TRIBAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. N. A. HAZARIKA
DIRECTOR, ASSAM INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH FOR TRIBALS
& SCHEDULED CASTES, JAWAHARNAGAR, GUWAHATI - 22

TRIBAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

Compiled by

DR. GIRINDRA NATH DAS
District Research Officer,
Karbi Anglong, Diphu.

Edited by

Mrs. N. A. HAZARIKA
Director, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals & Scheduled Castes, Jawaharnagar, Guwahati

DIRECTORATE OF ASSAM INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH FOR TRIBALS AND SCHEDULED CASTES
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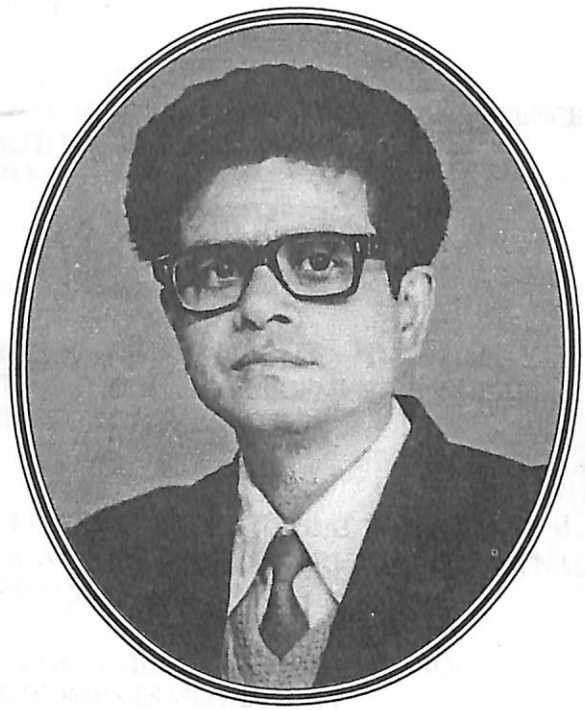
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PREFACE

It is a delightful experience to bring out a book on Tribal Women and Development which is a compilation of a number of seminar papers, contributed by esteemed scholars at a seminar organized by this Directorate in the year 1992.

I offer my heartiest thanks to Dr. Girindra Nath Das, District Research Officer, Diphu, Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes who had assisted me in bringing out this publication and enlightened me with details of the prevailing situation in 1992.

I also acknowledge my thanks to all the distinguished scholars who through their contribution enriched the knowledge of the status of tribal women and development to the general mass.

Ms. N. A. Hazarika, ACS
Director, Assam Institute of
Research for Tribals and
Scheduled Castes,
Guwahati-22.

INTRODUCTION

This publication is a compilation of papers presented in a three-day national seminar on *Tribal Women and Development* organized by the Directorate of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati from April 4-6, 1992. As a matter of fact, this was the last seminar held under the Directorship of Dr. B.N.Bordoloi and on the other hand, the first seminar in the Institute's own building complex which was inaugurated by the then Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam, Late Hiteswar Saikia on January 2, 1992. Previously the Directorate was functioning from various rented buildings since its inception in 1977.

Late Borgoram Deuri, the then Hon'ble Minister, Welfare of Plains Tribes and Backward Classes, Assam inaugurated the seminar. In his inaugural speech he mentioned that the tribal women are equal partners of men practically in all walks of life except some religious and other specific matters. The status of tribal women is better than that of non tribal women. Dowry system is not prevalent among the tribal people. Birth rate and infant mortality are also found to be low among them. However, it is painful to note that the tribal women have not been able to achieve respectable positions in the political, educational and economic fields. Various Five Year Plans have also not paid due attention for the development of the tribal women. The female literacy rate among the tribal communities is very low in our country. Therefore, provision of lady teachers in the educational institutions, one girls' hostel within the jurisdictions of each tribal development block, school uniforms and scholarships, etc., should be made for increasing the level of female literacy. Deuri pointed out that since the tribal women are expert in weaving, Co-operatives among tribal women weavers and Training-cum-Production Centres in weaving have been established in the State. Further, he suggested that the traditional institutions like the

dormitory for girls, institutions of mutual help and co-operation, etc., should be utilized for overall development of the tribal women.

Altogether 30 papers were presented in 6 (six) academic sessions of the seminar. In this volume 27 papers have been incorporated as other materials could not be traced. Original copies of some papers were, however, found and cyclostyled copies of few papers were collected from other sources. In this manner the papers have been compiled and edited thoroughly before sending to the press. Moreover, it is to be noted that summary proceedings of the academic sessions and recommendations of the seminar could not be included in the volume due to non availability of the relevant records of 1992.

The focal theme of the national seminar was *Tribal Women and Development* and the following parameters were formulated for presenting the papers :

1. *Role and Status of the Tribal Women in their societies through ages.*
2. *The Traditional Tribal Institutions meant exclusively for women and the prospect of their utilization for the development of the tribal women.*
3. *Problems of development of tribal women in different spheres.*
4. *Development of tribal women as a part of human resource development.*
5. *Changing development trends among tribal women – retrospective and perspective.*

While dealing the development of tribal women as a part of human resource development Bhowmick has referred to three main problems viz, economic sphere, education and health, hygiene and cleanliness. He has suggested that a competent authority should undertake a detailed study on the cultural constraints of the tribal groups in order to diagnose the problem and the Report should be submitted to the respective Tribal Welfare Department

for proper implementation. Roy Burman in his paper has elaborately discussed the concept of development and the role and status of tribal women. According to him the UN documents have not adequately highlighted two aspects of development viz, ecological indicator of development and gender role as a process and a product of development. He has also pointed out that historical ecology and cultural setting of the population are highly essential for understanding the locus of role and status. He comes to the conclusion that in order to augment the role of women in the development process the economy of permanence should be the basic and vital part of new economic order at the national and international levels.

Sachchidananda has mentioned that due to shrinkage of forest areas the tribal women have suffered a lot in the collection of minor produce. Moreover, the tribal women engaged in basket making do not get bamboo as raw material since it is supplied to the paper mills. As a result of switch over to settled mode of agriculture from shifting cultivation the role of womenfolk is minimized. The employment of tribal women in the mining sector has also decreased due to enactment of legislation. Although sale of firewood in the nearby town is being taken up as profession by the tribal women, the remuneration is poor. Again, women labourers engaged in building construction have to face sexual harassment. Housewives are sometimes compelled to act as concubines. The tribal women are also associated with social evils like bootlegging, gambling, beggary and prostitution due to industrialization. According to him wages of the women employed in the social forestry programme should be enhanced. Steps should be taken by the Government for imparting skills like masonry and carpentry to women workers. The tribal women have to set up cooperatives for collecting and selling minor forest produce like *tendu* leaves, *mahua* seeds and flowers to the Forest Development Corporation. It is heartening to note that the tribal women groups engage themselves in wasteland development for their subsistence. This reveals that the tribal women are living at various levels of socio-cultural development. The need of the hour is to

take positive steps by the Government for their welfare.

Taking into consideration various data in respect of literacy from 1961, 1971 and 1981 Census Reports Ratha comments that development of tribal women cannot take place unless the females are educated properly and level of literacy is raised. Mathur has critically examined the role and status of women among the Kurichians, a matrilineal tribe inhabiting the Wynad district of Kerala. He has opined that both formal and non formal education must be imparted to the Kurichian women so as to enable them to raise their inferior social status and come forward for development of the community as a whole. Neog deals with the role of tribal women in Meghalaya taking into account some indices of socio-economic development viz, occupational structure, literacy rates, enrolment ratio for Classes I to V and Classes VI to VIII, co-efficient of equality, employment and unemployment. He advocates for proportional job reservation for the tribal women as short term measure and growth of industrialisation in the State for economic development as long term measure.

In his paper Somawat has suggested for a national policy on human resource development exclusively for women with a separate component on tribal women. On the basis of a field study in two villages viz, Naharani inhabited by a Plains tribe and Betani inhabited by non tribal communities in Tinsukia district of Assam Goswami and Goswami reveal that out of a total of eight parameters applied for determining the status of women, three parameters such as participation in decision making process in the family, choice of husbands and socio-economic freedom indicate equal status of women while five parameters like property inheritance, volume of workload, husbands' assistance, female literacy and contribution to family income indicate low status of women.

Baruah attempts to focus light on the attitude of the traditional north-eastern tribal societies towards women taking into consideration some indicators such as proverbs, rites, practices and customary laws prevalent among them. She comments that biased attitude towards women must be totally changed and

welfare programmes meant for tribal women must be implemented from the grass-root level involving dedicated women. Das in her illuminating paper has discussed in detail the main factors responsible for low level of literacy among the tribal women in Assam. She has also forwarded a good number of suggestions for improvement of women's education.

From field experiences Mohakhud opines that the tribal women prefer economic development to education. As a result, they send their children to work as daily wage earners. Therefore, top priority should be given to effective education to tribal women and girls for development. Moreover, property rights should be entrusted to the tribal women. Singh has undertaken a case study of the Kols inhabiting *Patha* area of the Banda district of Uttar Pradesh. The organizations working for the development of the *Patha* area are *Akhil Bharatiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan* and *Mahila Samakhya*. Singh suggests for implementation of land reforms, setting up of cottage industries, execution of minor irrigation schemes, protection against dacoity, rehabilitation of bonded labourers and adequate educational facilities, etc. Hembram has dealt with the role and status of the tribal women on the basis of five features viz, social values, cultural heritage, traditional values, economic conditions and educational aspects. He feels that the tribal women are denied of social justice despite their contribution towards betterment of the society.

Rawat and Rawat have highlighted the role and status of women of Boksa and Tharu tribes living in the Himalayan belt of Uttar Pradesh. They have finally suggested that the Government should establish residential schools, provide necessary work to the people and also arrange compulsory saving from the daily/ periodical earning of the people. Gupta has tried to assess the nature and extent of achievements and the range of existing gaps in socio-economic sphere with emphasis on population, literacy, education and occupation among the scheduled tribe females in relation to the females of non scheduled communities and total population of West Bengal on the basis of 1961, 1971 and 1981

Census data. She comes to the conclusion that despite significant contribution of the scheduled tribe females towards family income they do not receive equal status as that of men. Rather they are neglected and exploited.

In his paper Gaikwad describes *Dakhan* (witchcraft) prevalent among the Pawara tribe of Maharashtra and comments that without changes in the ideology and belief pattern of the community such a culture bound syndrome cannot be eliminated overnight. However, health education should be imparted to the community. Singh and Singh in their joint paper have highlighted problems and prospects of Bhotiya women living in U.P. Himalaya. According to them without considering the geographical and socio-cultural aspects of the area, the borrowed schemes have been implemented as a result of which the Bhotiya women have suffered a lot. Supply of imported Australian sheep, hare and Jersey cows as grants-in-aid/subsidy could not provide sufficient benefit. On the other hand, supply of hybrids of their own sheep would have brought significant results.

Ette has endeavoured to focus light on the actual position of education among the tribal women of Arunachal Pradesh on the basis of data collected from the Heads of eighteen departments located at Itanagar. She opines that due to efforts of the State Government enrolment of tribal girls in the educational institutions is gradually increasing. Some girls are also pursuing higher studies in medicine, agriculture, veterinary, engineering and home science, etc. Many women are engaged in service, politics and business. However, necessary steps should be taken by the Government to remove social evils like child marriage, forced marriage and adult illiteracy, etc.

In order to highlight the role and status of the tribal women in Arunachal Pradesh Mallo has taken into account marriage, forced marriage, inter-tribe marriage, inheritance of property by women and registration of marriage. While dealing with the role and status of the Bodo women Brahma refers to the importance

of women during child birth, importance of two young girls in marriage ceremony, role of women in religious functions, women's participation at the family economy and women and social reformation. He comments that although the Bodo society is a patriarchal one the position of women in the society appears to be high. Moreover, the Bodo women can play a vital role in nation building provided female education is imparted sincerely.

According to Pathak it is necessary to take into account outward and inward approaches to deal with the problems of tribal women in India. Outward approach refers to the steps undertaken by social and other organizations to bring the tribal women to the national mainstream while internal approach refers to human treatment which brings confidence, courage and feeling among the tribal women that they are also part and parcel of the society. He considers that the main problems of tribal women are psychological and as such, an intimate relationship should be developed with them. Kuli in his paper attempts to highlight the role of women in economic development of the Mising society with reference to agriculture, weaving, animal husbandry and kitchen garden. He feels that although the Mising women play an important role in their economy, they are lacking scientific knowledge. It is, therefore, highly essential to provide training facilities to them so that they can contribute towards the development of the Mising society substantially.

While dealing with the role and status of the tribal women in India Hazowary tries to analyse the indicators such as literacy levels of tribal women, agriculture, kitchen garden, domestic affairs, employment, piggery and poultry farm, weaving and the role of tribal women in social function. He puts forward his suggestions for establishment of schools for females alongwith appointment of local female teachers, adult education centres for tribal women, spread of technical education among the females, provision of marketing facilities for handicrafts and provision of scientific rearing of pigs and poultry.

In her paper Pegu deals with the role and status of Adi

of Arunachal Pradesh, Mishing, Bodo, Karbi, Deori, Sonowal Kachari, Tiwa, Rabha of Assam. Moreover, she highlights the role of the tribal women in preservation of food, modern education and preservation of traditional art and culture. Doley discusses the problems of development of tribal women living in Assam with special reference to low level of female literacy, superstition, habitation in remote, hilly and flood-prone areas, heavy pressure of work, lack of voluntary women organization and lack of commercial attitude, etc. Moreover, she puts forward various suggestions for overcoming the problems of tribal women.

Koch opines that plans and policies should be oriented in such a manner that culture is transmitted from one generation to the next and ethnic identity is preserved. He further suggests that in the adult education programme it is necessary to impart training to the monolingual tribal women in their own mother tongue. Suitable schemes should be implemented among the tribal people living in slum areas so that the tribal women can start weaving and rearing plants for cultural heritage. Gohain in her paper comments that in order to develop the tribal women living particularly in the two hill districts of Assam priority should be given to develop the backward scattered areas and the first step in this direction should be educational aspect. This will definitely bring awareness to the tribal women to think about the future of their children and improvement of their family.

The papers included in this volume will definitely throw sufficient light on the various problems of tribal women living in the last part of the twentieth century and also the development measures undertaken by the Government and other agencies.

Dated Guwahati,
the 15th March, 2007

Mrs. Nilufer A. Hazarika
Director,
Assam Institute of Research for Tribals & Scheduled Castes,
Jawaharnagar, Guwahati

VII

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

1. **Dr. P.K.Bhowmick,**
Calcutta University,
Calcutta.

2. **Dr. B.K.Roy Burman,**
Centre for Study of Developing Societies,
Delhi.

3. **Prof. Sachchidananda,**
UGC Emeritus Fellow,
157 Kadam Kuan, New Area,
Patna.

4. **Dr. S.N.Ratha,**
Professor of Sociology and Social Anthropology,
Sambalpur University, Orissa.

5. **Dr. P.R.G.Mathur,**
Chairman, South Indian Regional Centre,
Palghat, Kerala.

6. **Dr. A.K.Neog,**
Director for SC and ST, Shillong.

7. **Dr. G.S.Somawat,**
Deputy Director for SC and ST,
National Commission for Scheduled Castes and
Scheduled Tribes, Ministry of Welfare,
Govt. of India, Guwahati, Assam.

8. **Dr. A.Goswami & Dr. H.Goswami,**
Professors of Economics,
Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh,
Assam.

9. **Dr. (Mrs.) S.L.Baruah,**
Professor, Department of History,
Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh,
Assam.

10. **Dr. Lakshahira Das,**
Professor, Department of Education,
Gauhati University, Assam.

11. **Yugal Kishor Mohakhud,**
Director & Executive Secretary & Chief Functionary,
Vivekananda Palli Agragami Seva Pratisthan (VPASP),
Dhanupali (Bhatra Chowk), Sambalpur, Orissa.

12. **Dr. Pramod Singh,**
Head, Institute of Environmental Sciences,
Chitrakut Gramoday Vishwavidyalaya,
Chitrakut.

13. **Nayan Chand Hembram,**
Secretary, Utkal Adivasi Mangal Samiti,
Unit-II, Ashoknagar, Bhubaneswar.

14. **Man Singh Rawat & Shashi Prabha Rawat,**
Sarvodaya Seva Kendra Haldukhata-Kotdwara,
Garhwal, U.P.

15. **Dr. (Mrs.) R. Gupta,**
Cultural Research Officer,
Cultural Research Institute,
Calcutta.

16. **Gaikwad John S.,**
Lecturer, Tribal Research & Training
Institute, (Maharashtra State),
Pune.

17. **Dr. N.N.Singh & Dr. S.B.Singh,**
Govt. Post Graduate College,
Kotdwara, Uttar Pradesh.

18. **Shrimati Premlata Ette,**
Assistant D.P.I.,
Directorate of Public Instructions,
Naharlagun, Arunachal Pradesh.

19. **Shrimati Dishi Mihu Mallo,**
Deputy Director (ICDS),
Department of Rural Development,
Arunachal Pradesh.

20. **Dr. K. Brahma,**
Principal, Gossaigaon College,
Kokrajhar, Assam.

21. **D. Pathak,**
Vice Principal, Dhakuakhana College.

22. **Dr. Jawahar Jyoti Kuli,**
Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh.

23. **Mangal Singh Hazowary,**
Lecturer, Govt. College of Teacher Education,
Kokrajhar, Assam.

24. **Mrs. Binapani Pegu,**
Jonai, Assam.

25. **Mrs. Niroda Doley,**
Lecturer, Murkongselek College,
Jonai, Assam.

26. **Jibeswar Koch,**
Lecturer in Bodo,
Dudhnoi College, Assam.

27. **Shrimati B.Gohain Roy,**
Research Scholar,
Gauhati University, Assam.

DEVELOPMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN AS A PART OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

P.K. BHOWMICK

I

Differences in male and female behaviour are reflected when biology and culture interact ; but these depend on situational exigencies. Traversing the lanes and bylanes of history a man became a human through various cultural attributes that constellated around the homosapien groups at different times and climes. Down the steps of human history we find a milestone of the palaeolithic stage or stone-age when the people were a hunting-gathering class for their subsistence. The male folks then chose to utilise the weaker sex or women as their child-bearing and child-rearing machines, for they themselves were not emotionally fit to do the job and God endowed women biologically to do this effectively. The women then were treated as their unalloyed mistresses. In this way, a matriarchate situation prevailed, by which the feminine status as mother was established due to her womanly attributes. But in course of time changes crept in consequent upon the use of new tools, progress in technology and the roles of males and females underwent a change ;

statuses were curved and the social conditions tilted in favour of a patriarchate living. Naturally, therefore, the relationship pattern among the individuals or the families was established on a mutually approved recognition which might have generated 'incest taboos' and other formalities crystallised in course of time. It is an undeniable fact that in course of such transformation many more archaic type of cultural traits have been dropped and the horror of incest, clan exogamy gradually perpetuated to establish an order. But still variations are there, and many more peculiarities have prevailed and interlaced with a group of people – locale having less interactions with the outer world, i.e., the people were in the condition of primitiveness. It is to be noted here that to minimise disabilities, especially widespread horror of menstruation and other associated traits of keeping the women in segregation in a sepa-rate hut is very common among the tribes and puberty rituals are sometimes clitoridectomy, i.e., additional operation of genital organ, considered to be a must in many groups of people. Again, monthly seclusion of women has been accepted by many people dissociating them from certain sacred objects and practices. Among the typical pastoral Toda, the women though well treated due to practice of polyandry are ranked as inferior and are debarred from all ritualistic activities. Among many African tribes, romanticised polygyny is there. Even the higher Brahmin Kulins of Bengal had exercised that privilege till two centuries

ago. Erotic impulses have urged many more formalities like this among many groups of people – prevalence of dormitory, both for men and women, among many tribes are the special features of the situation. A typical example is in the Murian inhabiters where this comradeship at the dormitory provided pleasure and satisfaction and those were unconditionally extended to the solemnisation of marriages – parting permanently the dormitory lovers. Naturally, we find many rules, rituals and prohibitions that have cropped up in the social system of various other so-called tribal groups, both in India and in other parts of the world also, indicating a distinctive position of women in the tribal society. Thus, anthropology records various aspects of women, i.e., love, romanticism and sexual freedom, though upheld by the random behaviour through taboos, concerning certain acts as indecent, contemptible, objectionable, barring unlimited sexual excesses through penalties. It is also indicated that deep sex urge in every woman lies the desire to possess a child, reflecting a strong maternal instinct that colours her life, reflects love and affection and sustains a group familial ties with obligations and formalities and therefore, we conceive 'man and woman together compose the fullness of humanity' (Hippal).

Any way, Morgan's thesis of reconstruction of human society from promiscuity to monogamy is considered sometime as a time-worn idea. But

it is true that historical situation, interactions of varied nature, discovery and inventions, improvement of tool and technology to harness the nature compelled the society to reorganise once more through attainment of comfort at the door of civilisation by more involving and reorganising women through capabilities to establish a better and comfortable society. Though in many cases masculine decisions ignore the lower status of the woman, bringing them inequality and as such, progressiveness has been reassessed in all the countries ignoring the sentimental gallantry.

II

The tribal scenario in India represents variegated social and economic categories. The age-old matriarchate tribe exampled by the Khasis, the Garos and the Rabhas, polyandrian tribes like the Todas and the Jaronsonies are having a colourful society of their own with individual dormitories. The Murias, the Gonds or even the olden Garos are noteworthy in this respect. Variation of their economic life from gathering-hunting to settled agriculture having distinctive economic role, both for males and females, division of labour, taboos and restrictions, have their elaborate systems in the ethnographic accounts which were observed, collated and collected by the researcher and it is not insignificant to draw a profile of women in tribal societies of India. The British

administration in India examined Indian people and interpreted her history and, consequently, we now get the tribal situations more vividly where many more contributions have potentially been made by many scholarly oriented persons.

Thus, we find geographical setting interlacing with these groups of people along with their population structure, available resources and utilisation of all these demanded certain action patterns, which are manifested in their lifestyle. Here, we find diversities of culture, differentiation in outlook and varied degrees of interactions with the other groups of people, moulding the cultural pattern of the people. Again, it is to be noted that the male-female distinctions, their capabilities and compatibilities altogether have been woven into the fabric of cultural setting of the groups.

While discussing tribal India, we nowadays say that there are some 427 tribal groups having distinctive cultural patterns with identifiable cultural traits. Of course, historical processes in many cases have brought some groups closer to each other through a process of blending and alignment. Again, some groups have alienated from some original stock or the main group. In such cases, we find sharing of common cultural traits with little differences as per need of the situation.

However, as stated earlier, all these tribal groups are not concentrated in any single part,

but there are zones where some groups are preponderant. Therefore, in a broad way we can see the distinction of the tribal people in some zones, though some groups of people are more in isolation than others, in areas like forests, mountains, rugged terrain, etc., and are separated from their general body. It has been emphasised that ecology, environment, availability of resources and technology as also the nature of interaction vary, just to portray a distinctive lifestyle, because division of labour due to differences in sex and age has a very significant role to play. Naturally, during the British rule in India, not so much importance was given to the so-called tribals, rather they maintained a policy of *laissez faire*. Of course, history has it that there were harsh interactions during certain periods of the British administration which resulted in insurrections and uprisings and, that being the case, the tribal people were to resist against varied types of exploitation. After that, certain policies were propounded by the administrators.

III

Independence of India ushered in many possibilities and advantages were extended not only to the tribals, but also to other groups of people, as our country has been declared as a Welfare State. Compulsory free education upto the primary level and communication facilities

were established in varied degrees and many more welfare programmes were initiated through various plans and programmes. Thus, India having broken her shackles of bondage promised many things – at least to those downtrodden weaker sections of the society who are called endearingly as the tribals, who were scheduled to have some Constitutional benefits. In spite of all these welfare measures, still some tribal groups after their careful evaluation proved to be extremely backward. They were described by U.N. Dhebar as 'the lowest layer of the tribal stratum'. These groups have been categorized as Primitive Tribal Group (PTG), their main criteria being (a) pre-agricultural level of techno- logy, and (b) extremely low level of literacy. Originally, 52 such groups (though some tribes were categorised in different States with an additional number) were marked and now the number stands at 74. Of course, many more special advantages were extended to them and it is to be noted that all the financial grants are made available from the coffers of the Government of India.

On all this background, we will have to consider the nature of development of the tribals with special reference to tribal women, as great hopes have been pinned on them since the days of Independence. Nowadays, we also consider the environmental capacities to utilise all these and also scientifically obtained knowledge, just to overcome the long drawn problems in which

the tribals are enveloped. It is not undeniable that human resources should be tuned to all these capacities, because of the inherent capabilities of man. So, spread of education, spread of scientific ideas to surmount the age-old prejudices in which these groups have fallen should be toned up to harness all the advantages and circumscribe the adversities for the overall betterment. Naturally, the widened world view will pull them with their capabilities honed by training and education.

IV

It has been reiterated again and again that the view of life of the tribal women varies from place to place and from tribe to tribe, though physical labour to earn their livelihood is a *sine-qua-non* for every member of the tribes. Polyandry is common to the Toda tribal community. Possibly, this was due to female infanticide that was agreed upon by all the groups of people at a certain point of time, when food materials were scarce to maintain the large families. Again, adultery in many tribes was dominant, particularly among the Lodha tribe, a hunting-gathering group. Among them marriage is a must, but at the same time the procedure to divorce is also very easy. A simple refusal to go to her husband's place by a married girl is considered sufficient for a divorce. Both the divorced parties can remarry. In the case of the Santal, various ways of getting a mate are

there which is to be approved by the society. As the age advances, girls and boys become more and more associated for love-making, forging their way to marriage and union. So, the view of life varies with their background to do something which is common to all the tribe members, but it is very difficult to perpetrate. Still we must not forget that our country is a Welfare State and something should be done by the advanced section of population, either with the help of the administration or with the help of the persons interested in tribal life. So, certain problems common to all are to be properly understood and pinpointed for the welfare by which the people may not be allowed to stay in suspense or in delay. Time is fast fleeting away and money at different phases is being spent in tons, but the people in charge of the development work are not attuned to this and so this sort of gap exists between the promise and the practice. This gap has to be bridged as soon as possible. For this purpose, a new policy is to be evolved and many more interactions are needed between the persons concerned. Development processes for women should not be tarried any further and this should be given the highest priority and proper attention should be paid to the problems jointly with Government officials and social workers. The beneficiaries should also be involved in the work, along with the social scientists.

Considering the tribewise status of

women, their economic rights and various other ways of participation in day-to-day life, in private or public, these people may pose many problems. The researcher during his study could work out some of them by talking with the women of the tribes. Under such circumstances, study and development of women lack in certain intrinsic insight. In spite of all this, we must put emphasis on the position of the tribal women when they are exposed to varied developmental scenes, though their status, world-view and responses are not uniform. So, interdisciplinary discussion is needed to chalk out a plan and idea of implementation through Government agency. Other cooperating agencies should also be sorted out in this respect through appropriate levels. All this requires proper examination and careful implementation as all of us are of the same opinion that most of the tribal women are in under developed stages. We must not forget that due to various welfare measures being in alien hands of the implementing authority, the tribal women all the time have had to face different types of interactions, resulting in different responses. All this, in course of time, created various problems which need now to be resolved. Thus, planners or the persons involved in the welfare activities must be careful in this matter, which will dispel a variety of harsh situations through proper understanding. We also know during this long period of welfare activities, done either by the Government machinery or by any other Voluntary

organisation for the tribal women, that they are aware of the situation obtaining around them. So, to do something good for them is a bit easy as the people in most cases are aware of the changing socio-politico situations. But the nature of resources needed for the purpose may not be sufficient and this will cause difficulties for proper implementation and fruitful result.

V

While considering the question of human resources development, with reference to the tribal women, in general, and tribal women of West Bengal, in particular, some problems were noticed. Now, we shall have to see how far all these problems can be circumvented for fruitful implementation of our schemes. These problems can be categorised into three broad heads , e.g.

(1) Economic sphere : As the tribal women have no formal education or even literacy background, their literacy rate is as low as 5.01% against a total general literacy percentage of 30.25. Hence they have to work mostly as wage earners and are engaged during the agriculture season only in various agricultural activities, but during the lean months they have no other alternative to opt, i.e., except earth work at different places, collection of *Kendu* leaves, etc., in the forest areas they live in. But no systematic training for some other profession has been imparted on them for a switch over. Thus, most

of them have to lead an idle life during the thin times. So, attempt should be made for imparting training-cum-production like printing, coir twisting, leaf-cup making and such other handicrafts which are considered to be very useful.

(2) Education : It has been mentioned that in educational sphere, all these womenfolk are not to compete with others. There are facilities for the tribal hostel where the boarders can get a sum of Rs. 100/- per month for 10 months. Even so, in many cases, they demand more money, but the fund is not upto the mark. Besides, hostels, school buildings are not upto any recognised standard. Over and above, the grant is released after a few months of its scheduled time, sometimes after one year. Naturally, it is difficult for the guardians of the tribal girls to procure money for hostel living. As a result, the money which is being sanctioned and shown as spent appears to be false, until the authorities of the school are competent to advance money for the same. In most cases, no alternative avocations are provided to them. It is not expected that all the tribal girls should have a higher education. There is every possibility of their getting drop-outs. Naturally, some new avocations in the form of tailoring, weaving, coir making or such other small-scale industries are to be provided on the basis of which the tribal girls should orient themselves by which they can stand on their own legs. Such sort of

encouragement is needed to accommodate the drop-outs alternatively, with other avocations of life. Along with this, there should be many interactions with other groups of people on the basis of which they can shake off their tribal obstinacy and coyness.

(3) Health, hygiene and cleanliness : The tribal people, in general, have a strong-built body and they are to cope with the hostile environmental conditions by taking only the available food all around them. Besides, primary health care is needed, a new mentality should be grown up with the help of the Governmental infrastructure. Along with this, locally available food should be cooked in a scientific way by which the food value is not wasted. Therefore, demonstration in respect of food preparation and food preservation should be made by which more hygienic food stuff can be made available to them.

This done, the habit of seeking the aid of witch-doctors, etc., for remedial measures should be eschewed wholly by giving education and alternative health and family care services. Even all these should be tagged on to the educational curriculum and exhibited through demonstration and application.

VI

When all is said and done, the development of the tribal women as a part of human resources development is to be considered a must, though belated due to lack of initiative on the part of the Government, through fruitful experiments. Firstly, details of the cultural constraints of the tribal groups should be studied by some competent authority, i.e., a fruitful research work should be undertaken to diagnose the problem. The Tribal Welfare Department or the administration should be made aware of all this research work and the benefits of these can be utilised in a meaningful manner. While conducting researches a careful scrutiny should be made to understand the problem through native participation while implementing the schemes for the betterment of the tribals. Their inherent obstinacies should be made to go through discrimination.

It is also suggested that a few organisations should be selected for such experimentation as micro-growth centres through which dissemination of the information about availability of more benefits should be made. There should be a training and orientation course and this will be as per geophysical setting of the area, indicating the 'island of development'. Not by spending alone at random that some kind of such Centres of Development can be had but

it can be achieved by proper monitoring cells which will consist of experts and senior level officers who are to take a decision alternatively, when required.

However, a joint venture is needed with the administration, social scientists and social activists, and not by acting on the whims and caprices of the omnipotent political leaders who spend money to develop their vote-bank area and to support their supporters. Nothing can be achieved with the bane of illiteracy of the tribal people, who do not understand their own problems and do not know the remedial measures as to what is needed on priority basis for their development.

ROLE AND STATUS OF THE TRIBAL WOMEN THROUGH THE AGES WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO NORTH EAST INDIA

B. K. ROY BURMAN

As the theme of the seminar is "Tribal Women and Development" it is proposed to examine in this paper the concepts of development, role and status and the interlinkages among them.

Concept of Development :

The concept of development itself is a developing one. It is under constant review and change in different forums. In the 50s higher G.N.P., more national income, favourable balance of payment, creation of physical infrastructure of industries and incorporation of more and more technological sophistication for establishment of man's mastery over nature were considered to be the prime indicators of development. But then it was discovered that this model of development was insensitive to the immediate survival needs of the bulk of the population, it accentuated inequalities and it created a spiritual arid zone in the minds of men. It projected man primarily as *homo-economicus* and undermined the wholeness of human existence.

As a corrective the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2542(xxvi) adopted in 1971 emphasised the following aspects : (i) full utilisation of human resources, creative initiative, information and participation opportunity (ii) right of work and free choice of employment (iii) participation of all members in productive and socially useful labour and establishment of forms of ownership of land and other means of production which precludes any kind of exploitation and conditions leading to genuine equality and (iv) rapid expansion of national income and wealth and their equitable distribution among members of the society.

Elaborating some of these perspectives and supplementing them the UN Declaration of Social Progress and Perspectives envisages (a) effective participation of all elements of society in preparation and execution of national plans (b) equitable distribution of national income (c) acceleration of the process of industrialisation with due regard to social aspects (d) legislative, administrative and other measures to ensure political and civil rights and full implementation of economic, social and cultural rights (e) democratically based social and institutional reforms including land reforms (f) protection and improvement of human environment.

The concepts of development as culled out from the UN documents do not, however, appear

to have taken adequate care of two important aspects of development, namely (i) ecological indicator of development and (ii) gender role as a process and a product of development. In fact, to a considerable extent, these two aspects are inter-related. Ecological indicators should cover along with others (a) conservation (b) protection (c) recuperation (d) sustainability and (e) aesthetic quality. Gender dimension requires (a) re-examination, re-interpretation, reformulation of role (b) demystification, demythifical and redefinition of status (c) recognition of complementarity of gender relations based on the principle of equity (d) recognition of gender dimension of development as an essential ingredient of overall societal development.

This presentation will mainly concentrate on gender dimension of development.

Role and Status :

According to Linton (1952, 50) "Role is the most dynamic aspect of status and status refers to the position of an individual in the prestige system of his society." In respect of primitive societies, Lowie (1948) has emphasised four parameters of status (i) legal status (ii) actual treatment obtained (iii) opportunities for social participation (iv) character of the individual. Based on Coser and Rosenberg, Nirmala Bai (1986) suggests that in modern times, the

concept of status has been broadened to encompass all culturally prescribed rights and duties inherent in social positions, whatever their origin. In other words, for appropriate understanding the locus of role and status as outlined earlier, the historical ecology and cultural setting of the concerned population are of great importance.

Historical ecology :

For a rapid appraisal of the historical ecological setting four types of areas may be delineated in terms of political economy and historical process.

1. The bulk of the area in the country from the North to the South (excluding large portions mainly in the North East) which came under common political domains. Various permutations and combinations, however, took place during different periods of history.

2. Those areas in the North East and the North that shared many political and cultural linkages not only with one or the other part of the rest of the country, but also with South East, and Central Asia eventhough marginally. At the same time, they had many distinctive features in their ethnic processes, including internal social control mechanism.

3. Enclaves of tribal concentration which came under common political control and administrative apparatus during the colonial rule.

4. Areas in the North East which came under colonial suzerainty, but where regular civil administration was extended only after Independence.

In the areas of the first order, feudal mode of production prevailed in the pre-colonial period. During the colonial period alliance of feudal and capitalist forces took place. In the post-colonial period while vestiges of feudal mode of production continue, the capitalist mode of production is rapidly taking over. But the predominant social organisation in these areas is even new caste, though it has lost much of its ideological rationale.

In the areas of the second order where feudal mode of production co-existed with patriarchal mode, caste system also penetrated, though in an incomplete manner.

In the areas of the third and fourth categories the mode of production was patriarchal during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Even in the matrilineal enclaves in these areas, the mode of production was by and large modified patriarchal (Nongbri, 1988). Economy was predominantly non-monetised and caste system and caste values had hardly any

relevance. In fact, in the areas of the fourth order caste system had no relevance at all. In the post-independence period, relentless attempts are being made to orient the productive activities in these areas, to serve the needs of the national and global market to a considerable extent. This has caused great strain in the socio-political processes of the indigenous population and in their relations with the immigrants who have been inducted to these areas to meet the requirements of the new productive activities and their backward and forward linkages in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of economy.

Ideational and cultural process in the historical ecological context

Exogenous influences

Before going into the endogenous ideational processes or the internalized ideologies a rapid appraisal will be made of the diverse strands and circumstances emanating from exogenous sources (or specialist belonging to communities other than the tribal ones and enjoying historical elite status) which have bearing on the role and status of women.

Though overwhelming majority of the population in the areas of the third and fourth orders are tribals, overwhelming majority of the tribal population of India live in the areas of the

first order. Considerable number of them also live in the areas of the second order which includes Brahmaputra valley. In the areas of the first order and to lesser extent in the areas of the second order, the predominant cultural ethos, in so far as the women are concerned, has been brought out by Uma Vasudev (1978) by referring to a dialogue between Kalidasa, the legendary poet laureate of the remote past, and his wife princess Udyttama. While Kalidasa affirms the privilege of a man to take advantage of a variety of experiences, Udyttama pleads that a woman on her own, like herself, has no sanction to live and must, therefore, be pitied. With respect to the Muslim women who are also found in sizeable numbers in the areas of first and second orders, and thus form a significant part of the social ecology of these areas, Vasudeva points out that Islam in India is, in general conservative in its approach. According to Fernandes (1988) even Christianity has failed to exercise a uniformly liberalising influence in India. This is an important observation, because while in the areas of the first and second orders Hindu ethos related to caste constitutes the primary exogenous ideological influence on the tribal societies (and Islam also is not without some of its spell), in the areas of the third order Christianity exercises more significant exogenous influence.

If one can put it in that manner in some of the enclaves of the areas of the fourth order

Buddhism has been for a long time the most important source of exogenous cultural influence. Theravada Buddhism which is popular among the Khamtis of Arunachal lays down the principle that the social units engaged in merit making need not be an individual ; it may be a household, a family, a kingroup or even the entire village (Kondinya, 1982). A person may thus make merit on behalf of other persons. This introduces some amount of axiological flexibility and the scale is tilted according to the leverage of power.

The importance of exogenous ideological intrusion can be appreciated from several incidents. Since the mid-19th century onward, the royal family in Tripura was trying to settle Bengali peasants in this realm for raising revenue. To facilitate this he was trying assiduously to spread the Hindu way of life among the subjects. It was during this period that we find evidence of self-immolation in the pyre of the husband among the Hinduised section of the hill tribes of the State. Ultimately the king was forced to prohibit the practice at the intervention of the British (Choudhury, 1984).

A tragic incident is that of the daughter of a Mech landlord. During the transition from shifting cultivation to settled agriculture a landlord class emerged in the community. In order to facilitate social communication with

fellow non tribal landlords and with revenue officials, they started claiming for themselves the status of Kayastha within the Hindu caste framework. Following the ideology of high Hindu caste, their women were withdrawn from outdoor agricultural work and huge amounts were spent on securing bridegroom from the Kayastha caste. An educated daughter of one of the most influential Mech landlords who was in love with a young man of the same community, was forced to marry a semi-literate Kayastha boy. It was clearly an incompatible marriage which ended in suicide.

Endogenous ideational and cultural processes

(i) Source of gender based differentiation

Like exogenous influences, endogenous ideational and cultural processes having bearing on women's role in development are also diversified. One of the correlates of diversification is the predominant source of livelihood. Broadly the sources are (a) collecting and gathering of the endowments of nature particularly forest products (b) nomadic or semi-nomadic livestock rearing (c) slash and burn cultivation (d) settled subsistence cultivation (e) traditional crafts (f) plantation, mining and industrial labour
(g) others.

Until recently in each of these activities

tribal women had specific roles and these roles were frequently sustained by bio-cultural considerations.

Among the bio-cultural considerations associated with the gender related role differentiation, the following deserve special mention (a) difference in physical capacity (b) physiological rhythm related to menstrual cycle (c) interlacing of productive and reproductive roles (d) comparatively greater concern for sustainable use of the sources of livelihood in the interest of protection of the progeny (e) internalisation of the value of reciprocity and differentiated unity.

(ii) Nature of gender based differentiation

(a) Difference in physical capacity, ideational-cultural processes and role differentiation

Because of difference in physical capacity, even in the primal stage of human existence males were more concerned with predatory realm of life, particularly hunting or during scarcity grabbing goods from other lands or local groups ; females were concerned with foraging with collection and gathering. These two modes of obtaining the succour of life would have dawned in the mind-sets of the males and the females two different ontologies. One is that of hierarchical cosmic order ; the other is that of a

cosmic order characterised by ever expanding cosmic circles.

In a hierarchical cosmic order, one is more concerned with domination and extortion ; in the cosmic order symbolised by concentric circles one looks for harmony and muse of the vision. These are two different starting points in the odyssy of humanity through time and space.

(b) Physiological rhythm of women related to menstrual cycle, ideational-cultural processes and role differentiation

Physiological rhythm of women would have sharpened their perception of the physical rhythm and cyclical change in nature. It enabled the women in primal societies to observe the behaviour of plants in different situations. It could not be very unoften that the woman, who looked after the food in the household unwittingly left the remnants of wild edible grains on the soil and sometime or the other she would become aware that from these grains sprouted and grew plants to give more grains.

(iii) Interlacing of productive and reproductive roles

This knowledge, however, created an aura of luminous darkness. The cause and effect relation was construed in the logic of association. It was not nature that was responsible for the germination of seeds. It was by the grace

of the mysterious reproductive power of the woman that earth was fertilised.

The woman who was the better half of man, was transformed into mother goddess. Her mysterious essence rose from the travails of mundane existence (Roy Burman, 1975).

(iv) Concern for sustainable use of resources

It is generally agreed that early form of agriculture was slash and burn shifting cultivation. The more arduous task of cutting the trees and warding off the predatory animals was done by the males while sowing and weeding was women's job. Harvesting was done in common. A balance of power at the household and local group level was achieved through this division of labour.

If it tilted in favour of women when productivity went up and assurance against vagaries of nature was attained as a sequel to sowing of multi-variety seeds through dibbling method, a balance was reached for sometime when herding of livestock became male role complementary to hunting. But livestock grazing can be overdone, it can also disturb the bio-diversity through selective consumption of plant-types in a plant community niche. This would over a length of time reduce male role which they would either try to compensate by predatory raids on the territories associated with other local groups or would take shelter in self-abnegation

through spells of laziness ornated by rituals or smeared with drinking bouts. Thus while sustainable lifestyle becomes more associated with females, the opposite is perceived to be part of male role (Vandana Siva, 1992).

(v) Internalisation of the value of reciprocity and differentiated unity

Gender specific shared experience of women as the ones who bear the physical agony of perpetuating the human species generates an empathy for the bearers of progeny going beyond the human species even. Women are the repositories of cosmic empathy almost as an existential imperative. In case of the male empathy or reciprocity is a contingent fact for ensuring social well being ; in case of the female empathy and reciprocity are primal urges conditioned by their gender related physiological attribute. This is also reflected in their activities for earning their livelihood. The males transcend their egoistic personal interests more frequently during war and predatory raids ; the females more frequently carry on their foraging and creative activities collectively. Pursuit of power is male prerogative, pursuit of existential prudence - pragmatically and ideologically comes more easily to women.

Implication of gender related ideational cultural drives for development

It is the male world-view which was reflected in the European renaissance harping

on the conquest of nature, whose logical corollary is conquest of human social formation and colonialism. The development perspective in the 50s and 60s was more related to this world-view. But the recent shift in development perspective as outlined earlier is also a shift from the world-view of dominance to that of participatory shared equity. It does not, however, mean that women will automatically be in the centre-stage of development activities. Commercialisation of the endowments of nature including minor forest produce is reducing the role of women in this activity ; recent trend towards practice of shifting cultivation for commercial disposal of pulses and oilseeds is also reducing women's role in this field ; mechanisation of agriculture, adoption of world market oriented horticulture are also pushing out the women from their productive role. Only a small section of them who have taken to higher education are entering the tertiary sector of economy. If the role of women in development is to be augmented, the economy of permanence as envisaged by Gandhiji (Kumarappa, 1945) primarily to satisfy the basic need of the bulk of the population must be the core of the new economic order at the national and global levels. Here it is also to be mentioned that without moving for appropriate reorientation of the economic order as a whole, harping on the role of tribal women in isolation, carries with it the possibility of diverting our attention from the system of exploitation and extortion to which the tribals and other peoples of the disadvanta-

ged countries are progressively being subjected. In an international conference of the indigenous women held at Norway in 1991, this point was highlighted (IWGIA, 1990). We shall do well to keep this also in view.

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TRIBAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

SACHCHIDANANDA

The tribals are an integral part of the nation. When steps are being taken for people's development in various ways, their role has to be envisaged in clear terms. It may be that in some ways national development projects hurt rather than help tribal interests. They also have certain specific problems emanating from the environment in which the bulk of them live. These problems have to be solved before their participation in the national development effort is assured.

The tribals are one of the most deprived and disadvantaged sections of the population. In some areas, particularly in the north east, they have suffered from isolation, while in middle India they have gone through a long history of exploitation. In the tribal population itself, women are comparatively more deprived. The bulk of the tribal societies are patriarchal and as such, woman's position is subordinate to that of man. They have poorer access to nutrition, health and education. They have to perform the most arduous and monotonous jobs in the household. They have to trek long distances to

fetch drinking water, fuel and fodder to meet the needs of the members of the family and their animals. In spite of the harsh conditions in which they live, they have certain advantages as compared to their counterparts among the non tribals. They are not secluded or segregated from the folk and they have full freedom to move about in fields, farms and forests. They are not considered a burden on their family as dowry has not to be paid at the time of marriage. They enjoy song and dance and participate in them with full fervour. Divorce and separation is easier in the society and there is no taboo on widow remarriage. Most of the marriages are adult marriages. These plus points may facilitate their participation in the development effort.

