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Development of Women Education: A Case Study of Darrang District

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Abstract

Women constitute almost half of the population in the world. But the hegemonic masculine ideology made them suffer a lot as they were denied equal opportunities in different parts of the world. In Indian culture since time immemorial women enjoyed significant status. But during the course of civilization women lost their prominence and made them accepted secondary status to men. Indian women generally facing all types of barriers like literacy, domestic violence, lack of motivation and support and many more. Darrang district of Assam a small part of bigger India is not escaped from these injustices to women. So it is very essential for the harmonious development of our country that women could go hand by hand and shoulder to shoulder with men. For all these injustice it has been seen that the lack of education of women is the prime cause. Therefore authority concern must look forward for the development of women education.

Key words: Women, Education, Development, Injustice, Status.

Introduction

Education of women is realized for the development of the society. Without educating women folk one cannot think of prosperous future generation. So the development of future generation depends upon the education of women section. The children learn their manners and behaviors at home and mostly mothers are responsible for cultivating good behavior in their children. Swami vivekananda once said that, "It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing". The fortune of a nation depends upon the educational system of the nation. Every educated woman can think independently and it also helps them to know their duties and rights. It was obvious that women were so intellectually and emotionally blind, under the cover of false definition of femininity tide on their vision, that one woman was prejudiced against the efforts of the other to attain freedom. On the contrary, true women hood is only understood and adhered to, when illuminated by education. It is education which make a female competent enough to handle the issues of her life, to be self sufficient, to become an able daughter who can have economic independence and support her family, to stand by her husband in difficult time and to rare up her children with the right education. Certainly, the strength of today's global women lies in the truth that she is a multi-tasker, invested with such outstanding caliber.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are as follows-

- To study the historical background of education in Darrang district.
- To see the development of women education in this region in comparison to male.

Methodology

The present study has been based on primary and secondary data. Primary sources include archival records, periodical, unpublished and published documents and the data collected by administering questionnaire and conducting interviews. Further important publications and journals are also accessed from a historical perspective. The method of research is purely descriptive in nature.

Review of literature

Some previous works related to the topic have been reviewed. Some of them are discussed briefly- Bisaria S. studied (1991) about the “Need based vocationalization of education for girls” from NCERT. The main finding of her study was that the girls simply got into the vocational education being persuaded at home because they had to make a living. The majority of girls in the school wanted to learn skill for self employment.

Hazarika ,Himadri & Devi,Runusri (2011) made a study on “Problems of girls education at secondary level under Sipajhar Block with special reference to Darrang district “. The finding of the study was parent’s education and guidance which is an important factor for educating girls. The study reveals that twenty percent parents are unable to give proper guidance.

Karlekar,Malavika (2004) made a study on “Empowerment of women” and attempted to trace a brief history of empowerment and its implications for Indian women.

Jumani ,Usha (1991) conducted a study to analyse the status of self employed women in rural areas. In this book she shows that the women’s’ income will be increased with her economic activities.

Subha ,I & Reddy MSN (2001) made a study on “Education for quality and empowerment of women”. The study shows that the education is the sole and effective means to achieve social and economic development of women.

Educational progress in Darrang district during colonial period

In ancient Assam system of education was Gurukul, which was not opened for all. Inscriptions provide information that only the wives of Brahmanas and the women of Royal families had the right to access education. In the course of time this system had changed, subsequently a new pattern of education started during the reign of Ahom in Assam .The Burmese invasions destroyed largely the indigenous system of education and consequently new educational institutions established under the patronage of British who came to Assam in 1826 under the Treaty of Yandaboo. In October 1826, David Scott established eleven schools, most of them were in lower Assam and one of those was in Desh Darrang means present Darrang district. As per document of A.J.Mafat Mills published in 1853 there were nine vernacular schools in Darrang district .Out of these five schools were set up in Mangaldai sub-division. The places where in these schools were set up was Mangaldai, Maharipara, Lokrai, Sipajhar and Swetmoder .The history of modern school in Darrang was started from that time. At that time the education was imparted through the medium of Sanskrit. The British

Government of Assam and its commissioner captain Jenkins felt the need for more schools under the auspices of Government. Accordingly a proposal was sent to the Government for setting up few English schools in Assam. Perusing the urgency of the proposal the then Govt of India recommended for one school only which was opened in 1835 at Gauhati in the name of Gauhati English School.

