

## **A BRIEF STUDY ON THE GENDER INEQUALITY IN NORTH EAST INDIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Gender equality is defined as a stage of human development in which an individual's rights, duties, and opportunities are not dictated by his or her gender at birth. Gender discrimination costs societies a lot of money in terms of more poverty, worse quality of life, slower economic progress, and poor governance (Elizabeth King, 2001). The patriarchal kinship structure dominates women, resulting in their social and economic dependency on males and establishing their inferior position in comparison to men. Despite the fact that women have worked hard over the previous few decades to achieve equality with men in all aspects of life (education, health, job, etc.), there is still inequity in many areas. Gender inequality has emerged as a fundamental impediment to accomplishing development goals. Being one of the world's developing countries with the status of having the world's second largest economy, it's hard to believe that gender inequalities still exist in India. The patriarchy system in Indian society, where males are valued more than females, is one of the root causes of gender-based inequality in India. The purpose of this article is to examine the state of gender disparity in North East India utilising secondary data and various indicators. In terms of gender equality, the northeast fared better than the rest of the country, according to the report. Despite the preponderance of numerous ethnic groups that, on the whole, do not believe in sex discrimination, there is inequity between men and women in the region. According to the report, women in the region are relatively disempowered and have a lesser status than males. In terms of education, work, and health, there is a gender divide. At both the state and national levels, there is a significant gender divide in political engagement. Meghalaya, Manipur, and Mizoram are the north-eastern states with the least gender imbalance in terms of labour engagement, literacy, infant mortality, and sex ratio. Tripura, Assam, and Sikkim, on the other hand, are in a bad state. The research closes by stating that access to school, work, and health are just enabling variables that may or may not ensure attainment of the objective, which is mostly determined by people's thinking.

**KEYWORDS:** Gender Inequality, Social Exclusion, Women Empowerment, North East India

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

States in India's north-eastern area include Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya as well as Tripura and Sikkim. Known as the Siliguri corridor (also known as the chicken neck corridor), it connects the region to the Indian mainland via the borders of Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and China. More than five millennia of political instability in the north-east area has led to insurrections and deadly conflicts. All but three states in the area (Arunachal Pradesh; Mizoram; and Sikkim) are now afflicted by remote violence, according to reports. To give you an idea of how long a conflict might last, consider the Naga insurrection, which began in the 1950s and has been dubbed "the mother of all north-eastern uprisings." Similarly low-astringency disputes have occurred in states such as Manipur, Assam, Nagaland, and Tripura. There has never been a fight of this magnitude in any other region of India or South Asia. It is improbable that the insurgency that has engulfed this

region for so long will be quenched any time soon. It's getting more difficult to solve the North East problem every day. Women in north-east India have also changed their roles from conventional housewives and passive observers to peacemakers and combatants in this conflict-ridden atmosphere. Despite the region's dire circumstances, the increasing influence of women in leading roles provides a glimmer of optimism. When women's standing changes, it is seen as a symbol of liberation from private space and a declaration in the established public sphere of life. A lack of opportunity, gender discrimination, a lack of education, feticide, infanticide and malnutrition all contribute to gender disparity in India's female population. The women of the north-east include victims, refugees, militants, peace campaigners, household leaders, and labourers. No matter how many times we hear the phrase "political circles," we can't quite grasp how difficult it is to keep up with the rapid social and economic shifts taking place in a region as volatile as the North East (NE). Many factors have contributed to the increase of women in public life in the North East, particularly at a time when neoliberal developmentalism dominated attempts to achieve peace. Some typical numbers. The north-eastern Indian state of Assam, in particular, suffers from a lack of gender equality, social inclusion, and women's empowerment, all of which are explored in this literature.

