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THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON SOCIETY: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

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Abstract: Artificial intelligence has rapidly become an integral part of our daily lives, transforming various aspects of society and opening up new possibilities and opportunities. However, the growth of Artificial intelligence also raises concerns about its impact on society and the potential consequences of its widespread adoption. Artificial is a field focused on enable machines to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, including perception, reasoning, learning and problem-solving. This paper is an attempt to analyze the impact, both positive and negative, of artificial intelligence on society. It has been shown that while the positive impacts are significant, it's crucial to address challenges such as ethical considerations, job displacement, and the potential misuse of artificial intelligence technologies. This is the reason that many politicians, scientists, technologists and all others concerned with the welfare of society have started fearing about the extensive use of advanced artificial intelligence leading to its negative impact on society. It has been concluded that striking a balance and implementing responsible artificial intelligence practices is essential to maximize the social benefits of this Transformative technology globally in all types of countries. The future our ability to harness its potential responsibly, striking a balance between innovations and safeguarding the principles that define a fair, just, and equitable society.

Keywords: Artificial intelligence, Technology, Impact, Positive, Negative, Innovations, Computers, Machines, Productivity, Society

1 | INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly evolving and has become an integral part of modern technology. Its application are seen across industries, ranging from health care and finance to education and entertainment. Artificial Intelligence has grown to be immensely popular in today's world. Artificial Intelligence is a study of how human brain think, and work ,when tries to solve problems. Aim of Artificial Intelligence is to improve computer functions which are connected to human knowledge such as reasoning, learning, problem solving, belief and linguistic intelligence. Alearn, decide, Alan Mathison Turing (June 23, 1912- June 7, 1954), English mathematician, computer scientist, logician, cryptanalyst, philosopher, theoretical biologist and often referred to as the "Father of Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence" has done earliest substantial work in the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the mid-20thcentury.He asked the question to himself in1950,"Can machines think?" He claimed that

an answer to the question can be found by subjecting machines to what he calls the “imitation game.”

Turing is famous for his work developing the first modern computers, decoding the encryption of German Enigma machines during the Second World War .He detailed a procedure known as the Turing Test, forming the basis for artificial intelligence, where a human interrogator would try to distinguish between a computer and human text response .Even though this test has been scrutinized extensively since then, it continues to be a significant aspect of the history of artificial intelligence and a current philosophical issue since it makes use of language concepts. He argued that a program must be written in such a way that it directs a computer to learn .His ideas seem to have come true with the increased use of artificial intelligence in different fields. The Indian Skills report 2024 by Wheebox forecasts that India’s AI industry will reach S28.8 billion by2025, with a CAGR of 45 percent. The report highlights that the AI-skilled workforce has seen a 14-fold increase from 2016 to ,2023,making India one of the top five fastest-growing AI talent hubs, alongside Singapore, Finland, Ireland and Canada.

2 | OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the study of Artificial Intelligence are the followings-

1. To study how Artificial Intelligence is changing the world, making it more productive and innovative.
2. To study how it affects many fields and what this suggests for the future.

3 | METHODOLOGY

The paper is based on Secondary data. It will include Journals, Newspapers, Various Websites, and the Reports. The research work is done with qualitative approach.

4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Meaning of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence refers to ability of a machine or computer program to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence such as learning, reasoning, problem solving and making decisions. Artificial intelligence is the imitation of human intellect in computers that have been designed to have human-like thought and learning processes. In other words, it simply means the approximation of human intelligence in machines. The foundation of AI is the idea that human intellect can be described in a way that makes it simple for a computer to replicate and carry out activities, from the most basic to the most complex. The applications for artificial intelligence are endless. It is evident from its goals which include computer-enhanced learning, reasoning, and perception as it involves the development of algorithms and models that enable Computers to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. These include figuring out problems, comprehending spoken language, identifying patterns, picking up knowledge from past experiences, and adjusting to new information. This is also the reason that AI technology is being used currently across diverse sectors and businesses from finance to healthcare.

Artificial Intelligence is a set of technologies that enable computers to perform a verity of advanced functions, including the ability to see, understand and translate spoken and written language, analyze data, make recommendations, and more. Its like equipping machines with the ability to think and act intelligently, often by analyzing data to identify patterns and make predictions. It is simply means the approximation of human intelligence in machines.

Artificial Intelligence has been defined as the capacity of a digital computer or computer-controlled robot to carry out actions often associated with human intellect. According to Mc Carthy, “It is the

science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs. It is related to the similar task of using computers to understand human intelligence, but AI does not have to confine itself to methods that are biologically observable." In its most basic form, artificial intelligence is a subject that combines computer science and large datasets to solve problems. It also includes the machine learning and deep learning sub-fields, which are often referenced when discussing artificial intelligence..

Types of Artificial Intelligence

There are two main types of artificial intelligence:

Weak Artificial Intelligence: This type of artificial intelligence is designed to perform a specific task or a narrow range of tasks .It is also called Narrow Artificial Intelligence.

Strong Artificial Intelligence: Strong AI is a more advanced form of artificial intelligence that can understand, learn, and apply knowledge across a wide range of tasks, similar to human intelligence. It is still largely theoretical and is not yet fully realized.

Artificial intelligence can also be categorized on the basis of its functionality into following four types:

Reactive Machines: This type of artificial intelligence system is designed to react to specific inputs or stimuli without the ability to learn or adapt over time. These systems operate based on predefined rules. They do not have the ability to learn from experience. Reactive machines don't possess the capability to change their behaviour or adapt to new situations.

Limited Memory: These artificial intelligence systems can learn from historical data or past observations to make informed decisions. However, they have a limited ability to adapt to new situations. This limitation can be beneficial in scenarios where storing and processing large amounts of historical data is impractical or computationally expensive. Models with limited memory are often categorized as online or incremental learning algorithms.

Theory of Mind: This is a hypothetical level of artificial intelligence that would have the ability to understand human emotions, beliefs, intentions, and thoughts. This includes recognizing and comprehending beliefs, intentions, desires, and emotions in order to interact more effectively in social settings. This is related to creating machines that not only process and respond to explicit commands or inputs but also understand the implicit and nuanced aspects of human communication.

Self-aware Artificial Intelligence: It refers to the *hypothetical* capability of an artificial intelligence system to possess a level of consciousness, self-recognition, and awareness akin to human self-awareness. In other words, this is an even more advanced concept where artificial intelligence systems have self- awareness and consciousness, similar to human beings.

The applications of the types of artificial intelligence systems described above are widespread and include areas such as natural language processing, image and speech recognition, expert systems, robotics, and machine learning. As technology continues to advance, artificial intelligence is playing an increasingly significant role in various aspects of our daily lives and industries.

Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Society

The anticipated arrival of Artificial Intelligence technology has brought short, medium and long-term changes in all societies globally. Many scholars hold that the integration of AI into society has significant consequences for professionals accustomed to engaging with modern technologies. This extends to legal practitioners who grapple with the influential effects of AI and its regulatory implications, as well as technocrats who regularly rely on this advanced technology to make precise decisions in complex technological matters.

Nobody can probably deny the fact that every technological innovation like artificial intelligence invites

effective potential for advancement as well as for damages to the society. The impacts of artificial intelligence on society can be divided into following two categories:

Positive Impacts of Artificial Intelligence on Society

Artificial intelligence has the potential to bring about numerous positive impacts across various domains. Some of the key positive aspects include:

Increased Efficiency and Productivity: Artificial intelligence systems can automate repetitive and mundane tasks, allowing human workers to focus on more creative, complex, and strategic activities. This leads not only to time savings and increased productivity, but also can quickly analyze vast amounts of data to extract meaningful insights. Streamlining processes through artificial intelligence can lead to increased efficiency and productivity in various industries. It can also optimize supply chain operations by predicting demand, managing inventory, and improving logistics.

Advancements in Healthcare: Artificial intelligence is being used to analyze medical data, assist in diagnostics, and identify patterns in patient records. Artificial intelligence algorithms have demonstrated remarkable accuracy in diagnosing medical conditions by analyzing medical imaging data such as X-rays, MRIs, and CT scans. This can lead to earlier detection of diseases and more personalized treatment plans. This enables proactive intervention sand personalized care plans for at risk individuals. Artificial intelligence-powered robotic surgery systems enable more precise and less invasive procedures.

Enhancement of Education: Artificial intelligence has the potential to significantly enhance education by introducing innovative tools and technologies that support teaching, learning, and administrative processes. It can provide personalized learning experiences, adapting to individual student needs and learning styles. Educational software and artificial intelligence-powered tutoring systems can assist students in their studies and help educators in tailoring teaching methods. Artificial intelligence also enables the creation of virtual classrooms with interactive features, facilitating engaging online learning experiences.

Improved Customer Service: Artificial intelligence plays a crucial role in improving customer service across various industries. Artificial intelligence algorithms can predict potential customer issues based on historical data, enabling proactive customer service. AI powered chat bots and virtual assistants enhance customer service by providing quick and accurate responses to inquiries, improving user experience. Natural language processing allows artificial intelligence systems to understand and respond to customer queries in real-time. Artificial intelligence tools are also helpful to analyze customer feedback across various channels, including social media and review platforms, to identify trends, sentiments, and areas for improvement.

Innovation in Business and Advertisements: Artificial intelligence also plays a significant role in driving innovation in various aspects of business. It enables businesses to gain insights from large datasets, helping in decision-making and strategic planning. Predictive analytics powered by AI can assist companies in forecasting trends, identifying opportunities and outcomes based on historical data. AI optimizes supply chain processes by predicting demand, managing inventory, and improving logistics. Not only this, AI enhances security measures by detecting anomalies and patterns associated with fraudulent activities. AI into business procedures is becoming crucial. Information, robotics, and smart advertisings becoming more prevalent in today's marketing. When marketers get into such a contact, the possibilities for consumer value creation are huge, AI-powered market strategies that are smart and inventive can quickly respond to different company demands and provide connections and service bundles that are vital and profitable to relevant stakeholders. Information, robotics, and smart advertising is becoming more prevalent in today's marketing. When marketers get into such a contact, the possibilities for consumer value creation are huge.

Environmental Impact: Artificial intelligence technologies have the potential to contribute to sustainability and efficiency having far-reaching environmental implications. It is used in various environmental applications, such as monitoring and managing energy consumption, optimizing logistics and transportation, and predicting natural disasters.

Assistance for People with Disabilities: Artificial intelligence has vast potential to significantly improve the lives of people with disabilities by providing solutions that enhance their accessibility, communication, and independence. AI-powered assistive technologies, which include tools for communication, Voice recognition, gesture control, mobility, and daily tasks, can change the life of individuals with disabilities. AI-driven chat bots can provide emotional support and companionship, particularly beneficial for individuals with mental health challenges or social anxiety. By addressing specific needs and challenges, AI has the potential to empower people with disabilities, fostering greater independence and inclusion in various aspects of life.

Scientific Research and Discovery: Artificial intelligence plays a crucial role in scientific research and discovery, accelerating the pace of exploration and expanding our understanding of the world. AI accelerates scientific research by analyzing vast amounts of data, identifying patterns, and suggesting hypotheses. Drug discovery and genomic research benefit from AI's ability to process and analyze complex biological data.

Improved Safety and Security: Artificial intelligence has the potential to significantly enhance safety and security across various domains by providing advanced tools for threat detection, response, and prevention. AI can also be used in fraud prevention and cyber-security. Autonomous vehicles leverage AI for navigation, collision avoidance, and traffic management, potentially reducing accidents. AI can also optimize law enforcement resources by predicting when and where misconducts are expected to transpire. AI can monitor critical infrastructure, such as power plants and water treatment facilities, for anomalies that may indicate a security threat or malfunction.

It is evident from the above contribute on artificial intelligence about the positive impact of AI on society that it is proving a boon. Its impact on society has been multifaceted and transformative, contributing to advancements across various domains. We can safely say that the positive impact of AI on society is far-reaching and it has started transforming the way we live, work, and interact. While challenges and ethical considerations must be addressed, the potential for AI to drive positive societal change is substantial, with ongoing research and responsible deployment ensuring that the benefits continue to outweigh the drawbacks.

S. Chatterjee has rightly shown that artificial intelligence is significantly impacting the general populace by offering substantial assistance in a cost-effective manner. However, it also presents complex challenges that could potentially jeopardize their fundamental rights, including privacy infringement. In this context, this paper makes a measured, thorough, and holistic effort to briefly analyze the implications of the advent of this technology. AI technology is effectively contributing to the societal changes by providing advantages as well as disadvantages to the humans.

Negative Impacts of Artificial Intelligence on Society

In spite of positive impact of artificial intelligence on society, there is its other side also. AI brings about various challenges and potential negative impacts that need to be carefully addressed. Some of the key concerns about negative impact include the following:

Job Displacement: Artificial intelligence has the potential to lead to job displacement through automation, a process where tasks traditionally performed by humans are taken over by machines or algorithms. Automation through AI can replace certain jobs, particularly those involving repetitive and routine tasks. AI-powered robots are increasingly capable of performing tasks that were traditionally done by humans in fields like manufacturing, logistics, and even customer service. This can exult in job displacement for workers whose tasks are taken over by robots. Not only this, AI systems, including virtual assistants, can automate administrative tasks such as scheduling, email filtering, and document management. This may reduce the need for administrative up port roles in certain contexts. It's imperative to note that while AI can lead to job displacement in certain sectors, it can also create new opportunities and transform industries. New roles emerge in AI development, maintenance, and oversight, as well as in areas that leverage the unique skills and creativity of humans.

Bias and Discriminatory Outcomes : Artificial intelligence systems can lead to bias and discriminatory outcomes for various reasons, reflecting the biases present in the data they are trained on, the algorithms themselves, and the contexts in which they are deployed. If certain groups are underrepresented or misrepresented in the training data, the AI system may not adequately learn to recognize patterns with in those groups. Not only this ,the biases of the developers involved in creating and training AI model scan influence the outcomes. AI systems may not account for the specific context in which they are applied. Biases present in one context may not be applicable or may even be harmful in a different context, leading to unfair or discriminatory outcomes. If not addressed, these biases can be perpetuated or even amplified by AI algorithms, leading to unfair or discriminatory outcomes, especially in areas like hiring, lending, and law enforcement. Addressing bias in AI requires a multi-faceted approach, involving careful consideration of data quality, algorithmic design, ongoing monitoring, and diversity in development teams.

Ethical Concerns: Artificial intelligence raises ethical questions regarding privacy, consent, and the responsible use of data. Privacy issues arise as AI systems process vast amounts of personal data, leading to concerns about surveillance and unauthorized access. Ethical concerns surrounding AI center on the potential risks and consequences associated with its development and deployment. Issues such as surveillance, facial and voice recognition, and the collection of personal information without proper consent can lead to privacy violations. One major ethical concern of AI is the manifestation of biases in AI systems, perpetuating and amplifying societal prejudices present in training data. Ethical considerations, transparency, and fairness must be prioritized to ensure that AI technologies contribute positively to society

Lack of Transparency: The lack of transparency in AI systems is as significant concern that raises ethical, legal, and societal issues. Many AI algorithms, especially in deep learning, operate as complex “black boxes”, making it challenging to understand their decision-making processes. Lack of transparency can raise concerns not only about accountability and trust in AI systems, but also pose several challenges like compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks, fairness and accountability of AI systems, hidden biases and discriminatory practices, under- mining consumer rights, limiting human understanding and control, raising ethical questions about the autonomy of AI systems, etc. All these can lead to unforeseen negative impacts on individuals, communities and societies. It must be stressed that striking a balance between safeguarding proprietary information and providing sufficient transparency is crucial for fostering trust, accountability, and ethical use of AI technologies.

Security Risks: Though artificial intelligence has the potential to significantly enhance safety and security across various domains, still AI systems can be vulnerable to adversarial attacks, where malicious actors manipulate input data to deceive AI models. The proliferation of AI technologies has introduced significant security risks that demand careful consideration. The interconnectedness of AI in critical domain like healthcare, finance, and infrastructure creates a broad attack surface, making these systems attractive targets for cyber threats. Additionally, the increasing reliance on AI in critical systems poses cyber-security risks if these system s are compromised. Safeguarding AI against security risks necessitates robust cyber security measures, ongoing vulnerability assessments, and a concerted effort to address the unique challenges presented by the intersection of artificial intelligence and cyber security.

Social Inequality: Artificial intelligence has the potential to exacerbate social in equality through various mechanisms. One primary concern is the unequal distribution of benefits and opportunities stemming from AI adoption. Access to and benefits from AI technologies may not be distributed evenly, contributing to social inequality. Those with better resources and access to technology may disproportionately benefit, while others may be left behind. Hence, it may lead to a digital divide that disproportionately affects marginalized communities. To mitigate these risks, there is a pressing need for ethical AI development, inclusive policies, and efforts to address the broader socio-economic implications of AI deployment.

Loss of Human Touch: The widespread adoption of artificial intelligence technologies raises concerns about the loss of the human touch in various aspects of life. As AI systems automate tasks and interactions traditionally handled by humans, there is a risk of diminishing the personal and empathetic elements inherent in human interactions. In certain fields like healthcare and customer services etc., the introduction of AI may lead to a reduction in human interactions, potentially diminishing the quality of personal relationships and customer service experiences. For example, in healthcare sector, the reliance on AI for diagnostics and patient care may compromise the empathetic connection between healthcare providers and patients. This underlines the need for carefully balancing technological advancements with the preservation of the human touch to ensure that essential qualities like empathy, understanding, and intuition remain integral in areas where human connection is paramount.

Misuse of Autonomous Weapons: The ethical concerns surrounding AI are particularly pronounced in the context of autonomous weapons. The ability of autonomous weapons to identify and engage targets without direct human control introduces the risk of unintended consequences, civilian casualties, and the escalation of conflicts. Ethical considerations encompass issues such as compliance with international humanitarian law, the potential for misuse, and the lack of a moral framework guiding the actions of autonomous weapons. This has sparked discussions about the need for regulations and ethical guidelines in the use of such technologies in military applications and to prevent the ethical pitfalls associated with autonomous weapons.

Unemployment Problems and Economic Disruption: Beyond job displacement, the widespread adoption of AI could lead to economic disruption and structural changes in industries, potentially affecting entire sectors and local economies. It has been shown that the integration of AI technologies in to various industries has prompted concerns about unemployment and economic disruption. While AI has the potential to create new job opportunities, the pace at which it transforms industries may outstrip the ability of the workforce to adapt. Economic disruption may result from the displacement of existing jobs, necessitating a shift in skills and roles.

Dependency and Reliability: The increasing dependence on AI systems raises significant concerns about dependency and reliability. As critical functions in various sectors such as healthcare, finance, and transportation become heavily reliant on AI, the vulnerability of these systems to technical failures, cyber threats, or adversarial attacks becomes a pressing issue. Many scholars hold that overreliance on AI systems without proper fallback mechanisms can lead to catastrophic consequences if the technology fails or makes incorrect decisions. Moreover, overreliance on AI may diminish human expertise and critical thinking skills, leading to a potential erosion of individual and collective problem-solving capabilities.

Addressing these negative impacts of artificial intelligence requires a multidisciplinary approach involving policymakers, technologists, ethicists and society as a whole. Implementing ethical AI practices, promoting transparency, and developing policies that address the social and economic implications of AI are essential steps in mitigating potential harm.

Many studies have revealed that the development of AI for the societal benefits will be hampered if the concerns covering privacy and security protection for personal data are not properly addressed by formulating appropriate policy, laws and regulations. Those are required to be consistently implemented with good governance .The authority should be cautious to stick to the ethical norms in structuring AI-program.

Artificial Intelligence and the Future

It is said that AI is the greatest thing humankind has ever worked on. AI is being used in image and speech recognition and analysis which will be for better than human recognition of image and speech and its application stretches wide and far wide and far. There are research and works being conducted using AI that is going to play a very important role in our future healthcare. AI is being worked on to cure Alzheimer's disease and someday even blindness. Someone with dyslexia is being helped to read

better with the help of AI. Genetic data is being analyzed by bioinformatics; data science integrated with AI for way better data analysis by in health care that has not been possible for us in the past. Fields like Cancer research and other such diseases are being impacted greatly by advanced applications of AI. AI can be a great tool in the future of education. The uses of AI are also going to change the way are going to commute in the future. In addition to self-driving cars, work is being done to manufacture" self-flying" planes and drones that conveniently deliver your food faster and better.

One of the biggest concerns about AI is that jobs are being replaced due to automation.

5 | CONCLUSION

Throughout the world people are depending on use of artificial intelligence and it is expected this trend will increase with passage of time. It may be concluded that the impact of artificial intelligence on society is profound and multifaceted, ushering in transformative changes across various domains. While offering unprecedented opportunities for efficiency, innovation, and improved quality of life, AI also poses challenges that demand careful consideration. The ethical implications, potential biases, and societal inequalities arising from AI applications require ongoing scrutiny and thoughtful regulation. Moreover, concerns about job displacement, loss of privacy, and the need for transparent, accountable AI systems underscore the importance of responsible development and deployment. A number of studies have highlighted the potential misuse of AI on society. This misuse is related both to ensuring that such AI do not harm humans and other morally relevant beings, and to the moral status of the machines using AI themselves. As we navigate this era of technological advancement, it is crucial to prioritize ethical considerations, inclusivity, and the preservation of human values to ensure that AI contributes positively to society, empowering individuals, fostering equity, and enhancing overall well-being. The future impact of AI hinges on our ability to harness its potential responsibly, striking a balance between innovations and safeguarding the principles that define a fair, just, and equitable society.

It is worth mentioning here that there is no comprehensive AI-policy in India. Without a clear regulatory framework, there is a risk of unchecked development and deployment of AI technologies, potentially leading to ethical lapses, biases, and privacy concerns. The absence of guidelines could impede the responsible and transparent use of AI across industries, hindering the nation's ability to harness the full potential of artificial intelligence for economic growth, innovation, and societal benefit.

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COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS IN EDUCATION

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Abstract: In the face of rapid social change, the integration of social media tools has become essential in modern life. Staying updated with recent trends is crucial for every individual today. Within the education system, continuous attention to the learning process is vital. The contemporary approach to education emphasizes faster and more accessible media channels, with social media playing a key role in both teaching and learning. To achieve excellence in education, the learning process must adapt to current trends. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X, and YouTube are widely used by individuals, regardless of their academic stage, enabling students to access updated academic resources. Collaborative learning and the application of social media tools are increasingly prevalent in educational environments, fostering student engagement and enhancing their collaborative abilities. These tools enrich the educational experience by connecting students to real-life scenarios, better preparing them for academic and professional success.

Keywords: Collaborative Learning, Social Media Tools, Education, Technology

1 | INTRODUCTION

Society is racing at a fast pace in recent times. The new evolution in the field of technology is seen everywhere and has become a part of our daily lives. Fast-growing technological means and their environment have become an essential part of our lives. Technology has beaten every corner of our lives, we cannot deny the privileges we enjoy in our lives due to technological advancements.

Technology is also instrumental in the lives of students. They are the leading stars of our society. Technology is used to interact among the students according to their potential. The area of their interests also matters in choosing technological tools. In this technology-driven era, education is undergoing a transformative shift, moving beyond traditional classroom boundaries to embrace collaborative learning environments. Central to this evolution is the integration of social media tools, which facilitate real-time communication, knowledge sharing, and peer collaboration. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn are no longer just venues for social interaction; they have become vital educational tools that enhance engagement and foster a sense of communal harmony among students and educators(Manca and Ranieri, 2016; Popescu,2014).

The integration of collaborative learning and social media tools in education has transformed traditional teaching methods, fostering interactive and student-centered learning experiences. In an era where digital communication is a fundamental aspect of everyday life, leveraging social media platforms for educational purposes enhances engagement, knowledge sharing, and peer collaboration (Dunn, 2013;Popescu, 2014). Social media facilitates real-time discussions, resource accessibility, and personalized learning opportunities, making it an essential component of modern pedagogical strategies. Collaborative learning, supported by social media, encourages students to work together, share diverse perspectives, and co-construct knowledge. This approach aligns with constructivist learning theories, which emphasize active, social, and contextual learning experiences. By participating in online discussions, group projects, and content creation, learners develop critical thinking, digital literacy, and communication skills essential for success in this new century.

The connection between collaborative learning and social media tools not only enriches the educational experience but also prepares students for a connected, information-rich world. As educational institutions continue to explore innovative teaching methods, the strategic integration of these tools promises to redefine learning paradigms, making education more interactive, inclusive, and globally connected. The incorporation of social media into education has revolutionized conventional teaching and learning approaches, creating fresh avenues for interaction, teamwork, and the exchange of knowledge (Dunn, 2013).

Concept of Social-Media

Social media refers to digital platforms and technologies that enable users to create, share, and interact with content through a virtual community or network. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, Share Chat, YouTube, LinkedIn, etc. facilitate communication and content exchange through text, images, videos, and links (Popescu, 2014).

Social media has evolved beyond personal use; it now plays a significant role in various sectors, including business, politics, entertainment, and education. In the context of education, it serves as a tool for collaborative learning, knowledge sharing, and building online learning communities, and transforming how students and educators connect and interact in a digital world (Lam, 2015; Dunn, 2013).

Social-Media Tools and Their Use

Social media tools have become an integral part of the lives of those who have revolutionized the way of communicating, collaborating, and learning strategies of modern people. To enhance these areas, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp enable instant sharing of ideas and information, fostering global connections. Tools such as LinkedIn cater to professional networking, helping users enhance their careers. YouTube and similar platforms provide vast educational resources, offering tutorials, lectures, and interactive content. Additionally, tools like Share Chat and X allow for community-specific engagement and real-time updates. These platforms are increasingly being utilized for educational purposes, enabling flexible learning, peer collaboration, and access to diverse resources with the newest version of any information. However, effective use of social media tools requires alertness towards the challenges like misinformation, distractions, and privacy concerns (Manca and Ranieri, 2016; Popescu,2014; Ansari and Khan, 2020).

Importance of Social Media Tools in Education

Social media tools have become increasingly important in education due to their ability to enhance communication, collaboration, and engagement among students and educators. These tools make every

kind of service for this community easy. They can rely upon the benefits availed by the social media tools (Ansari and Khan, 2020). It is faster, and they use this for their study purpose as well. For real-time services and to browse a vast world of knowledge, students can take it as a fun; and for this reason, they also use the tools to excel in their careers(Al-Rahmi and Zeki, 2017). It opens before them a vast world of opportunities to collect every kind of information.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of related literature reveals insight into the research and studies done previously. It is very important to have some guidance to proceed towards the process, and it is made easier by the literature published previously. Here aresome reviews of the literature related to this paper.

Dunn (2013) provides valuable insights in the paper **'Teaching in higher education: can social media enhance the learning experience?'** into the crucial role of social media in higher education. While digital platforms offer innovative ways to enhance learning experiences, their effective use requires better planning and responsible engagement. The study focuses on the need for educators to control social media's potential while maintaining academic integrity and student engagement.

Manca and Ranieri (2016) provide a comprehensive analysis in theirscholarly paper **'Facebook and the others. Potentials and obstacles of social media for teaching in higher education.'** of the role of social media in higher education, highlighting its transformative potential and inherent challenges. Their research underscores the need for thoughtful integration of digital tools to enhance student learning while maintaining academic rigor.

Lam (2015), in the scholarly conference paper **'Collaborative learning using social media tools in a blended learning course,'** provides valuable insights into the evolving role of social media in education, demonstrating its potential to enhance collaborative learning. While digital tools offer numerous advantages, structured implementation and support are essential to optimizing their impact on student engagement and academic success.

Popescu (2014)in the article **'Providing collaborative learning support with social media in an integrated environment'**examines how social media contributes to collaborative learning within an integrated digital environment. The study highlights the effectiveness of various Web 2.0 tools like wikis, blogs, microblogging platforms, and media-sharing applicationsin fostering student engagement and facilitating the exchange of knowledge. The author provides valuable insights into the evolving role of social media in education and shows concern that, though digital tools offer numerous advantages, constructive implementation and support it is essential to optimize their impact on student engagement and academic success.

Ansari and Khan (2020) in their research article, **'Exploring the role of social media in collaborative learning the new domain of learning'**exhibit the impact of social media on academic environment settings, emphasizing its role in enhancing student engagement, knowledge sharing, and their engagement and interaction beyond the domain of physical classroom. Their study provides insights into how digital platforms facilitate learning and contribute to students' academic performance.But they also point out some issues such as digital distractions, misinformation, and privacy concerns that might hamper in better utilization of those modern methods.Sothey emphasize on essential optimization of using digital platforms.

Al-Rahmi and Zeki (2017), in their journal article '**A model of using social media for collaborative learning to enhance learners' performance on learning'** examine the impact of social media on collaborative learning and its role in enhancing students' academic performance. The research presents social media as a learning tool and its influence on the academic performances of the students, but they

also demonstrate some limitations using in social media and challenges faced by the users.Their research presents a theoretical model to evaluate the effectiveness of social media in education.

3 | OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To better discuss an article's theme, some objectives must be set. To discuss the use of social media tools in education, there are some objectives to take, such as-

a. To know the familiarity of social media tools among the teacher-student community.
b. To get information about the frequency of using social media tools.
c. To discuss the usability of social media tools for educational purposes and learning.
d. To get knowledge about the challenges faced by users while using social media tools.

4 | METHODOLOGY

Regarding the use of social media tools and during its study, there has been used a set of questionnaires was distributed among the population.The population of the study was selected randomly from some of the selected schools of Jorhat district, Assam. The questionnaires were distributed among them first come first serve basis.Some of the students were asked some queries to better understand their interest in using social media tools. They were seen to be excited by the questions, as well they filled a questionnaire containing several questions.

5 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regarding the topic of discussion, 'Use of Social Media Tools in Education,' there have been found some interesting areas that people get connected and familiar with. The findings are shown through some tables and diagrams.

