

Violence against Women and Issue of Rights in North East India

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Abstract: The hub of verities of culture north east India has faced the problem of security of women. This part of the country has separated by the geographical location as well as it also known for the violation of human rights in a large number. The reality is that women and children of this north east region are in a particularly vulnerable situation because of the conflict in the region, especially those in indigenous, minority and low-income communities. The growing number of insurgent and terrorist group is act as a major reason which creates more difficulties for the women. In the name of peace and governance army and other paramilitary forces has violated the rights by committing rape and other inhuman manners. Poverty and dispossession has been exploited by traffickers of women and children, primarily for domestic labour but also the sex industry. Anti-trafficking organizations reported instances of women and children from NEI being trafficked to Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Dubai, and internally to places like Mumbai and Goa. The government has enacted some ground breaking legislation to enhance women's rights, but the keen mind sent of the states has made a great hindrance in this process. The no of domestic violence is also high comparing the other region of the country. State governments had not taken any favorable measures to stop this, the provision to provide free legal advice and shelter for victims, but it has not been adequately funded or implemented in NEI. The same is true of the National Commission for Women Act of 1990. Although, State Women's Commissions (SWCs) has been established but the lack adequate resources, infrastructure and committed personnel made this only a puppet of the government. In this paper these issues are analysed by using secondary data.

Key words: *North East, Violence against Women, Role of Government, NGO's.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The state of seven sisters North East India is known as the one of the counter place of crime and violation of Human Rights in a large scale. The north-eastern part of India is bounded by China in the north, Bangladesh in the south west, and Bhutan in the North West and Burma in the east. This isolated it from the rest of India, both geographically and economically. This region is tenuously linked to the rest of the country by a narrow corridor running 56 kilometers through the foothills of Bhutan and Sikkim to the state of West Bengal. By whom the region abruptly descends to the plains of the mainland, cultural, social and economic contrasts are strongly evident.

Now a day, there is an ongoing struggle by people trying to establish their right to autonomy, in most of the seven north-eastern states, which has led to political instability, strife and outright violence in the region. Strong inter-ethnic rivalries have aggravated the cycle of violence. In Assam, these resulted in the anti-foreigners movement that lasted for six long years, insurgency and of late, the *Bodo Adivasi* ethnic violence. In Manipur, as in other states in the North East, the movement for autonomy took violent turns. Army operations intensified the violence. Political unrest has created difficult conditions for the different communities in the region. Traditional, community cohesiveness and the ability of rural people to determine their own course has been seriously undermined. By this reason today north East India is known as a of the birth place of crime in eyes of the world. So, it is very essential to improve the socio-economic condition of the area to empowerment of the women and inclusive growth in the state particularly.

II. OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the paper is to study the status of women and condition which are more responsible to threat and anxieties and also affected the security of the women.

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the paper is descriptive and analytical based on secondary data. The secondary data are collected from the internet, related books, individual and institutional publications.

Security of Women In North East India: A Brief Overview

In the north east region the crime related to the women has been growing in such a way that today place is the one of the hot spot which known for the violation of human rights in a large number. The reality is that women and children of this north east region are in a particularly vulnerable situation because of the conflict in the region, especially those in indigenous, minority and low-income communities. The growing number of insurgent and terrorist group is act as a major reason which creates more difficulties for the women. In the name of peace and governance army and other paramilitary forces has violated the rights by committing rape and other inhuman manners. Poverty and dispossession has been exploited by traffickers of women and children, primarily for domestic labour but also the sex industry. Anti-trafficking organizations reported instances of women and children from NEI being trafficked to Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Dubai, and internally to places like Mumbai and Goa. The government has enacted some ground breaking legislation to enhance women's rights, but the keen mind sent of the states has made a great hindrance in this process. The no of domestic violence is also high comparing the other region of the country.

Problems facing by Women and Children:

Women and Children are the main who suffer more in the brunt and conflict in NEI region. India's counter-insurgency operations in the Northeast have resulted in widespread human rights abuses including extra-judicial killing, torture, forced disappearances, mass rape, detention without trial, and draconian restrictions on freedom of assembly, expression and movement. 16 Human rights abuses are synonymous with the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) of 1958. Countless thousands of extra-judicial killings and disappearances have occurred in Nagaland, Manipur and Assam, not just of militants but political leaders, activists and civilians. These practices continue to the present day. In 2009 media and human rights organizations in Manipur reported more than 300 extrajudicial killings, though numbers are said to have declined in the past two years. A growing number of international human rights organizations, including the United Nations, have called repeatedly upon the government of India to repeal the Act.