## **2. STUDY AREA**

Northeast India is made up of eight states: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura. A rich cultural legacy contrasts with the dominant homogenised culture of the region. The region's women are perceived to be more liberal than those in the rest of the country because of the prevalence of tribal and indigenous culture. Women in the region are believed to be equal partners with their male counterparts in most aspects of life. Because the whole north-eastern area of India is essentially free from social issues such as female feticide and female infanticide in comparison to the other four regions of India, this notion is supported by this fact. On the other hand, a variety of gender studies provide a quite different picture. According to Shiv Kumar's (1996) study on gender achievement in India's north-eastern states, Assam came in 10th place out of 16 major states. According to the National Human Development Report, the GEI at the national level was 0.620 in the 1980s and slightly grew to 0.676 in the early 1990s (Govt. of India, 2002). GEI in the 1990s was greater than the national average in north-eastern states like Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Nagaland. States like Assam, Sikkim and Tripura were found to be well below the national average in the same survey. In addition, insurgency has been a part of the people's daily existence in the region for the previous few decades. People's everyday lives have been affected by ethnic unrest, rebellion, and militancy, with women bearing the brunt. In this area, there have been reports of human rights abuses. Due to armed conflict and terrorist activities, women in the region have grown more vulnerable. Gender disparity issues in the region are being studied in light of all of these aspects. In this area, there have been reports of human rights abuses. Armed conflict and militant activities have increased the vulnerability of women in the region. Gender inequality in the region is a major concern, and health is a key indication. This article examines the present issues of the gender gap in the region.

## **3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

For the World Bank in 2002, Malhotra, Schuler, and Boender produced a paper focusing on the methodological aspects of measuring and analysing the empowerment of women. According to Mathew (2003), the 'gender and development notion' was created by combining the equity and empowerment methodologies.

In Mohiuddin's (1995) view, women's inferior socioeconomic standing is reflected in their lower earnings across all industries and occupations, as well as their limited upward mobility and their greater family responsibilities as a result of divorce, desertion, and other life events. Toward that goal, Anand and Sen (1995) sought to develop an indicator of gender inequality in their research. They focused on measures that were gender-sensitive and their applications. With regard to gender disparity and the capacity approach, Hicks critically examined Sen's ideas (2002). For example, Mahanta's (2002) edited book tried to explain whether or not women in the North East had access to or were denied essential human rights, including the right to health and education as well as legal rights and working women's rights and domestic abuse.

Women in the North Eastern region were compared to those in the rest of India. The data shows that women in the region are just marginally better off than their counterparts in the rest of the country in a few crucial areas. On the other hand, they said that women in the North Eastern region had very little freedom of movement and control over their own bodies. Equality in the workplace is becoming less pronounced as educational attainment rises in all three nations studied (the United States, the Netherlands and Sweden), according to Evertsson et al. (2009). The fundamental explanation is the high employment levels of well-educated women in all three countries.

Indian women are entirely disempowered by Kishor and Gupta (2004), and their empowerment has remained steady throughout time. Women's health and nutrition in India are primarily in the hands of women, and the authors considered that women's empowerment was vital to assure not only their own but also the welfare of their homes for a number of compelling and pressing reasons. They also claimed that India's progress would be hindered if it did not increase the quality and quantity of its people resources via the process of empowerment.

Male and female life expectancy in India is nearly equal, making it a unique case study (Mandal et al., 2011). The lack of a distinct female advantage in terms of life expectancy in India suggests that there are systemic issues with women's health in the country. Most Indian communities have a patrilineal social structure, which has a substantial influence on gender inequality, affecting the health of Indian women. Puberty exacerbates gender differences in eating habits, which can be explained by differences in the energy requirements of women and men, as well as by cultural standards (Askovic and Kirchengast, 2012).

Women in the third world face particular challenges, and feminist philosophy and international politics and economics should pay attention to these issues as a matter of fairness, according to Nussbaum (2001). With regard to gender disparity and the capacity approach, Hicks critically examined Sen's ideas (2002).

Sullivan (2004) examined how domestic gender relations have evolved in heterosexual couples. At the same time, she provided evidence of a change in domestic gender relations. As well as altering views on gender equality, she also touched on the concepts of masculinity and intimacy in romantic relationships. Gender patterns in domestic labour allocation have been shifting over time, according to quantitative data based on time use diaries. The gender gap studies of the World Economic Forum looked at the situation of women in a wide range of countries.

Northeast India has not had a substantial amount of research done on gender disparity, according to a literature review undertaken before to this article's publication. A small attempt is being made to narrow the research gap in this way.

