



Topic- Social empowerment of Bodo women- A study on Sonitpur District of Assam

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Abstract- Assam is a land of unity in diversity where people of different castes, tribes, social groups and religions live together and among all the tribes, the Bodos are considered as the largest ethnolinguistic group in Assam. The Bodos comprising almost half of the state's tribal population in Assam. It is very significant that development of the Bodo society is dependent on both men and women. For welfare of the tribal women the Assam government has made various developmental schemes and programmes and also takes many legal initiatives. Though many legal provisions are made for welfare and protection of tribal women but in true sense, these schemes are unable to achieve its goals fully. It is also observed that in the districts of Assam in where majority people are from Bodo community such as Kokrajhar, Baksa, Udalguri, Chirang, the female literacy rate is low in comparison to the male literacy rate according to census report 2011. The previous research studies also reveal that Bodo women are lagging behind in many developmental aspects in comparison to the other social groups of Assam. It is true that if women can't be freed from illegalities, social bondage, superstitious beliefs and orthodox then a truly developed society is not possible. In this regard, the role of education is considered as significant because social awareness, decision-making skills, knowledge of better health and hygiene, taking responsibilities, taking legal actions any illegality etc. all are the qualities directly or indirectly influenced by education. Through this field-based research study it is tried to study about social empowerment of Bodo women and the issues confronting by them.

Key Words- Bodo women, social empowerment, education, social development, social issues.

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1.Introduction- Assam is the land of different tribes and it is one of the largest states of North East India and each tribe has its own unique tradition, culture, dress and exotic way of life. Among all the tribes, Bodos are considered as the largest ethnolinguistic group in Assam. The Bodos comprising almost half of the state's tribal population in Assam. From the previous research studies, it has been found out that Bodo women play crucial role in making a sound Bodo society are involved in different household and social activities. But it cannot be said Bodo women are totally free from social restrictions, superstitious beliefs and orthodox. Though the Bodos are considered as the largest ethnolinguistic group of Assam but they need more development. It is very significant that development of the Bodo society is dependent on both Bodo men and women. For welfare of tribal women, Assam government has prescribed various welfare schemes and programmes such as -Arundhati scheme, Assam-Orunodoi scheme, Atal Amrit Abhiyan Health Insurance Scheme, Sarothi, Swanirbhar Nari, Assam Abhinandan education loan subsidy scheme, Welfare scheme for ST are - Assam Bikash Yojana &CM's special employment generation programmed, Grants for ST meritorious students, Stipend for craftsman training etc. Though many legal provisions are made by the Assam government for women welfare specially for tribal women but it is notified that these schemes are unable to achieve its goals fully. It is also observed that the districts of Assam in where majority people are from Bodo community such as Kokrajhar, Baksa, Udalguri, Chirang, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Drrrang and Sonitpur, in such districts the female literacy rate is low in Comparison to the male literacy rate according to census report 2011. It is very significant that without proper educational development of the common masses a developed society cannot be expected. Because education is the potent factor of social change and development. If women can be freed from illegalities, social bondage, superstitious beliefs and orthodox then a truly developed society can be possible and in this regard the role of education is significant. Only education will help to emancipate the women and make them empowered socially, economically, culturally and politically and enhance their competencies for contributing overall development.

2.Review of related literature- Brahma, S (2006) discussed in his book about social, family status of Bodo women and women's contribution towards preservation of their language and literature. The main focus of this book is the study of different religious practices, beliefs, rituals and norms of Bodo society. Talukdar. (2012) in his study found that Bodo women take important role to develop the economic status of the Bodo community but still their poor educational status is standing as a barrier in their development. It is observed that the female

