



Study On Gender Budgeting And Status Of Women In Assam

Parismita Das

Asst. Professor

Dept. of History, Majuli University of Culture, Assam, India

Date of Submission: 01-03-2022

Date of Acceptance: 10-03-2022

Abstract: Gender Responsive Budget (GRB) is a very effective tool for reinforcing the concept of gender equality and empowerment. It is a practice to investigate the budget through the lens of gender, but not a separate budget for women. An effort is made through this study to explore the status of women in India as well as Assam in different periods and how the central government and state government of Assam launched several schemes to empower women and reduce this gender gap. Data for this paper is collected through various published sources and internet.

Index Terms - Empowerment, Gender Equality, Gender Responsive Budget, Schemes.

North- East India is the easternmost part of India. It consists of eight states -Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. Among all these states Assam is one of the largest and culturally rich states of India. It is a homeland of various indigenous tribes and known for its unique social structure. Women are considered as an integral part of social structure of Assam. They influence the society by their dynamic action and meaningful thoughts but with the continuous changing pattern of the society the status of women also get changed.

In Vedic age women held an honored position. They were considered quite competent to take part in every spheres of life. We find references of some prominent women like Lopamudra, Gargi, Maitreyi, Vishvavar, Ghosha, Atreyi, Apala in Vedic literatures. The women scholars of Vedic period were given the same respect as male scholars. But due to the rigidity of prevalent practices right and freedom of women curtailed gradually in later period. Assam came into contact with Aryan Civilization during the later Vedic period but the tribal elements could not be entirely rooted out from the social composition of Assam. The traditional egalitarian societies of Assam received a blow with the coming of Ahom rule. The Ahoms were

patriarchal in nature and brought feudal components to tribal structure. If we look into the basis of Ahom government *Paik* or *Khel* system was there. Under this system every adult male in the age group of 16 to 50 was enrolled as a *Paik*, who was compelled to give his service to the state for three to four months in a year. In return for his service he was assigned two *puras* of best arable land. Thus men got access to individual landed property which formerly was enjoyed on communal basis by both men and women. Consequently, women were reduced to non-entirety. As feminist writer Gerda Lerner in her book "*The Creation of the Feminist Consciousness*" throws light on the process of creation of patriarchy, she argued that creation of patriarchy can be traced back from the period of Neolithic when women were pushed back to home with the introduction of plough-agriculture. In that period they assumed that plough can be handled only by men. Once men hold his control over the productive force, he also began to control over reproduction. So, gradually women in Assam came under the patriarchal control.

In India women constitute one of the most vulnerable and weaker sections of our society. Indian society mainly comprises of the element of patriarchy. Therefore, gender disparities are prevalent in almost every aspects of a woman. Paradoxically, sometimes women are treated as Goddesses or sometimes merely as slaves in Indian society. Though gender disparity is found everywhere in the world but it mainly pronounced in developing countries. To address the question of gender inequality the government introduced the concept of 'Gender Responsive Budget'. The Gender Responsive Budget (GRB) is not a separate budget for women but an attempt to recognize the most helpless section of our society, i.e. women. It is a significant part of the development policy because women are oppressed from the time of birth. Therefore, the Gender Responsive Budget is now seen as a socio-economic mechanism for securing gender equality in the development process



There are certain terms like 'Gender Budget', 'Gender Sensitive Budget', 'Women Budget' for 'Gender Responsive Budget'. The concept of Gender Budgeting was introduced mainly in commonwealth countries. Australia became the first country to implement a women's budget in the year 1984. Mainly the concept of Gender budgeting was given momentum by the 4th World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, where 'Beijing platform for action' called for securing the consideration of a gender perspective and women's needs in budgetary policies and progress. Now, Gender budgeting is prevalent almost all over the world. In India, Gender Budgeting was first introduced in the year 2005-06 to address the massive inequality existing in the Indian society. India started 'pre-GRB women component plan' in the Ninth Five-Year Plan because of it focused on the issues related to women empowerment. India also signed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of UN with an aim to reduce the gender gap between men and women according to the goal 5 of SDG and attempt to bring gender equality by 2030.

The status of women in Assam can be understood by the long debate on the introduction of women education. Initially, social reformers anticipated education of women as a tool for changing their subordinate status in the society. Debate on women education was initiated in the journal like *Assam Bandhu*. Most of the articles published in this journal on issues relating to women. Male objection to female education seem to have been based on a fear of the unknown powers education could give women along with the suspicion that education divert the attention of women from their domestic duties. Therefore, government of India introduced several new schemes for overall development of women under the Gender Responsive Budget. Hence, it is crucial for the government to take necessary steps or schemes to empower women and girl child. Keeping this in mind, to improve education and girl child ratio the "*Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*" scheme was launched by the government of India in the year 2015. Following the pattern of the Central government, Assam government also initiated Gender Responsive Budgeting to empower women at the grass root level since the year 2008. Giving push to the "*Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*" scheme that intends to end discrimination against the girl child, Assam government went a step further and distributed scooters among female students who passed higher secondary exams with flying colours, hence fulfilling their poll promise. This was a practical decision realizing the difficulties that a girl

has to undergo in her attempt to gain higher education particularly in rural areas. Prior to this, the state government also distributed free bicycles to girls hailing from BPL (Below Poverty Line) families to attract them towards education.