Table- 1: Response Rate of the Population/ General Information:

Teachers			**Students**		
Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Filled	% of Response	Questionnaires Distributed	Questionnaires Filled	% of Response
120	118	98.33%	125	120	96%

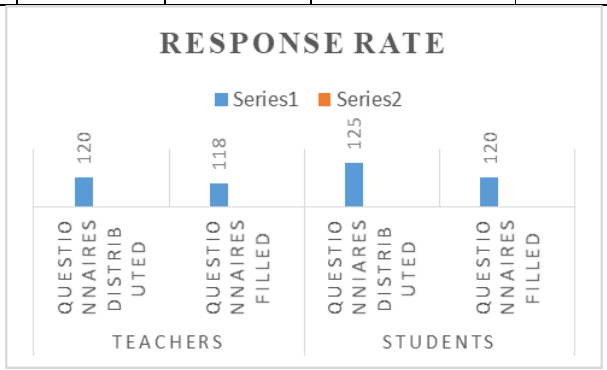
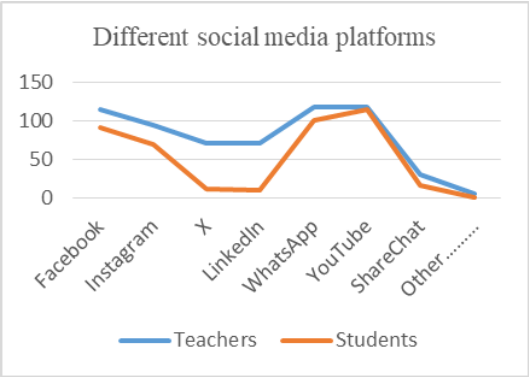


Table 1 shows the response rate of the teachers and students as well. The teachers' response rate is higher than the students' (98.33%).

Table 2: Which social media platforms do you use regularly? (Mark all that apply)

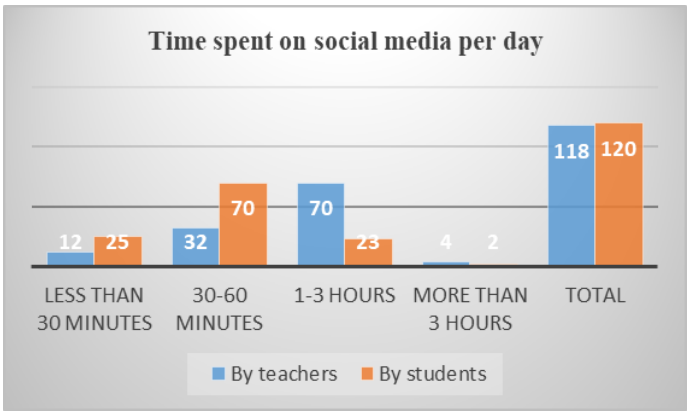
Social Media Platform	Teachers	Students
Facebook	115	91
Instagram	95	70
X	72	12
LinkedIn	72	10
WhatsApp	118	101
YouTube	118	115
ShareChat	31	17
Other……	5	0



The table data highlights the preferences of teachers and students across various social media platforms. WhatsApp and YouTube emerge as the most popular platforms among both groups, with 100%of teachers and 84.16%of students using WhatsApp, and 100% of teachers and 95.83% of students engaging with YouTube. Facebook is another widely used platform, favored by 97.45% of teachers and 75.83% of students.The above table shows that several social media platforms are popular among the student-teacher community.The least used tool is selected ShareChat (26.27%) by the teachers and X (12%) by the students.

Table 3: How many hours per day do you spend on social media?

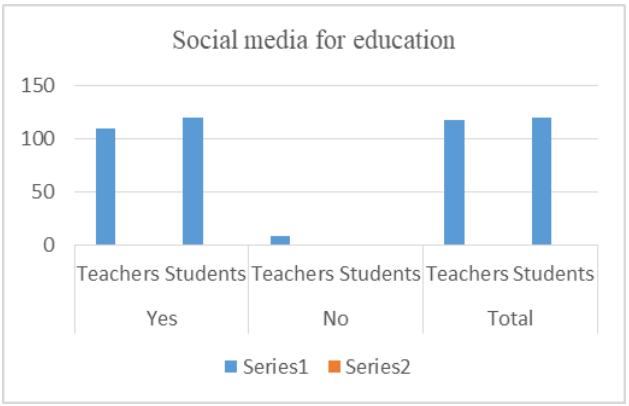
Time spent per day	By teachers	By students
Less than 30 minutes	12	25
30-60 minutes	32	70
1-3 hours	70	23
More than 3 hours	4	2
Total	118	120



The table presents data on the daily time spent on social media by teachers and students. Among teachers, the majority (59.32%) spend between 1 to 3 hours daily, whereas most students (58.33%) dedicate 30 to 60 minutes to social media. The data reflects distinct patterns in social media usage, highlighting a significant difference in habits between the two groups.

Table 4: Do you use social media for educational purposes?

Yes		**No**		**Total**	
Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students	Teachers	Students
110	120	8	0	118	120

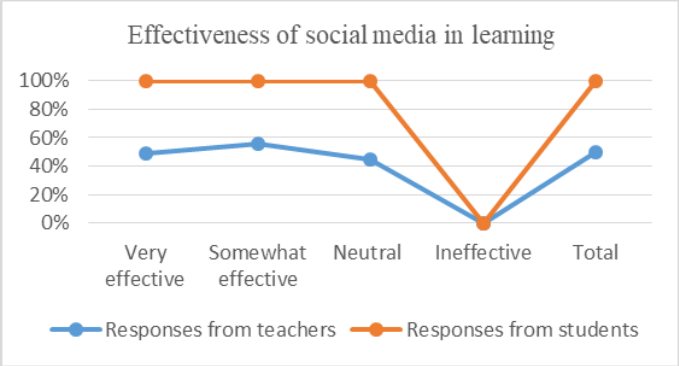


The data reveals a strong trend of social media being utilized for educational purposes among both teachers and students. A substantial majority (93.22%) of teachers and all (100%) of students use social media as a tool for learning and teaching. Conversely, only a small proportion of teachers (6.78%) do not use social media for educational purposes. This demonstrates that social media platforms have become integral to educational activities, bridging communication gaps and enhancing resource sharing.

Table 5: How effective do you think social media is for learning?

Measuring tools for effectiveness	**Responses from teachers**	**Responses from students**
Very effective	99	103

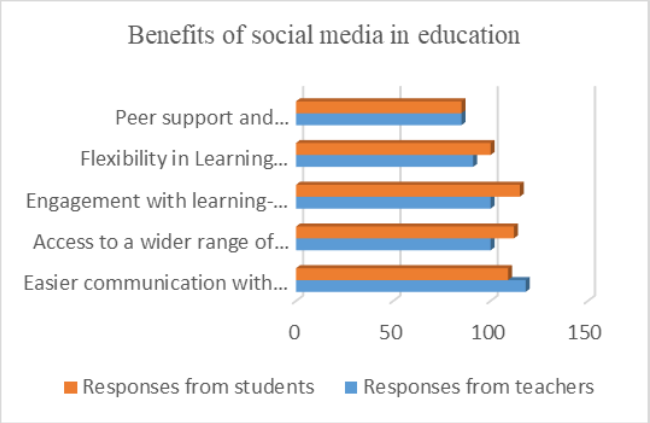
Somewhat effective	15	12
Neutral	4	5
Ineffective	0	0
Total	118	120



The data emphasizes the high effectiveness of social media as a learning tool, as perceived by both teachers and students. A large majority (83.89%) of teachers and (85.83%) of students rated social media as "very effective" for learning, reflecting its significant role in education, and none (0%) considered social media tools "ineffective." These findings demonstrate the widespread appreciation of social media as a resource for enhancing education and providing access to learning opportunities.

Table 6: What benefits have you experienced using social media in education? (Mark all that apply.)

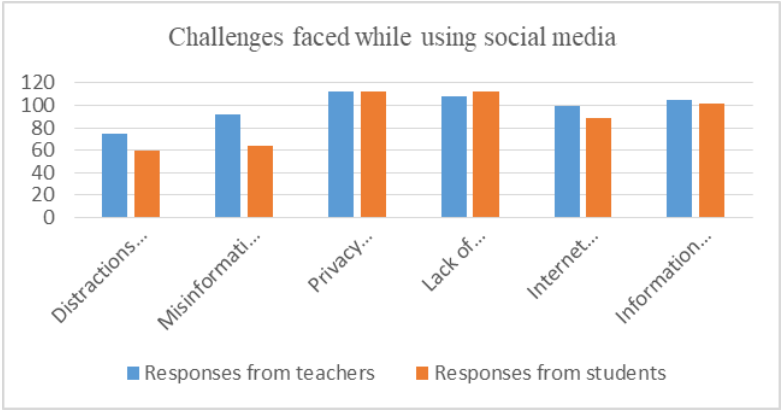
Benefits of Social Media	**Responses from teachers**	**Responses from students**
Easier communication with others	118	109
Access to a wider range of resources	100	112
Engagement with learning-materials	100	115
Flexibility in Learning time/location	91	100
Peer support and collaboration	85	85



The table highlights the various benefits of social media as perceived by teachers and students. Easier communication with others stands out as the most appreciated benefit, with 100% of teachers and 90.83%of students recognizing its value. Lastly, peer support and collaboration are valued the least by both groups, with 72.03% of teachers and 70.83% of students acknowledging this benefit. These insights underline the significant impact of social media in enhancing communication, accessibility, and collaborative learning.

Table 7: What challenges have you faced using social media (Select and mark all that apply)

Challenges	**Responses from teachers**	**Responses from students**
Distractions and time wasting	75	60
Misinformation or unreliable content	92	64
Privacy concerns	112	112
Lack of awareness as an educational tool	108	112
Internet issues and data limitations	99	89
Information traffic	105	102



The data highlights the challenges faced by teachers and students when using social media. Privacy concerns stand out as the most significant issue, with 94.91% and 93.33% responses from both groups (teachers and students, respectively). Lastly, distractions and time-wasting are highlighted by 63.55% of teachers and 50% of students. These findings underscore the diverse challenges that need to be addressed to make social media a more effective and reliable tool for learning and communication.

Through the above findings and discussions, it is revealed that both the student teacher community is familiar with social media tools and their usage. Their views have shown that the tools become integral to run their social as well as personal life and career. Social media tools help students excel in their educational lives and careers. Though they do not deny the fact of facing some challenges during use of social media there are available sources that people cannot leave untouched. People have to accept social media and technology as a boon to their lives. From the findings, it becomes clear that some social media tools, i.e., YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, X, etc., are very popular in both communities. LinkedIn, ShareChat, etc. are some tools used, but they are constrained to some specific users.

6 | CONCLUSION

To summarize, social media tools have become an integral part of education, enabling innovative and flexible learning opportunities. They allow educators and students to connect, collaborate, and access a wealth of resources beyond traditional classroom settings. Platforms like YouTube, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn have proven especially effective in sharing knowledge, fostering engagement, and supporting professional growth. However, to maximize the benefits of social media in education, it is essential to address challenges such as privacy concerns, misinformation, and distractions. By promoting mindful and responsible usage, social media can continue to transform the educational landscape and strategically empower learners.

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MENSTRUAL HYGIENE AND SOCIAL SANCTIONS: A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY AMONG THE SCHOOL GOING GIRL STUDENTS IN BORBAM TEA GARDEN OF ASSAM

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Abstract: This paper is an attempt to examine the menstrual health of School going Girl students in Tea community of Assam. This paper also tried to explore the knowledge of school going girl students about hygiene practices during menstruation for their quality life. The hygiene practices are mostly essential to girls/women for their reproductive health, but social taboos and other restrictions related to menstruation make obstacles for them to survive themselves with proper dignity as like their male counterpart. Therefore, knowledge of girl's student about menstrual health and their experiences of using menstrual kits have been examined in this study. It is an empirical study and data have been collected from both primary and secondary sources through applying qualitative as well as quantitative research strategies. The data gives an interesting finding to meet the basic objectives of the study.

Keywords: Menstruation, Sanitary Pads, Menstrual Hygiene, Women Health, Girl Students, Social Taboos.

1 | INTRODUCTION

In the Indian society, some aspects are still not getting proper attention as it demands and among them menstruation is mentionable. Menstruation is a normal physiological process; however, the beginning of feminine cycle is a one-of-a-kind wonder for immature young girls. In India, it is viewed as unclean, impure and their participation in household activities, religious rituals are restricted during this period. Limitations were also found at eating certain foods like jaggery and papaya etc. Menstrual hygiene[1] deals with the special health care needs or requirements of female during the period of monthly menstruation. These areas of special concern include choice of the best "period protection" or feminine hygiene products; how often and when to change the feminine hygiene products; bathing care of the

[1] Managing the menstrual flow through proper using of menstrual kits like sanitary pad, tampon etc., and cleaning the body by using soap and water

vulva and vagina as well as the supposed benefits of vaginal douching at the end of each menstrual period.[2]

To live a healthy, productive and dignified life, it is essential that women and girls are able to manage menstrual bleeding effectively. This requires access to appropriate water, sanitation and hygiene services, including clean water for washing clothes used to absorb menstrual blood and having a place to dry them, having somewhere private to change clothes or disposable sanitary pads, facilities to dispose of used cloths and pads, and access to information to understand the menstrual cycle and how to manage menstruation hygienically. As well as addressing practical needs like this, it is also necessary to promote better awareness among women and men to overcome the embarrassment, cultural practices and taboos around menstruation that impact negatively on women's and girls' lives, and reinforce gender inequities and exclusion (Mahon & Fernandes: 2010). In a study conducted by (Dasgupta & Sarkar: 2008) in West Bengal found that among the 160 girls' respondents 67.5% girls were aware about menstruation prior to menarche, but 97.5% girls did not know the source of menstrual bleeding. A common belief among Gujjar (a semi-nomadic tribal group in Jammu and Kashmir) girls was that menstruation was a process through which the bad blood from the body was removed to prevent infection (Dhingra et al: 2009). The awareness of practices and access to facilities needed to maintain good hygiene during menstruation were generally found to be lacking. In Bangladesh, India and Nepal the majority of women in rural areas use reusable cloths to absorb menstrual blood. In Bangladesh these are usually torn from old saris and known as 'nekra' (Ahmed and Yesmin: 2008).

In spite of the fact that puberty is a solid time of life, numerous teenagers are frequently less educated, less experienced, and less comfortable with getting to reproductive health[3] knowledge than adults. In numerous parts of the developing nations, a culture of quietness encompasses the theme of menstruation and related issues. For that reason, numerous young girls lack proper and adequate information with respect to menstrual cleanliness. This may bring about erroneous and unfortunate conduct amid their menstrual period. Likewise, numerous mothers lack correct information and skill to impart about menstrual cleanliness which they pass on to their youngsters, prompting false demeanors, convictions and practices in this regard. To learn about cleanliness amid feminine cycle is an indispensable part of wellbeing instruction for immature young ladies as examples that are created in puberty are probably going to continue into grown-up life (Lawan, UM et al.: 2010). Lawan, UM et al. 2010, in their study found that majority of respondents of their study had fair knowledge of menstruation and menstrual hygiene. Specifically, majority of the students knew that mature females normally experience monthly/cyclical flow of blood per vagina; they knew correctly that sanitary pads are used for menstrual protection. However almost half of the student did not know the average duration of normal menstrual flow.

Absence of menstrual hygiene and cleanliness was found to bring about unfriendly results like reproductive tract infections. Better learning about menstrual cleanliness diminished this hazard. In a study conducted at Karachi of Pakistan, it has been found that, there were some difficulties for Young girls to manage menstrual hygiene because of lack of infrastructure to dispose of used cloths in school and lack of privacy to dry washed ones at home. The study reveals that absorbent pads used to manage

[2] Menstrual Hygiene. Feminine Hygiene, Gynecology and Menstruation Information, Resources and Products for Dads and Husband, http://www.mens- trualhygiene.com, accessed on 21st September, 11pm

[3] Reproductive health includes —a satisfying and safe sex life free from the fear of disease and free form coercion and violence, the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if when and how often, to do so, that is access to both infertility services on the one hand and contraceptive services on other, reproductive choice for women and men, that people have the right to be informed and have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, access to safe and affordable abortion facilities, safe child-bearing, access to services for the prevention and care of reproductive health problems, both gynecological and obstetric and special attention to adolescents whose reproductive health needs have been particularly overlooked

menstrual blood loss are an important need of adolescent girls. On the other hand it was also found that, though sanitary pads are used universally in high- income countries, a large study in India showed that only 12% of menstruating women used sanitary pads and 70% of women cited cost as a major barrier for using them (Shah P. Sobha et al.: 2013).

2 | METHODOLOGY

As the aim of this study is concerned with menstrual health and hygiene practices of School going girl students of tea community, The Borbam tea garden of Sivasagar district of Assam was selected as the field. Sivasagar earlier known as "Rangpur", the historical city of Assam is situated 363 K.M. east of Guwahati (The capital of Assam). The Borbam tea Garden was established in 1865 and is situated on the South bank of the river Brahmaputra, located between the district towns of Sivasagar and Jorhat and close to the Nagaland border. The Tea garden is owned by the company named Goodricke and the name Borbam is derived from “BOR” meaning very in the local language and “BAM” meaning highlands, as it was located on the higher grounds on the banks of the river Jhanji. Total population of Borbam Tea garden is 9855 consisting of 2998 male and 3925 female and 1128, 1804 Adolescent and Children respectively. Borbam also has proud linkage with Col. Sir James Buckingham who was the longest serving Chairman of the Assam branch of the Indian Tea Association. The Borbam tea garden is highly acclaimed for quality of tea and standard of factories. In this study School going Girl Students who attain the age of 10 to 18 years were considered as respondent. For fulfillment of the purpose of the study, total 50 girl students were purposively selected as respondent from the tea garden.

3 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Menstrual health and hygiene practices of the school going girl students

The study showed the age of the respondents varied from 13 to 18 years. The students of class IX were mostly 14-15 years and class X mostly 15-16 years. Regarding the religion of the respondents, the study reveals that majority of the respondents i.e. 35 (70%) belongs to Hindu and other 15 (30%) respondents belong to Christian religion. 40 (80%) respondents were from nuclear family and others were from join family. Here an important finding reveals that, the girls who were living in the join families have to maintain more restriction during the period of menstruation. Their grandparents restrict them from entering the kitchen; they have to maintain secrecy during this period. In West Bengal a few girls used disposable sanitary pads with availability and affordability being stated as the key obstacle to more widespread use (Dasgupta and Sarkar 2008). Same as in the present study only (58%) girls i.e. 29 respondents expressed that they used sanitary pads and non-availability and affordability is as the key obstacle to more widespread use of sanitary pads. The remaining 21 (42%) respondents managed the menstruation period by using old cloths, leafs, sands etc. Out of the 50 respondents 29 (58%) used sanitary pad. 21 (42%) respondents used old cloths, and out of these 18 respondents; all had problem while washing and drying of the cloths due to lack of privacy. They expressed their reasons of not using sanitary pads and that is high cost, lack of knowledge, shyness, restrictions from elder generation etc. Regarding hygienic practices during menstruation, 91% respondents had daily bath. Other 9% thinks that bathing in the first two days increases the menstrual flow. Maximum number of the respondents absent from their school during these days as the facilities for changing and disposal of sanitary pad, cloths is not available in the schools. The findings of the study revealed that due to lack of privacy, the girls took baths and washed their menstrual cloths early in the morning, before other family members woke up or were not around.

Parental role on menstrual hygiene

As we know that man is a social animal. Hence to live in human society one has to learn the societal characteristics, norms, culture, through the process of socialization, and the parents of each and every child remain as the primary source of socialization. Same as in the case of menstruation, parents especially the mother of every girl has primary role. Mother has the most imperative part in the training, transformation of knowledge, and wellbeing practices of young girls with the end goal for them to have a solid progress from the basic phase of adolescence. Mother's educational status and respondent's knowledge of menstruation is interlinked and it was depicted from the study. The study reveals that, Mother of 20 (40%) respondents were HSLC passed, 5 (10%) were HS passed and the remaining 25 (50%) were read up to primary level. In the present study it was found that the girl students of these 25 mothers who have read up to HSLC and HS had primary knowledge regarding menstruation before their menarche and they were well-aware regarding menstrual hygiene. In most cases the respondent's first informant regarding menstruation was their mother. In this study it was also found that 33 (66%) respondents pursued the idea of menstruation from their mothers. As many as, 12 (24%) respondents got the idea from peer groups and the remaining 5 (10%) respondents obtained it through social media, television, radio etc. it is true that maximum numbers of respondents got the idea of menstruation from their mothers; but regarding maintenance of menstrual hygiene and cleanliness it was found that, Television, social media, radio etc. plays the major role in the life of the girl students. About 37 (74%) respondents expressed that they got the idea of menstrual hygiene through television, radio etc. Regarding the maintenance of menstrual hygiene, the respondents were again asked a question, ―Whether their family members told them to maintain a hygienic and clean menstruation? In response to this question 23 (46%) respondents expressed that their family members especially the mother told them to maintain cleanliness and hygiene during the period. On the other hand, the remaining 27 (54%) respondents opined that their family members were not aware about menstrual hygiene. They even not discuss anything related to menstrual hygiene.

Social Sanctions and Menstrual hygiene practices

Menstrual hygiene is a taboo subject; a topic that many women in South Asia are uncomfortable discussing in public. This is compounded by gender inequality, which excludes women and girls from decision-making process (Mahon & Fernandes, 2010). Still in many parts of India, celebration of rituals related to goddesses is going on. For example, in kamakhya temple the ritual of the menstruation of the goddess is celebrated during the monsoon season. It is believed that during the time of June month the goddess kamakhya menstruate and the "Pujari"[4] who belongs to only male folks perform the ritual of purification of goddess. The same male 'pujari' can perform the purification process but they treat menstruation as taboo in our society. In the Hindu religion, ladies are disallowed from taking part in typical life while bleeding. She should be "cleaned" or Purified before she is permitted to come back to her family and everyday tasks of her life. Menstruation is a vital reproductive health function of women folk, but despite this it has been dealt with secrecy in India. A number of taboos and socio-cultural limitations still exist concerning menstruation which abash the adult girls and make their life troublesome. In this manner, menstruation is for the most part unwelcome by the adult girls (Kumar & Srivastava 2011). Menstruation incorporates endless legends and secrets. The most well-known social and cultural practices and limitations concerning menstruation among the adult girls and women are not going into the puja room, not going into the kitchen, not looking the mirror, and not going to the visitors amid menstruation (ibid). Puri & Kapoor, 2006; found in their study that, not entering the puja room during menstruation is the main restriction among urban girls whereas not entering the kitchen is the main restriction among the rural girls during menstruation.

As, one of the important objectives of this paper is to find out the relationship between social taboos, sanctions and menstruation; hence, in this context a question was asked to the respondents, ―whether they have faced any kind of restriction from their family members during menstruation period? In response to this question it was found that maximum number of respondents faced restriction from their

[4] An Individual who performs the religious rituals in Hindu religion.

family members. Out of the total respondents, 42 (84%) respondents expressed that they faced restrictions. On the other hand, 8 (16%) respondents opined that they have not faced any restrictions from their parents. Again, those who had faced restriction from their parents i.e. 42 (84%) respondents were again asked about the types of restrictions they faced from their family members. Interestingly it was observed that, majority of the respondents faced restrictions which is related to religious faith. About 33 (78.57%) respondents faced restrictions like not entering kitchen, puja room etc. As many as 7 (16.6%) respondents expressed that they were restricted from talking and playing with boys as it was believed that by doing this, they may become pregnant. On the other hand, the remaining 2 (4.76%) respondents faced restrictions on going to school. When the researcher asked the parents of the 2 respondents about their restriction on going to school, they expressed that, they restrict their daughters on going to school because during this period they may feel uncomfort and proper facility is not available in the school. School dropout is high in India and menstruation is one of the causes of it. In a study conducted by (Das, Mittoo: 2008) on Menstruation as Pollution: Taboos in Simlitola, Assam found that during the menstruation period young girl is not sent to school. She is not allowed to cook for those three days and her food is placed in front of her during meal hours. The utensils, in which she eats, are to be cleaned by her in the backyard. In the present study the researcher also tried to find out whether there was any restriction regarding the food of the respondents during the period of menstruation. Interestingly it was found that 36 (72%) respondents were restricted from eating certain things like Papaya, ginger, meat, jaggery, pickle etc. According to them it was believed that eating these foods may increase the menstrual flow and they may face heavy abdominal pain.

4| CONCLUSION

The main focus of this study was to learn menstrual cleanliness among immature young girls. Absence of fitting and adequate information about menstrual cleanliness can be ascribed to social and religious convictions furthermore, taboos. Social awareness should be spread to mitigate the traditional belief, misconceptions, and restrictions regarding menstruation. Numerous deep-rooted convictions and practices are imparted from ages, yet it is not really understood that a significant number of those have turned out to be superfluous today. Rather than conveying about the correct hygienic practices identified with menstruation to the immature young girls, we are trapping them in legends and convention. By following, such cultural practices aimlessly, we are intentionally influencing the young people to remain on the cross roads. It is in this manner vital to fortify safe menstrual hygienic practices among young girls and haul them out of social taboo, irrelevant practices, and conventions identified with menstruation. It is important to learn by everyone that menstruation is a natural biological process and there is nothing to be maintaining any secrecy regarding it. Rather we should encourage our sisters to be living a healthy and hygienic life by using the sanitary pad. School authority should also build clean and hygienic toilets with facilities of disposal for the girls. Incorrect restrictions, myths and beliefs associated with menstruation can be removed with the help of parents, teachers and religious leaders.

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Abstract: This paper is an attempt to explore the self-perception towards ageing among the aged people. Specifically, the focus is on how they perceive ageing as a process and old age as a stage of human life, in light of their beliefs, life experiences and attitudes. Even the study also tries to examine whether social constructs like traditional values, sanctions, customs, always influence in the formation of perception towards ageing among the aged people. The study reveals that though ageing is associated with problems the rural aged people have a positive attitude towards the old age situation. The study also reveals that though most of the aged people have economic hardship but they are satisfied with their life and feel good as an elderly person.

Keywords: Ageing, Aged Women, Perception.

Buddha said, "Some people are old at 18 and some are young at 90"

1 | INTRODUCTION

Perception towards ageing is of substantial importance for aged people as it is relate to health (Levy, 2003; Levy et al., 2002; Levy and Myers, 2005) and behavioural outcomes (Sarkisian et al., 2005) along with wellbeing (Steverink et al., 2001; Westerhof and Barrett, 2005) and self-identity (Sneed and Whitbourne, 2005). Perceptions of ageing among older people refer to the ways they conceive the ageing process and, by extension, experience their own transition to old age. The formation of each individual's perceptions and experiences of ageing is a dynamic process that pertains to self, social norms and their interplay (Steverink et al., 2001) and reflects the way an individual internalizes social norms (Levy, 2003; Westerhof and Barrett, 2005). Researchers have suggested that it is ageing stereotypes, which in old age become ageing self-stereotypes that influence older people's conceptions of ageing and old age (Levy, 2003). There are several stages that an individual takes place in creating his or her perception about ageing. The person imagines his or herself as an adult first as he generates his or her primary perception. Second his or her perception when he or she is already part of the "old age" as whether by the identification of the society or by other people which can also be defined as self-stereotyping from age stereotyping. Lastly is on how they categorize other people as member of their group or not (Levy, 2003). Numerous studies have showed that there are both positive and negative

connotations of getting old (Macia et al., 2009; Schoemann and Branscombe, 2011; Kotter- Gruhn et al., 2009; Levy and Myers, 2005). On the positive side, especially in the traditional Indian context, old age is associated with wisdom, respect and potential for spiritual growth. It relives them from family responsibilities and gives them freedom of action. On the other hand negative side, it is associated with physical and mental decline, stereotyped as self- pitying, unhappy, complaining and unproductive. They are often suffering from depression caused by loneliness and alienation. These negative effects probably derive from a loss of authority, absence of a meaningful role in social life, marginality in family and social relationships, material insecurity, dependence and attenuated intergenerational relationships (Bali, 1999). These two subtypes were often associated by former researches to their health condition. It revealed that those who perceived positively often live a healthy life while those who have negative perceptions frequently suffer from various illness such as cardiovascular disease (Hendricks, 2005; Kotter- Gruhn et. al, 2009; Levy and Myers, 2005). How people view and perceive the old ageing process varies from culture to culture. Depending on cultural norms, and beliefs, ageing can be seen as an undesirable phenomenon, reducing beauty and bringing one closer to death, or as an accumulation of wisdom and status worthy of respect. In the traditional Indian culture, a human life span is one hundred years. Manu, the ancient law givers, in his Dharmasastra divided this span of life into four 'ashramas' or life stages. The first 'Bramhacharys' (life of a student) was to be spent of the teacher's (guru) house. Once education was complete, the boy (grown into adulthood by now) would be ready to enter the 'Grihasta' ashram. This was the life of a householder. A man was to marry, have children, shoulder the responsibilities of an average citizen in the society. He was to discharge the debts he owed to the parents (pitru rina) by begetting sons and to the Gods (deva rina) by performing yajans (rituals). This was the stage when a man would fulfil his basic desires, for love, marriage, for parenthood, for status, wealth, prestige and other such physical and social needs. When a man's head turned grey and wrinkles appeared, he was to give up this life of householder and turn to 'Vanaprastha' which literally means 'moving to the forest'. A mature and ageing man would gradually give up his worldly pursuits, move away from the mundane routine of householder and turn inward in search of spiritual growth. Finally, when he was spiritually ready, he would renounce the world completely and enter the stage of 'Samnyasa' or asceticism (WHO, 1999). Although, no strict ages were specified, the stages were functionally different and non- overlapping (Tilak, 1989). Though this scheme of a man's life did not comment about a women's life, it was assumed that a wife would follow her husband faithfully in his move through different stages. In ordinary social intercourse, a person would be considered old when his children were married and he had grandchildren, regardless of his chronological age. In Terms of cultural practice in India, the marriage of first son generally heralds old age, especially for the mother, since it signifies major shifts in her role and status in the family (Sati, 1996). For mother, the entrance of the daughter-in-law into the household invariably meant passing now to her the management of the household and often competing with her for the son's affection. For father, it meant giving up the mantle of headship of the household in substance if not in name (Bhat and Dhruvarajan, 2015). A mother she would usually hand over the responsibilities of the household and relinquish her own position as 'mistress' of the house. In some parts of India, married women usually would have the ways of the house tied to the end of their 'pallu' (part of the sari that is drawn up over the upper part of the body or head). When the bride arrived, these keys would be handed over to her symbolizing a transition in the status of the older women. There is a trend for women to consider themselves old of a younger age then men (WHO, 1999). The image of the aged carries a greater social stigma for women than for men. Part of the double standard concerns women's sexuality. At an older age, women are viewed as less alluring than men at older ages. Where older men are seen as handsome, women are less attractive. Such a double standard for ageing is, in part, due to a tendency to judge women in line with the idea that youth and sexuality are equated with beauty and reproduction, while ageing goes with desexuality. Thus misconceptions parallel gender perceptions by age. In sum, misconceptions foster a tainted and distorted image of older women (United Nations, 1999). The paper also explores people's perceptions of age by focusing on self-perceived and desired ages, and on their perceptions about the boundaries of old age. Self- perceived ages as distinct from actual chronological age refer to how old an individual feels and how old she/he would prefer to

be. They are both dimensions of a person's age identity and perceptions that are also considered socially constructed (Knoll et al., 2004). Self- perceived age relates to future expectations and a person's own personal ageing model ('envisioned trajectory of ageing) (Furstenberg, 2002). Desired age refers to a person's age preference and pertains to the degree of their acceptance of the idea that they are getting older and their reconciliation to it. People's perceptions about when middle age ends and old age begins refer to their perceptions about age and the very core of their definition of old age. These are built upon cultural and individual norms and beliefs (Furstenberg, 2002) and reflect people's own judgments about the stages of life and major turning points in it. Individual images of ageing are important, for identity is based upon self-identity, how we think of others and how others actually see us. Our self- image is based upon a number of attribute, which we ascribe to ourselves such as intelligence, good looks, a caring nature or a short temper. This sense of self- image and identity is reinforced by interaction with others in our social environment and with the wider social context. Age identity varies across the social classes, between men and women and, between different minority groups (and cultures). This is a manifestation of the integration of beliefs, behaviours and emotion; it is a representation of our (social) identity. It also contains functional aspects concerned with the organization of experience, the regulation of experience and motivation (Victor, 2005). Cooley (1962) viewed the self as formed through the action and reaction of others, that is the looking-glass self. Mead (1934) argued that individuals have selves because they can take the attitudes of others and see themselves as objects. The individual experiences him/herself indirectly through the interaction with particular "significant others" (person who are important to the individual) and with the "generalized other" (society). Goffman (1959) claims that situation shape the self, persons take on the characteristics required by the situations and roles change, the person's former commitments and behaviour patterns unravel. This paper, therefore, tries to explore perception towards ageing among the rural aged women of Assam. While unearthing the perception towards ageing, the paper attempts to seek answers to two research questions: (1) how does socio- economic position influence ageing experiences and the formation of ageing perceptions and (2) how does the relationship with the family members influence in the formation of self perception towards ageing.