Tribal women, however, are not a monolith, since the tribes themselves are at various levels of socio-cultural development. The tribal social system has been affected by the opening up of the tribal country. The initial impact set into motion a process of sanskritization. It led to lowering the age of marriage, a preference for child marriage and stigma on widow remarriage and divorce. These indeed were negative developments. The bride price among some communities like the Ho, has gone up so high that few youngmen are able to afford it. This has led to an increase in the number of run-away marriages. In the north east, elderly rich males acquire more than one wife simply because they can pay the requisite bride price.

Among the Gallong of Arunachal Pradesh educated males tend to divorce their uneducated wives. The gap between the education of sexes in tribal societies has led to marriage of educated tribals either with a partner from the Christian section of the tribe or from the non tribal population. New ideas of inheritance have tended to castigate matrilineal descent as backward. Exigencies of govern- ment service and other economic imperatives have tended to give preference to patrilineal descent. In course of time, the norms of patrilineal society begin to dominate the minds of men, and these ultimately tell upon the status and economic role for women. In matrilineal society women keep their earnings to themselves. Men contribute to the economic activities but their role is limited. In a family which has changed over from matrilineal to a patrilineal, these values and roles also tend to change.

Enormous changes are taking place among women in the world of work, on account of changes in the means of subsistence and in agricultural technology. Some tribes live by hunting and food gathering. Among them the collection of minor produce is the task of women. The tribe derives its shelter, food and drink from the forest which is also a source of game and indigenous medicine. In many areas inhabited by these communities, forests are shrinking due to large-scale felling. The state control over forests restricts the freedom of hunting which amounts

to loss of resource. It has been shown how the resources of the food-gatherers have been appropriated by powerful people and in place of it, conditions of an economy of different order have been laid, which require a complex situation of exchange of commodities based on competition, accumulation and profit. These developments have not only weakened them physically but also socially and economically. In the bargain, it is the women of these communities who have suffered most. In such communities men casually go out for gathering and seldom do hunting. Household jobs such as cooking, cleaning and rearing of children are done by women. These days with the large-scale commercialisation of minor forest produce a change has taken place. Business firms which have contracts for forest produce, appoint collection agents from outside. This leads to the loss of an important role for women.

In many parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka there are communities of basket makers who are now finding it difficult to get bamboos as raw material since the forests have been contracted to large paper mills. Most of these basket makers are tribal women who have been deprived of valuable means of subsistence in the wake of development. In the change over from slash and burn cultivation to settled cultivation the role of women in agriculture is drastically reduced. In most parts of India it is taboo for a woman to handle the plough. The

taboo on ploughing makes for more male control over land. Since ploughing is regarded as a master operation, this gives a decisive dominance to man and the woman recedes into the background. Mechanisation of agriculture and multiple cropping have increased the work load of women. In the non-agricultural sector, where the traditional occupation of the community has been given up, women's participation in the work force has declined. In the mining sector the employment of tribal women has gone down due to legislation.

Some educated tribals in white collar employment are beginning to aspire for housebound wives as a mark of higher social status. This ultimately leads to lowering the status of women. In migration situations, it is the women who suffer more since they are left at home to look after children. They have to depend on irregular remittances from their husbands and left to fend for themselves. As the women do not have adequate access to education and secure employment in the organised sector, other opportunities of livelihood are scarce. The government forest laws make access to available forest produce more difficult. The search for fuel and fodder has made women's lives much harder.

In most tribal areas, thousands of women are engaged in selling firewood in the town. Surveys show that the sale of firewood as a profession has rapidly grown with the rise of

landlessness and joblessness. Cutting firewood and head loading and its sale is both hazardous and backbreaking and remuneration is poor. But women do this because they cannot rely on man to bring any cash home. This is an employment which is available throughout the year. This involves a tussle between the head-loaders and the Forest department but it cannot be given up since the government has no plans either to give the women alternative employment or to meet the firewood needs of the cities through any other means.

Studies of the impact of industrialisation on tribal women focus attention on a number of dysfunctional consequences. A large number of women have been attracted to the mining, factory, building construction and even domestic service. Women labourers in building construction are subjected to sexual exploitation by the staff of the contractors. In industrial areas of Bastar, a large number of tribal women engaged as housemaids have been turned into concubines. Such conditions led to the growth of prostitution and immoral traffic. Tribal women were also involved in bootlegging and gambling. Thus beggary and prostitution which were unknown in tribal areas have emerged as social evils. The absence of seclusion in tribal societies encourages the outsiders to lure unsuspecting young women into their traffic. The social costs of industrialisation in tribal areas for women have indeed been heavy.

Large sections of women in the tribal areas are involved in collection of fuel and fodder. With large-scale deforestation, this has become more strenuous as women have to walk long distances to collect fuel. Non availability of grazing land has increased that problem. Social forestry programme was visualised for reducing pressure on the forests by generating resources for community needs outside the forest land. However, during implementation a slant has developed in favour of larger farmers, urban markets and industry while the fuel fodder crisis continues to grow. On account of land allotment by the government, there has been quicker degradation and privatisation of common property resources, illegal encroachment by large farmers and the operation of market forces have led to further deterioration of the state of the common land affecting women adversely. The social forestry programme has not resulted increased employment opportunities for women. It is, therefore, necessary to build up adequate wage support through the period of rearing, maintenance and protection of plants. Women's access to productive resources under the social forestry programme should be backed by state marketing support. Since it provides only short term employment the wages must be upwardly revised. The budgets must also include provisions for the development of women's organisations.

Women construction workers have to face

insecurity of employment, low wages and bondage to middlemen. Their wages are also comparatively lower than that of men. They are also totally unskilled. There is need for more stringent observance of existing labour laws. This should be strengthened by providing legal literacy to women construction workers. Special care should be taken to impart skills like masonry and carpentry to women workers under government initiative. Women construction workers should be provided facilities like creches, maternity benefit, ration cards and clean drinking water.

Women in industry are subject to casualisation, contractualisation and temporary employment. Women dominate in the low skill work area. They should be provided equal remuneration and child care facilities. Efforts should be made to upgrade their skills through training. Craftswomen should be provided with social security.

In the tribal areas the forestry sector provides employment in the collection and processing of minor forest produce and afforestation. The minor forest produce is a major source of income in the months of starvation. About 60% production of minor forest produce is utilised as food. In Orissa 13% of the forest population depends exclusively on collection of minor forest produce and 17% as wage labour in forestry. In Panchmahals 35% of the

earnings of the tribal are from minor forest produce collection. Collection of *tendu* leaves provided employment for 90 days to 75 lakhs of women every year.

To ensure them better price, produce like *tendu* leaves, *mahua* seeds and flowers are nationalised in a number of States. To remove middlemen and to take up procurement and sale of produce Forest Development Corporations have been created. However, middlemen have not been eliminated and the women remain totally on their mercy. It should be ensured that the forest produce collectors do not earn less than the NREP rates at the end of the day. Tribal women should set up cooperatives to collect and sell the produce to the Forest Development Corporation. The women might also be trained in processing of various minor produce.

In Gujarat some tribal women's groups have worked towards wasteland development. They got government land leased to them. On such land they planted *Ratan jota* (non edible oil) ayurvedic herbs and fodder for goats. This was a novel income generating scheme. In that State a large number of tribal women have joined milk cooperatives and thus, cattle rearing is giving them good and steady income. In Rajasthan they have taken initiative in curbing excessive drinking among their menfolk. They have also joined Save the Forest committees and in wasteland plantation.

In tribal areas in Santal Parganas in Bihar, Santal women have taken to wasteland plantation in a big way. They are also engaged in the production of mulberry and tasar cocoons and of exquisite silk cloth. The programme for development of women and children in rural areas (D.W.C.R.A.) has speeded up income generating activities in tribal districts. It has given them self confidence and helped the process of their empowerment.

In the field of non-formal education and total literacy tribal areas and specially women are an area of special concern. This helps in mobilization and conscientization.

Better education and explicit support from the State Reservation Policy have helped some tribal girls enter into a variety of occupations in government or semi-government institutions. One can find them working as clerks, typists, teachers, nurses, and even police constables. In north eastern India we find a large number of tribal women in these capacities. In middle India also we find tribal women from advanced communities in new positions of privilege, prestige and power. The entry of such women has created problems of adjustment and integration at the work place. They are looked upon with envy by their colleagues on account of the privilege enjoyed by them. Most of the tribal women in this stratum have begun to follow the norms and practices of the middle class. They

deemphasise their own traditional customs, rituals and social practices. There is a tendency of suppressing their past to catch up with the modern and better off sections of non tribal society.

It has been found that in some places tribal women protest against lower wages paid to them. They quarrel with their menfolk for accepting certain terms of employment without consulting them. They are up against discrimination. But, by and large, in a labour surplus economy they have to bear with such discrimination and exploitation.

Thus, we find that the tribal women are at different levels of socio-cultural development. Among the hunters and food-gatherers and artisan communities, their resource base has been decimated and they are facing great problems of survival. Similar is the case of women who have been displaced on account of building of dams and industrial complexes. Tribal women are facing problems of exploitation and discrimination as members of the labour force. Positive steps have to be taken to safeguard and promote their interests in the social forestry programme and also as collectors of minor forest produce which, indeed, is their mainstay in days of adversity.

In planning for women's development in tribal areas it would be useful to bear the following considerations in mind :

1. Recognition of tribal ethos, customs and felt needs.

2. A holistic approach which will encompass the intended as well as the unintended consequences of the development schemes.

3. Drawing up microplans taking into account regional differences in resources and skills.

4. Identification of upcoming tribal women who would work as opinion leaders and organise women's development groups.

5. Enlisting the support of voluntary associations working in tribal areas with participatory approach in training and implementation of schemes.

6. Organization of tribal cells in Departments of Women's Development or Women's Development Corporations at the State level.

THE PROBLEM OF LOW LITERACY : THE PRIME CONSTRAINT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN INDIA

S.N. RATHA

I

A policy document issued by the Govt. of India (1984) feels that "education is key to development" and asserts that education can be input for economic development. It believes that education can help the tribals to build their inner strength and equip them to meet the present day challenges. The document recalls that almost all Commissions, Committees, groups and study teams have emphasised the importance of education in tribal development in the most unambiguous terms.

Consequent to the implementation of the State policy for removal of disparity between the tribals and non tribals through a large number of educational incentives, the document records that the disparity continued to grow between 1961–1971. Between 1971 – 81, though the gap has comparatively come down, the progress is 'painfully slow'. Poor response and heavy dropout continue to be the most decelerating factor in the tribal literacy growth.

Another Government document (1982) notes, "It is alarming to find Common Zero levels of female literacy for a good number of scheduled tribe communities" in all States.

II

According to 1981 Census 16.35% tribals in the country are reported to be literate. The difference between the literacy level of the general population and the tribal population is 19.88%. A look through the available data on the growth of literacy among the tribes compared with that of the general population in different States show that the gap is on the increase in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tripura, West Bengal, Andamans, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

In Andhra Pradesh the gap in 1961 was 16.38% that rose to 19.24% in 1971 and to 22.12% in 1981, maintaining a steady negative growth of nearly 3% (2.96% and 2.88% respectively). In Bihar the corresponding figures are 8.24% (1961), 8.30% (1971) and 9.21% (1981) respectively. For Madhya Pradesh the gap in 1961 was 12.13%, rising to 14.52% in 1971 and to 17.19% in 1981. In Orissa the tribal population in 1961 was less literate than the general population by 14.30% that increased to 16.72% in 1971 and further to 20.27% in 1981.

At Rajasthan 11.24% difference in 1961 widened to 12.60% in 1971 and then to 14.11% in 1981. The Tripura picture presents the gap at 10.23% in 1961 that widens to 15.95% in 1971 and 19.05% in 1981. At Kerala it rose from 29.59% to 34.70% and then to 38.63% over three decades. In West Bengal the difference in 1961 was 22.75% that rose to 24.48% in 1971 and then to 27.73% in 1981. The Gujarat figures are 18.76%, 21.67% and 22.56% respectively for 1961, 1971 and 1981. For Andamans the figures for the corresponding years are 22.53%, 25.74% and 26.45% respectively. For Dadra and Nagar Haveli the figures stand at 5.08%, 6.07% and 7.81%. At Himachal Pradesh the figures increased from 13.63% in 1961 to 16.07% in 1971 and to 16.55% in 1981.

Trend that emerges out of this is that in Andhra Pradesh, Tripura, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh the negative growth between 1961 and 1971 shows slight decline between 1971 and 1981. For Andhra Pradesh the situation between 1971 and 1981 is improved by a mere 0.08%, for Kerala, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Tripura, the decline is arrested by 1.18%, 6.2%, 2.10% and 1.96% respectively. In rest of the States, stated above, not only the gap between the tribal and non tribal population is widening, the rate of this negative growth shows an increasing trend between the decade ending in 1971 and the decade ending in 1981 from 0.06% to 0.91% in Bihar, 2.39% to 2.67% in Madhya

Pradesh, 2.42% to 3.55% in Orissa, 1.26% to 1.51% in Rajasthan, 1.75% to 3.25% in West Bengal, 3.21% to 5.29% in Andamans, and from 0.99% to 1.74% in Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

The gap is, however, narrowed down in Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and Goa, Daman and Diu at the decade ending in 1981. The difference in the literacy levels in 1971 for these States had been 27.44%, 4.20%, 3.04%, 3.39%, 30.44%, 7.18%, 32.02% respectively. It came down to 24.89%, 1.61%, 2.53%, 2.26%, 26.09%, 6.71% and 30.18% in 1981 respectively, showing a positive growth of 7.18%, 3.62%, 0.51% (for Meghalaya 1961 figure is not available), 2.37%, 7.29%, 0.47% (1961 figure for U.P. is not available), and 1.84% (1961 figure for Goa is not available) respectively in these States for the decade ending in 1981. In Assam 1981 figures are not available where the gap showed a downward trend between 1961 and 1971. For Arunachal Pradesh 1961 figure is not available where the gap between 1971 and 1978 is increased by 0.66%. At Lakshadweep the gap that was reduced to 0 between 1961 and 1971 rose to 1.99% between 1971 and 1981. In Karnataka the gap was showing a bridging tendency between 1961-71 but got widened between 1971 and 1981 again. For the country as a whole the gap shows a continuous increasing trend from 15.46% in 1961 to 18.15% in 1971 and then to 19.88% in 1981.

III

Great differences are also observed in the literacy achievements between tribe and tribe within the same State. The gap between the highest and the lowest literate tribes in Andhra Pradesh is 14.29%, in Assam it is 46.85%, in Bihar 16.12%, Gujarat 28.76%, Himachal Pradesh 18.25%, Karnataka 37.97%, Kerala 73.04%, Madhya Pradesh 17.68%, Maharashtra 47.66%, Manipur 89.89%, Meghalaya 59.48%, Nagaland 11.76%, Orissa 32.26%, Rajasthan 48.60%, Tamil Nadu 44.77%, Tripura 61.26%, Uttar Pradesh 20.63%, West Bengal 27.53%, Andaman 13.90%, Arunachal Pradesh 99.82%, Goa 18.43%.

IV

Focussing the attention on the women situation in tribal India one notes that the literacy gap between the females of the general population and tribal population increased from 8.79% in 1961 to 13.84% in 1971 and then to 16.78% in 1981 for India as a whole (Table I). The corresponding situation, in Andhra Pradesh is from 10.55% to 13.62% to 16.93% ; in Assam from 0.26% to 1.47% between 1961 and 1971 (1981 figures for Assam are not available). In Arunachal the difference of 2.01% in 1971 goes

upto 4.01% in 1981 ; in Bihar it is 3.72% to 4.85% to 5.77% ; in Gujarat 15.01% to 18.60% to 20.66% ; in Himachal Pradesh 4.51% to 14.70% to 18.64% ; in Karnataka, the gap increases from 11.38% to 13.30% and then leaps to 17.38% ; in Kerala, however, the increasing gap from 1961-1971 (16.98% to 19.40%) gets appreciably bridged, narrowing the gap to 1.71% only in 1981 ; in Madhya Pradesh the difference in 1961 from 5.94% increases to 8.74% in 1971 and then to 11.93% in 1981. In Maharashtra the increasing difference between 1961-71 (15.01% to 22.27%) considerably slows down between 1971-81 (22.27% to 22.85%) ; the difference decreases between 1961 and 1971 (1.74% - 0.66%) but picks up again between 1971 and 1981 (0.66% to 1.29%) ; in Meghalaya (formed a separate State after 1961) the difference slows down from 2.77% to 1.17% ; in Nagaland it is 0.77% to 0.97% to 0.90% ; in Orissa, it is 6.88% to 11.34% to 16.36% ; in Rajasthan, it is 5.56% to 7.97% to 10.22% ; in Tamil Nadu, it is 15.44% to 22.38% to 20.99% ; in Tripura, it is from 7.88% to 15.43% to 19.73% ; and in West Bengal, the difference of 15.22% in 1961 increases to 19.33% in 1971 and then to 25.24% in 1981. In the Union Territories the situation is not much different. In Andamans the 1961 gap of 12.92% increases to 20.01% in 1971 but slows down to 18.90% in 1981 ; in Dadra and Nagar Haveli it is 3.64% to 5.25% to 8.36% ; in Goa the difference of 30.07% in 1971 slows down to 28.67% in 1981 ; and in

Lakshadweep the difference increases from 0.37% to 1.61% and then to 2.03% during the same period.

V

The tribal female is not only less literate in comparison to their non tribal sisters, they are also less literate in comparison to their own menfolk. In 1961, for the country as a whole, only 3.16% tribal women were literate compared to 13.83% of tribal men, leaving a gap of 10.67% that increased to 12.78% in 1971 and then to 16.48% in 1981, through the negative growth rate of 2.11% per decade during 1961-71 that slowed down to 1.59% in 1981(Table II). This picture is largely similar to most of the individual States except in case of Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep where the tribal female literacy is picking up along with their menfolk.

VI

The official data presented here show that the tribal female seems to suffer from a double edged disadvantage of being a female and a tribal. The trend shows that there is some improvement in their literacy level in Kerala, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya and Nagaland.

Since education is considered the key to development, it cannot be achieved when almost half of a population remains away from the educational advantages. A world bank report, listing seven sins of development, considers development without women is one of the major sins. The key to development, therefore, rests in meaningfully educating the females. The statement made by Napoleon, the Great : *'Give me good mothers I shall give you a good nation'* seems to convey a universal principle of development.

Table I

Female Literacy in India : The increasing gap between the General and Tribal population from 1961 – 1981

State / U.T.	1961			1971			1981		
	Gen	ST	Gap	Gen	ST	Gap	Gen	ST	Gap
Andhra	12.03	1.48	10.55	15.75	2.13	13.62	20.39	3.46	16.93
Assam	15.98	15.72	0.26	18.63	17.16	1.47	-	-	-
Bihar	6.90	3.18	3.72	8.72	4.85	3.87	13.62	7.75	5.77
Gujarat	19.10	4.09	15.01	24.75	6.15	18.60	32.30	11.64	20.66
Himachal	6.25	1.74	4.51	20.23	5.53	14.70	31.46	12.82	18.64
Karnataka	14.19	2.81	11.38	20.97	7.67	13.30	27.71	10.33	17.38
Kerala	38.90	11.92	16.98	54.31	19.40	34.91	63.73	62.02	1.71
M. P.	6.73	0.79	5.94	10.92	2.18	8.74	15.53	3.60	11.93

Maharashtra	16.76	1.75	15.01	26.48	4.21	22.27	34.79	11.94	22.85
Manipur	15.93	17.67	1.74	19.53	18.87	0.66	29.06	30.35	1.29
Meghalaya	-	-	-	24.56	22.79	2.77	30.08	28.91	1.17
Nagaland	11.34	10.57	0.77	18.65	17.68	0.97	33.89	33.99	0.90
Orissa	8.65	1.77	6.88	13.92	2.58	11.34	21.12	4.76	16.36
Rajasthan	5.84	0.28	5.56	8.46	0.49	7.97	11.42	1.20	10.22
Tamil Nadu	18.17	2.73	15.44	26.86	4.48	22.38	34.99	14.00	20.99
Tripura	10.19	2.31	7.88	21.19	5.76	15.43	32.00	12.27	19.73
U.P.	7.02	-	-	10.55	15.58	5.03	14.04	8.69	5.35
W. Bengal	16.98	1.76	15.22	22.42	3.09	19.33	30.25	5.01	25.24
A/N Islands	19.37	6.45	12.92	31.11	11.10	20.01	42.14	23.24	18.90
Arunachal	-	-	-	3.71	1.70	2.01	11.32	7.31	4.01
D/N.Haveli	4.05	0.41	3.64	7.84	2.59	5.25	16.78	8.42	8.36
Goa	-	-	-	35.09	5.08	30.07	47.56	18.89	28.67
L. Dweep	10.98	10.61	0.37	30.56	28.94	1.62	44.65	42.62	2.03
INDIA	12.95	3.16	8.79	18.69	4.85	13.84	24.82	8.04	16.78

Adopted from Background papers on Tribal Development No.12 Table 14 : pp 50 - 52, Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi.

Table II

Tribal Literacy Male-female differences

State/U.T.	1961			1971			Diff. Bet-ween 61-71	1981			Diff. Bet-ween 71-81	% of increase / decrease in gap
	M	F	gap	M	F	gap		M	F	gap		
Andhra	4.26	1.48	2.78	8.33	2.13	6.20	3.42(+)	12.02	3.46	8.56	2.36(+)	1.06(-)
Assam	31.09	15.72	15.37	34.62	17.16	17.46	2.09(+)	-	-	-	-	-
Bihar	15.22	3.18	12.04	18.45	4.85	13.60	1.56(+)	26.17	7.75	18.42	4.82(+)	3.26(+)
Gujarat	19.06	4.09	14.97	21.83	6.15	15.68	0.71(+)	30.41	11.64	18.77	3.09(+)	2.38(+)
Himachal	15.37	1.74	13.63	26.25	5.53	20.72	7.09(+)	38.75	12.82	25.93	5.21(+)	1.88(-)
Karnataka	13.24	2.81	11.43	21.71	7.67	14.04	2.61(+)	29.96	10.03	19.93	5.89(+)	3.28(+)
Kerala	22.70	11.92	10.78	32.01	19.40	12.61	1.83(+)	37.52	62.02			
M.P.	9.25	0.97	8.28	13.05	2.18	10.87	2.59(+)	17.74	3.60	14.14	3.27(+)	0.68(+)
Maharashtra	12.55	1.75	10.80	19.06	4.21	14.85	4.05(+)	34.79	11.94	22.85	8.00(+)	3.95(+)
Manipur	37.03	17.67	19.36	38.64	18.87	19.77	0.41(+)	48.88	30.35	18.53	1.24(-)	0.83(-)
Meghalaya	-	-	-	30.11	22.79	7.32	-	34.19	28.91	5.28	2.04(-)	-
Nagaland	18.99	10.57	8.42	30.17	17.68	12.49	4.07(+)	47.32	32.99	14.33	1.84(+)	2.23(-)
Orissa	13.04	1.77	11.27	16.38	2.58	13.80	2.53(+)	23.27	4.76	18.51	4.71(+)	2.18(+)
Rajasthan	7.39	0.28	7.11	12.03	0.49	11.54	4.43(+)	18.85	1.20	17.65	6.11(+)	1.68(+)
Tamil Nadu	8.93	2.73	6.20	13.34	4.48	8.86	2.66(+)	26.71	14.00	12.71	3.85(+)	1.19(+)
Tripura	17.37	2.31	15.06	23.60	5.76	17.84	2.78(+)	33.46	12.27	21.19	3.35(+)	0.57(+)
U.P.	-	-	-	22.51	15.58	6.93	-	31.22	8.69	22.53		
W.Bengal	11.20	1.76	9.44	14.49	3.09	11.40	1.96(+)	21.16	5.01	16.15	4.75(+)	2.79(+)
A/N Islands	15.56	6.45	9.11	24.14	11.10	13.04	3.93(+)	38.43	23.24	15.19	2.15(+)	1.78(-)
Arunachal	-	-	-	8.72	1.70	7.02	-	20.79	7.31	13.48	6.46(+)	-
D/N.Haveli	8.28	0.41	7.87	15.30	2.59	12.71	4.84(+)	25.46	8.42	17.04	4.33(+)	0.51(-)
Goa	-	-	-	20.33	5.08	15.25	-	33.65	18.89	14.76	0.49(-)	
Lakshadweep	34.40	10.61	23.79	54.06	28.94	25.12	1.33(+)	63.34	62.62	0.72	24.40(-)	23.07(-)
INDIA	13.83	3.16	10.67	17.63	4.85	12.78	2.11(+)	24.52	8.04	16.48	3.70(+)	1.59(+)

THE ROLE AND STATUS OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN KERALA : A CASE STUDY OF KURICHIANS OF WYNAD

P.R.G. MATHUR

The code of Manu summed up the woman's status thus : "The father protects a woman in her childhood, husband during her youth, and sons in her old age ; the woman is never fit for freedom." "Though destitute of virtue or seeking pleasure elsewhere, or devoid of good qualities, yet a husband must be constantly worshipped as God by a faithful wife."

Manu has made distinction between woman as a wife and the woman as a mother, the latter is given very high position. Thus, the woman enjoyed a dual status early in Indian history. Although her position in society has varied in different times and in different regions, the ambivalence and duality of her role has continued to be a very significant feature of Indian civilisation. *Sati*, child marriage, female infanticide, low status of widows and *Purdah*, etc., were important features of the traditional Indian society. With the advent of Islam, during the medieval period of Indian history, the status of the woman further deteriorated close to the adoption of *Purdah* and seclusion of caste-Hindus.

The advent of British, spread of western education and the activities of the Christian missionaries brought about a unique social change which highlighted the evils prevalent in the Indian society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Mahatma Gandhi and other social reformers championed the cause of women. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was instrumental in the abolition of *Sati* in 1829. Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar followed him and introduced widow marriage. Remarriage of widows, female education, abolition of the *Purdah* system and child marriage, etc., were some of the burning issues of the 19th century. The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act, 1856 ; the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 ; the Immoral Traffic Act, 1923 ; Hindu Women's Right to Property Act, 1937, etc., were some of the most memorable pieces of legislations that changed the status of the Hindu women. The welfare institutions established in the pre-Independence days include the *Seva Sadans* and Widow Homes. The earliest women's organisation in the country was the Women's Indian Association founded by Dr. Annie Beasant in Madras in 1917. The National Council of Women was established in 1925. Young Women's Christian Association (Y.W.C.A.) and Kasturba Gandhi National Trust (1941) also took up the cause of women.

After Independence :

In the post-Independence days serious efforts have been made to improve the status of

women. Fundamental Rights enshrined in Articles 14, 15 and 16 of the Constitution of India guarantee to all citizens, regardless of sex, equality before the law, equal protection of the law and equality of opportunity in matters of public employment. It is in the light of these provisions of the Constitution that social legislations have been enacted after Independence to improve the status of women and also to bring them at par with men. Steps are also being taken to improve their education, health and economic position so that they could take a better part in the family and community life.

Four important laws have been enacted to improve the status of women in India after Independence. They are : The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 ; the Hindu Succession Act, 1950 and the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, 1950 and the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1950. According to the Hindu Succession Act, the widows can inherit their husband's property. Apart from this, the mother and daughters have been accorded equal rights in property with the sons. Under the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act, the custody of a minor child below 5 years shall be with the mother instead of the father. Under the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, a woman can adopt a son in her own right. Both son and daughter can be adopted provided the husband takes the consent of his wife. Thus, in several ways the status of

women have been brought at par with the men.

Women have achieved great influence in Indian society after Independence. They have attained positions of distinction in several walks of life. Some of the most independent-minded leaders and most able professional people are women ; their distinction in politics is well known. Besides the election of Mrs. Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister in 1966, over one hundred women have been so far returned to Parliament and more than 200 women to the various State legislatures. Richard Lanney has observed (1972) thus, "In this country Indian women have undergone a social revolution rather far-reaching and radical than that of men. In fact, this quiet revolution (it also had its spectacular moments in the nationalist struggle) is the most important element in social changes which occurred in modern India."

The Position of women in Tribal society :

The main objective of this paper is to examine the role and status of women among the Kurichians of Wynad, a matrilineal tribe of Kerala.

The origin of the Kurichians who inhabit the Wynad district of Kerala is lost in antiquity. There is no evidence to say that the Kurichians are degenerated Nairs with whom they have close affinity. No records are available about the advent

of the Kurichians in Wynad. However, we believe that the Kurichians have changed little during their living memory.

Literally Kurichian means one who reached the *Kurichia*, fixed or appointed place. Earlier writers traced the origin of the Kurichians to various interesting etymological sources. For instance, some of them point out that *Kuri* means hill and *Chian* means people. Thus, the term Kurichian denotes hill people. Gopalan Nair (1911) traces the origin of the Kurichian to the word *Kuriveecharan* which means one who took the aim. The author of the Gazetteer of Malabar connects them with Kurinji (Kurichi) which means hill country. According to Gopalan Nair, the Kurichians were originally the Thekku Kari Nair of Venad or Travancore. He says the Kurichians have been brought to Wynad by the Kottayam Raja for fighting against the Vedar Kings, Arippan and Vendan. When they returned home their castemen ex-communicated them for the offence of crossing the Korapuzha, a river near Calicut. The Kottayam Raja settled them in the hilly tracts of Wynad. S.A. Sherring (1884) writes that the Kuruchavar are a rude people of Wynad, expert in the use of bow and arrow and noted for their dexterity in destroying the wild animals.

My Kurichian informants claimed that they were the descendants of the "Thekku Perumbaadam Nayar", who were brought from

Perumbadam by the Raja of Kottayam in his fight against the Veda Kings of Wynad, Arippan and Vendan. They say that their traditional dresses were black clothes and their bow and arrow were made of bamboo splits (*Karinkanavillu*). They were expert in archery and hence they were particularly known as Villolikari Nayars. The legends of Kurichians may not be incorrect as the erstwhile rulers of Cochin State claimed that they belonged to the Perumbadappu Swaroopam.

The Census of India (Travancore), 1901 mentioned Kurichia Nayars, a sub-caste of Nairs, who were formerly engaged in firewood and *Kari* (charcoal) trade. They were considered a degraded subdivision of Nairs as they traded in *Kari* or charcoal and firewood. Similarly, there is Vandikkaran, a subdivision of Nairs of Travancore, particularly in Thirumangalam village, who are cartmen and suppliers of fuel by profession. Since they engaged themselves in an unclean occupation they came to be called Vandikkaran. In Southern Travancore there is a subdivision of Nairs known as Karivelan or Karivelathu Nairs, who occupy the same social status as that of Kiriyathu Nairs, in other parts of Kerala. Above all, in Central Kerala, especially at Kodakara, there are Kurichchathu Nair Taravads. It is also interesting to point out that there is a Kurichi village in the present Kottayam district and a place called Perumpadapur near Paringhalmanna.

From the above, the claim of the Kurichians that they came from Thekku Perumbadam is untenable but we may concede the fact that they are from Travancore. The opinion of Gopalan Nair regarding the origin of Kurichian appears to be more reliable than others and the claims of the Kurichians themselves.

My informants maintained that all their tribesmen who reached Wynad did not get the title Kurichian. Some other tribes living in Wynad were the descendants of their followers. Those who were afraid to meet the King received titles other than Kurichian. For instance, those who went to the *ghats* became Kunnan Kurichian, and those who went to the forests came to be known as Wynad Kurichian.

Kurichians and their subdivisions :

The tribesmen are segmented into four endogamous subdivisions, viz, (1) Kurichians of Wynad who accepted the titular name Kurichian from the Kottayam Raja ; (2) Kunnan Kurichians of Kannavam Forest, Kuthuparamba ; (3) Anchilla Kurichians of Thirunelly who were once excommunicated from the community for committing incest, and (4) Munnam Vedakkar or Christian Kuruchians who were excommunicated for adultery, levirate, sororate, etc., and who subsequently embraced

Christianity. Subdivisions 3 and 4 are commonly called *Kattalas*. Therefore, intermarriage between the original Wynad Kurichian and Kunnan Kurichian is totally prohibited ; interdining is permitted. The latter two groups are even considered untouchables by the former.

Kurichians and their Economy :

The main source of subsistence among the Kurichians is agriculture in which they surpass their neighbours, especially the Paniyans, Adiyans, Uralikurumans and Mullakurumbans. The Kurichians have become settled agriculturists. Sometimes 50 to 100 acres of paddy lands are owned by a Kurichia *Mittom* (clan). Their staple crop is paddy. Most of the paddy lands are double cropped ones. Several antique varieties of paddy are grown by the Kurichians. Turmeric, ginger, yam, melon, watermelon, etc., are grown as inter-crop in coffee plantation. They also cultivate pepper, maize, ragi (*muthari*), tapioca, cardamom and vegetables like gourds, bittergourds, tomatoes, etc. Some of the Kurichians have not given up slash and burn cultivation though they keep the plantations as well as cultivate paddy and *muthari* (millet).

The Kurichians have trade relations with the non tribals for exchanging their surplus paddy, coffee, pepper and vegetables.

Specialization of skills is undeveloped, although old men, incapable of hunting and ploughing, devote themselves to making of bows and arrows, nets, baskets, wooden implements, umbrellas, etc. There is division of labour. Their menfolk go to hunt, plough, make agricultural implements and manufacture nets, climbing and felling trees, etc. Women are prohibited from doing any of the above works, besides digging the paddy fields and taking part in religious ceremonies. Tapping of palm wine (*toddy*) for drinking and religious purposes was done by their menfolk.

The Kurichians claim that they are the most superior community in Kerala. They do not accept food and water from any community other than Namputhiris and Nayars. They also observe touch pollution with all other communities with the exception of Namputhiris. Even today when the Kurichia children return home after attending school, they take bath before entering their *Mittom*. Kurichians seldom send their children to the tribal schools in Wynad because they have to sit along with the other tribal children in the same class. The Kurichian children also do not carry food/tiffin to their schools because they believe that it pollutes them. However, a Kurichian is purified by drinking holy water which is usually provided by the Nadumpoopan (Territorial Chieftain).

STATUS OF WOMEN AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Matrilineal descent is the key rule to the Kurichia social organization because it is the basis of a localized organization known as *Mittom* (clan) on *Eripera* (lineage). Every Kurichian is member of his mother's clan on the strength of his birth and has his domicile in the *Mittom*. A woman may live and give birth to children outside her natal *Mittom* when she is married. The wife returns with her children to her natal home (matri clan) on the death of her husband. A woman, even after her marriage, maintains her connection with her natal *Mittom* and does not give up her rights to property vested in the *Mittom*. She does not neglect to worship her lineage or clan ancestors and gods. Thus, one of the most important rights of the Kurichian women is the right to occupy the *Mittom* land. Often children of a woman who was given in marriage return to their ancestral *Mittom* on the strength of their allegiance to clan land on this basis. Again, when there is a vacancy in the office of the chiefdom of the *Mittom* or headman of the *Eripera*, a capable member of a branch who is a non resident in the village is invited to fill up the post. A *Mittom* (clan) consists of all descendants of both sexes in the ascending and descending order whose direct relations cannot be traced, but who on death or birth of a member of a matriclan or lineage observe pollution. Children of a male member take their mother's

clan name and inherit her property. Children live with their maternal uncles in certain *Mittoms*. This shows that there is a strong matrilineal affinity among the Kurichians.

All members of a *Mittom* and its branches (*Eripera*) reckon their descent from an unknown common ancestor. Sometimes the members of an *Eripera* can be traced through known common ancestors. A Kurichia *Mittom* or *Eripera* generally consists of uterine brothers of the matriclan and their wives and their children, especially male children of three to four generations and so on.

Sometimes a *Mittom* is a maximal unit tracing common descent from an ancestor eight to ten generations back. In other words, this unit would be a major segment of such a maximal unit. The *Mittom* has a segmentary structure having relations with each segment (*Eripera*). For example, the *Edappidi Mittom* has 34 *Eriperas*. Every *Mittom* and *Eripera* has a male headman known as *Poopan* or *Karnon* who is often *ipso facto*, the chief councellor. The office is generally hereditary. He is sometimes chosen from all living male members of the *Mittom*. In such circumstances personal and leadership qualities of the candidate is generally taken into account. For instance, in Palliyara Chelpa Raman is an educated young man and he manages the economic affairs of the *Mittom* but Annan Poopan was the ritual head. His consent is required for all ritual ceremonies. It is also the duty of the

Poopan to oversee the welfare of the whole *Mittom*. It is also his duty to conduct the marriage and death rites of any member of his lineage. His consent is essential for a divorce. He attends the disposal of the dead, puberty marriages and other ritual ceremonies in the neighbouring *Eriperas*. It is his duty to settle private disputes between members of his lineage and other Kurichians. The *Poopan*, Anthra Nadumpoopans have the customary right to keep the ceremonial costumes of *Pattu* and *Ponnu* (red cloth and ornaments of gold and silver) of the *Mittom*. Wives of these functionaries play an important role in the puberty marriage of girls belonging to the neighbouring *Eriperas*. The *Karnon* has powers to settle disputes between members of his *Mittom*.

Poopan is the lineage headman and the *Mittom*'s chief representative for conducting political and legal relations with other *Mittoms* and the Kurichian community as a whole. He presides over the funeral ceremonies. He supplies necessary articles for the funeral rites. He must pay the bride price which is the binding element in a Kurichian marriage. The *Poopan* is the trustee of the ancestral shrines of the *Mittom*. The ancestral shrine is the repository of the consecrated images of his predecessors in office and these belong to the lineage as a whole. A subordinate *Mittom* has its own ancestral shrines. The *Poopan* and other elders meet to pour libations and make offerings to the ancestral

deities on behalf of the *Mittom*. Individual members of the *Mittom* bring votive offerings to the *Poopan* for the ancestral deities in the case of personal misfortune or as expiation of sin or sacrilage. The heir of a deceased member must be formally appointed by the *Poopan* and a widow cannot remarry without his consent.

The *Poopan* is the headman of a *Mittom*. The members of the *Mittom* refer him as *Poopan* or *Karnon*. But they also address their maternal grand uncle as *Poopan*, mother's brother as *Ammoman* and elderly ladies as *Chachi*. *Poopan* and his wife are referred to sometimes as *Odayakkaran* and *Odayakkarathy* respectively. Non tribal people address them as *Pittam* and *Pittathi*. The Kurichian females have *Pillaru* as affix with their name.

Patrilocal residence is the rule followed by the Kurichians but both premarital and avunculocal residence are also found among them. Cross-cousin is the preferential form of marriage. If there is no preferential mates, then search is made from another mate as spouse. Both matrilateral and patrilateral cross-cousin marriages are prevalent among them. But patrilateral cousin marriages are preferred. Post-marital avunculocal residence has been found, particularly, in the case of cross-cousin marriage.

ROLE AND STATUS OF WOMEN IN LIFE CRISIS

BIRTH :

A Kurichia woman goes to work after 60 days of her delivery. She is supposed to observe some simple rules of diet. The woman should not go out of her *Mittom* during nights. She is prohibited from visiting distant places. The expectant mother is isolated in a secluded hut called *Orakkottil* or *Erokottupura* or *Theedapura*. When the labour pain begins she is assisted by two or three women who must be Kurichians and expert in midwifery. These midwives are known as *Petticchi* or *Vayattatti*. The stomach of the expectant mother is rubbed with gingelly oil to ease the labour pain. Kurichians believe that *Karimbili Bhagavathi* or *Thambeerati* (mother goddess) takes care of the expectant mothers at the time of delivery. They vow to offer plantains and coconuts during festive occasions as votive offerings to *Karimbili Bhagavathi* for easy delivery. This votive offering is known as *Kulayum Thengayum Vaikkal*. Men are not permitted to approach the *Orakkottil*. The Kurichian believes that delay or complication in delivery is due to the wrath of their departed *Poopans*, sorcery, witchcraft and misconduct of the woman. The oracle is consulted to diagnose the cause of delay in delivery. If the oracle says that the woman had illicit sexual relations, she is excommunicated immediately after the delivery.

Birth of a boy is announced by a gunshot and by a *Kinna muttal* (beating a vessel) in the case of a girl. If a son is born, purificatory ceremony (*thalichu kuli*) is observed on the 4th day, which in the case of a girl is on the 5th day. Mathur P.R.G. (1977 : 157) observes : "When a female child is born five women from the neighbouring *mittoms* (sub-clans) are invited on the 5th day to bathe the new-born and the mother, whereas four ladies are invited to do so on the 4th day in the case of a boy. The midwife (*pettichi*) is in charge of bathing the mother and the child in flowing water. On the 9th and 15th days nine and fifteen women are invited for a purificatory bath, besides the midwife from the neighbouring *Mittoms*, irrespective of the sex of the child. But on the 21st and the 45th days, apart from the midwife only two women are invited for purificatory bath ; it is only after the 40th day that the menfolk are allowed to see the mother and the new-born. A Kurichia woman is removed to an *Erokottupura* (a hut for confinement of women during their periods and birth) and she is confined there for 60 days after her delivery. This house is generally located 200-300 yards away from the homestead. The Kurichians prefer to have the final purificatory bath of a woman after her delivery on a Sunday. They consider Sunday auspicious for the long life and health of the new-born, his mother and his maternal uncle. Friday is inauspicious for a purificatory bath for it is likely to invite the wrath of evil spirits." As soon as the child is born the midwife

(*Pettichi*) cuts the naval chord with a bamboo split. She buries both the placenta and the naval chord on the western side of the *Orakkottil*. The midwife bathes the mother and the child with warm water.

The news of the birth of a child is first communicated to the territorial chieftain, *Nadumpoopan*. His household is referred to as *Athara* by the Kurichians who are under his jurisdiction. The Office of the *Nadumpoopan* is hereditary. *Nadumpoopan* is the first settler in the area. His original *Mittom* is sometimes in a distant place. It is his duty to look after the affairs of the *Eriperas* of various clans. He sends the news of birth to the neighbouring *Eriperas* or households under his jurisdiction through the womenfolk who are responsible for conducting the *Talichukuli* (purificatory bath). The oil required for the *Talichukuli* is given by the maternal uncle of the new-born. The womenfolk of the *Eriperas* of the *Athara* and the mother rub oil and bathe in any neighbouring pond. The child's father has also to take a bath. All the *Eriperas* belonging to the *Athara* contribute half a seer of rice for meeting the expenses of the feast. The assembled women are fed with a feast.

The first and foremost medicine given to a mother is the pith of a tender toddy palm (*Pana Thomb*), (*Kanda*). The woman is fed with a *Meluku Kanji* (pared rice gruel) for the first nine days after delivery. She is also given *Pacharikanji* (raw

rice gruel) for another nine days. Thus, she is given postnatal treatment. Her diet is regulated for two months.

Pandal Payattu (Pre-puberty *Tali* rite) :

Pandal Payattu (pre-puberty *Tali* rite) was conducted once in seven or nine years for the children belonging to all the *Eriperas* in a settlement. The Kurichians belonging to the same clan are generally allowed to participate in the ceremony. Karanavans of the *Eriperas* (branch lineage) are invited for the *Tali* (marriage badge) rite ceremony. Without the permission of the *Nadumpoopan* no pre-puberty *Tali* rite could be performed in olden days. *Eriperas* (lineage) have no right to conduct the pre-puberty *Tali* rite and it is conducted only at the original *Mittom* where ancestral shrines are situated. This ritual ceremony is to be performed for only an odd number of girls, belonging to a *Mittom* such as 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, etc. A pandal or marriage booth is erected for the purpose in consultation with the astrologer. The *Nalpadi* (a family friend) with the assistance of an *illathumoothathu* (eldest female member of the *Mittom*) brings a *Kindi* (spount-vessel) full of water from the bathing pool. The number of *Kindis* used for the ceremony depends upon the number of girls for whom the *Tali* rite is to be performed. Separate packets of gold, silver, paddy, rice and pepper are put into the *Kindis* and their mouths are covered with *Koovayila* (leaf of arrowroot plant).

Such *Kindis* are called *Nirakundams*. The girls, after their purificatory bath, are dressed in yellow clothes supplied by their father and take their seats in front of the elders. A coconut is cut open but the *Nalpadi* pours its water into a *Kindi* from which small quantities are given to the girls for drinking. The coconut water is considered holy (*Puniyaham*). The customary law is that no girl should be given this before performing the *Tali* rite. Before the *Tali* ceremony the female children of the Kurichian community are also forbidden from eating the *Prasadam* from temples. They are also not allowed to visit their ancestral shrines.

The *Komaram* or *Kontalakkaran* (oracle) officiates as the priest and is responsible for tying the *Tali* on all girls. The Kurichians believe it was a *Bhagavathi* or *Thamburatti* who ties the *Tali* and they get the blessings from her. When the *Tali* rite is over, the *Nalpadi*, after seeking the permission of the elders, orders the girls to open the *Nirakundam* and takes one of the packets from their respective *Kindis*. If a girl has taken a packet containing gold, silver or paddy, it is considered lucky. But if the packet containing pepper or rice is taken, it is regarded as unlucky and she is likely to be excommunicated. The opening of the vessel is known as *Nira-kundam Pottikkal*.

The next ritual performed in connection with the *Tali* rite ceremony is the distribution of plantains from a bunch by the

Kallianathikkuttikal (the girls for whom the *Tali* rite ceremony was performed). The girls keep seven fruits for themselves and distribute the rest to the elders and children. A *Bandhu* or a *Macchichi* (female kin) sits with each girl throughout the ceremony and the same comes to an end with a sumptuous feast. All the prescribed rites of the ceremony are performed with the consent of the assembled elders.

