

**DEVELOPMENT OF FEMALE EDUCATION WITH  
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ASSAM OF NORTH-EAST  
INDIA**

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**Abstract**

Education plays a vital role in the all-round development of not only an individual but also of the society in which he or she lives. The socio-economics status of any society is directly reflected by the educational position of both men and women in that society. It is a lucid truth that female is the imperishable part of a body of the human society which can never deniable. An educated woman has the capability to handle her home and professional life. They can effectively contribute to controlling the population of India as they would like to marry at a later age in comparison to the uneducated women.

***Keywords:***

Female education;  
Relevance;  
Development;  
Literacy rate;  
Perspective.

In this paper, I shall try to analyze the scenario of past and present educational system of female, problems of women education, female literacy rate, development of female education and future perspectives.

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## 1. Introduction

Female education is a catch-all term for a complex set of issues and debates surrounding education (primary education, secondary education, tertiary education and health education in particular) for girls and women. It includes areas of gender equality and access to education and its connection to the alleviation of poverty. Also are involved the issues of single-sex education and religious education in that the division of education along gender lines as well as religious teachings on education have been traditionally dominant and are still highly relevant in contemporary discussions of educating females as a global consideration in the field of female education in STEM, it has been shown that girls and women under representation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education are deep rooted [1].

Although India's society is a male dominated, female contribution can not be weakened by any means. Therefore, providing education to the female is of great importance today. In North-East India to female are relatively deprived of the avenues to be educated and to bring about any drastic change in society.

The history of Assam in the nineteenth century witnessed great socio-political and economic transformations. It saw the collapse of the six hundred year old Ahom monarchy and the imposition of British colonial rule which brought about considerable changes in the socio-political fabric of the province. Within a short period of time, the Assamese society found itself in the midst of a totally new environment. In short, aided by three major simultaneous influences in the province, viz. the spread of British administration and its associated infrastructure, the activities of the American Baptist Missionaries and the impact of the Bengal Renaissance, a new awakening emerged in the Brahmaputra Valley in the second half of the nineteenth century [2].

Formal educational institutions for girls were practically non-existent in Assam, prior to the coming of the British. The British Government was the first to advocate female education and emancipation as an essential step towards progress. By the end of the eighteenth century, enquiry into the state of education in India and noted the existence of some educational institutions which also had some girls in it [3].

North-East India is a traditional society. The position of women in most part of the North-East Indian society is yet in a poor stage. They are backward in every aspect of society including political, economic and societal activities. The educational status of women in North-East India is not developed. Women education remains backward due to suffering from some serious problem.

## **2. Objectives**

The main objectives of the present study are:

- To analyse the past and present scenario of female education.
- To bring out the problems associated with female education.
- To study the development of women education in Assam of North-East India.
- To analyse the recent literacy rate of female education.

## **3. Methodology**

The analytical and descriptive methods are adopted for the study. The research article is based on secondary sources as the data are collected from various books, newspaper and e-articles. Author's interpretations are also added.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

In this paper a brief discussion has been carried out on the factors affecting on the development of female education in North-East India as follows:

### **4.1. Past and Present Scenario of Women Education**

Women in India have been experiencing different status since the inception of the civilization. Women in India have been struggling for equal rights over the past millennium. However, in ancient India, women were assigned to certain rights in the days. Women in ancient society in India was respected and was given importance in the society. In the Vedas one can find the importance of women philosophers and intellectuals of the Vedic period. During the Vedic period women enjoyed privileges. They were regarded as the prime source of power, peace, satisfaction and knowledge for men. At that period, there were a number of women having deep

scholarship. Education then depended upon one's capability and there were no restrictions on caste, gender and colour.

During the post-Vedic period many negative changes were introduced in women's education. Women were deprived of social and religious rights and also not allowed to participate in social functions. As a result, the status of women fell drastically in society. But during the Upanishadic period, women regained their educational right. Many women became the Acharya (Guru) of Ashrama. In this context, Gargi and Maitriyi, Atriyi, Sulabha etc. may be mentioned. They made valuable contribution to the advancement of knowledge. Besides spiritual knowledge women were also attracted towards learning of dance and music.

During the Buddhist period, Buddhist education paid little attention to women education. There was restriction to entry of women into the monastery by Lord Buddha, but latter on they were allowed to make admission in vihars with many restrictions and reservations. Women monk were not allowed to meet male monk in loneliness, nor given any permanent post in the sangh.

In the Medieval period, during the Muslim rule there was a sharp decline in women education. The Hindu society as a whole become prejudiced against women education with the belief that the girls who were given education would become widows soon gained ground in the society widespread early marriage of girls belonging to both Hindu and Muslim families acted as a great hindrance to their education. Due to the "Purdah system, education of the Muslim women was naturally restricted. Only girls belonging to Muslim royal and noble families were given education by private coaching within the palaces and homes.