If we look into the Brahmaputra Valley child marriage or early marriage was unconventional. However, government of India launched 'Sukanya Samridhi Scheme' mainly to prevent the early marriage of a girl child. In Assam also as a part of this scheme an account opened under the name of a girl child will remain operative till she attains 21 years of age, which can be partially withdrawn when she is 18 years of age for education purposes. Keeping the same objective in mind as *Sukanya Samridhi* Scheme, Assam government announced that 10 grams of gold will provide to a bride hailing from an economically weak family having an annual income of below five lakhs. This scheme under the title of "*Arundhati Swarna Yojana*" has been subject to a mixed response. This is exclusively an initiative of Assam government through which the government intends to create awareness on the legal recognition of marriage implying that marriage has to be registered and the bride should be 18 or more years of age and the bride will be entitled to this benefit only in her first marriage. This scheme also intends to prevent polygamy and child marriage as the gold will be given only in the first marriage of bride is under the legally recognised marriageable age. However, this scheme is still at the nascent stage to judge/evaluate its implications.

In most of the society birth of a girl child was a source of desolation for the parents. Therefore, a son was valued more than a daughter. Even though the average household regarded the daughter as the root of all misery and the source of unending trouble but the female infanticide never obtained a footing in the Assamese families. Under the national health mission, Assam has also launched a number of health schemes centering the pregnant women. To cite a few are the 'Mamoni Scheme' which provides cash assistance to pregnant women, 'Majoni', that awards INR 5000 on the birth of a girl child to families having two children and so on. This scheme resembles the *Sukanya Samridhi Yojana* launched in 2015 that encourages parents to deposit a certain amount for a better future for the girls in the family.

All the efforts of the central as well as the state governments have gradually succeeded to improve the condition of women. But if we observe the case of Assam, the state has been facing several problems like the implementation of various schemes



are usually delayed compared to the rest of the states. Assam even lagged behind in initiating gender responsive budgeting when compared to other neighbouring states like Tripura which took this initiative back in 2005-06. Most of the gender responsive schemes are still at their infancy; hence it will take a few more years for their effective evaluation. In addition, havoc caused by floods induces the state government to prioritize flood related problems over schemes related to Gender Budgeting. Another important drawback is the lack of participation of women as they are hardly aware of the various schemes launched by government. Therefore, it is responsibility of the government to disseminate the information regarding various schemes using mass media like television, radio, social media etc. so that women can improve their living conditions by taking advantage of various government schemes and actively participate in the nation building process. Considering this, we can say Gender Responsive Budget paves the way for improvement of women status in our society.

[18&usg=AOvVaw08ck7XSMLf6B8yBPSji0o2](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj4k8GKmsjrAhV77HMBHbQ8BuwQFjAAegQIBBAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.indiatoday.in%2Famp%2Feducation-today%2Fnews%2Fstory%2Fassam-govt-to-provide-scooties-to-22-000-girl-students-first-division-marks-class-12-exams-1712607-2020-08-18&usg=AOvVaw08ck7XSMLf6B8yBPSji0o2)

REFERENCES

- [1]. Baruah, S.L. 1995. A Comprehensive History of Assam.
- [2]. Bullender, Debbie. 2002. Gender Budget Make Cents: Understanding Gender Responsive Budgets. Commonwealth Secretariat.
- [3]. Chakraborty, Lekha. 2013. A Case Study of Gender Responsive Budgeting in India. Commonwealth Secretariat.
- [4]. Lerner, Gerda. 1988. The Creation of Patriarchy.
- [5]. Budget 2018-19. Government of India. Retrieved from <http://indiabudget.gov.in/>
- [6]. Ministry of Finance, Government of India. Retrieved from <http://www.finmin.nic.in/>
- [7]. Ministry of Women & Child Development Department (MWCD). Government of India. Retrieved from <http://www.wcd.nic.in/>
- [8]. Nath, Hemanta kumar. 2020. Assam govt. to provide scooties to 20,000 girl students with first division marks in class 12, India Today, Retrieved from
- [9]. [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj4k8GKmsjrAhV77HMBHbQ8BuwQFjAAegQIBBAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.indiatoday.in%2Famp%2Feducation-today%2Fnews%2Fstory%2Fassam-govt-to-provide-scooties-to-22-000-girl-students-first-division-marks-class-12-exams-1712607-2020-08-](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj4k8GKmsjrAhV77HMBHbQ8BuwQFjAAegQIBBAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.indiatoday.in%2Famp%2Feducation-today%2Fnews%2Fstory%2Fassam-govt-to-provide-scooties-to-22-000-girl-students-first-division-marks-class-12-exams-1712607-2020-08-18&usg=AOvVaw08ck7XSMLf6B8yBPSji0o2)