



WOMEN IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Compiled & Edited by
C. KHONGLAH

**WOMEN
IN
NORTH-EAST INDIA**
An Annotated Bibliography



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Women in North-East India: An Annotated Bibliography

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FOREWORD

The status and the issues related to women in North-East India has been discussed and debated in the various academic forums for a long time. However, till date there is no concrete effort made to provide a documentation of the works done on women in North-East India.

Considering the need in this direction, Ms. Cerilla Konglah, our colleague in the Centre, made an effort to compile a state-wise annotated bibliography on women in North-East India.

We would like to put on record our appreciation to Ms Konglah, Documentation Officer, ICSSR-NERC for compiling the entire volume with the assistance of other staff in the Centre.

Indeed, it gives us immense satisfaction to place before the academic community and the general public *Women in North-East India: An Annotated Bibliography*.

We hope scholars and users will find this volume useful and informative.

ICSSR-NERC
Shillong

C JOSHUA THOMAS
Acting Director

PREFACE

The Indian Council of Social Science Research of North Eastern Regional Centre (ICSSR-NERC), Shillong (1977), has brought out Eight Bibliographies on Social Science on North East in mimeograph form since its inception. The present annotated bibliography is the first venture of the Documentation Unit of our Centre on Women Studies in North East India. The main aim of this volume is to provide a useful reference tool to scholars interested on the issue under reference.

The bibliography contains Seminars on Status of Women and other women related issues presented during the workshops and conferences organized by various Literary and Research Organisations of the seven States under the auspices of the ICSSR-NERC. Books on Women in North East also are included for the benefit of the scholars working on this area of study. This bibliography is divided into seven parts:

- Part I. Status of Women
- Part II. Women and Education
- Part III. Women and Urbanization
- Part IV. Women and Development
- Part V. Women and 73rd Amendment Act, 1992
- Part VI. Papers on Women in Proceedings of North East India History Association

Part VII. Books on Women in North East

Part VIII. Monographs.

The entries in the bibliography are arranged State-wise. Every entry is provided with an annotation, so that scholars, looking for his/her work of interest may be able to get a general idea about its coverage. Further, the author index is also included in the Appendix arranged in alphabetical order for prompt access of the scholars to the right information without wasting their time.

Many of the works done on *Women in North East* are not included in our present effort in view of the constraint that we have to include only the seminars/conferences/workshops proceedings and a few books available in our library collection. We apologize for the inconvenience. However, we hope to be of more service in future. We also invite suggestions from our users.

Lastly, this bibliography would not have been brought out in its present form without the keen interest taken by our Director, Dr C.J. Thomas and the support of our team work particularly Mr Romauldo M. Pasi, who deserve a special thanks for silently doing his work on the computer. This acknowledgement would be incomplete if we do not thank Ms Iamon M. Syiem, Head, Department of Sociology, St. Edmund's College, Shillong who has gone through the typescript and offered the valuable suggestions.

On this occasion, we also remember our colleagues, (L) Mrs Jean Mebari Blah and (L) Mr Bantiplang Nongkhlaw for their urgrudging help towards the project in the initial phase.

CERILLA KHONGLAH

Documentation Officer

INTRODUCTION

Women issues have become an area of interest among the researchers in the field of social sciences. Studies on various issues related to women reflect that nearly half of the world's population constitute of women. Their contribution in different fields is highly appreciated. Unfortunately, women are still being suppressed and oppressed in different forms of social, economic and political spheres in many parts of the world. Consequent to the discrimination and marginalization of women in the society have also become the issue of debate among social scientists, researchers, social reformers, planners and women activists at different levels particularly at the international level.

