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## **Women's Human Rights in North-East India**

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### **Abstract**

*Women's right as Human Right is a global concept. Human right are those minimal rights which are available to every human being without distinction of language, religion, sex, caste, nationality and social or economic condition in the society.*

*Women constitute half of the world's population and have been suffering from a variety of social and economic disabilities which prevent them from enjoying their human rights and freedom in society. In other words human rights of women are inhumanely denied. For centuries, women not only in India but all over the world have been treated as occupying secondary position to man. As a 'weaker sex' they have been subjected to different types of torture or violence like rape, murder, bride burning, dowry death, sexual harassment, domestic violence and many others.*

*In spite of the prosperity, globalization and education, we have failed to eliminate the violence against women. Though some national and international laws are introduced to protect women from violence women are still suffering. There is the gap between theoretical and practical aspect. Violence against women on the rise in Indian as well as in our state of Assam. In this paper an attempt has been made to conceptualize certain gender specific violation as Human Right violation in context of North-East India.*

**Key Words:** *Women, Patriarchal society, North-East India, Violence against Women, Women Human Rights.*

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**Introduction:** Women right as Human right is a global concept. About half of the world population is constituted by Women, but yet they have not treated equally as men or they have not enjoyed equal right in the society. Gender differences, customs, traditions, social attitudes etc., are mainly responsible for the inequality between men and women. Women in traditional patriarchal society have always been considered as weaker section of the society. Today, all the members of the society have an equal right to live, to enjoy equality, to be treated justly and to live in peace. Besides, the Human Right of women and girl child are an integral part of the universal human rights (World Conference on Human Rights, 1993).

The UN charter made several provisions in connection with the human rights of all the people, men and women living in all parts of the globe.

**Women's Right in India:** The constitution of India provides the provisions for basic human rights throughout the preamble, fundamental rights and the directive principles of state policy (e.g. Article 14,15,20,21,22,32 etc.). Besides constitutional safeguards a number legislations relating to women were also enacted in our country viz. Hindu Marriage Act (1955), The special Marriage Act. (1954), Hindu succession Act (1956), the immoral traffic (Prevention) Act. (1986), Dowry Prohibition Act (1976), Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (1987), The National Commission of Women Act (1990), The Protections of Human Rights Act (1993). The Protection of Women from Domestic violence Act (2005) etc. Despite all these safeguards, the women in our country continue to suffer and are victims of different types of violence.

**Status of Women in North East India:** In Indian society, women are worshipped as goddess in the form of Lakshmi, Durga, Kali, Saraswati and many others. In north east region, women enjoy greater mobility and visibility than women of other parts of the country. On the other hand Practices such as dowry, torture, raped and bride burning are not very prevalent in the region. This is often cited to portray a picture of equity between men and women in the region and has given rise to the presumption that violence against women is not a major concern in the area. Data collected by the north east network however suggests that violence in Assam is comparatively high than other states of north east India (The Low Research Institute, Guwahati).

### **Objectives of the Study:**

1. To conceptualize certain gender specific violation as Human Right violation in context of north-East India.
2. To analyse various dimensions of violence against women and consequences of physical, mental and sexual violence faced by Women.
3. To suggest measures based on the findings of the study.

**Methodology:** The Methodology of this paper is descriptive and required information is collected from different secondary sources like books, research articles, different government documents, magazines, journals, newspaper and visiting various websites.

**Violence against Women—A conceptual Framework:** Violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between man and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement (World Women's Conference, Beijing 1995). Both men and women face violence, an overwhelming majority of victims of sexual assault and domestic violence is women. A gender relation has played an important role creating and perpetuating patriarchal ideology. While it is estimated that at least 3 out of every 5 women in India face domestic violence, reporting of such cases is extremely low. One of the major factors for this is the culture of silence (Report by The North East Network,

2004). Domestic violence is considered as a private matter and not to be interfered by others. Mentally harassment, sexual and psychological violence are not taken into account by a majority of women. Last few years, certain efforts have been made to bring consciousness among women that violation against women is a violation of women's human rights.

