

“Status of women Rights: A study of Baksa District (BTAD) of Assam”

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ABSTRACT : Being a birth right of an individual Human rights are therefore, inherent in all the individuals irrespective of their caste, creed, religion, sex and nationality. These rights are essential for all the individuals as they are consonant with their freedom and dignity and are conducive to physical, moral, social and spiritual welfare. Women’s human right is defined as the freedoms, liberties and opportunities that women have, especially the opportunity to be treated equal to and given the same legal rights as men. The term women’s rights refers to the freedoms inherently possessed by women and girls of all ages, which may be institutionalized, ignored or suppressed by law, custom, and behavior in a particular society. “The status of women’s human rights: A case study of Baksa District” is based on some important assumptions. The Baksa District is basically a backward and one of the most conflict prone areas of Assam. Several types of conflict have been occurring in this region like ethnic conflict, communal conflict, conflict between insurgent groups and the government, conflict between political parties etc. During the conflict situation some atrocities especially on women were attempted and committed, may be of any type such as molestation, rape, abduction and threatening etc. They also become an easy prey to human trafficking due to lack of education. The violent is responsible for low status of women’s rights. Consequently, status of women’s human rights in Baksa district, basically in education, health, socio-economic and political is lower than in rest of the Assam. This present study is focused on the discriminatory position of women in the family and society. The study is focused on this question--Why Traditional rules are created only for women? Why women are generally excluded from access to power structures and participation in decision-making? Why the gender roles were neglected in the Society? In what is the status of women in Baksa district specially education, health and socio-economic and political. Therefore this problem has been selected for a thorough probe.

Keywords - Status, Women, Rights, Baksa, Education, Health

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I. Introduction

Women’s right is defined as the freedoms, liberties and opportunities that women have, especially the opportunity to be treated equal to and given the same legal rights as men.¹ The term women’s rights refers to the freedoms inherently possessed by women and girls of all ages, which may be institutionalized, ignored or suppressed by law, custom, and behavior in a particular society.²

Women’s rights are the rights and entitlements claimed for women and girls of many societies worldwide, and formed the basis to the women's rights movement in the nineteenth century and feminist movement during the 20th century. In some countries, these rights are institutionalized or supported by law, local custom, and behavior, whereas in others they may be ignored or suppressed. They differ from broader notions of human rights through claims of an inherent historical and traditional bias against the exercise of rights by women and girls, in favour of men and boys. Issues commonly associated with notions of women's rights include, though are not limited to, the right: to bodily integrity and autonomy; to be free from sexual violence; to vote; to hold public office; to enter into legal contracts; to have equal rights in family law; to work; to fair wages or equal pay; to have reproductive rights; to own property³

The concept of women's human rights owes its success and the proliferation of its use to the fact that it is simultaneously prosaic and revolutionary. On the one hand, the idea of women's human rights makes common sense. It declares, quite simply, that as human beings women have human rights. Anyone would find her or himself hard-pressed to publicly make and defend the contrary argument that women are not human. So in many

¹<http://www.yourdictionary.com/womens-rights>

² Aswal B.S.(2010) *Women and Human Rights* published by Asian Offset Printers, New Delhi.

³ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Womenrights>

ways, the claim that women have human rights seems quite ordinary. On the other hand, "women's human rights" is a revolutionary notion. This radical reclamation of humanity and the corollary insistence that women's rights are human rights have profound transformative potential. The incorporation of women's perspectives and lives into human rights standards and practice forces recognition of the dismal failure of countries worldwide to accord women the human dignity and respect that they deserve—simply as human beings. A woman's human rights framework equips women with a way to define, analyze, and articulate their experiences of violence, degradation, and marginality. Finally, and very importantly, the idea of women's human rights provides a common framework for developing a vast array of visions and concrete strategies for change.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The research problem formulated for this study is: the status of women rights: A case study of Baksa District It is based on some important assumptions. The Baksa District is basically a backward and one of the most conflict prone areas of Assam. Several types of conflict have been occurring in this region like ethnic conflict, communal conflict, conflict between insurgent groups and the government, conflict between political parties etc. During the conflict situation some atrocities especially on women were attempted and committed, may be of any type such as molestation, rape, abduction and threatening etc. They also become an easy prey to human trafficking due to lack of education. The violent is responsible for low status of women's rights. Consequently, status of women rights in Baksa district, basically in education, health, socio-economic and political is lower than in rest of the Assam.

