

Empowering Futures: A Quantitative Study on Educational Achievement among Scheduled Caste Girls in Lakhimpur District, Assam

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Abstract:

The term “Scheduled Caste” is used in context of statutory provisions, government programmes and policies. Thus Scheduled Caste is not sociological but administrative category of population identified by the constitution of India for the compensatory discrimination and for special protection. The Scheduled Caste been historically excluded from formal education due to oppression under caste feudal society and their spatial isolation and cultural differences and subsequent marginalization by dominant society. Education is an important as well as most vital instrument for social transformation. But its efficacy in attainment its goal is seen being hindered by the society of its caste-ridden and hierarchical characteristics. Government initiatives for eradication of illiteracy among the Scheduled Caste students more particularly girl students in Lakhimpur district of Assam need revisiting of the report card. While enrolment and dropout are two important indicators that hinder such literary drives, an alarming situation of high dropout rate from the primary level to secondary level among Scheduled Caste girl students is of major concern in the days ahead.

Key words: Gender disparity, Scheduled caste, Girls’ education, School enrolment, School dropout, Government initiatives

Rationale:

The educational attainment of women can have ripple effect within the family and across generation. “Education of boy is education of one person, but education of a girl is the education of the entire family”, said Jawaharlal Nehru while underlying the importance of women education. Educational problems of the scheduled castes have been studied by different researchers from time to time. Gangrade (1974), Dubey (1986) in their study argued that enrolment, retention and dropout rate of scheduled caste children in various levels of

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education varies from region to region and district to district..Chauhan (1975), Yadav (1983) and Shah (1989) in their study found that the most significant reason behind the scheduled caste backwardness in education lies not in their culture but in the financial problems, poverty and non-implementation of government funds and schemes. Economic status also influences the awareness of scheduled castes about educational opportunities for continuation of study (Shantakumari, 1976, Yadav, 1987).

Formal schooling is good index of education. The most minimum measurement of educational attainment is degree of literacy. But the word literacy is not simple to define as Ghosh (1985) states that as to how literacy is very difficult to define .Often it is not very easy to draw list of factor which influence literacy rate and education. The degree of urbanization, political background, the type of economy, status of women all seem to influence literacy .literacy is essential to engage in the process of learning and education. Scheduled caste people are most backward section in India who has faced exploitation and injustice since long. The Scheduled Caste been historically excluded from formal education due to oppression under caste feudal society and their spatial isolation and cultural differences and subsequent marginalization by dominant society.

Introduction:

Education is an important as well as most vital instrument for social transformation. But its efficacy in attainment its goal is seen being hindered by the society of its caste-ridden and hierarchical characteristics. It is a well known phenomenon in India from down the memory lane depicted in different literatures of its character of inequality and injustice to the downtrodden. Since educational developments took place within the framework of stratified social system, it has always been focused on the needs of the privileged ones. The unprivileged sections always remain marginalized in all fronts of development agenda. Hence, the “Directive Principles of State Policy” and article 15(4) of the Indian Constitution enables the states to make special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward class of citizens. Articles 15(4), 29, 30, 45-46 and 350-A are the relevant provisions in the constitution pertaining to educational development of the people. Article 15(A) provides that, "Nothing in this article or in clause (2) A of Article 29 shall prevent the state from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and

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educationally backward classes of citizens or for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes." In pursuance of these constitutional provision, a series of measures have been taken both by the central Government and the state governments to spread education and literacy among the scheduled castes, so that, through educational advancement the social and economic disabilities may also be over. The socio-economic and socio-familial factors, inadequate government funds and incentives, lack of proper planning and proper implementation of government policies and schemes are acting as the major barriers of schedule caste education in this area.

Patriarchy is the root of this discrimination. The word patriarchy, as stated by Kamala Bhasin in her book 'What is Patriarchy,' literally means the rule of father or the 'Patriarch' and originally, this term refers to reflect 'male-dominated society', exist members are father, mother, husband, wife, brother, sister, children, domestic servants etc. where ultimate control under the hand of men whether elder or younger (Rao, 2008, p.120-121). Through the gender socialisation process it establishes its legitimacy. Thus, this patriarchy leads to various factors which serving as impediments to deny the women participation in the education field. Thus, to solve out such problems there is needed to break up such patriarchy based stereotypes traditional customs and practices. Women are more aware about their rights and against the patriarchal domination which is the main cause to create marginalization of their status in society.