Under the initiative of the United Nations to improve the status of women, the World Conference on *Women* held in different places during 1975-1995 witnessed the solidarity of the half of the world's population. Organizing themselves at the international level, women took a pledge to share their problems and fight for justice. On the direction of United Nations, studies on the *Status of Women* were conducted world-wide as agenda on *Women Issues* for the *First World Conference in 1975* held at Mexico the year declared as *Women' International Year* aiming at achieving universal equality, integration in the social, economic and political

spheres as well as to maintain international peace. The Conference was the first landmark in the history of the United Nations where implementation of the *Plan of Action* was then dwelt at length resulted to the constitution of the Committee on the *Elimination of Discrimination Against Women of the United Nations (CEDAW)*. This Report entitled, *The Work of CEDAW, 1982-86* was published by United Nations from New York in 1989. The Programme of Action was discussed at the 2nd *World Conference on Women* held at Copenhagen in 1980, while *Nairobi Conference* in 1985 observed a decade of United Nations on women led to the emergence of the *Forward Looking Strategies* to observe as the agenda issues for the next decade of its activities. It is heartening to note that during the *United Nations Decade on Women*, participants made numerous recommendations, designed to rectify the imbalance. In the Report of World Conference of the *United Nations Decade of Women* held in Nairobi in 1985, *resolutions were passed stressing on the need for political parties to nominate women candidates and give them real chance of winning elections for government and non-governmental organizations to educate women about their own often newly-won civil, political and social rights. Participants also voiced support for time tables and quotas to set concrete goal for increasing the participation of women.*¹ The movement had made a herculean task at the international level during the two decades formulating plans and policies to elevate female population widely. However, without the regional and national cooperation of the member governments, this movement would not have reached its height. Therefore, in South Asia, it may be noted that under the initiative of the SAARC, in pursuance of the decision of the first meeting of its Council of Ministers,

a *Technical Committee on Women Development* was formed in October 1986.² *Meeting periodically, the Committee organizes workshops, training programmes, exhibitions, study tours etc. Exchange of information and data on women, preparation of bibliographies, directories, etc. are also facilitated.* Further to strengthen women's initiative, the Asian and Pacific Centre for Women of the UN ESCAP known as the Women's Information Network for Asia and Pacific was set up to improve availability and accessibility of data and information needed by Government policy makers and to promote and monitor the effective participation of women in all aspects of national development. But one of the most remarkable decisions of the international level was taken at the workshop on leadership held at Bangalore in which the Groots South Asia International was announced as a network of NGO's working in SAARC countries. *The ambitious agenda for action includes fostering grassroots and regional networking, information exchange, leadership development etc.*³ Interestingly, the SAARC Conference on Women was held in Shillong too in 1986.

Women in India

Being concerned at the plight of women in India, Sarala Gopalan⁴ has rightly remarked that "*We have traveled a long way from the First UN World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975 to the Fourth World Conference at Beijing in 1995 in search of Equality, Development and Peace*". True, it has been a long journey for UN women in search of justice, yet under the network of the women's world wide web (WWW) brought home of the participating nations including India the fruit of success at the setting up of the *National and State*

Commissions for Women in their respective countries and states to address the problems and grievances of women. India as one of the signatories of the United Nations has also set up the National Commission for Women under the National Commission, Act 1992. But as discussed we should not forget that women in our country are still the victims of suppression and exploitation of the society.

It is said that, women in the Vedic period participated in all fields like men and took active part in every sphere of human life. Woman was man's best friend, his co-worker and never his inferior; she had enjoyed the property rights, discussed political and social problems and took part in all religious activities. There was no bar on the marriage of widows or women remaining unmarried. But with the passage of time women in India have to face the brunt of various problems of the social processes like *purdah* system, polygamy, child marriage, *sati*, dowry, and female foeticide, deprivation of education and property rights. Nevertheless, women did not shy away from taking part in any movement for the good cause as and when called for. One of such is their participation in the national freedom movement during the colonial period. Women from different corners of the country irrespective of their ethnic identity came out of their traditional four walls in response to the call to show their solidarity, courage and sacrifice in saving their motherland, India from the clutches of the alien rulers. The contribution of women was then recognized not only economically but also of their glaring participation in the freedom movement, that, without half of the country's population participation *India's Independence* would not have been achieved. Therefore, the post-Independence era saw the

setting up of the Central Social Welfare Board in 1953, the first landmark in the history of the *First Five Year Plan* (1951-56) of the Government of free India a concern for women's welfare orientation. Another landmark in the history of India is the inclusion of the chapter on *Women and Development* in the *Sixth Five Year Plan* (1980-85). The next landmark in the history of women's welfare and development was the appointment in 1971 of a *Committee on Status of Women* under the Chairmanship of Mrs Phulrenu Guha to examine all the rights and status of women in the context of changing social and economic conditions in the country and problems relating to the advancement of women.