Sometimes marriages (*Pennukodukkal*) are also conducted in the same booth. In case the elders of the community express their desire that a particular girl should be married to a boy who is already present, and if the guardians of both the parties agree, the pair is seated in the booth and are then told to hold their forefingers together. After this ceremony, the girl accompanies the boy and stays with him. If the girl has not attained puberty, she is not permitted to sleep with her husband. Consummation is permitted only after puberty. In this connection Mathur (1977 : 158) has rightly stated : "Immediately after the *Talikettukalyanam* the girl was given in marriage to a boy who was responsible for looking after her. However, she would not sleep with her husband until she attained puberty. Thus, the puberty ceremony of a Kurichia girl was celebrated at her husband's place in olden times. The celebration was held within a month of her menarche. Since the *Talikettukalyanam* has fallen into disuse, Kurichia girls are nowadays

given in marriage only after the onset of puberty. The puberty ceremony takes place at the girl's father's house."

PUBERTY CEREMONY (*THEREANTU KALLIANAM*)

In most tribal communities a menstruating woman is regarded as one of the gravest magical dangers and an object of awe and repulsion. Nowadays the *Therantu Kallianam* (puberty ceremony) of a Kurichian girl is performed at her father's place when she attains puberty in a simple manner. The Kurichia woman suffers pollution for three days during her periods and she becomes ritually clean only on the fourth day after a bath in the morning. During the monthly periods she cannot cook, draw water or touch anyone. The Kurichians keep the menstruating woman in an outhouse or she is secluded in a hut ((*Orakkottil*) which is situated in the outermost boundary of their *Mittom*. A woman in her periods is specially required to keep away from the ancestral shrines. The territorial chieftain or his wife (*Nadumchachi*) and the wives of the headmen of the neighbouring *Mittoms* or *Eriperas*, on getting the news about the onset of puberty of a girl, segregates her into the outhouse. She is kept in the *Orakkottil* and bathed by the *Nadumchachi* and the elderly ladies of the neighbouring *Mittoms*. She is prohibited from using oil for the bath. She has to take nine dips in the flowing

water. For this ceremonial bath, *Mittom* ponds are not at all used. She is not allowed to see menfolk during her periods. The assembled women are given the customary feast. They each contribute half a seer of rice for meeting the expenses of the feast. After the repast, they return to their respective *Mittoms*. The girl remains in the *Orakkottil* until the *Therantukallianam* or *Theendarmuttu* (puberty ceremony) is performed.

Before the ceremony, the girl's maternal kins are required to go for a ceremonial hunting and fishing and propitiate their lineage or clan deities. If the puberty ceremony takes place in a *Mittom*, the headman has to inform the heads of all other lineages (*Eripera*). But if it is to be celebrated in an *Eripera*, the headman of the lineage informs the *Atharapoopan* or territorial headman and it is he who informs the girl's *Mittom* and it is his responsibility to send news to the *Eripera*s of his *Mittom*.The territorial chieftain is the ultimate authority in this case to fix the date of the ceremony. There is no fixed day or date for the performance of the puberty ceremony. It all depends upon the availability of the resources in her family and also the convenience of her kinsfolk.

As has been mentioned earlier, *Mittom* deities are propitiated before conducting the puberty ceremony. A pandal or booth is invariably erected for the ceremony.

Nadumchachi is in charge of lighting the ceremonial hearth for the feast. The oil required for the rituals is placed at the courtyard. The girl is accompanied by her friends from the neighbouring lineages. The eldest woman of the girl's *Mittom* (*Illatthumoothathu*) applies oil on the girl's head for seven times before the purificatory bath. She also supplies oil to her friends and the assembled people. When the girl is taken in procession for the ritual bath, the *Erakkottil* is sprinkled with cowdung emulsion for purification. The footpath through which she walks to the main entrance of the *Mittom* (*Konithala*) is also purified similarly. A coconut is broken into two halves with a hatchet and they are used for the preparation of pudding (*Chakkara Choru*) on the occasion which is served only to the girls and her friends. This coconut is called *Muhoortha Thenga*.

The girl takes seven dips in the pond. When the bathing is over, she is taken to her *Mittom*. On reaching the entrance of the *Mittom*, she is given *Puniyaham* (coconut water) for drinking by the *Changathi* (family friend), besides sprinkling the same over her for purification. She puts on red clothes for her waist, and gold and silver ornaments to neck, waist, arms and legs on the occasion. A *Kuri*, a paste made with rice powder and turmeric, is drawn over her forehead. She is also given *Pan* or betel for chewing. If her spittle becomes red in colour, it is considered a good omen. Speaking

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father and mother's brother pay 50 paise each to the *Poopan* before she is taken to her *Mittom*. Her parents have no responsibility henceforth to look after her. She remains at her mother's *Mittom* becoming its member. It is the duty of the *Poopan* to conduct her marriage. The money given by her uncle and father goes to the deities of the *Mittom*. Taking the girl to her mother's *Mittom* and giving the money are known as *Alum Pathinarum Kondupokal*.

MARRIAGE

Marriage among the Kurichians is generally performed on an auspicious day. Kurichians regard Friday and Tuesday as unlucky for marriage. We have elsewhere stated that cross-cousin marriage is the preferential form. The boy's maternal uncle fixes an auspicious day for bringing the girl in consultation with the *Karnon* of the *Mittom*. The boy's maternal uncle is generally given a reception at the *Padinjattu* (the room facing the west in a *Mittom*) or ancestral room. If he is satisfied with the girl, betrothal (*Pennukurikkal*) is performed. Sometimes the boy's mother visits the girl. She is accompanied by two or three matrons and a man.

When the day comes, the boy's maternal uncle and parents, *Karnons* (*Poopans*) of the neighbourhood, women and girls, the boy's elder brother, elder brother's wife, mother's brother's

daughter and mother's brother's son are called to the boy's *Mittom* and sent to fetch the girl after they are fed with a sumptuous feast. This is called *Pennukonduvaral*. The bridegroom does not accompany the party. The groom's party carries the wedding dress. When the groom's party arrives, it is customary for the girl's *Poopan* to receive them. The party is given a feast. The eldest woman of the girl's *Mittom* (*Illatthumoothathu*) receives the wedding dress from the party. Then the girl is dressed in the bridal costume and is taken for worshipping the ancestral deities. The bride, after the invocation of the deities, accompanies the party. When the party arrives at the bridegroom's *Mittom*, the bride worships the deities of his *Mittom* and is thereafter introduced to her husband by the elders. Sometimes the bride is introduced only on the eighth day of the marriage. In such cases the bride and the groom are prohibited from having sexual intercourse. On the day of introduction of the bride to her groom either on the day of marriage or on the 8th day, the elders of the neighbouring *Mittoms* are invited to a grand feast. It may be noted here that it is only after this ceremony called *Pennine Cherppichu Kodukkal*, the bride and her groom are eligible to be called husband and wife. If the bride is married to an *Eripera*, she is first taken to an *Atharapoopan* or *Nadumpoopan* to get his blessings. On the eighth day the couple visits the bride's *Mittom* where the husband is expected to sing. If he fails to sing, he is looked down

upon by the relatives of his bride. Their visit to the bride's *Mittom* is called *Virunnukan jikku Pokal.*

A coin is generally tossed in the air immediately after the marriage to predict whether the union will be a happy and prosperous one. The same coin is sent to the *Bhandaram* (treasury) of the clan deity. The three terms used for the marriage are : *Marivadi, Erivadi* and *Muttuvani* or *Kekkuvani.* The marriage arranged by the *Karnon* between a young man and a girl is called *Marivadi* or regular marriage, whereas the union between an old man of forty and above and a woman of thirty and above is known as *Erivadi.* If a marriage takes place without the consent of the local *Karnons*, but with the assistance of a *Changathi* (family friend), it is known as *Kekkuvani* or *Muttuvani.* No bride price or dowry is given at the time of marriage among the Kurichians. No marriage symbol or special badge is worn by a married woman.

Divorce (*Ozhinju Pokal*) is frequent among the Kurichians. This is permitted to both men and women. A woman seeks divorce on the grounds of ill-treatment, impotency and inability to provide food and clothing. She can also seek divorce, if the husband lives with another woman without her consent. Barrenness, lack of either male or female issues, death of children, incurable diseases, adultery, misconduct, inability to manage the household affairs,

uncleanliness, etc., are the common grounds for a man to seek divorce. However, it is not always necessary that there should be any valid common ground for seeking divorce by either party. Marriage is dissoluble at their will. The customary payment for seeking divorce among the Kurichians is Rs. 3.25 which goes to the wife's *Mittom.* This payment is known as *Nyayam Teerkkal.* The amount is generally deposited in the *Bhandaram* of her clan deity. But nowadays a number of divorces take place even without paying the amount. For instance, Kodangela Yasoda's husband divorced her without giving the amount. Similarly, Palliyara Theyi deserted her husband Chappan of Odamoottil without paying the amount because she disliked him. Edamana Kumba, a deaf girl, was married to Edappidi Kurichian Annan. Her husband's people used to make fun of her as she was physically handicapped. When she was ill treated by her husband's people, she deserted him and they did not pay the amount. It is interesting to point out here that if a divorce takes place without paying the amount, the divorced husband's *Mittom* is debarred from contracting any further marriage alliance with that of his divorced wife's *Mittom.* A divorced woman is permitted to remarry. The *Karnon* of the *Mittom* arranges the marriage. A divorced man is allowed to marry even a young girl. But a widow or divorced woman is permitted to marry only a widower.

The traditional marriage among the Kurichians was celebrated at the girl's natal *Mittom*, and the presence of her parents was not compulsory. But nowadays most of the Kurichia marriages take place at their father's *Mittom*. For instance, in Odamoottil the marriage of Yasoda and Ammini was conducted in June, 1977 by their father Chandu. Similarly, Kodangada Chandu celebrated his daughter's and son's marriages without sending them to their maternal uncle's *Mittom*. It may be mentioned here that in olden days the rule was that all the Kurichia marriages must take place only at the *Mittom* of their maternal uncle (mother's *Mittom*). Polygyny was formerly prevalent among the Kurichians. Many *Karnons* or *Poopans* are still practising it. However, it is rare among the commoners. It may be noted here that co-wives do not often quarrel and they live together with the husband in the same room of their *Mittom*.

WOMEN AND PROPERTY

Property among the Kurichian is inherited in the female line, but the male must be there to manage it. However, the case of widows is different. She returns to her natal *Mittom* and her husband's property will be inherited by his sister's son. In no case a woman sells or transfers any property.

The *Poopan*'s wife in a *Mittom* is called the *Odakkarathi*. She has certain duties, functions and privileges which are as follows :

1. The Kurichia *Mittom* members of more than two lineages numbering over 100 share the same kitchen. The women belonging to these *Mittoms* cook the food in rotation under the supervision of the wife of the *Poopan (Odakkarathi)*. The *Odakkarathi* measures the rice required by the *Mittom* every day.
2. The *Odakkarathi* is in charge of the post-puberty and post-delivery treatment of women in a *Mittom*.
3. The *Odakkarathi* is the mother of all women in a *Mittom*, both affinal and consanguineal. She is addressed by all the females of the *Mittom* either as mother or grandmother.
4. The *Odakkarathi* is in charge of reporting the ailments of any of the members of the *Mittom* to the *Poopan*, whose duty it is to arrange for divination by the oracle to ascertain the cause.
5. The *Odakkarathi* is responsible for furnishing information to the head of the *Mittom* when a girl attains puberty.
6. The first sowing is done by the *Poopan* and the *Odakkarathi*.
7. The first harvest is gathered by *Odakkarathi* and *Poopan*. It is only after the performance of the harvesting ceremony that members start gathering the crop.
8. The first threshing and measuring of the paddy is also done by the *Odakkarathi*. She does this after propitiating the *Munnam Daivam*.
9. We have already said that the *Odakkarathi*

is in charge of measuring the rice for cooking food. When the rice is cleaned and the water is drained by the women who are in charge of the kitchen for the day, the *Odakkarathi* ceremoniously puts one handful of rice in the boiling water after propitiating the *Athiralan Daivam (Munnam Daivam).*

10. The *Odakkarathi* helps all the members of the *Mittom* in keeping the dogs.
11. The *Odakkarathi* is responsible for the maintenance of the sanitation of the *Mittom.* The women who are brought to the *Mittom* by marriage are expected to sweep the courtyard and plaster it with cowdung emulsion.
12. No married woman can visit her husband's *Mittom* or the parent's lineage without the permission of the *Odakkarathi.* She provides them with new clothes and money required for the trips.

The Kurichians believe that the woman is a necessity for a family. No maid servant is employed even by a rich Kurichian *Mittom.* One of the elders say that their belief is that those who lead a good family life need not go to Benares because they sacrifice many of their comforts for the family. As a matter of fact, they believe that they are bound to go to paradise if they lead a normal family life, observing their *dharma,* morality and have compassion for animals.

Barren Women

The Kurichians believe that the women become barren due to the commission of sins during their previous birth. Barrenness is considered a punishment of God. When his wife fails to give birth to a child, a Kurichian is permitted to take a second one. The barren woman is looked down upon by the Kurichia society. Her husband's second wife enjoys a superior social status than the barren woman. But if the *Odakkarathi* happens to be a barren woman (*Machi*), she is not debarred from enjoying her status and privileges. The *Poopan* is allowed to marry for a second time. In a *Mittom* where there are two *Odakkarathis* their status is determined by the degree of preference she gets from her husband. However, if she is barren, she does not enjoy a better status in family affairs.

Status of Widows

When a man dies his household continues to function as a productive unit with the aid of his brothers and nephews. The property of the deceased is not at the disposal of the patrilineal kins but the chief claimants are his sister's children. The widows join either her grown-up sons or her own parents. Unless the deceased has not set apart a portion of his self-acquired property, it is inherited by the adult sons and daughters of the deceased sister.

There is no lowering of the status of a widow in the Kurichia society if she remarries after the period of ritual mourning. Only very old women, who do not have recourse to remarriage, remain as widows. A widow is respected by her family. However, she is not given the place of a family counsellor. The traditional Hindu attitude is present among the Kurichians and a widow is considered unwelcome in ritual functions. Even the widow of the Poopan has to return to her natal lineage. For instance, the Palliara Poopan's wife returned to her natal lineage when her husband Raman Poopan died in 1973.

When a woman remarries, her husband does not pay back the bride price (*Kana Panam*) of Rs. 5/-. On the other hand, when her first husband dies and she returns to her natal lineage, she pays back the amount.

Divorce is not very frequent among the Kurichians. However, whenever the husband and wife quarrel, the former repudiates the latter and the divorce proceedings are generally initiated by the husband. The frequency of divorce and remarriage is a matter of significance in determining the status of women in a society. Remarriage of a widow and divorce are something unthinkable among the orthodox Hindus. But among the Kurichians men are free to divorce their spouses. When a woman wants

to divorce her husband, she goes to her *Mittom* and refuses to return to her husband's *Mittom*. The husband has the right to seek divorce for adultery. There have been many instances of a woman leaving her husband on account of incompatibility of temper. It goes without saying that the chieftain, in case of divorce, always follows his mother. This is, no doubt, another reason why divorce is less popular with men, than with women.

The position of the daughter-in-law creates problems of accommodation and adjustment. She generally comes from a different lineage and is, therefore, confronted with an altogether new social environment. Like caste Hindus who live in joint families, the Kurichia daughter-in-law is subjected to no less difficulties of adjustment, for she remains in her in-law's house throughout her married life. Husband and wife work together in productive and domestic spheres of the *Mittom*. A daughter-in-law must stand five feet away from her husband's father. Similarly, a sister's daughter has to stand five feet away from her maternal uncle. The sister's daughter is responsible for helping the MoBrWi in washing the clothes of her maternal uncle.

As soon as the daughter-in-law enters the *Mittom*, she has to face her mother-in-law and her husband's MoBrWi (*Odakkarathi*). In olden days when the daughter-in-law was an immature girl, she was looked after by her

husband's maternal uncle. The daughter-in-law is expected to do the household chores ungrudgingly and to perfection. A little negligence on her part does not generally provide her mother-in-law or the *Odakkarathi* with an opportunity to create an unpalatable scene. Consequently bad words are rarely used, if she knows rudiments of cooking, sweeping the ground, milking the cows and watching the crops. She is also supposed to know weeding the fields, winnowing and threshing the paddy.

The husband has the exclusive right to his wife's consortium. He may either divorce or initiate proceedings to excommunicate her for adultery. When the husband initiates the divorce proceedings he loses the bride price which her mother or brother has given him and his children leave his *Mittom* with their mother. A wife may seek divorce from her husband for cruelty and incompatibility. A marriage may sometimes be suspended if the brother-in-law engages in a serious quarrel with the lady's husband.

The spouse is the chief mourner at the death of a man or woman but the mourning rituals are more strictly enforced upon the wife than the husband. A widow continues to wear *machunan's Tali* around her neck. She removes it only at the death of her *machunan*.She is secluded for a long period of time than a widower. If an adult belonging to a marriageable clan lives

with a Kurichia girl, he is compelled to marry her provided he is willing to pay a fine of Rs. 5/-. In case she becomes pregnant and her paramour refuses to marry her, she is allowed to deliver the child in her *Mittom* and the baby is looked after by her maternal uncle. She is permitted to remarry.

When a man, whether married or unmarried, commits adultery with a married woman, he is fined Rs. 5/- by the tribal council. Similarly, when there is illicit sexual relations between unmarried boys and girls, boys are regarded at fault. They are forced to marry such girls. As punishment for adultery with a married man, the aggrieved wife can claim compensation from the erring woman for trespass upon her rights. But in such cases also the fine must be paid through the tribal council.

The Kurichia girl was given in marriage before puberty in former times. Nowadays, only after the first menstruation, the girls are given in marriage. No marriage was celebrated in olden days without the consent of the maternal uncle. Today even the consent of the groom is sought before marriage.

It has already been pointed out that the Kurichia women during their periods and delivery are secluded and are prohibited from coming near the family shrines including those of ancestors. Kurichia girls are generally

permitted to enter the precincts of the shrines before their menstruation. Once the Kurichia females start cohabiting with their husbands, they are prohibited from entering the compounds of their shrines. They are allowed to visit the shrines only after menopause.

CONCLUSION

A question might arise as to whether the status of a tribal woman can be improved. A woman's role in the life and culture of a tribe is undoubtedly very vital, but her role in the economic development is no less important. It is the great and powerful woman force which has to be taken proper note of and has to be harnessed for the optimum development of the community. This is possible only if women are treated with respect and controlled intelligently and their energies properly channelised for the benefit of the tribal community and also for raising their own status. Thus, the role of women in a tribal community is so significant that nobody can afford to ignore it. Women are vital to the progress of a tribe. For achieving this goal, it is essential that the position of women should be raised equal to the status of their menfolk.

There are different definitions which have been used for "role" and "status". For the purpose of the present study the term "role" and "status" would convey two parts of woman's social position ; the "role" referring to the obligations

and duties and "status" to rights and privileges. The "status" has two aspects : the first is the prestige a woman commands, implicit or explicit, in the scale of what is socially valued and the second is "power", the position of a woman on some implicit and explicit scale which represents her ability to influence or control the social and physical environment. It is in this sense that the role and status of women in the Kurichian society has been discussed in this paper.

With regard to the improved or equal status of tribal women, it is not sufficient that they are treated at par as the bread-winners in a Kurichia family or in theory that they have been given equal opportunities in the economic development. What is required is that at home the tribal women should have an equally honoured and important position and outside they should enjoy equal privilege not only in entering into different occupations and professions but have opportunities for higher education.

The U.N. Commission on the status of woman, the I.L.O. Panel of consultants on the problem of women workers and the International Labour Conferences – the Political and Economic Planning studies – have paid much attention to the subjects of interests of women workers. But it seems that nothing has been mentioned about tribal woman.

The main obstacles in the development of tribal women are : (1) attitudinal level and (2) environmental level. At the attitudinal level, the attitude of men and women and tribal society towards women at home and outside have to be changed through the socialization process, educational system and mass media. Since most of the obstacles seem to be of a "cultural nature" or owing to outdated social attitudes, conceptions and expectations that continue even with a changing civilization, the most urgent need is to promote fresh mental approach by means of making a tribal society, as a whole, more widely informed about the demographic, technical and cultural events, as well as about the changing life pattern and attitudes particularly of women. They should be made to understand equality or rights between men and women.

A greater understanding should be generated among the tribal people with regard to the woman's development for the tribal community, both as farm workers, and as wives and mothers as well as with regard to the contribution that they are making and are capable of making to the socio-psycho-economic life of the family and the community at large. Tribal people have to be made aware of the still greater contribution that their womenfolk could make to their economic, social and cultural development if they were given equal opportunities and equality of treatment as regards education, training and employment and

property rights. Numerous studies by social scientists have shown that human behaviour is much more malleable and capable of being conditioned than what was formally thought of. Researches have also shown that it is the socialization process and cultural condition that affect social behaviour and personalities – their ambition, thinking, capabilities and capacities.

Various studies have shown that women can never achieve economic equality with men as long as there are differences in the social expectations from the two sexes and so long as any protected and sheltered role is open to women and not to men. This is very true in the case of the Kurichians of Kerala.

It will be evident from the foregoing analysis that the attitudes built up over centuries in the Kurichian society will not easily change, and social change cannot be bulldozed through the enactment of legislation and the implementation of welfare measures. Nevertheless a change in attitudes can be brought about through education and training. And this could be done only if the Kurichia women are awakened of their talents and emancipated from their inferior status. By and large, the Kurichia women are satisfied with their present status, having no ambition, expectations and desires and having no definite constructive plans for raising their social status and position in their society. They have to be stirred out of

their age-long slumber and ignorance and pig-like contentment. They have to be made conscious of their inferior social status and should be stimulated to acquire knowledge and status which will entitle them to be equally respected and honoured. It is through effective formal and informal education that the tribal women should be taught to prove their calibre and abilities to claim an equal status with that of men. The Kurichia women should raise their standard of life.

The pattern of socialization in the Kurichian society is considerably influenced by the value system, religious ethos and the traditional belief system that prevail. The cultural traits, socialization, customs and manners, rituals and traditions in the Kurichian society that have contributed to make their womenfolk into a voiceless and passive segment should be probed thoroughly and prescriptive measures undertaken to cure the ills.

The study has also shown that one of the important reasons for the poor status of the Kurichia women is the absence of education and vocational training. The educational system for the Kurichian should be such as to incorporate vocational training. But the opportunities for education, vocational training and guidance for suitable employment opportunities is totally absent. An increasing awareness should be created among the tribes in Kerala in general

and those of the Kurichians in particular that educated women are an asset to the economic development of the community. The Kurichian social system, rituals, customs, values and world view are the main constraints in the emancipation of their womenfolk. The outdated attitudes have to be changed and a fresh outlook has to be developed in the tribal society which would approve and encourage the equal participation of their womenfolk in all activities. And to enable the women to participate in the tribal development, more and more women should be given education which should have a vocational bias. Women should be encouraged from the very beginning in the Kurichian society for formal and non-formal education. The planners and administrators should note that the tribal women power can contribute largely to the tribal development.

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DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND PROBLEMS OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN MEGHALAYA

A.K. NEOG

Introduction :

The hands that rock the cradle rules the earth, so goes the saying. This entrusts special responsibility on the role of women in a family and society at large. There is now a growing recognition of 'women studies' as a distinct field of investigation. In this paper an attempt is made to investigate the role of tribal women in the context of certain socio-economic aspects of development in the State of Meghalaya.

Background :

Meghalaya, a hill State, covering an area of 22,429 square kilometre attained its statehood in 1972 i.e., during the currency of the Fourth Five Year Plan. The per capita income of the State in 1989-90 is estimated at Rs. 2856 at current prices compared to Rs. 597.9 in 1973-74. In 1981 the State had a population of 13,55,819 persons of which 80.58 per cent are tribal, ranking tenth position by tribal population among the States in the country. Hence it can be called a major tribal State. The total population of Meghalaya

in 1991 stood at 17.6 lakh, of which 81.25 per cent are rural. The caste-wise breakup of the said Census is yet to be available. There are seventeen groups of scheduled tribes (ST) in the State. However, the Khasis including Jaintia, Synteng, Pnar, War, Bhoi and Lyngngam, and the Garos are the two major tribes. The people speaking Khasi language accounts for 47.14 per cent while that speaking Garo accounts for 29.87 per cent of the total population. The tribals of Meghalaya are hill tribes.

In Meghalaya, the Khasis and the Garos follow matrilineal social system. The total number of scheduled tribe population in the State was 8,14,230 persons in 1971 which increased to 10,76,345 in 1981, registering an annual compound growth rate of 2.83 per cent as against the 2.75 per cent population growth rate of general community. In 1981 there were 5,38,710 tribal females against 5,37,635 tribal males, thereby females outnumbering the males. The sex ratio was therefore about 1002, lower than 1032 of Kerala State. In fact, Kerala and Meghalaya (for tribes) are the only two States in the country where sex ratio is high. This suggests the importance enjoyed by the women in these two States. However, in Meghalaya the sex ratio is high for tribals in urban areas i.e., 1066 against 993 for rural areas. In other words spatial factors are also responsible for sex differential.

Occupation :

Occupational pattern is one of the indices from which the dynamics of development can be observed. The Census of India classifies the primary economic activities into cultivation, agricultural labour, livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting, planting, orchardry, mining and quarrying. These are broadly called primary sector activities. The industrial activities like manufacturing, processing, servicing, repairing, construction are referred to as secondary sector activities. The rest of the activities like trade, commerce, transport, communication, services are called tertiary sector activities. There is spatial variation in the distribution of these activities and the people employed. Table 1.I presents the sexual division of tribal workers and non-workers by rural-urban dichotomy.

Table 1.I

Sexual division of tribal workers (in No.) in Meghalaya, 1981

Item	Rural Areas		Urban Areas	
	F	M	F	M
Population	4,69,780 (100.00)	4,72,954 (100.00)	68,930 (100.00)	64,681 (100.00)
Main workers	1,89,513 (40.34)	2,54,002 (53.71)	14,355 (20.83)	26,031 (40.24)
Marginal workers	22,152 (4.72)	4,984 (1.05)	358 (0.52)	121 (0.19)
Non-workers	2,58,115 (54.94)	2,13,968 (45.24)	54,217 (78.65)	38,529 (59.57)

Note : (a) F = Female, M = Male

(b) Figures in bracket indicate percentages.

Source : Census of India, 1981 Series 14, Part-IX.

We can draw two main inferences from Table 1.I viz, in rural areas proportion of tribal women engaged in economic activities is higher than those in urban areas and the proportion of tribal employed women is lower than the tribal men. Given the higher sex ratio in Meghalaya, the above disparity suggests that the employment structure is biased against women. In this context it may be worthwhile to examine the occupational structure as presented in Table 1.II. It shows the percentage of employed persons in different occupations in rural and urban areas.

Table 1.II

Tribal Occupational Structure in Meghalaya, 1981 (in percentage)

Occupation	Rural Areas		Urban Areas	
	F	M	F	M
Cultivators	77.29	73.96	6.53	4.95
Agri. labourers	10.84	10.21	4.36	4.26
Livestock & allied	6.89	7.86	1.50	4.45
Mining & quarrying	0.15	0.44	1.18	1.84
Industry	1.12	0.76	4.51	10.53
Construction	0.12	0.93	4.38	12.45
Trade & commerce	0.93	0.59	22.30	8.43
Transport, etc.	0.07	0.48	1.69	6.88
Other services	2.59	4.77	53.55	46.21

Source : Ibid

From Table 1.II it is seen that there is clear difference in the occupational structure of rural and urban tribal women of Meghalaya. In the rural areas the women are mainly engaged in primary sector activities compared to urban women who are mainly engaged in tertiary sector activities. The proportion of tribal rural women employed in cultivation proper is over 77 per cent whereas the proportion of tribal women employed in urban trade and commerce and services together is 75.85 per cent. This is mainly due to spatial concentration of occupational opportunities. However, there is limit to agriculture in the State as it is mainly the shifting cultivation called *Jhuming*. It is significant to note that the proportion of female cultivators is higher than that of the male cultivators. This may be due to the tribal law of inheritance viz, property going to the female more particularly to the youngest daughter among the Khasis. The proportional bias to female (than male) in trade, commerce and services is also noticeable from the table. The proportion of female agricultural labourers is higher than that in the males. The relatively lower proportions of tribal women and men engaged in the activities viz, livestocks, forestry, fishing, hunting, etc., indicate that majority of the Meghalaya tribes have already crossed the pastoral stage in the development process. The lower proportion of workers engaged in the activities like industry, mining and quarrying, transport and communication, construction, etc.,

indicates that these activities are yet to develop to the desired extent and hence there is potentiality for their development and occupational mobility of the tribal persons.

Literacy and Education :

Next to occupational structure the important index of development is the literacy rates. The rate of modernisation of a society is associated with the rate of literacy. On the other hand, literacy is also an index of rate of accumulation of human capital. High level of per capita income is associated with high level of literacy. The modern sector demands the services of educated persons. Productivity of educated persons is observed to be higher. Spread of education enlightens a society, enhances skill and enables to stand against exploitation and superstition. In a backward society female literacy is of crucial importance for development as female illiteracy, poverty and high population growth rate are said to be interlinked. Table 2 shows how the female tribals of Meghalaya fare in literacy with counterparts over time.

Table 2

Literacy rate (%) for females

State	Year	Female (ST)	Other females
Meghalaya	1971	22.79	33.60
	1981	28.91	36.09
All India	1971	4.85	22.95
	1981	8.04	29.43

From Table 2 it can be inferred that though the literacy rate for tribal females in Meghalaya is significantly higher than the all-India level in both the Census years, the rate is considerably lower than for the other females i.e., for the females excluding the scheduled castes and tribes females within the State. This is pertinent in view of the fact that historically Shillong, the capital of the State is the centre for educational excellence of the region, having also several colleges exclusively for women. The tribal literacy data for 1991 Census is not yet available. However, the female literacy for all social categories of Meghalaya during 1991 is 44.78 per cent compared to all-India average of 39.42 and that of Kerala 86.93 or of Mizoram 78.09 per cent.

Enrolment :

Other than literacy rate there are two important indicators to measure the progress of education by stages. One is the enrolment ratio for primary stage i.e., Classes I to V and for pupils of Classes VI to VIII or for pupils of 11 to 14 years of age. The gross enrolment ratio is measured as the ratio of total enrolment for a particular stage of education to total child population. The other is the coefficient of equality. It is measured as the ratio of percentage enrolment (say) of ST pupils to total enrolment of pupils of all communities on the numerator and percentage of population (say) of ST to total

population in the denominator. Both the indicators are expressed as percentages. The enrolment ratio for ST boys and girls at the two stages of education for the year 1988-89 and as estimated by the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development is as given under :

Table 3

Enrolment ratio for tribal students by stages of education, 1988-89

(in percentage)

State	Classes I to V		Classes VI to VIII	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Meghalaya	110.20	117.28	57.79	63.47
All-India	76.00	126.23	22.73	47.90

Source : Selected Educational Statistics, 1988-89, Govt. of India (1990)

Coefficient of Equality :

For the estimation of coefficient of equality we need data for a given year (1988-89) on projected population of school going age groups and enrolment for total and particular community population, which are available from the source mentioned above. Then the percentage of the particular community population to total population and for enrolment are worked out to estimate the coefficient. These are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

School going children and coefficient of equality for ST boys and girls students of Meghalaya, 1988-89.

Item	Unit	Age group (6-11 years) (Class I-V)		Age group (11-14 years) (Class VI –VIII)	
		Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
Total children	No.	111100	110200	60500	58600
ST children	No.	89500	88800	48800	47200
	%	80.56	80.58	80.66	80.55
Total Enrolment	No.	117116	122175	31954	36416
ST Enrolment	No.	98668	104160	28175	29976
	%	84.25	85.25	88.17	82.33
Coefficient of Equality	%	104.58	105.80	109.31	102.21

Source : LOC, Cit.

From Table 4 it is evident that enrolment of ST girls in the two stages of education is fairly high vis-a-vis ST boys in Meghalaya. The coefficient of equality also compares favourably between the sexes and are above 100 per cent. From this one can infer that there is egalitarianism between the sexes or 'egalitarian sex culture' among the tribals of the State.

It may be pointed out that what is more important than higher enrolment ratios is the quality of education. The drop out rate in the State is said to be alarmingly high. In 1981-82 the rate was 76.62% for tribal girls against

76.86% for boys at the primary stage, compared to respective national average of 78.46% and 71.57%. The rate for all students at the middle stage was 84.75% and for secondary stage 89.81% in the State. There are many factors behind this. Important among these are inadequate availability of trained teachers and facilities, aversion of the tribal students to arithmetic, biasness towards general education.

Employment :

We may now look at the problem of employment and unemployment among educated women in the State. In Meghalaya there are about 883 establishments in the organised sector, both public and private. According to the Directorate of Employment and Craftsmen Training of the State, the total employment in the organised sector in 1986-87 was 60,205 persons. Of this, women employees of all communities constituted 10,471 accounting for 17.39 per cent. The number of women employees stood at 8,759 in the public sector and 1,712 in the private sector. Majority of the women employees i.e., about 84.44 per cent are employed in the tertiary sector, 12.9 per cent in secondary sector and only 2.66 per cent are employed in the primary sector. However, the highest number of women are employed in the community, social and personal services i.e., 75.79 per cent of the total women employees.

Unemployment :

Open unemployment among the women is reflected to a great extent in the figures of job seekers registered with the Employment Exchanges. The number of job seekers sexwise is given below for the available years.

Table 5

Unemployment in Meghalaya

Year	No. of job seekers	
	Women	Men
1982-83	2843	7300
1983-84	3434	8372
1984-85	3675	8789
1985-86	5683	13248
1986-87	7275	15956

Source : Government of Meghalaya

From Table 5 it is seen that the proportion of women unemployment in Meghalaya is rising alarmingly. In 1983-84 women unemployment accounted for 28.03 per cent of the total registered unemployment which rose to 31.32 per cent in 1986-87. The unemployment among all women is growing (compound growth) annually at 26.48 per cent, higher than the rate of 21.59 per cent for all men.

Some important characteristics of women unemployment in Meghalaya is worth mentioning. In 1986, the percentage of women job seekers in the age group 25 to 49 years constituted 32.43 per cent of the total women

job seekers as against 26.54 per cent for male job seekers. The percentage of women job seekers with qualification undergraduate to post graduate stood at 41.48 per cent against 32.39 per cent among male job seekers. The number of graduate (in different disciplines) women job seekers (815) was higher than male graduate (742) job seekers. Similarly, the number of post graduate female job seekers (145) was higher than male job seekers (57) in the mentioned year. All these suggest that women with higher qualifications have to stay longer for employment than men. The chances of women getting employment has also come down over the years in the State. As for instance, the placement through employment exchange was 6.76 per cent of the registration effected by the employment exchange in 1982. It was only 4.2 per cent in 1986. Since there is no evidence on expansion of employment opportunities in the organised sector in recent years, it is therefore likely that women unemployment problem has further aggravated. The women job seekers are also handicapped by their lack of mobility unlike men to search for jobs outside the State. The foregone analysis of employment and unemployment is for all categories of women i.e., tribal and non tribal. Breakup of data for tribal women are not available. Since tribals are in majority in Meghalaya and there is reservation for tribals so we can make a conjecture that tribal women constitute a significant proportion in employment market for women. On the other

hand, tribal job seekers of both sexes stood at 15,163 at the end of June, 1987. This can be said to constitute about 65% of the total job seekers in the State. As the tribal population accounts for over 80%, it can be said that all tribal unemployees are not availing the employment exchange facility.

Concluding Remarks :

Meghalaya is a tribal State following matrilineal social system. Occupationally tribal women of Meghalaya are more mobile than geographically. There is 'sexual egalitarianism' in the field of property and educational pursuits. But in spite of reservation policy for tribals, the spread of education is leading to open unemployment among the women more than the men. This is mainly due to limited employment market within the State. In the short run solution may lie in proportional job reservation for the tribal women. The long run solution, however, lies in the accelerated economic development through industrialisation and increase in the levels of productivity of the persons employed.

DEVELOPMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN AS A PART OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

G.S. SOMAWAT

Human resource development has gained a significant importance in India during the last one decade or so. It is well recognised everywhere that human competency development is an essential prerequisite for any development effort and many organisations have set up new department of 'Human Resource Development'. Whereas in the past training was considered as a mechanism of developing competencies of human and in government services it is still being considered so. Development of human resource is essential for any organisation or society that would like to be dynamic and growth oriented. As unlike other resources human resources have rather unlimited potential capacities.

Human Resource Development is most needed in a country like India, especially the development of women in service and trade sectors which demand a continuous competency development to increase their knowledge and skill to perform the job better and efficient way. To enhance the career development as well as earning of the self employed women which is

possible through restricting cost with a better management and human competency development. Unfortunately very little has been done in this area, so far, except of creating a small number of training infrastructural facilities in general like Farmers' Training Centres, Nutrition Centres, Women I.T.I.s, Cutting & Tailoring Centres, Weaving Centres. The job oriented training courses are also being conducted by the Voluntary Organisations and Private Institutions for women. These training programmes by themselves have a limited impact on developing complex competencies amongst women. What it requires at this stage is a serious and concerted effort to increase the training facilities especially to cater the need of different categories of urban, rural and tribal women in the traditional as well as non traditional areas so that human resource can be developed at all levels and categories.

In this paper an attempt has been made to answer some of questions (i) What is HRD ? (ii) Why the development of tribal women as a resource is necessary and required a separate component within the human resource development ? What strategies to be followed to develop women ? Who is to be responsible to design, and develop policy as well as implement to achieve development of women including tribal ?

Human Resource Development (HRD)

Human resource development is the process of helping people to acquire competencies in the areas of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values which needed to perform task. Without continuous development of competencies in people, society or an organisation is not likely to achieve its desired goals. Human resource development is to develop the capabilities and try to discover and exploit inner potential development of human. It facilitates to collect information on performance appraisal assessment of training needs and impact, feedback, potential development, career development and rewards.

It is also needed as over a period of time, one may reach at a saturation point in terms of its growth and to maintain such a saturation level of growth human competencies to be developed as many other things like improvement in the technology, knowledge, skills and availability of alternative technologies are constantly changing, which needed to develop human resource so that it remains economically viable.

Main activities of tribal women

It is essential to know the kind of activities which are being performed by women/tribal women. Once these activities are known it would

help in planning, designing, developing and to concentrate on specific areas to develop tribal women competencies on those areas. The priority can also be fixed on the basis of demand and importance of the activities. The main activities of tribal women on the basis of their occupation can be broadly categorised in two groups – (1) Workers and (2) Non-workers.

(1) **Workers :** The tribal women work as labourer or worker to perform certain functions in the following areas :

(i) Agriculture production related operations (ii) Traditional and social forestry (iii) Weaving and making handicrafts (iv) Diary, Piggery and Poultry farms (v) Fishing (vi) *Khadi* and village industries (vii) Agro-based social forestry (viii) Construction of roads, buildings, minor irrigation channels (ix) Fruit & vegetable (x) Mining and quarrying (xi) Sericulture (xii) Brick kiln and stone cutting (xiii) Transport, storage and communication (xiv) Trade and commerce and (xv) Other services

(2) **Non-workers :** Tribal women perform several activities like cooking, washing, sewing, fishing, dairing, spinning and weaving, making pickles and papads for home use as well as sale, child care, collection of fuel, fodder and water but still may not be counted as worker as their work is not being considered economically productive activity.

Female work participation rate is low in India which is due to conceptual and measurement related problems implicit in the identification of women within the work force or labour force.

Problems of tribal women

90 per cent of the total female labour force is engaged in the unorganised sector and most disadvantaged group. There is need to improve productivity as well as explore new avenues of employment to facilitate occupational shift wherever possible for tribal women.

The tribal women are facing following types of problems apart from other cultural and social : (i) Tribal women migrate in search of work and generally find work in the unorganised sector like brick kiln, road construction, stone cutting and construction, etc. (ii) Marginality of attention and services (iii) Lack of skill and training facilities (iv) Low productivity and fewer opportunities (v) Low level of participation in decision making (vi) Wage discrimination (vii) Drudgery system (viii) Low health and nutritional status (ix) Illiteracy (x) Morbidity and sickness and (xi) Marginal workers.

Apart from these one of the major hurdles to development of employment opportunities and entrepreneurship amongst women is the lack of adequate training facilities in the areas in which they are considered to be most potential. The

purpose of training is to develop employable skill, self employment and establishment of new business. In most of the occupations where women are employed as low paid unskilled labourer in large number, are in agriculture and construction areas. There is hardly any training facility available to upgrade their skills and competencies. The existing training programmes are primarily aimed at government as well as industrial workers which are creating further imbalances. A few facilities to train women in various skills through polytechnics and apprenticeship training under the Apprentice Act are available. However, there is no special focus on the training of women. As existing training facilities largely cater the need of smaller section of urban women and rarely to tribal women.

There has never been a systematic approach to deal the rural and tribal women to develop their knowledge, skills, attitudes and confidence so that they can able to get better employment opportunities. A few training programmes like Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment (TRYSEM), Women Industrial Training Institution and Vocational Training Institutions have failed to attract rural and tribal women as visualized.

Recently to overcome some of the problems of women a new scheme *Indira Mahila Yojana* has been introduced to provide integrated

system of services for the development of women and children. The main aims of the *yojana* are to :

(i) Create awareness among poor women about the facilities and provisions made for their benefits and rights (ii) Mobilisation and empowerment (iii) Upgradation of skills (iv) Create new employment for women (v) Provide integrated system to cover various schemes like I.C.D.S., family welfare, adult education, schemes for adolescent girls and creche services.

The *Indira Mahila Yojana* has been well received by the State Governments.

According to 1991 Census (Provisional) there are 29.48 million marginal workers and they constitute 9.36 per cent of the total workers in the country (excluding J & K). Out of that 85 per cent marginal workers are females and the incidence of marginal workers is higher in rural areas than in urban areas. A worker who has worked less than six months or so in a year is considered as a marginal worker.

There is some evidence that the work participation rate of females has shown a definite increase by over three percentage points during the last decade and it may be attributed to the efforts made by the Government and voluntary agencies. The rural female workers, an increase as cultivators over that of 1981 has been

observed, whereas proportion of agricultural labourers and household industries has declined. Therefore, there is need to create more works in rural and tribal areas throughout year so that number of marginal workers can be reduced. It can be possible if special programmes are drawn similar to *Jawahar Rojgarh Yojana* (JRY) for these workers and integrating with existing programmes while making a component within these programmes.

National Human Resource Development Policy for Women

Whether there is a clear and written policy or not, some policy nevertheless usually governs Human Resource Development by training management and based on hunches, unsystematic efforts, and vague course of action, which often result in many pitfalls and ultimately make the human resource development approach unproductive. It is, therefore, essential to realise as to why a human resource development policy for women is an essential requirement ? Mainly to make utilization of the resources available as well as to provide clear directions to the human resource development agen-cies who are engaged in the various areas. To achieve all round development of tribal women there is a need to draw a national policy on human resource development for women with a special component on tribal women.

The national policy should be based upon a systematic assessment of present and future needs and should provide for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of programme performance. To frame a national policy on human resource development for women following elements should be considered :

(i) Describe briefly the National Policy, explain reasons to have it along with background and rationale. It will flow from the national human resource development policy which in turn will flow from National Education and Training Policy.

(ii) On the lines of National Policy, every State shall develop its own women resource development policy and the States should be supported and assisted by the Central Government.

(iii) Describe the major objectives to be achieved in practice. The objectives should be further specified into long term and short term.

(iv) Once major and specific objectives are defined, describe the approach to be adopted to achieve them.

(v) The policy should cover all categories of women and at all levels too.

(vi) The areas of human resource development by specifying for different categories of women prioritywise should be clearly identified.

(vii) There must be a commitment for development of National and State level Human Resource Development plans

Annual as well as Five Year.

(viii) It should describe how to assess the development needs at various levels and areas.

(ix) How human resource development programmes for women will be designed and also to make them more practical, so that women energy is utilised in the nation building process.

(x) The policy should describe how and where the development of women plans will be implemented. Who will be responsible to implement, monitor and evaluate these plans ?

(xi) The roles to be played by various organizations involved in development of women should be specified. A nodal agency for whole affairs should also be identified along with specific responsibilities like coordination among various Central/State and other Institu-tions, review, setting up infrastructural facilities for meeting women's requirements at different levels and also specific areas.

(xii) Tribal Research Institutes of the country have the needed expertise and may play a significant role in designing, developing, monitoring and even implementing specific programmes for tribal women.

(xiii) To develop tribal women competencies in agriculture and allied areas, the Agriculture and other allied Departments and State Agricultural Universities/I.C.A.R. Institutions should provide more and more training opportunities as majority of women are engaged in this sector.

(xiv) The role of voluntary organisations should not be ignored in development of women as resource and those who are really working in the field should be supported and encouraged to take up more specific programmes on tribal women development purpose.

(xv) To make HRD more successful and productive monitoring –cum-evaluation studies must be supported so that necessary improvements in the development strategies and policies can be modified from time to time.

Strategies to develop tribal women as a Resource

A strategy is a course of action planned to be undertaken to achieve desired goals. Human resource development strategy is the desired course of action planned by an organisation to achieve its goal. The course of action may deal with the choice of various means to achieve the desired goal and plan for implementing the chosen activity or action. To develop tribal women's knowledge, skills and attitudes a systematic strategy is required to be followed so that their competency can be improved to do the job more efficient way. The following elements may be considered as necessary and

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should be taken care while framing the strategies by the State or Central Government or an organisation.