2 | METHODOLOGY

The universe of the present study comprises of the aged people reside within these two villages namely Kapahua and Barbam No. 1 villages of Tengakhat circle located in Dibrugarh district of Assam. Both the villages have been purposefully selected. For this study 120 respondents were taken who crossed the age of 60 years, out of which 60 respondents from Kapahua village and 60 respondents from Barbam no.1 village by employing census survey method. For seeking essential information regarding objectives of this study, the data of this study have been collected with the help of both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Primary data has been collected from the field with the help of certain relevant methods like observation and interview schedule. On the other hand secondary data has been collected from various books, journals, internet etc. For the analysis of data the researcher used 'descriptive' analysis process. The analysis of data has been based on logical as well as an analytical point of view. In the study, statistical data have been based on primary and secondary data and logical analysis have been based on information and comments of the respondents stated in the interview schedule. In this regard calculations of frequency and percentage have also been used for the proper analysis. However, the study employs exploratory research design to examine the problem under study.

3 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the general information and the socio- economic characteristics of the respondents, such as age, marital status, educational status, income etc. of the 120 respondents have been examined. In this study out of the total number of 120 aged women, majority of them, i.e., 47.5 percent belonged to the age group of 60-65 years followed by the age group of 66-71 with 21.7 percent and 15 percent from the age- group of 72-77 years. As many as 9 respondents, i.e., (7.5 percent) are from the age- group of 78-

83 years, 7 respondents, i.e., (5.8 percent) are from the age- group of 84-89 years and only 3 respondents i.e., (2.5 percent) are from the 90 and above age. The findings show that majority of the respondents i.e., 51.7 percent were enjoying married life, while the 5 percent of them unmarried, 42.5 percent widow and the rest 0.83 percent were separated. The study reveals that 100 percent of the sample cases were Hindus. The study reveals that 73.33 percent respondents live in joint families followed by 24.17 percent in nuclear and 2.5 percent in extended families. So far as the family members by exact relationship are concerned, highest percentage i.e., 70 percent of the aged women live with their married son. They are followed by 10.83 percent who live only with husband, 5.83 percent who live with unmarried sons, 5 percent who live alone, 4.17 percent live with unmarried daughter, 3.33 percent live with siblings, and 0.83 percent live with unmarried sister. The study reveals that the highest number, i.e., 62.5 percent are illiterate. Educational level of the literate respondents was highest amongst the group of primary level with 21.67 percent followed by H.S.L.C level with 10.83 percent and graduate level with 0.83 percent of the total sample. In this study it is found that out of 120 aged women, 52 aged women (43.33 percent) were engaged in own household work, followed by pensioner with 26.67 percent, poultry for business purpose with 9.17, Non-agricultural labour with 8.33 percent, respectively. There are 9 or 7.5 percent aged women who were unable to work and only 3 or 2.5 percent aged women who were no need to work respectively. An equal number of aged women are there who were doing some business like piggery (1 or 0.83 percent), and similarly one or 0.83 percent aged women who works as an agricultural labour. As such their income is very meagre. However, from these 32 pension holders aged women, only 26 or 81.25 percent are now getting old age pension from the state government, 4 or 12.05 percent are family pension holders and 2 or 6.25 percent are gets widow pension from the state government.

The opinion of respondents about the nature of old age has been elicited bases on opinion respectively to the following characteristics: ‘ increase in chronological age’, ‘reduce physical capabilities’, ‘ reduce mental capabilities’, ‘ getting daughter- in- law for the first son’, ‘ birth of a grandchild’, ‘ peace of mind’, ‘ free from all kinds of responsibilities’, ‘ lacking roles’, ‘ lost in memories’, ‘ physical immobility and confinement’, ‘ increased religious activities’, ‘ retirement from job/ work’, ‘stopping of menstrual cycle’, ‘loneliness’, ‘helplessness’, ‘ fear of impending death’. The assessment of the opinion for the characteristics is presented in the following table.

Table 1: Respondents’ opinion about the nature of old age

Characteristics	**Opinion**						**Total**
	Yes		No		Don’t know		
	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Increase in chronological age	74	61.67	36	30	10	8.33	120 (100.00)
Reduce physical capabilities	63	52.5	55	45.83	2	1.67	120 (100.00)
Reduce mental capabilities	51	42.5	62	51.67	7	5.83	120 (100.00)
Getting daughter-in-law for the first son	100	83.33	18	15	2	1.67	120 (100.00)
Birth of a grand child	95	79.16	20	16.66	5	4.16	120 (100.00)
Peace of mind	44	36.67	69	57.5	7	5.83	120 (100.00)
Free from all kinds of responsibilities	58	48.33	52	43.33	10	8.33	120 (100.00)

Lacking roles	65	54.17	48	40	7	5.83	120 (100.00)
Loss in memories	55	45.83	62	51.67	3	2.5	120 (100.00)
Physical immobility and confinement	94	78.33	26	21.67	00	00	120 (100.00)
Increased religious activities	71	59.17	43	35.83	6	5	120 (100.00)
Retirement from job/ work	00	00	120	100	00	00	120 (100.00)
Stopping of menstrual cycle	120	100	00	00	00	00	120 (100.00)
Loneliness	72	60	45	37.5	3	2.5	120 (100.00)
Helplessness	82	68.33	34	28.33	4	3.33	120 (100.00)
Fear of impending death	46	38.33	72	60	2	1.67	120 (100.00)

Source: Field survey

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (61.67 percent) reported that increase in chronological age is an indicator of old age. A lesser percentage, i.e., 36percent was disagreed with the statement that increases in chronological age as the nature of old age. However, 8.33% remains don't know. On enquiring their opinion about ' reduce physical capabilities' the large number of percentage i.e., 52.5 percent stated that reduce physical capabilities is natural to old age, 45.83 percent of them disagreed and 1.67 percent remains don't know with the statement. The opinion about the 'reduce mental capabilities', most of them 51.67 percent had disagreed with the statement, whereas 42.5 percent responded by saying that they consider reduce mental capabilities is natural to old age. However 5.83 percent remains don't know. The large number of respondents (83.33 percent) expressed that getting daughter- in- law for the first son leads to the onset of old age, while 15 percent were in disagreement with the statement and a very meagre percentage of 1.67 percent remains don't know. 79.16 percent of the total sample studied which reported that birth of a grandchild is the natural to old age, while 16.66 percent had disagreed with the statement that birth of a grandchild as the nature of old age and 4.16 remains don't know about the statement. The opinion about 'peace of mind' shows that majority of the respondents 57.5 percent were in disagreement with the statement that peace of mind is the nature of old age, a very meagre percentage i.e., 36.67 percent agreed with the statement that peace of mind is the character of old age and 5.83 percent remains don't know. The opinion of the respondents in respect of the statement' freedom from all kinds of responsibilities', only 48.33 percent agreed with the statement that freedom from all kinds of responsibilities is natural to old age, while 43.33 percent were in disagreement with the statement that freedom from all kinds of responsibilities is the nature of old age. However 8.33% remains don't know. When the respondents were exposed to the statement, namely, 'lacking roles', 54.17 percent answered that they had agreed with the statement that lacking roles is the natural to old age, 40 percent disagreed with them and 5.83 percent remains don't know. When inquired into their opinion about 'loss in memories' 45.83 percent responded by saying that old age is characterised by loss in memories. Of total sample studied 78.33 percent reported that physical immobility and confinement is natural to old age. Regarding into their opinion about 'increase religious activity' at old age 59.17 percent agreed with the statement that increases religious activity as the natural to old age. When inquired into their opinion about 'retirement from job/ work' all of them i.e., 100 percent responded by saying that they disagree with the statement that retirement from job/work is the nature of old age. Of a total of 120 respondents, 100 percent agreed with the statement that old age is characterised by stopping of menstrual cycle. Among the sample population, the highest percentage (60 percent) agreed with the opinion that loneliness is natural to old age, 2.5 percent remains don't know and 37.5 percent were disagreed with the statement. The large proportion (68.33 percent) of the sample studied agreed to the statement that helplessness is the natural to old age, 3.33 percent were don't know and remaining 28.33

percent disagreed with the statement. i.e., 'fear of impending death' only 38.33 percent of the total When asked to give opinion in respect of the last statement respondents agreed with the statement while majority (60 percent) of the sample population was in disagreement with the statement. It is significant that majority of the respondents with 65.58 percent expressed that they have felt changes in terms of household activities, followed by 19.48 percent in terms of family responsibilities, 11.04 percent in terms of attitude and behavior towards them by their family members, 2.60 percent in terms of role playing, 1.30 percent in terms of decision making regarding household responsibilities. So, here it is clear that most of the aged, who have experienced changes in different aspects as they are unable to move freely due to their poor health condition and most of them belong to the age category from 80 years and above. The study reveals that majority of the respondents i.e., 72.62 percent have felt good being aged due to free from all kind of responsibilities. It is true that in patriarchal society women are compelled to do most of the domestic works and never get free time for their own, so this data significantly depicts gender mainstreaming and work load of women at home. As per social expectation women are bound to confine themselves with all kind of domestic activities. Though they never express their discontentment for this, but being an individual they also wish to be free from stereotype everyday responsibility. So, they feel that becoming age gives them an opportunity to be free these forced exercised. Remaining respondents are feel happy and satisfaction as they have got most of the desired things in their life, due to the proximity of children and grandchildren and due to enough time for hobby and prayer.

4| CONCLUSION

From the results it can be concluded that peoples perceive ageing according to their distinct experiences. In particular, important social units play vital roles in the way they made sense of the ageing process. In effect, perception of ageing is socially constructed. This implies that creating perception toward ageing process is dependent on our personal and social experience as a whole. Significantly it was observed that family income of the respondents does not impact on the any mean which influence perceptions towards ageing. However, the findings of the present study by and large reveals a positive self-perception of aged women and present a picture of adjusted, satisfied and socially aware and responsible picture of aged women as perceived by themselves. They are active and able to render their advice and expertise in important family matters.

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EMERGING TRENDS AND ISSUES IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

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Abstract: Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is essential for addressing global challenges, particularly in a diverse and rapidly developing nation like India. ESD encourages learners to develop skills, knowledge, and values that promote environmental stewardship, social equity, and economic responsibility. This paper explores ESD in India, examining its foundational pillars, features, and guiding principles. It reviews the current scenario, identifies emerging trends, and discusses prevalent issues in implementing ESD. Finally, this paper suggests practical solutions to overcome these challenges to create a more sustainable educational landscape.

Keywords: *Sustainable Development, Issues, Trends*

1 | INTRODUCTION

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has become essential in India as the nation strives to balance rapid economic growth with environmental stewardship and social equity. With a young, growing population, India faces unique challenges and opportunities in embedding sustainable principles into its education system. In recent years, ESD has gained traction, driven by global mandates such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasize the role of education in fostering responsible and empowered global citizens. Emerging trends within ESD in India reveal a shift towards interdisciplinary learning, experiential education, and community engagement, aiming to produce learners equipped with the skills to tackle social, environmental, and economic challenges.

One significant trend in India's ESD landscape is the increasing integration of environmental science and sustainability concepts within school curricula. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the need for a curriculum that imparts values of environmental conservation, critical thinking, and ethics. As a result, institutions are encouraged to include concepts such as climate change, biodiversity, and responsible consumption in mainstream education. Moreover, skill-based education, including green and digital skills, is being promoted to align with India's growing green economy, ensuring that students are not only aware of sustainability but also equipped for related employment.

Another trend is the focus on experiential learning through programs that engage students with real-world environmental projects. Many schools now collaborate with local organizations on initiatives like waste management, water conservation, and afforestation. These hands-on experiences allow students to actively participate in sustainable practices and understand their impact on their communities.

However, there are notable challenges in implementing ESD on a wide scale. Access to quality resources, especially in rural areas, remains a concern, as does the need for teacher training specific to ESD content and pedagogy. Additionally, cultural and socio-economic barriers may hinder the adoption of sustainability practices, particularly where livelihoods are closely tied to unsustainable practices.

Overall, ESD in India is gaining momentum, but to truly transform education towards sustainability, coordinated efforts across policy, community engagement, and curriculum development are crucial. By addressing these challenges, India has the potential to foster a generation that values sustainable practices and works towards a balanced, equitable future.

Sustainable Development (SD) aims to meet current human needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is an educational framework that empowers learners to understand sustainability issues, develop critical thinking skills, and take responsibility for their actions. In India, ESD is gaining traction as the country confronts pressing environmental, social, and economic challenges, from pollution and deforestation to social inequity and poverty.

This study investigates the implementation of ESD in India, focusing on emerging trends, current issues, and solutions. This research holds significance for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders who seek to advance sustainable practices through education.

2 | OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the foundational elements of ESD, including its pillars, features, and principles.
- To analyze the current state of ESD in India.
- To identify emerging trends in ESD within the Indian context.
- To assess the key issues hindering ESD progress in India.
- To suggest strategies for overcoming these challenges.

3 | METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative and review-based, synthesizing findings from secondary sources such as academic journals, government reports, and publications from international organizations like UNESCO. The literature review focuses on the pillars, principles, current status, and challenges of ESD in India.

This study adopts a qualitative, review-based methodology to systematically examine the existing literature on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in India. The primary focus is on identifying trends, challenges, and proposed solutions related to ESD implementation.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted using databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, and official publications from UNESCO and India's Ministry of Education. Key search terms included "Education for Sustainable Development in India," "sustainable education," and "ESD challenges." To ensure relevance, only studies published between 2010 and 2024 were selected, with an emphasis on peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, policy documents, and NGO publications.

Inclusion criteria centered on literature that directly addresses ESD's integration in Indian educational systems, particularly in K-12 and higher education. Studies that examined the impact of digital

technologies, policy frameworks, or community-based approaches on ESD were prioritized. Articles discussing the socio-economic and cultural challenges in ESD implementation were also included.

A thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes, such as emerging trends in ESD (digital learning, community initiatives) and key challenges (resource constraints, limited teacher training). In addition, a comparative analysis was conducted to contrast global and Indian ESD practices, highlighting unique challenges and potential solutions specific to India's context.Given the focus on secondary data, this study is limited by the scope and accuracy of existing literature, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings.

4| RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Education for Sustainable Development

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is an educational approach aimed at equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes necessary to contribute to a sustainable future. Rooted in the broader concept of sustainable development, ESD encourages people to make decisions and take actions that consider the long-term impact on the environment, economy, and society.

The primary goal of ESD is to empower individuals to act as responsible global citizens who understand the interconnectedness of natural and human systems. By fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and participatory learning, ESD helps students explore complex issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, poverty, and inequality, and recognize their roles in addressing these challenges. This approach to education not only focuses on knowledge acquisition but also emphasizes ethical principles, encouraging learners to develop values of social justice, equity, and environmental stewardship.

ESD encompasses three core pillars—environmental, social, and economic sustainability,which guide the integration of sustainable practices into educational content. It encourages interdisciplinary learning, linking subjects such as science, economics, and social studies to provide a holistic view of sustainability issues. This approach aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4.7, which emphasizes the role of education in promoting sustainable lifestyles, human rights, and gender equality.

Ultimately, ESD seeks to transform education systems to prepare learners not only for academic and career success but also for active participation in building a just, equitable, and sustainable world.

Pillars of ESD

ESD is built upon three core pillars—Environmental Sustainability, Social Sustainability, and Economic Sustainability—each of which is essential to fostering a comprehensive understanding of sustainability and guiding students toward meaningful action.

The environmental pillar of ESD focuses on nurturing respect and responsibility toward the natural world. This component emphasizes understanding and protecting the Earth's ecosystems, biodiversity, and finite resources. Environmental sustainability education encourages students to engage in practices that reduce pollution, conserve energy and water, protect habitats, and combat climate change. Through lessons on environmental science and ecology, students learn about the interconnectedness of life on Earth, recognizing the impacts of human activities on climate, biodiversity, and ecosystem health. Fieldwork, project-based learning, and real-world examples—like recycling programs or school gardens—illustrate the practical application of these concepts. Additionally, environmental sustainability education stresses the importance of ecological balance, urging students to adopt practices that support a thriving natural environment for future generations. By emphasizing this pillar, ESD aims

to foster eco-conscious individuals who prioritize the planet's health in their personal and collective decisions.

The social pillar of ESD addresses the importance of creating a just and equitable society where individuals, regardless of background, have the opportunity to thrive. Social sustainability involves promoting human rights, equity, diversity, cultural preservation, and peaceful coexistence. In ESD, social sustainability is about cultivating empathy, respect, and responsibility toward others while recognizing and addressing social injustices like poverty, inequality, and discrimination. This pillar encourages inclusive educational practices that embrace cultural diversity and foster social cohesion, empowering students to become advocates for social change. By exploring topics such as gender equality, social justice, and community resilience, ESD equips students to address societal challenges in their communities and beyond. Collaborative projects, community service, and open dialogues on social issues provide practical opportunities for students to apply their learning in ways that strengthen society. Social sustainability ultimately seeks to empower individuals as compassionate, active citizens who contribute to building fair, inclusive, and resilient communities.

The economic pillar of ESD emphasizes responsible resource use, sustainable economic growth, and social equity in the distribution of wealth. Economic sustainability education focuses on developing skills in financial literacy, resource management, and sustainable entrepreneurship. Students learn about the concept of a green economy, which promotes economic activities that reduce environmental risks and are aligned with sustainable development goals. Lessons in economic sustainability encourage students to understand the impacts of consumerism and to make informed, ethical choices in their personal lives. This pillar also highlights the importance of creating jobs and industries that are environmentally friendly, socially equitable, and supportive of a circular economy, which minimizes waste by reusing and recycling resources. By fostering an understanding of economic sustainability, ESD prepares students to enter the workforce with a mindset that values not only profitability but also social and environmental accountability. This pillar empowers learners to contribute to sustainable economic systems that support the well-being of both people and the planet.

Together, these pillars form the foundation of ESD, promoting a balanced and holistic approach to sustainability education that integrates ecological integrity, social equity, and economic viability. Through these three interconnected dimensions, ESD fosters a deep understanding of sustainable development and prepares individuals to contribute actively to a sustainable future.

Features of ESD

- Holistic and Interdisciplinary: ESD integrates knowledge from various fields, including environmental science, ethics, and economics.
- Learner-Centered and Participatory: ESD promotes active, hands-on learning, empowering students to engage critically with real-world issues.
- Future-Oriented: ESD encourages forward-thinking and resilience-building to prepare students for future challenges.
- Locally Relevant: ESD tailors its content to specific regional challenges, making it more relevant for Indian students who face diverse socio-economic and environmental realities.

Principles of ESD

ESD is grounded in several guiding principles that shape its approach, purpose, and implementation. These principles aim to foster a holistic, inclusive, and transformative educational experience that prepares individuals to actively participate in creating a sustainable future. Here are 10 key principles of ESD explained in detail:

- Interdisciplinary Learning -ESD transcends traditional academic boundaries, integrating knowledge across disciplines like science, economics, social studies, and ethics. This interdisciplinary approach is essential to understanding the complex and interconnected nature of sustainability challenges, such as climate change, poverty, and inequality. By linking subjects, students can analyze issues from multiple perspectives, making connections between human actions and their environmental, social, and economic impacts.

- Critical and Reflective Thinking -A core objective of ESD is to develop students' ability to think critically and reflect on their beliefs, assumptions, and behaviors. Critical thinking empowers learners to question unsustainable practices, identify biases, and evaluate solutions in a balanced and informed way. Reflective thinking further enables individuals to reconsider personal choices and societal norms, fostering a sense of responsibility and willingness to adopt sustainable behaviors.
- Values and Ethics-Based Education- ESD encourages the development of values and ethics that support sustainability, such as respect for nature, social equity, and intergenerational justice. Through values-based education, students learn to prioritize the well-being of the planet and society over purely economic gains. This ethical foundation encourages individuals to act as responsible global citizens and make decisions aligned with principles of fairness, empathy, and stewardship.
- Lifelong Learning- Sustainability requires continuous learning, as the challenges and solutions evolve over time. ESD promotes lifelong learning, encouraging students to engage with sustainability concepts beyond formal education. Lifelong learning enables individuals to adapt to new information, technologies, and societal needs, helping them remain active contributors to sustainable development throughout their lives, in both professional and personal contexts.
- Future-Oriented Perspective- ESD emphasizes a future-oriented perspective, encouraging individuals to consider the long-term consequences of their actions. By developing a sense of responsibility toward future generations, ESD instills the importance of sustainable decision-making that prioritizes the planet's long-term health and resources. This principle helps students understand that sustainability involves more than immediate benefits; it also concerns the legacy they leave for those who come after them.
- Participatory and Inclusive Learning -ESD values the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives, fostering an inclusive learning environment where all students, regardless of background, feel empowered to contribute. Participatory learning methods, such as group discussions, community projects, and role-playing, encourage active engagement and collaboration. Inclusive education supports the belief that everyone has a role in sustainability and that diverse perspectives are essential for finding comprehensive, fair, and culturally appropriate solutions.
- Global and Local Relevance- ESD balances global awareness with local relevance, recognizing that sustainable development is both a universal challenge and a context-specific one. This principle encourages students to think globally while acting locally, understanding how global issues such as climate change, biodiversity, and resource management affect their communities. By exploring sustainability in a local context, learners can make meaningful contributions to their immediate environment and community.
- Respect for Cultural Diversity and Indigenous Knowledge -ESD respects and integrates cultural diversity, recognizing that traditional and indigenous knowledge systems often hold valuable insights into sustainable living. This principle encourages respect for different cultural perspectives and values, helping students understand that sustainability is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Indigenous knowledge, in particular, can offer sustainable practices related to natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, and community resilience. ESD advocates for

an inclusive approach that honors cultural diversity as a resource in building sustainable societies

Present Scenario of Education for Sustainable Development in India

In India, ESD is integrated through initiatives by organizations such as the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEFCC) and programs aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) includes elements of ESD by advocating for environmental education, experiential learning, and life skills. Schools and universities are increasingly adopting sustainable practices, incorporating climate change and environmental topics into their curricula. However, the implementation remains inconsistent across states due to disparities in resources and awareness levels.

Emerging Trends in ESD in Present Time

Several trends in ESD are emerging within the Indian educational context:

- Digital Learning and ESD: The use of digital tools is growing, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital platforms are providing access to online resources, interactive learning modules, and global discussions on sustainability.
- Community Engagement: ESD programs in India increasingly involve community participation, where students collaborate with local communities on projects such as waste management and tree plantation.
- Focus on Green Skills: There is a shift towards equipping students with skills for green jobs. Courses related to renewable energy, waste management, and environmental management are becoming popular.
- Climate Change Education: ESD in India is increasingly emphasizing climate change education, aiming to build resilience and climate literacy among students.
- Interdisciplinary Approaches: Indian educational institutions are adopting interdisciplinary methods, integrating ESD topics across subjects, from science and geography to social studies.

Issues Rising in ESD at Present

Despite its importance, ESD in India faces several challenges:

- Resource Constraints: Rural and under-resourced schools often lack the materials, funding, and training required for effective ESD.
- Lack of Teacher Training: Teachers often lack the expertise and training necessary to integrate ESD into their teaching effectively.
- Resistance to Curriculum Changes: The traditional exam-oriented system in India can create resistance to ESD, as it emphasizes critical thinking and active learning over rote memorization.
- Insufficient Government Support: While the NEP 2020 encourages sustainability education, there is a lack of concrete policies and budget allocations specific to ESD.
- Limited Awareness: Many stakeholders, including educators, students, and parents, are unaware of the importance of ESD, limiting its impact.

Ways to Overcome Issues in ESD

To strengthen ESD in India, the following strategies are proposed:

- Enhanced Government Support: Increased funding and policy support are essential. Policies should provide clear guidelines for integrating ESD into curricula at all levels.

- Teacher Training Programs: Regular training workshops should be conducted to equip educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to teach ESD effectively.
- Inclusion of ESD in Examinations: To align with India's exam-oriented system, ESD topics could be incorporated into national examinations, encouraging students to engage seriously with sustainability issues.
- Public Awareness Campaigns: Campaigns promoting the importance of ESD could increase awareness among parents, students, and educators.
- Partnerships with NGOs and Private Sectors: Collaborating with NGOs and the private sector can bring additional resources, expertise, and support to ESD programs.
- Integrating Local Contexts: Tailoring ESD content to address local issues can make it more relevant and impactful for students in diverse regions.

4| CONCLUSION

Education for Sustainable Development in India is essential for creating informed and responsible citizens capable of addressing complex global challenges. While progress is evident, significant challenges hinder the effective implementation of ESD across the country. Emerging trends like digital learning and green skills development hold promise for the future of ESD in India. However, these trends must be supported by robust policies, teacher training, and public awareness efforts. By addressing these issues and fostering a commitment to sustainability, India can build a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable future.

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CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN ASSAM AND IMPLEMENTATION OF POCSO ACT: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract: The well-being and development of children are essential for the prosperity of any society. As a vulnerable and dependent population, children are at risk of exploitation and require protection. Child sexual abuse is a serious offense that can have severe and long-lasting physical, emotional, and psychological consequences. To combat this issue, effective prevention, protection, and support mechanisms are necessary. In India, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, is a significant law aimed at preventing child sexual abuse. This article evaluates the causes of CSA in Assam, implementation of the POCSO Act, highlighting its weaknesses, and areas for improvement, with the goal of strengthening the state's child protection mechanisms.

Keywords: Child Sexual Abuse, POCSO Act, Exploitation, Protection Mechanisms

1 | INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines a child as "every human being below the age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier." Indian children encompasses of more than 40% of India's population and 19% of the world's population. India also has the highest number of developing teenagers in the world.

The concept of rights is fundamental to human dignity, and the rights of children are paramount to their growth, development, and well-being. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recognizes children as rights-holders, entitled to protection, provision, and participation. However, children continue to face numerous challenges, including sexual abuse, which is a grave violation of their rights.

Children need love, care, protection, and nurturing to grow into capable and responsible individuals. They require access to quality education, healthcare, and nutrition to develop their physical, emotional, and cognitive abilities. Despite their importance, children continue to face numerous challenges and problems worldwide. Poverty, hunger, malnutrition, lack of access to education and healthcare, child labor, and exploitation are some of the critical issues affecting children globally. Children are also vulnerable to various forms of violence, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Child sexual

abuse includes ownership, production, and supply of sexually explicit images of children; using the Internet to lure children into sexual acts; prostitution of children; and child molestation. It takes place in all settings: at home, schools, child care institutions, places of work and in the community.

In India, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, is a comprehensive legislation that aims to protect children from sexual abuse, exploitation, and pornography. The Act provides for stringent punishments for offenders and establishes special courts for the speedy trial of cases.

However, the implementation of the POCSO Act in Assam, a state in northeastern India, remains a pressing concern. Despite the existence of the Act, cases of child sexual abuse continue to rise, and the state's response to these crimes remains inadequate.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of child sexual abuse is a critical concern that requires a thorough examination of existing research and literature-

Hari Om Gautam observed that child sexual abuse victims often hide their experiences due to fear and shame, and don't report them. Close relatives and teachers may know about these incidents. The abuse can affect many areas of a victim's mental health.

Deb and Walsh (2012) in a study in Agartala, Tripura, India, found that 18% of children experienced sexual violence. The study revealed that boys were more likely to face physical and psychological violence, while girls were more vulnerable to sexual violence. Additionally, children who experienced any form of violence had poorer social adjustment compared to those who hadn't faced violence.