But in later period, the idea of imparting education to women emerged in the British period. After Bhakti movement the Christian missionaries took interest in the education of girls. In 1824, a girls school was started for the first time in Bombay. And in 1882, girls were allowed to go for higher education. After that different social movements initiated by some enlightened leaders, women organization emerged for the upliftment of all aspects of women's life. There are some important legislations also enacted to women such as Child Marriage Restraint Act of 1929, the Hindu Marriage Act 1955 etc. All these factors point out the change in the conditions that kept women in situation of inferiority, dependence and exploitation.

At present, women are holding that position where they can get education equally as men. Since Independence in India, girls are getting the education they deserve because the Constitution of India has made it possible for girls to fully receive their education, access to schooling has improved and there has been an upswing in girls enrolment [4].

#### **4.2. Problems of Female Education**

Though we are in the modern era where lots of socio-economy, educational, political rights are given to women but still there are practices of victimizing female in their day to day life. Sexual harassment, witchcraft murder, discrimination, neglect towards female education etc. depicts the picture of present hurdles for female education. Lack of education and poor health facilities plays a major role of catalysts in aiding those till practices in this regard.

Some major factors which affect female education are:

##### **(i) Priority to Sons Education Compared to Daughters Education**

As a patriarchal society, sons are always given priority than daughters because of financial restrictions. Generally people of our society think that education of daughters is as a waste of money but education of sons considers as an investment.

##### **(ii) Lack of Girls' School or Co-educational Aspects**

The number of women educational institution is much less than as compared with the male educational institutions particularly in the remote area villages the women are supposed to travel some distance and parents does not allow their daughter to go the school for this reason. They also feel that in the same school where both boys and girls study together, corruption is bound to breed. Thus they are not prepared to send their daughter to a co-education institution.

##### **(iii) Sexual Harassment and Abused at Early Age**

Sexual harassment is also another problem for female education. When someone is sexually harassed in school, it can undermine their sense of personal dignity and safety, disrupt their education, and interfere with their ability to reach their full potential in life. For example, a student experiencing sexual harassment may stop doing their school work and taking part in school related activities.

##### **(iv) Restrictions and Taboos**

There are some restrictions and always for female in our society. In case of education also, female is not allowed to go for further education after attaining puberty in some remote areas. These are the common problems related to female education which are prevalent in our society. To improve female education it is necessary to solve these problems in a proper way [5].

#### 4.3. Development of Literacy Rate among Female in North-East India

After Independence in India, there are different educational institutions like colleges, schools, technical institution, engineering colleges established in different states of North-East Region which has been helping in increasing the literacy rate of women in this region.

The following table shows percentage of female to the literacy population in the North-Eastern states of India as per 2001 to 2011 census.

Table 1. Literacy rate in the North-Eastern states of India from 2001 to 2011

States	Female Literacy Rate	
	2001 (census)	2011 (census)
Arunachal Pradesh	43.56	59.57
Assam	54.61	67.27
Manipur	60.10	73.17
Meghalaya	59.61	73.78
Nagaland	61.46	76.69
Sikkim	60.40	76.43
Tripura	64.91	83.15

#### 4.4. Higher Educational Institution in North-East Region

The following table shows the number of higher educational institutions and enrolment of students in North-East Region (2005-2006):

Table 2. Higher educational institutions and enrolment of students in North-East Region (2005-2006)

Sl. No.	States	No. of Higher Educational Institutions	Enrolment
1	Arunachal Pradesh	17	8839
2	Assam	369	217652
3	Manipur	62	38177
4	Meghalaya	56	38658
5	Mizoram	28	14575
6	Nagaland	42	28965
7	Sikkim	08	8985
8	Tripura	20	24845

*Note:* Enrolment Figures Includes Ph.D., PG & other Professional Courses

*Source:* MHRD, Annual Report (2009-2010)

According to the MHRD, annual report (2009-2010), Assam consists of highest number of 369 higher educational institutions with 217652 numbers of students enrolments. It was followed by Manipur and Meghalaya with 62 and 56 higher educational institutions whereas Meghalaya has the higher enrolment number of 38658 students than Manipur which have an enrolment number of 38177 students, Nagaland has 42 higher educational institutions with total enrolment number of 28965 students and Mizoram has 28 higher educational institutions with the enrolment number of 14575 students. Tripura has got 20 higher educational institutions with the enrolment number of 24845 students which is higher than Mizoram. Since, Tripura is one of the most populated states in North-East Region, Arunachal Pradesh has got 17 higher educational institutions with the enrolment rate of 8839 students whereas Sikkim has got the lowest number of only 8 higher educational institutions but the enrolment rate is higher than Arunachal Pradesh by 8985 students against 8839 students.

## 5. Conclusion

In this study a particular discussion is made on development of female education in North-East India. From the above discussion it is clear that female play a vital role in modern human society.

It is also seen that there is an increase in female education in modern society and also a prospect for it. From this we may say that superstitions are decreasing. Higher educational institutions have highly contributed to female education.

Positively speaking, the current scenario is improving and the prospects seems to be gradually increasing with governmental and non-governmental institutes are extending helping hands to the women education.

There is an urgent need to create awareness among the women in particular, of the social evils of the society. Women are so much cocooned by various social customs and taboos, that they often cannot and do not want to bring changes in their own traditional lifestyles, so there is a need for creating socio-political consciousness among women.

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