(i) There should be a National Human Resource Development Centre for women to provide a new thrust on training, planning, implementation, monitoring and dissemination of information. The Centre should coordinate training programmes to be organised by the various governmental and non-governmental organisations for the different categories and levels of women.

(ii) Tribal women must be given increased access to various types of training to acquire knowledge and develop skills in management, entrepreneurship in both areas of traditional and non traditional occupations. Apart from that they should also be given training to develop in all nine categories of workers viz., agriculture, dairy, fisheries, small animal husbandry, *khadi* and village industries, forestry, handlooms, handicrafts, sericulture on priority basis.

(iii) The trainers should be sensitized to local issues, cultural values, customs, beliefs, local needs and resources. A special emphasis should be given by the training institutions on group mobilization, skills, interpersonal and managerial skills.

(iv) In the process of modernisation and adoption of new technologies as a result of that displace women should be trained and developed in alternative skills and

employment possibilities.

(v) A benchmark village level survey is needed to assess tribal women development needs in various areas. The human resource develop-ment programme strategies should be designed and developed on the basis of actual needs and should not be according to the facilities available in organisations. The development needs of tribal women can be assessed at village level by the Secretary, Village *Panchayat*, Department of Rural Development and *Panchayat Raj* or Agriculture Department who has also village level extension workers and infrastructural facilities. As majority of tribal women are engaged in agriculture and allied areas and the agriculture department is responsible to provide training to develop their competencies, therefore, the agriculture department should be preferred than rural development and *Panchayat Raj*.

(vi) In order to meet the training demand in the various areas special condensed job oriented training programmes should be organised through various governmental, non-governmental and other insti-tutions by utilizing existing infrastructural facilities.

(vii) Hostels for women should be provided in the existing training institutions as well as similar provision in the new institutions.

(viii) Special provision for scholarship/stipend should be made to pursue the various job

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(viii) Special provision for scholarship/stipend should be made to pursue the various job

oriented training programmes which are being conducted by voluntary agencies and private organisations.

(ix) One multipurpose vocational training institution for every three to four blocks should be set up for imparting training in various trades to rural and tribal women. The training programmes should be developed while keeping in mind their educational and literacy levels and local demands.

(x) Agriculture and allied area is the main sector in which majority of rural and tribal women are being engaged. In the country a new agricultural extension system was introduced in the year 1977-78 with the assistance of World Bank and popularly known as 'Training and Visit System'. In this new organised agricultural extension, each extension work has been allocated a fixed number of farm families on the basis of geographical, crop intensity and irrigation facilities prevailing in the area. A large number of grass root level extension workers (VEWs) were appointed to cover all farm families. By the end of the twentieth century there will be 1.50 lakh village extension workers against the present 80.8 thousands. However, out of that women extension workers are almost negligible numbers. Female as cultivator has increased considerably in the 1991 Census as compared to 1981. Out of the total female

workers 34.6 per cent are found as cultivators and 43.6 per cent as agricultural labourers.

The agriculture departments must make special efforts to increase intake of female extension workers and also develop their knowledge, subject matter and communication skills. The selection of contact farmers are mainly from male farmers and there is need to select at least 30 per cent female as contact farmers. This will encourage women to take decision on the agricultural production operations. As many agricultural operations are mainly being performed by women and by doing so it will help in adoption of new technologies by them. It would also strengthen women contact farmers' knowledge, skills and attitudes which will enable them to take decision timely.

(xi) Tribal women's role in animal husbandry development should be given more importance and they should be trained to develop skill amongst them in the areas of cattle management, veterinary care and fodder production. There is a need to bring more and more tribal women under the women dairy cooperatives.

(xii) In order to achieve overall development of tribal women there is need to ensure the drudgery on tedious chores such as fodder,

fuel and water collection, cooking and child care, etc., be alleviated.

Summary

Tribal women are mainly engaged as labourers or workers in agriculture and allied areas. Many of them migrate in search of work and generally find work in unorganised sectors like brick kiln, road construction, stone cutting and construction. They also find work locally in household industries, social and traditional forestry, sericulture, weaving and handicrafts but they do not find regular work throughout the year and work as marginal workers. Out of the total marginal workers 85 per cent are females. Tribal women spend considerable time in collection of fuel, fodder and water. Therefore, we must concentrate to develop tribal women's skills on these areas at different levels and categories which should enable them to find regular work, equal wages, fewer time on collection of fuel, fodder and water. Apart from that knowledge, skill and attitudes development in traditional as well as new areas is needed. It should provide them confidence, improvement in their job performance and new employment opportunities. To move in right direction a national policy on human resource development for all sections of women is essential with a nodal agency to develop policy, strategies and watch the implementation as well as to monitor.*

* The views expressed in this paper are of the author and not necessarily of those of National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes or Ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India.

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STATUS OF WOMEN IN TRIBAL SOCIETY : PERCEPTION & REALITY (A MICRO STUDY)

A .GOSWAMI
H. GOSWAMI

Status of women is usually determined by a number of parameters which include, inter alia, property inheritance, quantum of work load, participation in decision making process, freedom of choosing life partner, level of educational attainment, access to modern occupations and the level of freedom in socio-economic fields.

The paper is based on a field study conducted by the Department of Economics, Dibrugarh University in the month of February, 1992 in two villages of Tinsukia district of Assam – Naharani and Betani – located nearly 30 km away from Tinsukia town. The former village is inhabited by a plains tribe of Assam (Sonowal Kachari) and the latter by non tribal communities. All households of both villages (60 of Naharani and 51 of Betani) were covered by the field survey.

The purpose of the survey was to know how the tribal and non tribal women of rural

Assam perceive their status in the society and how far they have attained the perceived status in reality.

A carefully prepared schedule was canvassed in all the households of both villages for collecting information pertaining to the selected parameters of status from both wife and husband of each household. The findings of the survey and analysis thereof are presented below :

Property Inheritance :

Although the Constitution has granted equal right of inheritance to both sons and daughters, quite a good number of both tribal and non tribal women still perceive that daughters should not inherit paternal property.

Table 1
Wives' attitude towards daughters' inheriting paternal property along with sons

Population group	No. of wives liking inheritance by both sons and daughters	No. of wives liking inheritance by sons only	Total
Tribal	30 (50.0)	30 (50.0)	60 (100.0)
Non tribal	22 (43.1)	29 (56.9)	51 (100.0)
Total	52 (46.8)	59 (53.2)	111 (100.0)

Figures in brackets indicate percentage.

Table 1 shows that as high as 56.9 per cent of the non tribal women and 50 percent of the tribal women like inheritance by sons only. Although this perception is indicative of inferior status of women in both the population groups, it is worse in the case of non tribals. At the performance level, the situation is dismal. Not a single respondent woman in both the villages reported receiving parental property as right, though a few had received some property by way of gift. The dismal picture in this regard, both at perception and performance levels, indicates that the womenfolk have not been able to rise above the age-old male dominated practice of inheritance.

Volume of workload :

Domestic chores which are traditionally performed by women, are non-remunerative of money income. Though the woman keeps herself busy in these monotonous, non-remunerative works day in and day out, the husband only is considered to be the earning member. Therefore, her labour does not receive recognition it deserves, and her position gets denegrated in the process. Had she been relieved of the domestic chores, even partially, she could have found time for developing her latent talents, which could have been even a source of monetary income for the family, and in the process could have elevated her status.

Table 2

Housewives' perception of work division between husband and wife

Work	No. of respondents perceiving the work as:					
	Wife's alone		Husband's alone		Both's	
	Tribal	Non tribal	Tribal	Non tribal	Tribal	Non tribal
A. Domestic						
Morning cleaning	52 (87.0)	41 (80.4)	-	-	8 (13.0)	10 (19.6)
Tea preparation	49 (81.6)	43 (84.3)	1	1	10 (16.7)	7 (13.7)
Food preparation	48 (80.0)	47 (92.2)	1	1	11 (18.3)	3 (5.9)
Washing clothes	51 (85.0)	48 (94.1)	1	-	8 (13.3)	3 (5.9)
Child care	25 (41.7)	30 (58.8)	-	-	35 (58.3)	21 (41.2)
Child coaching	32 (53.3)	23 (45.1)	15 (25.0)	16 (31.4)	13 (21.7)	12 (23.5)
B. Outside						
Agriculture	0	0	6	6	54 (90.0)	45 (88.2)
Marketing	0	0	49 (81.7)	45 (88.2)	11 (18.3)	6 (11.8)
Earning income	0	0	30 (50.0)	29 (56.9)	30 (50.0)	22 (43.1)

Figures in brackets indicate percentage.

Housewive's perception of work division, both domestic chores and outside works, is presented by Table 2. More than 80 percent of both tribal and non tribal housewives perceive domestic chores as their share of work, while all the housewives think outside works as their husbands' share. Only a few housewives think that both domestic chores and outside works should be shared by both husbands and wives. However, in the case of agriculture, about 90 per cent housewives think that it is an area of activity of both husbands and wives.

This gloomy picture of work division at the perception level is reflected in the actual state of work division as shown by Table 3.

Table 3

Average working hours of housewives distributed among various activities

Activity	No. of working hours		
	Service holder	Non-service holder	Non-service holder
	Tribal	Tribal	Non tribal
Housewife	6.0	5.5	4.6
Mother	1.5	2.5	2.5
Agriculture	1.0	5.3	4.6
Weaving	1.0	2.4	2.5
Service	6.0	-	-
Daily average working hours	15.5	15.7	14.2

Note : No non tribal respondent is working as service holder.

Table 3 shows that domestic chores (comprising works of housewife and mother) take away more than 7.5 hours of a day on an average in the case of tribal women (both service and non-service holders), while in the case of non tribal women these activities (domestic chores) eat up 7 hours daily. It is interesting to learn that even a service holder tribal woman is not getting any relief from household chores, although she has to work for 6 hours a day on an average in her job outside home. This shows that the tradition of performing domestic chores by the womenfolk is still very much in operation.

Table 4

No. of housewives reporting receiving assistance from husbands in their works

Population group	Regularly	Occasionally
Tribal	21 (39.6)	32 (60.4)
Non tribal	8 (17.4)	38 (82.6)
Total	29 (29.3)	70 (70.7)

It is seen from Table 4 that all the respondents, both tribal and non-tribal, reported receiving assistance from husbands in their works, including domestic chores ; but the proportion of respondents receiving such assistance regularly is very small (29.3%). When a comparison is made between the tribal and non tribal respondents, it is seen that the proportion of tribal respondents receiving regular assistance is more (39.6%) than the non tribal (17.4%).

Table 5

Attitude of wives receiving husbands' assistance in their works

Population group	No. of wives liking husbands' assistance :	
	Openly	Secretly
Tribal	29 (49.1)	31 (50.9)
Non tribal	23 (45.6)	28 (54.4)
Total	52 (46.8)	59 (53.2)

The attitude of wives towards the assistance received from their husbands (Table 5) in their (wives) works, including domestic chores, is amusing. Although all the respondents desire that they should be assisted by their husbands in their works, as high as 53.2 per cent of them like to receive such assistance secretly only, lest they should buy social wrath for 'violating' the age-old work division between the wife and the husband.

Table 6

No. of wives being consulted by husbands in taking major decisions of the family

Major decision	Consulted		Not consulted	
	Tribal	Non-tribal	Tribal	Non-tribal
Land transactions	52	41	8	10
Land utilisation	50	42	10	9
Birth spacing	49	40	11	11
Child education	55	44	5	7
Child's marriage	57	44	3	7
Selling domestic produce	51	43	9	8
Saving & investment	51	40	9	11
Domestic spending	53	47	7	4
Social contacts	57	46	3	5

Effective participation of women in decision making process indicates high status of the women. Judging by this parameter, it is found from Table 6 that the respondents, both tribal and non tribal, enjoy high status. Most of them reported to have been consulted by their husbands in taking major decisions of the family.

Table 7

Distribution of respondents married to husbands self-chosen and arranged

Population group	Self chosen (No.)	Arranged (No.)	Total (No.)
Tribal	28 (46.7)	32 (53.3)	60 (100.0)
Non-tribal	33 (64.7)	18 (35.3)	51 (100.0)
Total	61 (54.9)	50 (45.1)	111 (100.0)

The right to choose one's husband is regarded as an indicator of high status of woman. The survey findings given in Table 7 reveal that more than 50 per cent of respondents of both population groups have chosen their husbands themselves. The freedom of choosing one's husband is found to be more among the non tribals.

An educated woman is supposed to enjoy a status higher than an uneducated one, because the former can take a more rational view of the situation.

Table 8

Level of literacy of the respondents – tribal & non tribal

Pop. group	Illiterate	Literate	Primary	Secondary	Above	Total
Tribal	19 (32.2)	12	22	7	41 (67.8)	60
Non tribal	33 (64.7)	12	6	-	18 (35.3)	51
Total	52 (46.8)	24	28	7	59 (53.2)	111

The survey reveals (Table 8) that the percentage of literate women is much higher in the tribal village. The level of women's educational attainment is also found to be much higher in this village.

Wife's ability to contribute monetary income to the family elevates her position. However, in a rural setting the wives rarely get such opportunities. Table 9 indicates that 50 per cent of the tribal and 41 per cent of non tribal women could contribute to family income. The average percentage contribution of woman to family income is found to be 18.64 in the tribal village and 15.15 in the case of the non tribal village (Table 10).

Table 9

No. of respondent women contributing to family income with their level of contribution

% of contribution	Tribal No.	Non tribal No.
Nil	30 (50.0)	30 (58.8)
Below 10%	8	8
Between 10% & 20%	5	5
Between 21 % & 30%	8	4
Between 31% & 40%	1	2
Between 41 & 50%	8	2
Total	60	51

Table 10

Amount of wive's contribution to family income : tribal & non tribal

Pop. group	No.	Wive's contribution (Rs.)	Family income (Rs.)	Wive's income as % of F.I.	Avg. F.I.for families having wive's income
Tribal	30	137000	735000	18.64	24500
Non tribal	21	25000	165000	15.15	7857

Another indicator of the status of woman is socio-economic freedom. This has been measured with the help of the following measures :

(a) *Attitude towards female education :* All the respondents of both villages desire extension of female education as a necessary condition for raising women's status.

(b) *Attitude towards divorce :* All respondents of both villages disfavoured divorce even in the event of continued conjugal discord. This is only to be expected from rural wives who have no social security to fall back on.

(c) *Attitude towards outside jobs :* All respondents expressed positive attitude towards outside jobs.

(d) *Attitude towards widow remarriage :* On widow remarriage the respondents expressed mixed opinion. About 41 per cent responded positively to widow remarriage.

Conclusion :

Thus, only three out of the eight parameters used in this paper for measuring the status of women, namely participation in the decision making process in the family, choice of husbands and socio-economic freedom, weigh in favour of equal, if not higher, status of wives. But the remaining five parameters such as property inheritance, work division, husbands' assistance, female literacy, contribution to family income weigh against equal status of women.

In spite of the fact that majority of the

parameters used here indicate unfavourable status of women, Table 11 reveals that more than 67 per cent of the respondent wives reported enjoying equal status. This inconsistency between the objective and the subjective assessments of status of women lends support to the proverb, 'Ignorance is bliss'.

Table 11

Housewive's perception of social status of women : tribal & non tribal

Pop. group	Status of women		
	Higher	Equal	Lower
Tribal	9 (15.0)	41 (68.3)	10 (16.7)
Non tribal	4 (7.8)	34 (66.7)	13 (25.5)
Total	13 (11.7)	75 (67.6)	23 (20.7)

TRIBAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT : TRADITION, CULTURE AND STATUS OF WOMEN IN NORTH EASTERN TRIBAL SOCIETIES

S.L. BARUAH

In the Census Report of 1981, 7.7 per cent of the total population of India are specified as tribals. Most of them till late were in the primitive stage of civilization, confined to their secluded areas of habitation. Christian missionaries introduced a large number of them to modern way of life but still many remained tied to their traditional pattern. However, with the opening of tribal areas after Independence, expansion of transport and communication, growing industrialisation, growth of education, opportunities for diversi-fication of occupation as well as social mobility, their primitive ways of life have undergone significant changes.[1] But this has not substantially improved their socio-economic conditions.

The North-East India is, in the main, a land of tribes. Arunachal Pradesh alone has 110 tribes and sub-tribes.[2] These tribes speak different dialects and have different manners, customs, festivals and dress. Racially most of them are of Mongoloid origin. They inhabit the hill areas and

a few like the Dimasas, the Rabhas, the Mishings, the Lalungs and the Bodo Kacharis live in the plains. Majority of them practise *jhuming* and have subsistence economy. Christianity is the dominant religion among the Mizos, the Garos, the Nagas, the Khasis and the Jayantiyas. Tribes of Arunachal mainly profess their own religions, whereas those living in the plains or the foot-hill areas profess some sort of Hinduism. All the tribes of this region with exception to the Khasis, the Jayantiyas, the Garos, the Lalungs (a plains tribe of Assam) and the Akas of Arunachal are patriarchal and patrilineal.

In the post-Independence period, several efforts have been made by the Central and State Governments to improve the condition of the tribals and integrate them with the rest of the Indian population but the result is not encouraging. Moreover, the development programmes being, in the main, male-oriented, fail to reach the womenfolk and the contributions made by women to social and economic progress are often ignored. In recent times, therefore, these programmes are aiming to harness the entire human potential. But integrating women to development process means not merely institutional change, it also entails a change in society's attitude and behaviour towards women.

It is generally believed that in the tribal

societies of north-eastern India, where there is no *purdah*, no restriction on women's movement, no dowry, no bride-burning, no female infanticide and ban on widow remarriage, women enjoy equal status with men in the family and the society. But reality betrays that though their status is comparatively high, they too like their counterparts in the non tribal or advanced societies are looked upon by the menfolk only as second sex or inferior human beings. Many of them still remain bound to certain ethos, norms and traditions which stand as obstacles towards their development. Traditions are held dear in human societies and social change is a slow process. There has taken place no doubt, radical changes in tribal women's dress, pattern of behaviour, occupation and lifestyle. But this material change has not improved their status in the real sense of the term, making them capable of taking leadership roles or participating in the decision-making process inside and outside the family. It is, therefore, felt that unless material developmental programmes are accompanied by psychological revolution or change in society's attitude towards women and, unless women themselves become conscious of their inferior position in the society and of their own dignity, rights and potentialities, legislation and development programmes will not succeed in improving their lot. In the context of this background, this paper attempts to study the traditional north-eastern tribal societies' attitude towards women taking into account some

proverbs, rites, practices and customary laws which also act as important indicators for determining their status.

Image of women in the north-eastern traditional tribal societies is not a bright one. They are often equated with lowly animals and birds and conceived to have no intelligence or wisdom. Thus go some proverbs amongst the Mizos that women's wisdom does not extend beyond the bank of a river, that a wife and an old fence can be replaced at any time and that an unbeaten wife and the uncut weeds of a field are both unbearable.[3] They consider women's words as having no value because 'as a crab's meat is not counted as meat, so also a woman's word cannot be counted as word'.[4] The traditional Garo society ridicules woman with the saying that 'just as a goat is without teeth so a woman lacks brain'.[5] Among the Singphos of Arunachal there is a proverb that 'women's hair is long but their mind is too short' meaning thereby that women are not reliable, because they cannot hold a secret. The Moyan Nagas of Manipur consider women as having no principle because they do not have a particular or permanent clan'.[7] The Meities from the same State say that man should not pay attention to a woman, a child, a cow and a Hindu priest. They compare women with raw material which men can use as they like.[8] Many tribes of Arunachal believe that the heart, voice, physique and mind of women are weak.[9] According to the Lotha

Nagas males are possessed of six kinds of strength, females only five. For this, they christen the boys on the sixth day after birth and girls on the fifth day.

Many tribes compare woman with the field or the earth and hence consider them as a source of energy or strength. But her contact is supposed to bring evil to man in his manly enterprises like hunting and war. For instance, it is a taboo among the Zeliangrong Nagas to sleep with his wife or touch her inner garments before going to war or hunting expeditions, because this might bring undesirable consequences to the whole group. It is, therefore, imperative for him to sleep in the boys' dormitory (*Khangchiu-kih*) the previous night.[11] The Zemi Naga males would not touch the meat of an animal killed by a woman ; that would be below his dignity,[12] because bravery is a quality of man and docility that of woman. The taboo prevalent in traditional Assamese Hindu society of not allowing a male child to touch the inner garments of women or passing through the place where these are hung are also there in many tribal societies and followed with much strictness.[13]

Such attitudes towards woman of considering her as lowly creature had its impact in her status in the family and socio-political life. In all patriarchal tribal societies, man being the head of the family is looked upon as the breadwinner and woman simply as the

breadkeeper. A wife is usually not associated with any decision making process involving money. Amongst the tribes of Arunachal, for instance, all matters relating to purchase and disposal of any family property like stone-beads, *Mithun* or any livestock or poultry or those relating to bride-price, etc., are decided by the menfolk exclusively. In family affairs like marriage or girls' education, women are consulted but the decision is of men.[14] Same is the case with the Naga tribes. All major decisions inside and outside the family are taken by the husbands, wives are to abide by their husbands' wishes and orders.[15] Even in the fields, women are under the control of men.[16]

Women in general were not allowed to take part in the deliberations of the village councils, not to speak of assuming the office of a chief or village headman. Among the Singphos, a queen can sit in the *Suphangtai*, the Meeting House where political deliberations take place but common women are prohibited from entering to it.[17] In a like way, the matriarchal Akas allow their *Rani* to take part in political deliberations but this privilege is not extended to other women.[18] Women thus cannot become member either of the *Bulianq* of the Apatanis, *Kebang* of the Adis or the *Nongthum* of the Noctes and the Wanchos.[19] The Moyan Nagas till late did not allow women to talk of village administration even within the four walls of their residence because administration was solely as men's business and

women were only to obey and act question.[20] The Zemi Nagas do not allow women to appear in court in person and take part in the trial of disputes.[21] Even amongst the matriarchal societies, women were not allowed to enter any *durbar* or council because politics was considered solely as men's affairs. The Jayantiyas had a superstition that bad days were ahead if women were allowed to enter politics.[22] The popular saying prevalent among the Khasis relating to women's entry to politics runs thus : 'If the hen crows, the world including the family will change for the worse.'[23] In the Garo society, the *Mahari*, even in deciding matters relating to women, did not consider it essential to consult them. As a result, he could commit such crimes against women as that of settling the marriage of minor girl with an elderly man.[24]

Such hostile attitude towards women extended to the religious institutions and rites of the North-Eastern tribal societies with only a few exceptions. Although the major part of the labour involved in the religious festivities was performed by women, the place of honour as priest for conducting the ceremonies belonged exclusively to men. Women's role was confined to preparing food and serving beer to the menfolk and catering to their needs. The Karbis even do not allow women to enter the place of worship in certain religious festivals like *Hemphu* and *Rongker*.[25] Even those tribes accepting Christianity do not have as yet a woman pastor.

The command of St.Paul long ruled their religious organizations. 'Women should keep silence in the church, for they are not permitted to speak.' [26]

This deprivation of woman from playing leadership roles in political and socio-religious organizations is, however, not a distinct character of the tribal societies. It is a world phenomenon. It may be argued that since leadership demands one's stay outside home and all time free movement involving risks, women were not allowed to play this role, and in some societies, mainly matriarchal ones, women themselves on this ground declined to accept this responsibility. But this possibility applicable to the distant past should not be extended to women of this age. Development demands equal rights and opportunities to men and women to develop their personalities and a congenial atmosphere for their enjoyment. Unless men treat women as their equal partners and give them scope to play leadership roles and accept it with an open heart, all-round progress of any society is not possible.

Although women play a vital and indispensable role in tribal economy contributing much more labour than men, they are denied right to inherit property. In some societies, of course, in the absence of sons, a daughter is permitted to inherit the property of her father but in such case, her husband comes

to stay with her father. On the other hand, Naga and Mizo daughters are deprived of this right, so that in the absence of a son, property goes to the nearest male kinsman of the father's family.[27] Even in the matriarchal societies of the Khasis, the Jayantiyas and the Garos, a woman simply inherits the property and acts as the custodian. She cannot exercise any right over it. There are instances in the Garo society in which a *nokkrom* or resident son-in-law 'squanders the entire property of his wife, while she remains a dumb spectator'.[28] Some tribes deprive woman of exercising her right even to the income earned by her through livestock, poultry, weaving, etc.[29] Such exploitation and economic deprivation of women have perpetuated their subordination to malefolk and made their labour unaccounted and their status low. It had a serious impact on their morale, as a result of which even now they lack interest in the development programmes aimed at their economic welfare.

Sex discrimination in some patriarchal tribal societies of north-eastern India like that of others starts from the birth of the girl child. Although for the prevalence of the system of bride-price, birth of a daughter is not an unwelcome event in tribal families and in the matrilineal ones, she is always desired. There are tribes who prefer having sons to daughters. The Nagas consider the birth of a male child as an auspicious event because sons are needed for continuation of family lineage and village

defence.[30] The Mao Nagas even worship a god to get a male child. They celebrate the birth of a son with pomp and festivities whereas observe nothing of that sort when a daughter is born.[31] The Zeliangrong Naga husbands even divorce their wives if they fail to give birth to any male issue.[32] In the traditional Mizo society, when a male child is born, he is hailed as a blessed one, as a valiant elephant killer, whereas a new born female child is greeted with the words that she would cost a *mithun*.[33] In the Adi society, desire to have sons is considered as a genuine ground for having polygamous marriages. Amongst the Mishings, a plains tribe of Assam, these families are considered ideal, which has more number of sons and less number of daughters.[34]

Whereas a boy child till about 13-14 years of age in the traditional tribal societies are allowed to lead a life of ease and pleasure, the girl child since she is six or seven years old is trained to take up all responsibilities of the household. She has to fetch firewood and water, look after the younger ones like a 'little mother', sow, weed, reap and husk paddy, cook rice and prepare rice-beer, perform all other domestic drudgery and also spin and weave for the family. When the question of education comes, she is compelled to sacrifice for her brothers even though in many cases, she proves herself a better student, because her service is required at home either for taking care of the youngsters or helping in cultivation or earning money by

weaving. For instance, in the traditional Meitei society of Manipur, girls of 13-14 years of age are made to give up education and engage themselves fully in weaving, because their parents think that their daughters would be 'earning more by weaving than by school diplomas'.[35] The Singpho parents do not like to send their daughters to school as they consider girls as *paraya dhan* or 'other's property'.[36] Amongst the tribes of Arunachal the percentage of female literacy is as low as 11.02 per cent as per 1981 Census.[37] Amongst the Mishings, female literacy is one of the lowest (7.54 per cent according to 1971 Census) and it is only one-fourth of the percentage of male literacy.[38] Even amongst the Mizos, classed as one of the most literate communities of India, percentage of female literacy according to 1981 Census is lower than that of male (52.75 against 67.05).[39]

Thus, tribals living in remote areas are not yet aware of the importance of girl's education. Many of them consider it sufficient if the girls can cross the primary level. No doubt, it is mainly economic backwardness which stands in the way of girl's education. In some remote areas absence of high schools also prevent girls from having higher education, but sex-biasness is also an important deterrent towards women's higher education.

It is generally believed that in tribal societies, girls are free to marry whomever they

like and parents simply ditto their will. But facts reveal that among some Naga tribes, the opposite is the reality. The Adis of Arunachal also who prefer settled marriages, get their daughters married at a very early age. Among the Galo group of the Adis for selecting a bride, the popular saying goes, 'Catch the young'.[40] The Miniyong sub-tribe of the Adis sometimes settles the marriage of their daughters when on mother's lap.[41]

It is also generally opined that the system of bride price prevalent among most of the tribes reveal the high status of their women, because this makes birth of daughters desirable in the family and is a mark of recognition of woman's dignity. But actually 'bride price does not enhance the status of women, as it encourages to treat them as property in the in-law's clan'. [42] To quote from the Gazetteer of the Suvansiri district of Arunachal, "The very fact that bride price has to be paid for obtaining a wife confers on the husband, in theory, exclusive right over her person. Her kinsmen have no redress against any harsh treatment meted out to her on suspicion of misconduct. It is not legally possible for a wife to leave her husband unless her kinsmen are in a position to compensate for this loss".[43] This observation made in regard to the Nishis of Arunachal may be true of all tribes having this system. Usually women do not have any say on the bride price. Sometimes the girl's father takes an instalment of the bride price

(when demanded in cash) in advance thus bonding his daughter to a man. If the girl not willing to marry that particular man, escapes from her parent's house, she is haunted like anything, tortured when caught and forced to marry the man of her father's choice.[44]

Marriage is considered indispensable for a girl. Amongst the Lotha Nagas, the status of spinsters is lower than the widows.[45] After marriage, the girl is expected to behave according to the defined norms and practices of the community. Tribal husbands also demand blind submission from their wives. Among the Nagas, chastity and devotion to their husbands are considered to be the most essential virtues of women falling short of which they are divorced or fined by the village authority.[46] They also keep strict vigilance over the movement of their daughters because of girls having any moral slip, bride price becomes lower.[47] Amongst the Meities, "chastity is considered as a part and parcel of the 'nice' part of a woman, but a man is considered as master of many".[48] Women's submission to men is taught to the Karbi maidens through a legend relating to the origin of their marriage system, in which a Karbi maiden, when asked for consent to marry a man of her elder brother's choice replied : "What decision can I give ? We, girls are like rolled up plantain leaves, like bundles of herbs. We are like your possessions to be sold and exchanged. Therefore, you may do what you deem best".[49]

Life of tribal women is very hard, they being one of the most exploited sections of the woman community. They carry the main workload of the family including cultivation. They start their routine at dawn and continue it till late at night. To some tribal women like the Adis of Arunachal, life is so hard that they unhesitatingly accept or even persuade their husbands to take a second wife.[50] It is a taboo for many tribal women to go to bed earlier than the menfolk, so that when the male members of the family gossip or enjoy taking rice beer, women keep themselves busy in spinning and weaving. Amongst the Moyan Nagas, women are meant for performing household chores and other activities, while men are to be "preserved and prized".[51] In the traditional Lotha Naga society, amongst whom gambling was very popular, a wife was sometimes used as a bet by her husband in the game and in case, the husband lost the game the wife was passed on to the hands of the winner for a certain period of time.[52] This practice is no longer prevalent but the attitude associated with it of treating women as a pawn in the chess-board or a commodity to be used according to men's whims and pleasure are still pervading all societies tarnishing the image of woman and creating strong barriers on their way to development.

Sex discrimination is seen in cases of divorces also. Though divorce and remarriage of

women is permissible in tribal societies, it is not so easy for women to obtain, because in most cases it involves the return of the bride price. In some societies husband can instantly divorce his wife by uttering simply "I divorce you", but a wife cannot behave in a like way. A Lotha Naga wife can be divorced on the ground of barrenness, disobedience or her alleged ill-treatment to the husband's relatives by a fine of Rs.10/-. But if the wife wants to divorce her husband for torturing her, she is to pay double of the amount.[53] When a Singpho husband compels his wife to concede to divorce, his property may be equally divided between him and his wife and the male child remains with the husband and the female goes with the wife. But if the divorce is initiated from the side of the wife she gets nothing and all children, male or female, remain with the husband.[54]

Such sex discrimination shows how tribal women about whose social status we are usually full of appreciation had been treated as inferior human being throughout the ages. What is said of the Arunachal tribal women by a woman elite of their State can be applied to most of their fellow sisters of other parts of India. "Women's life and the status and role allotted to her are all antiquated, outmoded and unrealistic in the modern world. I need not elaborate in the marriage system, which does not recognise her as a human being. Everyone knows the painful and shameful indignities and torture, she may

have to submit to if she tries to exert her will."[55] Even regarding the advanced Mizos, Mrs. Lienginpi, Secretary of the Mizoram State Social Welfare Advisory Board comments : "In the eyes of an outsider, the Mizo women seem to enjoy high status in the society as well as in the family, but in practice, the status of women is very low".[56]

Peculiar and ignoble customs, as one prevalent among the Garos in which the son-in-law can marry his widowed mother-in-law thus becoming the husband of both the mother and the daughter[57] or one prevalent among the Nishis of Arunachal in which the father-in-law sleeps with his daughter-in-law[58], polygamy practised by a number of tribes and polyandry by Gallongs of Arunachal all make women only objects of sex or items of movable properties of the menfolk.

All such primitive customs and blind traditions had been putting strong hurdles towards tribal women's development, so that despite the concerned efforts of the Central and the State Governments, their progress is very slow. Although the situation has changed for the better in recent decades, there are still many miles to go. One of the basic points which the planners and the administrators associated with tribal women's development should take into account is that to achieve satisfactory results of their efforts, the stereotypical and biased attitude shown towards women at all levels of society

should have to be changed by one of equality and dignity. It is also true that development programmes have not yet touched women at the grass-root level. Plans are made from above in which men speak for women or sometimes elitist western-educated ladies for the illiterate labouring women. Thus, there is a communication gap between the planners and the groups of women for whom the programmes are designed. Made to live in ignorance for centuries past and having had no contact with the outside world, tribal women in traditional societies have cultivated their own view of the world which they are not willing to change.

To achieve good results dedicated women should be associated with the programmes at all levels, because it is women who know best women's mind, their health and their problems. This also needs mobilising women through voluntary associations and interactions of all classes of women throughout the country.

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CAUSES OF LOW LEVEL OF TRIBAL WOMEN'S LITERACY IN ASSAM AND SUGGESTIONS FOR THEIR REMOVAL

LAKSHAHIRA DAS

The Constitution of India gives an equal status to the Indian women with that of men. But has she attained this equality in our society ? The ill-fated Indian girl child is still at the mercy of our traditional backward looking socio-cultural practices. It was only in the Sixth Five Year Plan that a special chapter was added for women's development and the role of women in national development recognised. This was elaborated by the Seventh Plan document.

The development of women especially the tribal women's development has become a burning problem today. Government departments, voluntary agencies and research institutions are engaged in this task since a pretty long time. But these efforts had little impact on the tribal society of North East India in general and especially in Assam.

TRIBAL WOMEN OF N. E. INDIA

Societies in North East India can be broadly categorised into two classes viz, (1) Tribal Societies and (2) Peasant Societies. In the mountain valleys and other areas of the region covering Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya,

Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura various tribes such as Adi, Garo, Kuki, Mishmi, Naga and others live. Tribal societies of this region are till recently more or less isolated from outside world and from similar other societies. Due to historical factors, their simplicity and coyness tribal people were pushed back and compelled to live in regions which lacked communication facilities and modern amenities of life. After independence only they gradually came into contact with the people outside their society and happenings taking place at the wider levels of society have a bearing on these tribal societies too.

It is recognised that the status of tribal women in tribal society of N. E. India is better than that of their non tribal counterpart in many respects. They are held in high esteem and they had the privilege of participating in socio-religious rituals and ceremonies. The former enjoys more freedom in different walks of life. The sex ratio is favourable, there is no female infanticide, no bride burning, boys and girls are treated alike and there is high participation of tribal women in rituals, economy and family affairs. *Purdah, sati*, pre-pubertal marriage of girls, prohibition of widow marriage or divorce are markedly absent. But it must be mentioned here that the total picture is not so rosy as it appears to be. Because the status of women in tribal society cannot be looked upon in isolation as it is integrally connected with the status of women in general. Again, the status and role of

women in tribal society are relative. Hence before going to understand the real position of women in such societies one must study the position of women in general. Firstly, the tribal women of N. E. India's societies cannot be placed under one category and that their problems will have to be considered in the context of time, space, region, socio-cultural, political upheaval, family system, village or community organisation, etc. The tribals in India differ from one another in such respects as racial traits, social organisation, cultural pattern, languages, religion, customs, beliefs and so on. Traditions, socio-cultural norms, religious activities and other ethics differ widely in different tribal areas. Again, the relationship between male and female in a society will have to be studied by the standard of that society. Thirdly, the status and role of women are changing in an emerging situation. There are several problems which tribal women in particular and society in general will have to fight to enable tribal women to enjoy equal status and opportunities with men.

The status of women in any society depends upon their ability to acquire adequate education and knowledge which supplies strength to raise their position and retain the same in the face of various hazards of life. Education is also the stepping stone to the other forms of development and a weapon of personal and social liberation.

In spite of all the expansion that has taken place in the formal education system the vast

majority of women especially the tribal women have remained outside the reach of education and are leading wretched lives as illiterates. The tribal women of Assam are no exception to this. Excepting a small percentage of such women who have come into contact with the advanced and enlightened society, the rest have been compelled to lead a wretched life due to illiteracy, as illiteracy inhibits and prevents proper exercise of human rights and favours exploitation and discrimination.

LITERACY AND TRIBAL WOMEN OF ASSAM

The tribal community of Assam constitutes 10.99 or 11% of the total population of the State as per 1971 census. If we look at the All India census figures of 1981, we find that the total number of Scheduled Tribes is 51,628,638 of which 26,038,535 are males and 25,590,103 are females. They constitute 7.76% of the total population. Bereft of 1981 census figures in Assam and non-availability of 1991 census figures we have to depend on 1971 figures according to which the S.T. population of Assam was 16,07,035. Of the total S.T. population, 13,44,413 belonged to plains and 2,62,622 to Hill areas. There are 9 S.T. in Plains areas, 14 in the two autonomous districts as mentioned below :

Scheduled Tribes (Plains) :

(1) Barman in Cachar (2) Boro, Boro-Kachari (3) Deuri (4) Hojai (5) Kachari, Sonowal (6) Lalung (7) Mech (8) Mishing and (9) Rabha.

Scheduled Tribes (Hills) :

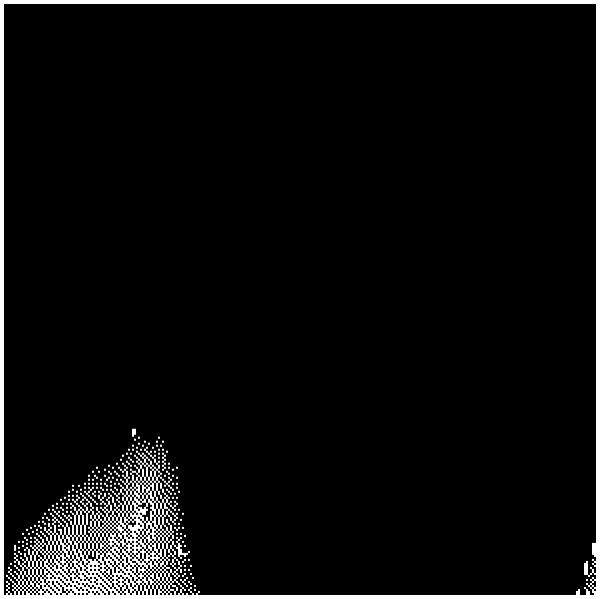
(1) Chakma (2) Dimasa Kachari (3) Garo (4) Hajong (5) Hmar (6) Khasi, Jaintia, Synteng, Pnar, War, Bhoi, Lyngngam (7) Any Kuki tribe (8) Lakher (9) Man (Tai speaking) (10) Any Naga tribe (11) Karbi (Mikir) (12) Any Mizo tribe (13) Pawi and (14) Syntheng.

Table I shows the details of population and literacy of S.T. of Assam.

Table I

Population and Percentage of Literacy of Scheduled Tribes in Assam, 1971 Census

Name of Scheduled Tribe	Total population	Male	Female	Total P.C. of literacy	P.C. of male literacy	P.C. of female literacy
Barman in Cachar	13,210	6,761	6,449	30.45	39.97	22.56
Boro, Boro-Kachari	6,10,459	3,08,768	3,01,691	20.51	29.73	11.06
Chakma	396	208	188	23.48	38.94	6.38
Deori	23,080	11,901	11,179	27.72	39.58	15.10
Dimasa (Kachari)	39,342	20,711	18,631	18.84	27.36	9.36
Garo	9,139	5,222	3,917	22.89	31.36	11.62
Hajong	385	227	159	10.88	14.98	5.03
Hmar	5,380	2,724	2,656	44.40	56.90	31.66
Hojai	2,298	1,135	1,163	27.72	36.56	19.09
Kachari including Sonowal	1,98,619	1,02,457	96,072	27.33	35.36	18.77
Khasi & Jaintia	6,487	3,530	2,957	18.27	20.65	15.42
Any Kuki tribe	13,524	7,179	6,345	28.51	36.54	19.43



Lakher	1	1	X	1.00	1.00	X
Lalung	95,609	48,397	47,212	21.43	31.47	11.14
Man (Tai speaking)	964	489	475	7.99	13.70	2.11
Mech	2,570	1,275	1,294	30.58	39.66	21.64
Mikir (Karbi)	1,77,194	90,355	86,839	13.18	21.09	4.95
Miri (Mishing)	2,59,551	1,31,764	1,27,787	18.20	28.54	7.54
Any Mizo tribe	711	372	339	57.95	63.44	51.92
Any Naga tribe	8,481	4,280	4,201	15.51	22.55	8.33
Rabha	1,38,630	71,497	67,133	22.24	31.23	12.66
Pawi	6	4	2	16.67	25.00	X
Syntheng	611	305	306	4.91	5.25	4.58
Total	16,06,648	8,19,653	7,86,995	26.02	34.62	17.16

State percentage of literacy = 28.72%
Male = 37.19%, Female = 19.27%

According to the census figure of 1971 the percentage of literacy in Assam was 28.72. Sexwise the breakup is 37.19% in case of males and 19.27% in females. Among S.T. communities the percentage of literacy was 26.02 of which male literacy was 34.62% and female literacy 17.16%. Table 2 shows the position of Assam in respect of literacy of women of various tribes against the same of N.E. Region.

Table 2

Level of literacy among tribal women of North Eastern Region

Sl. No.	Name of State	Literacy among S.T.	P.C. of male literacy	P.C. of female literacy
1	Assam	26.02	34.62	17.16
2	Arunachal Pradesh	5.20	8.72	1.70
3	Manipur	28.71	38.64	18.87
4	Meghalaya	26.45	30.11	22.79
5	Mizoram	60.03	66.28	53.96
6	Tripura	30.98	40.20	21.19
7	Nagaland	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

It is true that in some tribal societies of Assam women enjoy distinctive roles in various spheres of their socio-economic and cultural life, exercise considerable authority and exert influence in decision making. But this should not lead us to the conclusion that in all tribal societies of Assam women are in an advantageous position. The figure of literacy of the tribal women against the All India backdrop is satisfactory nevertheless the same presents a disappointing picture when considered against the North Eastern Region. A closer analysis of the variables brought out by various researches shows that difficulties and disparities in educational progress of the tribal women of Assam stem from three sets of constraints – ecological, socio-economic and internal. The main causes of the low level literacy of tribal

women in Assam may be mentioned as follows :

(1) Lack of awareness of the tribal women as to the benefit of education. As they are tradition bound, conservative and confined to their home and agriculture, they are less susceptible to change and fruits of education. Most of the tribal girls do not receive any motivation from their parents.

(2) Excepting urban and a few growth centres there is general negligence in both patriarchal and matriarchal societies regarding education of the womenfolk.

(3) Education in our country is designed to meet the requirement of average ability and it is alien to tribal life and culture. For this tribal children especially girls experience considerable difficulty in studies. This is one of the causes of dropping out from school.

(4) Regarding the question of distance between home and school as a barrier for schooling many researches and studies have shown that due to long distances tribal parents found it inconvenient to send their children especially daughters to school as they have to pass through thick forests and high hills.

(5) Traditional taboos and prejudices of tribal community acted as constraints in the advancement of their education of the womenfolk.

(6) There is a prevailing notion that education of a girl is a luxury and should be avoided.

(7) Family commitment and household work

consume a very large proportion of a woman's energy and time in tribal societies.

(8) Engagement of adult tribal women in *jhum* cultivation for which the girls had to stay back from school.

(9) Absence of girls' hostels especially in interior areas is a big problem which prevents girls from attending schools.

(10) The conditions of schools are far from satisfactory and the number of schools is inadequate.

(11) Tribal women living in predominantly illiterate communities have very little incentive for literacy and education.

(12) Poverty is also a problem in this issue. As the parents cannot provide text books, school dress and other amenities at home the children, mostly girls are deprived of education.

(13) Due to conservatism, superstition and outmoded customs many of the tribal adult women deprive themselves of the benefit of literacy.

(14) Timing and holding of literacy classes are not convenient for tribal women.

(15) Adult tribal women are not motivated as their major interest of earning money is not catered to by education.

(16) Nomadic way of life in some tribal communities for which educational institutions do not cater to their needs leading to low level of literacy.

Remedies

For removing the above constraints in the path of tribal women's education in Assam, the isolated pockets where they are suffering badly must be identified first and scientific study made of the root causes of it. The following points may be offered by way of solution :

(1) The challenges of the widening illiteracy gap will have to be borne in determining priorities in educational development of tribal areas.

(2) More primary and secondary schools and colleges are to be established to give more coverage of girls of such areas. Hostel facilities for tribal girls are to be increased.

(3) Literacy programmes should be incorporated into and correlated with economic and social development plans.

(4) Various vocational training programmes which do not require high education should be started for diverting to non-agricultural occupations.

(5) A few *Ashram* type of schools on the pattern of Gujarat State can be conveniently established for the benefit of girls in a phased manner.

(6) Revision of school timings, adjustment of vacation to agricultural season, improvement of school building, adoption of suitable method of instruction, use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction are some of the measures to be adopted.

(7) As the conservatism of the tribal society is gradually decreasing in modern time, co-educational schools may be increased.

(8) Schools exclusively meant for girls with female teachers will definitely help to spread education among women.

(9) Scientific training and ideas of health, sanitation, hygienic habits, care of pregnant mother, lactation and child caring needs are to be given to mothers and aged families.