R.P. Kataria recognized the various causes of sex crime including poverty, industrial development, urbanization, change in social system, superstitious belief, influence of intoxicants, non-registration of crime etc. he have also forwarded some remedial measure for prevention of sex delinquency such as sex education, stringent laws, Active vigilance by police and many more.

P.B. Behera in his research paper titled "Sexual abuse in women with special reference to children: Barriers, boundaries and beyond" stated that more than 70 percent of child sexual abuse are committed by family members and closely connected people, means people whom they believe the most. His findings clearly pointed out that it is not necessary that the accused and the victim are always of the opposite sex because there are many instances where the accused belong to the same sex as that of the victim. He explained about the various posttraumatic stress disorders that are seen in a child victim after sexual abuse.

Shibnath Deb and Aparna Mukherjee studied how sexual abuse impacts the personality and mental state of minor girls, trying to understand its effects on their development.

Muhammad Faiz A.U in his research paper found that 24 percent of all children have experienced sexual abuse and half of these were at the hands of the person in the position of trust or family members. He pointed out that signals of child sexual abuse are often subtle and frequently defy detection even by knowledgeable parents and experienced professionals. Hence, additional effort are needed, including parent awareness in method for reducing the risk of child sexual abuse and training for professionals.

3 | OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Examine the extent of children sexual abuse in Assam

2. To find out the effectiveness of machineries under POCSO act

4 | METHODOLOGY

This study examines child sexual abuse and POCSO Act, 2012, with a specific focus on the state of Assam. For this study, a combination of analytical and descriptive research methodologies is used. It is based on a comprehensive review of secondary sources, including books, reports, legislative acts, research papers, articles, journals, newspapers, and online databases. Relevant literature was searched through Google and Google Scholar to gather insights and information on the topic, limited to the context of Assam.

5| RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The literature review highlights the complexities of child sexual abuse in Assam, emphasizing the need for a robust legal framework to protect children. Building on this foundation, our discussion will focus on the legal framework governing child sexual abuse in Assam, including the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, and other relevant laws. We will examine the extent of child sexual abuse in Assam, analyze the effectiveness of protection mechanisms, and explore the challenges in implementing these laws.

Legal framework

Among the many international conventions declaring rights of child, there are a few provisions which specifically deal with rights of child against various types of abuse. A few of the important international conventions and treaties which specifically deal with rights of child against various types of abuse are discussed below:

United Nations Convention on the Rights of child, 1989(UNCRC): it is the first international legally binding document concerning child rights. The convention consists of 54 articles covering all four major categories of child rights: Right to life, Right to development, Right to protection, and Right to participation. It came into force on the 2nd September 1990. The CRC recognizes the exceptional vulnerability of children and proclaims that childhood is entitled to special care and assistance. It obligates the state to respect and ensure that children get fair and equitable deal in society. It lays emphasis on the importance of family and the need to create an environment that it is conducive to the healthy growth and development of children. It also, advocates concerted public action by all individuals and agencies, government and non- government, to promote the rights of child. Article 11 imposes duty on Governments. This article is particularly concerned with parental abductions. The Convention's Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography has a provision that concerns abduction for financial gain. Article 19 provides for Protection from all forms of violence. Articles 34 instruct the government to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Article 35 puts a ban on abduction, selling or trafficking of child.

Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, 2000(OPSC)-This protocol gives special emphasis on crimes like sale of child, use of child for prostitution and pornographic purposes. Article 10 is a direction to the member state parties to take steps to strengthen international cooperation in order to prevent, detect and punish offences like child prostitution, child sex tourism etc. Articles 34 and 35 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child say that governments should protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse and take all measures possible to ensure that they are not abducted, sold or trafficked. It requires punishment not only for those offering or delivering children for the purposes of sexual exploitation, transfer of organs or children for profit or forced labour, but also for anyone accepting the child for these activities.

The problem of child abuse and child rights violation is prevailing on large scale all over the world including India. Based on the international policies famed by the UN the national governments including India have enacted special laws and policies to protect the children from exploitation and abuse.

National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)2007 : primary objective of the commission is to ensure that all laws, policies, and programs are in sync with the rights of children as enshrined in the Constitution of India and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The NCPCR works to protect and promote the rights of children, particularly those who are vulnerable and marginalized, by monitoring the implementation of laws and policies, investigating complaints, and advocating for policy changes. The commission also focuses on issues such as child labor, trafficking, education, health, and nutrition, among others, to ensure that children's rights are safeguarded and their well-being is protected.

Rights and Protection under Juvenile Justice(Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015: Juvenile justice is the legal system that aspires to protect all children, bringing within its ambit the children in need of protection, besides those in conflict with law. It can be proclaimed as the first all-India child welfare enactment seeking to promote the best interests of the juveniles' by incorporating into its fold not only some of the major provisions and clauses of the Indian Constitution and National Policy Resolution for Children declared by India in 1974, but also universally agreed principles and standards for the protection of juveniles such as the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice.

Rights of Child under Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006: the word 'child' itself indicate that the person is not biologically prepared for sexual activities. It is violation of basic human rights of a child as because it leads to various types of abuses. in many cases child marriage is just a mode of trafficking whereby the child is sold out in the brothels for some considerations. Sexual intercourse with a child either by way of rape or marriage the result is same i.e. the child suffers from severe pain and agony which is a serious violation of child right. Under this piece of legislation every child has a right not to get married in a very tender age. The term 'Child' is defined as a person who have not completed the age of 18 years if she is a female and 21 years if he is a male person.

Like international and national levels, the state of Assam has its own machinery dealing with child rights-

Assam state commission for protection of child rights(2005): Primarily centers on preventative methods and raising awareness about the sexual safety of children. The department also aims to promote the reporting of sexual violence cases, and monitors the legal process, compensation, education, and other rehabilitation measures for child victims of sexual violence. The works under this component also promotes awareness on mental health issues of children, on handling and providing psychological care to POCSO survivors, and to ensure that every child who deals with gender-based violence is provided with appropriate psychological support.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012: The POCSO Act was formulated to combat the increasing incidences of child sexual abuse, providing a comprehensive framework to protect children from various forms of sexual exploitation. This gender-neutral law includes male children within its purview and aligns with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It Expanded Definition of Child Sexual Abuse by Including penetrative and non-penetrative assault, sexual harassment, using children for pornographic purposes, and trafficking. It has also included punishment for the person in authority. Moreover, the Act has also introduced the significant provision of mandatory reporting. the act provides for various measures and procedures that need to be taken care of by an individual or authority when he/she comes to know of such offence being committed against a child. The act makes it obligatory for a person to inform the juvenile police unit or the local police if he

comes to know of an offence of sexual abuse committed against a child or is about to be committed as soon as possible. The police should record such information in a record register kept for such purpose. If any person fails to inform the police under section 19(1) and if the police do not record the information as per section 19(2) he/she may be punished with imprisonment up to a term of 6 month with or without fine. This act provides for designation of a Special Court for each district to try the cases under POCSO Act for speedy disposal of case with an object to give quick justice to the victim. The State Government is empowered to designate such court in consultation with the Chief Justice of respective High Court.

The POCSO Act provides a critical framework for protecting children from sexual exploitation and ensuring justice for victims. Its provisions aim to prevent and address child sexual abuse, promoting a safer environment for children.

Extent of child sexual abuse and implementation of POCSO act in Assam

A majority of sexual abuse cases occur in the home, school or the neighborhood next door. More than 6,000 cases of sexual abuse against children have been registered in Assam under the POCSO Act from 2021 to 2023, Of these, 1,926 were registered in 2021, 1,703 in 2022 and 2,425 in 2023.

In The city of Assam named Guwahati there are 430 cases were registered from 2019 to 2023. Data reveals that major offenses include rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment, highlighting the prevalence of these issues. 156 cases registered under pocso act in the year 2023 and 56 cases in 2024 since April shows the sexual offences against children.

Child Marriage: Child marriage is a societal problem tackled by the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act-2006. From 2019- 2023, 128 cases of child marriage were reported in Crime branch Guwahati, Assam.

Causes of increasing Child Sexual Abuse in Assam

- Socio-Economic Disparities: A primary cause of child sexual abuse is poverty. It increases vulnerability and limits access to resources and support. Also disparities in wealth and income contribute to social and economic instability, exacerbating the risk of abuse.

- Cultural and Social Norms: Power imbalances based on gender, class, and social status perpetuate abuse and limit opportunities for victims to seek help. The stigma surrounding child sexual abuse can lead to silence and inaction, allowing the problem to persist.

- Inadequate Support Systems: Limited understanding of child sexual abuse and its consequences hinders efforts to prevent and address the issue. Inadequate access to support services, including counseling and healthcare, exacerbates the trauma experienced by victims.

- Non-Reporting of Cases: Victims often fear retaliation, shame, or blame, leading to underreporting and a lack of accountability. Again the people always try to blame the victim in cases of offence like sexual abuse with a presumption that there might be some mistake on the part of the victim due to which such an act had been committed against him/her! Their Distrust in authorities and support systems can discourage victims from seeking help.

- Low Conviction Rate: Limited evidence and inadequate investigation can lead to acquittals and a lack of justice for victims. Gaps in legislation and enforcement hinder efforts to hold perpetrators accountable.

- Religious Practices in Society: Certain practices and beliefs can perpetuate power imbalances and contribute to the risk of abuse.

Assam has implemented various machineries to enforce the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012:

- State-Level Consultation: The Guwahati High Court, in collaboration with the Department of Women and Child Development and UNICEF, organized a consultation to discuss implementation challenges and strategies.
- Police Procedures: Police officers in Assam are required to inform the Child Welfare Committee within 24 hours of receiving a report, record the child's statement in the presence of a trusted person, and conduct medical examinations in a child-friendly manner.
- Special Courts: Fast Track Special Courts (FTSCs) have been set up to provide speedy justice to victims of rape and POCSO Act cases. There have been 17 exclusive fast-track POCSO courts established in the state, including two in Nagaon. So in all the districts, fast-track courts are available to try POCSO cases.
- Awareness: Efforts are made to raise awareness about the POCSO Act among children, parents, and communities, including incorporating the topic into school curricula.
- Collaborative Efforts: Collaboration between government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like Protsahan India Foundation and UNICEF to improve implementation and support services.
- Child Protection Machinery: Strengthening child protection systems, including the establishment of Child Welfare Committees and Juvenile Justice Boards.

Key Findings

The criminal justice system in Assam faces challenges similar to those seen across India, including limited resources, procedural delays, and a lack of specific training for handling cases involving children. These challenges hinder the effective investigation and timely intervention in cases of child sexual abuse.

Children from lower socioeconomic sections in Assam are often exploited due to poverty and illiteracy, making them susceptible to sexual exploitation. This exploitation persists despite some legal progress, with overall improvements remaining limited.

The state machineries established by the Government of Assam to deal with the incidence of child sexual abuse under various statutes are inadequate due to several drawbacks. Reforms and improvements in the state's response to child sexual abuse are necessary to address these inadequacies.

While there are areas for improvement, the study also found several strengths in the protection mechanisms that contribute to safeguarding children.

The study found that the POCSO Act has been effectively implemented in Assam, for example, in 2022, the Assam Police registered more than 1500 POCSO cases, demonstrating the state's commitment to addressing child sexual abuse. There have been cases where accused individuals have been convicted under the POCSO Act, such as a Guwahati man sentenced to 20 years in jail and a Morigaon man sentenced to 25 years.

Awareness programs and campaigns have led to increased awareness about child sexual abuse and the POCSO Act among the general public. For instance, a campaign by the Assam State Commission for

Protection of Child Rights reached over 10,000 children and parents in rural areas, educating them about child rights and protection mechanisms.

4| CONCLUSION

The prevalence of child sexual abuse in Assam is a pressing concern, so there is a very high need for protection of children from CSA. Presently the POCSO act is a powerful tool to guard children from sexual offences. There are thousands of cases reported under the POCSO Act. Despite legislative efforts, challenges persist in effectively implementing the Act, including societal attitudes, inadequate support systems, and low conviction rates. To combat child sexual abuse, Assam needs a multi-faceted approach that addresses the root causes, strengthens support systems, and ensures accountability. By working together, government agencies, NGOs, and communities can create a safer environment for children and hold perpetrators accountable.

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The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012

THE AHOM POLICY AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN ASSAM: FROM TRIBE TO STATE

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Abstract: This study explores the transformative role of the Ahom polity in shaping the socio-political landscape of Assam from the 13th to the 19th centuries, focusing on the transition from tribal social formations to a more centralized state structure. The Ahoms, originally a Tai-Shan tribe, established a kingdom in the Brahmaputra Valley and over centuries developed sophisticated administrative, military, and land revenue systems. This paper examines how the Ahom rulers integrated various indigenous tribes through policies of assimilation, patronage, and localized governance, facilitating a shift from clan-based tribal societies to a complex, hierarchical state society. By analyzing historical records, Buranjis (Ahom chronicles), and ethnographic accounts, the research highlights the role of statecraft, cultural syncretism, and social engineering in fostering unity among diverse ethnic groups. The study contributes to broader discussions on state formation, identity politics, and the evolution of tribal societies into early states in South and Southeast Asia.

Keywords: Tribal transformation, state formation, Buranjis, Tai-Ahom, social integration, indigenous policy, Northeast India, ethnicity and state

1 | INTRODUCTION

The process of state formation and social transformation in pre-modern societies remains a central focus in both historical and anthropological scholarship. In the context of South Asia, the Northeast region, particularly Assam, offers a unique case study through the rise and consolidation of the Ahom kingdom. The Ahoms, a Tai-Shan group who migrated from present-day Yunnan (China) in the early 13th century, established a polity in the Brahmaputra Valley that endured for nearly six centuries (1228–1826). What began as a tribal chiefdom evolved into one of the most resilient and sophisticated regional states in pre-colonial India. This transformation was neither abrupt nor accidental; it was the result of deliberate policies, cultural negotiations, and institutional innovations that gradually reshaped the socio-political fabric of Assam.

At the time of the Ahom arrival, Assam was a mosaic of tribal chiefdoms, hill communities, and scattered agrarian settlements. These groups, such as the Bodos, Mishings, Morans, and Chutiyas, followed distinct socio-political systems grounded in kinship, clan-based leadership, and subsistence economies. Political authority was decentralized, and cultural practices were diverse, reflecting the ecological and ethnic heterogeneity of the region. Into this fluid and dynamic landscape entered the

Ahoms under the leadership of Sukaphaa, who brought with him not only martial strength but also a vision of integration and governance that would set the stage for a significant historical transformation. Over time, the Ahoms managed to assimilate and politically incorporate various ethnic groups, converting a fragmented tribal world into a coherent state system.

The Ahom strategy for state formation combined military conquest with cultural accommodation and administrative innovation. One of the most distinctive features of their policy was the emphasis on inclusive governance. Rather than imposing their Tai identity, the Ahoms adopted and adapted to the local environment and indigenous customs. They intermarried with local tribes, adopted the Assamese language, and promoted syncretic religious practices. This flexible approach enabled them to gain legitimacy among diverse groups while slowly centralizing power. Their administrative system was organized around the Paik system, a form of corvée labor that linked agrarian production with military service and governance. Each adult male subject was registered and could be mobilized for agriculture, warfare, or public works, effectively creating a strong and sustainable agrarian-military complex.

Another cornerstone of Ahom statecraft was the use of historical chronicles, known as Buranjis, which recorded dynastic events, political decisions, and social developments. These texts served not only as administrative records but also as ideological instruments that legitimized Ahom rule and narrated a shared historical identity. The promotion of such a shared past helped dissolve rigid tribal boundaries and contributed to the emergence of a collective Assamese consciousness, centered on loyalty to the Ahom state.

Religious and cultural integration was equally significant in this transformation. While the Ahoms initially followed their own animistic Tai faith, they gradually embraced and patronized Hinduism, particularly Vaishnavism and Shaktism, which were gaining popularity among the local population. This shift not only facilitated the religious unification of the population but also aligned the Ahom kingdom with the broader Indic civilization, enhancing their diplomatic and cultural legitimacy. Temples were constructed, local deities were incorporated into the royal pantheon, and Brahmin scholars and priests were given prominent roles in the court. These actions helped create a sense of shared cultural belonging that transcended tribal identities.

Despite these integrative policies, the Ahom state was not without its contradictions. The process of social transformation often involved coercion, subjugation, and the marginalization of groups that resisted assimilation. Revolts, such as those led by the Moamorias in the late 18th century, reveal the tensions between central authority and tribal autonomy. Nevertheless, the fact that the Ahom polity endured for nearly six centuries, until its annexation by the British in 1826, speaks to the effectiveness of its model of inclusive state-building rooted in strategic accommodation and pragmatic governance.

This paper aims to explore the Ahom policies that enabled this extraordinary transition from tribal fragmentation to centralized statehood. Drawing from historical texts, particularly the Buranjis, as well as recent historiographical and anthropological studies, the research examines how the Ahom kingdom facilitated social integration, restructured indigenous institutions, and crafted a new political order. The study situates the Ahom experience within broader debates on state formation, ethnicity, and identity in pre-modern South and Southeast Asia. In doing so, it highlights the relevance of the Ahom model as a case of early statecraft that navigated the complexities of ethnic diversity and regional autonomy, laying the foundation for modern Assam's multi-ethnic society.

2 | OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to critically examine the role of Ahom political, administrative, and cultural policies in transforming the socio-political landscape of Assam from a tribal society to a structured state system. It aims to analyze how the Ahom dynasty integrated diverse ethnic groups, institutionalized governance, and fostered social cohesion, thereby laying the foundation for a centralized state. The research seeks to explore the mechanisms of assimilation, land distribution,

military organization, and religious patronage employed by the Ahoms and assess their long-term impact on the evolution of statehood in medieval Assam. Specifically, the article aims to:

1. To analyze the political policies of the Ahom dynasty that facilitated the centralization of power and administrative control in Assam.

2. To examine the role of Ahom governance in integrating tribal communities and transforming fragmented tribal societies into a unified political structure.

3. To study the land revenue system, military organization, and bureaucratic institutions introduced by the Ahoms as tools of state formation.

4. To explore the cultural and religious policies (including the patronage of Vaishnavism and local traditions) that fostered social assimilation and cohesion.

5. To assess the processes of Sanskritization and social mobility under Ahom rule, contributing to the emergence of a more complex and hierarchical society.

6. To understand the shift from kinship-based tribal organization to a state-based political system with codified laws and structured administration.

7. To evaluate the long-term socio-political impact of Ahom rule on the evolution of Assamese identity and statehood.

3 | METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, historical-analytical approach to investigate the role of Ahom policy in the socio-political transformation of Assam from a tribal society to a state system. Primary and secondary historical sources are critically examined to trace the political, administrative, and social strategies of the Ahom rulers. This includes the study of chronicles (Buranjis), royal edicts, inscriptions, and travelogues. Indigenous sources such as the Ahom Buranjis and colonial-era records are analyzed to understand policy decisions and administrative developments. Relevant documents from archives, libraries, and digital repositories are included. The study integrates insights from anthropology, political science, and sociology to interpret the transformation of tribal structures into state mechanisms. This helps contextualize the Ahom experience within broader theories of state formation and social change.

4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Historical Context and Tribal Origins

The transformation of Assam from a region dominated by tribal polities to a structured state system is intricately linked to the advent and consolidation of Ahom rule in the Brahmaputra Valley. The Ahoms, a Tai-speaking group, migrated from present-day Yunnan (China) through northern Myanmar and entered Upper Assam in 1228 CE under the leadership of Sukapha, their first king. Initially a small group with tribal characteristics, the Ahoms possessed a mobile political culture, organized around kinship, warrior ethics, and clan-based leadership.

Upon settling in the Brahmaputra Valley, the Ahoms encountered a mosaic of indigenous tribal communities such as the Moran, Chutia, Borahi, and Kachari, each possessing their own autonomous socio-political systems. These groups were primarily organized around kinship-based clans (khels), animistic belief systems, and shifting cultivation economies. At this stage, the region lacked centralized authority and codified state structures. The Ahom polity itself, in its early phase, reflected similar tribal characteristics, including oral customary laws, clan-based military organization, and communal land use.

Over time, through a process of political accommodation, intermarriage, military expansion, and administrative innovation, the Ahoms gradually expanded their influence. They absorbed and integrated various indigenous groups, while simultaneously modifying their own socio-political institutions. This reciprocal process of assimilation and adaptation laid the foundation for a centralized state that combined Tai-Ahom traditions with local Assamese and Sanskritic elements.

The Ahom Buranjis (court chronicles) document this gradual evolution, highlighting both the continuity of tribal practices and their transformation into statecraft. By the 16th and 17th centuries, the Ahom kingdom had developed a complex administrative system, including a hereditary bureaucracy, land revenue mechanisms, a standing army, and diplomatic relations hallmarks of a mature state. Importantly, this transformation did not eliminate tribal identities but repositioned them within a broader framework of state integration, cultural synthesis, and socio-political hierarchy.

Thus, the Ahom state exemplifies a unique historical trajectory in which a tribal society, through adaptive governance and cultural negotiation, evolved into a regionally influential polity, marking a significant chapter in the broader history of state formation in South and Southeast Asia.

Administrative Consolidation

The consolidation of Ahom administration played a pivotal role in transforming Assam from a fragmented tribal society into an organized state. The Ahom rulers, particularly from the 16th century onward, developed a centralized and hierarchical administrative system that enabled long-term political stability, territorial expansion, and socio-cultural integration.

Foundation of the Paik System

One of the most significant administrative innovations of the Ahoms was the Paik system, a form of corvée labor and military conscription. Every male subject, called a paik, was registered under a got (group of four), with one paik serving the state at a time while others supported him in his absence. This system ensured a permanent pool of labor and soldiers without the need for a standing army or tax-based economy in the early phases. The kingdom was divided into khels (recruitment clusters) based on village, clan, or occupational lines. Officials (Phukans, Baruas, Hazarika) managed these groups, ensuring fiscal stability, infrastructure development, and local governance.

The Paik system also helped institutionalize control over land and population, fostering a more integrated and regulated society compared to kinship-based tribal organizations.

Bureaucratization and Centralization:

Over time, the Ahom court adopted Indo-Sanskritic titles (Swargadeo, Burhagohain, Borgohain) and formal administrative ranks. Administrative manuals codified procedures in land survey, revenue collection, and dispute resolution. A council of nobles (Patra Mantris) supported the king in legislative and judicial matters. These changes illustrate a shift from kinship-based management to an institutionalized bureaucracy.

The Ahom kingdom was divided into some administrative units. These functionaries were appointed by the king and held executive, judicial, and military powers, thereby creating a feudal-like hierarchy within a centralized framework. The King (Swargadeo) remained the supreme authority, supported by advisory councils like the Patra Mantris (five noble ministers). Land and Revenue Policy

Land and revenue Policy

The land and revenue policy of the Ahom kingdom played a foundational role in the transformation of Assam from a tribal to a state-based society. Unlike early tribal communities that practiced shifting cultivation and communal landholding, the Ahoms introduced a more regulated and hierarchical system of land tenure that reinforced state control over agrarian resources and labor. Central to this

transformation was the Paik system, through which the state exercised indirect control over land by organizing adult males into labor units that were periodically rotated for agricultural, military, and infrastructural duties. While the Ahom economy was not monetized in the conventional sense, land functioned as the principal source of wealth, authority, and political integration. The state allocated land based on service and loyalty, creating categories such as "nankar" (land granted to religious institutions), "gamtal" (village lands), and "chamua" (land for minor officials). This system enabled the Ahom rulers to bind the aristocracy, bureaucracy, and even religious institutions to the state's administrative machinery. Furthermore, the surveying and documentation of land, particularly under rulers like Suhungmung (1497–1539), indicate the early evolution of a proto-bureaucratic system of revenue assessment. Thus, the Ahom land and revenue policy not only facilitated agricultural expansion and surplus generation but also helped institutionalize state authority, social hierarchy, and economic stability, marking a decisive shift from tribal autonomy to centralized governance.

Judicial and Legal Administration:

The judicial and legal administration under the Ahoms marked a significant departure from the informal, kinship-based dispute resolution mechanisms of tribal societies and laid the groundwork for a more institutionalized legal order. Initially governed by customary Tai-Ahom laws, the legal framework gradually incorporated indigenous Assamese practices and Hindu jurisprudence, reflecting a syncretic evolution of judicial norms. The Ahom king, or Swargadeo, functioned as the supreme judicial authority, with the power to issue royal decrees and final judgments. Below the king, a structured hierarchy of officials—such as the Borahs, Phukans, and Rajkhowas—was tasked with dispensing justice in their respective administrative units. These officials handled both civil and criminal cases, with serious matters such as treason, theft, murder, and rebellion tried at the royal court. Punishments ranged from fines and exile to corporal and capital punishment, depending on the gravity of the offense. Importantly, the legal system was also used as a tool of state integration and moral regulation, helping to replace the decentralized authority of tribal elders with a centralized legal framework. Over time, the codification of judicial practices particularly during the reigns of rulers like Rudra Singha further formalized the legal structure. This shift signified a broader transformation in Assamese society: from tribal autonomy and customary justice to a codified, centralized legal system, thereby reinforcing the emergence of a cohesive state apparatus.

Integration through Administration:

The Ahom state’s administrative system played a crucial role in integrating diverse ethnic and tribal communities into a unified political and social framework. In a region historically characterized by fragmented tribal polities, the Ahoms adopted a pragmatic and inclusive approach to governance that allowed them to absorb and co-opt local power structures rather than dismantle them. Tribal chiefs, warriors, and elites from indigenous groups such as the Chutias, Morans, Borahis, and Kacharis were incorporated into the administrative hierarchy by being granted official titles like Phukan, Barua, or Rajkhowa, and were entrusted with civil, military, and revenue responsibilities. This policy of selective inclusion facilitated a sense of political belonging while also establishing the legitimacy of Ahom authority. Administrative institutions such as the Paik system not only ensured efficient management of labor and military resources but also brought diverse social groups under direct state control. Additionally, land grants and honorary titles were strategically used to bind local leaders to the central administration, encouraging loyalty and service to the state. Over time, this administrative integration reduced inter-tribal conflicts and fostered a collective political identity centered around the Ahom monarchy. Thus, the Ahom administration served not merely as an instrument of governance, but as a mechanism for cultural assimilation, social mobility, and state formation, enabling a relatively peaceful transformation from a tribal mosaic to a centralized and durable polity.

Religious and Cultural Integration

The Ahom rulers played a vital role in promoting religious and cultural integration by blending their Tai animistic beliefs with local Assamese Hindu traditions. Over time, they embraced Hinduism, particularly Shaivism and Vaishnavism, while continuing to respect indigenous faiths. Royal patronage of Vaishnavite satras (monastic institutions) and Sanskritic rituals helped unify diverse ethnic groups under a shared cultural-religious identity. This fusion not only legitimized Ahom rule among the local population but also facilitated social cohesion, cultural assimilation, and the gradual Sanskritization of tribal communities, reinforcing the transformation from a tribal to a state society.

Embrace of Hinduism and Brahmanical Influence

Beginning in the 16th century, Ahom rulers patronized Hindu Brahmins like Madhavadeva and Sankardeva, incorporating Brahmanical rituals and Sanskrit-derived royal ideology. Rituals such as coronations, land donation ceremonies (bona-dan), and temple endowments fostered legitimacy among caste-Hindu populations and allowed the Ahoms to transcend Tai tribal origins.

Syncretic Practices and Ethnic Accommodation

Despite Sanskritization, courts retained Tai-Ahom traditions such as Rongali Bihu festivals and ancestral shrines, underscoring a vibrant syncretic culture. Annually, Ahom kings performed ritual hunts and offerings—called 'Me-Dam-Me-Phi'—to pacify ancestors and local spirits. This helped maintain ethnic distinctiveness while embracing broader Assamese identity. Invited tribal and hill chiefs (e.g. Chutiya, Kachari) into the court through rituals and honors, reinforcing social cohesion via cultural diplomacy.

Land Policy and Agrarian Transformation

The Ahom land policy marked a major shift from tribal communal landholding to a more structured and hierarchical agrarian system. Through the Paik system, land was allocated based on service obligations, integrating agricultural production with state control. The introduction of land grants—such as nankar (for religious institutions) and chamua (for officials)—stimulated agrarian expansion and helped establish a class of landed elites loyal to the monarchy. This transformation facilitated settled agriculture, increased surplus production, and laid the foundation for a stable, state-centered rural economy, replacing earlier tribal modes of subsistence.

Village Grants and Multi-Ethnic Settlement

Ahom kings instituted land grants (Paik-land, Brahma-chouwari) to nobles, Brahmins, and clans, fueling new settlements and integrating diverse ethnic groups. The rulers concretely linked land tenure to state service obligations transforming agrarian relations. These grants created multi-ethnic villages governed under Ahom administrative authority but produced by different communities.

Irrigation and Agrarian Productivity

Infrastructure policy, including embankments, canals, tanks, and roadways, expanded cultivable land in flood-prone valleys. The Paik system ensured availability of labor for large irrigation projects. As productivity rose, barter exchange turned to cash revenue, allowing the state to mint coins and pay standing troops—another element of state maturity.

Warfare, Diplomacy and Territorial Expansion

The Ahom state engaged in continuous military campaigns against neighboring tribes and Mughal intrusions. Notable are the battles of Saraighat and Alaboi, which halted Mughal eastward expansion. Ahom diplomacy was nuanced pacts with hill chiefs, marital alliances, and gift-exchanges were deployed. Through such mechanisms, the Ahoms secured frontier zones without constant warfare.

Policymaking incorporated strategic fortification and annual military training via khan and rangpur camps. This not only defended boundaries but institutionalized military discipline among various ethnic paiks reinforcing state identity

Colonial Encounters and Continuities

With the Treaty of Yandabo in 1826, the Ahom state fell under British paramountcy, but many Ahom administrative institutions persisted. The Paik system continued, though British revenue surveys began to undermine it. The colonial administration retained familiar offices (Phukan, Rajkhowa) for practical reasons, indicating the durability of Ahom governance. This institutional persistence influenced post-colonial structures in Assam, as British provincial administration built upon Ahom foundations.

