Dr. Ranu Pariyar

Associated professor, Department of Education, Dhemaji Commerce College, Dhemaji-787 057, Assam (India)

ABSTRACT

Nepali society is a patriarchal society in which women are generally dominated by men. As such, it is widely believed that production activities are mainly carried out by men and those of the house hold are performed by women. Gender issue is an important factor in studying the socio economic status of women in Nepali community of Assam. Educational attainment, decision making role of women in both individual and societal level in Nepali societies are not at all satisfactory. In this study an attempt has been made to study the social status of Nepalese women in Dhemaji district of Assam. The work participation rate among the women of the study community is very poor. Majority of the women workers practice agricultural and cattle rearing which do not upgrade their status in the society. This research work tries to measure the magnitude of assimilation of the Nepali community with the local community. The study was carried out intensively and extensively at the micro-level. The study gave a picture of gender gap situation in the Nepali society of Dhemaji district and few important causes of gender disparity in higher education were also given.

KEYWORDS: Nepali, Patriarchal, Dhemaji, Gender gap, Socio-economic, Micro-level.

INTRODUCTION:

The Nepali community with a population of over 1.5 lakh is fairly dominant in the northern southern and eastern part of Dhemaji district, especially in Gogamukh, Mingmaung, Moharicamp, Jarampur, Santipur, Bauli, Sissilkhalgarh, Silapathar, Dimou, Sems and Jonai areas. Nepali people are considered to be immigrated into the district starting from early 1850s.

Nepali society is a patriarchal society and the male is the head of the family. Therefore Gender issue is an important factor in studying the social status of women among the Nepali community. Educational attainment, increasing labour participation and decision making role of women in both individual and societal level certainly enhanced the status of women in their respective societies. In this study it has been supposed to scratch the underlying actual socio literary status of Nepalese women in Dhemaji district of Assam. Nepali society is the social fabric of Assamese community. According to Subedi (2010) men in the society are considered as the ‘Protector’, ‘Provider’ and hold at a superior position in the family. Domestic violence against women is found among the less educated Nepalese society in the interior places of Assam. More specifically, rural Nepali women of Assam are not well treated and they are compelled to provide the service for the owner (husband). They cannot raise their voice against any injustice done by the any other male members of the family and so they kept silence all the time. Therefore, women are dominated by father, mother or brother in their own home before marriage and she often faced marital violence by her husband or other in-laws. In socio-cultural status of Nepali women marriage is early and universal, and it is viewed as disgrace for a Nepali couple, particularly for the wife, not to have any children. High fertility is desired because by producing children, preferably sons, a woman raises her status in the family. The social myth also indicates that women are basically inferior to and their labour, efforts, social right, role in decision making are less valuable than men. A strong son preference for socio-economic and religious reasons such as economic gain and old age security has been uniform among all the Nepalese. This contributes a factor of population growth. These results in the decline of economic condition of a family and thus female children are deprived of adequate facilities of education, food and freedom. Ministry of Women and Child Development, Govt. of India, in their eleventh five year plan for Girl Child (2007-2012) mention girl’s nutritional intake is inferior in quality and quantity while boys have access to more nutritious food. As a result, 56 percent girls of the age group 15-19 years suffer from anemia. Gender inequality thus begins at home, a mother usually prefers a son to a daughter because sons can be especially important for women’s old-age security (Cain 1993). This is one of the important issues of declining women status of Nepali society which leads to Gender inequality in higher education. Nepali women particularly in rural and remote areas are disempowered resulting from patriarchal, social and cultural prejudices and civil and political unjust that legitimize and maintain unequal power relation between men and women in all private and public sphere (UNESCO-AP; 2000; Gandhi: 2004). Most people refuse to believe that Nepali women can also be educated and can have their own thinking.
RESULTS:

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub Div. P.C.</th>
<th>Vill</th>
<th>Pln</th>
<th>No of Boys</th>
<th>No. of girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dhemaji</td>
<td>MCP</td>
<td>6700</td>
<td>370 (5.52%)</td>
<td>410 (6.11%)</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>11.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SKL</td>
<td>5050</td>
<td>276 (4.60%)</td>
<td>104 (2.05%)</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>7.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MCK</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>110 (5.45%)</td>
<td>104 (2.05%)</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>10.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Jonai</td>
<td>SLP</td>
<td>9020</td>
<td>350 (3.88%)</td>
<td>310 (3.36%)</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>7.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DMW</td>
<td>5025</td>
<td>130 (2.58%)</td>
<td>30 (0.59%)</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>JNI</td>
<td>7086</td>
<td>308 (3.43%)</td>
<td>210 (2.90%)</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>7.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>34901</td>
<td>1544</td>
<td>1168</td>
<td>2712</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Annotation: MCP= Mohari camp, SKL= Sissikalghar, MCK= Machkhowa, SLP= Silapathar, DMW= Dimow, JNI= Jonai, Pln= Population)