(10) Mobility of *jhum* cultivation should be controlled by encouragement to settled life through improved agricultural methods.

(11) A good rapport should be established with the menfolk of the areas and they need be convinced that education will add to the efficiency of their wives, daughters and sisters.

(12) Audio-visual aids like posters, flash cards, projected pictures and films should be used in community centres and different places.

(13) Programmes connected with leisure time vocations and new function of women as an economic partner to be incorporated.

(14) Immediate steps should be taken by the authority concerned that tribal children receive education through their mother tongue at least at the primary stage. In plains districts students are receiving instruction through Bodo language in Bodo-Kachari concentrated areas. The District Council of Karbi Anglong has also introduced Karbi as the medium of

instruction. This measure is to be expanded in other tribal areas.

(15) Adult education centres exclusively meant for females and run by educated females should be started.

(16) To attract more tribal girl students for schooling scholarship facilities should be provided from primary stage onwards.

(17) Such amenities like supply of text books, school dress, mid-day meals will provide immense incentives for the spread of education in tribal areas.

(18) Various welfare organisations like State Education department, Tribal Welfare department, Social Welfare department and other voluntary organisations should be involved in this task with more vigour.

(19) Educated tribal women of both plains and hill areas should take initiative and associate themselves with other organisations for spreading education among the womenfolk of such areas.

(20) With the advent of political consciousness tribal people have become conscious about their own language and identity. So trained teachers from tribal group should be appointed in schools especially at the primary school stage.

(21) The job of primary school teachers should be made more attractive so that the deplorable situation of the primary schools may be raised. More attention should be given to create motivation among the

parents of girl students of tribal communities.

(22) Provision should be made to hold women's meets in tribal areas which will act as forums to share societal concerns and at the same time enable cultural expression of women's aptitudes, skills and abilities.

In conclusion, it may be said that among the tribal communities traditional values, social ethos and urge for retaining identity play an important role. Therefore, in formulating schemes for the development of the weaker sex against illiteracy, exploitation and social injustice special care should be taken to give due emphasis on the above factors.

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DEVELOPMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN AS A PART OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

YUGAL KISHOR MOHAKHUD

In this paper an attempt is being made to reflect the general problems faced by the tribal women and the bottlenecks to their development and progress in a larger social context.

It is a fact that there prevails an articulated and unarticulated distress for centuries, where one half of the humanity has been subordinated to the other half, but I would like to say that this is the eternal question and the question of why there should be so much disparity between one part of God's creation and another part, both parts being completely interdependent, both parts being supplemen-tary and complementary to each other, and both parts being such that neither part can become the whole in the absence of the other. Finally it is observed that since decades to decades, we come to a stage where it is said that one half of this humanity is always definitely inferior to the other, why ? Why is this so and why should it be so and how long is it going to be so ? These are the number of questions coming in everybody's addresses.

Practically, we have a feeling in our different development programme imple-

mentation areas of the districts from the grass-root level to the city slum areas, all the problems the tribal women are faced with, that if we start the equal effective education system to the tribal child, girl or boy, probably, most of these problems could be solved by this system, provided we implement effectively and systematically and undertake follow up action for this in a continuous process till they have achieved the equal opportunity with the male sex. Further the male and female sex of the tribals should be given more effective attention to educate and aware them for their socio-economic development and educational development for their self-survival.

Further here, I have a feeling that the tribal women who are living in the grass-root level, are giving more priority for their economic development rather than education ; for example, in our operated area in the Kuchinda Tribal Subdivision, in the district of Sambalpur, Orissa, in Kulangjore and Karlakhaman & Khaliamunda tribal villages where the 'Kishan' tribal communities are living, according to their dialogues, in the time of our case studies, they want their own economic development and for that they want support services for their family upliftment first and then only they will think for education. But for tribal women development, if we introduce the socio-economic education and awareness along with the education system from the grass-root level by formation of *Mahila*

Mandals effectively through voluntary sectors and identify real women social workers from the village level and involve them, then it can be successful and the problems can be solved in stepping process. For that it is highly essential for effective women education and training should be given to the tribal women. So, subject to our field experiences, we are observing that the tribal women are utilising their children as the working children for the daily wage purposes and they are concretely thinking that their physical labour is supporting for the economic development of their family. They are not at all giving more attention for future of the girl child and due to their poverty they are not giving stress for education.

So far our field experience is concerned, if we will have to give the special emphasis on the education for the tribal women and to their girl child with innovative ideologies by introducing door education audio visual system with their own languages and local customs, by songs and their own traditional dance and folk media with coinciding the economic development by cultural media then the speedy tribal women development can be achieved, or expected. Secondly, we are sure that if the education is taken care of, the legal rights of the tribal women can be taken care of, law will be taken care of. It is a fact that they will not have to fight for their rights. So far several years of our Independence have already been observed and passed away

till today no step has been taken with clear strategy for the property rights of the tribal women. It is observed that the tribal women have no property right in the family and land rights. Even no priority is given to the tribal women in the society for the decision making in the family. The tribals have their own traditional customs for functioning of the society. They will do what the tribal male dominators will say and they are bound to obey. The tribals who have no son and have only daughters, they are adopting son-in-law from outside called *GHAR JAMAI* and vest the property in the son-in-law's name, but they won't give opportunity of the property right to their daughters. In terms of land records it may be said that their names are written in the land records simply but actually they are not given property rights. So it is extremely needed to change the system by giving property rights to the tribal women and encourage them to share the physical attention to take care and promotion of the development of the family. If rights are given to the tribal women then why they will fight for their rights ? Due to lack of voice and property right of the tribal women the male dominators, their husbands, their father-in-laws are torturing the tribal women by taking drugs and alcoholism like *Handia, Mahua* flower, *deshi* liquor, etc., and the tribal women are suffering in the society till today. Further in the present days we observe that the dowry problem is also spreading in the tribal communities and there is every chance they will be more effected after

some years unless the proper awareness is given to them initially.

Thirdly, due to high rate of illiteracy among the tribal women they cannot get any welfare activities and cannot enrich themselves though the government has provisions for that. So if the government's welfare activities are channelised by flexible ways through voluntary sectors, social activist sectors, to the grass-root level and provisions are made to bring awareness among them through audio-visual system then it will be very easier to change their feelings and attitudes. Here we can suggest :

Domestic Trade should be recognised for the development of the tribal women and it will effectively develop the human resource of the tribal women. The Tribal Women Household Trade should be taken and recognised as the Bankable Schemes which will encourage them to lead their skill and resource can be developed and utilised for better results and achievements.

Priority should be given to the tribal women for undertaking business of their choice - animal keeping, poultry, piggery, dairy, bee keeping, goatery, different types of handicraft products and local craftings on the way of cooperative in each village and G.P.wise. As a result, they will get scope for their self employment and self-survival and it will strengthen the economic condition of the family.

Further for the development of the tribal women it is necessary to give the health education, social services to the tribal women, trainings for the responsible motherhood, child birth, child care, marriage custom, pre-marriage counselling. We are feeling that among tribal women if we implement the one year housewive's education system and train them in behaviourial approach, traditional system, customs, application of medicines, cookings, health care, self health care and child birth care, environmental education, and protection of natural resources, religious thoughts, and on women income-generation, if the emphasis is given to them and also supply the raw materials, technical guidance and market support then the tribal women can be most successful entrepreneurs for the society.

Lastly, it is really the development of tribal women as a part of human resource development and for that we the male sex should be more liberal, vigilant for their upliftment in every sphere of their life. Unless we will give the rights to say her opinions in the decision making of the family as one of the active members, it is impossible to develop her resource, develop her skill, and the family. As such, the society cannot be changed effectively. In the present day when the advanced science, electronics, technology are extending in every minute and second and the women are playing vital role internationally, it is mostly required to give special attention for

the tribal women development and their resource development and every people of the nation should think seriously for this. Unless we develop them from the grass-root level and take it as one of the Mass Movement from each village it is impossible to bring significant changes in their development.

TRIBAL WOMEN : A CASE STUDY OF THE KOLS OF *PATHA* AREA OF MANIKPUR AND MAU BLOCKS OF BANDA DISTRICT (U.P.)

PRAMOD SINGH

Tribals are typical groups common in 10° N and 10° S of the world. The region covers Amazon low lands, coast of Guineas of South America, Congo basin, Guinea coast of Africa, Malaysia, Indonesia, New Guinea, South Phillipines. The main groups of tribes of the world are the following :
(i) Amazon Indian (ii) Congo basin pygmies (iii) Dayaks of Borneo (iv) Samangs of Malaysia (v) Veddas of Sri Lanka (vi) Kubus of Sumatra and (vii) Head Hunters of New Guinea.

Each country has a cultural identity and within this there are large number of sub-cultures slightly varying and someway separately identifiable.

The tribal population of India was 51.02 m in 1981 and about 55 m in 1991. They live in hills of North East, the belt that passes over Central India covering the States of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra which

account for 85 % tribals. Himalayan and plateau region of Uttar Pradesh, Southern States of Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Kerala and the Union Territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands are the other noted tribal habitats of India.

The Study Area

Patha is the local name given to a stretch of largely rocky, undulating and water scarce land which is located in south-eastern part of Uttar Pradesh, spread across the border area of Banda and Allahabad districts. The case study is confined to Manikpur (700 km) and Mau (451 km) Blocks, having the area of 1151 km of Banda district. The tribals living here are known as Kols, identified as the forest people who welcomed Lord Rama during his days of exile from Ayodhya. There are large scale hunger specially in drought years, shortage of drinking water, exploitation by land-lords and contractors, terror of dacoit gangs, misdeeds of police and other corrupt officials. The holdings are small, scattered and dominated by forest. Its height varies from 700 to 900 m and it is dominated by biogenetic groups.

In British period 112 villages were put under the revenue which was quite low. From forest the local populace get fuel, fodders, *Tendu* leaves, herbal plants and minor forest produce.

Climatically, this region has long summer and the temperature goes upto 48° C and the rainfall is between 100 – 125 cm per annum.

According to Ameer Hussein, the Kols are the native of the *Patha* region. They are Dravidian and close with Mundarian of Kolirian group. It is said Shaberi Bhillani, the devotee of Lord Rama, was resident of Godavari in Amarawati district of Maharashtra as defined by Tulsidas in Arankya-Kand of Ramcharit Manas as the Kols are related to Shabari families.

Minerals

Geologically this area is rich in minerals and a lot of mining activity is going on. Stone sheets and boulders for construction works and stone chips for railway lines, roads and other construction works are obtained from these hills. Local influential persons are the legal contractors or illegal miners. They give the work to poor Kols and Harijans on piece-rate basis. They work from morning to night and earn only Rs. 15/- per day.

Cattle

Patha has vast grazing fields and the farmers of this area invite cattle herds in their fields for obtaining valuable manure. This area has rich potentialities for dairy development and one Centre Manikpur town has already emerged as important market of *Khoya.*

Boys from weaker sections are employed as *Charwaha* for grazing the animals belonging to rich families. They are paid Rs. 60/- plus a

little food and clothes or else. In some cases only food in form of grains and clothes are provided. The tribal women are employed to take care of dung and make dung-cakes from this, again at very low wages.

A review of the control over basic local resources reveals that at the top level a small number of landlords enjoy excessive access to land, water, animals and minerals whereas at the lowest level, the Kols and Scheduled Castes have hardly any access to these resources and have to toil to till the land of others, look after the animals of others and break stones on the mines leased in by others.

Instead of attempting such a significant change in the resource use pattern, government efforts of poverty alleviation have been more concerned with loan-cum-subsidy schemes aimed at increasing the income generation capacity of tribal sections. But this has gone to a large failure because it was marred by three factors :

1. Large-scale withdrawal of funds in the name of weaker sections by influential and powerful men, in collusion with officials, while recovery notices are later sent to weaker sections.

2. Kols and Harijans are forced to buy income earning assets from a particular shop or dealer selling substandard goods or animals.

3. Kols, the weaker section of society have to take the government loans which had not benefitted them. In spite of this they are indiscriminately forced at the time of recovery of loan and sometimes their lands are auctioned.

Irrigation and water supply

In *Patha* area wells are difficult to dig and at several places water cannot be obtained even at great depths. Some irrigation dams are built at Maro, Panhai and Bardaha and about over two dozen smaller check dams on the rivulets to provide relatively small scale irrigation to the surrounding fields like at Behala, Gobarhai Mauhariya, Baraha and a series of check dams on Bardaha river.

As per survey people of Samhariya tola (Hamlet) are forced to bring dirty water from *khiddi* tank nearly 3 km away. Bharat Ki Tikuri village has a well but it dries up in summer so they have to walk one km to the nearest source. This is the story of several villages. Low level of water table upto 50 m or even more creates the problem of water scarcity.

There are several springs or small rivulets around which a small structure is built to prevent cattle from drinking the water and to keep the water clean. These water sources are known as *Chauhras*. There are considerable sources

improving the drinking water supply by improving these *Chauhras*, or improving the structures around them.

But there are lot of distorted priorities, corruption, collusion of corrupt officials with influential local landlords-cum-contractors, the ability of the latter to twist development schemes to their own ends, the inequitous socio-economic structure of the area and its domination by some landlords-cum-contractors - all these emerge as important factors behind the failure of investments in irrigation and drinking water schemes to give the expected benefit in this area. These are the factors which have kept the land and the people of *Patha* thirsty despite substantial investments to quench the thirst.

Forests

The forest of *Patha* is a badly needed patch of greenery in the dry plains and hills of Bundelkhand region. For its conservation government had replaced contractors by Forest Corporation in the felling of trees and collection of *Tendu* leaves. In spite of that illegal felling of trees goes on unchecked. Secondly, the local bamboo artisans are not provided at a reasonable rate by forest officials and instead the bamboos are sold in big lots to purchase. Thirdly, the rate of collection of *Tendu* leaves given by Forest Corporation is more in relation to contractors but they are kept waiting for a long time. In 1989 payment worth Rs.15 lakh was pending till

September despite the work had been completed in June.

Pruning of branches is important for the proper growth of *Tendu* leaves. This is being neglected by forest officials. Similarly, the after care of the plucked leaves has not been attended properly.

There are several types of minor forest produce such as auvla, gum and honey and these are auctioned. But the tribals get a very low price, and one person was saying that they are getting Rs. 3/- only for a can containing 15 kg auvla. *Mahua* and *chiraungi* are not yet auctioned. *Mahua* is retained largely for own use and *chiraungi* is sold to the nearby traders after local processing at quite low rate.

There is a lot of scope for development of cottage industries based on minor forest produce. According to Sri Gaya Prasad Gopal over forty types of minor forest produce are available which can be used in various industries and in the preparation of several kinds of medicines.

A wildlife sanctuary established in Ranipur area has created several problems for the villagers of this area. Hundreds of domestic animals have been killed and dozens of persons have been badly mauled and even killed by wild animals. But the victims are generally not given the compensation and even they have been implicated in false cases.

In villages like Garchapa and Mangaavan, thousands of acres of land cultivated by tribals and Harijans are claimed as forest land which has threatened the livelihood of the large number of families of weaker sections.

Dacoit menace

A decade back dacoit problems had started. The most powerful gang at that time was of Gaya Baba. Gaya crossed the state border and surrendered before the police of Madhya Pradesh. But his colleagues continue the dacoities and kidnappings. Dadua became the new leader and police launched a massive hunt for him but did not succeed. The failure is widely attributed to a dacoit-landlord-official-politician nexus. Now other gangs such as Sitaram, Budha Nai, Dharma, Vishvakarma and Mastari are also coming up. The poor households of the Kol tribe have suffered greatly at the hands of the dacoits as well as the police. The dacoits order them at gun point to show paths, bring food and run errands. Sometimes they also molest their women. When police come to make enquiries, they accuse them of giving shelter to dacoits, beat them, ask them to pay bribes and time to time arrest some of them.

In the first week of February, 1989 a tribal woman (who had gone to forest to collect their daily needs) suffered to mass rape and simultaneously several women of Harijanpur

were subjected to the most indignities by a group of dacoits.

They also successfully kidnapped three railway employees in broad daylight near Manikpur town whom the police failed to rescue and their release finally had to be obtained by their families by paying ransom money. Subsequently, the entire loco staff and their family members numbering about 1,000 had to be shifted elsewhere.

Some ex-dacoits or their family members, after serving prison sentences, have emerged in *Panchayat* elections as *Gram Pradhans*, Block *Pramukhs* and also elected to the *Zila Parishad*. Several other candidates have been elected with the support of dacoits. The forest officials have reached a compromise. They buy peace from dacoits by giving them a fixed sum of money which are not noted in their records. Dacoits are also involved in construction of roads. They won't be happy if contract is not given to their own man. In case of otherwise, they beat up the workers and disrupt the work. This has been very much evident in the recent work on Manikpur-Bargarh road.

Comparative study of the life at bottom and top

Here we will discuss the life condition of a landless tribal family of 5 members of Amchur Nerva village. They have built a small hut of mud

and thatch and now it belongs to the forestry department as told by forestry officials and their neighbours. They have a cot, an earthen bin to store *mahua* flowers, a few aluminium utensils and a hearth. In January they were using bed of rice straw. They do not have any quilt or blanket. They cannot sleep for a long time and till late in night keep warming themselves beside a fire. The entire family does not have any woolen cloth and even unable to afford a kerosene lamp because of the difficulty in obtaining kerosene oil. The most important task of the family is to have one full meal every day. Two full meals were beyond their capacity. On average day, the only meal for the family is cooked in the evening. Their major component of meal is cereal rice or roti made of wheat or jowar. It is only rarely that they can afford pulses or vegetable. They work from morning to dusk in the fields of landowners or in the forest cutting of trees or collecting minor produce. For working in agricultural fields a person can get one kilogram food grains, for plucking *tendu* leaves earn upto Rs. 5/- per day and for collecting and selling in the nearest market one can earn Rs. 3/- to Rs.4/- in a day. This is the horrible condition of poor tribal family.

The living style of landlords-cum-contractors (*dadus*) differs from person to person and family to family. Their expenses are on cars, jeeps, motor cycles, televisions, VCRs, marriages, dowries and ceremonies. They have houses in

Markundi, Manikpur, Satna and even in Allahabad apart from the property they have in villages. They have vast amount of money for litigation. Many of them own licensed as well as unlicensed firearms and have links with dacoits and other criminals and make use of their services to settle scores with their enemies. These criminals were used to bring forced labour at cheap rates for forest work. When forest contractors were stopped, these criminals suddenly found themselves without work. Familiar with forest life, they eventually formed dacoit gangs or joined dacoit groups of others. Despite enormous wealth their families experience lot of distress. There are frequent quarrels with families. Several men from these families have their eyes on women from tribal sections. Many landlords openly keep women from weaker sections as their mistress and after using them for some years they discard them and may select a new mistress.

Society of the Kols

The society of the Kols is matriarchal. The women are more powerful in the family than males. Their main activities are labourers, fuels, bamboos, minor forest produce and *tendu* leaves collection. The work of fuelwood collection, packing is of male and its selling responsibility goes to Kolines. The colour of the Kolines is mostly dark and body is tough.

They have got the unique culture of

marriage. At the time of marriage Kolines dance and male Kols beat the *Dhol* and drums. Their folk songs are of a peculiar type and we can listen only *Ho-Ho-Ho Rama-O-Rama-Ho.* They sing *Devgujja, Dadara, Kolihori, Paharaha, Rai* and *Barahmasi.* Brahmans conduct the marriage. In case, Brahman is not available, both bride and bridegroom's fathers shake the *mandap* and bridegroom's head is coloured by turmeric and clapping is done to complete the ceremony. In marriage generally one *thali* and one *lota* are given and sometimes goat or calf is offered. After marriage bride and bridegroom settle their own house.

The Kols are economically very poor and they mostly get meal single time in a day. Only on festivals like *Diwali, Holi, Ram Navami* they try to take jowar, bajara, salt and *chatni.*

The Kol ladies are exploited by *zamindars,* dacoits, forest personnels, police, *dadus,* etc. They sing songs which convey the meaning *'Why you have sent me to work in higher class family ? They have looted everything by closing the door.'*

The philosophy of bonded labour is still continuing in the area. The Kolines always have the fear psychosis from gangsters, dacoits, *Mahajans* and landlords. Once Swami Agniwesh, the leader of Badhua Mukti Morcha has told that still *Patha* is under bonded-labour.

The main agencies working in the development of *Patha* region are :

(1) ***Akhil Bharatiya Samaj Sewa Sansthan***

This *Sansthan* is working under the auspices of Council for Advancement of Rural Technology under the guidance of a social worker Sri Gaya Prasad Gopal since 1978 in Manikpur and from 1990 in Mau blocks. They have done a considerable work in the following fields :

(a) Land levelling, organic composting, freedom for bonded labourers, tribal organisation, distribution of land to the poorest people, construction of wells, handpumps, ten tanks such as Ravidas, Sukhrampur, Chulhi, Mazhi, Shankar, Saledar, Nibiha, Baba, Lakhanpur, Dadri tanks and Tikuri checkdam.

(b) Development of brotherhood amongst Kols.

(c) To provide information to district officials about the problems of Kols and solution to them.

(2) ***Mahila Samakhya***

The Ministry of Human Resource, New Delhi for the welfare of Kolines has started its works in Manikpur block in 1988-89 and from March, 1991 the work of *Mahila Shamakhya* has gone to whole Banda district. In April, 1991 *Mahila Samakhya* becomes an independent entity and

it is looked by ladies only. This institution has made women conscious about their fundamental rights, education and economic development such as training of leaf plate making, tasser and for non-formal education. Hundred centres were established.

The main objective behind the *Mahila Samakhya* is to make the tribal women self-reliant to fight for their rights and duties towards socio-political and economic development. Formerly, when the *Mahila Samakhya* personnels visited the villages, the tribal women were frightened and having the idea that they must have come for tubectomy or debt collection and they bluntly informed that they had no time. After our long approach and day-to-day and door-to-door contact and meeting, they felt that we are really interested for their welfare. The *Samakhya* personnels listen to their problems in every month and suggest an approach to solve their family problems by themselves. In case the problem is serious then it will go to supervisor of 10 (ten) villages. After that if there is no solution then it comes to *Mahila Samakhya* office. Three years back the tribal women who were frustrated due to their poverty and exploitation by *zamindars*, dacoits and police officials are now able to challenge their mischievous acts. There are certain examples such as :

(a) A 13 year Kol girl of Bahilpura was raped

by one constable in her house. She cried and so many village people came to rescue her and for this heinous crime tribal ladies made a procession and they forced to arrest the constable and got success.

(b) In a family, both husband and wife were beaten by dacoits and nobody was ready to write the complaint in Police *Thana*. Then they made a procession upto Circle Officer, Karvi. After that the police lodged the complaint and also helped in getting medical and other facilities.

(c) The tribal women (called as *Shakhi*) became very conscious and they started trying to solve their own problems. Due to their illiteracy, they were regularly exploited by contractors, *Dadus* and officials. They then decided to read and write. In a batch of 60 *Sakhia*, 50 can do their signature and 10 can read and write. After the demand from other villages *Mahila Samakhya* had started educational activites in other villages.

(d) The educational guide is known as *Saheli* and the centre is known as *Sumti Shala* which is not having any constructed house. *Shala* is mostly a place prepared by cow-dung beneath the tree or in front of the house of some one. Here, *Saheli* writes on the floor or stone slab by *Chuhi* or lime and *Shakhi* try to copy them. They read and write in such way :

Ka for *Kulhadi* not *Kamal*
Da for *Dadu* not *Davat*
Aa for *Arhar* not *Anar*

Shakhia have also prepared a detailed chart on the basis of aforesaid statement.

(e) The *Patha* region is suffering from chronic water scarcity and the *Shakhia* of *Patha* are facing lot of problems in collecting water from distant places. To solve the water problem, they decided to learn the process of boring of handpumps and its repairing work. After talk with UNICEF, a two-day workshop was organised. Due to their strong desire to learn, a training programme of 10 days was also organised. Seventeen *Sakhia* took the training in October, 1991. Moreover, they organised several meetings on how to keep the water clean along the pump area, and how to repair the pumps. A committee of five members of *Shahelies* was formed to look after. Oil, greese for the repair of the pumps were provided. Simultaneously, within 10 days they repaired 23 pumps and converted 6 pumps of India mark II into India mark III.

(f) Emphasis was given on traditional homely cure massage, herbal medicine. A workshop was organised on this matter and confidence was developed in them.

(g) Women labourers were formerly getting 1.5 kg food grains only per day. Due to their organisation they are now getting 3 kg food grains per day. For obtaining proper wages they sat in group on *Dharna* and demanded that they won't work till they received proper wage.

(h) For awareness and to create interest in different commodities songs, role play, drama and *kathputli* by vegetables available in local areas were conducted.

(i) Several meetings were organised in the office of BDO, SDM and ADM along with the *Sakhia* of Manikpur and Tendwari on land grabbing, old men, widow pensions and disabled. *Shakhia* started collecting forms from villagers and took solutions from the officials. This was really a fantastic change for the women who were not able to talk to any person , had started fighting with the officials.

(j) Once *Shahelies* of villages expressed their desire to learn about certain laws of land. As such, a four-day legal workshop was organised for their benefit.

(k) The ladies face several problems in their life. They need proper care in pregnancy, proper injection, proper delivery and after delivery immunisation, etc. The nurses were not regularly visiting the villages. *Sahelies* went to their offices and informed that they would help in their work and also pointed out that they were using the same needle for several children and women. They further told that they would help them to boil the needle each time and in such way, they were able to make the immunisation work very successful.

(l) Once in a family the husband beat his wife severely and as a result, she died. To make it a case of suicide, he threw away the body on the railway line. Then all the *Sahelies* and *Shakhia* made a procession to Manikpur *Thana* and they succeeded in arresting the husband.

This is, in brief, the story of the work of *Mahila Shamakhya*. Besides, the following measures may be undertaken :

(i) Proper implementation of land reforms, control on illegal encroachment by landlords.
(ii) Ban on felling of green trees and bamboos.
(iii) Restructuring the collection of all minor forest produce.
(iv) Setting up cottage industries based on bamboo, herbal plants, animal skins and other locally available materials.
(v) Mining leases to be given to genuine cooperatives of the Kols and weaker families.
(vi) Minor irrigation schemes to be developed for irrigating the fields of small farmers.
(vii) To solve drinking water problem more pumps and new wells to be installed and adequate tankers should be provided in summer months.
(viii) Strong steps should be taken to stop the dacoit menace and special efforts for protection of women.
(ix) Proper rehabilitation of bonded labourers.
(x) Proper educational facilities to be made for the welfare of the downtrodden.

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The author is thankful to Sri Mathura Prasad Mishra, a social worker of Akhil Bharatiya Samaj Seva Sansthan, Manikpur, Ashwani Kumar Srivastva and Miss Arti Srivastva, reference person of *Mahila Shamakhya* Karvi, Banda in providing help and information for completing the paper.

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ROLE AND STATUS OF THE TRIBAL WOMEN IN THEIR SOCIETIES THROUGH AGES

NAYAN CHAND HEMBRAM

A society is a sweet composition of men and women. The growth of the society in all aspects of living solely depends upon the proportionate sincere efforts of man and woman. The well advanced societies contribute to the prosperity and progress of the nation to demand its legitimate position in the competitive world of development. So, when we are talking of much keen contest with other developing or developed nations of the world in the field of science and technology with an apprehension that modern scientific approach in every sector of our developmental plans would ensure better peace and progress, we have failed to mobilise the vast potential resource remained unutilized through ages by confining itself behind the screen in the so-called tradition bound society, i.e., the women resource, the under current power of the society which can deliver high degree of progress if properly utilised and special attention is paid by all concerned thinking of rapid changes of the societies. The history of India is full of examples as regards the dedication, sacrifice and services rendered by the Indian women for the interest of country and nation when they are given right position with honour.

In the present day of up-to-date planning, if somebody looks into the welfare of the women and examines their status in the democratic based society, one is to be harassed and shocked that nothing has been done to them by Individuals/Institutions i.e., officials/non-officials in order to share the responsibility to build up strong modern India. Even the women from non tribal societies where education has visibly entered are also not free from the clutches of suppression in the conservative social followings. Only we can take the sigh of relief just for eyewashing when we find that some women have, of late, gradually appeared in every field of administration and are participating equally in all spheres of works with men. The planners may be pleased with the achievement that after 45 years of independence a national level commission, i.e., Women Commission of India has been constituted by the Govt.of India, to safeguard the interest of women in our country.

So, when the position of India itself is so discouraging, the status of tribal women living in the interior hilly-forestry areas out of the communication link from the ongoing modern trend of living is out of the attention of the planners. The Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes has no doubt undertaken a praiseworthy task by organising such national seminar on *Tribal Women and Development.* The problems and situations of

tribal women are completely different, peculiar and need close study while formulating any programme for them.

Role and status of tribal women is dominating – though not recognised in their tradition bound society. The following main features can give clear vision about their role and status. They are :
1) Social 2) Cultural 3) Traditional 4) Economical 5) Educational

1) Social : The tribal women play a vital role in preserving the social values prescribed and followed since unknown periods by the tribal communities. Hospitality, sincerity, affectionate dealings and obedi-ence to superiors are the very rare qualities that the tribal woman gives priority in social living. Voluntary cooperation among each other in distress and tragedy, commitment of words and open hearted exchange of feeling and deep affinity to social customs in ceremonies and festivals are the special roles that the tribal woman pays personal honour to safeguard. The nature of sacrifice for others in the family and community is very inspiring among tribal women. Without any rest and break the object of the tribal woman is to see the society in peace within limited resources that they can afford according to their strength as they are not habituated in complicated nature of social living.

But, in return to the above vast role and

responsibility that the tribal women play in establishing a sound social base, they are denied of social justice in enjoying a status of liberty like expression of views, imposition of decisions, change of the mode of living and sharing of experiences, etc., though the tribal women are not inferior in any comparison with men in the field of all achievements. Restrictions are imposed upon her which she is bound to follow. She has got no options except to carry on the orders of the head of family. In simple term she wins the race but reward goes to somebody and she kills the giant but credit is not her's. Only one status tribal women enjoy is the motherly status through which she influences the family and society. Otherwise she is always victimised in the process of stronger supersedes the weaker.

However, because of the crucial role she plays in and outside the family for the society the rate of victimisation is very low in modern times as both man and woman exclusively depend with each other to lead a life of peace. The rate of divorce is very much in existence among some tribal communities because of the lack of status allowed to tribal women. Though there is provision of remarriage or self-living still it happens very rarely due to the bad social taboos prevailing among the tribals.

2) Cultural : The only identification that the tribals bear is the rich cultural heritages that

they have possessed through ages in spite of several disadvantages caused by non tribals who usually go to such tribal pockets for economic exploitation. Thanks to the nature based culture-loving tribals that though they have been economically exploited by the outsiders, they have not surrendered the cultural spirit.

In cultural field also the tribal women accept major task to ensure sound culture. As tribal communities mainly depend on agriculture and forest produces, the songs and dances are classified according to various seasons and different stages of farming crops. The tribal women are very hard working. They go to forest for collection of forest produces from dawn to dusk. There are specia-lised agricultural works in the field that the tribal women do better and for such heavy work during extreme summer or rain they are never found in panic or tiredness due to their close cultural ties with songs. In tribal dominating areas one can hear the melodious song of tribal women; coming out of the thickly dense forest and hills. In the heavy summer/rain the working tribal women in the field singing the traditional songs are the common sight. The songs are of ancient nature based on the unwritten historical, mythological, geographical and social backgrounds. The tribal women have kept living these traditional songs from generation to generation due to their cultural affinity. Similarly, in the evening, let there be work for tomorrow or not, there may

not be food to eat but to relax from the poverty ridden sorrow they come together for dance. Ceremonies and festivals are celebrated as per the growth of crops in the fields which have the reflection in tribal culture. During religious festivals the tribal women perform particular occasional songs and dances meant for them.

The role of tribal women in promoting cultural identity is equal with men. Her contribution is at least recognised in cultural field and as such, the tribal women enjoy equal status with men when there is a question of cultural bindings.

3) Traditional : The tribal communities are tradition–oriented societies which the tribals have honoured with much care to protect it. The tribal women are the custodian to keep the traditional values of the society that is reflected in their culture also. The tribal culture and traditions have eternal links to give the meaning more perfect in combination of the two. In certain traditional lines the role of tribal women is totally independent. It is a common sight in interior tribal villages where the traditional arts originated from the natural surroundings are painted and decorated by the tribal women. The traditional ornaments, dresses, etc., once again introduce them as the true lover of tradition. The well cleaned floor area and the attractive wall paintings of tribal women is nothing but the tempo of obligation of the tribal women to

their tradition. The tribal women have the credit in following the tradition of 'no dowry' and have the sense of morality of self-dependence."

In the name of traditions, of course, there are some superstitions and bad social taboos that have caused concern for the tribal women. Otherwise, the status of the tribal women in the tradition-bound society is well placed, because without their care some good traditions might have vanished with the introduction of modern living.

4) Economical : The role of tribal women in the field of economy is so important that their society also recognises it with due considera tion. The economic conditions of tribals are very pathetic through ages. So many factors are responsible for such financial sufferings of the tribals right from geographical locations that they live to acute illiteracy, etc. So just to live on, both man and woman are to work hard in any condition with low wages or result. Nature has physically built them so strong that they are very hard working in any situation or environment.

Forest products' collection and field agricultural works as labourer are the main basic sources of income for these tribals. The tribal women never sit idle inside the home waiting for the male members' income to take bread. With the usual domestic works she undertakes extra hard work along with the man to prove

her role in generating the family income. Her income is not considered as the supplementary one but is considered as the main earning member of the family/society. There was a time perhaps, only for such reasons tribal men were found having more than one wife because of the earning attitude of the tribal women. The popular slogan of *"Jiyo aur Jine Do"* (Live and let others to live) is best answered by the tribal women through their hard work. Even in the industrial-urban areas tribal women are found equally working with men though they get something less wages. In the local market tribal women are seen selling the forest or agricultural products though they do not know how to count the money/coins. To be more practical one can find the extreme old tribal women making mats, ropes of grasses, etc., sitting on the corner of the *veranda*. Therefore, in the financial front the tribal women's role cannot be overlooked for simple reason that the women are physically weak to undertake hard work.

What is more disappointing is the status that the tribal women enjoy in any field/sector already mentioned earlier in their societies through ages. The requirements of the tribal women may be more to live like a cultured woman but their requirements are minimised by the male members of the society. Very often there is mismanagement of the scanty income that they gather through so much of hardship. The income is spent without their consent just

for drinking alcohol or for amusements only by the male members of the society. The tribal women are deprived of share and justice in economic field though they accept the major role to raise income in the family.

5) Educational : In the field of education the tribal women have nothing to do with as they are too ignorant and do not understand the fruits and prosperity of education. Even the tribal men of the society are also not so keen towards educational progress. Though there is very hue and cry to popularise modern education it has failed to get suitable response from the tribal societies. The tribal lover research scholars are trying hard to understand the reasons of non response and in course of studying the problems of tribal women in educational fields, they have suggested some measures for execution by the Government but these also failed due to lack of sincere efforts.

Of course, only the education could have well determined the status of tribal women in their societies and they could have played a double role to develop the economy as the tribal women are very daring and brave and the society might have been guided in right direction towards progress.

Of late, some tribal women have come up in the field of education, but their number is so poor that the presence is not felt by the society.

Again, it is very regrettable to mention that the tribal women getting higher education crossing all these hurdles and bars of the society are loosing importance in their community rather to be a source of inspiration because of the wrong conviction of the tribal society towards education.

Conclusion

It has been observed from the above brief study that the tribal women have been deprived of social justice through ages in their respective societies in spite of discharging great responsibilities that contribute to the well-being of the society. The administrators and planners are to take precautionary measures while introducing any programme for their welfare. I would like to put the following suggestions for remedies of the tribal women in a bid to bring them to the mainstream of the national life :

1) All the good social practices in existence among the tribal communities should not be disturbed in the name of civilisation. More importance is to be attached in educational syllabus to preserve their valuable characters. To give right status means to remove the wrong social followings through propagation, motivation and convincing approach. The official and non official institutions should work in a spirit of one among them, by involving them (tribal) in

planning process and their expression, feelings and views must be taken into consideration to find out the solution method.

2) The rich cultural heritage they preserve is to be encouraged. A deep study by research scholars and institutions on the *tribal women* and *culture* would give new inventions that may prosper the modern culture. Cultural institutions by the official and non official agencies are to be formed taking the tribal men and women to highlight their deep cultural values.

3) The traditional arts, paintings, decorations, musical instruments and ornaments used by the tribal women are to be carefully preserved through intensive collection as so many traditional belongings are going to be vanished with the emergence of modern fashion. The collection of traditional arts must be brought to the public notice through organising exhibitions and competitions among tribal women. The traditional herbal medicines that the tribal people practise should be studied for public interest as they are very useful and are of high qualities giving wonderful results. Tribals have learned the use of such herbal medicines through long process of experiments / experiences at the cost of countless lives.

The superstition, blind faith and wrong

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The superstition, blind faith and wrong

social taboos are to be eradicated through introduction of demonstrative modern action of science and technology. Special attention is to be paid to give them free status in removing these social evils that cause concern for them.

4) The economical status of the tribal women is to be properly rewarded with good value according to their hard work. Economical exploitation by the outsiders must be stopped through enactment of powerful laws by the Government. The unskilled labour that the tribal women contribute needs to be properly trained in organised manner so as to enable them to earn good income. Their simplicity is mainly responsible for poverty and target of exploitation. It is painful to find in news media that the tribal women are exported abroad for illegal profession and are put in bad hygienic environment even in our country also. All concerned must pay constructive attention to stop it.

The agricultural and forest produces collected by the tribal women are to be purchased in fair prices through trusted official/ non official agencies. There should not be any business venture of profit while buying commodities from the tribal women and such sincere efforts would give them sound economical status.

5) Special syllabus should be designed with a clear reflection of their cultural background,

tradition, geographical environments and good social habits as modern education has failed to attract them in spite of hard efforts by the official/non official sectors. As the tribal women are non separable from their own favourite social/cultural surroun-dings, the residential schools should be set up in their localities putting these above elements in order. As poverty is the main factor for their illiteracy Government must undertake integrated programmes covering all groups of tribal people as the tribal family itself is depending with one another to live a daily life.

I am very sure that if we execute the welfare measures for tribal women with committed approach understanding their above problems, they can play very remarkable role in establishing an advanced nation and could take their justified status in their societies in future.

BOKSA & THARU TRIBES IN U.P. HIMALAYAN FOOTHILL BELT : ROLE & STATUS OF WOMEN IN THEIR SOCIETY

MAN SINGH RAWAT
SHASHI PRABHA RAWAT

Boksa and Tharu tribes are inhabiting the Bhabar and Tarai areas of the Himalayan belt of Uttar Pradesh. At the adjoining of hills and plains the whole area is relatively hot and malaria-prone. In the eastern part in Pilibhit and Nainital districts it is known as Tarai (marshy ground) area, in the central part in Bijnor and Garhwal districts it is known as Bhabar (dryland) area and in the western part in Dehradun district it is known as river *ghati* area. A few years back this whole 250 km long and about 20 to 40 km wide belt from east to west, was the permanent resort of malaria and such other diseases. These tribals were the only inhabitants of this region. Lions, tigers, elephants, horndeer, whitefeeted antelope, peacock and a number of other wild animals and birds were the permanent enemies of the crops, animals and human beings.

Both the Boksa and Tharu are very simple and harmless people. They like to be away from any type of quarrel and they are habituated to pains and hardships. The male members are

more submissive, painstaking and hardworking. Women are relatively easygoing, violent and behesting.

Boksa and Tharu are said to be originated from the Rajputana soldiers. It was at the time when Mughal pressure in India was increasing, the Rajputs of Rajasthan resisted it to their outmost. Sometimes they would win while at some occasions they would lose. Those days the high family Rajput wife would burn alive with the dead body of her husband on his pyre. At moments when the handful of soldiers fighting against the enemy at their best, they would send their wives to the dense forests for safety from the clutches of enemy with some male guards. Here they were quite secluded from the rest of the society. When the days went on, their women formed their families with those guards and so these Boksa and Tharu both are their progenies. The place of their women remained superior to men. These women are the queens in their families. Their husbands take good care of their wives and try to make them comfortable. The girls are treated as deity both at their father's as well as father-in-law's place. Though with the progress of time they are living in great poverty, even then they are self-satisfied and their womenfolk are relatively comfortable.

Being a hill area Garhwal and Nainital have scarcity of fertile land whereas the foothill land is more fertile. With the increasing

population pressure on land the non tribals have been taking over their land, leaving them landless. The hardworking refugees from Punjab have also forcibly acquitted their land.

The Tharu of Nainital and Pilibhit districts are now trying to follow the non tribals on their fields and as such, their children are trying to take lead but the Boksas in all these districts are still very far from other residents. Their condition is very miserable.

Boksa and Tharu women keep their house and courtyard very neat and clean. Their pots are always shining. They feel proud of it. In spite of their poor financial condition they try to put on fine clothes. However, the males are careless about their clothes. The males are served food in the portico of their huts. They are not allowed in their kitchen.

Boksa and Tharu girls have good saying in matters of their marriage. Their consent is essential. Without it the marriage cannot take place. Even after marriage if the bride is not satisfied at her father-in-law's place, she will come to her maternal home with any pretext and will not go back. In the early period there is much possibility of any marriage relations to be broken down. So they try to keep the bride pleased and gain her favour.

In every society, usually, it is a tradition

that the groom is of a better social and financial footing than the bride's father, whereas in this society the groom has a thin footing. More often he is seen working in the father-in-law's field and house. He has to show his skill and ability in ploughing, fencing and hut-making. He works there for some months and sometimes for 2-3 years before he obtains final consent.

The Tharu are now comparatively much enlightened. Some of their young people are holding posts in government service after their education. They have begun taking advantages by the concessions granted by the government. But the Boksa are still very shy. Their proportion of literacy and education is very low and the women's education is hopelessly low. Children enjoy full freedom in this society. In a way they are over pampered. It is a very difficult job for them to go to school ; to be punctual, obedient and disciplined. The parents too cannot insist them for a particular work. Because girl child is given more freedom to their fancy. They can seldom stay at school. The only way to attract them is through games, songs and amusement-informal education and Balwadi where the children can be assembled in a common courtyard within the village, and then in the residential schools, especially for girls, where the favourable atmosphere to their liking should be provided. Mentally, these children have very high grasping power. Being given equal opportunity and educational background, they might have proved to be the best students. This we have

experienced that girls are still ahead of boys and they are more sharp. This they always show in their family life as well. Women go to *bazar* along with their husbands, but they make the purchases themselves. They say that men are usually cheated and they cannot bargain. The hawkers sell their articles in the villages. The women only are their purchasers. Their accounting is correct. Unfortunately their wit is not utilised. If opportunities are given, they can prove to be very useful to the society.

In spite of the legal safeguards, the recent trend of the hunger for land has deprived most of them of their land. Now it does not look possible to get that back. Thus, their natural occupation is lost. On the other hand, without education or any other skill, they live on meagre uncertain unskilled labour. As a result, they are leading very miserable life.

No doubt, the government is trying to improve their lot. But either due to lack of insight or due to selfish and corrupt political motives, all the efforts are spoiling the country's resources to no one's gain. The policy of free grant and loan has only ruined them to the utmost. They are now the puppet for the government alms. Instead, if the government really wants to do some good to them, the following measures may be adopted :

(1) Proper facilities for their education through

residential schools should be given to their children.

(2) Opportunities for work should be provided to them and

(3 Compulsory saving from their daily or periodical earning should be initiated to them.

PROGRESS OF TRIBAL FEMALES – A CASE OF PARADOX

R. GUPTA

Scheduled tribes, the weakest section of our population constitute 7.8 per cent of the total Indian population. Special provision has been made in the article 46 of our Indian Constitution to promote with special care the economic and educational interests of this weaker section. From the First Five Year Plan special attention was given for the development of this weaker section and to accelerate the growth of development, different schemes have been implemented with a view to improve the socio-economic development and to protect this section from all sorts of exploitation by integrating them with the mainstream of general mass. The tribal situation in relation to their problems and programmes implemented for their development was reviewed on the eve of the Fifth Five Year Plan Period when the concept of Tribal Sub-plan strategy was evolved. With the twofold objectives of socio-economic development and protection of the tribals from exploitation the strategy of Sub-plan is continuing during the successive plan periods.

Attempt has been made in this paper to assess the nature and extent of achievements

as well as the existing gaps in the socio-economic sphere (population, literacy, education, occupation) among the scheduled tribe females in relation to the females of non-scheduled communities and total population of West Bengal. To present an overall profile, the situation has been examined from different angles – population and time.

As per 1981 Census the total population of West Bengal is 5,45,80, 647, the males constituting 52.32 per cent (2,85,60,901) and the females 47.68 per cent showing a difference of 4.64 point between the sexes whereas the scheduled tribe females cover 49.22 per cent (15,11,384) against 50.78 per cent (15,59,288) of the males with 1.56 point difference only. Among the non-scheduled population (excluding Scheduled Castes and Tribes from the total population) the percentage of share between the sexes is 52.55 (2,07,69,818) : 47.45 (1,87,39,389) revealing thereby a difference of 5.10 point. The earlier decade too (i.e., during 1961 and 1971) shows similar type of trend amongst different sectors of population as would be visualised from Table I below :

Table I

Sexwise percentage distribution of population during different decades

Sector	Year								
	1961			1971			1981		
	M	F	D	M	F	D	M	F	D
Scheduled tribe	50.78	49.22	1.56	51.14	48.86	2.28	50.78	49.22	1.56
Non-scheduled communities (excluding scheduled castes & tribes)	53.73	46.27	7.46	53.29	46.71	6.58	52.55	47.45	5.10
Total pop.	53.25	46.75	6.50	52.89	47.11	5.78	52.32	47.68	4.64

During 20 years (i.e., 1961- 1981) the tribal females show an increase of 49.49 per cent against 55.87 per cent of females of non-scheduled communities and 59.36 per cent of the total population. Here it may be mentioned that in almost all the decades (excepting 1971-81 when the non-scheduled communities had slightly lower growth rate) the scheduled tribe females remained at the lowest level in relation to growth of different sectors of the population.