Objectives:

- 1) To highlight the Educational policies and programmes of the Government in eradicating illiteracy among the girls of Scheduled Caste community of Lakhimpur district of Assam.
- 2) To study the impact of educational schemes in attainment of changing scenario in educational development among the targeted group.
- 3) To study the problems of education in Scheduled Caste villages of Lakhimpur district .
- 4) To study the factors related to school dropout among scheduled caste girl students of the district.
- 5) To find out the causes and factors of backwardness in education of the district.

- 6) To chalk out Strategies for promotion of Equality in Education among the SC students of Lakhimpur district of Assam.

Educational Policies and Programmes of the Government:

Government incentives in Assam has a pivotal role play to play in the field of education. But only government incentives would not serve the purpose unless its importance is percolated down to the society. Consciousness about the girls' education and equality is the need of the hour for attainment of the desired goal.

i) First Plan (1951-56) envisaged that the programmes under various sectors of development would benefit all sections of the population including SCs, OBCs and Minorities. But, unfortunately, it never happened so. Therefore, special programmes under the Backward Classes Sector were formulated, keeping in view the special requirements of Scheduled Castes.

ii) Second Plan (1956-61) promised to ensure that the benefits of economic development accrue more and more to the relatively less privileged classes of society in order to reduce inequalities.

iii) Third Plan (1961-66) advocated greater 'equality of opportunity' and a reduction in disparities in income and wealth and the even distribution of economic power.

iv) Fourth and Fifth Plans (1969-78) envisaged the 'basic goal as rapid increase in the standard of living of the people through measures which also promote equality and social justice'.

v) Annual Plan (1979-80) was the launching of the special mechanism of Special Component Plan (SCP) for SCs to ensure that these groups receive their due share of funds/benefits from the other developmental sectors.

vi) Sixth Plan (1980-85) marked a shift in the approach to the development of SCs. Special emphasis was laid on the implementation of the newly launched SCP for SCs facilitating easy convergence and pooling of resources from all the other developmental sectors in proportion to the population of SCs and monitoring of various developmental programmes for the benefit of Scheduled Castes.

vii) Seventh Plan Prioritised the educational development of SCs. Another important achievement of this Plan was the setting up of a National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled

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Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) in 1989 to extend loans-cum-subsidies and thus encourage these Groups to become gainfully engaged in various income-generation activities.

viii) Eighth Plan (1992-97) was to intensify the efforts and to bridge the gap between the development of SCs, OBCs and Minorities and other sections of the society, so that by the turn of the century these disadvantaged sections of the population could be brought on par with the rest of the society

ix) Ninth Plan (1997-2002) was committed to empower the Socially Disadvantaged Groups as agents of socio-economic change and development through - creating an enabling environment conducive for SCs, OBCs and Minorities to exercise their rights freely, enjoy their privileges and be able to lead a life with confidence and dignity on par with the rest of the society; ensuring removal of disparities. The approach adopted towards empowering these Groups in the Ninth Plan was holistic in nature, to accomplish their all round development through (i) Social Empowerment; (ii) Economic Empowerment; and (iii) Social Justice. The nodal Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment which is responsible for the development of SCs, OBCs and Minorities. They include i) Education & ii) Literacy. Emphasis was laid on the educational development of SCs. The nation-wide popular scheme of 'Post-Matric Scholarships (PMS) for SC Students', the largest educational scholarship scheme of its kind in the country, continued to promote higher education amongst scheduled castes.

x) Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07): National Policy on Education, 1986 that recognized education as the Fundamental Right, chalked out various steps to reduce drop-out rates and increase school enrolment and retention rates amongst the children belonging to SCs, OBCs and Minorities. Special provisions were incorporated in Elementary, Secondary as well as Higher Education for SCs by relaxing norms for opening of educational institutions. Department of Elementary Education & Literacy having relevance to SCs and OBCs include - the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Lok Jumbish, Shiksha Karmi, Non-Formal Education (NFE) and National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education (popularly known as Mid-Day Meals). One of the strategies of the programme of *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)* is the educational development of children belonging to SCs, OBCs and educationally-backward Minorities. SSA is a historic stride towards achieving the long cherished goal of "Universalisation of Elementary Education" (UEE) through a time-

bound integrated approach, in partnership with the states. SSA aims to universalize elementary education to cover all children in the 6-14 age-group through the community-owned and mission-mode approach.