The major outcome of this report was the National Plan of Action, 1976 (Vats, 2004).⁵ We further saw the passing of the Constitution 73rd Amendment Act, 1993 considering 30% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. There are also a number of resolutions taken from time to time at the international and regional cooperation *Conferences on Women* of the participating countries of the United Nations towards uplift of women. One of such decision is to disseminate information on women issues. In India besides formulations of policies and developmental programmes for women in the Five Year Plans, especially, after the publication of the Report in 1974, on *Women Towards Equality*, with a focus to improve the conditions of Indian women not only in the field of education, health, nutrition but also to meet the need of women in the development of the society. Thus, to collect and disseminate information related to the development of women, *Women and Development Studies Information Networks* were set up in the country by several academic/research institutions particularly in the late 80s. Similarly networking among *Women's*

Development Corporations and *Women Studies Centres* were also initiated by clearing house for Information of Women's Division of NIPCCD. Perhaps it is not out of place to say that in India particularly for more than three decades now that is from 1975, the *International Women's Year* onwards women must have seen as the most productive period in the history of women's welfare, development and empowerment, with regard to the flow of information on women issues and formulation of policies and development programmes for women, such as the *National Policy for Empowerment of Women, 2001*, the introduction of the *Protection of Women from Domestic Violence, 2006*, *Fast Track Court* and many other programmes and schemes for economic and social welfare of women. During this period, we also observed the active organization of various awareness programmes on women issues in different parts of the country by interested organizations including women organizations.

As mentioned earlier, women in India, be it in the North, in the South, in the West or in the East or in the Eastern most part of the country are not free from different types of harassment, gender prejudice or gender bias in different spheres of life. However, women should not feel that they are being marginalized in the society, but, to strive to achieve their goal in this world of *survival of the fittest*.

Coming to North East India, the region comprises of the States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura known as the '*Seven Sisters*' having diverse ethnic groups, speaking different languages, having different history, traditions, costumes and beliefs. Geographically, the region is almost isolated

from the rest of the country being surrounded by Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Burma (now Myanmar) and China connected by a narrow corridor between the Himalayas on the one side and Bangladesh on the other. The Region is less known to different parts of the country except on some occasion when some news flashed through the print and electronic media. As such information on condition of women in this part of the country is also less known to those interested on this issue. It is a fact that women in North-East India are enjoying a better position in the society particularly the tribal women compared to their counterparts in the rest of the country in the absence of social evils like dowry, infanticide and *sati*. However, we cannot deny the fact that women in North-East have to face various social and economic problems such as illiteracy, poverty, landlessness, poor health, alcoholism, drugs, broken homes, eve teasing, domestic violence, single parent, early marriage, gender discrimination of wage, discrimination of democratic participation in decision-making at the grassroot/traditional institutions at the cost of the customary laws, discouragement of participation in electoral politics, so on and so forth. The present situation in the region, the peace-loving people of North-East are being disturbed with various types of problems in the society like, unrest, violence, armed conflict, ethnic conflict, terrorism, insurgency, law and order, extortion, etc. These are some of the factors affecting normal life in the region. In such a situation, it is quite obvious that women and children are always the first to be affected in the society. So, the problems of women in North-East are no less different from other women in the rest of the country.

However, generally speaking studies on women in North-East till the late '80s were very limited and those

available are scattered in different sources. Therefore, the North Eastern Regional Centre of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, set up in 1977 in Shillong to promote social science in North-East India sponsored and organized a number of workshops, seminars, symposia, annual lecture series in the field of social science research in North-East including issues on women right from its inception. As mentioned, papers presented during the above programmes are maintained in the Library and Documentation Analysis Unit of the NERC-ICSSR. Some of the proceedings of the same are published in book forms by the organizers. With the increasing interest of the scholars on the issue under reference, today, we witness the flow of research works on women in North-East not only those sponsored and organized by the Centre but with the sponsorship from other sources extended to quite a number of individuals, Professional Organizations, Departments in the Universities, Colleges, and many others to conduct such research programmes in this field of study.

