surrounding areas. The header gets the notion of double-standard oppression because the protagonist Dielieno who is the youngest girl child after four boys is not only suppressed by the patriarchal set up norms but also her stern grandmother who is of strict nature assumed that women and girls should not be educated and bear the responsible for household management. The young protagonist is sent off to be raised by her grandmother initially she got the vibe that her grandmother doesn't favour her but that of her brother receives better treatment than her. It is sad to learn how women of equal sex can be so unsympathetic to their own gender. This traditionalist patriarchy is so cruel that makes women the victim of their own exploitation.

It is always said in tribal household of Northeast women were peacemakers within family as well as society. In the words of Shimray [1985], "In bygone days, when head hunting were practiced, Women played a vital role in saving lives of men. A woman was like an Ambassador and also a mediator if talented. She enjoyed full diplomatic immunity. Nobody could lay hands on her. She was called the Peace Maker, the bearer of the torch of peace and the Red Cross bearer of Naga inter-village war." The contemporary Women's organization have created a great deal of awareness on gender issues, inequality and empowerment have created the centre stage, feminist appear to cover large prospect of gender concerns. Revolution is taking place at the grass root level through active participation in transforming social and cultural bondage. In the present scenario, women actively participate in campaigns against Women's rights and justice, several women's rights organizations have set up across Nagaland, Meghalaya, Assam and Manipur. Man being physically stronger than women was used as a sign of superiority but as compared to now, it is not the physical strength that matters but it is the intelligence that matters. If women were given equal rights for academic education and freedom to do things they love, their name will be remembered for their greatness and remain in history. Society, on the other hand plays a pivotal role in sowing the seeds of gender inequality since gender gap is not an inborn ability but certain thoughts, beliefs and norms are constructed by society itself. Since from the beginning, more rights and freedom were applied to men while women were denied of it. With 67.6 million Tribal population in India and the largest tribal population in the world it is counted by their literacy rate of tribal women being low, men have shown great numbers than women however in this era education have become an impaction for every female across North-East region women have become an active age agent of the era, in fact women are prospering much greater than man in many ways while breaking down the tradition beliefs and norms which are still

intact in the environment women are actively taking new roles to set new goals and empower women's equality they continue to face new challenges around them no matter they are less valued. They have found a new identity to lead a healthy society in the male dominated society tremendously women are participating socially, economically and politically comparatively women have become more family oriented. Well the fact Northeast women enjoy greater status as compared to the other parts of India with less patriarchal restrictions but yet they are not considered as voiceless to the society. While the representation of Northeast women in contemporary fields of literature, art, women's activist and women of different professional fields have emerge to be the Northeast role models for girls and women of their regions women of Northeast have challenged the patriarchy system, they are more independent to raise their voice against social injustice. Society looks upon women as a subject of destruction. If society changes their outlook on women and embrace their rights and freedom, if men could accept the challenge and fight for women rights, we may realize that where a society exist of men and women there would be possibilities to participate together in parts of politics, at the work place and at home, and lead to exciting and fulfilling lives.

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