Social Transformation and Composite Identity

The confluence of Ahom, tribal, caste Hindu, and tribal practices produced a new Assamese identity. Policy tools—land grants, rituals, administrative inclusion—integrated multiple communities into a common socio-political framework. By the 18th century, tribes like Moran, Dimasa-Kachari, and Chutiya had participated in Ahom-sponsored temples, military services, and governance. This plural polity foreshadowed modern concepts of citizenship and regional identity. The Ahom dynasty's success in social transformation stemmed from its adaptive governance: integrating new communities without erasing antecedent identities. The resulting composite society retained ethnic diversity within a stable political entity.

5 | CONCLUSION

The Ahom transformation from tribal polity to state exemplifies endogenous state-building through policy innovation. By combining traditional kinship systems with centralized bureaucracy, adopting religious pluralism, executing agrarian reforms, and sustaining diplomatic strategies, the Ahom dynasty crafted a resilient, multi-ethnic socio-political order. Its administrative legacy continued under colonial rule and influenced Assam's modern institutions. This case highlights the capacity of indigenous polities to evolve sophisticated governance structures—challenging assumptions that state formation must result from conquest or external imposition. Future research should consider comparative studies in Southeast Asia and examine the lasting ideological legacy of Ahom governance in contemporary Assamese politics.

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THE GENESIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF MGNREGA: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: Unemployment, irrespective of its geographic location, constitutes a latent threat to global economic stability. It persists as a pressing and multifaceted challenge confronting the majority of sovereign states. In response, numerous governments have instituted an array of targeted interventions to mitigate its adverse effects. India, too, remains deeply afflicted by the scourge of unemployment. The exponential increase in population, compounded by the progressive depletion of natural resources, has significantly exacerbated the crisis. Consequently, the unemployment rate continues to escalate annually, posing a formidable obstacle to sustainable development. In an effort to redress this systemic issue, the Government of India promulgated a comprehensive policy in 2005 aimed at enhancing the employability of the rural workforce irrespective of their skill level. Pursuant to this objective, the Indian Parliament enacted the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) on 7th September 2005. This landmark legislation was subsequently rebranded as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, symbolising a broader commitment to rural empowerment, inclusive growth, and socioeconomic equity.

Keywords: MGNREGA, Poverty, Unemployment, Employment, Development.

1 | INTRODUCTION

An examination of the 2011 Census data elucidates that India retains its character as a predominantly agrarian economy, with 68.84% of its populace domiciled in rural area. Notwithstanding the passage of over six decades since the attainment of independence, the spectre of rural poverty remains unabated and structurally entrenched. This persistent socioeconomic malaise has catalysed a significant demographic shift, manifesting in the mass exodus of the rural workforce to urban agglomerations in pursuit of subsistence and employment. Despite the incorporation of rural-centric poverty alleviation frameworks within successive Five Year Plans ostensibly designed to foster income generation and employment guarantees the envisioned outcomes have frequently been thwarted by a conspicuous disjunction between policy formulation and on-ground execution. From an economic doctrinal standpoint, the Indian state has historically adhered to a hybrid model of mixed economy, underscored by a centralised planning paradigm since the post-colonial era. However, notwithstanding the ostensibly earnest intent to ameliorate the plight of the impoverished masses, the incidence and scale of poverty have continued to proliferate. The populist slogan *"Garibi Hatao"* (Eradicate Poverty), which gained

prominence during the 1971 general elections, crystallised public discourse around the poverty question. Yet, despite its rhetorical potency, successive policy mechanisms have failed to yield substantive, scalable, and enduring solutions to this enduring national predicament.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

S.R. Maheswari in "*Rural Development in India",* discussed about the Rural Development in India with a historical overview and also discussed about the various rural development programmes. The author examines into the evolution and implementation of rural development schemes, while also emphasizing the pivotal role of the rural bureaucracy and the significance of people's participation in the developmental process. According to Maheshwari, these programmes have contributed meaningfully to the enhancement of rural socio-economic infrastructure and have led to a measurable decline in the incidence of rural poverty**.**

In "*Employment Guarantees: Signs of Transformation"*, N. Lakshmanan articulates that the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) constitutes a paradigmatic institutional innovation, marking an incipient yet foundational movement toward the codification and operationalisation of the constitutional right to work**,** as delineated within the Directive Principles of State Policy. In light of the pervasive conditions of agrarian distress and chronic deprivation characterising vast swathes of the Indian hinterland, Lakshmanan underscores that MGNREGA compels the state to undertake a normatively grounded and juridical enforceable obligation to furnish a rights-based social protection architecture—thereby reframing welfare not as discretionary benevolence, but as a structural entitlement integral to democratic citizenship**.**

In their incisive article "*Commendable Act"*, Jean Drèze and Christian Oldiges articulate the substantial and underutilised potential of rural employment interventions under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) within the socio-economically stratified context of Odisha**.** This emergent entitlements-based framework, they argue, constitutes an unprecedented instrument of socio-economic empowerment for the rural underclass, particularly for casual labourers and historically disenfranchised demographics**,** who exhibit discernible and widespread recognition of its utility. Moreover, the scheme engenders a palpable aspiration among rural workers to extricate themselves from the structural compulsion of long-distance seasonal migration**,** a phenomenon frequently characterised by exploitative labour relations and profound social dislocation.

3 | OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To make an analysis of the history of the MGNREGA.
2. To make an analysis of the goals of the MGNREGA.
3. To examine the positive impact of the MGNREGA.

4 | METHODOLOGY

The methodological orientation of the present study is predominantly historic-analytical**.** This analytical framework facilitates a critical interrogation of the multifaceted dimensions of the subject under investigation, enabling a nuanced understanding of its structural and temporal contours. The study is primarily grounded in secondary sources of data**,** which have been meticulously compiled from a diverse corpus of scholarly literature, including academic monographs, peer-reviewed journals, seminar proceedings, statistical compendia, the *Handbook of Assam*, and authenticated digital repositories.

5 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

HISTORY OF MGNREGA: In 1979, the Government of India instituted the Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), a programmatic intervention conceived to enhance the employability of rural youth through vocational orientation and enterprise development. As per the official operational guidelines, the scheme mandated that a minimum of 50% of beneficiaries be drawn from Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), 40% from women, and 3% from persons with disabilities, thereby embedding affirmative action within the selection architecture. Notably, no formal educational prerequisites were stipulated for participation, and the typical training duration spanned six months. Between inception and the financial year 1997–98, a cumulative 4.14 million youth were trained, with 1.76 million subsequently engaging in self-employment and 2.33 million absorbed into wage labour markets.

The antecedent to this intervention, the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), was initially piloted during 1977–78 across 2,300 development blocks, and was later universalised to all administrative blocks of the country on 2nd October 1980. IRDP was conceptualised as a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy, designed to integrate credit, asset distribution, and infrastructural support to economically marginalised rural households. Complementing this initiative, the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), launched in 1980, sought to generate sustainable community assets such as drinking water facilities, irrigation infrastructure, rural road networks, educational institutions, and panchayat buildings thereby reinforcing rural physical capital. NREP was executed through the District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs) at the sub-national level.

In a gender-specific shift, the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) was introduced in September 1982 as a sub-component of IRDP, with the explicit objective of augmenting the economic participation and agency of women below the poverty line. The scheme enabled the collectivisation of 10–15 women into DWCRA groups, offering them institutional access to credit, skill enhancement, and infrastructural support. A revolving fund of ₹25,000 was disbursed per group ₹10,000 from the Central Government and UNICEF, and ₹5,000 from State Governments though UNICEF ceased its participation as of 1 January 1996. Additionally, the Child Care Activities (CCA) initiative was integrated within DWCRA in 1995–96, providing early childhood services including immunisation, nutrition, primary education, and health care for the children of DWCRA beneficiaries up to six years of age.

The Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) was introduced during the Ninth Five Year Plan (1992–97), aimed at providing 100 days of unskilled manual labour annually to unemployed individuals in rural households. Subsequently, during the Tenth Five Year Plan, the Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) was instituted in April 1999 through the amalgamation of multiple pre-existing schemes namely IRDP, TRYSEM, DWCRA, and Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY). SGSY was designed to elevate assisted families above the poverty threshold by enabling sustained income generation over a specified temporal horizon. Beneficiaries, termed Swarozgaris, could participate either individually or as part of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) consisting of 10–20 members, with adaptive flexibility for difficult terrains or vulnerable populations.

Similarly, the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) was inaugurated on 28 April 1989, with financial provisioning in an 80:20 ratio between the Central and State Governments, respectively. The primary goal of JRY was to ensure employment for at least one member per impoverished rural household, offering 50–100 days of gainful employment per annum.

The Indian state's post-independence anti-poverty apparatus reflects the complex, multi-layered nature of poverty, which remains inextricably linked to broader patterns of economic stratification and uneven growth. Although macroeconomic indicators particularly post-1991 economic liberalisation demonstrated accelerated GDP growth, the distributive outcomes of this growth were highly asymmetric. According to the Sengupta Committee Report (National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector), despite a statistical reduction in individuals subsisting below the official poverty line ,approximately 77% of India's population continued to live below ₹20 per day, barely surpassing subsistence levels. This demographic, designated as the "poor and vulnerable," constitutes a socio-economically heterogeneous collective characterised by educational deprivation, nutritional insecurity, caste- and gender-based marginalisation, and political disempowerment. Mahatma Gandhi's epigrammatic assertion that "poverty is the worst form of violence" underscores the moral urgency for state intervention. Gandhi perceived poverty as a dehumanising condition that corrodes human dignity and social cohesion. Likewise, Jawaharlal Nehru, in his Independence Day address of 1947, framed the eradication of poverty, ignorance, disease, and inequality of opportunity as the cardinal responsibility of a sovereign democratic republic. These ideological convictions were instrumental in shaping the postcolonial welfare orientation of the Indian polity.

Historically, India's poverty alleviation architecture from the NREP, RLEGP, JRY, and EAS to the SGRY was premised primarily on wage employment mechanisms. However, a substantive paradigmatic transition materialised with the enactment of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in 2005, which inaugurated a justiciable right to employment. The Act mandated the provision of a minimum of 100 days of wage employment annually to every rural household with adult members willing to undertake unskilled manual work.

The imperative for MGNREGA was catalysed by two interlocking developments. First, a constellation of grassroots social movements and civil society advocacy coalitions notably those mobilising around the Right to Food and the Right to Information demanded a rights-based social contract to redress chronic hunger and unemployment. These movements galvanised public consciousness and built a compelling moral-political consensus for legislative action. Second, the Employment Guarantee Scheme (EGS) implemented in Maharashtra for over three decades served as a robust empirical prototype, lending institutional legitimacy and administrative feasibility to the conceptualisation of a national employment guarantee framework

In an evaluation of the EGS in Maharashtra it has been found that the scheme has been successful on account of the following aspects that have had a profound bearing and impact:

- Efforts have been put in place to pacify the sense of extreme deprivation among the rural poor.
- Accounting is based on a computation between one-tenth and one-third of the number of day's employment of rural workers.
- Minimise migration to urban areas.
- Balancing employment in the slack season.
- Enhancing the participation of women.
- Bolstered by these influences, the government enacted the NREGA in September 2005.

In addition to the aforementioned policy initiatives, India reaffirmed its global developmental commitments by becoming a signatory to the United Nations Millennium Declaration in September 2000. This strategic alignment underscored the nation's resolve to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, particularly among populations subsisting on less than one U.S. dollar per day. Recognising the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as legitimate and urgent policy imperatives, the Government of India integrated these global obligations into its national framework through the Planning Commission, which formulated a National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) aimed at mobilising financial, institutional, and political capital for the upliftment of the rural poor.

Within this context, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, upon assuming office, formally adopted the NCMP in September 2004, wherein it pledged a decisive legislative intervention in the form of a National Employment Guarantee Act. This Act was envisioned to provide a justiciable right to employment, ensuring a minimum of 100 days of wage labour per financial year to at least one adult member of every rural household. The primary objective was to offer a subsistence-level income floor, thereby reinforcing the right to livelihood as an essential component of socio-economic citizenship. Prior to this enactment, numerous rural wage employment schemes existed, albeit without statutory backing. To address this lacuna and institutionalise employment as a legal entitlement, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was conceived. The initial draft of the Act was conceptualised and authored by noted development economist Dr. Jean Drèze, whose intellectual contributions were instrumental in shaping the legislation. The Indian Parliament passed NREGA during the monsoon session on August 23, 2005, and it subsequently received Presidential assent on September 5, 2005, with formal notification issued on September 7, 2005.

Implementation of the Act commenced in a phased manner. In its first phase, launched on February 2, 2006, the programme was rolled out across 200 of India's most socio-economically backward districts. The second phase, initiated on April 1, 2007, expanded coverage to an additional 130 districts, and by April 1, 2008, the Act was operational across the entire rural landscape of India. In a symbolic reaffirmation of Gandhian principles of rural self-reliance and dignity of labour, the Act was officially renamed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on October 2, 2009, in commemoration of the 140th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi under the auspices of the UPA government.

An Analytical Critique of MGNREGA: Structural Constraints and Systemic Anomalies

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), as a paradigmatic policy initiative of the Indian state, aspires to function as a comprehensive, rights-based instrument for the amelioration of rural destitution and chronic labour underutilisation. While the scheme has progressively entrenched itself within the scaffolding of rural developmental policy, its efficacy remains critically circumscribed by the limitation of offering a mere 100 days of guaranteed wage employment per annum, which is patently inadequate to insulate impoverished households from year-round economic precocity. Notwithstanding its theoretical robustness, the operationalisation of MGNREGA is fraught with persistent systemic deficiencies. These include but are not limited to fiscal inadequacies, delays in fund allocation, monotony and low utility of sanctioned labour tasks, and pervasive bureaucratic malfeasance. The implementation apparatus is marred by institutionalised rent-seeking behaviour, wherein local governance actors, notably Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) functionaries and state-level bureaucrats, are frequently implicated in practices of bribery, coercion, and illicit monetisation of entitlements, including the issuance of job cards, which are ostensibly to be distributed free of cost. In a candid admission during a February 2012 interview, then Union Minister of Rural Development, Mr. Jairam Ramesh, acknowledged the infrastructural ephemerality of assets created under the scheme specifically noting that roads and irrigation canals constructed by untrained manual labour often fail to withstand seasonal climatic stressors, particularly the monsoonal deluge, resulting in their cyclical obliteration and reconstruction. Such ephemeral outputs not only squander fiscal resources but also fail to contribute substantively to durable asset creation or the augmentation of rural economic resilience. Furthermore, the scheme suffers from an endemic transparency and accountability vacuum. Institutional oversight remains perfunctory, with neither central nor decentralised administrative bodies exercising adequate vigilance. Simultaneously, the beneficiary population characterised by socio-political disempowerment and organisational atomisation remains structurally incapacitated to mount effective resistance against corruption or demand procedural rectitude in the implementation of entitlements. That said, MGNREGA has inadvertently catalysed incipient processes of financial

inclusion**.** The channelization of wage disbursements through formal financial institutions such as banks and post offices has not only enhanced procedural transparency but also fostered a nascent culture of banking among the rural proletariat. However, the mere quantitative expansion of financial institutions is not tantamount to qualitative financial inclusion. A vast substratum of the rural populace continues to languish in credit invisibility**,** lacking access to affordable financial instruments. This structural deficiency necessitates innovative, technology-driven financial architectures including mobile enabled platforms, digital financial literacy programmes, and an expanded cadre of business correspondents to serve as conduits of inclusive economic participation. While MGNREGA offers a foundational framework for rights-anchored employment provisioning**,** its transformative potential remains impeded by institutional inertia, fiscal fragility, implementation irregularities, and infrastructural inefficacy**.** The imperative, therefore, lies in a comprehensive recalibration of rural welfare policy**,** one that synergises legal entitlements with robust governance, financial inclusion, and sustainable asset creation to fulfil the aspirational promise of inclusive and participatory development.

6 | CONCLUSION

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) epitomises a paradigmatic legislative intervention in the postcolonial Indian state's quest to institutionalise rights-based distributive justice within the rubric of democratic governance. As an instrumentality that transcends the conventional parameters of welfare delivery, MGNREGA operationalises the constitutional vision of socio-economic equity through the juridical entrenchment of the right to wage employment**,** thereby foregrounding the imperatives of economic security, human dignity, and participatory agency for the rural precariat. Designed with a deliberate orientation towards the structurally disenfranchised, the Act endeavours to reconfigure the developmental discourse by anchoring labour-intensive asset creation**,** decentralised planning, and community-led implementation within the normative framework of inclusive growth. It envisions not merely the mitigation of income poverty, but the reconstitution of citizenship through productive engagement**,** enabling the rural proletariat to assert claims to both material subsistence and symbolic recognition. MGNREGA thus signifies a decisive shift from discretionary welfare to entitlement-based governance**,** wherein the state is not a benefactor but a guarantor of rights. When executed with procedural integrity, administrative transparency, and substantive civic participation, the Act possesses the latent potential to engender transformative structural outcomes**:** recalibrating state-society relations, fortifying the accountability architecture of local self-governance institutions, and catalysing a bottom-up recalibration of development priorities responsive to subaltern voices. Heralded by many as one of the most seminal legislative enactments of contemporary India, MGNREGA is simultaneously a social compact, a governance modality, and a developmental praxis**.**

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EDUCATION SYSTEM OF TEA TRIBES AND ADIVASHI COMMUNITY: A CASE STUDY OF SELENGHAT , JORHAT ASSAM

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Abstract: Education is a powerful weapon to change a Society. Education plays a significant role in the human life. It is only Education who makes us different from animals. So Education is the main weapon to shape human civilization. Tea Tribes or Adivashi community is an integrated community of Assam. Alone this community Assamese society cannot be completed. Tea Tribes and Adivashi community has been dominated from British ruler time. This community has use as a machinery tool in a tea factory. They have no any right to develop their personality. So this community more people became illiteracy. Now-and- Days Education System has change among this community. Selenghat is one of the most area the tea tribes people lives everywhere. In this area have many Tea Garden and Tea Factory to product Tea and supply all over the world. In this paper try to focus on Education system Among the Tea Tribes and Adivashi Community in Selenghat, especially in the Seleng Tea Estate, Boisahabi Tea Estate and Maznoi Tea Estate.

Keywords: Tea Tribes and Adivashi, & Education System

1 | INTRODUCTION

“Education breeds confidence, Confidence breeds hope, Hope breeds peace.” by Confucius. Education is the key to success and happiness. A society cannot develop without Education. The Environment of Tea Tribes and Adivashi community has huge different from other society. In this society have varieties cultural and social traditional practices. In 1823 Robert Bruce had discovered Tea in Assam. The British ruled in Assam at that time. Robert Bruce found Assam Soil economically best for tea growing. So he tries to develop a huge industry of Tea especially upper Assam area. For Tea garden and Tea Factory works Robert Bruce and his company migrant the people from various states of India base on Girmitya Chalan Act. The migrant people have used as machinery tool in Tea Garden and Tea factories. Slowly Tea Garden increased day by day in Assam. But the workers of tea garden cannot develop their personality and essential site. It is main reason is their have no education right at that time. After independence of India Assam Tea became a backbone of Indian Economy System. The Constitution of India especially Article 21(A) provides free and compulsory primary education for the age group 6-14 years. For Article 21(A) Act more children go to school. But some students completed their education and some students not able to complete education lack of their proper financial support. There are many factors behind their lower literacy. Now and days, gradually increased the percentage of educate person in the Tea garden areas.

Selenghat area covered many Tea Garden and villages. In this areas have some higher secondary and high school, hospital, and some governmental office etc. major people living in tea garden areas. The education system of Tea Tribes and adivashi community not develops as compare to another society. Maximum people of tea garden areas depend on Tea Garden and labour works. So this area selected for case study.

2 | SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The literacy rate among the people of Tea Tribes and Adivashi community is lower than community people. Majority of the people of tea garden dependent on tea garden works. The study is also significant to universalize primary education as the government has initiated many acts and programmes regarding increase literacy rate among tea garens areas, yet not achieved it. Therefore, it is very important to know the problems of non-universalization of primary education.

3 | OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

a) In this paper try to focus main reason illiteracy rates of Tea garden areas.
b) In this paper discussed about initiatives to increased literacy rate among the people both tea garden areas and villages.

4 | METHODOLOGY

Methodology is an important part of research paper. It is a way to systemically solve the research problem. There are various methods which can be applied in the field studies. Both Primary and Secondary sources of data has been extensively used for the purpose of study. Primary data have been collected mainly from the Tea-Tribes people living in the garden area through the techniques of questionnaire, interview schedule, and partial observation. Secondary data have been obtained from various sources such as previous study, books, newspaper, e-journals and periodical report, published officials data, souvenir etc.

5 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A sample is the small population selected for observation and analysis of data. In this study try to randomly selected the population for the study, which consists of 15 girls (age group 06 -20above) and 15 boys (age group 06-25abve). In this study a self-made interview schedule was made in order to collect the data from the respondents. Primary data was also collected from a few dignitaries' people of this area through interviews.

Table 1.1 Completed Educations

SL No	Age Group	Level of Education	Nature of Responds	Completed Responds	Percentage %
1	03-10	Primary Education	15	14	93.33%
2	11-12	Upper Primary Education	15	14	93.33%
3	13-14	High School	15	9	60%
4	15-16	Higher Secondary	15	6	40%
5	17-19	Graduation	15	3	20%

6	20-above	Post Graduation	15	1	6.66%

According the Table-1.1 93.33% responds completed their primary and upper primary education. 60% responds are completed high school. 40% responds are completed higher secondary education. 20% responds are completed graduation and only 6.66% responds are completed post graduation education.

Table 1.2 Uncompleted Educations

SL No	Causes of Uncompleted Education	Nature of Responds	Drop Out Responds	Percentage %
1	Medium Issues	15	1	6.66%
2	Financial Problems	15	9	60%
3	Parents Negative attitude	15	7	46.66%
4	Early Marriage	15	8	53.33%
5	Not Interest	15	3	20%
6	Depend on Tea Garden works	15	12	80%

According the Table-1.2 6.66% responds are drop out from their education due to medium issues. 60% responds are uncompleted their education due to financial problems. 46.66 % responds are not completed education because parents negative attitude. 53.33% responds are drop outs from their education due to early marriage. 20% responds are not completed education because not interest. 80% responds are drop out their main cause of depend on tea garden works.

Major Findings

From the study it is found that some unconditional reasons to drop out their education. These are mentioned in below:

- According to study low of percentage people of Tea Tribes and Adivashi community completed their education. Some of people engage government jobs and profitable business.
- According to studies few people of this community have an interest to develop their personality with higher education system.
- Some of people of this community gained opportunity get admission in higher Education Institute.
- Maximum people of this community uncompleted education due to their personal problems. Such as environmental issues, lack of proper guide, financial support, negative attitude etc.
- According to study more people of Tea Tribes and Adivashi community drop out from their education system only because of depended on Tea Garden works. So many persons are not interest on education system. Therefore, Tea Tribes and Adivashi society literacy rates of percentage very lower compare to another society.

Overview

Tea industry is one of the India's oldest and most profitable Industries, which has been an integral part of the country for economic development. Assam is backbone state of Tea product. Assam Tea is famous for organic all over the world. Every year Assam Tea has contributed more economic support to manage financial condition of the country. In Tea Factories without tea worker is impossible product high range of tea for commercial. This tea worker consist group of people call Tea Tribes and Adivashi Community. They are migrants from different state of India during the British Ruler time. So they are facing lots of problem communicate with other person. Therefore, these people communicate with understanding language that is call “Shadri” language. Without this community Assamese society

cannot be completed. The cultural scenario of these communities is very attractive. Karam Puja is a main festival of this community. This festival especially celebrates on July –August month known as Assamese calendar "Bhado Mah". In this festival after Karam Puja youth boys and girls dance with jhumoir song and Mador Dram. Another social tradition is more interesting. Like marriage, new born, and other festival etc. In earlier period these people not able to manage time to develop their personal will. The companies of Tea Industries not offer extra time to accept the educational facilities. So literacy rate are very low compare to other societies.

Education system in Tea Garden societies increased day by day compare to earlier condition. The Constitution of India especially Article 21(A) provides free and compulsory primary education for the age group 6-14 years. For Article 21(A) Act more children go to school for their bright future. The students Union namely All Assam Tea Tribes Students Association (ATTSA) and All Assam Adivashi Students Association (AASA) play a key role provide education system among these people. Hence, some people drop out from their education only because unconditional reasons. Such as lack of financial support, proper guide, early marriage system, depends on tea garden works.

Suggestion

- Educational awareness campaigns should be held especially in the remote areas to make the people conscious about the need and importance of education.
- Importance should be given to open and distance education, so that those who work part-time could also receive education.
- Awareness about family planning should be made among the tribal community. As the elder son/daughter has to leave school to look after their siblings or has to work for financially helping them.

- Opportunities for scholarship for the bright students and those who want to pursue higher education should be made.

6 | CONCLUSION

In conclusion above the study say that the literacy rate is higher than earlier education system. In earlier period Tea Tribes and Adivashi community people mainly focused on their Tea Garden works. They are pressured by company manager. With the change of time in global period this community people gradually change. Few people of Tea Tribes and Adivashi community completed their education and some people engage government jobs and profitable business.

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LANGUAGE AND DALIT EXPRESSION IN INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Abstract: The present paper focuses on the role of language in the Dalit representation in Indian English literatures, and how English is used as a medium to break the silence of Dalit voices. Analyzing main works of Dalit writers and their positioning in Indian English literary texts, the investigate opens to understand how language functions as a tool enabling the switch and as the ground of caste oppression. It explores on the other hand how English was a tool of colonial oppression as well as the ability of a number of the Dalit writers to break free of other linguistic regional dominance to take their message to the world. Also, the paper examines the role of English in shaping narrative voices and techniques, and negotiation of self and culture in Dalit fiction. Thus, the study focuses on cast, literature, and language in modern India through the exploration of the topic that addresses social justice, identity, and resistance; at the same time, the research aims to enlarge the understanding of the role of literature in constructing change in society.

Keywords: Dalit voices, Dalit writers, Dalit fiction, Social Justice, Identity, Resistance

1 | INTRODUCTION

Dalit literature means the existence of the members of the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) who were excluded and marginalized socially, culturally, and academically precluded from history. This term means the people who suffered or are still able to suffer social injustice and exclusion, and who were able to feel isolation and spiritual emptiness as part of their identity and tries to escape the unchangeable destiny of untouchability that have been always applied to them. The protest of the colonial status quo, this literature was initially a forceful rebellion against the dominant literary and societal order, which arrogated to neglect the questions and histories of the downtrodden in India. The exclusion and exclusion of the Dalit community has been built into the texture of practice intentionally and unintentionally. The awakening of Dalit consciousness arises from centuries of agonizing torment, and the literary works that capture and articulate this consciousness can rightfully be identified as Dalit literature within the realm of Indian English literature. In a land burdened with five millennia of degradation, the question remains: How can we liberate the Indian populace from this burden that has plagued them for far too long? (Bilton, 2021)

The emancipation of the untouchables is possible only when there comes into being a real and a thorough revolution in the complicated social structure of the Hindus. From this it follows that total and radical change in concepts of the directed Layer, in this case the Hindu masses is imperative to make an understanding of the subtle and deeply cherished caste system in the society. It just makes one wonder

how those pathetic patients who are tortured with those chronic diseases can get a complete and juicy constitutional treatment if not treated they can hardly ever recover. Indeed, what was unique and radical about the efforts of Dalit writing – and not only for Dalit writing but for women and other regional and subaltern forms of writing – was the very premise and urgent need of such writing to be not only heard but to be heard as literature. It is important to note that this literary movement dreamed of sitting at the same level as other great literatures. In fact, to achieve a higher status and be considered equal to the other person, both were endowed, so to say, with that sense of the universal. However, this tendency to achieve a universal dimension remained unattainable for them as the others were not embedded into their distinctive socio-cultural settings, pointer to the values they hold dear, and in fact their suffering and pain milestones. (Sonowal, 2023)

2 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Evolution of Indian English Literature and Dalit Expression:

Mainstream Indian English literature took major turns during its historical evolution: it began as a traditional art and adhered to romanticism and aestheticism, which were remnants of colonial effects. Poetry flourished in its classical forms from ancient times, picking and refurbishing it with Indian literary themes. During the 1930s, some writers made a switch from 'innocent art' to 'responsible art' with the onset of the nation's socio-political awakening. In a way, the writers of this period were trendsetters and tradition makers in this transitory period. Under colonial rule, the literary atmosphere of Indian writing in English started with the abstract or generalized portrayal of life and personalities; it later evolved to revolve around themes that made readers realize the complex and numerous aspects of Indian social and mental existence. It was in this respect that fiction in English was adapted for 'writing back' and interiorizing the natural and supernatural. That was also the time when caste social segregation underwent a great deal of criticism. The depressed class, today referred to as the 'Dalit' class, revolted against untouchability and ugly social practices of the inner class, creating extensive literature. (Regmi, 2021)

As time progressed, these themes underwent remarkable expansion, capturing the essence of India's cultural tapestry with astonishing depth and richness. The trajectory of Indian English literature witnessed a fascinating metamorphosis, giving birth to an opulent amalgamation of diverse narratives and eloquent prose. The writers, armed with their pens as mighty instruments, embarked on an exploration of the intricacies of the human experience within the vibrant and multi-layered Indian society. Their words became a symphony of emotions, painting vivid portraits of love, suffering, and triumph against the backdrop of a nation on the cusp of profound change. Delving deeper into the intricacies of the human psyche, the writers honed their craft, wielding language as a brush to craft intricate masterpieces. They delved into the labyrinthine complexities of human relationships, exploring the bonds that shaped individuals and communities alike. Words became bridges, connecting distant hearts and unraveling the threads that wove the tapestry of Indian life. The stories they wove began to resonate with readers, resonating with the echoes of shared experiences and unspoken truths. (Williams, 2024)

As the colonial shackles loosened their grip, the writers seized the opportunity to shed light on the dark corners of society, exposing the harsh realities that lay hidden beneath a veneer of tradition. They fearlessly confronted the prejudices and injustices that plagued their nation, giving voice to the marginalized and oppressed. The once silenced voices of the 'Dalit' class reverberated through the pages, challenging the status quo and demanding change. Indian English literature became a vehicle for not just storytelling, but also for social commentary and advocacy. It became a powerful tool for enlightenment, as the writers harnessed their literary prowess to ignite conversations and inspire introspection. Through their words, they celebrated the rich cultural heritage of India while also examining the flaws and shortcomings that needed addressing. (Karim et al.2023)

The literary landscape of Indian English literature expanded exponentially, embracing a multitude of genres and styles. From spellbinding historical epics to introspective coming-of-age tales, the writers navigated uncharted territories, pushing boundaries and defying conventions. They crafted narratives that transcended time and space, capturing the essence of India's diverse landscapes and intricate tapestry of traditions. Today, Indian English literature stands as a testament to the resilience and creative spirit of a nation. It continues to evolve, adapting to the changing times while staying true to its roots. The writers of this rich tradition have left an indelible mark on the literary world, enriching the global literary canon with their unique perspectives and unparalleled storytelling. They have paved the way for future generations to weave their own narratives, ensuring that the vibrant legacy of Indian English literature will endure for generations to come. Many of the major literary works in the rich and diverse English language have assertively showcased Dalit concepts in both subtle and fiercely competitive ways, giving voice to the long-suppressed narratives and experiences of the marginalized. The impactful emergence of Dalit literature in modern times in India began to take root from around the 1960s, propelled by a multitude of illuminating concepts that elucidated the essence of Dalit consciousness. It is crucial to recognize that Dalit consciousness, as we know it today, has undergone a profound and arduous journey of introspection, self-discovery, interventions, and deep understanding. (Kumar) Before a Dalit writer even embarked on the courageous path of penning down their vivid collection of experiences, encompassing their joys, agitations, and idiosyncrasies, they were already imbued with the weight of over two hundred years of tumultuous history.

