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Abstract

India is a vast country with a number of caste and communities. If we talk about tribes, generally we believe that the group of people, considered as backward and primitive in nature. There are total 14 recognized tribal groups in Assam (Excluding Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council), among them Bodo tribe is the largest tribal group which carries 40.90% out of total tribal population and the Miri tribe is the second largest, 17.80% (Census, 2011). The role of tribal women in tribal society is very unique in nature and they hold various responsibilities as compare to other tribal women. As per the reports, tribal women are hardworking than tribal men but their economic contribution is lesser. The level of health, nutrition, knowledge and standard of living of tribal women is also inferior to the tribal men. Thus the strategy for development of tribal women needs improvement, betterment, development and upliftment to effect their empowerment. This study focuses on the present position and development of Bodo tribe women in the society. The investigators have also discussed Bodo tribe women empowerment in the present study.

Keywords: The tribe, Empowerment of Bodo women, Socio-economic status.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

We believe that the tribal are the group of people considered as backward, primitive, and deprived in terms of education, economic, social, political and many other aspects. Tribal population constitutes around 8.60% of the total Indian population (Census, 2011). Near about all Indian states is having tribal population, only Punjab, Hariyana, Delhi Chandigarh and Pondicherry doesn't have official recorded tribal population. If we talk globally, tribal are generally found in India, Africa, North America, Myanmar, Malaysia, Russia, Tibet, Australia etc. International Labour Organization (ILO) defined and described tribal as "Indigenous and tribal peoples is a common denominator for more than 370 million people, found in more than 70 countries worldwide. Indigenous and tribal peoples have their own cultures, languages, customs and institutions, which distinguish them from other parts of the societies in which they find themselves. Indigenous peoples, also known in some regions as First peoples, First Nations, Aboriginal peoples or Native peoples or autochthonous peoples, are ethnic groups who are the original or earliest known inhabitants of an area, in contrast to groups that have settled, occupied or colonized the area more recently". India is having the highest tribal population of the world i.e- 104 millions and Africa is second highest. There are total 705 recognized tribal groups in India. Among them a total number of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) represents 75 tribal groups, including 15 States/Union Territory of India (Affairs, 2019). There are total 14 recognized tribal groups in Assam

(Excluding Dima Hasao and Karbianglong Autonomous Council), among them Bodo tribe is the largest tribal group which carries 40.90% out of total tribal population and the Miri tribe is the second largest, 17.80% (Census, 2011). Most of the poultaiion of Bodo Tribal Women live in isolated village or rural areas and lease percentage live in urban areas. The main reasons behind is the educational factors. Education is the only mean to change the human life and progress. The living standards of a family always depend on a mother or female person at home, so it clearly shows that the women are the core member of society (G. Sandhya & Basumatary, 2019). The nature of family and the society is highly related with woman's participation including cultural reflexes. The dresses and the way of living reflex in culture of a particular communities. The role of tribal women in tribal communities is substantially very significant. The term "scheduled tribes" first appeared in the Constitution of India, to confer certain constitutional privileges and protection to a group of people who are considered disadvantaged and backward. Article 366 (25) of the Constitution of India refers to Scheduled Tribes as those communities, who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution (Constitution of India). Tribal communities live, in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forests to hills and inaccessible areas. For long periods of history, they were always socially and geographically isolated and are at different stages of social, economic and educational development. Broadly the schedule tribe people inhabited the following distinct geographical area – Central India, North-East India, South India, Sub-Himalayan Region and Western India. Their main occupations can be found Farming, Cultivation, Weaving, Handicraft, Fishing, Hunting animals, Gathering foods and fruits. Brahma (1998), stated in his study, "that the status of women in the Bodo society is high. They can also enjoy property rights in case if there is no male child in the family. They can enjoy such property event after her marriage. But in some grounds it is witnessed that the Bodo women are facing social problems that show the low status of women in the society." Brahma (1989) also stated that, "the status of Bodo women can be understood through different roles they play in the family as well as in the society." Talukdar (2012) also opined that "due to the suffering of various social, economic and political problems in the society Bodo women are facing low status. There is economic backwardness, educational problems, negligence of women education, superstitious beliefs, and low infrastructural development in the area." Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru said, "If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Woman empowerment means mother India empowerment."