This present study is focused on the discriminatory position of women in the family and society .The study is focused on this question--Why Traditional rules are created only for women? Why women are generally excluded from access to power structures and participation in decision-making? Why the gender roles were neglected in the Society? In what is the status of women in Baksa district specially education, health and socio-economic and political. Therefore this problem has been selected for a thorough probe.

1.2 Objective of the study:

The objective of this study is as follows:

- 1). To explore facts and find out the nature of the problem.
- 2). To understand the problem, and suggest the measure so that human rights of women are being realized.

1.3 Methodology:

The Study will be based on both primary and secondary data. Secondary data have been collected from different published books, journals, internet source etc. The primary data will be collected with the help of interview, observation as well as discussion. A total number of 310 women will be selected from the area of Mushalpur and Tamulpur for the study. For data collection self structured questionnaire will be distributed to the selected respondents. Along with these, informal interviews and focused group discussion will also be conducted with the women and locally available NGOs and prominent women.

II. Profile of the study area

The Baksa is an autonomous district. Baksa is a part of B.T.A.D. which enjoys the status of autonomy under the provision of the sixth schedule to the constitution of India. Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District popularly called B.T.A.D. was formally inaugurated on 2003. The total number of population of Baksa district is 9, 50075 lakhs, out of these the total male population is 4,81330 and total female population is 4,68745. The total literate persons of this district is 572837 lakhs, Sex ratio is 974 female against 1000 male. The main communities of the District are Bodo, Mainstream Assamese, Adibasi, Nepali, Rabha and Religious minority. Out of these total male literates is 322614 and female literate is 250223. Overall district literacy rate 60.3%, which consists male literary rate 67% and female literary rate 53.4% (Census 2011, Source: Baksa District Profile). In this study , we have selected Mushalpur and Tamulpur subdivision of Baksa District of Assam State, reason been that it is one of the most underdeveloped area in terms of human development related indicators as compared to whole of the State of Assam. The field Study based on questionnaire format, interview, as well as group discussion. The field survey was conducted by selecting 15 villages. Representative villages by name Angardhua, Polokata, Baganpara, Boglamari, Santipur, Subankhata, tupalia, Ghoramara, Jartaluk, Balabari Kalakuchi, Barsimalaguri, Anandapur, Merkuchi, Kadamtola Under the area of Mushalpur and Tamulpur subdivision. Among these Angardhua, Baganpara, Boglamari, Santipur, Subankhata, Ghoramar, Polokata, Jartaluk are under Baganpara Revenue Circle , Balabari and Kalakuchi are Tamulpur Revenue Circle, Anandapur and Barsimalaguri, Merkuchi, Kadamtola are under Barama Revenue Circle. A total number of 310 women have selected from the area of Mushalpur and Tamulpur for the study. For data collection self structured questionnaire was distributed to the selected respondents. Along with these, informal interviews were also conducted with the women.

An in-depth field survey has been undertaken in the study area. The physiographic background of the district has been taken into account for selection of the specific areas and Bodo and Mainstream Assamese areas have been selected accordingly, so that it becomes representative in character.. The factors affecting human rights status of women have been examined in this study. Education, health, Social, economic, political status of women, Awareness of Human rights etc are taken into consideration in the measurement of Human rights status of women..

III. Educational rights of women

Education is major catalyst in bringing about changes in the status of women. The educational status of women in Baksa also is not very satisfactory. The female literacy rate in Baksa District has considerably increased over the years. It has increased from 48.33% in 2001 to 53.4% in 2011. However as compared to the male literacy rate the literacy rate of women is low.

Table: 3.1 Government Educational Institution in the District.

SL.No	Institutions	No
1.	Degree College	15
2.	Junior College	11
3.	H.S. School	15
4.	High School	234
5.	L.P. School	1462
6.	Sanskrit toll	01
7.	U.P. School	467

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam 2015

The following table presenting the male-female literacy and gender gap between the literacy in Baksa District and Assam.

Table-3.2 Literacy rate of Assam as well as Baksa district.

Literacy rate 2011	Male (%)	Female(%)	Male-Female gap
Assam	77.85	66.27	11.58
Baksa	67	53.4	13.6

Census-2011

The above table representing the male-female literacy rate in Assam as well as Baksa District. The table has surprisingly noted that there is a gap between Female literacy rate of Assam and Baksa district. According to Census of India 2011 the male-female literacy gap of Assam and Baksa district were 11.58 and 13.6 respectively. So it is indicate that the condition of female literacy in Baksa is lagging behind compared to State literacy rate of female. During field survey it was found that the conditions of Education facilities are not appreciable. To examine the Government efforts for Female education, we asked our respondents, “How do you evaluate government’s performance on women education in Baksa district? “The following table will show in the reality

Table-3.3 How do you evaluate government’s performance on women education in Baksa district?