Review of Literature :

India is only democracy in world that made constitutional and legal provision for compensatory discrimination popularly known as reservations for the advancement of socially and economically backward section of the society. It has been striving for its commitment to overarching conception of equality in terms of basic freedom and imperatives of compensatory discrimination in favor of schedule caste and scheduled tribe families. Reservations were aimed to give backward classes a helping hand which will help them to compete with upper classes in a fair manner. But these measures have been partial enforced and impact has been much less than desired.

Dr.B.R.Ambedkar tried very hard for the welfare of SC's and at times he clashed with what Gandhiji visualized of Indian society. During the process of framing of constitution also DR.B.R.Ambedkar, the chairmen of drafting committee worked hard and made to include special provisions in the constitution for the SC's and ST's. The constitutional guarantees says that state shall with special care promote educational and economic interest of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe and protect them from social injustice.

Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It is not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside .The Indian Education system has two important structures, one is formal and another formal education. Some other educational programmes also formulated to motivate the women education such as online education and distance education. The main objective of the entire educational programme is to make every girl child to educate. This low level of literacy not only shows a negative impact on women's lives but also on their families and country's economic development. Hence it is of foremost importance to raise the level of education amongst women Fundamental Rights of women are equality, freedom to religion, educational rights, cultural and educational, against exploitation, freedom. Improving girls' educational levels has been demonstrated to have clear impacts on the health and young women, which in turn improves the prospects of their

entire community. After the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Basic education is more than an end in itself; it is the foundation for lifelong learning and human development (Ramachandran, 1998).

Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. The gap in the male-female literacy rate is just a simple indicator, while the male literary rate is more than the female. The women were considering only house wife and better to be live in the house (Bhat, 2015).

A significant portion of the people in Assam is educationally and socially backward (Bhakta, 1986). Due to the byproduct of the Hindu caste driven social system in India, social inequality is existing in India (Chandan, 1989). As the upper caste educated and high-income people with their practices used to exploit the low income earner, illiterate people, belonged to weaker section of the people. So, the status of weaker section is lower compared to the general people (Bhatnagar, 1972). But the situation is totally changed at present. Due to effort of different social reformer and of course one among is B.R. Ambedkar, who, for the first time suggested for some special reservation for benefit such weaker section of the in terms of education, politics, economics etc. in the constitution of India (Agarwal, 2005). After independence, the principle of Indian constitution like equality, democracy, freedom, secular etc. provides much security to all the sections of the India and Assam (Bhakta, 1986). The development of education, economy, and moral of the people of India caused much change in their thinking and now all the people are treated more or less equally (Chaube, 1994 & SK., 2000). The lower level of literacy rate may be attributed for the reason of lacking in awareness among the weaker section of society (Agarwal, 2000).

Drop out the girls from school reflect a gender discriminated position here. The report reflected that 3.6 percent of girls in the age group of six to 14 years were either drop outs from the school or had never enrolled for elementary education This discontinuation of girl's education has been prominently seen from the secondary level education and it affect fewer girls involving in professional and technical education (Karmakar, 2016, para.9).

Now, it needs to revisit these educational schemes about the effectiveness of the delivery systems and efficient as well as proper utilization in achieving result-oriented" Millennium Development Goals".

Methodology: All the relevant data are collected from secondary sources like different Government reports, various Census Reports and other published data.

Results and Discussion:

Profile of Education of Assam:

The most unique feature of India is its status of having ‘unity in diversity’ and Assam is also focused in that principle feature strictly. Indian society still has to a long walk towards egalitarian society. In Assam also egalitarian social condition is not achieved because of the caste-oriented socialism, the caste stratification inherently visible in Assam (Thakur, 1992). Most of the study of demography and social sciences explains a comprehensive outlook towards the caste system inherited in India from traditional class-based system. Such sections of society are termed as weaker sections, which are poverty driven, marginal and informal worker with insecurity of tenure and has lower living status in terms of health and education (Bhadra KR, 1990).