'Witch-hunting', which inevitably discriminates against women, is also prominent in remote areas of NEI. In one region of Assam alone, 27 'witches' were killed in the first six months of 2011. More have been expelled from their villages with control over land often said to be the real motive behind allegations of witchcraft. Despite widespread condemnation of the practice, there is no State policy or law on witch-hunting. These murders should of course be covered by the normal criminal law but due to a lack of evidence and witnesses to what often are crimes in which entire communities are complicit, there is usually little prospect of prosecution.

Table 1: Ratio of Women Related Crime in North East region.

| State | Sexual Harassment | Domestic Violence | Women Trafficking | Child Abuse |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Assam | 57% | 59% | 47% | 36% |
| Arunachal Pradesh | 48% | 37% | 41% | 31% |
| Manipur | 62% | 31% | 45% | 38% |
| Meghalaya | 54% | 39% | 33% | 28% |
| Nagaland | 48% | 32% | 43% | 29% |
| Mizoram | 39% | 35% | 37% | 27% |
| Tripura | 42% | 38% | 46% | 31% |

Source: Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India (accessed on 12th Aug, 2019)

The rule of Law:

The Indian government has enacted some ground-breaking legislation to enhance women's rights. The Indian Constitution was amended in 1993 to stipulate that 33 percent of elected seats in local, state and national elections must be reserved for women, but the actual representation of women remains low at just 10 percent across India. The Domestic Violence Act of 2005 is supposed to provide free legal advice and shelter for victims, but it has not been adequately funded or implemented in NEI. The same is true of the National Commission for Women Act of 1990, which mandates the establishment of State Women's Commissions (SWCs) under the auspices of a national body. While SWC have been established in the majority of NEI states, the lack adequate resources, infrastructure and committed personnel made it only a joke. The same is true of NEI's State Human Rights Commissions. In 2001 the Indian government established the Ministry of industries

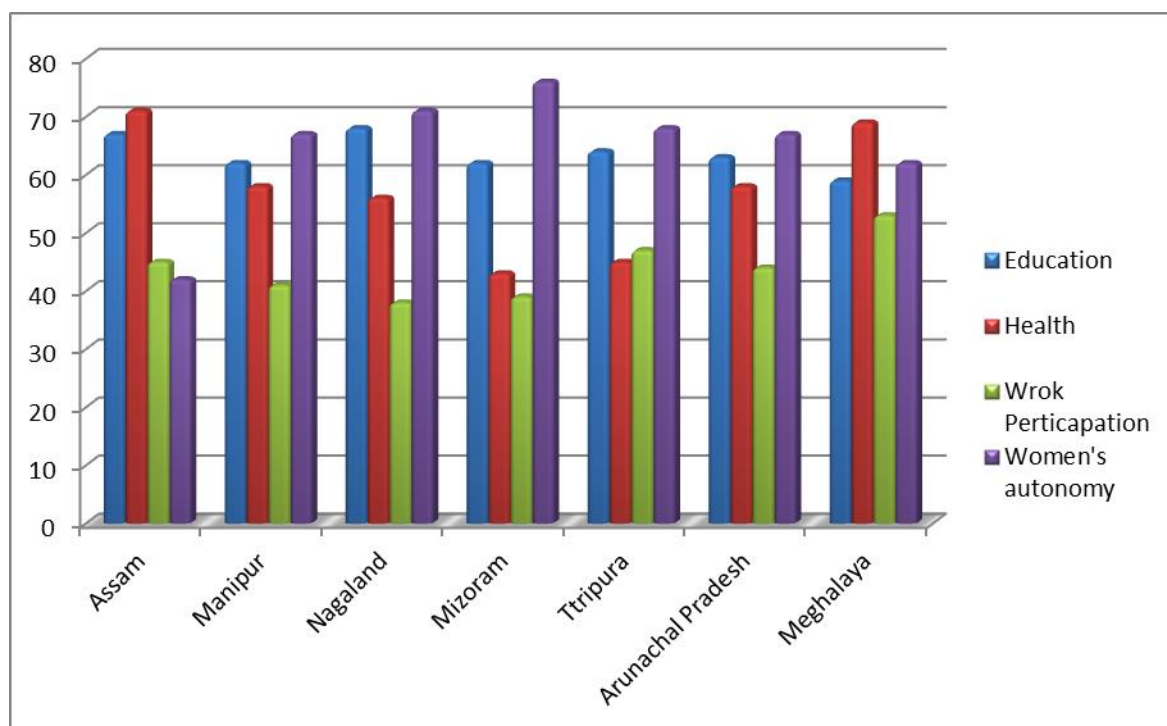
Development of the North Eastern Region (DONER) to accelerate development through ambitious infrastructure projects. Today NEI receives around ten per cent of the federal budget despite having only four per cent of the population. So why has so little been achieved? In addition to the insurgency, two problems in particular are said to have hampered development. First, the army has been given increasing power over development as part of an underlying policy to win over local 'hearts and minds'. Second, so much of NEI's development budget is being siphoned-off by a vast, unresponsive bureaucracy and corrupt political class that government food, education, health, housing and livelihood programmes are being undermined in many of the places they are needed most.