Ferdaush and Rahman (2011) found that Bangladesh's numerous sectors (education, health, and employment) have significant gender discrepancy, and that this structure should be taken into consideration when developing policy. According to the results of the poll, progress in closing the gender wage gap has slowed in recent years.

Economic empowerment of women, according to Blumberg (2005), may contribute to gender equality as well as improved prosperity and well-being at the national level. According to the author, women's decision-making abilities would increase if they had more control over their finances. According to Kabeer, gender equality and the empowerment of women are the third MDG (2005). It examined the concept of women's empowerment and how the indicators associated with this objective may be used to attain it.

Women's lives are affected by global problems, and Wallace and March (1991) looked at how to plan and implement development programmes using a gender-sensitive approach. He focused on the link between gender and development, policy making, and practise implementation in Moser's (1993) book.

#### **4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objectives of the study are:

- To summarize the indicators that affects gender inequality.
- To know the current situation of women and Gender Inequality in two different Regions of North-East India.
- To know the Impact of Gender Inequality on Health, Education, Employment and various Opportunities provided to women.
- To recommend suggestions on the gender inequality issue.

#### **5. DATA AND METHODOLOGY**

The analysis is based on secondary data gathered from the Indian government's official websites, such as the Census of India, the National Family Health Survey, and the National Sample Survey Office, among others. The data is analysed using percentages, frequency, and basic tables. Literacy Rate, Nutritional Status, Wage Earning, Gross Enrolment Ratio, Female Infant Mortality, Sex Ratio, Unemployment Rate, Worker Population Ratio, Workforce Participation Rate (WPR), and other indicators are used to study gender inequalities in the North Eastern Region.

#### **6. SOCIETAL NORMS AS MEANS OF DISCRIMINATION AND EXCLUSION OF WOMEN**

The physical and social distinctions between men and women are referred to as "gender" as a social notion. Gender classifications (Oakley, 1972) of men and women, as well as their anticipated behaviours based on their stated societal roles, play a part in this (Oakley, 1972). (Bhasin, 2000). The central question in the gender debate is whether men and women's social behaviour is influenced by biology or culture. Intra-household stratification appears to be dominated by gender stratification in terms of the differential power relations between men and women. Cynthia believes that the difference between men and women is the most permanent and profound in the world. In terms of the roles that men and women are allotted, the lines have been drawn. The majority of them are the work of "cultural entrepreneurs,"

people who take ideas and turn them into reality (Fuchs, 2007). Because it is a socially engendered division, the gender divide may be considered the most basic and least amenable to change. Gender norms are exceedingly difficult to modify due to the threat they pose to male supremacy, which manifests itself via the oppression and discrimination of women. Women's contemporary subjugation, according to Nivedita Menon, is a result of social and cultural norms, ideologies, and institutions that ensure women's material and ideological exploitation (gender). Feminists use this argument to challenge the conventional wisdom that the division of labour is based on gender and is, thus, biologically inert (Menon, 2008). This discussion of women's position has focused on their role in the male-dominated society. As time went on, two additional dimensions were added to the equation. Classified by Veena Mazumdar, it is:

- The degree to which women have true authority over their own lives.
- How much influence they have on decision-making processes and how successful they are in positions of power and authority.

Power and control determine women's lower status, according to feminist scholars, who have made major contributions to the field. Alternately, all societies have a form of patriarchal ideology that embodies this idea of power or control (Nanda & Mangalagiri, 1985). A lack of confidence in one's own abilities to change one's life stems from a sense of helplessness. A society that regards men as having the right to rule over women's lives has profound socio-cultural beliefs regarding men's and women's rights and duties. Men are essential to women's well-being, while women are responsible for the relationship's well-being. In order to elevate women's social and domestic status, it's imperative that they demonstrate their weakness and subjection to men in this way (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). People and societies are valuable only if they have the flexibility to live the lives they choose, according to Sen's "capability approach" (Iversen, 2007). This kind of freedom is characterised by the individual's ability. True freedom is a difficult idea to reconcile with the persistent power imbalance between men and women. In contrast to Hirdman's assertion that males are superior creatures, women are subordinate (Berger, 2007). The young of India's north-eastern tribes were tasked with maintaining peace and safety for their communities in the face of widespread headhunting and violence. A bachelors' dormitory was constructed, where young men learned combat tactics, fighting, wrestling, traditions, etiquette and religion as well as anything else they needed to know in order to survive in the modern world (Dena, 2008; Sikdar, 2009). While ensuring the institution's safety was of paramount importance, the bachelors' dormitory was equally concerned with the well-being of the surrounding populace. Unlike males, women were not considered suitable for juvenile hostels (Mann, 1996). It was assumed that women would care for the family's needs because they were responsible for so much of the domestic relations and house upkeep. The attitude toward women remains one of "benevolent subordinates" despite the fact that such institutional practises are no longer applied.