This significant period can be thoughtfully divided into three distinct phases: the pre- Independence era, the post-Independence era, and the era of neo-Dalit literature that seamlessly emerged thereafter. In the first phase, the seeds of Dalit literature were sown by individuals who embodied
immense wisdom and courage, such as the eminent social reformer Jyotirao Phule. Likewise, one cannot overlook the indelible contributions of his prominent students, including Lakshmi Narshamma and the remarkable Tarabai Shinde, who authored a deeply impacting, voluminous denunciation of the oppressive Brahminical order that continues to resonate powerfully even today.

Language and Linguistic Choices in Dalit Literature

From its formative years, Dalit literature has been understood in terms of language. The establishment scholars have been harshly critical of it for speaking through the crude and ugliness of victimhood, which is often seen as a language of illicit and horrendousness, or have deeply appreciated the same horrendousness as the most honest and plainest reflection of Dalit pain and desperateness. The Dalit genre embodied writers loudly affirm the importance of linguistics and the epic experiences of their people, firmly maintain the language of their bodies as their true tors, their dense cultural heritage, and they lived realities of the Dalits. In their attempts to attain authenticity, Dalit writers always effortlessly employ code-switching, the loveliness ceaselessly of creole languages, and the unique phrases of region Language dialects all in a manner of stitching together a tale the beautifully telescopes the dense pronunciations of region words, the blendingly profound proverbs, the evocatively idiomatic, nothingness, the positively metaphorical and the vivid imagery that are indivisible from this. This is not only a joyful piece that succeeds in weaving together the extreme suffering and impossibility of justice experienced by the Dalit community with such deliberate linguistic choices, but rather it is poised to become a recital that stands out on its own. (Browarczyk, 2021)

The dividing line in Indian literature is not so much between Dalit and Non-Dalit as it is between the English used in Indian writing in English and the vernaculars of India. The struggle over language reveals the writer’s politics. However, the usage of language according to his or her own choice by a Dalit writer, being on the margin, becomes a radical and innovative act, which neither a colonial nor an elite writer can parallel. The life-space of the Dalits has been violent, and it is the politics of experience

that guides the rhetoric of Dalit literature, which has to be authentic and will be orally communicated. Ultimately, in Dalit literature, voice is ideology. Dalit literature is more consciously ideological, as it fights for social transformation within. Hence, writing itself, in terms of content and form, becomes revolt, struggle, and resistance.

In the field of literature, this translates into counterpoising Dalit narratives to the myths of Aryan culture, purity, and innocence in caste matters of poetry, to the experience of the sufferer endured in the poetry of Untouchables. Dalit linguistic constants have become expressive of content, reflecting the state of society and the individual self. The significance of this dynamic cannot be understated, as it shapes the narrative landscape while paving the way for unprecedented change. The resounding impact of Dalit literature echoes through the corners of cultural reformation, fostering a profound metamorphosis in the societal consciousness. (Azam, 2022)
Through the sheer power of its words, Dalit literature awakens the dormant vigor in the hearts of the marginalized, shattering the chains of oppression that have strangled their souls for centuries. As the pen dances across the untamed pages, it breathes life into long-suppressed voices, offering a sanctuary of expression where untold stories unfold. In this battle for emancipation, language becomes the spearhead, piercing through the barriers of societal hierarchy, forever altering the landscape of literature.
The courageous act of a Dalit writer defies the confines of convention, for their words reverberate with an unwavering truth that reveres their own unique experiences.

The struggles engrained within the life-space of the Dalits have been nothing short of cataclysmic, leaving an indelible mark on their existence. Through the unwavering power of penmanship, Dalit literature illuminates the darkness that has long veiled their narrative. It charts its course through the choppy waters of oppression, navigating uncharted territories with the insistence of a roaring tempest. In the ceaseless quest for societal transformation, the written word emerges as the bedrock of this revolution. Every stroke of the pen carries with it a defiance that challenges the very foundation on which societal constructs have been built. Content and form intertwine, birthing a formidable force that dismantles long-standing myths with unprecedented precision. The intricate tapestry of Dalit narratives interlaces with the threads of Aryan culture, casting light on the fallacy of purity and innocence intertwined with caste matters of poetry. From the depths of suffering endured by the Untouchables, a poetry emerges that transcends boundaries, preserving the essence of their collective pain.

Within the realm of Dalit literature, language assumes a profound significance. It becomes more than just a vessel for expression; it becomes the embodiment of the collective consciousness of a marginalized community. The very linguistic constants that define their existence become conduits of their truth, mirroring society's flaws and mirroring the ache of the individual's soul. Through these linguistic constants, the state of not just the self, but of an entire society, permeates the pages, underscoring the urgent need for change. The pervasive influence of Dalit literature resonates far beyond the confines of mere words on a page. It reverberates with the weight of a thousand voices, breathing life into a transformative journey towards justice and equality. With every stirring narrative, the narrative landscape shifts, propelling society towards an uncharted future where liberation and understanding reign supreme. As the echoes of Dalit literature reverberate through the corridors of cultural progress, the world bears witness to a metamorphosis of the human spirit, forever altering the trajectory of our shared existence.

Themes and Motifs in Dalit Literature

In her groundbreaking and revolutionary study, Dalit Literature: Contents and Cultures, Suniti S. R. Diwakar extensively and comprehensively elucidates and provides a vivid and comprehensive account of the profound and significant major themes and motifs that are inherently characteristic of Dalit writings from the historic 19th century to the contemporary present. The range and scope of the themes

encompassed within this remarkable and awe-inspiring list are truly vast and multifarious, representing a diverse and thought-provoking tapestry of the Dalit experience.

These themes include but are by no means limited to the pernicious realities of oppression and impoverishment, the intricate and complex aspects of identity, the abhorrent and deeply entrenched practice of untouchability, the influence and impact of historical, ontological, and patriarchal factors, the interplay and dynamics of caste-class relations, the ramifications of race and gender, the intersections of Hinduism and exclusion, the plight of the marginalized and dispossessed, the harrowing plight of landless laborers trapped in a cycle of degradation and exploitation, the cruelties and horrors of torture, fascism, and slavery, the pervasive and insidious nature of discrimination, the experience of marginalization and dispossession, the desolation and confinement of ghettos, the profound sense of isolation, the struggles and challenges faced by the sub-peasantry, the concept of collective life and its implications, the exploitative and degrading systems that perpetuate suffering, the denial of fundamental human rights and the erosion of identity and dignity, the fundamental and intrinsic importance of ethics and values, and finally, the momentous and profound journey towards self-respect and self-realization that lies at the heart of the Dalit experience. (Singh2023)

While every Dalit experience is intrinsically unique in nature, the collective micro-narration that emerges from these profound and deeply personal stories serves to eloquently and powerfully articulate the collective sorrow, pain, and suffering of not only the Indian Dalit community but also the downtrodden communities worldwide. It is through this poignant and emotive collective micro-narration that a resounding and profound macro-resonance is generated, aiming to quell the agonizing pain that ignites the spirit while simultaneously granting the long-sought-after and cherished autonomy and self declaration of the Dalits, thereby enabling them to rise above and ultimately reject the well-intentioned yet misguided assistance of outsiders. However, amidst this landscape of hope and progress, there lingers an unanswered and troubling question that continues to haunt and elude resolution: Who will rise to the challenge and bear the responsibility of aiding and supporting those who desperately seek liberation and justice? (Misrahi-Barak2021)

Dalit literature inherently engages with and embodies the intricate and nuanced narratives of both individuals and communities, skillfully weaving together a rich tapestry of interconnected stories that highlight the resilience, strength, and unwavering determination of the Dalit people in the face of overwhelming adversity and systemic discrimination.

In addition to these themes, Diwakar not only identifies motivational preoccupations such as land and labor, dispossession and social justice, and familial relations but also delves deeper into their complexities. The Short Stories and Letters that Diwakar explores are not just narratives focusing on familial relations, but also vivid portrayals of the harsh reality of marginalization and oppression. Many talented writers have dedicated themselves to capturing these profound motifs in their works. One can see their dedication and passion in pieces like The World of Hori, Godan, and Nectar in a Sieve, where they have sought to understand and depict these motivational upshots with remarkable intensity. Their efforts have resulted in bringing the readers closer to the stark realities of Dalit concerns, as these fundamental motifs serve as powerful tools to further deepen the delineations and presentations of Dalit re-advancement to the rich Indian heritage. Moreover, they encompass visible and read-out progressiveness, particularly in lifestyle and day-to-day behavior, offering a glimpse into the transformative power of these themes. The themes of aesthetic movement, influenced by inherent motivations, play a pivotal role in showcasing the complete impartiality required to explore and appreciate the nuances of artistic expression.

Impact and Significance of Dalit Expression in Indian English Literature

Over the course of many years, the expression of the Dalit community in Indian English literature has played a significant role in shattering the barriers constructed by the caste system. It is now evident that context has evolved into nothing more than another facet, as Dalit literature has been recognized and acknowledged as a counter-narrative within the vast framework of Indian English literature. This form of literature has allowed us to view the established literary canons through a completely different lens, prompting us to reevaluate our preconceived notions. The ingenious Dalit writers have fearlessly challenged the prevailing values and representations that have been imposed upon us by the traditional literary works. Moreover, they have tirelessly fought for their rightful place within the existing literary tradition. Unfortunately, more often than not, they have been systematically excluded from the conventional realm. It is crucial to recognize that the social problem at hand will not be resolved until the upper-caste writers themselves take responsibility for the cruelties, exclusions, and other deficiencies perpetuated by the Hindu socio-political-economic systems upon the Dalit community. (Ghatak, 2021)

The emergence of a higher level of perception and criticism of religion within Dalit literature has undeniably left an indelible mark, profoundly influencing and quite possibly instigating a societal transformation towards a more liberal and inclusive climate. As a result, this ultimately sparked a renaissance within Indian society, permeating all societal levels. The presence of Dalit literature has successfully captured the attention of the global community, shedding light upon India and its multifaceted realities. It traces the various phases of poetry, deeply delving into the intricate details of the immense creativity displayed by these talented wordsmiths. Furthermore, the poetry magnificently shines a glaring spotlight on the relentless violence and excruciating oppression that the Dalits endure within the confines of Indian English literature. As such, the focal point of Indian English literature effortlessly shifts towards the fundamental principles of justice, equity, and fairness within the vast tapestry of Indian society, with a particular emphasis on the state of Maharashtra. Throughout this profound exploration, the concentration intently zeroes in on the powerful impact of the word 'persecute,' which masterfully portrays the harsh realities of exploitation, repression, and brutal assaults inflicted upon humanity by fellow human beings. Consequently, it powerfully sheds light on the existence of extreme adversities and harrowing predicaments that life frequently hurls in our paths, thus leading to widespread anguish and unhappiness. Exemplifying immense resilience, the oppressed Dalit writers and critics have risen above these challenges and firmly established themselves as formidable instruments for fostering awareness within society. (Richard, 2020)

These incredibly talented authors hailing from marginalized backgrounds have made substantial contributions, deftly crafting profound themes that effortlessly encapsulate the aesthetic, cultural, societal, and compassionate aspects of the human experience. Although these remarkable writers journey along the path of creating a distinctive brand of literature, they have astonishingly managed to captivate the hearts and minds of the public, evoking deep emotions and contemplation. The magnificent realm of Dalit writing has undeniably laid bare the shocking discrepancies and the inherent worthlessness of the rights to freedom of expression. It is crucial to acknowledge the monumental impact that translated Dalit writing has made, as it has finally begun to gain the serious recognition and appreciation it so undoubtedly deserves within the vast realm of literary works. Within the expressions of these talented writers, one can vividly hear the resounding roar of denial, anger, despair, and profound intellectual prejudices. Furthermore, they valiantly shed light on the barbaric perception that society often forces upon the untouchables, as most translations eloquently reflect the simmering undercurrents of violence that permeate their conversations, themes that have historically found limited space within the realm of Indian English literature.

3 | CONCLUSION

The present article aims to comprehensively analyze and delve into the intricate usage of language across different epochs of Dalit expression, focusing on the profound manner in which Dalits depict and encapsulate the raw realities within the vast expanse of various writings in Indian English literature. It is discernible that the expression of Dalits vividly manifests itself throughout the realm of literature, etching an indelible mark on the sentiments and consciousness of readers. Remarkably, Dalit expression occupies a preeminent and meritorious position within the vast tapestry of Indian writing in English, commanding attention and admiration. Every facet of existence, devoid of exception, has been irrevocably touched and impacted by the scrutiny and exploration of Dalit expression, becoming a poignant testimony to their enduring suffering, arduous struggles, and profound ruminations. The pervasive societal stigma as well as the perpetual state of marginalization, unrelentingly permeates every arena and discipline of Dalit writings within the rich tapestry of Indian English literature, further emphasizing the potency and significance of their words.

India is the land of snake charmers where chaos is part of routine life. India remains entirely patriarchal and caste-ridden. Perhaps, these are the characteristics of the country, that is why all through several stories are still into the news regarding the bride burnings and female feticides and there are around 6.8 crores of people live in abject poverty and live such an economic condition, in which fulfill his/her basic educational requirement is unable to optimize up to the age of 32 to 50. Nearly 85% of the people who are a part of the great circus of Indian democracy are anguished because of their caste, and the conditions will not change until and unless untouchables are going to complete forced social ostracism. Caste system, due to its prevalence, hoards social ostracism and inapproachability, fill 70 percent of the rural scheduled caste population under the category of bonded labor and 75.9 percent Dalit laborers are paid less than Rs.100 per month, because a small percentage of rich people hold the upper hand.

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EVALUATING THE ROLE OF WOMEN WARD MEMBERS IN THE PERFORMANCE OF PANCHAYATS IN SIVASAGAR DEVELOPMENT BLOCK

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Abstract: This paper examines the role and performance of women ward members in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) with special reference to the Sivasagar Development Block in Assam. Following the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and the Assam Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, the participation of women in grassroots governance has increased through mandated reservations. However, the study reveals that while women attend meetings regularly and engage in ward-level issues, their involvement in broader decisionmaking remains limited due to social, structural, and institutional constraints. Based on empirical findings from two Gaon Panchayats, the study highlights the need for capacity building, financial autonomy, and institutional support to enhance women's leadership in rural governance.

Keywords: Panchayati Raj Institutions, Women Leadership, Grassroots Democracy, Political Empowerment, Gender Participation.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Panchayat as a grassroot political institution has been in existence in India since time immemorial in one form or the other. However, women never occupied any important position in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and their participation was almost non-existent due to the predominance of certain social evils like the rigid patriarchal system, purdah system, illiteracy, superstition and traditional beliefs. Women had an important role in household work, and economy of the family was mainly in the hands of men. Politics as well as the decision making process was considered an exclusively male domain.

However, the constitution makers inserted into the constitution of India, promulgated in 1950 an article (Article 40) in the Directive Principles of State Policy providing for setting up of village Panchayats and endowed them with such powers and authority as may be necessary for them to function as units of self-government. In pursuance of this directive, village Panchayats was set up in almost all the states. But emphasis was not given on the empowerment of women through ensuring their participation in Panchayats. So participation of women in Panchayats was either microscopic or nonexistent. In 1957, a committee headed by Balwant Rai Mehta was set up by the Central Government to examine and report

on the community development project and National Extension Service. Along with other recommendations like three tier Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), the Mehta Committee recommended co-option of two women each in all three tiers of Panchayats, who could look after the welfare of women and children. Thus it provided for a role of women in Panchayats. But some of the states still did not provide for co-option for women and some other states accepted the recommendation in principle but did not implement it. On the other hand the co-opted women had marginal power and role to participate in the decision making process. Thus the Mehta Committee recommendations failed to empower women practically. In 1974, the Committee on the status of women in India recommended the establishment of statutory women‟s Panchayat, at the village level to ensure greater participation of women in the political process. The recommendation was only implemented by the states of Andhra Pradesh and Maharastra. The other states did not pay any attention to the recommendations. The Ashok Mehta Committee (1977) also recommended co-option in Zila Parishad for those women who secured maximum number of votes though not elected. All these recommendations were in vain because these were not implemented properly. Till 1970‟s there was no demand by any women organizations to reserve seats for women in the decision making political organizations. There was resistance to and outright rejection of reservation policy for women. Stands began to change substantially after the publication of Committee on the Status of Women Report in 1974 and in the face of plethora of pathetic political experience. Since 1970‟s support to positive measure for women began gaining ground strongly for local government. Shedding off their initial inertia some women‟s organizations became vocal in demanding inclusion of women‟s issues like dowry, rape, violence against women into political agenda and urged protected representation in political institutions and employment. Majority of women organizations began to push for reservation in PRIs. They explained their stand by the logic that reservation would help in breaking the barrier of fear and resistance that have prevented rural women from entering into formal political institutions (Mandal2003:58). The National Perspective Plan (NPP) for women (1988) for the first time gave some valuable recommendations regarding the reservation of seats for women in the PRIs. The final report of NPP recommended for women: (i) thirty percent reservation of total seats in local governments-both Panchayats and municipalities-with higher representation of Dalit, Tribal and weaker sections of the society “wherever possible”, (ii) thirty percent reservation of executive heads in all Panchayati Raj bodies and a „certain percentage of chief executive‟, (iii) reservation of certain percentage of constituencies in lower Panchayati Raj tiers as exclusively women‟s constituencies, and (iv) reservation of fifty percent of all grassroots functionaries. The 73rd constitution Amendment Act which was passed by Parliament on December 22, 1992, proved to be a revolutionary step in the field of democratic decentralization of power and a landmark in the history of Panchayati Raj in general and the political empowerment of women in particular. Because, this amendments not only provided constitutional status to the rural local self-government institution but also provided an uniform policy throughout the country in their constitution and power. According to this amendment, it became compulsory for the states to set up PRIs and to provide them 29 subjects as mentioned in the 11th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The most important provisions made by these amendments are the compulsory and periodical elections and the 33% reservation of seats for the women at the grass-root level democratic institutions. In view of this amendment, the state government throughout the country made necessary amendments in their Panchayati Raj Act. To cope with the new system, the government of Assam has also passed the Assam Panchyati Raj Act 1994. This new act opened up a new chapter for people‟s participation specially for women by providing 33% reservation to them. That is one-third of the total member of seats in local bodies in all levels and one-third of the total member of chairpersons in gaon panchayat will be reserved for women including ST, SC women. This would be done on a rotation basis among different Panchayats at each level. Thus, the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act marked a watershed in the representation of women in the grass-root politics through the PRIs in the country. In 2001, the first election of PRIs under the Assam Panchayat Act 1994 was held, wherein 7851(33.45 percent) women got elected as members of Gaon Panchayats, 746(34.73 percent) to Anchalik Panchayats and 117(30 percent) to Zila Parishad. Thus the Panchayat election held in 2001 provided great opportunity to a large number of women to participate in PRIs (Das 2009: 30). This first experiment of women representation in the PRIs in the state of Assam had

reflected their efficiency and accountability to the people as representatives and that women of Assam are fit for active participation in decentralized democracy.

Women empowerment is one of the major objectives of 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, which provided reservation of one third of the seats in the PRIs for women. The participation of women in PRIs is considered essential not only for ensuring their active political participation in the democratic process, but also for realizing the development goals of women. No doubt the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, with a view to involving women in decision making, provided psychological empowerment and a sense of political efficacy to those who had been left powerless to intense public decisions that affect them. But it also raised some issues which are related to tradition and socio economic background of the society. In this regard it is important to study whether women have managed to overcome all the ageold traditional obstacles to actively participate in the PRIs. These obstacles rose mainly from the perception of society with regard to public life of women, capabilities of women in decision making, socio-economic disabilities of women like illiteracy, poverty, ignorance, in assertiveness etc., insecurity in the political activities, capacity to stand against social impediments like the division of castes, class, patriarchal attitude, ethnic, religious separation etc.

To study all these issues crucial to the empowerment of women. In this paper attempt has been made to explore the role of women representatives in the decision making, planning, implementation and evaluation process. In a rural society, women are considered basically as house wives and doing unpaid household activities are considered as their primary duty. Under the circumstances it would be pertinent to closely look into the reality of the emerging trend of political representation of women in the specific context of our selected universe. Democracy in comprehensive sense and grassroots democracy in specific cannot be successful without proper and adequate representation of women and their effective role as development participants and decision makers. Therefore it is necessary to examine the role of women ward members in grassroots politics in the context of peripheral. Hence, it is justified to undertake a study on women representation in an intensive manner. An empirical study on the women representatives would give us a scientific knowledge on the empowerment of women through Panchayati Raj.

By observing all these points the researcher has taken an attempt to conduct an empirical study on the Role of Women Ward Members in the performance of Panchayat services with special reference to Sivasagar Development Block in Sivasagar District, Assam.

2 | OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

a. To study the views and observations of women representatives on various aspects of PRI and rural development.

b. To understand the problems faced by women with reference to their participation in Panchayati Raj Institution.

c. To examine whether there is a need for formulating new state policy for socioeconomic and political empowerment of women.

3 | METHODOLOGY

The approach of the study is historico-analytical. The analytical method helps in critically analyzing the various aspects of the study. Such an approach also helps in understanding the attitude and behavior of the respondents. At the same time historical approach helps to know the various facts and figures pertaining to the study. Besides that behavioural approach has also been adopted in the course of study.

Sivasagar Development Block has 17 Gaon Panchayats. Out of the 17 (Seventeenth) Gaon Panchayats in the Sivasagar Development Block (Banmukh, Betbari, Chaulkara, Cherekapar, Desang Dhai Ali, Desangmukh, Desangpar, Gargaon, Hahchora, Khelua, Konwarpur, Lachit, Lakuwa, Nagar Mahal, Panbecha, Santiur and
Silakuti) two Panchayats has been selected purposefully i.e. Cherekaper Gaon Panchayat (CGP) and Betbari Gaon Panchayat (BGP). The total population resides within these two panchayats is 18027, which bears 10.49% of total population in Sivasagar Development Block.

In 2013 panchayat election due to 33% reservation of seats for women, a sizeable number of women came forward and represent the grass-root level democratic institutions. In this election 6 women in CGP and 5 women in BGP were able to get elected to the panchayats.

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data has been collected from the field work by using questionnaires, official records collected from concerned offices. Moreover, for collecting necessary information, the researcher has personally interviewed the elected women member of Panchayats as well as the officials of the Panchayats. The secondary data has been collected from Printed Books, Journals, News Papers, Articles and publications of the different offices of the Government of Assam connected with the study.

4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Panchayati Raj Institution is the prime instrument of decentralization at the grass root level. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment provides for decentralized administration through local government units at district, block and village levels. They act as the vehicle in carrying back to the people the power that really belongs to them.

It is to be mentioned here that a good number of women are seemed to be interested in public life for the first time after the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India. The 73rd Amendment ensured the active participation of women in the gaon panchayat by making 33% reservation to them. So, it has been considered essential to examine the role of performance of the women members in the management of panchayat services.

Since in this paper it is intended to examine the performance of the Women Members, it is deliberately decided to deal with the services which are considered as important civic problems by the respondents. It is to be noted here that the problems faced by the people of both the panchayats under study are more or less same.

Construction and maintenance of roads is one of the most important tasks of every gaon panchayats. PRI spends a huge amount of money under this head but without any satisfactory progress. The road condition in the both CGP and BGP is observes to be dissatisfactory. During the rainy season, in some parts of the village it becomes impossible for the people to enter into the villages due to the mud. As a result the people of both the panchayats are not happy with the services of construction and maintenance of roads. The researcher finds that the road condition in some villages is quite unsatisfactory during his visit to the locality for data collection.

Like roads, the drainage and culvert is also very important for the villagers to lead a smooth life. Lack of good drainage system crates lot of troubles to the villagers because of water logging. The gaon panchayat has a great responsibility in constructing and maintaining the drains within the panchayats area to protect the villagers from artificial flood due to water logging. But it is significant to note here that there is no drainage system what so ever in the villagers under these two panchayats. It is significant to note that the villagers themselves made some bamboo bridge for their convenience where culvert is necessary. During the interview, majority of the respondents held the view that culvert and drainage service is poor.

Water supply is another important service to be performed by the Gaon Panchayat according to the constitution of India. In the Act it has been mentioned that every panchayat body shall make arrangement for the supply of pure drinking water for the inhabitants of the areas within its jurisdiction. The gaon panchayat shall make adequate provision for securing that the water supply is at all-time pure and suitable for the human consumption. Water is a basic requirement for human life. But it has been observed that the provisions for water supply are not adequate in both the panchayats to meet the needs of the common people of the villages. Thus it can be said that although both the panchayats have installed some tube-wells in panchayats area but a large section of the people are still deprived of pure drinking water. Both the panchayats under study fail to fulfill the requirement of the people.

The study reveals the following important functions which have been undertaken by the panchayats during the last few years.

Implementation of MGNREGA Scheme and distribution of Job Card.

1. Distribution and construction of IAY House.
2. Implementation of SGRY Scheme.
3. Construction of school building and kitchen room.
4. Handloom and Weaving.
5. Old Age pension.
6. Formation of Self Help Group for poverty Alleviation.
7. Distribution of Galvanized sheet (Tinpat).
8. Construction of Road and Culvert.
9. Distribution of relief in flood affected area.
10. Sanitation facility to BPL Family.

Although the above mentioned functions are performed by selected panchayats, but the people are not satisfied with the service.

The Gaon Panchayat in Assam has not so far given attention to recreational facilities. Provisions for gardens, parks, playgrounds have an intimate bearing on the life of the people. But in Assam there are large number of panchayats where do not have any park and garden. In CGP and BGP also there is no park and garden maintained by the panchayats. It has been seen that in both the panchayats the children and younger people play on the agricultural land when it is free from agriculture. Through there are some school playgrounds in both the panchayats in different villages but they are now in bad condition due to lack of proper maintenance. It is also to be noted that no plan has taken by both the panchayats for constructing garden, playgrounds or recreational places.

Thus from the foregoing analysis about the performance of panchayat service, it can be said that both the panchayats have not been able to provide a reasonable level of services to the people. Considering the poor performance of the services of the two panchayats it is felt necessary to examine the role of the women members in their respective panchayat. As the Gaon Panchayat perform their services as per the decisions taken in the panchayat‟s meeting and developmental programmes approved by them. The following questions were asked to the women members to know their individual role in the panchayat meetings, their participation and commitment for the development of their respective panchayat areas.

Table-1.1: Do you attend the meetings of the panchayat regularly?

Response	Cherekaper Gaon Panchayat	Betbari Gaon Panchayat
Yes	6 (100%)	4 (100%)
No	---	---
Total	6 (100)	4 (100)

It appears from the above table that all the women members from both CGP and BGP regularly attended the meetings of their respective gaon panchayat. Though all of them said that they attended the meetings regularly yet at the same time they also mentioned that occasionally they failed to attend the meetings of the panchayat due to some of their personal problems, such as inconvenience of the date of meeting, their preoccupation in some other jobs, family affairs, illness etc. Regular attendance of the women members in the gaon panchayat meetings develops inter-courses and interactions with the members in taking decisions. This also helps in getting experiences on different rural problems which are generally come up in the agenda of the panchayats meetings. Regular attendance of the women members in the panchayats meetings may be considered as a determinant factor of active participations. This healthy sign has been demonstrated by the women members of both the two gaon panchayats.

Table-1.2: Do you participate in the discussions of the Panchayat Meetings?

Response	Cherekaper Gaon Panchayat	Betbari Gaon Panchayat
Yes	4 (66.67%)	3 (75%)
No	2 (33.33%)	1 (25%)
Total	6 (100)	4 (100)

From the data of the above table it has been observed that in CGP 66.67% took part in the discussion on various subjects in the panchayat meetings whereas 33.33% did not. In BGP also the picture is same where 75% took part in the discussion and 25% did not take part. The table indicates that majority of the women members of both the panchayats take part in the discussions. When asked the reasons of nonparticipation to those who replied „No", some of them stated reasons like their inconvenience to take part in the discussions for lack of knowledge in the subject while some other stated that they are not experienced to take part etc. inexperience, hesitation to speak in a gathering particularly before male members, lack of knowledge on subjects of discussion might be some of the reasons of non-participation of some women member.

Table-1.3: Do you take part in the decision making process?