With the above demographic trends in mind, let us now examine the growth pattern in the field of literacy, education and participation in different categories of occupations during different decades amongst the scheduled tribe females in comparison to females of other sectors of population.

Table II

Extent of variation of literates during different decades

Category	Percentage of Variation		
	1961-71	1971-81	1961-81
Scheduled tribes	114.56	98.24	325.24
Non-scheduled communities	63.34	64.81	165.74
Total population	68.77	68.26	183.98

The scheduled tribe females recorded higher growth rate in all the decades in respect of 'Literacy' in comparison to non-scheduled population as well as total population. 'Literacy' amongst the scheduled tribe females has increased manifold, i.e., 325.24 per cent during 1961-81 period against 165.74 per cent of the non-scheduled population and 183.98 per cent of the total population. On the other hand, the rate of increase amongst the scheduled tribe males during 1961-71 is 60.64%, in 1971-81, 75.79%, between 1961-81, 182.39% which are lower than the rates of increase recorded for the scheduled tribe females.

Table III reveals that the scheduled tribes in general are lagging far behind the achievement of the other sectors of population all through 1961-81 decades. The scheduled tribes also show quite low rate of increase of literates amongst them in comparison to other sectors in relation to total population, males and females. The

percentage of literates among the total scheduled tribe population was 6.55 during 1961, that almost doubled (13.21) in 1981, thereby recording an increase of 6.66% in twenty years. Compared to this, male literates among scheduled tribes show an increase of 9.96%, their percentage of literates in 1961 being 11.20 and 21.16 in 1981. In contrast the progress amongst the tribal females is rather poor, their increase between 1961-81 is only to the extent of 3.21 point. In 1961, 1.80% of tribal females were literate against 5.01% in 1981. Between the females of the non-scheduled communities and scheduled tribes the difference in 1961 was 19.84 point which increased to 32.37 point in 1981. The gap between the scheduled tribe females and the total females of all the sectors (including scheduled tribe) was to the tune of 15.18 point in 1961 which increased to 25.24 in 1981.

The scheduled tribe females were lagging far behind their male counterpart by 9.40 point in 1961, the gap expanded to the level of 11.40 point in 1971 and extended to 16.15 in 1981, thereby revealing a gradual increasing trend of difference between the sexes.

So far as growth of population is concerned, it has already been noticed that during 1961-81, amongst the scheduled tribes in general and the scheduled tribe females in

Table III

Percentage distribution of literates during different decades

Sector	Total			Difference	Male			Difference
	1961	1971	1981	1961-1961	1981	1971	1981	1961 1981
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*
Scheduled tribe	6.55	8.92	13.21	6.66	11.20	14.49	21.16	9.96
Non-scheduled communities	35.24	31.19	48.12	12.88	46.94	49.33	57.82	10.88
All communities	29.28	33.20	40.94	11.66	40.08	42.81	50.67	10.59

Female			Difference
1961	1971	1981	1961-1981
10	*11*	*12*	*13*
1.80	3.09	5.01	3.21
21.64	27.62	37.38	15.74
16.98	20.37	30.25	13.27

particular the rate of increase is quite low in comparison to the degree of growth amongst other sectors of population. On the other hand, in the field of literacy, the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes in general and the females in particular have shown a very high degree of growth in comparison to non-scheduled and total population. It is a bare fact that the literary position amongst the scheduled tribe females is not at all satisfactory. To bridge up the prevailing

gap in between the levels of achievements of different sectors of population some well thought action programme with additional dosage for ensuring further accelerated growth rate is to be worked out so that the scheduled tribe females may reach the level of their males as quickly as possible and gradually pick up the pace of progress of the females of the non-scheduled communities within a well specified period.

The following table provides a comparative picture of levels of achievement of males of different sectors which would be helpful later on in assessing the position of females in this respect.

Table IV

Coverage of population and literates among Males and Females during different decades

Sector	P.C. of population to total population					
	1961		1971		1981	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*	*7*
Scheduled Tribe	5.61	6.19	5.53	5.93	5.46	5.81
Non-scheduled communities	75.05	73.64	74.95	73.76	72.72	72.07

P.C. of literates to total literates					
1961		1971		1981	
M	F	M	F	M	F
8	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*
1.57	0.64	1.87	0.82	2.28	0.96
87.91	93.89	86.37	90.86	82.98	89.00

The scheduled tribe males show a decreasing trend in respect of population coverage in between the decades but increasing trend in the coverage of literates.

Though the scheduled tribe females have shown a decreasing trend in the population coverage and increasing trend in the coverage of literates, there is a necessity of a balanced growth for bridging up the prevailing gap with other sectors of population.

Table V

Coverage of population and literates in total population

Sector	P.C. of population of different sectors to total population			P.C. of literates of different sectors to total literates		
	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981
Scheduled tribe	5.88	5.72	5.62	1.32	1.54	1.81
Non-scheduled communities	74.39	74.38	72.39	89.58	87.80	86.10

On an examination of the total enrolment of scheduled tribe students from Primary Stage to Higher Secondary Stage during 1985-86, it is found that the scheduled tribe girls share 3.03% of the total girl students and the scheduled tribe boys 3.32% of the total boy students. The scheduled tribe students in general cover 3.20% of the total students.

Let us now examine the nature and extent of participation of scheduled tribes in different industrial categories of occupations for getting an idea about their economic condition.

The following table shows the coverage of population and workers mainly scheduled tribes and non-scheduled communities among different sectors.

Table VI

Coverage of population and workers (Main and Marginal) among different sectors.

Sector	P.C. of coverage of population to total population (1981)			P.C. of coverage of workers to total workers (1981)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Scheduled tribe	5.46	5.81	5.62	6.10	26.68	8.72
Non-scheduled communities	72.72	72.02	72.39	71.14	48.21	68.23

The population coverage of scheduled tribe is 5.62% against their share of workers of 8.72%. It is rather fascinating to note that the scheduled tribe females have shared 20.87 point of workers above their population coverage, whereas for the scheduled tribe males the difference is to the extent of 0.64 point only. But in case of non-scheduled communities the coverage of workers is quite less than their population coverage. Further, the females of the non-scheduled communities present an opposite picture to that

of the scheduled tribe females. It has already been seen that the scheduled tribe female workers are 20.87 point above their population coverage. On the contrary, non-scheduled female workers are below 23.81 point of their population coverage. This indicates that the extent of participation of the scheduled tribe females in different categories of occupations is greater than the female population of the other sectors, even higher than their own male counterpart.

Among the main workers of the scheduled tribe females about 79% are engaged in agricultural sectors, the cultivators sharing 18.44% and agricultural labourers 60.60%, whereas the females of the non-scheduled communities present quite an opposite picture. Among their main workers 15.20% are cultivators and the agricultural labourers share only 14.91%. In other words, more than 3/4th of the female workers of the scheduled tribes are engaged in agricultural sectors. In the household industry 1.37% of the female workers of the scheduled tribes are engaged against 11.86% of the non-scheduled communities. The existing situation thus reveals that when the female workers of scheduled tribes are engaged mainly in the primary sector, the females of the non-scheduled communities fall within the fold of the secondary and tertiary sectors of occupations.

Table VII reveals that the coverage of the scheduled tribe female workers is as high as 29.05% against their population coverage of 5.81% only, the difference being 23.24%. In the case of the females of the non-scheduled communities the picture is diametrically opposite. They share 45.73% of the total female workers against 72.02% female population, thereby showing a gap of 26.29 point. Further, when the scheduled tribe males share 6% of the total male workers, almost at par with their population coverage, the share of workers by the scheduled tribe females is six times to their population coverage. Of the total female agricultural labourers of the State, the scheduled tribe females share 44.63% as against 17.28% of the females belonging to non-scheduled communities. The extent of share of agricultural labourers amongst the females of the non-scheduled communities is far below their population coverage, whereas it is about eight times in the case of the scheduled tribes.

Table VII

Percentage distribution of workers in different categories of occupations

Sector	Main workers			Cultivators		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
	1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
Scheduled tribe	6.00	29.05	8.26	7.19	36.49	8.60
Non-scheduled communities	71.25	45.73	68.75	69.12	47.29	68.07

Agricultural Labourers •••			Household Industry		
M	F	T	M.	F	T
7	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*
10.77	44.63	15.96	1.63	5.31	2.39
50.21	17.28	45.17	80.00	72.57	78.46

In the preceding pages discussions have been centred around the different demographic aspects of the scheduled tribe females. Further, it provides a comprehensive picture of their nature and extent of achievements as well as the range of existing gaps in their socio-economic sphere (population, literacy, education, occupation) in relation to scheduled tribe females and their non-scheduled counterpart.

On analysing the available data a marked contradiction has been noticed in relation to their achievement and trend of progress. There is a decreasing trend in the growth of population of scheduled tribe females, the rate of increase of literates is comparatively higher among them and their high rate of participation in the economic activities indicate that they should enjoy a better socio-economic life in comparison to females of non-scheduled communities who have high rate of population growth, low growth rate of literates, less participation in economic activities. But the field situation does not reflect the same picture. There still remains a wide gap in relation to the socio-economic achievements

between these sectors of popula- tion. In this respect one thing deserves special mention that the scheduled tribe females also earn equally and not less than their male partner and more than 35% of the families maintain their livelihood mainly depending on the income of their female members. It is a fact that in spite of their contribution to the family economy they do not enjoy or get the equal status as that of their male counterpart and are quite often neglected and exploited. To elevate the status and position of tribal women, schemes should be designed and implemented which will open-up new avenues for their self employment and make them independent and protect them from all sorts of exploitation.

DAKHAN – A DREADFUL SYNDROME

GAIKWAD JOHN S.

Abstract :

Dakhan happens to be the most dreadful and a horrifying type of witchcraft among the Pawara tribal community of Dhulia in Maharashtra State. *Dakhan* is held responsible for various ailments and accidents. Hence it becomes a cause of social stress, strains and tensions in the community. *Dakhan* is estimated to possess tremendous capacity. Once a woman is declared as a suspected/confirmed *Dakhan*, this fact spreads all over like a fire and life is not easy for her. This stigma has a 'cumulative-chain-effect' in the female line of descent, for generations together. The complications related to *Dakhan* may get precipitated as police cases / court cases. The resultant stress/strains/ tensions between the families (due to *Dakhan*) persists even after the individual recovers. No one has actually seen the *Dakhan* in action as such.

Methodology :

The sample comprises the Pawara tribal community residing in the forest villages in

between these sectors of popula- tion. In this respect one thing deserves special mention that the scheduled tribe females also earn equally and not less than their male partner and more than 35% of the families maintain their livelihood mainly depending on the income of their female members. It is a fact that in spite of their contribution to the family economy they do not enjoy or get the equal status as that of their male counterpart and are quite often neglected and exploited. To elevate the status and position of tribal women, schemes should be designed and implemented which will open-up new avenues for their self employment and make them independent and protect them from all sorts of exploitation.

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Methodology :

The sample comprises the Pawara tribal community residing in the forest villages in

tahsil Akrani Mahal, District Dhule in Maharashtra State. The study largely dwells upon the application of ethnographic techniques. The observations (quasi-participant), interviews – (partially structured, informal, open-ended and indepth) and illness episodes/ narratives – comprise the basis of data collection. The nature of the study predominantly demanded interviews with the elders and the healers as key informants.

Prologue :

One woman had been in the field alongwith other women. The head of the village called all the men of the village to that field. The woman concerned at once realised that she was on the verge of death. She tried to plead her innocence, but in vain. Then she started begging not for her life but for feeding her child only once. ("... let me feed my baby only once ..."). Even this was not allowed. At once she was killed by the villagers. (A case was registered that she was killed by a tiger.)

This is an incidence which occurred in the year 1987, in deep interior forest village Danel–Manda which is not connected by road (even in 1990). It takes 5-6 hours for walking from Molgi.

This woman was killed because she was suspected to be a *Dakhan*.

Dakhan happens to be the most dreadful and a horrifying type of witchcraft. Any female who is suspected to utilise this strength/power/ capacity, is designated as *Dakhan*. Even if a *Dakhan* exists in human form, a layman cannot identify her. Only a *Budwa* can identify her. A suspected/confirmed *Dakhan* may or may not be related to the victim.

<u>*Dakhan* held responsible for various ailments and accidents :</u>

Chapara –	giddiness
Lui-ukhautla –	vomiting with blood
Hori –	fever/high fever
Guvaliya –	unconsciousness
Chanda/Ubadalo –	big boils/big and painful boils
Uh-ku –	a lump in the armpit/ on pelvic joint
Mund-dukhtlo –	headache

With the onset of any of the above symptoms/illness or accidents such as *Golahoo-kat-tala* (snake bite) and calamities such as serious illness, sickness persistent for a considerable period, increa-sing weakness/ withering away, increasing/persistent pains, it is viewed as a probable result in an individual or with a sudden death in a family – doubts arise – "Someone has done something." It is viewed as a probable result of the activities of a *Dakhan*.

Dakhan – A cause of maximum social stress, strains and tensions

If in the process of *Danapudi*, the etiological factor is detected/diagnosed as *Dakhan*/other types of sorcery/witchcraft (*Muth, Maan Mekhtala*) there are social stress, strains and tensions which vary in degree for the different etiological factors (in the category of sorcery/witchcraft). These are observed to be maximum in case the etiological factor is *Dakhan*.

Dakhan – Degree of attack varies

In case an ailment is detected/diagnosed as a result of the influence of a *Dakhan*, then it is believed that the doctor's treatment will be useful/fruitful only and only if the *Dakhan* has only 'bitten'(*Dakhan kat-tala*) the individual (i.e., the *Dakhan* has affected the individual to a minimum extent.)

In case a person is seriously/severely affected by a *Dakhan*, it is termed as *Dakhan* has 'eaten away' – (*Dakhan Khay-tala*) the individual. If such individual approaches a doctor, it is believed that 'the doctor would spoil the case', because the doctor cannot tackle such cases. On the contrary, it is strongly believed that an individual who has been 'eaten away' i.e., seriously/severely affected by a *Dakhan*, can be cured by a senior and experienced *Budwa* –

a specialist traditional healer. If a person dies in this process, then it is believed that the person died because necessary action was not taken within the stipulated period.

Dakhan – estimated to possess tremendous capacity

i) She orders her *Veers* (spirits) for victimising any person, with any illness.
ii) It is believed that if a *Dakhan* affects a person, then the person may get objects, such as bones, mud, stones in the stomach.
iii) She can appear and afflict in the form of a snake or a wild animal such as a tiger.
iv) The *Dakhan* is believed to be closely associated with the *Najar* (evil eye).
v) It is believed that she can literally disappear (and reappear).
vi) The *Dakhan* may appear in the form of a snake, tiger, dog or horse.
vii) The *Dakhan* can disappear at one place and instantaneously reappear at another place.
viii) She can break a tree.
ix) She can destroy the fruit on the tree/ incapacitate the tree for bearing fruit.
x) She can dig a well in the river bed within a very short period.

It is believed that once a woman acquires this 'art' then she has no alternative but to always utilise this art, with the help of her *Veer(s)*. Even if she is not inclined towards utilising this art, her *Veer(s)* irritates/troubles her. Therefore, it becomes an utmost necessity that the *Dakhan* 'keeps the *Veer(s)* continuously engaged'. It is believed that the *Dakhan* victimises not only human beings, but also domestic animals, plants, trees and crops, etc.

Moreover, it is fascinating to know that the people believe that the *Dakhan* is expected to take the deity's permission before she victimises anyone. If she fails to take such a permission, the deity may punish her by keeping her hanging on a tree on the outskirts of the village, and she is also beaten-up in this hanging position.

In case the people continuously request the deity (on the outskirts of the village) regarding the *Dakhan*, then the deity punishes the *Dakhan* (beaten-up in hanging position).

The informants have stated that "she can be literally seen in this hanging position, she shouts, her screaming is literally heard, but no one else is seen."

Identification of a *Dakhan*

If in the process of *Danapudi* it is revealed that a particular person's illness is due to

Dakhan, normally the matter does not remain as a personal affair between the *Budwa* (Bhagat) and the patient's family members, but it spreads like a fire. With this information, one member from each family in the village, and the members of the Community *Panchayat* approach a *Budwa* of their choice. The final decision in this regard is subject to confirmation by the *Budwa*, depending upon the results obtained in the *Danapudi* performed in front of the people.

While performing the process of *Danapudi*, the *Budwa* presses various questions to the power/spiritual benefactor, and conveys all the possible clues for the identification of the *Dakhan*, but, however, her name is not disclosed directly. Her description, description of her kins, family members, and kinship network, number of domestic animals in the house, direction of the doors and windows of the house, number of poles and beams in the house, etc., are indicated. The *Budwa* describes her nature, height, how many children she has, etc. With such description, it is left to the people to guess the name.

Sometimes the people in the village concerned, secretly go to different *Budwas* in different villages (in groups of 5-7). If the name is consistent then the diagnosis is confirmed. In case of inconsistency, the classification is verified again.

In a few cases – a woman declared as a *Dakhan* is subject to further confirmatory tests. This is at the discretion of the *Budwa* and the elders in the village.

- she is taken to the holy place/ worshipping place (where the deities are there). At this place she is asked to lift up a deity represented by a big stone. If she lifts up the assigned stone easily, then she is declared as acquitted. If not, she is convicted.

Or,

- she is taken to the place believed to be inhabited by *Pir*. Chains are tied round her legs and she is asked to walk over the steps at that place. If the chains fall off automatically while she is walking, then she is acquitted. If not, she is convicted.

- she is taken to the adjoining tribal area in Gujarat. If she passes between the legs of the elephant – she is acquitted. If not/ if the elephant is disturbed – then she is convicted.

Recently, the people from village Roshmal had been to Bavagadh (in Gujarat), in order to confirm whether a particular woman is a *Dakhan* or not. Similarly, the people from village Khardi had been to a village in Madhya Pradesh in order to confirm a suspected *Dakhan* who

was believed to be responsible for an individual's death by snake bite.

What – after identification

Once a woman is declared as a suspected/ confirmed *Dakhan*, this fact spreads all over like a fire and life is not easy for her.

- she may be beaten up by the patient's family members/villagers.
- she may be driven out of the village.
- she may have to go alone.

Or,

- she may go with her husband and children.

In such circumstances, she may go to her father's house, or try to settle in some other village.

It is not uncommon to come across instances such as – where the woman suspected/declared as *Dakhan* has to undergo the ordeals without any support from her husband/family members.

In such cases, the husband deserts his wife if she is declared as a *Dakhan*.

A confirmed *Dakhan* has every danger of being killed. If her husband supports his wife/ opposes the villagers, there are quarrels and

confrontations which may take a serious turn and both the husband and wife are likely to be killed.

A suspected/declared *Dakhan*'s daughter(s) is (are) looked with a 'biased view' and hence is (are) treated as (a) *Dakhan*(s).

Such a biased view renders difficulties for her (their) marriage/s, (but however, marriage is not impossible). When they have female offspring(s) the female offspring(s) also carries the same stigma which the maternal grandmother had.

A woman who has been declared as a *Dakhan* in village 'A' goes to another village 'B'. Her daughter(s) is (are) given in marriage in villages other than 'A' and 'B'. If someone, in these villages (X, Y, Z) becomes seriously ill, then doubts regarding these 'daughters' arise. It is believed that the daughter(s) acquires the special knowledge and information of this 'art' from the mother.

Hence it is observed that this stigma has a 'cumulative-chain-effect' in the female line of descent for generations together. This is certainly dangerous and this presents a dreadful syndrome.

The complications related to *Dakhan* may get precipitated as police cases/court cases. If a

woman is declared/victimised as a *Dakhan*, she resists this by going to the police station, and lodging a factual complaint against the villagers. The police approach the villagers and ask them to prove their allegations. The villagers say that it was the *Budwa* who gave them the 'clues'. The *Budwa* says that he has resorted to the process of *Danapudi* and has only given clues, without declaring any particular person's name. (Such cases even go to the court of law.)

It was stated that during early 70s, it was observed that the reasons attributed for lodging a police complaint use to be other than the actual cause (*Dakhan* and complications arising thereof). However, nowadays, complaints related to *Dakhan* and complica-tions arising thereof, are lodged by reporting the factual situation.

The Superintendent of Police, Dhule stated that in recorded cases related to victimization of a woman on the pretext of being a *Dakhan*, nowadays, the police department arrests the *Budwa* along with others on the charge of conspiracy.

It has been observed that in case, an individual's ailment/illness is attributed to the activity of a *Dakhan* then the resultant stress, strains and tensions between the families persist even after the individual's recovery. This has been illustrated by the following examples :

1) A young female from village Manvani became ill. During the illness she started behaving as an insane individual. The family members consulted the *Budwa* who resorted to *Danapudi* and treated her but in vain. Some of the members of the Community *Panchayat* consulted the *Budwa* who told the patient's father that a particular woman from their village was *Dakhan* and she had affected the patient. The suspected *Dakhan* was identified/detected. She was called at the patient's house. This woman was literally tied to the corner of the cot of the patient. The suspected *Dakhan* was asked to cure the patient. She was threatened by the patient's parents that if she did not cure their daughter, they would kill her. Her husband could not say anything in this regard, because the *Budwa* had declared his 'findings' in front of the members of the Community *Panchayat.*

Despite all these efforts, the patient's condition did not improve. Then the patient was taken to another village by her relatives. (The suspected *Dakhan* was set free.) Even after changing the patient's place there was no improvement in her condition.

At this stage some people suggested, "You have resorted to all the possible traditional methods but in vain. Why don't you take her to a hospital ?" Accordingly, a private practitioner was consulted. She was treated for about 15-20 days. After this treatment she recovered

completely. Then she got married. Even if she was recovered by virtue of modern medicine, their enmity with the suspected *Dakhan*'s family did not come to an end.

2) A youth had an injury on his thumb. Immediately he fell ill and remained ill for about $1^{1/2}$ – 2 months. During this period he was at home. Local *Budwas* were consulted but there was no improvement in his health condition. As the illness was persistent for a considerable long period, the *Budwas* resorted to *Danapudi.* The *Budwas* attributed the illness as an effect of 'influence of *Dakhan*'. In the course of detecting the *Dakhan* from the clues given by the *Budwas* – the patient's paternal aunt (father's brother's wife) was declared as *Dakhan.* She denied. Her husband also challenged the allegation. Both were beaten by the relatives.

The *Budwas* performed enchanting rites and offered fowl and goat for nullifying the influence of the 'external forces'. Despite this there was no improvement in his condition.

With this, the patient became extremely desperate/discoura-ged. He used to literally cry, and said, 'I have lost all the hopes.' The patient's paternal cousin uncle (a primary school Headmaster) got this message at Molgi Ashram School. He at once went to see him. After seeing his uncle he desperately asked, "Can you suggest something in this regard ?" The patient's

uncle stated, "All of you have tried your level best with the help of the traditional system but it has not been fruitful. Hence let us go to Dhadgaon and consult the doctor at PHC/RH." The Primary Health Centre doctor referred the case to the Civil Hospital, Dhulia. The patient was taken to Dhulia Civil Hospital by the PHC jeep. The patient was admitted to the hospital for about 20/21 days. At the end of this period he recovered completely. Despite this the quarrel was not settled.

Recently, it was observed that a suspected/confirmed *Dakhan* was 'silently' given an opportunity. Shri Janya Janglya Pawara from village Khardi died due to snake bite. (Message was sent to a specialist Shri Bilji Patel but the patient died before Shri Bilji Patel could reach.) About 8 to 9 days after this incidence, all the male individuals from village Khardi went to village Kawat in M.P. A specialist in that village was consulted in this regard. The concerned traditional healer resorted to the specialised process of *Danapudi*. His diagnosis was – "a *Dakhan* came in the form of a snake". The same healer detected the *Dakhan* by describing all the characters necessary for identification without disclosing the name.

In this case it was observed that 'suspected' *Dakhan* was from the same village. However, all the male individuals decided to keep this matter as a 'secret'. They decided that

if any such thing happens again, then they would take care of the individual responsible.

It is observed that even the educated people in the community are not ready to give up these beliefs/this ideology. They strongly believe the existence of *Dakhan*. However, very few informants express a concern in this regard, and they view this problem (*Dakhan*) as a 'dreadful and complicated disease'.

Another recent trend is observed. Some people are least interested in knowing the person responsible for a particular illness/sickness, despite the fact that they positively believe in the phenomenon of *Dakhan*, other types of sorcery/witchcraft (*Muth, Maan Mekhtala*). They ask the *Budwa* only to perform the necessary rites for nullifying the 'influence of the adverse powers'.

It will be fascinating to know that no one has actually seen the *Dakhan* in action as such. Hence it is apparent that all these complications arise from 'doubt'. The syndrome is based on a complex combination of elements embedded in the belief system and the assumptions and presumptions around the cloud of doubt as presented/formulated by the patient's condition, his response and outlook regarding the ailment as well as the community's (including the members, relatives and friends) interpretation regarding the patient's condition, response and

outlook. These assumptions and presumptions have been channelised in such a way that they form an integral part of their culture.

Epilogue

Though horrifying and dreadful, this syndrome cannot be eliminated all of a sudden. Elimination of such a culture bound syndrome would require necessary changes in the ideology and belief system of the community. Though the process of change is gradual, there is a need to impart health education to the community and also to take care of their immediate felt needs in the domains of illness management/ management of crisis such as snake bite. Planned and systematic efforts in this direction would certainly help in shifting the present supersaturated concentration of the culture bound beliefs/ideology to more secular ideology.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF BHOTIYA WOMEN OF U. P. HIMALAYA

N.N. SINGH
S.B. SINGH

U.P. Himalaya :

The U.P. Himalaya (28°45′ – 31°27′ N and 77°45′ – 81°4′ E) forms the northern parts of Uttar Pradesh with its distinct peaks and valleys. Mean relief of the region is about 5,500 m. The five groups of peaks of the region have been separated by transverse gorges of the Bhagirathi, the Vishnuganga, the West Dhauliganga, the Goriganga and the East Dhauliganga respectively. The region covers an area of 46,485 km^2 with a total population of about 6 million.

Bhot Region

13000 km^2 northern zone of the U.P. Himalaya is the centre of Bhotiya folk culture. Darama and Jauhar Tehsil of Pithoragarh, Pinkhanda belts of Chamoli and parts of Bhatwari Tehsil of Uttarkashi districts are the important belts of Bhotiyas in U.P. Himalaya. The inhabitants of the Bhot region are nomadic. Main occupation of Bhotiya is trade and pastoralism. Agriculture is subsidiary while wool spinning and weaving is their long established

outlook. These assumptions and presumptions have been channelised in such a way that they form an integral part of their culture.

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cottage industry. Bhotiya people possess two or three sets of habitations lying in different altitudinal zones for different seasons. An average family possesses 100 to 150 sheep and goats. Bhotiyas are very much adventurous and enterprising.

Problems and Prospects of Bhotiya Women

Written on the slate of time with the alacrity of seasons the distinctiveness of the women of the Bhotiya tribe may be an object of wonder, but their industrious nature, undaunting activeness and excellent business acumen have revolutionary possibilities. In the midst of not-too-friendly geographical environment, the Bhotiya women carrying aloft the standard of Indian culture are struggling hard to protect their own ethnic identities on the one hand, but on the other they are getting caught in the whirlpool of dynamic changes taking place in civic life as well as in the lifestyle of their own kith and kin. In such an atmosphere of cultural invasion, the Bhotiya women unlike the immovable mountains, inspired by the aesthetic dynamism of nature and rhythmic movement and melody of the mountaneous brooks, appear eager to fondle the big waves of the ocean – the outside culture. The reason is that the possibilities of development in their local situations are too limited or admit of no further room.

From the point of view of geography, no classification of the Bhotiya women can be made, but when viewed from socio-cultural angle, the distinctiveness of *Shanka, Johari, Darmi, Tolcha, Marcha* and *Jad* as separate cultural groups is apparent. Comparatively in the financially better off Bhotiya groups the reactionary customs like *Rang Bang* and *Guan* are loosing ground. The women of *Shanka, Marcha* and *Jad* tribes show close affinity with the Tibetan customs and folk-beliefs because of their closeness with Tibet which culturally is an integral part of India. Animal husbandry and business with Tibet was a male prerogative because of the high land pastures called *Bugyals* and passes. The Chinese invasion of Tibet shattered the Bhotiya economy. Consequently it adversely affected the life of Bhotiya women engaged in wool industry. Agriculture could not become a source of income because of the geographical complexities of the area. It was, therefore, animal husbandry and wool industry had developed in the area as cottage industries but with the disappearance of trade with Tibet which was a male preserve, the onus of looking after the wool industry fell on women and the menfolk became a victim of idleness and liquor. Education, which could have enabled the Bhotiya menfolk to cope with the changed situation, was not spread in the area, and therefore, their cottage industry could not change to rise to the occasion. Technical education would have enabled them to give a new shape to their age-old cottage industry.

Governmental measures for spreading education did not succeed as the Bhotiyas had to come down to warmer places in winter and go up to their permanent settlements in the summer. Teachers also are reluctant to live in such adverse conditions. Moreover, the menfolk also consider training in weaving and spinning more important for their women than formal education and consequently the Bhotiya women are the worst sufferers.

Where education is available or towns are close by, the condition of the Bhotiya women is comparatively good. From the point of view of education, the Bhotiya women can be placed in three groups – the first group comprises those who consider tradition as the fountain-head of all actions and feel an imaginary halo in the darkness of ignorance ; the second group consists of women who have learnt the basics of education, love education but are not going to sever their relations with the tradition ; and, the third group includes women who see the alluring horizons of science and knowledge and have freed themselves from the clutches of tradition. These women are economically self dependent and for that they have chosen different lines of self-dependence. They do have faith in and love for their tradition which in turn gives them a true direction in life.

Policies and plans introduced with a view to ameliorating the condition of the Bhotiya

women tailored to suit the situations obtaining in the present were introduced and thus in the place of some permanent redressal, the Bhotiya women got temporary relief only. Plans and policies were not undertaken, and the steps that were actually taken, directed from a far-off place without any proper on-the-spot study, could achieve only short-term gains. The planners and policy makers were probably unaware of geographical, social, cultural and emotional situations of the area. No wonder that the plans based on second-hand data obtained from books have proved futile. Without the active participation of the Bhotiya women plans could not achieve their aims and remained at a remove from the realities. Ignorance of geographical conditions and introduction of borrowed technological methods have hit the Bhotiya women very hard. By giving imported Australian sheep, hare and Jersey cows to the Bhotiya women as grant-in-aid or in the form of subsidy could not help them much. It would have been better if we had given them hybrids of their own sheep which have attuned themselves to their geographical areas over the decades. These hybrids will continue to feed on the fodder available in their areas and would not require superior qualities of fodder which the Australian sheep do.

Formal education based on western models will never benefit the Bhotiya women. Bhotiya women will feel affinity with education

which is based on their cultural and geographical milieu. Australian sheep are not profitable for them if the Bhotiya households are not equipped with modern scientific machines. The hand-woven woolen carpets, shawls and *Dans* prepared after a lot of nerve-wrecking manual labour do not fetch them a remunerative price, but when given a 'finish' on machines, the same articles become highly remunerative.

Their cottage industry can be helped by purchasing and exporting the articles through their own cooperatives with little governmental help. This can bring about a complete change in the economic condition of the Bhotiya women. The Bhotiya women are by birth industrious, fearless, great triers and sturdy. These attributes if tapped for inculcating in them mountaineering skills, could open new vistas of development and make them conscious of their capabilities.

The Government has given them reservation in service but this benefit is meant for those who live in towns or cities and not those who live in far-flung areas and require help. Measures should be taken to prepare them for competitions and other skilled jobs. However, the first priority is to kindle in them faith and confidence in their own capabilities. Without inculcating self confidence in them in their own capabilities, any hope to bring about their development will only be a mirage – no people have developed on crutches.

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DEVELOPMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION – FORMAL AND INFORMAL WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE STATE OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

PREMLATA ETTE

Education is considered to be a perfect indicator that assists people in tracing out their weaknesses and enable them to step forward with remedial measures, confidently in the path of all-round development. Alfred Marshal has emphasised the importance of education as 'National Investment'.

The New Education Policy, 1986-87, duly announced that education is an investment in the present and future.

Education both formal and informal is the source of increasing the knowledge, the understanding, the skills and the potentialities of the people in the society. The formal education makes it easier to bridge the gulf between the immature nature of the child and the demands of the society. The informal education helps to bridge the gulf between the education imparted in the school and the education needed to lead a successful life as a member of the community. Education both formal and informal is expected to change the values and attitudes of the people and to create in them an urge on the necessary motivation for social change.

Educationalists are of the view that mother is the first educator of the child from birth to school age. The home environment and association of other members of the family play a significant role in developing proper attitudes among them, but much more important is the influence of the mother on the child. She is responsible for his or her upbringing and care. Most of the time a child lives in contact with the mother and is influenced and affected by her. The habits inculcated in the family stage act as a guide throughout life, as the Tamil proverb says, "The habits of the cradle last till the grave". Therefore, it is very necessary that a mother is imbued with good qualities, and acts as a model for which education is the first and foremost thing to acquire. There is great truth in the old saying, "Teach a mother to be healthy and she will teach the rest of mankind".

A retrospective and thoughtful study will conclude that the state of female education in India until the first half of the 19th century was very deplorable, not to mention about the education of tribal women. History reveals that the support of female education was first received by the Missioneries and then later on from the British government. The work of the Missioneries included opening of day schools for Indian girls, establishing orphan houses and instructing women privately in their homes but female education was not too widespread. The real impact in the field of women's education was

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made after the Wood's Despatch of 1854 by which the Government assumed direct responsibility for the education of women.

In absence of relevant data regarding education among tribals, it is not possible to obtain a comprehensive picture of their education until Independence. However, it must be noted that due to the efforts of the missioneries, social workers, some of the progressive native rulers and with some support from the Government education among tribal women could step in its initial stage in the country.

Education of tribal women of Arunachal Pradesh cannot be separated from the education of tribal men since co-education system has been existing in the State since time immemorial. Educationally, the North East Frontier Tracts (the present Arunachal Pradesh) were most backward compared to other hill areas.

During the British period there were only two primary schools which were situated at the foot of the hills. It was, therefore, necessary that the Government of India after Independence had to build a network of schools for the area right from scratch. This movement gained momentum only after 1950.

By the end of the First Five Year Plan, sixteen middle schools and two high schools were

established. The Second Five Year Plan gave more importance to consolidation and improvement of existing schools rather than adding to them. However, four new lower primary schools and seven middle schools, serving also as inter-village schools were established. Two high schools were recognised into residential schools for the entire region. By the end of the Second Five Year Plan, the literacy figures for NEFA stood as follows :

1. Kameng 6,107 (including males and females)
2. Subansiri 3,254
3. Siang 6,863
4. Lohit 4;714
5. Tirap 3,075

(Source : *Arunachal through the Ages* by J.N. Choudhury)

Education has taken very rapid strides in the post Independence period, and the most intensive activity in the field of education began only after 1950. The earliest figure of literacy for women in the region available was according to 1961 Census Report.

Districts	**Females**
Kameng	429
Subansiri (Ziro)	135
Daporijo	25
Siang (Along)	219
Pasighat	360
Lohit-Tezu	664
Roing-Anini	45
Tirap	379

Census Report of 1981 says that the percentage of general literacy rate has increased from 11.29 in 1971 to 20.09 in 1981.

As regard to the percentage of female literacy, it has gone to 11.02 in 1981 from 3.71 in 1971. Of course, if compared with the All India female literacy percentage of 24.88, it is found less than a half of it.

However, the rising figure of 1971-1981 indicates a healthy symptom towards the female literacy in years to come. The increase of literacy of female population in Arunachal Pradesh speaks two ways : (i) Government's efforts to provide more educational facilities by opening schools (ii) better understanding of the people to educate their female children. It also throws light towards the social uplift of the people and their awareness of the importance of female education.

It may be interesting to note that in Arunachal Pradesh the first lady to pass matriculation was Smti. Odam Tamuk later on known as Smti. Odam Ering, w/o Late Daying Ering, Union Deputy Minister of Agriculture.

At present, we are having many educated ladies as compared to the earlier period, which is a healthy indicator of the march of women in all walks of life, the catalyst being education.

The author, hailing from Arunachal Pradesh has been professionally and emotionally involved to the cause of education in the State. Prior to this, there has been no studies relating

to the education of tribal women of Arunachal Pradesh. In fact, she pained to observe that no studies/committees/commissions have been set up so far to study the development of women in Arunachal Pradesh. However, despite manifold problems in collecting accurate data from different departments as stated in the tables and obtaining factual information, the author tried her best to reveal the actual position of education among the tribal women of Arunachal Pradesh with special reference to the Capital Complex, Itanagar as all the Heads of the various departments are located here and from which she perceived that a true picture of the socio-economic, cultural and educational conditions of the whole State can be highlighted. Accordingly, the data of eighteen departments have been placed in the subsequent tables.

Table 1

Decadal growth of tribal women employed under Directorate of Industries

	P.M.T. Registration		Provisional Registration	
Name of DIC*	No.of Units	Employment	No. of Units	Employment
1. Khonsa	4	16	14	33
2. Roing	2	23	16	49
3. Changlang	1	6	7	19
4. Tezu	3	14	20	48
5. Tawang	1	2	2	6
6. Along	4	11	10	22
7. Bomdila	22	10	17	37
8. Pasighat	2	25	7	14
9. Daporijo	1	6	4	6
10. Ziro	16	119	12	25
Total	35	241	111	264

* District Industrial Centre

Total No. of Units – 146

Total Employment – 505

Table 2

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Directorate of Supply and Transport, Arunachal Pradesh, Jorhat – 5 for the period from 1979 to 1989

Grade	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
Gr. I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. III	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	1	NIL
Gr. IV	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL

Table 3

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of R.W.D. for the period from 1979 to 1989

Gr.	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	Total
Gr. I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. III	1	1	2	NIL	NIL	NIL	1	NIL	1	13	6	25
Gr. IV	NIL	2	5	1	2	NIL	2	1	5	11	2	31
Total	1	3	7	1	2	NIL	3	1	6	24	8	56

Table 4

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of Cooperation for the period from 1979 to 1989

Gr.	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	Total
Gr. I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. III	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	2	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	3	5
Gr. IV	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	1	NIL	NIL	1	2
Total	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	2	NIL	1	NIL	NIL	4	7

Table 5

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of Social and Cultural Affairs for the period from 1979 to 1989

Grade	1979	1983	1987	1989
Grade I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Grade II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Grade III	NIL	NIL	Appointed on 14.7.87	NIL
Grade IV	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
	NIL	Appointed on 6.5.83	NIL	NIL

Table 6

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of Animal Husbandry & Vety. for the period from 1979 to 1989

Gr.	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	Total
Gr. I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. III	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	2	1*	NIL	3**	1	NIL	NIL
Gr. IV	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	1	1	NIL

* Released from this department w.e.f.30.6.87 on her appointment under R.D. Deptt.

** One left service w.e.f. 18.4.88

Table 7

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of Land Records for the period from 1979 to 1989

Gr.	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
Gr. I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. III	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. IV	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	2

Table 8

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of Panchayat for the period from 1979 to 1989

Gr.	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
Gr. I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. III	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. IV	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL

Table 9

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of Agriculture for the period from 1979 to 1989

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
NIL	Planning Officer – 1 No. Extension Officer – 3 Nos. (Agriculture)	L.D.C. - 2 Nos.	Peon - 7 Nos. Packer – 1 No.

Table 10

Growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of Director of Accounts

Grade	1986	1987	1988	1989
Grade I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Grade II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Grade III	1	1	1	2
Grade IV	NIL	1	1	2
Contingent	NIL	NIL	1	1

Table 6

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of Animal Husbandry & Vety. for the period from 1979 to 1989

Gr.	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	Total
Gr. I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. III	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	2	1*	NIL	3**	1	NIL	NIL
Gr. IV	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	1	1	NIL

* Released from this department w.e.f.30.6.87 on her appointment under R.D. Deptt.

** One left service w.e.f. 18.4.88

Table 7

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of Land Records for the period from 1979 to 1989

Gr.	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
Gr. I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. III	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. IV	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	2

Table 8

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of Panchayat for the period from 1979 to 1989

Gr.	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
Gr. I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. III	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. IV	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL

Table 9

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of Agriculture for the period from 1979 to 1989

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
NIL	Planning Officer – 1 No. Extension Officer – 3 Nos. (Agriculture)	L.D.C. - 2 Nos.	Peon - 7 Nos. Packer – 1 No.

Table 10

Growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of Director of Accounts

Grade	1986	1987	1988	1989
Grade I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Grade II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Grade III	1	1	1	2
Grade IV	NIL	1	1	2
Contingent	NIL	NIL	1	1

Table 11

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of State Transport for the period from 1979 to 1989

Gr.	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	Total
Gr. I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. III	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	1	NIL	NIL	1	2
Gr. IV	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	1	1	NIL	2	NIL	4
Total	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	1	2	NIL	2	1	6

Table 12

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of A.P.I.D.F.C.L. for the period from 1979 to 1989

Gr.	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	Total
Gr. I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. III	NIL	1	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	1	NIL	NIL	NIL	1	3
Gr. IV	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	6	3	9
Total	NIL	1	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	1	NIL	NIL	6	4	12

Table 13

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Directorate of Economics & Statistics for the period from 1979 to 1989

Gr.	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	Total
Gr. I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. III	2	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	51
Gr. IV	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Total	2	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	51

Table 14

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Deptt. of Rehabilitation & Settlement for the period from 1979 to 1989

Grade	1979-89
Grade I	NIL
Grade II	NIL
Grade III	I
Grade IV	NIL

Table 15

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Department of Fisheries for the period from 1979 to 1989

Grade	1979-89
Grade I	From 1979 to 1989 - NIL
Grade II	From 1979 to 1989 - NIL
Grade III	From 1979 to 1989 - NIL
Grade IV	From 1979 to 1982 – NIL
	From 1983 to 1989 - 1

Table 16

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under Office of Inspector General of Police for the period from 1979 to 1989

Gr.	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	Total
Gr. I	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Gr. II	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	2	3	8	13
Gr. III	NIL	4	8	8	8	8	8	8	11	19	77	159
Gr. IV	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL	1	1	2	3	5	12
Total	NIL	4	8	8	8	8	9	9	15	25	90	184

Table 17

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees under the Arunachal Pradesh Secretariat for the period from 1979 to 1989

Grade	1979-89
Grade I	NIL
Grade II	NIL
Grade III	33 Nos
Grade IV	NIL

Table 18

Decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh Tribal Women employees (as on 30.9.89) under Deptt. of Education for the period from 1979 to 1989

Category	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
Teachers											
Pre-primary	10	18	14	30	37	39	51	54	50	55	Information
Primary	52	58	72	92	127	132	147	145	165	170	Still
Middle	29	38	33	24	46	44	44	81	94	102	awarded
Secondary	5	7	6	18	19	19	29	41	44	47	from the
Higher Secondary	2	2	2	3	5	5	4	11	12	11	district
Headmaster/V.P.	-	-	6	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	2
Adult Education Supervisor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
In the Office of DPI											
DDPI	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-
Jt. DPI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
UDC	-	-	-	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	1
Assistant	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
LDC	2	2	3	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	1
Peon	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	4	6	6
College Estt.											
Lecturer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1
Total	103	128	133	185	240	245	281	339	372	404	18

N.B. : The position of Women (Tribal) ministerial and Group 'D' staff of the district is not included in the report.

COMPARATIVE STUDY

Table 1

Coming to the Department of Industries, the author made detailed enquiries about Weaving Centres. The information available is as follows :

Most women were greatly attracted to the Industries department, because they could get a quick job and incentives as compared to a formal education of a longer duration and so, without quick returns. Comprehensively, total illiterate women were also enrolled in the Department of Industries. What basically motivated them to opt for weaving centres and learn the craft was that it would make them supplement the family income. Besides, it has been traditionally brought down from generation to generation. Hence they find it easy to learn the method and skill of weaving.

Weaving Centre scheme was first mooted in the year 1953-54 in Arunachal Pradesh, the then North East Frontier Agency. The Cottage Industries Department as a whole came into being early in 1953-54 with eight Cottage Industries Training Centres in Bomdila, Tawang, Ziro, Along, Tezu, Namsang, Tuensang and Mon. There were four weaving schools at Pasighat, Yomcha, Laptang, Rupa functioning under Political and Educational Department. These

were taken over by the Industries Department in 1955-56.

Eleven trades had been introduced in different centres according to the need of the local people. Incentives available for each trainee include :

a) Stipend @ Rs. 200.00 per month to trainees residing beyond 8 kms from the Training Centres.
b) Stipend @ Rs. 100.00 to trainees within the radius of 8 kms from the Training Centres.
c) Free accommodation in Government Hostel.
d) Free medical treatment.
e) Provision of cooking utensils at Government expenses.
f) On successful completion of training tools and equipments are provided at 50% subsidised rates to each trainee.
g) Raw materials like yarns, wool, etc., are given on subsidised rates.