literacy rate of Bodo women is not equal pace of progress with the women of non-tribal due to some socio-economic problem in spite of the government's multifarious endeavors through special stipends, scholarships, free education, and reservation seats for the female of Bodo community. Deka, D (2016) made a research investigation on total 07 sample villages of BTAD to find out the total percentage female literacy at non-matric, matric, under-graduate, post graduate level from the year of 1985 to 2005. The research study shows as result that the rate of female literacy is faster increasing during from 2001 to 2005 but a steady increasing trend of female literacy within the period from 1985 to 2001. The study identified as reason as the influence of Bodoland Movement in the life of Bodos. Baishya, N. (2017) carried out an investigation on Bodo people of Baksa district regarding literacy rate, government's initiatives on women health care facilities, gender- discrimination, women economic and social participation. Through this study it is analysed that male literacy rate of Baksa is 67% and female literacy rate is 53.4%. Regarding health care facilities around 70.32% women are not satisfied of government's health facilities. 56.45% women think that their status is inferior to men. In Baksa district, there are 62349 are female main workers and 215948 are male main workers. The study of the result clearly shows that there are lot differences between men and women of Bodo community in the context of different socio-economic aspects. Brahma, A. (2018) made an investigation on total 600 samples of BTC including women of both rural (300) and urban areas (300) on the matter of female education facilities, government health care efforts, social discrimination, women economic status, women political participation of BTC. In this investigation it is found out that 47% percent women are agreed that they are not satisfied with the education facilities of BTC, only 21% women are agreed that they are satisfied with the education facilities of BTC. 66.16% women of both rural and urban are not totally satisfied with government's health care facilities and only 06.66% women are satisfied with government's health care facilities. Women of both rural and urban areas around 61.16% are agreed that they are socially dominated and 33.33% opined that they are agreed that they are not socially discriminated. Around 79.50% both rural and urban women are agreed that women less participation in politics because of male dominated election process and only 15.83% viewed that they are not suffered by male-dominated politics. The result clearly pointed out that women of BTC have faced all kinds of discrimination-educational, social, health, political. Basumatary, R. (2019) has examined through the research study that out of total 300 sample 54% are not agreed with equality of social status of women with men in Bodo society and only 43.6% are agreed with equal status, 2.4% are not provided any answer. Regarding need of female education 91% out of 300

provided positive answer in the sense of importance of education and only 7.33% gave negative respondents in importance of female education. In the context of religious conservativeness, the figure shows that 75% Bodo women are not agreed with religious conservativeness and 21.33% provided positive responses in religious conservativeness. Around 59% Bodo women provided positive response in the context of male dominance in domestic affairs, 38.67% viewed that they are not dominated by men in domestic affairs. The result clearly shows that Bodo women have suffered from social discriminations in the Bodo society.

3.Objectives of the study- The major objectives of this study are-

- a. To identify social issues confronting by Bodo women.
- b. To study about social empowerment of Bodo women and the role of education.

4.Research questions-The major research questions of this study are-

- a. What are the social issues confronting by Bodo women?
- b. How can education impact on women social empowerment?

5.Rationale of the study- This study is very relevant for present social scenario of Assam. From the previous research studies, it has been found out that though Bodo Women have played a significant role in Bodo society but they are not free from social issues and challenges. It is significant that Assam's all kinds of development are dependent on the tribes of Assam specially the Bodos. The previous research studies reveal that Bodo women are lagging behind in many aspects of development in comparison to other social groups of Assam. That is why, it is important to study about the Bodo women and their empowerment and this study will help to identify the practical social issues and challenges of Bodo women.

6.Methodology of the study- The researcher used stratified random sampling method for collecting the data. The sample was divided on the basis of age, education and geographical area.

population of the study will be 200 Bodo women who live in Chariduar and Balipara areas under Sonitpur district of Assam. Among the total 200 population 10 Bodo women are taken from Chariduar and 10 are taken from Balipara, it means total $(10+10) = 20$ sample are selected for this particular study. The sample has been framed by taking approximately 10% of the total population.

Tools used- Questionnaire address to Bodo women following 5-point Likert Scale.

Variables- Independent Variables- Age, gender, income, education, sex, marital status, occupation, family types, caste, geographical location, social class. Dependent Variables- women's attitude, social norms, social values, social issues.

6.Delimitation of the study- The study is delimited to study of Bodo women only and among the different areas of Sonitpur only two areas are selected- Balipara and Chariduar.

7.Data collection and analysis- Sonitpur is an administrative district in the state of Assam. The district has an area of 5324 sq. km and is located on the north bank of river Brahmaputra. In Sonitpur district the identified areas in where majority people are Bodos are- Dekiajuli, Chariduar, Naduar etc. For considering the limitation of this study only two areas under Sonitpur are selected, the selected areas are- Chariduar and Balipara. The collected data are shown thoroughly by tabulation.