Response	Cherekaper Gaon Panchayat	Betbari Gaon Panchayat
Yes	2 (33.33%)	1 (25%)
No	4 (66.67%)	3 (75%)
Total	6 (100)	4 (100)

The above table reveals that in CGP 33.33% took part in the decision making process whereas 66.67 did not take part in the decision making process. In BGP again 25% took party in the decision making process. When asked the reasons for their non-participation in the decision making, most of them replied their inconvenience. One women member went to the extent of saying that if at all they participate, their views are not generally considered at the time of decision making. This implies the male domination over the female in the meetings of the panchayat.

Another important question that relates to the development of their respective wards has been asked and the responses have been shown in table 1.4.

Table-1.4: Do you put any proposal for the development of your ward?

Response	Cherekaper Gaon Panchayat	Betbari Gaon Panchayat

Yes	3 (50%)	3 (75%)
No	3 (50%)	1 (25%)
Total	6 (100)	4 (100)

The data of the above table indicates that in both the panchayats the women members i.e. 50% and 75% respectively put proposals for developmental works. Only 25% in BGP and again 50% in CGP did not put any such proposals.

To know whether the women members are only concerned to their respective ward or the panchayat areas as a whole- a question was asked and this has been displayed in table 1.5.

Table-1.5: Do you put any proposal for the development of the panchayat area as a whole?

Response	Cherekaper Gaon Panchayat	Betbari Gaon Panchayat
Yes	1 (16.67%)	0 (0%)
No	5 (83.33%)	4 (100%)
Total	6 (100)	4 (100)

The above table depict that the women members are more concerned for the development of their own wards, and they submit developmental proposals concerning their respective wards only. It is seen that only one women member of CGP put proposal for the development of the panchayat area as a whole. The table depict unique data probably the women members are more concerned for their political gain instead of working as a true representative of the people.

In order to understand the attitude of the women members towards the development of women of the panchayat area a question was asked and this has been put in table 1.6.

Table-1.6: Do you propose any programme for the upliftment of the status of women of your ward?

Response	Cherekaper Gaon Panchayat	Betbari Gaon Panchayat
Yes	1 (16.67%)	1 (25%)
No	5 (83.33%)	3 (75%)
Total	6 (100)	4 (100)

The data of the above table shows that only one member i.e. 16.6% in CGP proposed the programmes for the upliftment of the status of the women of her own ward. But it is surprising to note that majority of others i.e. 83.33% in CGP and 75% in BGP did not put forward any proposal for the upliftment of the women in the panchayat areas, which is very unfortunate.

It has been said earlier that both the panchayats failed to provide civic amenities to the satisfaction of the people. The basic requirements of the people such as roads, drainage, bridge, culvert, water supply etc. are not in good condition in both the panchayats. As a result, the people are not satisfied with the services provided by both the panchayats and still facing a lot of problems. The women members of both the panchayat raised their voice more frequently in the meetings of the panchayat about the deplorable condition of the roads in their ward but no proper action has yet been taken to solve this problem.

In the CGP flood problem emerged as a serious one and this has been discussed many times in the panchayat meetings and with the MLA also. But no action has yet been taken for the solution of this problem and hence it has damaged not only the agricultural land, but also rural houses, roads etc. The women members of both the panchayats were about this problem and as such raised this problem in the meetings of their respective gaon panchayat. But till date it bores no fruits.

On the question of distribution of Ration Card as well as distribution of IAY houses, the women members of both the panchayats have shown their concern at different times. But due to unawareness of the women members as well as male domination in decision making process of rural development programmes, their voice in selecting beneficiaries and in other decision making matters of rural planning have got little importance.

The women members were also concerned with some other service like eye treatment, distribution of mosquito net, widow pension, old age pension, distribution of galvanized sheet (tinpat) and other materials in favour of the poor people of their respective ward.

Key Findings

1. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment and the Assam Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, with mandatory 33% reservation for women, significantly increased women‟s numerical participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), including the Sivasagar Development Block.
2. All women ward members of Cherekaper Gaon Panchayat (CGP) and Betbari Gaon Panchayat (BGP) regularly attended panchayat meetings. However, active participation in discussions and decision-making was limited: only 33.33% in CGP and 25% in BGP reported participating in decision-making processes.
3. A majority of women members prioritized development proposals for their respective wards rather than the entire panchayat area. Very few proposed initiatives for upliftment of women specifically (16.67% in CGP and 25% in BGP), showing limited advocacy for gender-specific concerns.
4. Many women members felt their views were not considered seriously in decisionmaking, reflecting continued male dominance and marginalization of women‟s voices within PRIs.
5. Essential services like road maintenance, drainage, drinking water supply, and recreational infrastructure were found to be inadequate in both CGP and BGP. People were dissatisfied with the panchayat's performance despite women members showing concern and raising issues in meetings.
6. Women members indicated that lack of funds, delayed disbursement, and bureaucratic interference from officials like BDOs and MLAs obstructed effective implementation of projects. They lacked functional and financial autonomy, often working under pressure from higher authorities.
7. PRIs were involved in various central and state schemes like MGNREGA, IAY, SGRY, Old Age Pension, SHG promotion, etc. Women members showed awareness and concern regarding ration cards, flood relief, and beneficiary selection, but their influence remained limited due to procedural and structural barriers.
8. The study indicates that mere presence of women in PRIs does not ensure better service delivery or governance. Structural issues like lack of capacity building, patriarchal control, poor funding, and political manipulation dilute their effectiveness.

5 | CONCLUSION

From the above analysis it is observed that the women members certainly played a constructive role in the performance of the panchayat service. But they are only the decision makers. The implementation part lies with the functionaries of rural development. The functionaries when asked about the implementation of various programmes as per the decision taken in the meetings of the panchayat, they said that fund is the main problem before them. Funds are not allotted in time. So, it is difficult for them to complete the works in time. It is seen that full functional and financial autonomy has not been granted

to the panchayats till now. The President, Ward Members reported that they have to work under the influence of government officials like Block Development Officer (B.D.O.), Junior Engineer and officials of DRDA who always try to impose their will on the functioning of the panchayats. The list of beneficiary of any programme prepared in lower level has been altered in upper levels. They also reported that financial autonomy have not granted to them. The higher authority always uses to curtail some amount of the allotted fund. They have to take any decision under the influence of government officials and political leaders, like local MP, MLAs, who directly influenced and try to manipulate all the activities of the panchayats. From the above analysis it may be assumed that gender is not the only factor for the excellent functioning of the panchayat. This has been well proved in the functioning of the CGP and BGP under Sivasagar Development Block.

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CULTURAL FUSION AND HEGEMONY IN EARLY ASSAM: VAISHNAVISM AND NARAKA

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Abstract: In early Assam, Brahmanical religion and culture were introduced through various aspects, including food, religion, dress, and architecture. Another aspect of such changes occurred when a new mythical character was introduced, which played a role in the Brahmanical religion. Naraka was such a character that it was sometimes presented as a medium for the acculturation of two different traditions. In this paper, the process and nature of acculturation are focused on. Different factional attitudes to the Naraka culture were visible throughout the centuries. Eventually, the Brahmanical traditional hegemony became dominant in shaping and moulding character. In the early two centuries, the Naraka story was not referenced in the inscriptions. Later on, the Naraka story was adopted and connected to the Early Assam on a Pan Indian basis and also in terms of early Assam. Naraka became the tool of Hinduization or legitimation in early Assam.

Keywords: Naraka, Acculture, Tradition, Inscription, Legitimation

1 | INTRODUCTION

The historical study of early Assam is codified with the inscriptional sources and Kalika Purana. In the social, political, and cultural history of Assam, Naraka is prominently important in understanding the legitimizations of the non-Aryan statehood for the newly emerged Hinduized or Sanskritized state mechanism. Along with the Naraka, the Vaishnavism was closely related, as the father of Naraka was Vishnu. Different religious scriptures at the pan-Indian and regional levels give us different formations about Naraka and Vishnu. Most of the inscriptions of early Assam have different information about Naraka. Various scholars and authors give prominent importance to the Naraka story. The inscriptions of early Assam belong from the 5th century AD to the 12th century AD. The timeline was very long. The Naraka story saw some changes in the inscriptions from different centuries. This has not been focused on yet. The changes are like waves; they do not have huge structural differences in the story, but some minor changes give some valuable interpretations to the historical understanding of the Naraka story.

2 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Vishnu as in pan Indian level

In the *puranic* Hinduism, Vishnu was a very prominent deity, and still, the Hindu religion has a prominent context. But comparatively the Vishnu was a minor god in the Rig-Veda as a solar deity (Flood, 2004). Vasudeva and Krishna, previously different deities, fused with Vishnu in the Bhagavat Gita. *Narayana*, another name of Vishnu, was identified with Vishnu in the *Budhayana Dharmasutra*. The Taittiriya Aranyaka states that Narayana, Vasudeva, and Vishnu were the same. Here, Hari also identified with Vishnu as the supreme lord (Flood, 2004). Nilima Dutta states that the thesis Narayana possibly originally belonged to the *Pancharatra* worship, which fused with the Vasudeva Krishna traditions (Dutta, 2009). During the Gupta time, Vaishnavism became an important religious sect. Samudragupta's regime was marked as a milestone for the development of Vaishnavism as a Bhagavata form of Vaishnavism (Flood,2004). The tribal origin Vishnu sect notably developed as Vaishnavism of puranic Hinduism as a religious sect.

Naraka story at the Pan-Indian level

In the Mahabharata, sage Lomasa described Naraka in the Vana parva that he appeared in the status of Indra by a thousand years of *Tapah,* and Krishna killed Naraka respecting the request of the gods. Boar incarnation and the rescuing of Earth are also mentioned in this episode. Naraka was not the son of Vishnu. In the Udogya parvan, the *Pragjyotisha* was mentioned as the great citadel where the *Naraka* lived. Naraka stole away the earring of Aditi, and Krishna killed him and earned fame. In the Dorna parva, Vishnu gave a Vaishnava Astra to Naraka as per the request of the Prithibi (Sharma, 1978). In this epic, a thin mythical connection was visible between the *Naraka* and *Vishnu*. But as a son of Vishnu, Naraka was not highlighted. The composition of the Mahabharata was dated as 400 BC to 400 AD. Naraka was directly related as the son of Vishnu in the *Puranas*. Naraka stole the earring of Aditi and due to that, Krishna killed him. The birth of the Naraka was also mentioned from the earth and the incarnation of the Boar. Krishna married lots of women from the harem of Naraka (Harivamsha), and the Bhagavata Purana depicted the same story (Sharma,1978). The *purana* was written in the 4th to 5th century AD (Singh,2008). Such *Puranic* Hinduism created the connections between Naraka and the incarnation of Vishnu.

Vishnu and Naraka in the inscription of early Assam

The *puranic* Hinduism is reflected in various ways in the inscriptions of early Assam. In the 5th-7th century A.D, the Umachal *Rock Inscription* (*URI)* of Surendravarman constructed a temple to Balabhadra. Balabhadra emanated from the supreme deity Vasudeva and Vayu, which was an important dogma of the *Panchatantra* mode of worship of Vaishnavism (Dutta,2008). Pushyavarmana was compared with Vishnu, and his wife with Lakshmi. Dubi copperplate Inscription (*DCPI*). Narayanavarmana is mentioned as the incarnation of Narayana (*DCPI*) (Sharma,1978). Krishna was mentioned as an enemy of the demons (v53). Suparthistharvarmana and Bhaskarvarmana were compared with Balarama and Achyut (v-69). The boar incarnation of wheel holder is the father of Naraka (*NCPI* V 4). Hari holds Lakshmi to his bosom (v19). During the 5th to 7th century A.D., the *Brahmanical* Vaishnavism reflected as a form of Vaishnavism in the very beginning of early Assam. The Puranic developed Vaishnavism made its impact, and this sect was continuously marked as an important religious sect in Assam. The *URI* of Surendravarman has no information about Naraka in the 5th century A.D. *Barganga Rock Inscriptions* of Bhutivarman have no reference to Vishnu in the 6th century. In the 7th century A.D, there were three inscriptions of Bhaskarvarma.[12] Naraka was mentioned as the winner against *Indra* and snatched the earring from the mother of Indra *(*verse 3). The *Nidhanpur Copperplate Inscription* (*NCPI)*belongs to the 7th century A.D.[13]. The boar incarnation of the wheel

holder is the father of the Naraka (verse 4). The inscription of Harjarvarman is the *Hayunthal Copperplate Inscription* (*HCPI*) of the 9th century A.D. The descendant of the *Prithivi* will be called the *Mleccha* (verse 2).[14] In the 9th century A. D, another copperplate inscription was found in the *Tezpur* district, namely the *Tezpur Copper Plate Inscription* (TCP). *Naraka* was mentioned as the son of Adhivarah (an incarnation of Vishnu), who stole away the earring of *Aditi* (verse 3). Krishna killed Naraka (verse 4). Bhagadutta, a son of Naraka, worshiped Siva with penance and politeness (verse 5). Siva pleased him and gave the lordship of the *Pragjyotisha* for their progeny (verse 6). In the *Uttarbari Copperplate Inscription* (*UCI)*, Vishnu was mentioned as Upendra and the father of Naraka, who had a friendship with the *Asura* (verse 3). During the 11th century, in the *Bargaon Copperplate Inscription* (*BCP)*verse 3, Hari is mentioned in the form of a Boar. In the Gauhati *Copperplate Inscription* (*GCI),* Mahabarah is compared with Pasupati as the lord of the whole mankind (v-2). Boar was mentioned as a form of Hari (V-4). From Vishnu and Prithvi, the *Naraka* was born (v-5). In the Gachtal copperplate inscription (*GCPI),* Boar saves the earth, which was an incarnation of Vishnu (v-4). Erotic sentiment of goddess Earth was provoked by the touch of the lord Vishnu, and Naraka was born (v-5).

In the GCII, Mahabarah is compared with Pasupati, the whole of mankind (v-2). Boar was mentioned as a form of Hari (V-4). From Vishnu and Prithvi, the *Naraka* was born (v-5). In the *GCPI,* Vishnu was mentioned as the source of the world as Brahma (v-2). Boar saves the earth, which was an incarnation of boar (v-4). The erotic sentiment of Goddess Earth was provoked by the touch of lord Vishnu, and Naraka was born (v-5).

In the first half of the 12th century, Dharmapala issued the *Khanamukh Copperplate Inscription (KCI).* The *Naraka* story was depicted the same as other inscriptions had depicted it (verse 2). Another inscription of Dharmapala was the *Pushpabhadra Copperplate Inscription* (*PCID*) issued in the first half of the 12th century. The incarnation of the boar by Vishnu was depicted, and the story of Naraka was also mentioned (verse 1).

3 | CONCLUSION

From 400 BCE to 400 A.D., Naraka character emerged in the Mahabharata that which was gradually related to the Earth and Vishnu. In the Mahabharata, two sides of his face were reviled so that he would get the status like Indra through the Tapah, and again he was killed by Krishna due to his bad act. In the puranic tradition, Naraka was highly related to Vishnu through several mythical stories. In particular, in Assam in the 5th and 6th centuries, there was not any kind of information about Naraka. In the NCPI of the 7th century Naraka story was depicted. He steals the earring of Aditi. Naraka, son of the adivarah, the Puranic story now relates Naraka with Vishnu and Prithvi. Throughout the 9th-century inscription, the story became the same with some minor changes that can be seen. Naraka made friends with Asura and worshiped Asura. Naraka will be called Mleccha, and he was killed by Krishna. Bhagadutta was installed on the throne of the Pragjoytisha. Bhagadutta was a Siva worshiper. In the 11th century inscription depicted that due to the erotic feelings of the Prithibi, the Naraka was born. From the 7th to the 12th century, the Naraka story was related to Vishnu. The story was driven by the Brahmins, and again, it was remade to legitimize the Hinduization in early Assam. In the 7th century, only the Naraka story had arrived in the inscription. In the last century, Naraka was trying to portrait as a bad character. This process was adopted by the Brahmins to legitimize the statehood. Firstly, the Brahmanical tradition connected the Vaishnav culture to Naraka. The killing of Naraka again symbolized the power of the Brahmanical God. Maybe it could be cultural hegemony over non-Aryan traditions. The fusion of the Naraka and Vishnu is depicted in the different inscriptions, but the whole story represents the cultural hegemony of the Brahmanical culture.

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE DETERMINANTS OF HOUSEHOLD SAVINGS AMONG RURAL HOUSEHOLDS: A STUDY FROM GOLAGHAT DISTRICT, ASSAM

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Abstract: Savings is an important determinant of economic growth of a country. It is the part of disposable income which is kept aside for future consumption. The Classical, Neo-classical and New growth theories also highlighted the importance of saving as a determinant of aggregate production function of an economy. Empirical evidences also show that countries with a higher saving rate will have a higher level of output per capita. In this paper an attempt has been made to identify the determinants of saving among rural households by using Multiple Regression Model and for this a sample survey of 120 samples collected randomly from Gomariguri village of Golaghat District, Assam. The results of the study reveal that gender, primary occupation, income level, and SHG membership significantly influence monthly per capita savings. In contrast, variables such as age, education, and dependency ratio do not have a statistically significant impact on savings. The findings highlight the importance of financial inclusion for women, income diversification through non-farm employment, and the role of SHGs in fostering savings behavior**.**

Keywords: Gross Domestic Savings, Household Savings, Economic Growth

1 | INTRODUCTION

Savings is an important determinant of economic growth of a country. It is the part of disposable income which is kept aside for future consumption. At macro level aggregate volume of saving is considered as the source of investment and hence rate of capital formation and finally economic growth depends on it. Again at micro level or individual level household savings ensure stable level of consumption during the time of income reduction and also provide safety for a household in the time of future uncertainty. Economic growth theories and various empirical researches revealed the positive relationship between savings and economic growth. In classical model, the fundamental proposition is that economic growth is functionally related to the rate of investment and rate of investment is functionally related to rate of saving. The Harrod-Domar growth model highlighted that rate of economic growth depends upon capital-output ratio and marginal propensity to save or saving ratio.

Neo -classical growth theories also highlighted the importance of saving as a determinant of aggregate production function of an economy. Robert Solow (1956) shows a positive relationship between savings and economic growth which states that increases in savings increases capital accumulation. Capital accumulation increases investment which leads to economic growth of a country. The endogenous growth theory postulates by Romer (1986) asserts that a high rate of savings increases capital investment which are essential for higher economic growth. The theory also asserts that, as savings increases, total savings are not only invested in accumulation of physical capital but a part of it goes to human capital formation. In addition, Lewis (1955) explained a process of economic development of the labour surplus developing countries where it is advocated that an increase in saving promotes capital formation and investment which accelerates the pace of income growth and economic development. The vicious circle of poverty, according to Prof. Nurkse (1953), can easily be broken in underdeveloped countries through increasing the volume of real saving. In the era of globalization and perfect capital mobility, domestic savings and investment can make a country self reliant, can help achieving stable growth path (Maitra, 2017). Thus, higher rate of savings increases capital formation and investment, which leads to economic growth.

In India mobilization of domestic savings is necessary for inclusive growth. India has also traditionally relied largely on national savings to fuel the investment needs, with relatively less reliance on foreign saving compared with less developed countries. Even the 1991 liberalization that led to an increase in foreign capital inflows has not significantly changed this scenario (Sadavarte & Arora, 2021). Immobility and low rate of saving in India can be attribute to numbers of socio- economic imperfections like lack of banking and other financial institution in rural areas, low per capita income, poverty, unemployment, high marginal propensity to consume , high dependency ratio, illiteracy, lack of financial knowledge and many more.

Further, North-east India has some common features like high rate of population growth, high dependence on agriculture, acute poverty and unemployment, low income, illiteracy, lack of formal financial institutions and all these ultimately resulting in low aggregate saving. According to NABARD All India Rural Financial Inclusion Survey 2016-17, average savings made by saver households in the last one year by the states of Meghalaya Rs. 10037, Manipur Rs. 10975, Mizoram Rs. 10154, Nagaland Rs. 14033, Arunachal Pradesh Rs. 17742, Assam Rs. 12315, Tripura Rs. 8411 and Sikkim Rs. 11047 which is lower than the national average of Rs.18007.

Household sector savings as a percentage of GDP was 23.6% in 2011-12 and declines to 18.4% in 2022-23. In this periods Gross domestic savings (GDS) declines from 34.6% to 30.2%. Since, this decline is on account of household sector; therefore, in this paper we are trying to focus on the saving behaviour of the household sector.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of empirical studies have discussed the determinants of savings and their impact on economic growth.

Fredriksson and Staal (2022) analyzed the determinants of household savings in 14 OECD countries. The results of the study revealed that unanticipated income, unanticipated inflation, and the lagged savings rate have positive effects on savings. There is no significant effect of the interest rate or the old-age dependency ratio on savings. Sisay (2023) discussed the rural households' saving status and its determinants in the southwest region of Ethiopia. The results of the study showed that the education level of the household head, farm income, financial literacy, and participation in non-farm activities significantly and positively affect both the decision to save and the intensity of saving. However, distance from financial institutions is negatively correlated with both.

Loayza and Shankar (2000), Athukorala and Sen (2001), Agrawal, Sahoo, and Dash (2010), Maitra (2017) and Ghosh and Nath (2023) have studied the determinants of private saving rate in India. They have found that share of agriculture in GDP, real interest rates, per capita income, and financial development, spread of banking facilities, the rate of inflation, dependency ratio, terms of trade changes and inward remittances, increase foreign and public savings and increased corporate saving are the significant determinants of private savings in India.

Hazra and Mitra (2024) studied the key factors influencing household savings and their impact on economic growth. It is found that better-educated households with smaller family sizes tend to save a larger portion of their income. Urban-rural divides, access to financial institutions, and local economic conditions all impact household saving rates in India. Unny (2012) and Gedela (2012) attempted to identify the determinants of saving of rural households in India. They found that the level of income, value of assets, and level of education positively influence savings, age of the household head; sex, dependency ratio, income and medical expenditure are significantly influencing the saving behavior in the study area. Dependency ratio and medical expenditure has significantly negative impact on household savings in the study areas.

Basumatari (2015), Nath (2021), Gogoi (2021), Nath & Elahi (2023) and Phukan (2024) have studied the determinants of household savings in Assam. They have found that levels of income, educational status, occupation, size of the family, number of earners, gender and size of land holdings are the significant determinants of household savings. Gogoi (2021) also found that marital status and caste are insignificant determinants of savings in the study area.

Thus, private savings or household savings is determined by various socio-economic, demographic, institutional and other factors. Again the household savings behaviour is also differ among the developing and industrial countries, rural and urban households.

3 | OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the paper is to identify the determinants of saving among rural households of Golaghat district, Assam.

4 | METHODOLOGY

Data and Sample

The methodology of the paper is descriptive and analytical. Both primary and secondary data have been used to assist the analysis. The required primary data is collected through direct personal investigation using interview schedule. The field survey was conducted on 1st week of December, 2024. One hundred twenty households were randomly sampled from Gomariguri village of Golaghat district. Random sampling technique has been used to select the households.

Secondary data are collected from publications of World Bank, IMF, Reserve Bank of India, Central Statistical Organization, All India Debt and Investment Survey (AIDIS), NSSO, NITI Aayog, NABARD, Nedfi Databank, etc. The primary data are collected through a structured interview schedule from Gomariguri Village of Golaghat District, Assam.

Design of the Study

The study is based on quantitative research technique. Both econometric and statistical techniques have used to discuss the various findings. To identify the factors affecting the saving habit of sample households of the study area multiple regression model is used.

5 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is argued that Countries with higher rates of savings have had a faster economic growth than those with lower saving rates. Since, savings leads to capital accumulation, which creates greater opportunities for production and the productivity of a country by providing an additional income stream (Ribaj and Mexhuani, 2021). The World Bank also regularly recommends developing countries to adopt policies that increase the saving rate for these countries to achieve a higher rate of economic growth (Sinha & Sinha, 2008). Again, high dependence of the developing countries on foreign fund for investment limits the independence in policy making.

Indian economic growth has been largely enabled by the availability of domestic savings, expressed as a proportion of GDP and the efficiency of resource use (Mohan, 2008). Therefore, for India to achieve 10% growth, the economy needs to garner higher savings and higher investment (Shome, 2006).

From the Table: 1 we have seen that rate of Gross Domestic Savings as a percentage of GDP in India (29.3%) is far below than some of the developed countries like Qatar (61.5%), Singapore (57.5%), Libya (54.5%), Luxembourg (52.3%), China (45.7%), United Arab Emirates (45.4%), and Norway (37.6), Switzerland (37.9%) etc. The developing countries in general have always attributed the intrinsic problems of development to inadequate savings capacity of their populace (Mbat, 1985). Therefore, in the present era of globalization and perfect capital mobility, domestic savings and investment can make a country self reliant, can help achieving stable growth path (Maitra, 2017).

Table:1: Gross Domestic Savings (% of GDP) of some of the Developed Countries

Country	**Gross Domestic savings (as a % of GDP)**
China	45.7
India	29.3
Korea Republic	35.7
Libya	54.5
Luxemburg	52.3
Qatar	61.5
Singapore	57.5
Switzerland	37.9
UAE	45.4
Norway	37.6

Source: *World Bank National Accounts Data, and OECD National Accounts Data Files- 2021*

Trends in Gross Domestic Savings in different sectors

Gross domestic savings of a country consists of Government savings, corporate private savings and household savings. The aggregate savings of all the household of a country is known as household savings. Household savings constitutes the major parts in domestic savings, which is the main source of capital formation and investment for sustainable economic growth. Indian economic growth has been largely enabled by the availability of domestic savings, expressed as a proportion of GDP and the efficiency of resource use (Mohan, 2008). Therefore, for India to achieve 10% growth, the economy needs to garner higher savings and higher investment (Shome, 2006).

Table: 2, Sector Wise Domestic Savings as Share of GDP (in %)

Year	Household Savings	Private corporate sector	Public Sector	Gross Domestic Savings
2011-12	23.6	9.5	1.5	34.6
2012-13	22.5	10.0	1.4	33.9
2013-14	20.3	10.7	1.0	32.1
2014-15	19.6	11.7	1.0	32.2
2015-16	18.0	11.9	1.2	31.1
2016-17	18.1	11.5	1.7	31.3
2017-18	19.3	11.2	1.6	32.1
2018-19	20.3	10.5	0.9	31.7
2019-20	19.1	10.2	0.2	29.6
2020-21	22.7	10.5	-4.1	29.1
2021-22	20.1	11.2	-0.1	31.2
2022-23	18.4	11.2	0.6	30.2

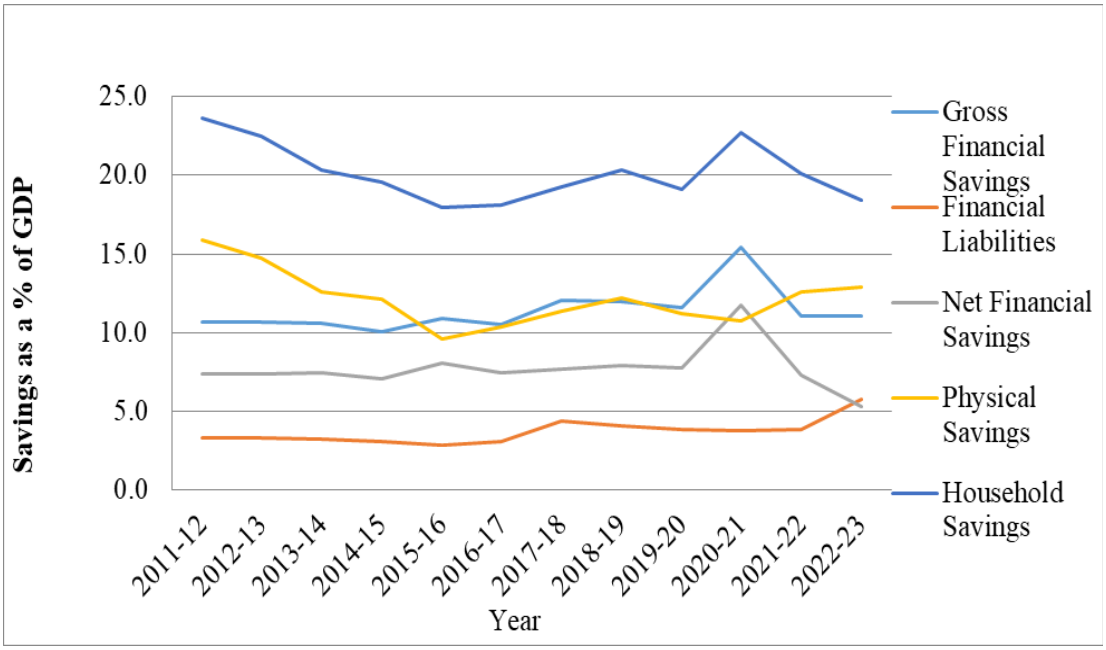
Source: Economic Survey 2023-24, Statistical Appendix

Table: 2, presents the aggregate and institution-wise savings behaviour (as a percentage of GDP at current market price) since 2011–12. Gross domestic savings (GDS) as a percentage of GDP decline from 34.6% in 2011-12 to 29.1% in 2020-21. In 2021-22 GDS increase slightly to 31.2%, due to lockdown and increase in private corporate sector savings. But, in 2022-23, GDS decline to 30.2%, as a result of increase in household financial liabilities, which reduces household savings.

Trends in Household Sector Savings

In figure 1 we have present the different components of household savings in India from 2011-12 to 2022-23. Household savings declines from the year 2011-12 to 2014-15. In 2016, demonetization increases the financial savings of households and which increases the household savings in that period up to 2018-19. After demonetization, an increase in consumption expenditure and investment reduces household savings in the year 2019-20. Again, Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown increases the financial savings of the household and it increases household savings. In 2022-23, increases liability of the household and high rate of inflation reduces the household savings in the economy.