Role of NGO's:

In North East India NGO's are trying to play a very positive rule for the promotion of women security and human rights. There has been a strong call from NGOs and women's rights advocates towards the establishment of State Commissions for Women in all the north eastern states. Most of the times the Ngo's like North East Network (NEN), SNEHA, MRG worked for the empowerment of the women, developed the health and lively hood, elimination of women related crime. This NGO's are also trying to increase the public awareness, to secure the rights of ethnic and religious and linguistic minority's indigenous people. It also worked for worldwide and to promote co-operation and understanding between communities of the North East region to attaining a prefect goal.

Status of women in North East India:

Women's status depends mainly on their rights and privileges and the roles assigned to them, most often on the basis of gender. Status is determined to a great extent in terms of socio-economic indicators such as income, property, education and skills that open up opportunities of employment, better health and the ability to determine important events in life even when others are opposed to them. These indices are also vitally interlinked with the concepts of power and position. It is widely acknowledged today that one cannot hope for gender equity unless women have a share in the decision-making process in the family and in the public sphere, thus enabling them to access the rights and opportunities provided to them by the state, society and socio-cultural institutions. The more egalitarian tribal culture of the North East region, coupled with the absence of some rigid practices prevalent in other parts of India, like seclusion (purdah) and dowry amongst the nontribal populace of the region, certainly gives the women of the region an edge over other women, in terms of visibility and mobility.



Source: Annual Report, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India (accessed on 12th Aug, 2018)

Suggestions:

Strengthening women's initiative In light of the above, certain measures could be taken up to mitigate problems faced by women's organizations addressing VAW (Violence Against Women) issues as well as by individual survivors of violence.

- a. There is a need to upgrade skills of people working in different organizations working across the region. A majority of organizations encountered during the study expresses a need for inputs on counseling, management and documentation.
- b. Identification of functional shelter homes and support services and allocation of adequate resources to strengthen their work.
- c. There is a need to involve the bureaucracy in the sensitization process and to facilitate political will to look at the problem of violence.
- d. Women's rights based agendas have to be incorporated in the political process.
- e. Strategies have to be developed to raise awareness of the extent and impact of violence perpetrated against women.
- f. Information dissemination on legal safeguards, rights, support services, health and accommodation. Women's groups should also inform other women about the available support services in the area and towns.
- g. Education of the youth is important. This is the time to develop healthy and respectful relationships. Schools can work with local communities to deliver anti-violence education.
- h. There is a need for societal responsibility, especially male responsibility, to mitigate violence against women. The society has to understand the cost associated with VAW and the fact that women have as much of a right to a happy and violence-free life as anyone else.

Way Ahead:

The north east region of India does not have a common platform where problems of women, especially those of violence- domestic violence as well as ethnic violence are addressed. While interventions from external social organizations in terms of training and confidence building are coming in, it is felt that building a constituent base is an important step in generating public support for addressing gender-based violence. This responsibility lies with the civil society on one hand, and state agencies on the other. However, women's organizations should be the facilitators in this process. The north-east region boasts of strong women's movements. It is important to build on this strong base to create coalitions by mobilizing diverse groups. Community watch groups should be created and mobilization of local government officials, legal advisors, community volunteers and survivors undertaken to establish procedures for reducing violence.

Initiating networks of women will encourage greater regional exchange on issue of gender equity, women's rights and empowerment of women. The network can also act as a base for service collaborations among domestic violence and sexual assault activists/organizations. They could also serve as important pressure groups to advocate for rights of women at the regional as well as national level. All this could go a long way in ensuring a violence- free life for women.

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