Weaving, knitting, tailoring, cane and bamboo, grass neckless, bead neckless courses are of one year duration whereas carpentry, carpet weaving and wood carving courses are of two years duration. Painting is a three year course.

It may be noted that all these courses are not exclusively meant for women only. Many tribal women preferred to join these courses than go for a longer term of formal education, because

the scope of these courses, for the passed out trainees, was more immediately gainful than a longer term of formal education. The trainees are given preference for employment in government jobs considering the suitability as and when posts are available. They are also provided government loans at reasonable rates of interest to start units of their own. The passed out trainees can form industrial cooperative for which government facilities are available. Marketing facilities extended to the passed out trainees, included assistance by the Department of Industries by issuing raw materials and purchasing the finished products as per Government's approved rates.

Passed out trainees are also assisted in marketing their products through S.S.I. units, for sale of their products either directly or through Government Emporium.

So far as 108 women trainees are employed in the Industries Department, out of a total of 169 trainees. In other words, it may be said that 61 (169 – 108) trainees are males.

Table 2 clearly indicates :

a) That for the last ten years not a single tribal woman of Arunachal Pradesh in the Capital Complex, Itanagar has been employed in Grade I, II, IV.
b) This table indicates the economic

position, and thereby implying their economic independence.

Table 3 shows the recruitment of women candidates under R.W.D. (Rural Works Department) of Capital Complex, Itanagar during the period from 1979 to 1989. From the table one can gather :

a) The extent of literacy among the womenfolk.
b) Job opportunities available.
c) Economic status.

In Grade I and II, since the last decade no tribal woman has been employed. This is due to (1) Inadequate educational qualifi- cations in terms of formal education (2) Drop out at various levels from Secondary to University levels (3) Lack of motivation to pursue higher studies (4) The urgent need is to get hold of a lower job in order to meet the family demands.

In Grade III, there was one woman employed in 1979, one in 1980, two in 1981, then not a single woman got employment in the years 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1986. In 1985 and 1987, only one woman was recruited respectively. In 1988 and 1989, we find 13 and 6 women being recruited respectively from Capital Complex, Itanagar in R.W.D. It shows a total dismal picture of recruitment of female candidates. In Grade IV, 31 women have been recruited during the period 1979 to 1989.

Table 4 shows the decadal growth rate of Arunachal Pradesh tribal women employees in the Department of Cooperation. This table is a virtual repeat of Table I and 2. In Itanagar the Department of Cooperation has recruited only 7 tribal women candidates for the period 1979 to 1989. Again, women have zero representation in Grade I and Grade II services. In 1984 and 1989, only two and three women candidates were recruited in Grade III. In Grade IV one woman candidate was recruited in 1986 and another in 1989. Grade III refers to the posts of clerks, assistants, LDCs, etc., where the women are negligibly represented. Table 4 confirms the socio-economic status of tribal women in the Capital Complex of Itanagar.

Table 5 shows the decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh tribal women employees under the Directorate of Social and Cultural Affairs at Itanagar. This is in conformity with Tables 1, 2, 3 and here again the tribal women of Arunachal Pradesh have no representation in Grade I and II during the period 1979 – 1989. In Grade III, we have one Arunchalee woman appointed as L.D.C. on 14.7.87 and one peon, Grade IV appointed on 6.5.83

Table 6 shows the number of Arunachalee women appointed in various Grades under Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department during the period from 1979 to 1989. This

department has a total number of 7 tribal women employed in Grade III and only 2 in Grade IV. In Grade I and II, again there is no representation of tribal women. Only in Grade III and IV we find 9 women employed.

Tables 7 and 8 show the decadal growth of Arunachalee women in a) Department of Land Records, Arunachal Pradesh and b) Department of Panchayat, Arunachal Pradesh. The tables exhibit :

1. That no Arunachalee woman has been employed in Grade I and II in the Department of Land Records and Department of Panchayats.
2. As regards the Department of Panchayats, only one Arunachalee woman is working with effect from 1983 as a peon. For the decade 1979 – 1989, no other tribal woman was appointed.
3. As regards the Department of Land Records, for the decade of 1979 -1989 only 2 women are working and that too in Grade IV.

Table 9 indicates the position of tribal women, employed in the Directorate of Agriculture, Naharlagun. The table indicates that there are no Group A officers. In Group B there are only four women, one is Planning Officer, three are Extension Officers. There are two L.D.C.s in Group C posts and in Group D services there are 7 peons and 1 packer.

Table 10 indicates the employment of tribal women in the Directorate of Accounts, Itanagar. Here no tribal woman is employed in Grade I service and Grade II service since 1986. From 1986 to 1989, only 5 tribal women have been employed in Grade III and 4 tribal women in Grade IV. Among the contingency staff, only two are working.

Table 11 shows the employment of Arunachal Pradesh tribal women from 1979 to 1989 in the State Transport Department. During the last ten years, only 6 Arunachal Pradesh tribal women could procure employment. And 4 out of a total of 6 are employed in Grade IV. The other two are in Grade III. As usual the pattern of employment is same, no Arunachal Pradesh tribal woman has been able to procure a Grade I or II job for the last decade.

Table 12 shows the decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh tribal women employees of A.P.I.D.F.C.L. from 1979 to 1989. Here too, the employment pattern is the same. No Arunachalee employee is in Grade I and II jobs. Only 3 are working in Grade III and 9 are working in Grade IV posts. During the last decade only 12 women could procure jobs in A.P.I.D.F.C.L.

Table 13 shows the decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh tribal women employees in the Directorate of Economics and Statistics for

the period from 1979 to 1989. Here again, we find no woman employee in Grade I and II and Grade IV. So far only 51 Arunachal Pradesh tribal women are in Grade III.

Table 14 shows the decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh tribal women employees in the Directorate of Rehabilitation and Settlement, Itanagar for the period 1979 to 1989. In all these years only one is working in Grade III.

Table 15 shows the decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh tribal women employees in the Department of Fisheries for the period 1979–1989, and here also only one woman has been employed during the last ten years in a Grade IV job.

Table 16 indicates the decadal growth of Arunachal Pradesh tribal women employees in the office of the Inspector General of Police, Itanagar for the period 1979-1989. In Grade I there is no tribal woman employee. But since 1987, 13 tribal women have bagged Grade II jobs whereas in Grade III, 159 women have found employment and 12 in Grade IV.

Table 17 gives a list of lady (Arunachal tribe) employees of Arunachal Pradesh Secretariat. No Arunachal Pradesh tribal woman has been able to procure a Grade I or Grade II job. Only 33 women are employed in Grade III jobs such as L.D.C.s, U.D.C.s, Assistants.

Table 18 shows the decadal growth of tribal women employees in the Department of Education as on 30th September, 1989 for the period 1979-1989. At present, we find quite an encouraging picture here, as quite a few Arunachal Pradesh tribal women are teachers, right from primary level to the Higher Secondary level, one lecturer in college. Two ladies are in Vice Principal posts in two different schools of Arunachal Pradesh and one lady is Joint Director in the Department of Public Instructions.

Coming to Adult Education Programme, it is learnt that at present, there are four Centres in different sectors of Itanagar, the Capital Complex, namely 1) 'P' sector, Itanagar 2) Oju Craft Centre, Naharlagun 3) Model village, Naharlagun 4) *Mohila Imdad* Committee, Naharlagun, the enrolment being 238 in total – 67 males and 171 females. But *Mohila Imdad Bhawan* is not functioning and two more centres, namely 'C' sector Bazar and Ganga of Itanagar were sanctioned and started functioning but these too had to discontinue due to poor enrolment. Incentives like sewing machine, knitting machine, musical instrument, sports materials are being provided to the adults. Our data reveal that in the year 1947 there were only 2 primary schools in erstwhile NEFA and the literacy percentage was below one per cent. In 1971, 11.29% and in 1981 census literacy percentage increased upto 20.9 per cent. As

regard to the female literacy rate it was 11.02% as against 27.98% of the male literacy rate.

...

The Government claims to take steps to achieve universa-lisation of education of children within the age group of 6-14 years by 1995. Incentives like free distribution of text books, stationery, grant of stipend in lieu of ration, merit scholarship provided by the Directorate of Public Instructions have been undertaken to attract children towards education. The Government claims that special efforts are in existence to enrol girls in schools to increase the literacy percentage of girls. Government establishes hostels exclu- sively for girls in the schools and proposes to open 10 more hostels exclusively for girls. (*Arunachal Newsletter*, Aug. 15, 1988)

'Operation Blackboard', a centrally sponsored scheme has been launched from 1987-88. The government proposes to provide all schools with two teachers, 2 class rooms, lavatories for boys and girls, and other equipments.

As stated earlier, informal education embraces the impact of all desirable influences. It has been seen that most of the illiterate parents, nowadays, prefer to send their children to school rather than to send them to any other occupation. Further they even do not feel hesitant to forego their financial or economic

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As stated earlier, informal education embraces the impact of all desirable influences. It has been seen that most of the illiterate parents, nowadays, prefer to send their children to school rather than to send them to any other occupation. Further they even do not feel hesitant to forego their financial or economic

benefits. This, they learn by observing and immitating other persons in the society and also through the impact of informal educational agencies like radio, TV, audio visual aids, library, art gallery, religious institutions, public gatherings, etc., in their day-to-day social life.

According to SCHOFTHALER informal education is a residual category. As per UNESCO publication (Metzger, 1978, 21, 98) formal, non-formal and informal learning systems are treated equally. The nomenclature of formal, non-formal and informal are assigned on the basis of educational goals, organizations (Structural levels) and institutions of the system.

In the world of economic crisis today the formal system of education has been found to be incapable of meeting the changes and new challenges. The nation, therefore, felt committed to search for alternative with a view to broadening the paths of living.

As a result, the non-formal and informal mode of learning surfaced upto a sharper focus. In the recent years open learning (non-formal and informal) has become a course of legal educational tender.

As regards non-formal education, it may be mentioned that there are 72 non-formal education centres operating in various parts of Arunachal Pradesh. The Government claimed

that all the centres are well equipped and well managed. The superiors and instructors of the various 72 non-formal education centres are given orientation training at S.I.E., Changlang. Under the national policy of Education schools will get trained teachers and all un-trained teachers will get training. (*Arunachal Newsletter*, Aug. 15, 1988)

Viewing the development of education in Arunachal Pradesh, no doubt there has been significant expansion of educational facilities at all levels. (*Arunachal Newsletter*, Aug.15, 1989)

To encourage female education girls' hostels are provided. At present, out of 520 hostels, 99 are found to be for girls during 1988-89. It is really a matter of pride to recall the announcement made by the then Governor Dr. Gopal Singh that eight girls' hostels have been sanctioned to encourage female education in the year 1989-90. (Address of the Governor Dr. Gopal Singh in the first session of the first legislative assembly of the State of Arunachal Pradesh, March 28, 1990).

CONCLUSION

The census reports of All India level give detailed data regarding the educational attainment of tribal women in the country. According to 1961 census, only 1.3% tribal women were literate (without any educational

level). 2.8% tribal women had obtained primary or Junior Basic level of education and the percentage of matriculation and above is negligible. It is also stated that the percentage of illiterate women was 95.9.

The 1971 census report says the percentage of literacy to be 0.5 (without any educational level). 5.6% tribal women were literate upto primary or Junior Basic education, 0.1% to have matriculation or higher secondary level education and the percentage for graduate and above has been shown as negligible. As regards illiteracy percentage of tribal women for the year the report has stated it to be 93.88. The 1981 census data regarding literacy rates and educational attainment of tribals are not yet available. The percentage of female literacy of Arunachal Pradesh has already been mentioned above.

It should be noted that since Independence, both the central and the state governments have been making concerted efforts to motivate the tribal people to obtain education and they have been attempting to devise new and liberal schemes for this purpose.

Education, both formal and informal, is a state responsibility. The state authority after thorough and careful examination is to plan, organise, administer and finance all policy matters relating to the developmental activities.

The history of the educational development of Arunachal Pradesh reveals that due to the manifold efforts of the State, a gradual attitudinal change is taking place in the minds of the people.

The point to be noted is that the number of girls admitted to schools is steadily on the increase. Many girls are prosecuting higher studies in various departments like medicine, agriculture, veterinary, engineering, home science, etc., in various colleges and universities in the country. Besides, many of them are employed in various professions as stated. Even in business and politics, women are taking a very active part. But it is not enough. Much more is yet to be done in the field of women's education and development of Arunachal Pradesh.

All the data/tables, stated in this paper, more or less represent the status of women in Arunachal Pradesh as a whole. It gives us a clear picture that the percentage of Grade III and IV services is also not upto the desired level, considering a State like Arunachal Pradesh, where free education upto class VIII exists, though from class IX to XII, students have to pay one fourth of the total cost of the text books. Facilities like reserve seats, stipends are available for higher education. For employment as well, there are reserved quotas for the local people.

The report also confirms that so far no

seminar, commission or discussion have been conducted in the State in connection with the women's education and development. State authorities may like to recall the version of the Father of the Nation – "Education of a man is the education of an individual, but education of a woman is the education of an entire family". (Mahatma Gandhi)

The All India level Research and Statistics have proved that with the passage of years, the percentage of the female workers' participation is on the decline, the reason being due to the non-receipt of requisite qualification of women at different levels and mainly due to the discrimination against women in all walks of life despite the constitutional guarantees for equality of economic, social, political and educational facilities.

Independence was expected to usher in new era of all-round development not on the basis of sex but of the nation as a whole. The probable solution of this problem is a pragmatic approach with constant endeavour for uniform development through research work. Because, it is an intellectual process, always in the quest of truth. It starts with a problem, collects data or facts, analyses them critically and reaches decisions based on actual evidence.

Since Arunachal Pradesh has obtained her statehood recently, it would be wise to

maintain all kinds of information, irrespective of major or minor aspects of each and every department. It would obviously help all researchers while proceeding in the collection of data, systemisation of data and drawing inference. It will also help to unfold the "total personality" of the female population. More suitable incentives and special facilities have to be provided towards female education and its development.

It is needless to mention that a lion's share must be shouldered by each and every woman of the society to make the education policy effective and fruitful. They should voluntarily take initiative in handling and sharing all the activities around them with man in day-to-day life, so that one day they would find that they are the participants in all aspects of life and living. "The worth of a state, in the long run, is the worth of individuals composing it." (John Stuart Mill)

To motivate the females towards education, more educational institutions have to be established with required facilities besides giving them preference for admissions into the co-education institutions. To maintain uniformity throughout the State, the authorities have to take up all policy matters with the visions of hindsight, insight and foresight.

The author while going through the causes

of wastage and stagnation of the primary level of education of the State, in her previous studies, found that the dropout rate is more in the case of girls. This is due to the facts that many of the parents/guardians are still ignorant to the values of education. They very little think of the education of their daughters. In spite of the government's efforts, child marriage is one of the traditional cultures in Arunachal Pradesh which makes the child unable to continue studies. Besides due to economic constraints, the parents/guardians cannot maintain the cost of the studies of their children. They want the children to help them in cultivation and looking after their siblings at home during the sowing and harvesting periods of cultivation. They also want them to watch their paddy fields in order to protect the crop from birds and animals. Thus, the children are compelled to forego their education.

Therefore, the parents/guardians need to be educated about the importance of education of individuals and also for social development. The massive programme for removing adult illiteracy has to be conducted with an improved and effective manner. Mass media can be another factor for the enhancement of literacy. Part-time education for girls/women has to be provided in every possible way. Some creches may be started so that the working women and others can keep their children during working hours. Appropriate steps have to be taken by

the state authorities for total removal of social evils like early betrothal or forced marriage and social taboos against the education of girls. This can be done through persuasion and propaganda.

In fact, nothing but the joint efforts of the society as a whole, the state authorities and womenfolk themselves only can do for the full blossoming of the innate gifts, virtues and potentialities of each and every member of the fair sex.

Favouritism, groupism, individual rivalry, jealousy and corruption are rampant in the whole process of education as pointed out by the Kothari Commission. All these create nothing but a vicious environment that results in victimising the poor, honest and efficient fair sex. Consequently, they lose interest in shouldering their grave responsibility which adversely affects the society.

There seems to be a direct correlation between education and development. Moreover, women's education will have an indirect advantage of helping in the social transformation, as the famous Chinese saying has this to say, "If you want to plan for a year, plant wheat ; if you want to plan for ten years, grow trees ; but if you want to plan for hundred years, educate your women".

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ROLE AND STATUS OF THE TRIBAL WOMEN IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

DISHI MIHU MALLO

INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh, situated in the North east of India, is nearly 84,000 sq. km in area and has a population of 8,58,392 out of which 3,97,150 are females. This population is spread in 3,257 villages compact by 48 Blocks in 11 districts. The total crop area is only 231.9 hectare.

Like the other States, Arunachal Pradesh is also implemen-ting many welfare and development activities but the achievement is quite slow due to the geographical constraints existing in the State, socio-economic backwardness and illiteracy of the people.

A general survey over the State may reveal a high incidence of child mortality, morbidity, deformities, acute malnutrition and skin diseases, tuberculosis in children and women due to poor unhygienic living conditions, ignorance of parents of child rearing. This is parti-cularly with the children and women groups because the two groups of the tribal

societies of Arunachal Pradesh are most neglected.

The Government has been administering the area just after Independence and has come a long way with multifarious problems and taboos – natural, geographical and psychological. But very little progress and development could be achieved for the womenfolk. There are 26 major tribes and a number of sub-tribes in the State. The Monpas, Mijis, Akas, Sherdukpens, Bangnis, Apatanis, Nishis, Sulungs, Hill Miris, Tagins, Adis, Mishimis, Khamtis, Shingphoos, Noctes, Wanchos and Yangsas are some of the main tribes inhabiting the State. Most of these communities are ethnically similar, having derived from the original common stock but their geographical isolation from each other has brought amongst them certain distinctive characteristics in language, dress and customs. Unfortunately, none of the practices and customs are favourable towards the women as Arunachal tribal societies are also dominant by man – the sex ratio being 861 females per 1000 males.

MARRIAGE

The era of the system of selling women to others which was in practice in pre-muslim dynasty – is still continuing in India in various forms even after several years of Independence – child marriage, *satipratha*, forced marriage, etc., could not be eradicated from Indian society.

It cannot be denied that matrimonial relationship is more important than any other relationship. Matrimony brings not only two souls together but also two families too to have a decent and affectionate relationship with the two families. Thus it spreads over the society to create a nucleus. Through marriage new culture, innovation, positive outlook generate and a society becomes dynamic in nature. Arunachal Pradesh is not an exception from that. Marriage depicts particular feature of the particular society. In Arunachal Pradesh we find various types of marriage customs in different tribes. No universal concept is applicable. There are negotiation marriage, romantic marriage and marriage by elopment and capture.

FORCED MARRIAGE

In case of forced marriage, it is obvious that counsel of both sex are not accepted. Specially dignity of women is absolutely overlooked in this marriage. The concept of marriage should be a blend of the factors – instinctive, economic and religious. But one cannot overlook the moral aspect. The social evil like forced marriage is still prevailing in Arunachal Pradesh. In such marriage, the will and wish of the girl has no meaning – her sentiment in this aspect is considered lunacy and by all means she is forced to accept the marriage for which her father/guardian has accepted the bride price. In the case of child

marriage, the brutality of the man rather the society goes to the extent of legal rape as before gaining sexual consciousness and puberty the child is compelled to maintain a routine conjugal life. The aspiration of a girl for education, decent life is nipped in the bud as a woman in tribal society is nothing more than a commodity, more values are paid to a *Mithun* than a woman in Arunachal Pradesh by the man. The forced marriage is generally imposed upon weaker section of the society when parents are unable to pay back debts/dowry to the bride's party. Usually the forced marriage occurs between an elderly man and a very young girl. The lack of understanding between the husband and the girl he marries, often creates a life of open prison.

The forced marriage has only demerits by taking into account its values. Very often a girl feels that there is no one to save her, release her from this imprisonment. She finds very little security and she becomes mentally depressed and being overwhelmed with her situation, she commits suicide or she is compelled by her impulse to run away for a shelter which she considers safe.

As a result, bitter relations or misunderstandings develop in both the families which lead to dispute and this dispute later turns into war, killings and destructions of valuables and property and the sweet relation of the two families is lost. As a whole, the whole society is effected by such dispute.

In the Nishi community of Lower Subansiri district, the custom of polygamy is prevailing not for gaining sexual satisfaction but perhaps with the idea to create more working hands in the family itself for cultivation. The womenfolk of the tribal society are more dynamic and the lion's share of the household responsibilities are shouldered by them. But be it in the house or be it in the cultivation field, without the cooperative hands of a lady the household will collapse. Yet the society being ruled by the men, due respect, social status and recognition of their imperative services towards the household and the society are not recognised.

India ia a large country having second largest population in this planet. India, after her Independence has crossed a long way to achieve development goals but a few social evils are still now pulling back the developmental speed - probably because the womenfolk are still denied with their due rights. In Arunachal Pradesh, the light of education and the fruit of social advancement have not reached many parts of the State. The social evils that are prevailing in the State are the perils of the womenfolk of the State. Should the national mainstream be strengthened, its tributaries are to be made free of evils and pollutions. It is high time that venture should be initiated by the Government of India and the State Governments with participation of the Voluntary Organisations to think and

promulgate suitable actions so that women of the country receive equal status as that of men, equal rights to be given in all spheres of life in the society. The respect and dignity of women are to be restored. To achieve the goal, we must Indianise ourselves keeping away the differences of religion, caste, creed, tribes, language, dress and habits.

INTER-TRIBE MARRIAGE

To create a sense of integrity it is felt necessary that inter-tribe marriage is encouraged in tribal societies of Arunachal Pradesh. A few stray cases might be there which occurred due to the enthusiasm of the boy and the girl. But such practices are not accepted by the tribal society widely or openly. For this a great responsibility lies upon the educated youth who should motivate the people with justification and value of inter-tribe marriage.

In a State like Arunachal Pradesh with multi dialects, rituals and various taboos and customs, inter-tribe marriage is presumed to be beneficial for bringing an integrated tribal society for peaceful co-existence. The coming society out of this inter-tribe marriage will have less differences and have a broader outlook and social strength. In a society like this, the women would find less hindrance to have their status and social rights.

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INHERITANCE OF PROPERTY BY WOMEN

Indian civilization is one of the oldest ones and in ancient India women were treated with almost a divine respect. Perhaps no other country or civilization equated women with the power of wealth (Goddess *Lakshmi*), education (Goddess *Saraswati*) and the power of all powers (Goddess *Durga*). This concept gave women an equality if not a superior position to men. Unfortunately, social evils found its way into our civilization and the position of women deteriorated to a status much lower to that of men.

Article 15 of Indian Constitution and the position of the State shall not discriminate on the grounds of sex, caste, etc., and this resulted in the Factory Act, the Mines Act, etc., bringing equal right to men and women. Under Article 16 women are equally eligible for all appointments and under Article 39 of the Directives of State Policy, women have equal rights to adequate means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work. Above all, the Constitution makes it a fundamental duty of every citizen, under Article 51A to renounce derogatory practices to the dignity of women.

In Arunachal Pradesh we have deep rooted traditional laws and customary practices. The predominantly tribal people of the State are regulated by age-old customs which have been

handed down to us from our forefathers. Whether they are the Mishimis, Monpas, Mishings, Adis or Apatanis the tribal laws and customs invariably state that man is the dominant force and personality in the tribal society. It is the man who is the sole owner of the property, inherited or otherwise by virtue of his being a man. Woman has no claim to any property except the few ornaments she may have received from the parents. Women can neither inherit nor acquire property which can only be inherited or claimed by a direct male heir. Wives and daughters of tribal people of Arunachal Pradesh have no right to property in any way and right to property only revolves around the succession of males. Only in case of the Idu-Mishimi tribe of Dibang Valley district the daughter/son inherits the property of father. The tribal woman of Arunachal Pradesh has neither security in life nor protection guaranteed by law.

The time is ripe now for all of us to re-evaluate and re-examine our traditional systems, to see clearly in the light of fast changes taking place in the country and the world at large. This does not necessarily mean that we should give up or break with our traditions and follow blindly the traditions of others but we are to change our outlook and change our value system to suit the necessity and requirements of modern days and the society.

REGISTRATION OF MARRIAGE

Any social system must cater to the needs of women as an integral part of family and society and the law should be for the betterment and enhancement of the quality of life for all. The women of Arunachal Pradesh are no exception and the Government while implementing schemes for women of Arunachal Pradesh should involve people and Voluntary Organisations towards promoting the cause of women through legislation and laws keeping in view the human values enshrined in the Indian Constitution. Last but not the least, the women of Arunachal Pradesh, particularly the educated groups should be able to offer a dynamic participation and cooperation to create a better future for the innocent and unfortunate fellow sisters of the State.

In any society, recognition or registration of a marriage is not a simple thing as one may think. Even in affluent society the question of proper recognition or registration of marriage is often raised in certain situation. Christians are married in the churches and records are maintained. In the court marriage, records are maintained in the courts. Similarly, in most of the Hindu and Muslim societies, a marriage is solemnised according to an established system. These systems are recognised and universally accepted both by the societies and the Court of Law.

In most communities of Arunachal Pradesh even negotiated marriages are not reeorded nor there are any established and uniform norms of solemnising the marriage. The lapse now started victimising more the woman partner than the man, and the need of keeping records of marriage, as in other societies, felt in Arunachal Pradesh with urgency long time back but nothing could be achieved in this regard so far. Government machinery has to be active in this regard and motivation is a pre-requisite to achieve success.

In conclusion, I could not help but tempt to say that unless we, the educated women wake-up and unite, act and motivate and fight for the constitutional right, it would never be possible to break the chain of the HUMAN BONDAGE that is still keeping the hands of Arunachal Pradesh women locked in the handcuff.

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ROLE AND STATUS OF THE BODO WOMEN IN THEIR SOCIETY THROUGH THE AGES

K. BRAHMA

Introduction :

(a) Social structure of the Bodos :

The social structure of the Bodos is primarily patriarchal in character. In the Bodo society father is the sole guardian of the family. After the death of the father the eldest son inherits the right exercised by his father. Generally it is observed that the entire property of the family is distributed among the sons only. Daughters do not have the right to property when there are sons in a family. However, it is also observed that a portion of the property is given to the wife while distributing the property among sons. After the death of the mother the portion of property given to her goes to the son who looks after her and takes care of her till her death.

(b) Family structure :

A Bodo family consists of the Father, Mother, their sons, daughters and their grand children.

It is observed that in a Bodo family married sons are separated from their parents after marriage. The unmarried daughters remain under the control of their parents till the marriage. The mother is more responsible for her daughter's well being than the father. However, the general responsibility of the entire family lies on the parent who is the sole guardian of a family. After the death of the father, the eldest son of the family bears the responsibility of the entire family. Of course, he is to be guided by his mother in some important affairs of the family. However, the mother is to bear the responsibility of the family after the death of her husband if the son is minor. In the Bodo society joint family is very rare. Separation is very common after the marriage of the grown-up sons. The quarrel among the wives of sons leads to separation from the mainstream of the family. It is observed that even without his will the son is compelled by his wife to get separated from their parents.

Status of Bodo Women :

(a) Importance of women during the child birth :

Elderly women are essential at the time of the child birth. They attend to the mother of the newly born child. Because of their good-cooperation safe delivery is possible to the mother. The elderly woman performs the work of a trained mid-wife or of a nurse. She cuts the

navel (*Uthumai*) of the newly born baby and bathes with tipid water. No male member is allowed to attend the child delivery. However, an *Oja* or medicine man is permitted if his service is required.

(b) Importance relating to marriage :

During the early period there was a system of realising the bride price from the bridegroom. The rate of bride price was too high and it was unbearable to the poor bridegroom, although it was compulsory in the Bodo society. However, the system of the bride price was later removed from the society. The custom of the feast in honour of the bride and her parents is still prevalent in the society.

To perform a marriage ceremony the presence of two young girls known as *Bairathi* is essential. They can never be replaced or substituted by the male. They perform some important pre-marriage rites like distribution of areca nuts and bathing of the groom on the day of marriage besides holding the *Chailon bati*, the sacred lamp, meant for the marriage ceremony. They also dance while procession with the bridegroom and bride takes place.

(c) Important Role during Religious functions :

(i) The *Kherai puja* is one of the most important religious festivals of the Bodos. This festival is performed with the help of *Daudini*

who must be a young and unmarried girl. In absence of *Daudini* no *Kherai puja* can be performed.

(ii) *Brahma Dharma* and woman's participation :

In the modern Bodo society it is observed that a Bodo woman is well-versed in vedic hymns (*Gayatri mantra*) of the *Yojnahuti*.

(iii) In the Bodo christian society also it is observed that a woman who is well-versed and well acquainted with the system of prayer can conduct the prayer in the church/any place where prayer is arranged.

(d) Bodo women's participation at the family economy :

(i) Custody of granary :-

It is a common system of the Bodo society that the granary (*Bakhri*) of a family is kept under the custody of the wife. She knows better than her husband about the position of the granary of their family. Her husband cannot dispose of any portion of the stock of paddy or any crop without prior discussion with her.

(ii) **Custody of the cattle, poultry, piggery, etc., of the family : -**

All female members of a family turn to be owners of the cattle, poultry, piggery, etc. The father, who is the head of the family has to take permission from his wife or daughters if he desires to dispose of any cattle, poultry or piggery of the family. All daughters possess share

of the poultry or piggery. Any income available either from poultry or piggery may be utilised for the benefit of the family. Thus, the female members manage their required expenses for their garments like *Dokhna, Jumgra,* etc. They rear cocoons and produce rayon, *endi, Aronai,* etc. The value of *Endi* is very high at the market. Thus, the Bodo ladies earn handsome money by selling the *Endi* clothes woven by them. The piggery and poultry also enable the Bodo women to earn handsome money. In such a way they can help the family.

(iii) **Agriculture and Womenfolk :**

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the Bodos. Without womenfolk agriculture is impossible for a Bodo family. Main role is played by female members of the family during the time of cultivation. A ritual performance is done by the female guardian of the family while plantation of paddy starts. During the time of growth of paddy plants another ritual performance is done by a young girl of the family wishing the paddy a full growth and successful harvest. She touches tops of paddy plants with a bamboo stick (*goncha*) which is used in weaving. While she touches tops of paddy she applies mustard oil on the stick. It is believed that if the maiden touches the tops of paddy plants there is a great hope of successful harvest.

Again, when the paddy is fully ripe and the time of harvest comes, a little portion of

bundle of ripe paddy is brought to the house by the female guardian of the family. If it is not done, it is believed that *Lakhi* or *Mainao,* the goddess of wealth becomes dissatisfied and may harm the family.

(iv) **Weaving and the Bodo woman :**

Weaving is the compulsory item for the Bodo woman. It is said that a girl who is not expert in weaving may not be selected for the marriage. Hence a young Bodo girl learns how to weave from the early age. It is observed that the young girls and married women of the family earn money by selling different clothes woven by them and thus help the family. Every Bodo girl is bound to weave *Dokhna* for her own use. It is a matter of discredit for a young Bodo girl to use the *Dokhna* woven by other girls or women. Nowadays, Weavers' Association called *Mahila Samiti* or *Aijw Afat* is established in almost every Bodo village with a view to producing clothes on community basis. The weavers are self-employed and get financial benefits from the *Samiti.*

(v) ***Aijw Lakhi Bhander*** :-

It is observed that the women of Bodo villages organise *Aijw Lakhi Bhander* and use to stock paddy by contributing themselves. The purpose of stocking paddy is to help the co-members of the *Samiti* during the time of distress or hardships. In this manner they can save a poor family who suffers from poverty.

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(e) Bodo Women and Social Reformation :-

(i) Bodo *Mahila Samiti* or *Aijw Afat* and liquor prohibition :-

The use of the country-made liquor is deep rooted in the Bodo society. This ill-habit destroys many Bodo families and as such, it becomes a curse to the Bodo society. The women's organisation called *Mahila Samiti* or *Aijw Afat* has undertaken programmes to eradicate the ill-habits such as consumption of liquor and sale of liquor from the society. Thus, the Bodo women's organisation has become somehow successful to save the Bodo society from total destruction. However, it is observed that eradication of the ill-habit of consumption of liquor from the society is not so easy task. In this regard the cooperation of the menfolk is necessary. Unfortunately, the *Aijw Afat* or the women's organisation is deprived of such cooperation. Consequently, the ardent effort of the Bodo women's organisation in the field of social reformation becomes unsuccessful.

(ii) Bodo women's participation in the Rural *Panchayats* :-

It is observed that the Bodo women take part in the Rural *Panchayats* along with the male members. They also participate at the discussion about the affairs of their villages along with their male members. Thus, the Bodo women are given equal status at the Rural *Panchayats*. Nowadays the Bodo women are seen enjoying democratic rights by contesting at the general elections.

There are few instances of becoming members of the legislative assembly as well as members of the cabinet of ministers of the State.

(iii) Example of Nationalism and Bodo women :-

Legends say that during the pre-independence period Bodo women also stood against the colonialist British rulers. For an instance, Birgwshri was such a Bodo lady who fought against the inhuman activities of the British rulers. She was a revenue collector during regime of the British rulers. However, she refused to collect revenues and valuable things like gold, silver, etc., for the British rulers. At last she died fighting with the British soldiers.

Nowadays, it is seen that the educated Bodo women hold employment in Govt. and semi-Govt. offices of the State. There are many educated Bodo ladies who are serving as teachers in educa-tional institutions. A few ladies are found holding responsible jobs at various departments including medical, judicial and engineering, etc.

Conclusion :

The position of women in the Bodo society is discussed here in brief. Summing up the discussion it may be said that since the early period the position of women in the Bodo society has been found considerably high. So far as the

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social pattern is concerned it may be said that the Bodo society is not a matriarchal one, rather it is a patriarchal society. Sometimes it is observed that daughters are also allowed share of the property, although it is not very common example in the society.

It is, however, a matter of great pleasure that the Bodo women of the present generation have undertaken measures to uplift the position of the womenfolk in the way of many odds and difficulties. This arduous task of the Bodo women who have been much neglected and ill-behaved by different machineries in the country would be successful if they are patronised and cooperated by their fellow brothers and well wishers. It is observed that due to much simplicity, open-heartedness, frankness and due to lack of education the Bodo women become easily victims of the antisocial elements of some high caste societies. Hence it is my humble suggestion to the womenfolk in particular and to all the members of the civilised human society to give stress in educating their daüghters and sisters properly and make them conscious. Education is the sharpest weapon of all to protect themselves from the social enemies and to maintain their position in the civilised human society as always high, so that womenfolk also can contribute a lot to the nation.

PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMEMT OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN DIFFERENT SPHERES

D. PATHAK

In any evaluation of what probes into the basic factors responsible for the backwardness of tribal communities in general, and the tribal women in particular, the point very much needed to be taken into consideration is not the outward aspects of what may appear to be a reality ; rather all we need to do is to develop a close intimacy with them with a view to dive deep into their heart and soul which, in turn, might provide us with facts having real relevance of their own in the true sense of the term. The nature, as also the scope, of this article is the one in which the emphasis is going to be put on the internal aspects, which, at first sight, may appear to be quite negligible having no importance whatsoever. As we all know post-independence India, as also during the colonial regime of the Britishers and even before that efforts have been made in so far as the putting forward of several programmes for the upliftment of tribal communities is concerned. In this context several teams of research from Government based institutions as well as social and charitable organisations have taken the burden of making studies of the various problems of these neglected

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lot having been facing so far. It cannot, however, be denied that these people, particularly women, living from the time immemorial and scattered all over the country, are still lagging far behind in comparison to other ethnic groups. Let us, therefore, try to approach the matter from both agents : outward and internal. In fact, outward approach stands here for the steps put forward to be taken, by various social and other organisations, so far, in order to bring the women to the mainstream of the modern society which has so far failed miserably, and internal approach stands for some sort of human treatment which, I think, would instil into them confidence, courage and the feeling that they also form an integral part of the society. Their much problem, I am sure, is not physical but psychological.

There are hundreds of tribal communities scattered in different provinces of our country. Climatic and geographical differences have always been there in facing the nature of their problems which varies from place to place as also from province to province. The 'Bhils' in Gujarat have problems of their own very much different from the problems of the 'Santhals' in South Bihar. Similarly, the nature of the problems of the tribal community living in 'Bastar' district of Madhya Pradesh is of different sort, different from the ones faced by the Bodos, Misings or Karbis of Assam. In fact, geographical set-up of a place shapes the nature of problems one is to face. But one thing common to all the

abovementioned tribal groups is that they are still living in wilderness, in darkness and that they should never be thought apart and isolated from nature. They, to tell the truth, constitute a major portion of what is to be thought as 'Nature'.

With the advent of modern education human lives appear to be happier, prosperous and easier to some extent. To be a bit precise, it has instilled into us 'feeling of security' we desperately searched in the olden times. But irony of the fate is that tribal women are yet to be made educated. Illiteracy is very much there in its ugliest form, which, in the process, has made them stuck to some of the most irrational superstitions and beliefs. For example, the Bodos or Misings in Assam still believe in 'child marriage'. These orthodox beliefs have led the women to turn a deaf ear to things like family planning, education to girls (particularly higher one), etc. There can be hardly two opinions about the fact that tribal women are hard working and that they are in no way inferior to their counterparts. As a matter of fact, they are the backbone of the economy of their houses. So education is one of the factors why they are still so much backward. No doubt, christian missionaries' efforts in this regard have been praiseworthy and have got spectacular success, but, in the process, it has endangered the very identity of these communities.

In the second place, tribal villages are generally located in remote and backward areas having no facilities whatsoever of modern communication. As a result, they are even today, cut off from the mainstream of our modern society. Television, radio, cinema, etc., are something not easily accessible to them as their economy does not permit them. They do not have schools and colleges in the area of their habitation.

These women, as I pointed out earlier, happen to be the backbone of the economy of their families. Apart from household works they are to perform duties in the cornfields which consist among other things, plantation of the paddy crops as well as even ploughing of the field. Now clear as it is, they depend very much on agriculture which hardly brings back more than hand to mouth service. Hence it is also a major obstacle on the way to their development.

But the point we need to emphasise upon most is the lack of proper seriousness on the part of the Government, and also other agencies like the groups of those thought to be more civilized and reasonable, in tackling this age long problems of tribal women. To my mind, their problems are purely psychological, and hence the need of the hour is to come forward with a new outlook and attitude, which offer genuine affection for these women. An approach like this would take us closer to them, even upto their

inner soul and heart. This will certainly develop a kind of feeling in them which, in the long run, may prove to be an inspiring factor. It would not be an overestimate of the fact that these women view the outside society to be full of the people not their own. It is, therefore, inevitable to develop an intimate bond with them which, in turn, will take them into our confidence. It will also create some sort of motivation in them – yes, it is nothing but an urge that inspires us to march ahead with the pace of the world of science has been moving ever since it came into existence.

THE ROLE OF MISING WOMEN IN THE FIELD OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

JAWAHAR JYOTI KULI

The Misings, otherwise known as the Miris form a major section of the indigenous tribal population of Assam. This colourful tribe of Mongoloid origin is scattered all over Assam although some degree of concentration are found mainly in the riverine areas of Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Sonitpur, Golaghat, Dhemaji and Tinsukia districts. They were originally the Tibeto-Burman speaking hill tribe who inhabited the range of Miri Hills in between the present Siang and Subansiri districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The Misings migrated to and settled mainly in the northern valley of the Brahmaputra about five hundred years ago. Since then they have been living as a part of the native population of Assam and have contributed a lot to the formation and enrichment of local culture throughout the centuries.

Although the Misings have been living in the plains mixing socio-culturally in the mainstream of the Assamese society, they have been still maintaining their traditions, customs, religious beliefs and practices and language

which distinguish them clearly from the rest of the people of Assam. This tribe has rich folk literature which reflects their sentiments and feelings, social norms and values and also historical events associated with their migration from the hills to the plains. Apart from their traditional customs, coming down to the plains, they have converted to Hinduism and have taken over lots of beliefs and customs associated with that faith. One of the characteristics of their culture is the remarkable manner of adoptation of the old mores and modes in the wider cultural setting of the plains.

The economy of the Mising society depends mostly on the production of agricultural crops, piggery and poultry farms, kitchen garden, weaving industry, etc.

The present paper is intended to analyse and evaluate the role of the Mising women in the economy of the society.

AGRICULTURE :

The Mising women actively participate in the agricultural activities of the society. In the fields, the Mising women have a hand in every aspect. They sow the seeds gathered from previous year's harvests in selected areas and help in transplanting the seedlings when the time comes. They make raised mounds of earth demarcating one patch from the other in order

to let the water collect. They collect the weeds and unwanted plants and throw them aside. As soon as the seedlings mature and they begin to bear fruit, the Mising women engage themselves in chasing of the birds which come to feed on them. When the crops ripen, it is time for harvesting. Here, the women are entirely engrossed. Right from the time, the first streaks of light of the early morning sun appear in the sky, they hurry to the fields and busy themselves in cutting the crops. It continues throughout the entire day. Generally, the menfolk carry away the big bundles of the harvested crops. But if necessary, the women also carry them upon their heads.

The Mising women often venture out into the forests adjoining their fields and home. They gather leaves and fruits which is considered a delicacy as vegetables for curry. It is often seen that while returning from the fields, they carry upon their heads huge bundles of twigs and branches of trees which are used as firewood.

Besides these, the Mising women devote time in RIKSENG (RVKSCNG) which is a separate and individual means of agricultural production of black pulses, mustard oil seeds, paddy, potatoes, etc., which is managed entirely by her care. This is a practice particularly of the youngers. They dig up the earth with spades, clear the debris and plant their own crops.

The money that is obtained by selling the products of RIKSENG is kept aside by the owner. She uses it to buy herself the necessary commodities that she prefers like raw materials for weaving, etc. It covers the medical expenses of herself and her family. She uses it to pay the school fees of the children or those of her brothers and sisters or herself and buy articles for the same. She even uses the money when she wishes to travel, visiting relatives or occasional visits to the town.

WEAVING :

An important household industry in every Mising family is weaving. Every Mising woman is a symbol of handloom weaving and art of spinning. Most of the domestic requirements of clothes are met from the family looms. Every Mising woman is a born weaver. Girls are taught spinning and weaving from their very childhood.

The Mising women grow mulberry, *Kesuru* trees, etc., in their own vegetable gardens. They collect the leaves in big bamboo containers and rear silk worms i.e., *Endi* and *Muga*. Great care is taken right from collecting the eggs and feeding the worms with a continuous supply of fresh leaves. They spin out the yarn in their own *CHARKHA* or in *TAKURI* and *TAKPIN*. The Mising women manage time for spinning threads after the family members have gone to sleep. Also during their ways to the distant fields, they spin

a handful of threads. It is their convenient regular time for spinning. Some of them dye the threads with their own indigenous methods like boiling them with leaves and barks of certain trees. They are skilful in weaving and weave beautiful clothes with artistic designs with ease. They look at MIMANGS which are pieces of cloth with intricate designs which they transfer into a riot of pleasant colours in their looms. They weave RIBI GASENG (*RI : BI GASCNG*), GONRO UGON, MIBU GALUG, DUMER (*DUMCR*), GAPA, SEGBUNG (*SCGBUNG*), SENG (*SCNG*). GERE EGE, KIMBU GASOR, TAPUM GASOR, YAMBO, GERO, GADU, etc.

It is a matter of utmost importance for a Mising bride to take with her a good number of clothes which she herself has woven. Every Mising woman bedecks herself with bridal attire that she has woven herself. Similarly, the groom's clothes are also woven by a Mising woman.

As part of the marriage gift every Mising woman presents to her son a GADU besides other necessary clothing.

The Mising women weave clothes not only for themselves but also for the other members of the family. In festivals or on other ceremonial occasions, the family head does not require to purchase clothes for their members. They put on the weaved clothes with great respect and proud. Moreover, the weaving products

particularly TAPUM GASOR, GADU, EGE, etc., are demanded high in the market. They use to sell the products at reasonable price. In this way, they help to lessen the economic burden of the family and earn their own expenses.

ANIMAL HUSBANDRY :

It is a common practice of the Mising women which has an important role in their economy. They rear cow, buffalo, goat, etc. Besides these, they also rear pig and poultry which are sold for cash income. Earnings from these animals go into the house of the women. They purchase necessary articles and save the rest for future utilisation. A family, apart from maintaining, can even prosper solely depending on poultry or piggery.

KITCHEN GARDEN :

The Mising women cultivate all kinds of vegetables. The elderly women spend most of their time in making a kitchen garden growing chilli, ginger, garlic, brinjal, potato, gourd, lady's finger, etc. The vegetables supplement their requirement for family consumption to a considerable extent.

CONCLUSION :

From the above discussion, it has been observed that the Mising women play a vital role

in the economy of their society. They have practically no leisure time from the time of leaving the beds early in the morning and till going to beds at night. Throughout the day, they have to keep themselves busy in performing indoor and outdoor works of the family.

By and large, the Mising women are inadequately equipped with skills and knowledge to compete in the present day market. They have got the potentiality in agricultural works and have got experience in spinning and weaving, but less scientific knowledge. They should be provided with facilities for training particularly in weaving, poultry and pig breeding. Besides these facilities for training, credit and marketing support are equally essential for creating gainful economy.

If these measures are combined with sincere motivation and effective application, then they undoubtedly will help in the economic upliftment of the Mising society as well as to nation.

(N.B. - The words inside the brackets are pronounced in Mising language.)