2.0 THE BODO TRIBE WOMEN OF ASSAM

The Bodos are educationally, economically, socially under developed. They are still backward in all aspects. Women are nearly the half of the total population size of a society so, their participation in family development activities is very important. Particularly the Bodo women in remote area are maintaining the same mode of living major changes over the years. That is why the tribal women are far from taking formal education, but education is the most important factor of development of the community. Total Literacy rate of Assam state according to census 2011 is 72.19 percent, while female literacy is at 66.27 percent. If we talk about female literacy rate of Bodo women it is below average. When we see the status of Bodo women, they could not occupied significant status in the society and educational field whereas opportunities were given to both the person equally (Basumatary & Sandhya, 2018).

There is no concept of discrimination of male and female child in Bodo society, but still the male individuals have been found superiority than the female child. The girl child believed that, they have to depend on their husband after marriage. They only have a traditional believed system, like all girl become a mother, a housewife who needs to look after the family and the child. They are expected to do all the household work and take responsibility for child-care and therefore, they have fewer hours of free time than men. The women are deprived of better education as compared to male in the society. In order to raise women education, adequate educational opportunities must be provided and the exiting government policy on women empowerment should be implemented properly. The most important thing is to bring awareness among the community so that women can also take equal participation in education.

3.0 STATUS AND ROLE OF BODO TRIBE WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

As per the data record, the tribal women are hardworking than tribal men but their economic contribution is lesser than the tribal men. "Only 6.50% of tribal women earn more than the tribal men (Census, 2011). Also the level of health nutrition, knowledge and standard of living, tribal women is low as compared to tribal men. Bodo women have a great role to play in economic aspect. The role and participation of women in economic development activities will contribute to the economy of the society (Basumatary & Pathak, 2017). The Bodo tribe women of Assam is something unique in this regard, they have been farming & cultivating various resources for their livelihood and the economic development of the family. Farming Hens, Duck, Cow, Goat, Pig, Silkworm, Fish etc. are the major strength of the family economic status. Selling and buying at daily market is a preliminary factor of economic development.



Figure 3.1: Daily Local Market
Source: Primary



Figure 3.2 : Fishing
Source: prokerala.com

The fishing activity is exists in Bodo society since the time immemorial. Bodo tribe community both man and women do fishing but generally Bodo women go for fishing with special instrument called 'Jekai' and 'Kobai'. Both the instruments are made up of bamboo. It is a handmade instrument, they design and make it by themselves.

The farming hens, ducks, pigs, cow, goat, silkworm, fish etc. are the basic economic strength of the family. The family economic development and family management is highly associated with these activities. The basic need including educational expenses of their children is managed through farming activities.



Figure 3.3 : Piggery
Source: Primary



Figure 3.4 : Hens & Duck farming
Source: Primary

The Bodo Women are the core member of the Bodo community. Their participation in family development

has an important part that leads towards economic development. Farming hens and duck are the basic foundation of family economic. They are skilled in all agricultural activities and other allied works. They are also skilled in weaving, plantation and art & craft.

The Bodo tribe women have high dignity and respect in the Bodo society. They called them (Bodo Women) as 'Laxmi' or 'Lwkki' in Bodo. As they are considered Laxmi, all the household works are under her supervisions including worshiping to their God. Generally family worshiping starts from women or head of the family. The traditional religion of Bodo is 'Bathouism' which was believed and practiced by the people since the time of immemorial. They also believed natural elements Sky. They don't Hinduism.