Community	Excellent	Good	Poor	Total
Bodo	37	61	57	155
Mainstream Assamese	10	45	90	155
Total	47(15.1%)	106(34.1)	157(50.6%)	310

Source: Field Survey

Our data in table 4:3 reveals that a majority of women (50.6%) were not satisfied of government performance about the women education. Only (34.1%) says that, government performance on women education is good and another (15.1%) says it is excellent.

IV. Status of right to health

Every woman has the human rights to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. Enjoyment of the human right to health is vital to all aspects of a person’s life and well-being. Poor health is one of the main problems which the women of the Baksa District are facing since long period. Although the BTC government is doing its best to improve the quality of health center in the area but it is not satisfactory

Table :4.1 Male Female sex ratio in Baksa:

Total population	9500075
Male	481330
Female	468745
Sex Ratio	974

Source: District Profile, Census 2011

The achievement of Baksa District in the field of health care is not satisfactory rather disappointing.

Table:4.2 Government Health Institution in the district.

SL.No	Name of Health Institution	No	Number of bed
1	Civil Hospital	01	150
2	Primary Health Centre	41	164
3	Community Health Centre	05	150
4	First referral unit	02	---
5	Sub Centre	156	----

Source: Statistical Handbook of Assam 2015

To examine the Government efforts for women health care facilities, we asked our respondents, “ How do you calculate government’s performance on women Health care facilities in Baksa?” The following table will depict the reality

Table: 4.3 How do you calculate government’s performance on women Health care facilities in Baksa?”

Community	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Not-Satisfied	Total
Bodo	12	51	92	155
Mainstream Assamese	8	21	126	155
Total	20(6.45%)	72(23.22%)	218(70.32%)	310

Source: Field Survey

Our data in table 4:6 reveals that a most of the women (70.32%) were not satisfied of government performance about the women Health care facilities. Only (23.22%) says that, government performance on women Health care facilities is satisfactory and another (6.45%) were highly satisfied. On the basis of the above analysis we might conclude that majority of the women were not satisfied of government performance on Health care facilities.

Regarding government’s performance on women Health care facilities in Baksa, we again ask a question-What are the causes for not-satisfaction?

Table: 4.4 What are the causes for not-satisfaction?

Causes for Not-Satisfaction	Yes	No
Absence of Doctors	116(53.21%)	102(46.78%)
Shortage of Medicine	154(70.64%)	64(29.35%)
Lack of maternity facilities in emergency situation.	212(97.24%)	06(2.75%)

Source: Field Survey

Our data in table 4:7 reveals that that main cause behind the non satisfaction with the medical facilities as identified by the respondents is lack of maternity facilities in emergency situation (97.24%) followed by shortage of medicine (70.64%), absence of doctors (53.21%) etc.

V. Societal discrimination on the basis of sex.

Like their counterparts in other regions of Assam, Women of Baksa district have also a number of specific problem due to patriarchal culture. For the discrimination on the basis of sex three questions were asked to know the opinion of people regarding the position and rights of women in our society.

Table:5.1 Q. In your opinion why society shows the different approach about women compare to men?

Community	Physically weaker section	Socially vulnerable groups	Economically they are dependent	Total
Bodo	27	71	47	155
Mainstream Assamese	23	99	43	155
Total	50(16.2%)	170(54.83%)	90(29.03%)	310

Source: Field Survey

Table 4:8 reveals, 16.2 % respondents think that society shows the different approach about women, because they are physically weaker section. Similarly 54.8% opine that women are socially vulnerable groups. Other hand 29.03% respondents think that women are economically dependent that is why society shows the different about women compare to men.

Table 5.2 Was discrimination against women due to tradition and custom?

Community	Agree	Disagree	Total
Bodo	114	41	155
Mainstream Assamese	133	22	155
Total	247(79.67%)	63(20.32%)	310

Source: Field Survey

In the above mentioned question, 79.67% respondents are in favour of the option that there is a strong discrimination against women mainly in the tradition and customary practices. But (20.32%) respondents do not think so. On the basis of the above analysis we might conclude that majority of the women think that tradition and custom are the main hindrances of women rights.

Table: 5.3 Do you think that, in the society, a woman is considered as inferior to man?