Figure 1: Different Components of Household Savings and Liability (as a percentage of GDP)



Socio- Economic Characteristics of the Sample Households

It is essential to know the socioeconomic characteristics of sample household to assess their saving and the factors affecting their habit of savings. Altogether 120 households from Gomariguri village of Golaghat district have been sampled for the study. A brief description of age, sex, education and occupational distribution of the head of the sample households is enlisted in Table-3

Table-3: Distribution of Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Head of the Sample Household

Socioeconomic Characteristics (Head of the Household)	Category	Nos. of Sample Household= 120	Percentage
Age	30-40	14	11.67
	41-50	47	39.17
	51-60	44	36.67
	Above 60	15	12.50
Sex	Male	99	82.50
	Female	21	17.50
Education	Primary	42	35.00
	Secondary	68	56.67
	Graduate & Above	10	8.33
Occupation of the Head of the Household	Farmer	91	75.83
	Wage Labour	4	3.33
	Small Business	6	5.00
	Service	19	15.83

Source: Field Survey

Saving habit of the Sample households

Saving capacity may be influenced by both quantitative and qualitative factors. Thus in this paper saving habit has been defined in terms regular saving habit of the people in formal financial institution.

This is real saving as this the part of surplus income which is saved or invested with formal financial institution (FII). Therefore it is very important to develop a proper saving habit as aggregate volume of saving of an economy depends on saving habit of the people.

Table -4: Distribution of Sample Households on the basis of Monthly Per Capita Savings

Monthly Savings (in Rs.)	Nos. of Household	Percentage	Descriptive Statistics	Values (in Rs.)
0-300	33	27.50	Mean	726.65
301-500	24	20.00	Median	524.31
501-1000	40	33.33	Mode	83.33
1001-2000	17	14.17	Standard Deviation	662.85
2001 and Above	6	5.00	Standard Error	60.51
Total	**120**	**100**		

Source: Field Survey

Estimation of the Determinants of Saving - The Multiple Regression Model

Saving behaviour may be influenced by both quantitative and qualitative factors. Hence the following multiple regression model has been developed to identify the factors or determinants of household savings.

$$S_i = \propto + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \beta_3 X_{3i} + \beta_4 X_{4i} + \beta_5 X_{5i} + \beta_6 X_{6i} + \beta_7 X_{7i} + U_i \ldots\ldots\ldots \textbf{(1)}$$

Where , Si = Savings measured in terms of Monthly Per Capita Saving in Rupees .The description of the independent variables is given in table 5.

Table:5: Description of the variables

Variables	Description
Si	Monthly Per Capita Saving Capacity of i^{th} household
α	Intercept term.
βi	Coefficients of Xi independent variables
X1i	Monthly Per capita Income of i^{th} household
X2i	Age of the head of the Household (in Number)
X3i	Gender of household's head. Male=1; Female=0
X4i	If any member of the household is a member of SHG. Yes =1; Otherwise 0.
X5i	Educational status of the head of the household Primary=1, Secondary =2, Graduate=3, Post Graduate=4
X6i	Dependency ratio- Ratio of unemployed members of the household over the household size.
X7i	Primary Occupation of the HH, Farmer=1, Self Employed=2, Business=3, Service=4

The above model has been estimated using SPSS software and corresponding results are plotted in table-7. Hypotheses are framed against each of the explanatory variables assuming they do not have significant impact on monthly per capita saving capacity of sample households. The result of the above model has been plotted in table-6.

The estimated regression results show that out of the eight independent variables, four have statistically significant impact on monthly per capita savings of sample households. The F-statistics being significant shows the overall significance of the model. The R-square value 0.70 indicates that 70 per-

cent variation of the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable incorporated in the model. The VIF value for all the independent variable being less than 5 shows that the independent variables are not correlated among them. Among the independent variables, gender of the household head has statistically significant impact on monthly per capita saving of the sample households. The coefficient value for the gender of the head of the household (408.67) indicates that the monthly per capita saving of male headed household is Rs 408.67 is higher than the female headed household. Primary occupation of the head of the household is also found to have significant impact on monthly per capita saving of sample households. The coefficient value 253.19 indicates that monthly per capita saving of non-farm household exceeds than that of farm households by Rs.253.19. Monthly per capita income of sample households also have significant impact on monthly per capita saving of households. The coefficient value 0.224 indicates that as the monthly per capita income of sample households increases by one rupee their monthly per-capita saving increases by 0.224 rupees. Finally, membership in self-help group also has significant impact on monthly per capita saving of sample households. The coefficient value 333.17 indicates that monthly per capita saving of households having SHG member households exceeds than that of non -member household by Rs.333.17. **Age, education, family size, and dependency ratio** do not have a significant impact on household savings in the study area.

Table: 6: Result of the model

Variables	**Estimates**	**t-value**	**P-Value (Two-Tailed)**	**VIF**
Dependent Variable: Monthly Per Capita Saving				
Intercept	-916.560	-2.528	0.013	--
Age of the HH	2.245	0.549	0.584	1.457
Gender of the HH	408.67*	4.338	0.000	1.768
Educational level HH	55.43	0.50	0.889	1.321
Primary Occupation of the Household	253.19*	4.752	0.000	1.974
Monthly Per capita Income	0.224*	5.181	0.000	1.671
Dependency Ratio	338.541	1.004	0.318	1.764
SHG Membership	333.17*	4.713	0.000	1.873
F-Statistic	33.20*		0.000	
R^2	0.70			
Adjusted R^2	0.68			

Source: *Computed on the basis of field Survey*; **Note: *** indicates significant at 1 per-cent level of significance.

Suggestions & Policy Implications:

Following suggestions can be offered to improve the saving habit of sample households.

- Increase employment opportunities for the women in the study area.
- Promoting non-farm employment opportunities in the study area such as diversifying income sources, support skill development programmes, boost rural industries, entrepreneurship etc.

- Financial inclusion programs targeting SHGs can increase financial savings adoption. Since SHG membership influences savings behavior, policymakers could leverage SHGs to improve savings.
- Financial Literacy and awareness programmes should be conducted by banks and other FIIs to create awareness among the rural households regarding the benefit of saving.

6 | CONCLUSION

The analysis of household savings determinants reveals that gender, primary occupation, income level, and SHG membership significantly influence monthly per capita savings. Male-headed households, non-farm occupations, higher income levels, and SHG participation are positively associated with increased savings. In contrast, variables such as age, education, and dependency ratio do not have a statistically significant impact on savings. The findings highlight the importance of financial inclusion for women, income diversification through non-farm employment, and the role of SHGs in fostering savings behavior. Policy efforts should focus on enhancing financial literacy, promoting alternative income sources, strengthening SHG programs, and ensuring inclusive access to financial services**.** These measures can help households improve their saving, leading to better financial stability and economic resilience.

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GENDER POLITICS IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract: Gender is a socio-cultural term that pertains to the roles assigned to men and women by society. In the social science field "gender and politics" or "gender in politics" studies how gender and political processes interact, emphasizing elements such as action, representation and political participation. India's political landscape is significantly shaped by gender which has an impact on governance, representation and policy making. Although there are constitutional guarantees for gender equality and several initiatives aimed at increasing women's involvement in politics, obstacles such as social norms, patriarchal systems, and political exclusion continue to exist. The representation of women in legislative bodies has seen gradual improvement but remains considerably lower than the global norm. The implementation of gender-based reservations, including the Women's Reservation Bill, has marked an important advancement in promoting political engagement. This paper seeks to describe the status of women and their struggles from ancient India to the present day by offering an overview of the historical evolution of women's issues and the challenges faced by women in the political sphere, as well as the impact of gender-inclusive policies and the challenges that must be tackled to attain gender equality in Indian politics.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Women Participation, Patriarchy, Subordinate, Violence.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Since both men and women are the foundation of a society, gender equality is essential to its advanceme nt.In many nations and industries, such as politics, sports, and business settings, gender inequality has b een a major worry.In the past, women have frequently been seen as less significant than males.The socio cultural dynamics of Indian society are significantly influenced by caste, tribe, religion, gender, region, l anguage, and class, making it one of the most stratified societies in the world.The position of women in Indian politics serves as an example of both the advantages and disadvantages of the country's democrat ic system.The vitality of civil society in India is demonstrated by the important roles that women have p layed in a variety of social movements and non-governmental organizations.

2 | METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the study is both descriptive and analytical in nature. The data`s collected for this study are based on secondary sources, such as like books, articles, journals and internet.

3 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In Indian society, the idea of gender in politics is not new.Gender plays a significant part in Indian socie ty and has done so since ancient times.In the Rig Vedic Aryan community, women were treated with res pect and were on an equal footing.Traditional Indian philosophy and Hindu religious beliefs viewed me n and women as equals.Women have historically been seen as the mothers of the universe and the guidi ng light of the home, such as Dharti Maa (Earth).Women are depicted as Shakti, or feminine creative en ergy, in epics like the Mahabharata.It's also believed that no teacher is as good as a mother.The Vedas e mphasize that women held a position of honor and respect.The Ashwamedha Yagya, which Rama perfo rms, serves as an example of the importance of women in the Ramayana.Women were essential contribu tors to the social, political, and familial realms because they also had the freedom to travel, read the Ved as, receive an education, and select their partners.There is evidence that women actively engaged in poli tical discourse with men, participating in discussions in the early Indo-Aryan folk assembly known as Vidatha and Sabha. Views on women have evolved from the later Vedic era.

Present Status

Women's participation in politics includes their involvement in electoral processes, policy formulation, and leadership roles. This includes activities such as standing in elections, voting, running for office, serving in public positions, and engaging in decision-making across all tiers of governance. Empowering women politically is essential for attaining gender equality, as it provides them with a platform to tackle issues such as education, healthcare, and violence based on gender. Gender inequality is prevalent in Indian politics. Certain political parties only include men, and familial obligations often prevent women from participating in politics. As a sovereign republic, India granted voting rights to all women from the first general elections held in 1952. Although women have had the right to vote since the Constitution was established, their representation in the Lok Sabha and State legislative assemblies has been inadequate.

In recent years, India has made gradual yet slow progress in enhancing women's representation in politics. The voter turnout for the 3rd Lok Sabha Elections in 1962 was 46.6%, which increased significantly to 65.8% by the 18th Lok Sabha Elections in 2024. The number of women contesting elections has also seen impressive growth. In 1957, just 45 women ran as candidates in the Lok Sabha elections; however, this figure soared to 797 during the 2024 elections, reflecting a growing interest and opportunities for women to engage as political candidates. Women's representation in legislative bodies has slowly but steadily increased. In the Lok Sabha, the count of female representatives rose from 22 (5%) in 1951 to 74 (13.6%) by 2024. Likewise, in the Rajya Sabha, female representation improved from 7% in 1952 to 13% in 2023. At the grassroots level, women occupy a larger proportion of seats; in 2022, they accounted for 44% of representatives in local self-government institutions, totaling 1,375,914 female representatives.

Government Initiatives

Several measures have been taken to encourage the involvement of women in politics, which include constitutional guarantees for equality, the right to contest elections, reserved seats, initiatives for skill development, and global commitments focused on improving women's political representation.

i. Right to Vote: The right to vote is ensured by Articles 325 and 326 of the Constitution, which guarantees political equality and voting rights for women through Universal Adult Franchise and prohibits excluding individuals from the voter's list based on their sex.

ii. Right to Contest: According to Articles 84 and 173 of the Constitution, every Indian citizen who is a registered voter is eligible to run for elections to the Parliament or the State Legislative Assemblies.

iii. Reservations in Local Bodies: The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution established a one-third (33%) reservation of the overall number of seats for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and urban local bodies.
iv. The 106th Constitutional Amendment: Women's Reservation Act 2023, also known as Nari Shakti Vandan Act mandates that 33% of seats be reserved for women in the Lok Sabha, State Assemblies, and the Delhi Legislative Assembly. Enacted in September 2023, this legislation seeks to increase women's representation in politics but will come into effect following the next census and delimitation process.
v. Election Commission of India: Measures taken by the Election Commission of India include the establishment of 'pink booths' that have an all-female staff, comprising election officials, police, and security personnel. Additionally, they have introduced initiatives such as Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP)
vi. International Commitments: India has signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and supports the Beijing Declaration on gender equality, encouraging women's involvement in public affairs.
vii. Sustainable Development Goals: The 17 Sustainable Development Goals, outlined in Agenda 2030, incorporate gender equality and were adopted by 193 nations, including India, during a high-level UN General Assembly meeting in September 2015.
viii. Capacity-Building Efforts: The National Commission for Women (NCW) and various civil society organizations have initiated training programs designed to empower women with leadership capabilities.

Challenges

The path of women in Indian politics is hindered by persistent challenges, which are deeply embedded in cultural traditions, social expectations, and institutional prejudices. Understanding these barriers is essential for developing successful approaches to improve gender representation.

Participation as a Proxy Candidate: There is evidence that, as a result of reservation policies, some women have been elected to positions, yet they often function merely as the spokespersons for their male relatives. This suggests that the actual level of women's involvement on the ground may be lower than what appears to be the case.
Patriarchal society: India is a society with deep-rooted patriarchal norms, where women frequently encounter societal expectations to adhere to conventional roles in homemaking and care giving, restricting their involvement in public life, including politics.
Violence and Intimidation: Violence and intimidation pose major obstacles to women's involvement in politics. Women who engage in political activities frequently encounter threats, harassment, and in some cases, physical violence. This unfriendly atmosphere can discourage many women from seeking careers in politics.
Economic and Educational Disparities: Economic and educational inequalities significantly impact women's involvement in politics. Many women do not possess the financial means or educational background necessary to engage effectively in the political sphere. This disparity in economic and educational gap hampers women's ability to acquire the skills and self-assurance essential for political leadership.
Lack of political will: Political parties hesitate to allocate tickets to female candidates as society views them as less capable, thereby reducing their chances of winning elections.

Measures

Although there are so many obstacles, but also various significant opportunities to enhance gender representation in Indian politics, which helps policymakers, political parties, and civil society to promote increased inclusivity.

Women's Leadership Development Programs: Investing in leadership development initiatives designed specifically for women in politics can be crucial. These initiatives should include training on campaign strategies, effective communication, and understanding the political environment. Inspirational success stories of women who have triumphed over obstacles can act as motivating examples.

Educational Initiatives: Education is crucial in confronting stereotypes and promoting a culture of gender equality. Implementing gender-sensitive curricula and awareness initiatives in educational institutions can help shift societal perceptions regarding women's roles in leadership.

Role of Civil Society and NGOs: Non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations are vital in promoting women's rights and encouraging political involvement. They can provide training initiatives, establish support networks, and advocate for changes in policy.

Media Partnerships for Positive Representation: Partnerships between media organizations and groups working for gender equality can assist in creating a more favorable narrative. Highlighting the stories of women in leadership roles and offering spaces for informed dialogues can aid in breaking down stereotypes and encouraging public backing for women in political positions.

Inclusive Political Parties: Political parties are crucial in determining the composition of elected representatives. The data showing a low rate of women candidates highlights the pressing necessity for political parties to implement more proactive strategies. Potential actions could include introducing voluntary quotas, establishing mentoring initiatives, and fostering an environment that supports women's involvement in politics.

Grassroots Mobilization: Grassroots initiatives and community engagement have traditionally been pivotal in facilitating social and political transformation. Promoting women's participation in local community initiatives and nurturing collaborations between civil society groups and local communities can play a crucial role in building a strong base of support for gender-inclusive policies.

Technology and social media: Leveraging technology and social media platforms can enhance women's voice and perspectives in political discussions. Strategically using these channels can assist in challenging gender stereotypes and increasing public recognition of women's roles in politics. The success of these instruments is illustrated by worldwide efforts that utilize social media to enhance women's empowerment.

4 | CONCLUSION

India has a significant history of assessing women’s political involvement since gaining independence. Ensuring gender equality in politics is crucial for democratic progress and governance, transcending mere fairness. Although women have made considerable advancements in Indian politics, they continue to encounter numerous obstacles. Issues such as gender discrimination, violence, and disparities in compensation contribute to the lengthy journey toward equality. Nonetheless, the growing presence of women in Parliament is an encouraging development. However, enhancing the enforcement of laws that safeguard women and improving support within political parties are crucial areas that require attention. As India evolves and advances, it is essential to keep women’s issues at the forefront. Only by directly confronting these challenges can we aspire to achieve genuine gender equality in Indian politics. A more robust democracy, a responsive government, and more inclusive decision-making will emerge from fostering a politically balanced environment.

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ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AMONG MARRIED WOMEN EMPLOYEE IN ASSAM: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract: Work–life balance has evolved into a matter of significant concern among the married women employee either in public or private life in patriarchal Indian society. Both men and women strive to achieve a steady professional and personal life. In reality, women especially the married women employees are more prone to experiencing such challenges.

This paper is an attempt to understand work-life balance among married women employee in Assam. The patriarchal society of Assam is always emerged as women-dominant society. This paper focused on the impact of job satisfaction, work overburden, workplace support, community support and cooperation, family support and cooperation, and dependent care on the work-life balance of married women employees. Along with this the paper aims to focus the issues and implications of women empowerment among married women employee. For the purpose of the study, a field-based observation and interview was taken with the respondents and statistical techniques were used for the study. The results indicated that workplace support, community support and cooperation and family support had a positive impact on the work–life balance among married women employees. The findings also suggested that work overburden and dependent care had a negative impact on work-life balance. The results also contradicted that job satisfaction was not a significant factor that impacted the work-life balance among married women employees.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Work Family conflict (WFC), Family work conflict (FWC), Role conflict, Work Life Balance (WLB).

1 | INTRODUCTION

The emergence of modern society has revealed the changing roles and positions of women in different countries of the world. This modern society has brought change in many ramifications of human life. In the traditional society of Assam, as well as in other parts of the country, women engaged in many economic activities whether in private or public domain. They were activities that could be accommodated it to the domestic roles of women, since their primary role were perceived to lie in the home. Until recently, sex division of labour has been an integral aspect of life in the family of Assam. Men were the main bread winners, while women were saddled with domestic responsibilities; an

important component of the domestic responsibilities of women is caring for family members. They maintained that men as bread winners could work away from home, if women would work at all; they were engaged in activities that could be carried out within or around the home. Women were encouraged to concentrate on household chores and the socialization and monitoring of young children. traditionally they were saddled with the duty of inculcating values and norms into children. Different studies on status of women reveals that various changes have taken place in different parameter of roles and status of women in both public and private sectors.

This division of labour in the family in terms of gender roles has virtually disappeared in the present-day society. Women educational attainment has soared over the years; consequently, gender inequality in formal employment has drastically declined in the modern society. The economic hardship prevailing in the country is gradually making it a norm for women to make substantial contribution to household budget in order to cater adequately for family needs. Thus, women are increasingly taking up roles which were traditionally the domain of men. Nevertheless, female dominated responsibilities in the family such as household chores, socialization of children and childbearing are rarely shared by men. In other words, while women are taking up formally male roles, it is likely that men find it derogatory to share roles that were traditionally recognized as female domain (Munguti et al, (2002). By extension, it is expected of women to play multiple roles in the society. Obviously, since women are the significant agent of household chores, socialization and childbearing and have to still carry out their economic roles as formal employees, it becomes difficult and over bearing in most cases. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the economic status of the family, reasons for women engagement in formal employment and the effects on the family.

The aim of this paper is "to investigate the issues and implication of women empowerment along with the relationship between the married women employee's perception of work family balance practices and work family conflicts"

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

Work/family balance is an issue that has become an area of interest because as a woman, the married women employees are pursuing jobs and careers while having families. It is need of time to explore the literature related to how women balance their lives with the responsibilities from both work and family. Balancing job demands and household tasks, including household and childcare demands, has been documented as a huge barrier that prevents married women employee from achieving work-life balance. Both personal and professional lives are important and women employees struggle to do justice for both the roles and in the process if they spend more time pursuing one role as opposed to the other can lead to negative outcomes (Nair, 2010).

According to Peeters, Montgomery, Bakker and Schaufeli, (2005)[1], job demands and family demands are often irreconcilable creating an imbalance between the two. Now, the role and position of women is different and their presence is seen everywhere in different positions in the workplace. These transformations in work culture have brought in more additional duties and responsibilities for women employees towards their family, work place and society as well. (Mathew & Panchanatham, 2009)[2]. Therefore, it is very much required to explore issues and implications of work-life balance.

Super DE[3] identified six common life roles. He indicated that the need to balance these different roles simultaneously is a reality for most individuals at various stages throughout their lives. Rather than following a transitional sequence from one role to another, women are required to perform an

[1] Peeters, M.C., Montgomery, A.J., Bakker, A.B. and Schaufeli, W.B. (2005) Balancing Work and Home: How Job and Home Demands Are Related to Burnout.
[2] Mathew, R. V., & Panchanatham, N. (2009a). Work life balance issues among the women entrepreneurs in South India.
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accumulation of disparate roles simultaneously, each one with its unique pressures.[4] However, multiple roles have also been found to cause a variety of adverse effects on women's both mentally and physically.

Work–life balance is the maintenance of a balance between responsibilities at work and at home. Work and family have increasingly become antagonist spheres, equally greedy of energy and time and responsible for work–family conflict (WFC)[5]. These conflicts are intensified by the "cultural contradictions of motherhood", as women are increasingly encouraged to seek self-fulfilment in demanding careers, they also face intensified pressures to sacrifice themselves for their children by providing "intensive parenting", highly involved child rearing and development.[6] Additional problems faced by employed women are those associated with finding adequate, affordable access to child and elderly care.[7]

WFC has been defined as a type of inter-role conflict wherein some responsibilities from the work and family domains are not compatible and have a negative influence on an employee's work situation.[8] These roles tend to drain them and cause stress or inter-role conflict.

Family–work conflict (FWC) is also a type of inter-role conflict in which family and work responsibilities are not compatible. However, FWC is related to attitudes about the job or workplace.[9] Both WFC and FWC basically result from an individual trying to meet an overabundance of conflicting demands from the different domains in which women are operating. Most of these studies revived are in western context; there is a scarcity of research in this area in the Indian context. Hence, the researchers made an attempt to study various factors which could lead to WFC and FWC among married women employee as women employees.

3 | METHODOLOGY

The propose study is "Issues and Implications of Work-Life Balance among Married Women Employee in Assam.' The domain of this study is concerned with the married women employee under different departments of govt/ private sector of Sivasagar district of Assam. For this study different govt/ private/ industrial women employee of Sivasagar district had taken for the study. Out of these 150 married employed women were selected as respondents by purposive sampling techniques for the present study.

An exploratory research design has adopted for the study. The information regarding the study was collected from two sources Primary source and Secondary. Secondary data were collected from available books, publications, research studies, articles and websites. A closed-ended interview-schedule was designed to collect primary data. Both observation and Interview schedule were adopted for data collection. The main tool for collection of data was questionnaire cum interview schedule.

4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present research work is of exploratory in nature and based on primary data. A survey was conducted among 150 married women employees, spouse across located mainly in Sivasagar district of

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Assam. This study explores issues pertaining to role conflicts between the dual-couples related to stress, childcare, domestic work and job roles and work, i.e work family conflict (WFC) and family work conflict (FWC) among the respondents. This study also discusses questions related to conflict with colleagues working hours, time spent with family after working hours, family responsibilities, domestic workload, factors responsible for higher level of strain, and how the working couples manage strain and stressful situations, conflicts between multiple roles.

The study reveals that out of the total 150 respondents, 29(19.3%) were found in high level of stress, 48 (32%) in moderate level and the 73(48.6%) were in low level of stress. It has also found that the main reason for stress of the respondents was excessive workload, Time management, family responsibilities and conflict with spouse. For 78 (52%) of the respondents' stress was caused due to excessive work load and for 52 (34.7%) it was for giving time to the authority. The respondents reported that they have to supply information oftenly about different data to the authority. For 74(49.3%) of the respondents' stress was due to time management. The respondents reported reason of stress was due to family responsibility and conflict with spouse was 77 (51.3%). Only 23(15.3%) of the respondents stated that they have no stress.

In the study, it has seen that I class Category married women employee 68(38.2 %) have more stress due to excessive work load and responsibilities of the organization than the II/III class Category of married women employee 25 (14.5%). They reported that they have to maintain as their boss directions and suggestions they have to maintain their duties and responsibilities. The higher category employee has to visit field survey, keep communication with the community, awareness on different social facts besides their normal duties. The IV Category married women employee has less stress (9.3%)

The respondents reported that they have to manage a limited time for managing the family. On the other hand, 59(34.1%) respondents were more stress due to family responsibilities and conflict with spouse. This stress is related to gendered base. Neither they are being able to take economic support, i.e. a least amount of honorarium they have been paid, nor family responsibilities. As such their spouses are being unwilling to support their household works.

The study focuses on identifying sources of tension and conflicts as well as of' 'support in the respondents both in the family and colleagues in service place. It is also tried to focus the respondents' efforts for management to combine their dual roles. Underlying the observations is that conflicts and tensions are inevitable both, 'because of the uncertainty in allocating priorities to competing demands of the two roles, and because of the sheer physical pressures involved upon the respondents.

Sometimes, some of the married employed women have to spend daylong in outside of home for job's duties and responsibilities. The data suggest that housework, child care and the absence of active support, encouragement and help from 'significant others' in the family are sources of tension in the respondents' role as home-makers and the pressures of commuting and of coping with the spillover of office work are the sources of tension in their role as earners.

On the domain of domestic works, it was observed that as many as 132(88.0%) out of the 150 respondents live in 'nuclear' families consisting of parents and unmarried children and only 12(8.0%) live in Joint family. 6(4.0%) respondents live alone i.e. outside of their family or aboard of her family for their job.(Diagram No.1) It could be pointed out that the burden of household responsibilities on women are likely to be greater in the nuclear family, than it is in the joint family - where the work is shared - and it could be argued that consequently, women from nuclear families are more likely to work but the household works of the whole family burden have to manage ownselves with the minors. A least percent of spouses' helps them in their household works and it emerges due to gendered related conflict.

The respondents were questioned as to which of the tasks they perform themselves and how often they do so. They were also asked whether any one assist them (partially/ entirely) in the performance of these tasks. Married respondents were specifically requested to describe the manner in which their husbands

share in performing these tasks. It was observed that above 94(62.7%) respondents perform almost all the tasks enlisted except shopping and repairing of household works and made pay bill without any assistance. A larger percentage of the respondents are involved with tasks generally seen as 'feminine' viz. cooking 104(69.3%), tidying up 103(68.7%) decorating the house 127(84.7%), etc. However, a sizeable number of the respondents are involved in the performance of tasks, which are usually not believed to be feminine, e.g. getting the repairs done, paying the bills and doing the banking work 54(36%). Regarding Shopping items, respondents prefer to do in shared basis with the spouse.

Regarding respondent's performance on Household Tasks, it had observed that Variations by marital status and by class of service are interesting. Out of 150 respondents 136 (90.7%) married, 8(5.3%) was widowed and 6(4.0%) married but lived separated. A larger percentage of married women and widowed, who were home-makers, wives and most often mothers, seem to be taking on most of the housework.

Respondents who are in high reputed jobs seem to take upon themselves, a larger proportion of household tasks. The other low reputed job's employees (respondents) whose economic condition is not good but able to afford adequate paid help to get housework done. Besides, as compared to job profile, respondents are likely to have to carry more work at office and home. Some of the respondents may leave them little time to take on the responsibility of day-to-day housework. Even more important possibility is that some respondents placed as they are not in high status, and powerful positions, see themselves more as home-makers, and also inclined to take on a heavy burden of household tasks and continue to be pre-occupied with domestic functions.

It is a traditional way of life for the women that roles and obligation for the women to do the household works although the respondents have to engage besides the official works. As the respondents are married employed women, they have to maintain the family works as well as the office works. To take care of their children is an utmost duty and obligation. out of 150 respondents, majority of the respondent 102(68%) was unable to give sufficient time for their children, 39 (26%) respondents had less time for taking care of their children because of their professional work and found problem in the outing time to school of their minor children in absence of her in the family. Only 9 (6%) respondents had not to face any role bearing adjustment related to child care.

On the role of respondent towards child care they reported that 77 (51.3%) respondents have less time to spend or care of their children. They had been facing role bearing problem for giving less time for care of their children. Because they have to be engaged more time on office related works. Some of the respondents informed that even sometimes their children were not permitted or forbidden them to do official works at home. Some of the employee have to spend more time outside of home and unable to maintain dual role both household work and office work.

In the course of this description, the focus is on Identifying sources of tension and conflicts as well as of' 'support in the respondents' efforts to combine their dual roles. Underlying the observations is that conflicts and tensions are inevitable both, 'because of the uncertainty in allocating priorities to competing demands of the two roles, and because of the sheer physical pressures involved.

The findings of the study support that women with pre-school children experience different types of conflicts and concluded that self-role congruence in women leads to better mental health. It has found that parental overload which included number of children; family demand in predicting WFC. It has also found that family involvement and family expectations were related to conflict in the family, but not related to WFC. High levels of family responsibility cause increased time requirements and strain on the family, thereby interfering with the employee's work roles. As children and elderly family members require additional care, the obligation to meet their needs can influence family roles, which can create inter-role conflict and impact family roles which is producing FWC. FWC basically result from the married women employee, who trying to meet an overabundance of conflicting demands from the different domains in which women are operating. It has also observed that the number of hours worked

per week, the amount and frequency of overtime required, an inflexible work schedule, unsupportive superior, and an inhospitable work culture increase the likelihood that women employees will experience conflict between their work and family role.

5 | CONCLUSION

These are different types of sources of conflict among the married Women employee regarding work and family situation. Among these: (1) conflicts between demands of multiple roles to accomplish with official works and household works, (2) conflict between role expectations of self and spouse relating with household responsibilities and work responsibilities and (3) lack of congruence between expectation and reality of roles with work and family. It has felt that self-role congruence in married women employees leads to better mental health. In the present study, it has also observed that the majority of the respondents (75.5%) working due to financial needs. They argued that they took up job on compulsion for economic gain and only a few respondents (24.5%) had taken up employment for status. Hence, the problems arise as their needs. As such the workers must have to be careful not to bring home her frustration and unhappiness, which can affect family relationships.

It can be concluded that the traditional gender roles such as child care, housekeeping and kitchen work of women have been significantly changing in dual career families. Women face a dual role all over the world. This dual role leads to work family conflicts. There are several expectations from her both in the family as well as in her profession. The two expectations demand two different women in a single woman. For pursuing her roles successfully, she has to work with a strict routine having greater physical and mental ability to deal with critical situations in time. It often arises in conflicts between job and family; the role of family dominates over the role of job. However, there are some married Women employee, who give priority to their jobs to maintain their strong commitments to job and to maintain their economic conditions as well as the welfare of the new generation and the society.

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With warm regards
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