Table -1 (Samples are distributed on the basis of age and location)

Age	Location	Total Sample
Between 30 to 45	Balipara	05
Between 30 to 45	Chariduar	05
Between 46 to 60	Balipara	05
Between 46 to 60	Chariduar	05

All total= 20 sample

Table -2

(Samples are framed on the basis of age and academic qualification and selected area is Balipara)

Sample	Age between 30 to 45	Academic qualifications	Sample	Age between 46 to 60	Academic qualifications
Samp1		Primary	Samp1		Illiterate
Samp2		H.S.L.C passed	Samp2		Primary
Samp3		Illiterate	Samp3		Primary
Samp4		Graduate	Samp4		viii passed
Samp5		Primary	Samp5		H.S.L.C passed

Source- field study

Table -3

(Samples are framed on the basis of age and academic qualification and selected area is Chariduar)

Sample	Age between 30 to 45	Academic qualifications	Sample	Age between 46 to 60	Academic qualifications
Samp1		Primary	Samp1		Primary
Samp2		Primary	Samp2		H.S.L.C Passed
Samp3		Higher secondary passed	Samp3		Illiterate
Samp4		Higher secondary passed	Samp4		Primary
Samp5		Illiterate	Samp5		Illiterate

Source-field study

Table- 4

(Data collection from Bodo Women of Balipara between the age of 30 to 45

Using 5- point Likert scale)

Sample	Statements							
	Women education is very important for women's social development	Women must be economically self-dependent	Gender-discrimination in education is the main barrier of women development	illiteracy can be recognized as the major social issue of Bodo society	positive attitude is important to solve life problems	Social norms are very important to make discipline in the society	Women of rural areas are not very much conscious about health and hygiene	Family plays an important role in one's life
Samp1	Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Agree
Samp2	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Samp3	Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Disagree
Samp4	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
Samp5	Agree	Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Agree

Source- field study.

Table 4 shows that 60% Bodo women are agreed that Women education is very important for women’s social development and 40% Bodo women are strongly agree that Women education is very important for women’s social development. 80% Bodo women are agreed that Women must be economically self-dependent and 20% Bodo women are strongly agreed that Women must be economically self-dependent. Around 40% Bodo women are neither agree or disagree that Gender-discrimination in education is the main barrier of women development and around 60% Women are agreed that gender-discrimination in education is the main barrier of women development. Around 60% Bodo women are agreed with the opinion that illiteracy can be recognized as the major social issue of Bodo society and 20% are strongly agree with this opinion and around 20% women are neither agree or nor disagree. Around 80% women agree that positive attitude is important to solve life problems and 20% are strongly agree with this opinion.40% Bodo women are disagreed with the opinion that social norms are very important to make discipline in the society and 20 % are strongly agree with this opinion and 20% women are neither agree nor agree and 20% are agreed with this opinion. Around 60% are disagreed and 40% are agreed with the opinion that women of rural areas are not very much conscious about health and hygiene.60% women are agreed,20% disagree and 20% women are strongly agreed with the opinion that family plays an important role in one’s life.

Table -5

(Data collection from Bodo Women of Balipara between the age of 46 to 60 using 5- point Likert scale)

Sample	Statements							
	Women education is very important for women’s social development	Women must be economically self-dependent	Gender-discrimination in education is the main barrier of women development	illiteracy can be recognized as the major social issue of Bodo society	positive attitude is important to solve life problems	Social norms are very important to make discipline in the society	Women of rural areas are not very much conscious about health and hygiene	Family plays an important role in one’s life
Samp1	Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Samp2	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
Samp3	Agree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Samp4	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Samp5	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Strongly agree

Source- field study

Table -5 shows that around 80% women are agreed and 20% women are strongly agreed with the opinion that women education is very important for women’s social development. Around 60% women are agreed, 20% women are disagreed, 20% women are strongly with the statement that women must be economically self-dependent. Around 40% women are neither agree or disagree and 60% women are agreed with the opinion that gender-discrimination in education is the main barrier of women development. 40% Bodo women are disagreed, 60% women believed that illiteracy can be recognized as the major social issue of Bodo. 80% women are agreed and 20% women are disagreed with the opinion that positive attitude is important to solve life problems. All women are agreed with the opinion that social norms are very important to make discipline in the society. 60% women are agreed, 20% are strongly disagreed and 20% are disagreed with the statement that Women of rural areas are not very much conscious about health and hygiene. Around 80% women are agreed, 20% women are strongly agreed that family plays an important role in one’s life.