Education is a powerful catalytic agent for social change and an important instrument for the development of a nation. The role of education as an investment in human resources has been increasingly recognized in all countries. But in a caste ridden and hierarchical society like India's access to educational opportunities is unequal and unjust. Though the literacy rate among the scheduled castes has increased from 1.9 percent in 1931 to 10.27 percent in 1961, 14.67 percent in 1971, 21.38 percent in 1981, 37.41 percent in 1991 and 54.7 percent in 2001 in national level, some SCs still continue to remain educationally backward and there are some who do not have even single literate person in their fold (Census of India, 2001, RGI). Though statistical record relating to the SC population for census 2001 shows the numbers of literates that has surpassed the number of illiterates for the total population, the same does not reflect the actual picture for SC, when compared with literacy rate of SC in urban areas, the picture of illiteracy in rural areas is two-fold high. Increase in enrolment and decrease in dropout are also two important indicators for measuring the educational development of the various groups in a society. but the dropout rate of scheduled castes for the year 1994-95 at the primary, middle and secondary stages have been reported as 49.03 percent, 67.62 percent and 79.42 percent (Table 1,2,3,4,5).

Table 1: Population of Assam and Lakhimpur District in 2011

District	Population				Child (0-6) population	
	Total	Female	Rural	Urban	Total	Female
Lakhimpur	1042137	512463	950804	91333	156739	76723
Assam	31205576	15266133	26807034	4398542	4638130	2274645

Source: Census 2011

Table 2: Decadal Growth of population of Assam and Lakhimpur District in 2011

District	Population				Population Density, 2011
	2001	2011	Decadal Growth Rate 2001-11	Per cent share of district population to state population	
Lakhimpur	889010	1042137	17.22	3.34	458
Assam	26655528	31205576	7.07	100	398

Source: Census 2011

Table 3: Scheduled Caste population of Assam and Lakhimpur District in 2011

District	Total	Female	Sex Ratio
Lakhimpur	81840	40151	963
Assam	2231321	1086007	948

Source: Census 2011

Table 4: Sex-wise Literacy Rate of Scheduled Caste in Assam (Census 2001)

State	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
Assam	64.92	74.21	54.94	76.86	84.08	69.08	66.78	75.74	57.14
India	51.16	63.66	37.84	68.12	77.93	57.49	54.69	66.64	41.90

Source: Deptt of Secondary and Higher Education, HRD Ministry, Govt.of India.

Table 5: Dropout Rates of Scheduled Caste Students in Classes of I to X in Assam (2005 - 2006)

State	Classes I-V			Classes I-VIII			Classes I-X		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Assam	58.81	52.28	55.88	70.38	70.50	70.43	73.78	70.14	72.15
India	37.03	35.36	36.31	54.60	58.37	56.24	68.42	73.42	70.57

Source: Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India.

Profile of Education of Lakhimpur District:

Lakhimpur is one of district of Assam in India. There are 7 Revenue Circles 1184 villages and 4 towns in the district. Lakhimpur district has 204307 households, population of 1042137 of which 529674 are males and 512463 are females (Table 1). The decadal growth rate 2001-2011 is 17.22 and 7.07 with Population Density, 458 and 398 in 2011 for Lakhimpur district and Assam respectively (Table 2).

The total population of Scheduled caste community is 81840 numbers (7.85%) of total population in Lakhimpur district of which 40151 numbers are female with sex ratio of 963 against 948 of Assam (Table 3).

The population of children between age group of 0-6 is 156739 which is 15.04% of total population. The sex-ratio of Lakhimpur district is around 968 compared to 958 which is average of Assam state. The literacy rate of Lakhimpur district is 65.59% out of which 70.9% males are literate and 60.09% females are literate. The total area of Lakhimpur is 2277 sq.km with population density of 458 per sq.km. Out of total population, 91.24% of population lives in urban area and 8.76% lives in rural area. (Census Report 2011) (Table 6, 7).