The highly Nepali populated villages are given as follows:

MCP: Mohari camp, Halakbarhi, Tajik, Chilimpur
SKL: Sissimukh, Jorkata Nepali village, Bauli, Sissitangani
MCK: Bopak, Bengena garah, Gondhia, Deogharh
SLP: Society, Phulbari, Magaon, Akajan, Jipu
DMW-Dimow, Dipa, Santipur, Naharbari
JNI: Bahir Jonai, Lai mekuri, No.1 Tari Nepali, Ujan Biyopur

DISCUSSION:

Though there are many more Nepali villages in Dhemaji district but only 24 villages were considered for this research purpose. 4 villages were taken from each surveyed area. The result shows that the maximum number of college going Nepali students found in Mohari camp (MCP) area where the percentage of girls is little higher than boys (Boys:5.52% and girls 6.11%). Next is Silapathar (SLP) area where the college going Boys and girls are almost equal (Boys:3.88% and Girls: 3.33%). Lowest percentage of college going boys and girls was found in Dimow(DMW) area where the boys and girls going for higher education are 2.58% and 0.59% respectively. The reasons behind this situation stated by some local inhabitants were as follows a) boys passing or appearing their High school leaving certificate examinations go to Bangalore, Chennai or Kerala for earning b) other few stated that due to desperation of jobless education they did not like to continue further higher studies rather they preferred to develop their skill in some factories or machinery shops. c) Girls' education in Demow (DMW) area is very poor and the gender disparity is quite alarming. The poor condition of girls' education is stated by some respondents as (i) the girls were not sent to the colleges or higher secondary schools because after 10th standard they are treated as the appropriate age for marriage (ii) after puberty restrictions are imposed on them so that they cannot freely mix up with college going boys (iii) girls were stopped from college going because they have to assist their mother in the house hold affairs (iv) some respondents stated that distance between the their residents and the colleges also matter to some extent (v) poverty is another factor for deprivation of girls from higher education and if there are both boys and girls in the house the preference is given to the boys only reasons are as stated above (vi) lack of electrification in the villages is also one of the causes of lower ratio in higher education system in Demow area (vii) the poor literacy rate among the Nepali people in the villages of Demow area is also another cause for not being aware of higher education.

On the other hand it was also found from the results that the percentage of college going boys and girls in Mohari camp (MCP) area is highest. As per the respondents' reply it was found that due to high literacy rate (75%) in these areas made aware of the people about the importance of education irrespective to boys and girls. The literate mothers or fathers encourage their daughters to go for higher studies. Few girls and boys coming out from these areas could show some good results in different fields which also inspired the guardians, some respondents stated. Good communication, no flood problem also help the guardians to send their children to the colleges and higher secondary schools. The people of Sissikalghar (SKL) and Machkhowa (MCK) areas suffer very much from frequent flood and dilapidated road communication problem. The students have to cover a long distance to their higher institutions. In this situation the girls students have to debar from college education. 50 percent girl students from both the areas have to stop college going. In Jonai (JNI) area also the situation is not encouraging. 50 percent girls only go for higher studies. The reasons are almost same as in DMW and MCK areas.

It was observed from the results and from the interviews with elderly persons of the areas that the Nepali community is showing little interest in girls' education but it cannot be said satisfactory. Lot of awareness programs on gender disparity issues have to be performed.

SUGGESTIONS:

Much awareness campaign for the improvement of women education in Nepali society has to be performed. The Nepali literary organizations, Nepali Students' Union should play a pivotal role in the remote villages to make the people aware of the empowerment of the women and the need of education. For the development of road communication the Government of Assam should play an active role so that not a single village remains inaccessible. Women organizations should visit the remote villages and make the guardians aware of their apathetic attitude for maintaining disparity among the boys and girls. Women Justice Forums should visit the Nepali villages very often for counseling the women.

REFERENCES: