

# Women Empowerment in Rural Area: A Study of Baniyakuchi Village

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**Abstract:** *The paper is a result of a field study on Women's empowerment in a rural area, particularly the Baniyakuchi village under Sarthebari revenue circle of Barpeta district (Assam) . The paper contains an analytical study from different perspectives. Women empowering means equal treat to others and equal opportunity to develop themselves like others. Gender equality is one without which women empowering not to happen in reality. The method used in the study is field investigation and the data are primary as well secondary.*

**Key Words:** *Women empowerment, Gender equality, Social norms, Education, Public policy.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Women are most and equally important as men for the holistic growth of a society and the growth of society contributes to the growth of a Nation. It is very unfortunate to have gender differences in many aspects of life in various countries, almost every country. The development of a nation can be measure through gender equality. Basically, the developed nations ensure gender equality in every aspect of life. The women of rural areas are facing gender differences in every sphere of their life. In the village area, women are facing many difficulties to ensure equality and also lost their rights in different circumstances. Being a citizen of the largest democracy and most liberal country like India we should contribute towards gender equality and women empowerment, which may contribute to the Nation's growth. There are many reasons for gender differences in rural areas which are mention such as illiteracy, poverty, some social norms, superstition, and so on. In rural areas, one of the major problems is child marriage, which may violate their right to education and freedom. Globally, 750 million women and girls were married before the age of 18 (United Nations report). The women are prevented to do work as men, most of the men in rural areas do not like to go out their wives, daughters to do the job. In 18 countries, husbands can legally prevent their wives from working; in 39 countries, daughters and sons do not have equal inheritance rights; and 49 countries lack laws protecting women from domestic violence (United Nations report). But in the present scenario, most of the countries' governments implemented many laws against violation of women's rights and made many constitutional provisions to protect their rights and freedom and for empowering as well. In 46 countries, women now hold more than 30 percent of seats in the national parliament in at least one chamber (United Nations report). Women empowerment can be defined as protecting their own wishes, freedom, and rights.

**1.1. Subject Matter:** Empowerment of women in rural areas is low compared to the urban areas because in urban areas women are highly educated and the opportunities in the different fields are also high. Due to the high literacy rate, people are not so conservative and willing to be liberal and social changes.

The paper contains a study in a rural area where the literacy rate of women is very minimal, this may consider one of the major factors in gender inequality or gender differences. The economic gap of the area is another major factor contributing to gender inequality in the rural areas. People do not like to change their social norms and regulation which are considered as traditions.

Maximising the literacy rate and minimising the economic gap between males and females, gender equality may happen in reality, without which women empowering never come into existence. The field study results illiteracy, economic gap, social norms, traditions are some major contributors towards gender inequality in the Baniyakuchi village. Maximum women in numbers serve as a housewife, they are not allowed to go out in search of a job, a very low portion of women work in other houses for daily wages within the village area. The welfare schemes for women and public policies taken by the Central as well State government helping in empowering women but the problem is the women of the area not concern about these policies and schemes because they are not engaging in the day to day politics and playing a very passive role in the decision-making process of the government.

**1.3 Location:** The study is confined to the area of Sarukshetri Development Block falls under Sarthebari Sub-division of Barpeta district (Assam). The main focused area of the study is Baniyakuchi village under Sarthebari revenue circle of Barpeta district.

## 1.2. Nature and Scope of the Study:

Women empowerment is a burning issue in the present-day context, government executed many policies and schemes to make women empowered. Reduce the gap between males and females tends to social as well economic development. For a developing nation, it is very much necessary to treat everyone equally in every sphere of life. Even in the 21st century, many nations are not able to make gender equality, many Islamic states do not provide any opportunity to females. But many democratic states are doing a remarkable job to make gender equality in every sphere of life.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- . To find why gender inequality prevails in rural area
- . To find the reasons behind women's unawareness of different perspective in life
- . To find what should be measures to remove gender differences
- . To find the role of social norms in gender inequality

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 METHOD:

The study is primarily based on field investigation. Obtained data are analysed of Questioner method.

### 3.2 Data:

**3.2.1 Primary Data:** The primary data are collected through interview method by asking different relevant questions in the time of field study. Questions are asked in local language (Assamese).

**3.2.2 Secondary Data:** The secondary data are collected different books, articles, local publication, journals, newspapers and websites.

**3.3 Sample:** Total 40 samples are collected from the village; the respondents were basically scheduled caste women, their husband and some random people living in that village.

**3.4 Procedure:** The respondents are informed earlier and fixed a date. Accordingly, the interview conducted in the fixed date for availability of the respondents.

**4. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:** The study is confined in the village area Baniyakuchi falls under the Sarthebari revenue circle office of Barpeta district(Assam). The study contains a holistic and analytical findings of women and their role in economic, social, and political spheres of life. The whole findings of the study based only on the field study of that particular area (Baniyakuchi).

## 5. RESULT AND DISCUSSION:

**5.1 Illiteracy:** Illiteracy is one of the major factors in rural areas for gender inequality and violation of rights of women. In the village area like Baniyakuchi most of the women are uneducated and they also belong to the scheduled caste but some women are educated who belongs to the General category. The uneducated scheduled caste women are housewife and some of their working in other houses in daily wages basis. The uneducated women are not aware of their rights and freedom; hence illiteracy is one of the major factors for gender differences.

But the girls of Baniyakuchi village are school-going and the adults are also enrolled in the undergraduate and post-graduate levels.

The village area is totally not free from superstitious believes because the majority of women belonging to scheduled caste are illiterate. In this rural area, most of the decisions are taken by the male of the family. Women are not allowed to make any decisions.

**5.2 Political Awareness:** To empowered women, it is very much important to be aware of political scenarios and it is also important to participate in the decision-making process of government. But the women of Baniyakuchi village are basically uneducated and have no any political awareness due to their illiteracy, they are not engaging in day-to-day political scenarios and are also not aware of public policies taken by the government. It is very obvious that they cast vote at the time of the election but the decision of casting vote is taken by the others, others mean maybe their husband or chief of the village. The participation of women in politics through contesting in the election is very low, and there are no political views, which are going on in the present-day context. They are unwilling to participate in the decision-making process which is so important to empowered women as well for the growth of the nation.

They are not aware that the Constitution of India provides reservations for women to contest in elections and seats are reserved in Parliament and State Legislative Assembly as well Panchayat and Municipalities.

The school-going girls of the area are not aware of the welfare policies taken by the government.

**5.3 Economic Awareness:** Lack of education and political awareness the women of the area are also not aware of economic equality. In this sphere, the highest differences are to be seen. The women workers are not getting equal pay to the men. Men are basically the outside workers, women are prevented to do that, but among them, some women are working in different homes on the basis of a daily wage but the wages of them are very minimal comparing to men. Economically empowerment makes people independent. Hence, it is important to be economically independent for women to be empowered. But the women of the place which this study covers are not economically independent; they are dependent on their husband or other male working members of the family. Economic independence also ensures the freedom of women.

They wish to fulfill their needs or wishes by being economically independent. The women of the Baniyakichi village are losing their wishes due to economic dependence. They are bound to obey whatever their husband says. They have no right to express their opinion in different situations. Therefore, economic empowerment is equally important.

**5.4 Reasons behind Unawareness:** The study finds different reasons behind this unawareness of women in different fields of Baniyakuchi village. Each and every reason is notable for making them downtrodden. The first reason may mention is illiteracy among the women in the rural area. As I mentioned above, most of the women of the village are uneducated.

Some social norms and traditional beliefs may consider as another reason behind the unawareness of women in that particular area. Due to the lack of education and awareness, child marriage seems to happen. In the Baniyakuchi village, most of the scheduled cast women married before eighteen, which is legally not recognised.

The economic gap among women is one of the major problems of empowerment, which encourages gender inequality. Women of the area are basically housewives; most of them are not engaged in any economic activity.

**6. MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:** We can say women empowerment really happens only when women will get equal treatment as men when there will no gender discrimination in any society when they get equal opportunity to develop themselves and so on. Empowering women is most relevant in the present day context.

Along with the government, we as citizens also have duties towards empowering women, everyone should treat equally without any discrimination.

Studies of women belong to Baniyakuchi village unfolded some new findings of special importance:

- Most of the women who belong to the village are uneducated; it is one of the main findings of the study.
- The uneducated women of the area serve as a housewife; they are not allowed to do the job in outside.
- The women are not aware of their rights and freedom; they are playing a passive role in the decision-making process of government.
- Some kinds of social norms and regulations also contribute to gender inequality in a rural area, believing in tradition they do not feel comfortable changing their tradition, in short, they are conservative in some context.
- The patriarchal structure of the society is one another reason behind gender inequality in the rural area. Most of the decisions are taken by the male or the chief of the village. What females should do, what should not do all these kinds of decisions are taken by the husband or the senior male member of the family.
- It is possible to reduce gender inequality by providing and giving chance to take education.
- It is very much important to engage them in day-to-day politics or they should stay concerned about what is going on in the present day context.

## 7. CONCLUSION:

Women's empowerment is one of the most important factors of all Nations. Every government tries its best to make gender equality in the sphere of life. Gender equality ensures empowerment among people. In the rural area, gender equality may not prevail. People of the rural area not so advanced yet in different perspectives. Illiteracy and poverty are the major factors in gender differences and which encouraging to women not empowering.

In the present day context gender equality and women's empowerment is very much important to make society developed.

To promote empower some measures can take,

we may create some corporate leadership to create gender equality, we should treat all people equally at any place, may it workplace or others, we should take care of the health, wellbeing, and safety of all the workers, we should not discriminate anyone on any ground, by promoting education and training women may be another measure for gender equality, we should stop child marriage in rural areas along with some meaningless traditions which are hampering in the process of progress.

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**Annexure-I (Questioner-)**

Questions	Answers
What is your educational qualification ?	10 <sup>th</sup> , 12 <sup>th</sup> , UG, PG, Below 10 <sup>th</sup>
What is your caste category ?	SC, ST, OBC, General
Do you know any public policy taken by the govt. of India ?	Yes, No
Do you aware of present political scenario ?	Yes, No
Do you cast vote ?	Yes, No
Do you feel somewhere gender differences ?	Yes, No

**Annexure-II (Responses)**

- Eighty Percent of respondents have no higher educational qualification, most of them are not even school going.
- Almost ninety percent of respondents are belonging to SC (Scheduled Caste) Category
- Ninety percent of respondent do not aware of any public policy taken by the government
- Almost same percent respondents are not aware of present political scenario
- Almost 100% respondents casting votes
- About 60% respondents feel gender differences.