In the first half of twentieth century the British had setup few M.V schools in various places of Assam through the state patronage. The places under Darrang district, where schools were established were Dumunichowki, Bhergaon, Udalguri, Kuruwa, Hazarikapara, Tangla and one M.E school at Pathrighat. With the initiative of some enlighten people of Mangaldai Sub division opened an M.E school at Mangaldai town in 1903. This was upgraded to high school in 1910 and higher secondary school in 1957. It was the first institution of higher education in Mangaldai Sub division of Darrang district. A renowned person named Bhagi Ram Nath had been taken some important steps to educate the people of Darrang especially Sipajhar Block. In 1935 few people along with him established a primary school at Punia. In 1955 he established Pakadali M.E School with the help of other well wishers of that locality. Before being erecting of the building he personally collected timber from Palashbari and he loaded and unloaded and finally carried through the Boat from Khandajan. This institution was upgraded to High School in 1962. In 1972 he established Khandajan M.E School at Khandajan. This renowned person also actively associated with the establishment of Bachachuba Primary school, Bhurargarh M.E School under Kalaigaon Mouza Being an inhabitant at Mangaldai by virtue of service from 1956 he dare to established Bhebarghat M.E. school at Mangaldai in 1977. But due to natural disaster the school building was destroyed. He then reconstructed the building from his provident fund.

Progress of women education in Darrang district

The first girls LP School was established in Darrang district in 1909. This institution was upgraded to girls M.V School in 1928 and after four years later it was transformed to M.E School. Late Snehalata Devi was the head mistress of this school. At that time some eminent personalities of Mangaldai decided to upgrade this school as a result it get recommended to Girls High School in 1943. This was the first higher educational institution of women in Darrang district. The first head mistress of this high school was one Garo lady named Miss D.Sira. For the first time three girls student admitted to class VII. In 1947 from this school three students passed the entrance exam under Calcutta University. Three decades later of the beginning of first High School at Mangaldai, some women education loving people came forward to establish educational institution in public venture. Among them people from Sipajhar area started an M.E School in 1930. Later on it was upgraded to High School and then in 1937 it was upgraded to Higher Secondary School. At first no guardian came forward to get their girls admitted in that school. Girls' education was not considered as more important than boys from early times in our society. Patriarchal form of society never allowed women to work out side of their own home. For this mindset of the male dominated society women education remained back footed. But at that time Holiram Nath Saharaia a pioneer of women education in Sipajhar area along with few eminent personalities came forward and made arrangement for girl's education in these schools since 1934. For their relentless effort Kabita Bala Baruah and Rewati Bala Saharia came forward to take admission in the school. Kabita Bala Baruah was the first metric passed girl student of this area. Holiram Nath Saharaia had setup a L.P.School and M.E Girls Schools at his own cost in the memory of his mother and wife, named as Sipajhar B.J.Girls School. Now that M.E School is upgraded to Girls High School with the initiative of that

locality. After independence several girls schools were came up in entire Darrang district for women education. The places where these schools were setup were Dalgaon, Tangla, Pathrighat, Kaligaon, Duni, Udalguri, Mazbat, Kharupetia and Khoirabari. In between 1960 to 1980 almost every four to five kilometer distance one High School and one M.E School were set up in entire Darrang district. Above all one college exclusively for girls was set up at Mangaldai.