Table-6

(Data collection from Bodo Women of Chariduar between the age of 30 to 40 Using 5- point Likert)

Sample	Statements							
	Women education is very important for women’s social development	Women must be economically self-dependent	Gender-discrimination in education is the main barrier of women development	illiteracy can be recognized as the major social issue of Bodo society	positive attitude is important to solve life problems	Social norms are very important to make discipline in the society	Women of rural areas are not very much conscious about health and hygiene	Family plays an important role in one’s life
Samp1	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree
Samp2	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Neither agree or disagreed	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
Samp3	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree
Samp4	Strongly	Agree	Agree	Strongly	Strongly	Agree	Strongly	Strongly

	Agree			agree	agree		Disagree	agree
Samp5	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Neither agree or disagreed	Agree	Neither agree or disagreed

Source- field study

Table-6 shows that around 60% women are agreed and 40% women are strongly agreed with the opinion that women education is very important for women’s social development. Around 80% women are agreed, 20% women are disagreed with the statement that women must be economically self-dependent. Around 20% women are disagreed and 20% women are neither agreed nor agreed and around 60% women are agreed with the opinion that gender-discrimination in education is the main barrier of women development. 40% Bodo women are agreed, 20% women are neither agreed nor disagreed,20% strongly agree, 20% are disagreed with the opinion that illiteracy can be recognized as the major social issue of Bodo. 80% women are agreed and 20% women are strongly agreed with the opinion that positive attitude is important to solve life problems. Around 60% women are agreed,20% are strongly agreed, 20% are neither agree or disagree with the opinion that social norms are very important to make discipline in the society.20% women are neither agree or disagree, 20% are disagreed and 40% are agreed and 20% are strongly disagreed with the statement that Women of rural areas are not very much conscious about health and hygiene. Around 60% women are agreed, 20% women are strongly agreed and 20% are neither agree or disagree with the opinion that family plays an important role in one’s life.

Table-7 (Data collection from Bodo women of Chariduar between age of 46to 60 using likert 5-point scale)

Sample	Statements							
	Women education is very important for women’s social development	Women must be economically self-dependent	Gender-discrimination in education is the main barrier of women development	illiteracy can be recognized as the major social issue of Bodo society	positive attitude is important to solve life problems	Social norms are very important to make discipline in the society	Women of rural areas are not very much conscious about health and hygiene	Family plays an important role in one’s life
Samp1	Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree

Samp2	Strongly agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Agree
Samp3	Agree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
Samp4	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Agree
Samp5	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree

Source-Field study.

Table-7 shows that around 60% women are agreed and 20% women are strongly agreed, 20% are neither agreed or disagreed with the opinion that women education is very important for women's social development. All women are agreed with the statement that women must be economically self-dependent. Around 20% women are neither agreed or disagreed and 60% women are agreed, 20% women are disagreed with the opinion that gender-discrimination in education is the main barrier of women development. 20% Bodo women are neither agreed or disagreed, 40% women are agreed, 40% disagreed with the opinion that illiteracy can be recognized as the major social issue of Bodo. 60% women are agreed and 20% women are strongly agreed and 20% are neither agreed or disagreed with the opinion that positive attitude is important to solve life problems. All women are agreed with the opinion that social norms are very important to make discipline in the society. 40% women are agreed, 20% are strongly disagreed and 20% are disagreed and 20% are strongly agreed with the statement that Women of rural areas are not very much conscious about health and hygiene. All women are agreed with the opinion that family plays an important role in one's life.

8. Major findings- The main findings of this study are-

- a. Bodo women have confronted with many social issues among them illiteracy, gender-discrimination, economic dependency etc are significant.
- b. Bodo women are able to realize the importance of economic self-dependency, most of the Bodo women are agreed the opinion that women must be economically self-sufficient and it is very important for women empowerment.
- c. Most of the Bodo women are agreed with the opinion that social norms are very important to make discipline in the society, it indicates that Bodo women realize the importance of social norms and principles.

d. The study indicates educated Bodo women are more socially empowered than uneducated Bodo women, educated women show more positivity towards own life, society than uneducated or illiterate women.

e. Most of the Bodo women are agreed with the opinion that family plays an important role in one's life

f. This study indicates that women education is very important for women's social empowerment.

9. Conclusion- Like other society development of the Bodo society is dependent on both men and women. The previous research studies done on Bodo women show that Bodo women have a special identity in Bodo society and it shows through their different social activities. But it is true they need more development because Bodo women are not free from social issues and challenges and without eradicating the issues of Bodo women it is not possible to make women truly empowered. In this regard, the role of education is significant and but spreading education among all women is not an easy task. The government initiatives, NGO's roles, strong initiatives of educational institutions, initiatives of social activists, role of mass-media and the educated persons of the society are really very important. Without proper educational development of common masses, a society can't be made a truly developed or modern society.

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