ROLE AND STATUS OF THE TRIBAL WOMEN IN THEIR SOCIETIES THROUGH AGES

MANGAL SINGH HAZOWARY

INTRODUCTION :

According to 1981 Census the population of scheduled tribes was 51.63 million comprising 7.76% of the total population of the country. This population relates to about 250 individual scheduled tribes notified in different States and Union Territories. Article 366(25) of the Constitution of India has defined the scheduled tribes as "such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be the scheduled tribes for the purpose of this Constitution". The scheduled tribes are primary rural dwellers, their rural population being 93.80% as per 1981 Census.

The geographical propinquity and tribal demography permit a regional and zonal classification. Broadly speaking, three tribal zones can be demarcated in India, (i) North-North Eastern Zone (ii) the Middle or Central Zone and (iii) South-South Western Zone. To a certain extent the tribes in the above zones are

distinguished from one another in language, culture and physical characters.

LITERACY LEVELS OF TRIBAL WOMEN :

As per 1971 Census the percentage of literacy in India was 29.46 and the percentage of literacy among the males and females was 30.45 and 18.70 respectively. The percentage of literacy among the scheduled tribes was 11.30, the percentage of literacy between the males and the females being 17.63 and 4.85 respectively. This now shows that while the percentage of literacy among the females at the national level was almost half that of the males, amongst the scheduled tribes the percentage of literacy of the females was almost 1/4th of the males.

Women in more civilised parts of India may deeply grieve their tribal counterparts for their hard working but envy for their high status among the community and their happy life. The wife and husband of tribal society are equal partners. Most of the marriages among them are concluded by the people who know each other intimately.

Most of the tribes are patrilineal. The marriage is strictly exogamous and proposal of marriage comes from boy's side who chooses his life partner. Consent of the third person is not an essential element in the tribal society as well as that of the tribes of North-East India. Bride

price is not a common practice among the tribals. However, this shows that the tribal culture is more advanced and superior in many respects like the higher status of the women.

A tribal woman occupies an important role in the socio-economic structure of her society. It may be said that the women of the tribes of the North-East work harder than the menfolk. The tribal women are equal partners of their male counterparts in outdoor as well as indoor activities. They play an important role in their economy. Their duty is to collect firewood, fetch water, cook food, brew rice beer, thresh paddy and dehusk it, catch fish, manage the piggery and poultry farm and weaving at home. In fact, most of the tribal women do all activities through ages in their society.

AGRICULTURE :

Agriculture is the main occupation of the tribal society and 87% of their population are also fully dependent on agricultural economy. The tribal women are active agriculturists. Most of them perform more than 50% of the agricultural work. Rice cultivation is more popular among the tribal women.

The tribal women assist the menfolk in clearing fields and hoeing too. Besides, the women do weeding and transplantation. Reaping of the corn is made exclusively by womenfolk.

KITCHEN GARDEN :

As like the other societies, the cultivation of vegetables is also popular among the tribal communities. They cultivate all kinds of vegetables which are found throughout India. The tribal women living in interior area, no doubt, feel even today pride in having a kitchen garden of their own. Elderly women spend most of their time in making kitchen garden. They grow chilli, ginger, garlic, brinjal, potato, coriander, gourd, lady's finger, etc. The vegetables, to a great extent, supplement their requirement for domestic consumption and tasteful food. It is also seen that most of the tribal women sell some vegetables produced in the garden in the nearby market.

DOMESTIC AFFAIRS :

The tribal women always spend their daily life in busy. In fact, tribal women do not have any leisure since leaving her bed early in the morning and till going to bed at night. Throughout the day she has to keep herself busy in performing not only the indoor household works, but outdoor works also. She is required to cook food, wash clothes, spin yarn, weave cloth, fetch water from the nearest available source, collect firewood and eatables from the nearby forest, attend to agricultural works in the fields and so on and so forth. A girl of school going age, therefore, has to help her mother and other

elderly women in the family not only by taking care of her younger brothers and sisters but also by helping the women of the family in the performance of day-to-day household works.

EMPLOYMENT :

Although the majority of the tribal educated women remain unemployed, some of them are engaged as Primary School, M.E. and High School teachers, mid-wives, *Gram Sevikas*, Clerks, Nurses, etc. Among the University degree holders are professional teachers in Middle and Secondary Schools, Doctors, Lawyers and others. A large number of them are clerks in Government Services and in Public and Private section concerns. In this way, educated tribal women are serving for the greater interest of the nation as a whole.

PIGGERY AND POULTRY FARM :

Since the tribal women are agriculturists, animal husbandry plays an important role in their economy. They rear cow, buffalo, goat, elephant, etc. Besides these, they also rear pig and poultry which they mostly need for meat, offering sacrifices and for trade too. The poultry and pig rearing is mainly confined to womenfolk. Every tribal woman has her own mini piggery and poultry farm. Keeping such a farm is their traditional occupation. They also rear goat. The poultry, piggery and goats are entirely managed

by womenfolk in traditional way and most of these products are sold at home by themselves. Sometimes, these products are also sold in the market by the menfolk on behalf of the actual rearer. A tribal woman earns a lot of money by selling domestic animals. These earnings are her own money and she buys her necessary articles and saves the rest for future purposes.

WEAVING :

Some of the tribal women are born weavers and they have a great heritage of traditional skills in weaving. They are the symbol of handloom weaving and art of spinning too. Some of the tribal women have their own traditional pit loom. The art of weaving is of unique interest and importance to the tribal women. There is no single woman or young girl who is not expert in weaving among the Boros as well as Mishings in Assam. From early age, they start learning and by the time they attain puberty they become master of weaving. From the very early times, they are used to weaving clothes to meet their requirement. They rear *Eri* worm and spin yarn out of cocoons. Sometimes, these products are sold in the market.

ROLE OF THE TRIBAL WOMEN IN SOCIAL FUNCTION :

In tribal societies family plays the major role in socialisation. Occupational trainings,

religious beliefs, social customs, cultural norms and values all are basically learnt within the family. The children specially the girls are assigned their respective roles in the socio-economic system according to their age. The tribal families have to perform quite a number of rituals, social functions, marriages and religious festivals throughout the year. Some of their religious functions continue for a number of days during which large number of relatives, friends and other invitees participate and all of them are entertained with food and drinks. In fact, such religious functions become a huge community feast, which involves considerable amount of human labour specially female section and as such, they are trained up.

SUGGESTIONS :

1) The tribal girls have also started to read and write presently. The speed is no doubt very slow, but they now realise the importance of education. Now, a few of them are teachers, nurses, doctors, etc. But the number of such women is not very encouraging. The tribal societies in India are not very much conservative and they do not mind co-education for their boys and girls. However, establishment of schools exclusively for girls and appointment of qualified local trained female teachers will surely improve the situations. The parents and guardians of the girls will like to send them to schools when they come to know that there are female teachers in

the schools where the girls could express their thoughts and ideas freely.

2) Adult education centres for tribal women should be opened separately and these should be managed only by local educated tribal female teachers. These centres should function only during the slack agricultural season. This will ensure confidence among the tribal women and also ensure regular attendance.

3) Special attention should be paid to the spread of technical educa- tion among the tribal women in the tribal areas. Industries are generally established in tribal areas but adequate number of tribal candidates is not available for absorption in these industries for lack of training. Although a number of polytechnics and Industrial Training Institutes have been started in the tribal areas, it has been noticed that the tribal girls do not acquire sufficient skills needed in the market. There is a complete mismatch between the products of these technical institutions and the recruits needed by industrial projects located in the tribal areas. There should be some co-ordination between the educational administration and the management of industrial projects to provide worthwhile skills and employment opportunities to the tribal women. Such technical education will be a valuable input for economic development as well as the role and status of the tribal women.

4) In the different tribal areas some degree of specialisation is found in respect of different handicrafts like weaving, smithy, cane work, carving, idol making, etc., among the tribal women. The invasion of mass-produced goods has been pushing the traditional skills towards extinction. It is desirable to encourage and improve the traditional handicrafts by providing incentives and marketing facilities. The Handloom and Handicrafts Export Promotion Corporation should open a separate wing for tribal products for foreign sales push. The tribal women products should also be popularised in the domestic market.

5) Pig and poultry rearing will be a successful industry, if efforts are made to adopt scientific techniques of breeding, feeding and management. This type of industry provides employment opportu- nities to the large number of marginal farmers, landless labourers specially tribal women as well as other communities.

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ROLE AND STATUS OF THE TRIBAL WOMEN IN THEIR SOCIETIES THROUGH AGES

BINAPANI PEGU

INTRODUCTION :

Situated in the north-eastern part of India, Assam is a province with a colourful and composite society and culture. The divergent tribal groups form the part of the great Assamese society and culture. These tribal communities are lying scattered in various parts of Assam, extending from the plains of Assam to the inaccessible hilly areas of Arunachal Pradesh, North Cachar Hills, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Karbi Anglong - Adis or Abors, Galongs, Akas, Dafalas and Noktes of A.P., Misings, Bodos, Rabhas, Deoris, Karbis, Tiwas or Lalungs and Sonowal Kacharis of Assam. The Mizos of Mizoram, Nagas of Nagaland and the Khasis and Garos of Meghalaya are the main groups inhabiting the North-eastern part of the country. From time immemorial, Assam is the home of these tribal races and through hard struggle for existence not only they have developed and maintained traditional cultures of their own, but they have ceaselessly been contributing to the social, religious, political and

economic spheres of the Assamese society.

Gandhiji said, "Women with the natural, mental strength of their own are fellow travellers of men. Women are the masters of their own trades, in the same way the men are." This observation of Bapuji is applicable to all the tribal women. To the all-round development of the society the tribal women are contributing in their own ways. In the preservation of art and culture of the tribal society in particular and the great Assamese society in general, the tribal women have a perennial place with an adequate promise of a bright future for the society. There are abundant sources of the study and research in the tribal society. A few discussions on the place and role of the women in the tribal society have been put forth. Although the inclusion of all the tribal races and communities in this paper could not be done due to lack of space and time, an attempt has been made to focus some light on the Adis or Abors of Arunachal Pradesh and the Karbis, Bodos, Deoris, Misings, Tiwas and Rabhas. This paper has been prepared particularly on the tribal women of the aforesaid tribal communities.

Social life, social norms and observations, agriculture, animal husbandry, weaving, dress and jewellery, preparation of tribal wine, earning livelihood, taking part in the cooperative society, taking care of and giving education to the children are the chief roles, the women are to carry out in their social and domestic life.

Although the tribes of Assam are mainly of the Tibeto-Burman and Mongoloid origins, the status of the tribal women is very high and remarkable like the women of the Aryan society. Since the ancient times, the tribal women have been performing a very important and indispensable role in the tribal society.

(1) THE MISING WOMEN :

Extending from Sadiya to Tezpur in the State of Assam, the Misings are living scattered and diffused. As per Government Census, it is disclosed that even in the district of Goalpara, the Misings have been found to reside, though in small number. In the male dominated Mising society the women have also been contributing to the family economy through their participation in the agriculture and other field works alongwith their menfolk apart from performing their normal domestic works. It is seen that the Mising women engage themselves in *Rikseng Arik* or plantation of various crops individually outside the family harvest. Rearing of cattle, poultry, pigs and sheep, etc., and weaving is a great source of income and expenditure on threads for their looms, cosmetics, jewellery, clothing, etc., are met with the earnings from *Rikseng Arik*. Moreover, it is also a source of an additional capital for the expense on their children's upbringing and education. It is seen that Mising women take active part in the solemnization of various social

and religious rites. For their own use and reception of guests, the Mising women prepare *Apong* or a kind of country wine made from rice. *Masanam Yakan ege* (a kind of embroidered dress for women commonly prepared in handlooms), *Ribi Gaseng*, *Dumer* (*chadar* or a kind of towel), *Galuk* (shirt for males), *Ugon* and numerous kinds of embroidered clothing are prepared by the Mising women in their own looms with artistic perfection. The *Endi*, *Nuni* and *Muga* products are wonderful creations of the Mising women, excellent in spinning as well as in weaving. The most wonderful and peculiar product of the Mising looms is the *Gadu* or the *Miri Jhim*, made from cotton, spinning and weaving of which are performed by their own hand in homemade tools. The weaving of the *Gadu* is the racial characteristic of the Mising women.

(2) THE ADI OR ABOR WOMEN :

Residing in the Pasighat area and some adjacent areas of Pasighat, the Adis or Abors are quite forward in various ways in comparison with the other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The Adi women are not lagging behind. They are outspoken, truthful and courageous. The active Adi women are seen to take important part in the *jhum* cultivation and other field-activities, the selling of the surplus agricultural produce and the purchases for their respective families are conducted by the Adi women themselves. In this

manner, they contribute to the economy of the society as well as to their own families. The Adi women are also actively engaged in animal husbandry. The rearing of animal is a remarkable aspect of their family economy. So, apart from strengthening the economic aspect of the society, they prove themselves to be self-dependent through their various activities.

The Adi women wear characteristic and colourful dresses and jewelleries. *Gale* (an open article of clothing worn round the lower part of the body), *Poreng*, *Pyagli Poreng*, *Kitpen Poreng*, etc., for women and *Midi Galuk*, *Bobing Galuk*, *Gadu Galuk*, etc., for men are names of some articles of clothing specially woven in motley in their domestic looms. These embroidered dresses represent the artistic perfection in weaving. They themselves cultivate cotton plants and spin in their own handmade spinning tools, weaving *Jhim* cloth. They also produce some articles of clothing for sale as well as for their domestic use. The women also excel in making cots with leaves of *Tako*, a kind of palm bearing big-sized leaves. They seem to have no special taste and interest in jewelleries. However, they keep some costly articles like *Dokne*, *Daksor*, *Tadok*, etc., as a security for the family. The Adis are cooperative, hospitable and simple. They help each other in plantation, fishing, preparation of *Apong*, collection of firewood, milling of rice in their homemade wooden tools, weaving and many other social and community activities.

(3) THE BODO WOMEN :

The Bodos are mostly concentrated in the district of Kokrajhar and Udalguri subdivision of Assam. Nowadays, the Bodos are living scattered in other districts of Assam, too. Just after marriage, the Bodo women are seen to be busy making their husbands' family economically strong and sound. Through various activities they subscribe to the family income. They are very hardworking. They help their husbands in agriculture through the seasons. They perform the plantation of paddy and various vegetables and earn money by selling them in the market. They also manage animal husbandry in the family. Like the women of other tribal communities, the Bodo women also prepare *Jumaijaw* (wine) and *Emao* (medicine for preparing wine) for family consumption and for use in various social and family rituals and for sale. The Bodo women excel in weaving, too. The articles of clothing for the women are generally produced in their own handlooms. The most remarkable of the articles of clothing is the *Dokhna* - a sari like dress for the women. The Bodos regard it as national symbol and it is compulsory for the Bodo women to wear *Dokhna* on all occasions. They also produce various clothes for both men and women. The Bodo women are also seen to be engaged in various small trades and commerce for their livelihood. In the sphere of education, the Bodo women have been making headway, too.

(4) THE KARBI WOMEN :

The Karbis of Karbi Anglong district are hardworking and live by tilling of the land. The Karbi women are the chief tillers of the land. They conduct field works as well as the normal domestic works. And they themselves go to the market for selling the home produce and for purchasing goods for family consumption. They take active part in the family and social rituals. The Karbi women, like other tribes prepare *Hor* (wine) for their own use and for use in various rituals.

In the ancient times, the Karbi women wore around the breast and waist a kind of dress knitted with barks of trees and cotton. In present times, the Karbi women produce some beautifully woven dresses for their own use. *Pini, Pekok, Jiso and Choi,* etc., are some of embroidered articles of clothing prepared by themselves. In the art of weaving and spinning and embroidery, the Karbi women are very excellent. The industrious Karbi women are an ideal for all. It is observed that the Karbi women prefer silver to gold for their jewelleries.

(5) THE DEORI WOMEN :

Apart from domestic works, the Deori women perform the collection of firewood from the forest, bringing water from the rivers, fishing, preparation of wine, weaving, etc. They weave clothes for both men and women. The tools of

weaving are generally made by the Deori women themselves. The *Gatigi* worn around the head indicates that the woman who wears it is a married one. They devote most of their times for the welfare of their family. As regards jewellery, ear-ring, various kinds of necklaces, bangles, etc., are worthmentioning.

(6) THE SONOWAL KACHARI WOMEN :

As the scholars describe, the Sonowal Kacharis collected crude gold from the sands of the Subansiri river in the past. The Kacharis have their traditional popular songs, dresses, etc. Weaving, rearing of animals and tilling of the land are the main occupations by which the Sonowal Kacharis earn their livings at present times. The Kachari women have shown their artistic perfection as well as industrial enterprise by cultivating *endi, silk* and *Nuni* worms at their homesteads and producing fantastic dresses like *Riha Mekhela* from the threads obtained from these worms. Milling of rice, looking for the family and preparation of various sorts of cakes and reception of guests are the chief activities of the Sonowal Kachari women in their day-to-day life. The participation of the Sonowal Kachari women in the festivals and domestic rituals observed by their own society is remarkable.

(7) THE TIWA OR LALUNG WOMEN :

The Tiwas are industrious and painstaking community. Their boundless

contribution to the Indian civilisation cannot be overlooked. Like other tribal women, the Tiwa women are also skilled in spinning and weaving, industrious and courageous. They help their husbands or parents in various domestic and field works. They are efficient in dying of threads in various colours made from the leaves of different trees and vines.

(8) THE RABHA WOMEN :

The Rabha women are active and dutiful. They could bring about affluence and happiness to the Rabha households by their skill, sincerity and self-reliance. They are the chief assistants of their husbands in cultivation and animal husbandry. They are in general healthy and strong. In the times, they cultivated cotton plants in the hills and span threads from it and wore beautiful clothes for domestic use. They also knew the art of dying. But nowadays, due to chronic poverty among the poor Rabha people this handicraft of national importance is on the verge of complete extinction. Most of their dresses were woven by themselves in their own looms. For the purpose of own consumption and use in the traditional rituals the Rabha women prepare *Penkur* (medicine of wine) and *Chakato* (a kind of intoxicated liquor). Like all other women, the Rabha women also have a taste for wearing different kinds of jewelleries. The manner in which they wear their jewelleries shows that they have much stronger sense of good taste than any women in other

communities. Even, there are some evidences that most of the jewelleries are made by themselves on their own anvils.

THE TRIBAL WOMEN IN THE PRESERVATION OF FOOD :

Milling of rice in their own tools made of wood (*Ural/Dhekl*) and preservation of the same for domestic consumption and for reception of guests and dry fishes on fire for future consumption are some common practices of the tribal women. If the stock is in large quantity, such dry fishes are offered to their relatives and neighbours.

THE TRIBAL WOMEN IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION :

The light of the history of the spread of education in the ancient and medieval periods did never brighten the age-old dark eyes of the tens of thousands of the tribal men and women. Neither they have been blessed with the sanctity of education nor they had any part to play in the spread of it. The setbacks for the tribal women in the sphere of education have still remained unsolved and in most cases uncared for. The most outstanding problems that have often been faced by the tribal women in receiving education are : strict social rules and regulations, conventions, superstitions, various works in the fields and homesteads, financial crisis, lack of adequate educational institutions,

etc., in the rural areas. During the fifties, being inspired by the ideals of Gandhiji, some tribal women out of the so-called tribal social dominance over the womenfolk received educational certificates upto matriculation and in some cases B.A. degree from the ideal Ashrams of Gandhiji evidence of which can be found elsewhere in some history books. It is only during the sixties that the dawn of renaissance in the sphere of education in modern age occurred in Assam as well as in India. During the period from 1951 to 1980, some educational institutions beginning from primary schools to colleges have been set up in the thickly populated tribal areas. Ever since, to some degree, an atmosphere for receiving education has been created for the tribal women along with rest of the people of the country and in this field the tribal women have made a considerable headway. During the seventies and eighties the whole tribal society became anxious for education. A great number of tribal women have been able to obtain Bachelor degrees, Master degrees and degrees and diplomas in technology, medical science and various fields of study.

Crossing the barriers of social systems, critical work-routines in domestic life, conservation, traditions and conventions, class differences, defective education system, etc., to a remarkable degree the tribal women of the North-east region have been able to come up with the women of different communities of

different countries, putting an audacious step into the domain of glorious national history.

THE TRIBAL WOMEN IN THE PRESERVATION OF ART AND CULTURE :

In the male dominated tribal society (the Khasi society being one exception) only the women have been maintaining their national characteristic and traditions through their homemade dresses.

The Bodo women wear *Dokhna, Dauthu, Gadu, Phareomegon, Salmatha,* etc., the Mising women *Ribi Gaseng, Yakan Masanam Yege,* etc., the Adi women of Arunachal Pradesh *Galuk, Poreng Gale,* the Karbi women *Pini, Pekok, Jiso, Choi,* etc., the Deori women embroidered *Mekhela, Riha* and *Gatigi* worn around the head ; the Rabha women *Buksili, Nephen, Saka,* etc.These traditional dresses of the tribal women are the symbol of their respective tribes.

The different kinds of songs and dances performed by the tribal women as well as the men, merry-making in various traditional festivals are the indispensable aspects of the so-called social systems of the tribes of the North-east region. The tune and concert of the *Punong* songs and dances create an atmosphere of peace and happiness in the horizon of the country of sunrise. The wavy and attractive dances of the

Bodo girls in their traditional dresses *Dauthugado* and *Phareomegon* seem to rouse the goddess of crops in the fields and the domestic animals seem to open a fair of love and affection around the cowsheds. The *Kaban* song, *Oi Nitom* and dances of the Mising virgins rouse the feelings of love in the hearts of the children of mother Asomi and all. In the same, the women of the other tribes have also an indispensable near relation and important place in their respective cultures. The tribal women are not only the preservers and symbols of their own traditional cultures, but also the true links between different cultures and the channels to the national integrity in the greater Assamese culture as well as the Indian civilization, representing 'Unity in Diversity'.

CONCLUSION :

Since the prehistoric eras, this 'country of sunrise', Assam has witnessed ups and downs of a number of civilizations and cultures. The tribes of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh are the symbols of an organised society, peculiar traditions and unity and integrity. The contribution and role of the tribal women in the materialisation of the social integrity deserves special mention. Apart from it, as the chief partners of their male counterparts the tribal women have a great part to play in the transformation of our old society into a modern and scientific one, through the transitions of time, social norms and values. In the fields of

agriculture, industry, handicrafts and animal husbandry in relation to the role of the tribal women in these fields, there is a great scope for an all-round development in the tribal dominated regions or areas. But due to lack of adequate study, research and proper education and scientific views, the ideals of a better social life for the tribal as well as the whole nation have not so far been realised, or rather the pace of progress has been stagnant and slow.

In comparison to other nations, races and communities, the pace of development of every tribal community is still very slow. Although the tribal women are not in a position to take active part hand in hand with the malefolk in removing the burning problems that deter progress of the tribes, devoting themselves to various developmental programmes like twenty-point programmes, social welfare centres, agricultural and industrial concerns and sports centres, etc., inaugurated by our popular governments, they have certainly contributed to the eradication of poverty, illiteracy and social evils in various forms in their own ways.

It is that in a progressive society competitions cause far-reaching repurcussion among the people. So it is high time for the tribal women, too, to be up and doing in stengthening our nation and society by dint of their intellectual activities instead of mere physical labour. In every walk of their daily life, the womenfolk can extend

their helping hands to their ever struggling male partners or their parents with indomitable courage and promises. If we look back to our glorious past, we can see and draw inspirations from the illustrious Indian women : Mula Gabharu, Kanaklata, Rani Lakshmi Bai, a few of the lot. The need of the hour is that our women should be inspired by the ideals and patriotism of those great Indian women of the past. Every tribal woman should feel the need of breeding worthy citizens who will enliven the life of the nation and protect the national properties from enemies.

Time is fast changing. In this transition of an era, we must awaken ourselves to the sense of responsibility. We must shoulder as members of our own society. The ills of our society will never cease to exist until and unless our womenfolk cease to glorify themselves by remaining stoic Gandharis to their morally blind husbands. Of course, stoicism of a wife earns endless commendations and praises for her, but it will do no good to the womankind and will never save them from irresistible miseries at the hands of the social male chauvinists and the society as a whole from its final overthrow. Ours is an era of science. To cope up with this ever changing scenario, the tribal women must try their level best to perform the impossible with the help of different discoveries and inventions of science. For this purpose, they should be thoughtful, progressive, resolute and dutiful.

PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN ASSAM IN DIFFERENT SPHERES

NIRODA DOLEY

In Rigvedic period women deserved high position in the society. She was quite competent to take part in every aspect of social, intellectual and spiritual life. She enjoyed a fair amount of personal freedom and equality with men. She had free access to education and training in their learning and participation in religious ceremonies and functions. But in the post Vedic period, the position of women has been stagnated under the stress of various circumstances. Manu, the famous Hindu law giver mentioned in one place that a maiden should be protected by her father, a wife by her husband and a widow by her sons. So their position has been reduced to that of dependents and subordinates. But whatever is the position of women as a girl, wife and widow, her position as a mother is very high in a society. Manu emphatically asserts that a mother is to be revered more than a thousand fathers. The present society of ours also believes that paradise lies at the feet of the mother.

The post independence period provided equal rights of women with men in all spheres

of life. The Constitution of India put an end to age-old suppression of women by men and declared that women like men are free to choose any form of education and training to equip themselves for a carrier. In this order, few of modern women proved themselves as equal with men by engaging in various departments like astronauts, engineers, mountaineers, doctors, police commissioners, etc. But the progress of development of women in different spheres of life has been noticed more among the urban groups who are socially high and economically independent. But the weaker sections of the society, S.C., S.T. and the disadvantaged group of the rural society are lagging much behind in general and in particular among the tribal women. Hence the backward tribal women have remained wretched ones of the earth, suffering from suppression and ignorance.

The main purpose of this paper is to discuss the various problems of development of tribal women in different spheres of life. Before going to discuss the problems I would like to give a brief introduction of the tribes of Assam. Assam is blended with hills and plains. There are nine S.T. (Plains) and fourteen S.T. (Hills). The hill tribes are under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. S.T. (Plains) includes : 1. Barman in Cachar 2. Boro 3. Deori 4. Hojai 5. Sonowal Kachari 6. Lalung (Tiwa) 7. Mech 8. Mishing 9. Rabha, while S.T. (Hills) includes : 1. Chakma 2. Dimasa 3.

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Garo 4. Hajong 5. Hmar 6. Khasi, Jayantia, Synteng, Bhoi 7. Kuki 8. Lakher 9. Man (Tai speaking) 10. Mizo 11. Mikir (Karbi) 12. Any Naga tribe 13. Pawi 14. Syntheng. As per 1971 Census the total tribal population in Assam was 16,07,035 and they constitute 10.99% of the state population.

Each tribal community in Assam has its own customs, beliefs, dialects, peculiar way of living and the distinct identity of its own. Agriculture is the main occupation of the tribal communities in Assam. The hill tribes practise shifting cultivation, commonly known as *Jhum* while the plains tribes resort to settled cultivation, where they cultivate paddy along with jute, mustard, pulses, etc. They also rear domesticated animals and birds but the commercial exploitation of livestock is rare. In case of cottage industry, manufacturing of bamboo and cane products, sericulture like rearing of *endi*, *mulberry*, silk and *muga* is very popular among the tribals of Assam. Similarly, spinning and weaving are practised by them but these are confined only to the womenfolk.

Though the tribal women in Assam are expert in home industry like rearing silk, *muga*, *endi*, spinning and weaving, etc., and are more laborious than their men, they have been lagging much behind in education, political activity, science and technology and in many other spheres of modern times. The main problems

which stand in the way of development of tribal women of Assam are as follows :

1. The percentage of literacy among the tribal communities of Assam is lower than that of non tribal communities of the region. As per census report of 1971, the percentage of literacy in Assam was 28.72 of which the percentage of male literacy was 37.19 and 19.27 in case of females. Among the S.T. communities, the percentage of literacy was 26.02 of which male literacy was 34.62 and female literacy was 17.16. The percentage of literacy among tribal communities in the North-east region has been shown in the following table :

Table 1

Percentage of literacy among tribal communities in North-east region

Sl. No.	Name of State	Literacy S.T.	P.C. of male literacy	P.C. of female literacy
1	Assam	26.02	34.62	17.16
2	Arunachal	5.20	8.72	1.70
3	Manipur	28.71	38.64	18.87
4	Meghalaya	26.45	30.11	22.79
5	Mizoram	60.03	66.28	53.96
6	Tripura	30.98	40.20	21.19

From the above table it is clear that the percentage of women literacy is very low except in Mizoram. There are various causes for the low level of literacy among the tribal women in

Assam. Most of the tribal communities in North eastern region has led a tradition bound and conservative society. They absorbed themselves in home and agriculture and thereby neglected their education. Being patriarchal societies, girls are treated as something inferior to men except in case of Garos and Khasis. The general belief of the tribal groups in Assam is that girls are *Parayadhan*, when she comes of age, she has to be given in marriage to another house and thus the benefit that may come from education is meaningless. Because of such preconception ideas the tribal parents do not generally like to send their girls to school for education. Secondly, most of the tribal communities are residing in the remotest areas where there is no school or any educational institution, good communication and supply of electricity. So the distance between home and school, lack of interest in education, traditional taboos and prejudices of tribal community, primitive way of cultivation, lack of educational institution and girls' hostel and other facilities – all these factors stand in the way of women education in the tribal areas. As they are not educated, the tribal women in Assam are not conscious politically and socially to take part in other spheres of life. The women in the North-east region are not also medically conscious, they do not know the benefit of medical sciences, give birth to many children who are more than needs, causing their health deterioration due to lack of hygiene and proper sanitation and that

handicap the womenfolk to participate in other spheres of life.

2. Superstition among the tribal communities is one of the important causes of the backwardness of the tribal women in modern times, which deprives the tribal women to come out from their traditionally conservative society. They generally believe that women are only for children and kitchen. Their duty is to give birth to children, feed them and other members of the family. So there is sense of fear among the tribal women to violate these beliefs and faiths for which they are lagging much behind than any other non tribal communities. But such beliefs have almost disappeared from those who are living in the urban places and economically sound. High rate of female literacy (53.96%) among the Mizos is noticeable in this connection.

3. Most of the tribal communities in India are living in the remotest far-flung areas, hilly places and flood-prone areas where there is no good communication, sound irrigation scheme to improve their agriculture and a commercial place to sell their products of handicrafts, oil or vegetables to earn money. Majority of them are living under poverty line. They are hardly making their livelihood as daily wage labourers, ordinary farmers, wood cutters and fishers and under this condition, question of education is far from them or they are not in a condition to provide even a

litre of kerosene oil or to buy a text book of primary standard.

4. Pressure of duties among the women group of the tribal communities is another problem of development of tribal women in different spheres. Women are more laborious than men in a tribal society. A tribal woman does not have any leisure time since leaving her bed early in the morning till going to sleep at night. Major works of a family are enlisted in the name of women of the entire family except ploughing and construction of houses. She is required to cook food, wash clothes, spin yarn, weave cloth, fetch water from the nearby source, collect firewood and eatables from nearby forests, attend to agricultural works in the field, rear silk, *muga* and *endi*, and prepare a kitchen garden, etc. So to get some relief herself from such burdens, a mother forces her school going girl child to take care of her younger brothers and sisters. In the hilly places the woman sets out for *jhum* cultivation and the care of the house is left to her girl child who performs all the household duties of the whole day and thus, the girl child is deprived from taking part in other activities like study, games and sports. Women in the tribal communities, it seems, play a considerable economic role in their respective society.

5. Lack of voluntary women organisation in the tribal dominated areas is another notable problem of development of tribal women in

Assam. Women organisation, not being Government organisation, can play an important role in making the backward sections aware of the government policies and programmes. There is an acute need of such right minded voluntary women agencies which would expose the awareness about ecology, environment and health along with various welfare programmes and therby win the confidence of tribal people. It can also help the government in assessing the impact of the policies and programmes and how to improve their schemes for better implementation of policies.

6. Commercial attitude among the tribal communities is almost absent. Tribal women are expert in handicrafts like embroidery, knitting, weaving and spinning. They weave clothes in their primitive looms, making colourful designs which lack scientific methods without proper training. Absence of training centre for handloom and textile industries in the tribal areas is another problem of tribal women in North-east India. Tribal women resort themselves to their primitive looms which are more laborious and time consuming. Due to lack of education in business management and the modern technology, they do not know how to improve their handicrafts and to expose the same in the market for sale. From the point of comparative study, the tribal women in the hill districts are more conscious than that of the plains.

Besides all these problems, there are many others which the tribal women in the remote areas are facing in their day-to-day life. For the improvement of the tribal women in the fields of social, political and economy the following points may be taken into consideration :

1. Women education should be made compulsory and to response this demand schools and educational institutions should be established in every village of the tribal communities with trained up women teachers.

2. Library and girls' hostel should be attached to each educational institution.

3. Tribal parents should be made conscious about the benefit of girls' education.

4. Provision should be made to improve the communication, electrification, water supply, standard of living, health and hygiene in the remotest tribal areas.

5. Method of cultivation should be improved with proper training and modern technology specially to save time for women's study.

6. Improved *chula* and *gobar* gas should be introduced and provided to improve their cooking process.

7. Developmental schemes should be introduced on the basis of community and area needs and problems.

8. Attempt should be made to divert the tribal women towards non agricultural economy like animal husbandry, textile and other handicrafts. Training centre should be established to create skilled manpower in various departments.

9. Strong voluntary agencies like women organisations, *mahila samities* and other independent bodies should be encouraged to organise at village level to alert the tribal women about all developmental programmes and schemes.

10. Women should be given equal opportunity in every aspect of government services, appointments and in other professional and field activities.

In conclusion it may be said that women education is indispensable in the fast changing society to enable them to use their full potentials in moulding the socio-cultural life of a society and character of growing children. Gandhiji says in one place, "Our goals cannot be achieved without the full participation of women in every sphere of activity. No country could make any progress if half of its people remain ignorant, inactive and socially depressed." Therefore, in formulating schemes for the development of the

weaker sex against illiteracy, exploitation and social injustice, special care should be taken to give due emphasis on the above factors.

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5. Constraints of Tribal Development in N.E. India :
B.N. Bordoloi, 1990

TRIBAL WOMEN : PROBLEMS OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT IN VARIOUS SPHERES

JIBESWAR KOCH

1 – 1 : Introduction :

It is known to all of us that tribals, specially Indo-Mongoloid ethnic groups are comparatively backward in their ways and means of day-to-day life, for which special attention is to be paid to make developmental schemes for eliminating the various problems. As the term implies, the tribal community represents an early stage of socio-economic life.

There are a sizeable number of tribals in India which vary region to region and thus call for needful plan and policy for their pace of development. Besides, there are some irregularities in scheduling the various tribal people living in various places, which make our planners dismayed in making developmental schemes. As for instance, the Bodo-Kacharis, Dimasas and Rabhas living in Karbi Anglong of Assam are not scheduled as S.T. and the proper Koch Mongoloid people (not Koch-Rajbongshi-Kshatriyas) of Assam are not scheduled as S.T.

whereas they are scheduled as S.T. in Meghalaya (vide the Gazzette of India : Extraordinary, Pt-II Section I : published by the authority No.50, New Delhi, 19th September, 1987), though the modern anthropologists proved the sameness of the Koch and Rabha community.

1 – 2 : The present topic can be approached from many different vantage points, including that of socio-economic and cultural context. This paper is neither an exhaustive nor a full coverage of the topic but a cursory study on cultural context, with a few hints of suggestion.

1 – 3 : The tribal women are naturally an asset of their own community with rich traditional heritage. Most of the tribal societies were matrilineal and matriarchal in character in olden times, but as time follows some of them have changed their pattern in keeping steps with other neighbouring Indo-Aryan people. To quote Guha, '... the process of sanskritization, going on slowly for centuries, gathered momentum during the period of liberal Vaishnava Movement under the guidance of Sankardeva (1449-1568) and his followers.' (Guha, Amalendu : Medieval and Early Colonial Assam : Society, Polity, Economy 1990 : 25). It is, perhaps due to mainly lack of the 'prima mobile' and 'spiritual aegis' for their own.

On this striking reason, the tribal people are also facing now with the most talked 'identity

crisis', and as a result, most of the educated tribal women or girls feel ashamed of dissemination and preservation of their own cultural heritage. So what should we do in this regard ?

First, it is perhaps, our duty to arouse the sense of ethnic identity with more specialist view of values of cultures. Through this sense tribal women could be free from some of 'ethnic psychological captivity' in which state, as Benett pointed out, the person feels ethnic self-rejection and 'low self-esteem' and is ashamed of his or her 'ethnic group identity' and instead, can arouse his or her senses of 'ethnic identity clarification, biethnicity, multiethnicity and finally globalism and global competency' etc. (Christine, I, Benett : Comprehensive Multicultural Education : Theory and Practice, 2nd edition, Sllyan and Bacon, Massachusetts, 1990). If our plans and policies fail to arouse their sense of ethnicity then the tribal women would become culturally jeopardized.

Thus, our traditional plan and policy should aim at transmitting culture to each new generation of children and let them survive, failing which the very root is bound to get threatened. In this regard, special mention can be made that as language plays a key role in the cultural transmission, it is to be adopted as means and ways of educational concern.

2 – 1 : In India, Adult Education or Social Education (1937) and Indian Adult Education Association (1942) have been imparting 3 Rs knowledge and general knowledge for daily life. These two institutions have been termed as formal and informal education since India attained freedom in 1947 and made popularized. In spite of the best efforts of the authority concerned, the Adult Education Schemes could not make as flourishing as expected due to certain reasons.

Bordoloi discussed some factors on which depend the questions of illiteracy of tribal girls, including facilities for imparting education to the tribal girls through their mother tongue at the primary stage in formal education while he aptly suggested, " .... Adult education centres for tribal women should be opened and then should be manned by only local educated tribal female teachers during the lack of agricultural season only". (Bordoloi, B.N. : Women Education in the Tribal Areas of Assam – A few basic issues : Bulletin, TRI, Vol. I, No. V, 1987 : 29). But like in the formal education, the monolingual tribal women are to be taught by their own mother tongue in the adult education programme. In this programme, other target language which is less known to them, can be used as a bilingual education programme in the later phase. Thus bilingual education can be introduced in the adult education so that "attempts can be made to teach the school language or to revive a dying

language, or there can be programmes to tailor the needs of the local community and its children" (Bernard Spolsky : Bilingualism in Linguistics : The Cambridge Survey Vol. V, ed. F.J. Newmeyer, Cambridge 1988 : 104). Even in advanced countries, specially in the United States, the study of bilingualism was ignored and but now, after 35 years, there has been a marked change in this emphasis, as a central concern of sociology and a key issue in sociolinguistics (Spolsky ibid : 115). The NCERT and Adult Education Centre can take up such kind of schemes.

2 – 2 : The tribal people in Assam rear domesticated animals and birds, but as such, milk is not favourite food for them. Pigs, hens, goats and other animals are domesticated by them and these are of immense help in maintaining the family.

Sericulture, specially rearing of *endi*, mulberry, silk and *muga* is a highly important cottage industry for plains tribals of Assam. Like other tribals the Bodo-Kachari women are efficient in weaving but 'they could not adopt this weaving as their means and ways to livelihood in this present competitive age' (Smti. Bharati Brahma : Boro Women and their Weaving – free translation from Article : RAIKHAMUTI : Souvenir, ATTWWF, 1990).

2 – 3 : Needless to say that nowadays some tribal people who live in the slum areas are

deprived of what the general people require for living. Besides formal education, some of suitable schemes, alongwith adult education should be undertaken for these people. In the slum areas, the tribal women are to face with dire scarcity of weaving and rearing some plants necessary for cultural heritage.

3 – 1 : As our knowledge is concerned, there are various socio-cultural organisations among the tribal women, playing an important role to actualize their talents. These organisations are to be enlisted and their portfolios are to be intimated as to the various schemes of the authorities concerned. Moreover, in this regard, the Research Institute like AIRTSC should conduct a 'leadership training' so that women can manage their organisations with smooth manner.

3 – 2 : Our plan and policy can be prepared as community-based. There should be a clear-cut target for the community on which matter we should emphasize. At a time or phase, two or three communities which are very close from the rung of cultural context as well as geographical area may be listed in the same category of plan and policy.

TRIBAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT : AN OBSERVATION

B. GOHAIN ROY

In the fast changing society the development of women in different spheres is the demand of the day. The development is possible when women become conscious about their surroundings, when they will feel where they are standing now, where they could have been. When sense of deficit will hit their mind, they will be conscious about what they do not do and cannot do. They are to play special role in moulding the character of home as well as nation. For full development of women resources the women and future women are to be awakened – that she has her own strength, her own function and her own place in the scheme of nature.

Though there are constitutional provisions for the development of weaker sections of the society, yet the fulfilment is not so satisfactory due to different reasons. Though different measures are adopted by the Government to eradicate illiteracy such as Adult Education Programme, NEP '86 it is not highly successful what I mean to say, in the Hill Districts of Assam, keeping aside the developed and developing areas of Karbi Anglong district where the scheduled tribe population is 55.37% and literacy percentage of female is 10.3 only (Statistical Hand Book, Assam, 1990). For development of tribal women if proper attention by the authority concerned is not paid

many hidden talents will remain unutilised. Who can say that there may not be one personality like Mrs. Indira Gandhi who showed an example for the future generation to come.Women can do as like as men in any walk of life. They remain backward because of their history and circumstances.The environ- mental forces have kept them down and now we are to try to change those environmental forces in such a manner that they may come to light. Every woman must feel that she has the same rights as man.

Now there are many tribal women who are showing success in many spheres. There are quite a good number of tribal women in medical, engineering, administration, teaching – which is a satisfactory account. They are getting scope for which they are exposed to modernity. They are able to adjust with the advancement of modern society. But time has yet to come – when these will be many in the two Hill Districts of Assam. But the idea of the author is to highlight some points which are observed after long staying in the Karbi Anglong district. To awake those people special measures are to be thought of. There are still many undeveloped and under-developed areas which we cannot imagine that now also people are in this stage ! Craving for light of knowledge is still a further dream. If development of tribal women is to be stressed then stress is to be given to develop those backward scattered areas -- where many measures of modernisation failed to be implemented. The first step for their development should be their educational aspect. This education does not mean that they should attain higher

degree but their understanding should be developed to bring consciousness in their mind about their future, about the future of their children, how to improve their living condition, about the progress of their family. Then automatically they will be motivated. If they are motivated then half work will be done. In this reference we can realise the sayings of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru : "To awake the people, it is the women who must be awakened, once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves."

So developmental aspects are to be stressed. For that the educated people should come forward with missionary zeal for the upliftment of those backward people. If they bear the torch many problems will be solved. The undeveloped/ underdeveloped people will feel that he or she is one among them. If he or she can do, why not they ? Proper motivation will be that since spending large amount by the Government, implementation of new policy also sometimes may not be possible to hit the target. This is a point to be thought of.

In some underdeveloped tribal areas the programmes may be made to make the women understand – for what they are fit since there are different scopes to be utilised. Through resource personnels who are specially trained for career talks, career for non-matriculates and school drop-outs may be chosen. What they do not know, may be known from employment exchange personnels who are specially trained.

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO VILLAGES REGARDING THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL PROCESS OF KARBI ANGLONG

The present author has done some field works in connection with another field of research within one and a half months and observed as follows :

A. Rongchedon village :

The name of the village signifies that people will live with love and co-operation. It is an integrated village having fortyone households where 87.8% are tribals – 80.5% Karbi, 4.87% Kacharis and 14.7% others.

In this integrated village none of the women are giving *Angutha* (thumb impression) except few (4%) who are old women. The village is at a distance of 2 km. and within Diphu. There are no children who are deprived of schooling. All tribal women are exposed to modernity. They are taking some benefits from different provisions given by the Government. In leisure time they are utilising the time in productive works which help in making financial condition sound or helping their male counterpart in maintaining family. The drop-out girls are using their labour through different schemes and benefitted. They may be termed as successful as they are helping in developmental process.

B. Dikrenglangso village :

It is located at a distance of 10 km. from Diphu. Upto 8 km. it is *pucca* road connected the village and beyond that upto 5 km. from *pucca* road the village extended. It is observed as follows :

1. There are 31 households living permanently.
2. Except one woman (reading upto Class X) all are illiterate.
3. Education is not the felt need of children (during *Chomangkan* not a single student is attending school).
4. Women are doing as the traditional tribal women did. In four families only it is seen that traditional weaving is replaced by fly-shuttle.
5. Only one L.P. school is in nearby area which is RLEGP scheme (1984-85) under Lumbajong Development Block.
6. All inhabitants are Karbis.
7. 65% of school going children are dropped not only for poverty but absence of felt necessity of schooling.
8. Drudgeries like carrying water from distant places, pounding of rice in mortar and pestles are still found.
9. Most of the children are first generation participants in schooling.
10. Regarding hygienic point the women are not found conscious.
11. Through IJDP scheme very few are benefitted in the village.
12. There is not a single matriculate found in the village.

Conclusion can be drawn from the study of two villages that in the first village the women are in gradual developmental process. They are gradually exposed to modernity. They are going to be conscious regarding what they are not having. On the other hand, the second village is still far below the margin due to the absence of consciousness about the progress of modern world and indifferent attitude of parents towards female education.

SUGGESTIONS :

1. Some dedicated educational workers should be deployed by the concerning authority for the greater interest of the backward people who are in great need of basic education.

2. Teachers of those backward locality schools should be screened in order to ascertain their sincerity and devotion.

3. Visiting team should be provided where the measures are taken to check whether it is practically doing or doing only paper work.

4. Career talks from specially trained resource persons should be arranged so that the drop-outs may choose their path of earning their bread. The drop-outs both boys and girls may take advantage of different schemes provided by the Government, as it remains in darkness for the common people, so that according to their capability they can use time and labour.