Bathouism, he
Bathouism through



Figure 3.5 : Bathou- A Worshiping Place
Source: Primary

started

every family. Here

deep thoughts. Which literary means 'Deep five thoughts' i.e. five super natural elements- Land, Water, Air, Fire and the Sky. As they had lived in jungle, they experience through nature and natural phenomenon. They believe that, those five super natural elements are exits in this world and nothing is beyond it. But now-a-days the diverse religions have also been found in Bodo community i.e.- Hinduism, Christianity, Brahma and other.

EMPOWERMENT OF BODO WOMEN

Education should enable a girl to become a better daughter, wife and a mother. An educated woman has the skills, information and self-confidence that she needs to be a better parent, worker and citizen. Education is a very important agent of social change and development. Without education a society is blind. Education helps an individual to understand all aspects rationally. It also builds a balance emotion. The state of mind of every woman is very dynamic. We received thousands information from various sources which gives diverse thinking (Basumatary & Kumar, 2020). All the information have their own philosophy having positive and negative values. The information which is available on social media is always not authentic. So we must be very selective while using it. A fake information and irrelevant news can lead an individual towards the darkness of life. We should have a great emotional control and patience to be more aware about misguide of the people around you. The emotional balance and stability is important in student life. And this can be only possible through proper education. The status of Bodo tribe women's education is comparatively below average. Most of the girl child is the first generation learners. Their parents are illiterate and they do not have much knowledge about the formal education system. The women who are not highly educated they are generally involving in household works, farming and agriculture activities. Highly educated women are working Govt. and private sector jobs. They have also their own business like fashion designing, Beauty parlour, Sewing and cutting, tailoring, weaving etc. Income earn from such activities are impressively higher than traditional primitive economic activities. For creating the goal an empowered women for rural development, the following strategically need to be implemented by the Government in

partnership with NGO and social organization of the Community. Creating community demand for girls education not only elementary level but also all the level of education. Gender and poverty sensation programme should be developed to create an environment where by all will work together to remove all the disparities - physical, social and economic. The Technical and Vocational education should be made available for girls. Number of Bodo medium schools need to extent up to all village of the community. The adult education programme in rural area is essential. Efforts should made to solve the drop out problem of girls education in rural area of the community. At present, Politics as an art of acquiring and exercising power- the power to effectively influence the decision making process and policies, must have a share of women. Bodo women can be found participation in politics now. Again there is complexity in mind of common people whether women participation in politics is good or bad? If it is considered to be bad, then how we can empower tribal women in all dimension? We should not only say, women are equal to man, but we should provide them a space to feel as we are really same. We should not let negative classification in terms of gender. Positive distribution and positive cooperation from different dimension in required.

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

Identifying women through education is not a new one. Women should be educationally aware so that they can maintain their livelihood comparing to that of their male counterpart. Equal rights and opportunities should be given to them. The students both male and female must have equal access to education, employment, technical knowledge. They must encourage by the intellectuals to follow and use innovativeness in their teaching-learning process. Overall development of a pupil is possible by three ways- i.e. school, teachers, and the parents. All these three factors are the major to build the equal responsibilities and overall development of the child (Kumar, Basumatary, Kumar & Dev, 2019). As per as we know that women are half of the total population in the world must possesses every works of their life along with the male population. Women must have good and quality education if not entire world will be miserable. It is the world of educationally aware population. Only educated and civilized people can keep their eye to the surrounding of the environment. Likewise, women must identify themselves through acquiring better and quality education. The Bodo women must follow the world of education. Various thinkers also made his/her contribution to the society on the path of liberty, equality and fraternity towards women. In the current situation, there is an in crime against women and children, violence, homicides, terrorism, moral crisis etc. It is important to bring consciousness and awareness of the importance of character education, spiritual and moral renewal in human society (Basumatary & Thiumai, E, 2019). Beside this, education level of Bodo tribal women should also be increased. Thus the strategy for empowering Bodo tribal women needs improvement, betterment and development.

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