Table 6. Revenue Circle wise Villages, Population and Literacy of Lakhimpur District, Assam in 2011

Revenue Circle	No. of Villages	Population	Sex Ratio	Percentage of		Literacy Rate
				Children (0-6)	SC Population	
Lakhimpur	1184	1042137	968	15.0	7.9	77.2
Narayanpur	203	135641	981	12.5	9.9	84.6
Bihpuria	173	210165	966	16.3	7.3	75.7
Naobaicha	148	148973	972	17.9	8.2	69.9
Kadam	155	107330	966	16.4	3.9	71.5
North Lakhimpur	227	250643	954	13.7	9.5	79.2
Dhakuakhana (Pt)	163	114295	974	13.5	8.7	80.6
Subansiri (Pt)	115	75090	973	15.3	3.8	77.1

Source: Census 2011

Table 7: Literacy rate by Sex of Scheduled Caste population of Lakhimpur District, Assam in 2011

District	Total	Male	Female	Rural	Urban	Male-Female Literacy Gap		
						Total	Rural	Urban
Lakhimpur	77.20	83.52	70.67	76.22	86.93	12.85	13.36	7.47
Assam	72.19	77.85	66.27	69.34	88.47	11.58	12.36	6.87

Source: Census 2011

The pupil teacher ratio (%) in lower primary is 23 and in upper primary is 11 and that the dropout rate (%) in lower primary is 6.1 and in upper primary is 4.4 in Lakhimpur district in 2016-2017 (Table 8).

Table 8: Student Teacher Ratio, Drop Rate and Transition Rate in Lakhimpur district, Assam in 2016-17

District	Pupil Teacher Ratio (%)		Dropout rate (%)		Transition Rate from Primary to Upper primary (%)
	Lower Primary	Upper Primary	Lower Primary	Upper Primary	
Lakhimpur	23	11	6.1	4.4	103.6
Assam	26	18	5.7	3.0	93.3

Source: U-DISE, 2016-17.

The enrolment of SC girl students in 2016-17 was 53595 in 1836 number of lower primary schools (Table 9) with toilet facility for girl students is 1810 in lower primary and 501 in upper primary schools in Lakhimpur district (Table 10).

Table 9: Enrolment and number of Teachers in LP School in Lakhimpur district, Assam in 2016-17 (Nos.)

District	Schools		Enrolment			Teachers	
	Govt. / Prov.	Tea Garden / Local Bodies	Total	Girls	Total	Govt./ Prov.	Tea Garden/ Local Bodies
Lakhimpur	1825	11	1836	53595	105189	4467	39
Assam	39986	479	40465	1478318	2913660	108343	1215

Source: U-DISE, 2016-17

Table 10: Status of facilities available in LP / UP Schools in Lakhimpur district, Assam in 2016-17

District	Primary School (Nos.)				Upper Primary School (Nos.)			
	No of School	Drinking	Boys Toilet	Girls Toilet	No of School	Drinking	Boys Toilet	Girls Toilet
Lakhimpur	1825	1818	1798	1810	513	511	494	501
Assam	39986	36894	37979	39203	7832	7346	7394	7650

Source: U-DISE, 2016-17.

The enrolment of girl students was 15873 in 302 numbers of high schools (Table 11) and that was 3316 in 38 numbers of higher secondary schools and 2896 in 16 junior colleges in Lakhimpur district in 2016-17 (Table 12).

Table 11: Enrolment and number of Teachers in High/H.S. Schools in Lakhimpur district, Assam in 2016-17

District	High School				
	No. of Institution	Enrolment		Teachers	
		Female	Total	Female	Total
Lakhimpur	302	15873	30260	693	2477
Assam	4314	354700	668356	10429	34696

Source: High and Higher Secondary - Rastriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhijan (RMSA) Junior College - Directorate of Secondary Education, Assam.

Table 12; Enrolment, Teachers and number of Institutions in Lakhimpur district, Assam in 2016-17 (In Nos.)

District	Higer secondary					Junior College				
	No. of Institution	Enrolment		Teacher		No. of Institution	Enrolment		Teacher	
		Female	Total	Femal e	Tota l		Femal e	Total	Femal e	Tota l
Lakhimpur	38	3316	6708	102	285	16	2896	5887	107	349
Assam	829	73312	149445	2212	597	247	50946	104659	2225	5910

Problems of Education in Scheduled Caste villages:

1. Most of the SC girl students are economically weak, hence they are deprived of education.
2. Often female children are excluded from education due to early marriage.
3. Some of the female children are kept busy in house work as well as busy in different field Activities.
4. A small number of female children are employed as house keeper in other people's homes. For which there is no opportunity to get education.
5. Girls are not given equal priority over boys for education.