### **How patriarchy control over women:**

#### **Patriarchy control over for a long period of time through systematic process:**

- a) The social system which believes that man is supporter to women. Women should be controlled by man and they are part of man's property.
- b) In patriarchal society man control women's productivity both within the household and outside in paid work. Within the household women provides all kind of services to there families and in outside some women are excluded from better paid jobs and forced to sale their labour in low wages and head of the family selectively allow them for works.
- c) Man control also women's reproductive power. In many Societies (such as Tribal Society) women do not have the freedom to decide how many children they want. Patriarchical society takes decision how many children they should have.
- d) Another area of women's subordination is control over women's sexuality. Women are obliged to provide sexual services to their husbands according to their needs and desires through the marriage system. Men also violate women's human rights through rape, threat of rape, forced prostitution etc.

**Types of Violence against Women:** Now-a-days violence affects the live of women and girls in all socio-economic classes around the world. It cuts across cultural and religious barriers and takes a variety of forms. Violence against women is largely unreported. Fear and stigma often prevent women from reporting incidents of violence or seeking assistance. In fact, 80 percent of women who have been physically abused by their partners have never informed the Police, NGO's or shelters.

#### **Various types of violence which are discussed briefly as under:**

**Drug Related Violence:** Alcoholism increases domestic violence against women and interruption takes place in the family. An alcoholic beats his wife and children. There are number of poor incidences has been occurred in the society. Besides husband who used illicit drugs, he also disturbed his family and spends his money without planning and he depends on his wife. Women (who are engaged in different paid works) are not allowed to have at least some money that they can spend as per their wish.

**Sexual Violence:** In most of the cases the victim is branded as a women of loose morals. Rape is viewed as a crime against the honour of not just the girl who is rape but also her family. Sometimes the nature of rape and the silence that tends to surround it makes it a particularly difficult human rights violence to investigate. Sexual violence has increasingly been used as a tool of war in the north east region. Hence for a long time, most cases of

sexual violence resulting from the armed conflict involved state. Krishna Devi case (a 30 year old women lived in Manipur) illustrate the use of sexual violence in armed conflict scenarios in north east India (report by North East Network). Men also violate women's human rights through rape, Forced prostitution etc.

**Dowry Related Violence:** Past few years, there have been increased dowry related violence in North East India specially in Assam. For that death by burning is often punishment for the poor, innocent girl who is unable to satisfy the greed of her husband and family in laws or take the decision for dowry related tortures.

**Domestic Violence:** Domestic violence is one of the greatest obstacles to gender equality. It obstructs women to secure their fundamental right to equal protection under the law and the right to life and liberty. Domestic violence is violence that occurs within the private sphere, generally between individuals who are related through intimacy, blood or law. It can take the form of mental, physical or sexual violence. It reflects the unequal treatment meted out to women in the areas of health, education and income. Due to the patriarchal structure of society, women have been relegated to a subordinate position.

**Harassment at Work Place:** Most of the women are engaged in different manual works and most of them are ill-paid, but do not leave the job due to increasing unemployment. Harassment at work place is all pervasive. Sometime they are not secured at their work place and face new challenges.

**Women in Arm Conflict Situation:** North- East region has been witness to an ongoing low intensity conflict for a long period of time. While the entire region continues to suffer, women living in such conditions are most vulnerable due to the restrictions on their mobility, the limited access to health services and most importantly, the lack of opportunities for education, employment and even leisure. Women have been, in internal war, the targets of sustained and frequently brutal violence committed by both parties of armed. Both the sides often use violence to punish or dominate women believes to be sympathetic to the opposite side. Women have been threatened, raped and murdered during the conflict. (Human Right Watch 1998)

During to arm conflict situation, women managed households. Be case the earner of the family have either fled, been killed or joined the ranks of the underground. Thus, women who were till them not allowed to join the formal economic sectors are suddenly left on their own and are forced to eke out a living for themselves and their families. They are however not provided with any kind of support or alternate sources of livelihood. Nor are any avenues of employment made available to them. Here, unemployment may be considered as a major problem. NEN team found that often women have to resort to selling liquor, drugs or even prostitution to make enough money to run their household. North-East Network Report (2004) focused that often women have to resort to selling liquor, drugs or even prostitution to make enough money to run their household. The have lost their rights such as right to life, right to liberty and security etc.

Due to lack of awareness, illiteracy, lack of interaction, unequal access to information and other economic and non-economic resources, women plays triples role, women's right can be violated.

**Violence against women in North-East India:** In India especially North-East violence against, women is common evil, not just in remote parts but in cities also women bear the burnt. They are subjected to physical and mental violence. They are the one who work most are not given their due.

Crime against women in six of the North-Eastern state increased significantly in last year compared to the year before assembled the list, although Manipur and Mizoram registered a downward trend.