Community	Yes	No	Total
Bodo	52	103	155
Mainstream Assamese	123	32	155
Total	175(56.45%)	135(43.54%)	310

Source: Field Survey

Our data in Table reveals that, 56.45 % respondents think that the status of women in our Society is inferior to man. So it is a fact that, inequality on the basis of sex has become part of a male dominated society. Although the social structure of the Bodo community is based on the patriarchal system women occupies an important place in the society. The data table shows that 103 (66.45%) respondents out of 155 belongs to Bodo community do not think that their position is inferior to man.

VI. Gender discrimination on economic activities.

The economic status of women of Baksa district is not satisfactory at all from the point of occupation. In Baksa, Most of the women are bound with household works. In rural areas the women participate largely in agriculture and other activities..Women are also expert in weaving. Their weaving is replete with artistic sensibility and it included not only cotton textiles but also silk fabric. The women are expert in the art of making different kinds of handicrafts. But these activities of women have unrecognized by their family. The following table shows the reality.

Table-6.1 Do you think that house hold work is not getting recognized because it is Non-Salaried in character?

Community	Yes	No	Total
Bodo	137	18	155
Mainstream Assamese	149	6	155
Total	286(92.25%)	24(7.74%)	310

Source: Field Survey

Our data in table 4:11 reveals that a most of the women (92.25%) were think that their household work is not got recognize by the family because of its non-economic character. Only 7.74% respondents agree that their household works get recognize by the family.

In the following table we have discussed the economic participation of women as provided in the Census report 2011.

Table-6.2 Economic Participation of Women.

Worker	Person	Male	Female
Main worker	278297	215948	62349
Marginal worker	128459	50663	77796
Total worker	406756	266611	140145

Source: 2011 Census

In Baksa district female main workers include 62349 where it is 215948 in case of male members. It indicates higher male main worker than female. In case of marginal workers the number of female worker is higher than the male workers. It is 77796 against 50663 male workers but in case of total workers including both main and marginal the number of male workers is higher than the female.

VII. Gender discrimination on the basis of political participation.

In terms of political participation women of Baksa district occupied an inferior position in the entire electoral process. The political arena is dominated by males at every level. Though the percentage of women voter increased considerably over the time, still they are lagging behind the decision-making power. In Baksa

district, so far there is no record of women candidate participating for parliament election basically from major political parties. After creation of Baksa district, so far three terms Legislative Assembly election have been held but surprisingly not a single women has been elected. On the other hand, In Bodoland territorial council Assembly, there is 46 members and so far three term election have been held but significantly not a single woman has been elected from Baksa district. . The following table will show in the reality.

Table 7.1 Do you think that the Male dominated Society is the main reason of low participation rate of women in politics

Community	Yes	No	Total
Bodo	92	63	155
Mainstream Assamese	111	44	155
Total	203(65.48%)	107(34.51%)	310

Source: Field Survey

In the above mentioned question, 65.48% respondents are in favour of the option that patriarchal society is the main reason of low participation rate of women in politics and decision making process.. But (20.32%) respondents do not think so.

VIII. Conclusion

On the basis of the above analysis we might conclude that:

1. The educational status of women in Baksa also is not very satisfactory. The female literacy rate in Baksa During field survey it was found that the conditions of Education facilities are not appreciable. Majority of the women were not satisfied of government performance on education.
2. Poor health is one of the main problems which the women of the Baksa District are facing since long period. Majority of the women were not satisfied of government performance on Health care facilities
3. Women suffer from gender discrimination because of our societal structure. Tradition is firmly rooted in our society.. So it is the time to be hurry to root out our traditional belief system, superstition and societal restriction.
4. Majority of the women were not satisfied for the discriminatory attitude by their family and society. So, the works of women in every respect whether paid or unpaid should be given due respect.
5. Majority of the women think that, they have been completely ignored by male dominated society and political parties in case of power politics and decision making process.

After the examination of the overall situation of the women's human rights in Baksa district, we can conclude with proved conviction that violation of women's human rights has become a matter of serious concern. It is clear from the above facts that women education is a vital point to develop a nation. Unless and until women come out from their home to recognize themselves it would not be possible to remove the gender disparity between men and women. The constitution of India no doubt provides to women and several provisions are inserted in the Constitution to protect the rights of women. But in reality there is a huge gap between men women in terms of literacy, health and public decision making. Thus there is an urgent need to remove the gap between men and women. To improve the status of the women in the society always should be not only enacted but also they should be backed by strong public willingness and public opinion because so long as conservative social thinking remains deep rooted in the society laws will not be able to society and try to create awareness among others also so that they can give respect and rights to others. It is the time for us to generate a consciousness in the minds of the people that women are not separate but part of the society.

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