## **7. FACTORS PROMOTING GENDER INEQUALITY**

### **7.1 DISCRIMINATION OF GENDER**

There has been a culture of preference for male children over female children since ancient times, which encourages criminal actions such as abortion, female feticide, and so on. According to UNICEF research, 7% of girls in India are married before they become 15 years old, and 27% of girls are married before they turn 18 years old. India has one of the highest rates of child brides in the world, at 15,509,000. (UNICEF, State of the World's Children, 2017) All of this indicates that gender-based discrimination is widespread in India, posing a threat to gender equality.

### **7.2 MALNUTRITION**

In Indian society, children of the male gender receive more parental care and attention in terms of education, health, and nutrition than children of the opposite gender, which renders females more susceptible to numerous diseases or infections, resulting in poor health and even a short life span. (Mehrotra & Chand, 2012) Nutrition is a fundamental necessity of the human body for good health. It is especially crucial for mothers in India who, due to their poor health, give birth to ill children. Among other developing countries, India has the lowest or poorest health condition of women, as well as the greatest rate of malnutrition among women. 2008 (Navaneetham & Jose). In India, a recent study of pregnant and non-pregnant women aged 15 to 49 years revealed that 70% of non-pregnant women and 75% of pregnant women are anaemic. Mason et al., (2005) Mason et al., (2005) Mason et al., (2005) Mason et al. Although much progress has been done, there is still much room for improvement in female nutrition and health. (United Nations Development Programme, 2008)

### **7.3 LACK OF EDUCATION**

In India, parents prefer to invest more in male education than female education, because ladies are groomed for marriage at a young age. Roy and Vecchio (1998) In India, patriarchal beliefs predominate, and females have limited educational options, thus women only obtain basic functional education such as drawing, reading, writing, personal cleanliness, and other home tasks. The basic philosophy underlying patriarchal views is to establish restrictions for women inside the confines of the home, making education for women obsolete. Roy and Vecchio (1998)

### **7.4 LACK OF EMPLOYMENT**

Gender equality is not viewed if a woman works as an alternative to staying at home and taking care of all family tasks; rather, it gives both men and women equal roles and choices. 2014 (Klugman, Kolb, & Morton) One of the most prominent forms of gender inequality is found in most nations throughout the world, when women earning the same work earn 10 to 30 percent less than males. Many studies on women's engagement in the workforce have shown that between 1991 to 2012, women's participation in the workforce decreased from 33.7 percent to 27 percent (Comyn et al.2014). Gender inequality has an impact on women's participation in the workforce, resulting in (a) poor representation and bargaining power, (b) inability to manage work-life balance, (c) very little family support, (d) less access to institutional training and information, and (e) less access to health, educational, and financial resources. Madhav and Sankaran (2011) (Madhav & Sankaran, 2011) (Madhav & Sankaran, 2011)

### **7.5 LACK OF OPPORTUNITIES**

According to the statistics from (Global Gender Gap 2011), India ranks in the middle of the global gender gap index, with women's economic possibilities and involvement well behind the other 95% of countries. Even after several decades of economic progress and India's status as the world's second-fastest-growing economy, gender inequities continue in India. Women's engagement as entrepreneurs and in local manufacturing and service sectors are major indicators of the kind of jobs and possibilities available to them. Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala had the highest percentage of new proprietary enterprises held by women in the unorganised kind of manufacturing sector in 1994. Rajasthan, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra are states with historically low female entrepreneurship rates. When examining total or overall business ownership owned by various genders from 1994 to 2005, a similar trend emerges across states. When comparing total or overall business ownership owned by various gender throughout the years 1994 to 2005, a similar pattern emerges. However, only one Indian state, Sikkim, sees a growth in

women-owned new firms. women's Computers, motor vehicles, fabricated metal items, and mechanical equipment account for around 2% of the industrial share. Female shares in educational and sanitary sectors in key states are over 30%, although total proportion of women as entrepreneurs in industries related to research and development, including transportation industries, is less than 1%.