The scheduled caste students did not differ significantly from that of the other castes in their rural background and the medium of instruction. The parental educational background of SC students is very low which may negatively effect on the students for completion of their secondary education. Motivation from the parents is one of the primary requirements for children's to get success in their life. Guardian unconsciousness, lack of motivation, over population of families, low attendance of students in schools and above all financial problem and poverty along with inadequate government aids.

Strategies for promotion of Equality in Education:

In order to promote gender equality, a gender- neutral academic environment has to be created through holistic approach. The core issue for achieving "Education for All" is to be dealt with result-oriented framework. It is now globally recognized that 5-8 years of education is imperative to control illiteracy and poverty. The World Bank extends financial supports for educational projects like Alternate and Transitional schools for different social groups. In Assam, the concerned stakeholders and Government intervention must be strengthened without any compromise to achieve comprehensive growth, better female conditions and strive to make "The Millennium Development Goals" goal-oriented.

The Road Map ahead:

1. Promotion of gender-sensitive education by promoting equality in educational opportunities,
Rights and unbiased treatment.
2. Promotion of democratic view for safe and friendly school environment through respect to all Religious and cultural diversity and gender parity.

3. Changing in stereotype school routine into fun-filled learning experiences for preventing drop-outs.
4. Laying emphasis on gender sensitivity and promotion of equality in all pre and in-service teacher training of teacher educators and vocational advisors.
5. Inclusion of women in teaching and school management. Increasing the number of female teachers especially at primary and secondary levels.
6. Open learning system for disadvantaged girls.
7. Formulation of gender-sensitive research agenda for redressal of gender issues.
8. Monitoring of gender equality by arranging seminars/talks to update knowledge on gender issues.
9. Remedial teaching and bridge courses for girls to prevent them from dropping out.
10. Providing home counseling to illiterate mother's on importance of education and gender equality.

Suggestions:

1. In order to bail out the SC girls from deprivation, awareness to be made about the need of education.
2. In addition to formal and informal education, parents must motivate their daughters for education.
3. Rural development agencies, Scheduled Caste Welfare Departments etc., Financial Institutions
have to play active roles for social upliftment of this target group.
4. For getting acquainted with digitalized education, they must be imparted coaching classes apart from their routine classes in educational institutes as a part of curriculum.
5. Education camps should be set up in SC villages either through Government or NGO initiatives.
6. Provision of scholarship or any sort of financial support to be made to the needy poor SC girl
students

Conclusion:

Education is a basic tool for create women emancipation. It develops the equal status for both men and women. Although in present day a tremendous development of education in India.

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But in reality a gender disparity present in this field. It happens because of the following patriarchal customs and norms which binding women within the four wall of the home and exclusion from this field. A general conception present that women in Assam get a better status than other rest of the part in India. But actual picture define that patriarchy plays a major role to create domination of women in this state also. So, here also see a gender gap in the literacy level. Thus, it is necessary both government incentives and people give importance to improve the women participation in the education field. Because without the growth of women who belong half of the population in a society could not develop of such community, society, state and country. Swami Vivekananda rightly 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." Thus it can be say that we cannot think about the overall development of society without the development of women.

To set right the imbalance of relationship in a male centered and dominated society, education and economic independence is imperative. Quantitative and qualitative evidence reflects acute gender bias, confirming discrimination in educational status. Women's ability for independent thinking and her participation at par with men will confirm Gender Equality and comply with the targets of the Millennium Development Goals. The Assam Government needs to identify those geographical locations and culture patterns contributing towards gender disparity in education. The gap between male and female literacy is a sensitive indicator of social discrimination. The concept of women's empowerment through education was introduced at the International Women's Conference in Nairobi in 1985 where Empowerment was stated to be 'a distribution of social power and center of resources in favour of women'. The need of the hour is to ensure better lives for the coming generations by creating an equitable social order. The objective of gender equality may be attained by guaranteed access to quality education for all.

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