Table No-1
Percentage of literacy of Darrang District as sex-wise after Independence

Year	Person in total (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
1951	19.21	29.11	6.46
1961	27.72	37.69	15.63
1971	20.63	21.63	11.32
1981	N.A	NA	NA
1991	42	50.80	32.53
2001	55.92	64.32	46.95
2011	63.08	67.87	58.04

Source: Statistical Handbook

Table No-2
Variation of literacy Rate between Darrang and Assam after Independence

Year	Darrang (%)		Assam (%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1951	29.11	6.49	28.01	7.58
1961	37.69	15.63	44.28	18.62
1971	27.63	11.32	43.72	22.76
1981	NA	NA	NA	NA
1991	50.80	32.53	61.87	43.03
2001	64.32	46.95	71.93	56.03
2011	67.87	58.04	77.85	66.27

Source: Statistical Handbook

Table No-3
Literacy rate of male and female of Rural and Urban areas of Darrang district

Description	Rural	Urban
Population	94.02%	5.98%
Male Poulation	51.14%	3.31%
Female Population	48.85%	3.05%
Average Literacy	61.50%	85.92%
Male Literacy	66.32%	89.93%
Female Literacy	56.43%	81.60%

Source: Census report 2011

From the Table No- 1 it shows that though the literacy rate increased year wise in both sex even though the female literacy lagging far behind to the male counterpart in terms of percentile. From

the Table No-2 it indicates that there is no significance difference in the growth of literacy rate during the last fifty years. If the literacy rate is compared with state level it is found that the Darrang district lagging far behind the state level in all the previous decades. From Table No-3 it shows clearly that the literacy rate varies not only in sex wise in general but also in rural urban context. According to the census report 2011 female literacy is almost half of the male literacy. in rural urban context. According to 2011 census, 94.02% population of Darrang district lives in rural areas. Altogether 873,006 population of Darrang district lived in villages of which males and females are 446,460 and 426,546 respectively. Sex ratio of villages in Darrang district is 955 females against 1000 males. The figures of girls in comparison to boys can be considered 970 to 1000 boys. Literacy rate in rural areas of Darrang district is 61.50% as per census data of 2011. Gender wise, male and female literacy stood at 66.32 and 56.43 percent respectively. In all 444,075 people were literate of which male and female were 245,311 and 198,764 respectively.

Discussion

The educational attainment of women of Assam at District level can be analyzed through female literacy rate and female enrolment rate at different stages of education. By the end of nineteenth century, female education becomes a major issue in the public sphere. The print media provided the Assamese literate with the powerful medium to express their views on women. The middle class literate justified women's education so as to create suitable companions for educated men. The education for women should be such, which could teach them to better wives, to live happily. Thus, through education was to confine women within the home, yet, paradoxically the progress of the nation was linked to their education. Phanindra Nath Gogoi, wrote in the *Jonaki (saka 1812)*, 'while I am in favour of women's education, I don't support the present system. I am totally against a type of education for women that would enable them to pass their B.A. or M.A. examination and encouraged them to compete with their husband. I don't see the women to be educated like a man, since such education causes more harm than good'. Lakshminath Bezbaruah had stated that the aim of women's education should be produced good wives and mother rather than rivals of men in the sphere of employment. The Assamese people with strong patriarchal learning believe that since the role of male and female were biologically different, the nature of women education imparted to men and women must also necessarily different. It clearly reflected the narrow conservative outlook of their social circle. Despite opposition of women education, a modest beginning had been made which saw the slow but gradual emergence of an independent consciousness among the women.

Conclusion

Women and man are equally treated in the eyes of law. However our cultural conditioning is the main source of atrocities against women. Due to the spread of education a lot of changes may be seen in the society. The outcome of women's education was the evolution of the nineteenth century generation of 'new women'. The latter half of nineteenth century started seeing the rise of women hood to freedom and assertion. Women used to attend schools and colleges, though limited numbers received education and assume the respectable position in our society. The above study is intended to explore the past and present status of women's education in Darrang district. There were many obstacles in front of women to attain education and have a respectable position. Ignorance on value of education made them backward. The district is mostly rural in character as well as economic condition of the people was not up to the mark. So poverty was one of the main causes of women backwardness. Above all there were merely any roads to go for educational institutions which are situated dispersedly in the entire district, of which no guardian intended to send their girls in that

educational institution. Nevertheless owing to relentless effort of few generous people in their respective areas of the entire Darrang district, and policy of government of that time made women education got underway.

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