Against the backdrop of unabated violence against women in various part of the country, there has been a spurt in the number of crime against females in Assam over the last decade. According to official records, serious crime like rape as well as social evils such as dowry and witch hunting had claimed the lives of as 1589 women in the during 2005-2014.

During 2005-2014, altogether 68, 239 cases of crime againsts women were registered. A total of 78 women died the to rape while 1388 others were killed in dowry cases, the number women killed in witch hunting cases registered during the period was 15,931. The year break-up of the againsts women registered with the police were:

Year	Crime against women in Assam.
2005	3562
2006	3907
2007	4547
2008	5021
2009	6209
2010	7326
2011	7075
2012	8268
2013	10787
2014	11657

In 2014, the number of crimes committed againsts women and registered with police was 11,657. The number of rape cases registered was 2047. Altogether 13 lost their lives in these cases there were also 205 deaths in dowry related cases while six other were killed after they had been branded as witches. Crime in 2013 also 10757 cases against women were registered. The number of rape cases recorded as 1960 of them 14 had lost their lives. The number of women killed in witch-hunting cases was 18 while 170 others were killed in dowry related cases.

In Tripura, between 2013 and previous year, crime against women risen to 1628 from 255. In Arunachal, it was up from 201 to 288. In Sikkim to 93 from 68 and Nagaland to 67 from 51.

Manipur and Mizoram, however recorded a slide in crime against women with the incident rate informer falling to 285 from 384 while later saw it drop from 199 to 177.

In case of rape Tripura recorded 23 in 2013, while Meghalaya recorded to 183 from 164. In Arunachal Pradesh to 75 from 46, in Manipur to 72 from 63, in Sikkim to 43 from 4 and in Nagaland to 31 from 21.

Mizoram in the only state which witness a drop in rape case, with such incident coming down to 289 from 103 the year before. In case of dowry, Assam is followed by Tripura with dowry case to 29 from 37, while Meghalaya increase two from 1. Other state of N.E. are free from dowry in the year 2013.

**Suggestions:** Here are some suggestions for the protection of women's right and elimination of violence of women's human rights:

1. An important requirement for bringing about empowerment of women attitude should be both men and women. The feeling that women are meant for household activities and bearing children needs. It should be replaced by a feeling of equal partnership of women and men.
2. The women should be encouraged to organized themselves such as women's group, self-help group, NGO's etc. It can be effectively used as instruments to mobised the women. Some successful women's organizations can also act as catalytic agents for encouraging women's participation in social and political activities. The government should provide financial support and infrastructure to some of the successful women's organizations to take of the responsibility to safeguards the women's right and to create awareness amongst women, thereby eliminating powerful men taking advantage of the ignorance of women and controlling their decisions.
3. National Literacy Mission and other organizations engaged in the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan should also be assigned the responsibility of educating the rural women and men regarding the significance of Human Rights and empowermen of women. On the other hand, both print as well as electronic media can play a vital role in restructuring the rural society. It can act as an agent of political socialization for inculcating the values of gender equality and gender justice.
4. As soon as the Government of India and all state Governments of North East India must make an all out effort to find a political solution to the armed conflict in North East India. And the armed forces (Special Powers) Act must be repealed immediately. Armed forces misused this act and involved of human rights in many cases. Therefore, section 19 of the Human Rights Act 1993 must be suitably amended to make armed forces must be removed (Human Rights Act 1993).
5. National Human Right Commission should knock at the doors of the offenders. Cases should not be pending in never ending process Strict Action should be taken in this regard.
6. It is very essential to promote research works concerning violence of women's rights and human right.

**Government of India has enacted some laws for protection of women's rights such as:**

1. Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005
2. Amendment Proposed in Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 2005.
3. Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961.
4. The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act and rules.
5. National Commission of Women Act.
6. Protection of Human Rights Act (1993).
7. Hindu Marriage Act (1955)
8. Abolition of Tini Talaq (2017)

**Conclusion:** Women status mainly depends on their rights and privileges and the roles assigned to them. Status is determined in terms of socio-economic indicators such as income, property, education and skills that open up opportunities of employment. One can not hope gender equity unless women have a share in the decision making process in the family and in the public sphere. There is a need for social responsibility, specially male responsibility, to mitigate violence against women. Educational strategies must be developed to raise awareness among them about legal safeguards, rights, health and accommodation. The government agencies and non government institutions must come together to protect and promote the human rights of women. Otherwise we cannot expect a healthy and sound democratic society in near future.

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