## **8. GENDER INEQUALITY AND ITS IMPACT**

### **8.1 GENDER INEQUALITY EFFECT ON EDUCATION**

Gender inequality based on education is one of the most prevalent issues in Indian culture, particularly among rural women and those from poor socioeconomic origins. India has been able to effectively execute universal school enrollment for several decades in order to eliminate gender-based educational disparities or inequality. In India, the problem of educational disparities persists, leading to an increase in gender-based inequity in education and causing many girls to drop out of school. Gender inequality is exacerbated by socioeconomic and familial factors, particularly among rural women. Prioritizing sons' education above daughters' education, where female education is underexplored due to a lack of understanding of women's role in education, is another key factor that contributes to the gender gap in education.

### **8.2 GENDER INEQUALITY EFFECT ON HEALTH**

Even after significant improvements in health and maternity care, prejudice against women continues to exist in such developing nations, having a significant detrimental impact on impoverished families. Providing women with educational opportunity is one of the most effective ways to close the gender gap and improve health care. Even minor successes in the fight for equality may have a significant impact on the lives of women and girls living in poverty. According to 2011 research by the World Health Organization, limiting women elementary education has a detrimental influence on reproduction rates, birth spacing, health literacy, and healthy behaviour. Similar studies have revealed that educated women in the African area have a decreased chance of HIV infection.

### **8.3 GENDER INEQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT**

Gender disparity in income and employment is commonly understood by comparing men and women's labour market involvement and other characteristics associated to it, according to NSSO 2011 statistics based on "employment and unemployment." (Lama, Sita, and Rajarshi Majumder, 2018). In both rural and urban regions, there has been a significant and growing gap in the labour force participation rate (LFPR) between men and women. In comparison to the rest of the world, India has a substantially lower labour force participation rate (64 per cent). In addition, compared to half of the male population residing in metropolitan areas, women's labour force participation is extremely low. In terms of entrance age, human capital, marital status, reproduction, and social standing, women's labour participation decisions differ from men's (S. Mahendra Dev, 2004).

## **9. CONCLUSION**

According to the findings, there exist gender discrepancies in many categories in a few states in the north-eastern United States. As a result, it is vital to determine the causes in order to reduce the disparity. Women should also come forward to demonstrate their effectiveness. In all of North-East India's states, there are gender disparities in literacy rates. In states like Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Mizoram, where the enrolment percentage of females is lower than that of boys, gender inequalities in literacy level are apparent. In higher education, however, there remains a significant gender gap. In terms of health indices, there are also

gender inequalities. In most of the North-Eastern states, males are observed to have a superior nutritional condition than women. Gender imbalance in job status in North-Eastern states was also observed in the study. Women have a low rate of involvement in the labour force. In urban regions, the gender gap in labour force participation is more apparent than in rural areas. Female unemployment rates in the states are greater than male unemployment rates. In metropolitan regions, the disparity in unemployment rates between men and women is particularly prominent. Finally, the study discovered gender inequalities in North-East India's per-day salary in both rural and urban regions. Women's daily wages in the state are much lower than men. Women in the north-eastern region encounter a number of structural challenges. Despite the fact that they are both social creatures, men and women are allocated separate duties based on gender. Later in life, both men and women develop as social institutions inside the family. There is an obvious distinction between the roles that a man and a woman must complete, and this frequently leaves the woman in the family or society with less "worth" in all ways and domains than the male. In the context of this study, this explanation has been interpreted as discrimination and social exclusion. Women should be given the encouragement, support, opportunity, and facilities they need both within and outside the house to appropriately handle their duties as mothers and socially responsible persons. We must handle women's difficulties while keeping in mind the region's dynamics in terms of geopolitical and economic situations, as well as other social variables that affect these women's lives. Women increased social engagement in decision-making is expected to weaken current stereotypical societal attitudes and norms that exclude women.

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