As one of the objectives of the North Eastern Regional Centre of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, is to render bibliographical and documentation service for research work, the present annotated bibliography on *Women Studies in North-East India* is therefore an attempt to facilitate scholars, social activists, policy makers, and students to get their needed information on women without much difficulty.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Hema Balasubramaniam, *Networking for Strengthening Women's Power at National and SAARC Levels*, in Ranjana Kumar (Ed), *op.cit.*, p. 97.

3. *Ibid.*
4. Sarala Gopalan, Foreword, in *Report of the Women and Child Development*, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, New Delhi, 1995.
5. Sorojini Vats, *Women's Participation in Rural Development*, Abhijeet Publications, Delhi, 2004, pp. 49-50.
6. Cerilla Khonglah, *An Introductory Note* presented during the Seminar on Women, Peace and Development: With Special Reference to Meghalaya, held in Shillong, 2000 (unpublished).

ARUNACHAL PRADESH

STATUS OF WOMEN IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH

A seminar on "*Status of Women in Arunachal Pradesh*" organised by the Department of Political Science, Arunachal University in collaboration with Jawaharlal Nehru College, Pasighat, was held on February 3-4, 1989. Mr. Jagin Singh, Deputy Commissioner, East Siang District, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Professor C.L. Anand, Vice-Chancellor of Arunachal University and Chairman of the Seminar, Dr. A.C. Talukdar, Seminar Director addressed the inaugural session. In three academic business sessions, chaired by Professor C.L. Anand, Dr. J Nath and Dr. P S Datta respectively, 16 papers were presented.

Phukan, J and B N Phukan, *Status of Women in Nishi Society*

The position and status of women in any society is always determined by its socio-economic background and social customs. This is the same with the women in the Nishi society. Studying the status of women in Nishi society, the work traces the history of the Nishi people living in the hilly and difficult terrains

of Arunachal Pradesh facing a hard life. The Nishis had a hard life, with jhuming as the main means of livelihood and other allied activities like rearing of livestock and food gathering.

Choudhury, J N. *Status of Women in Pre-Literate Arunachal Society: In the Light of Social Science*

This paper attempts to analyse the question of the status of women in general and the problem of women in Arunachali society in particular. Before analyzing the status of women in Arunachal in the field of agriculture and inheritance, the author discusses the history of human existence on earth and extensively examines the status of women in pre-literate societies of the Adi, Apatani, Nishi, Monpas and Hill Miri of Aka tribes. The author is of the opinion that the Arunachal society was predominantly patriarchal and the inheritance followed the paternal line. Further, he discussed the prevalence of the institution of 'bride price', the two different forms of 'marriage by exchange' and 'marriage by purchase', as well as polygamy and divorce.

Satpathy, B. *The Changing Phenomena: A Study of Women in Arunachal Pradesh*

This paper provides a theoretical approach in determining the status of women. It points out the insignificant enforcement of legal and legislative sanction in uplifting the status of women. It discusses about their social acceptance by the society and referred to the opinion of the social anthropologist, Ralph Linton (1936). It discusses the cultural and biological factors in bringing up boys and girls in different societies. It raises some questions on equal rights to women. The need to encourage birth rate is

also discussed. Also refers to women's participation in socio-economic, cultural and political fields in India, which adversely affected the variation of sex ratio as reflected in the 1961-1981 Census Report of India. The maternal mortality rate in India is another aspects discussed in this work. The observation is that there is an improvement in the status of women in Arunachal Pradesh in respect of their economic, political, cultural and social participation. The improvement of literacy rate reflected in 1961-1981 indicates a change in the status of women in the state. It comments on the laudable cooperation of educated women and the government machinery to upgrade the status of women.

Nath, Jogendra. *Status of Women in Traditional Adi Society*

Gives a brief comparative study of women in Adi society with women in Indian societies and Western cultures. Examines the position of women as depicted in Adi mythology. The practice of polyandry and polygamy in the Adi society is also discussed.

Borah, Bimal. *Gaps and Variance in Tribal Society of Arunachal Pradesh*

Outlines some of the forces and factors responsible for social change in the tribal society of Arunachal leading to the emergence of gaps and variance among them. Further observes the deprivation of women from taking part in the traditional administrative institution including the negative attitude towards improvement of their position as-cobread earner in the family.

Bormudoi, Anjali. *Status of Women in Arunachal Pradesh*

The author discusses the status of women on the basis of various indicators reflected in the socio-cultural aspects of the tribal society in Arunachal Pradesh and also from the works of selected writers.

Choudhury, Abhijit. *Woman's Right in Arunachal Pradesh: Customary Law to Civil Law (A Case Study)*

Discusses a court case of a girl from Gallong area who refused to go to the boy's house even while his parents had taken the bride-price. This resulted in the transfer of the customary law to the civil law.

Nyori, T. *The Position of Women in Adi Traditional Society*

Discusses the position of women in the patriarchal and patrilineal system of the Adi society. It also gives an interpretation of polyandry and polygamy practice which is rare occurrence in the Adi society. Highlights some of the restrictions imposed on the women. Finally asserts the better position of the Adi women as compared to any other society in the country in general.

Rubok, Talom. *The Tradition and Customary Status of Women among the Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh in General and the Adi in Particular*

Attempts to highlight the factors responsible for restrictions and limitations or the improving of the positions of Adi women before education became open to all. Observes the present changes taking place with the economic, social and political participation of women in the society.

Jamoh, Yanung. *Status of Women in Adi Society with particular reference to Miniyong Sub-Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh*

Highlights the commendable participation of Adi women from the household chores to the ploughing of the field. Discusses the constraints faced by women in early marriage, divorce, arranged-marriage, bride-price, re-marriage of divorcees and widows. Comments on the attitudinal changes of the parents towards better upbringing of their daughters in the present day society. Finally, observes the competitive aspiration of the Adi girls in various higher studies and professions.

Saikia, Jogayamaya K K. *Status of Women in Arunachal Pradesh- A Prospective View*

Points out the factors reflecting the status of male and female members in every society—socially, economically, academically etc. Outlines strategies in education and economic participation to promote the position of women in Arunachal Pradesh. Finally advocates for motivation of women to take up trainings in various fields.

Dutta, Parul. *Status of Women in Arunachal Pradesh*

Gives a geographical and historical background of Arunachal Pradesh in a nutshell. Discusses the status of women under the broad headings of socio-cultural, economic, political and religious aspects.

Bhattacharjee, Tarun. *The Status of Women in Arunachal Pradesh*

Highlights the heavy responsibility women have in

the family. Discusses the problems of women relating to bride-price, property rights, restrictions from taking part in decision-making, political and religious functions in the society. Finally, expresses hope of reformation of the social system that women may get due recognition with the spread of education.

Datta Choudhury, K. *Change in Women in Arunachal Pradesh as observed in Three Decades*

In the light of his association with the people of Arunachal Pradesh during his service from 1957, the author presents his personal observations on the role of women in the Adi society. He discusses the engagement of women in household activities and the field and their limited access to education. The spread of education and the changing attitude towards women's education in the later period and their active political participation in the society is also discussed.

Jha, S D. *Status of Women in Arunachal Pradesh*

Attempts to study the status of women in the light of two variables, duties and rights. Traces the history of some women celebrities during the Paranoic era, Buddhist era, and women scholars of the 14th and 15th century. Highlights the exertion of women during the freedom struggle in India. Projects the leadership of late Indira Gandhi as a woman Prime Minister, the passing of various legislations in favour of women's protection and rights. Gives a critical assessment on the deterioration of the position of women in India resulting out of foreign invasion and other forces. Dealing with Arunachal Pradesh, the author makes a historical study of all the major tribes in the state with an observation on the position of

women considering their social, economic, cultural, political participations and restrictions imposed on them. Lastly, raises the question of the implementation of various Acts which were not implemented in the true spirit of protection against various atrocities, exploitation of women, property rights to women, child marriage and others.

Sermon, Kiang. *Status of Women in Singphos Society—A Note.*

Elaborates the political, economic and religious status of Singpho women. Further, discusses the role of women in marriage ceremonies, their participation in cultural activities as well as girl's education in Singphos society.

Opinion . . .

This book *Women in North-East India: An Annotated Bibliography* is a useful addition to the literature on the North-East and particularly on women. It facilitate readers to get their needed information on women in North-East without much difficulty. I wish it is widely read.

—C. Joshua Thomas

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