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Gender Inequality in North East India

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The present paper is an attempt to analyze the status of gender inequality in North East India using various indicators based on secondary data. The study reveals that the northeast is better off than that of the nation as a whole in terms of gender equality. However inequality between women and men exists in the region in spite of the predominance of various ethnic groups who by and large do not believe in sex discrimination. The study reveals that women are relatively disempowered and enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men in the region. Gender gap exists in terms of access to education, employment and health. A large gender gap exists in political participation both at the levels of state and nation. Among the northeastern states, Meghalaya, Manipur and Mizoram show relatively lesser degree of gender inequality in terms of work participation, literacy, infant mortality and sex ratio. The situation is however adverse in case of Tripura, Assam and Sikkim. The study concludes with an observation that access to education, employment and health are only the enabling factors that may not guarantee the achievement towards the goal, which however, largely depends on the mindset of the people.

Introduction: The past few decades have witnessed a steadily increasing awareness of the need to empower women and achieve gender equality through measures to increase social, economic and political equity, and broader access to fundamental human rights, improvements in nutrition, basic health and education. The concept of gender equality has been gaining importance as the subordinate status of women in relation to men has been seen in almost every facets of life. Gender equality is understood as that stage of human development at which the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals are not to be determined by the fact of being born as male or female. It is a stage when both men and women realize their full potential and become partners in every sphere of their lives. Realizing the extent of gender inequality throughout the world, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was established as a separate fund within the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 1984. The General Assembly at that time instructed to ensure women's involvement with mainstream activities. The Platform of Action resulting from the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women expanded the concept and called it as 'gender mainstreaming' i.e., the application of gender perspectives to all legal and social norms and standards, to all policy development, research, planning, advocacy, development, implementation and monitoring— as a mandate for all member states. The gender factor was no longer to be only a supplement to development but central to the practice of development. As a result of the Beijing conference and many years of

work leading up to it, more than 100 countries announced new initiatives to improve the status of women. In 2000, the follow-up Beijing+5 Conference further strengthened the application of the mainstreaming concept and used it to highlight the need for more progress in reaching equality worldwide.

Similarly on human development front, it was gradually realized that if the women who constituted almost half of the population remained as passive, human development in its real sense could not be possible. Therefore in 1995 main emphasis on gender equality was given in the Human Development Report (UNDP, 1995). At the global level for the first time just before the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing two important gender indices were constructed by UNDP (1995): the Gender related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). The GDI considered inequalities by gender in the Human Development Index (HDI) dimensions. It measured the inequalities confronted by women in achievement of those which were very essential for overall development of human being. The GEM focused on political participation (measured by women's shares of parliamentary seats), economic participation (shares of high level and professional positions) and power over economic resources (income gaps).

The disadvantages facing women and girls are a major source of inequality. Very often, women and girls are discriminated against health, education and in labor markets— with negative repercussions for their freedoms. In 2010 report, UNDP further introduced a third measure of inequality known as Gender Inequality Index (GII) built on the same framework as the HDI and the Inequality adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) in order to better expose differences in the distribution of achievements between women and men. The GII is unique in including educational attainment, economic and political participation and female-specific health issues and in accounting for overlapping inequalities at the national level. Thus it became an important advancement on existing global measures of gender equity.

According to the latest human development report (UNDP, 2011: 139):

- Gender inequality measured for 187 countries varied tremendously across countries— the losses in achievement due to gender inequality (not directly comparable to total inequality losses because different variables were used) ranged from 4.9 per cent to 76.9

per cent. Sweden topped the list of the most gender-equal countries, followed by Netherlands, Denmark and Switzerland.

- Countries with unequal distribution of human development also experienced high inequality between women and men, and countries with high gender inequality also experienced unequal distribution of human development. Among the countries doing very badly on both fronts were Central African Republic, Haiti and Mozambique.

The GII which was estimated for 138 countries in 2010 report also revealed gender disparities in reproductive health, empowerment and labour market participation. The losses in those achievements due to gender inequality, as expressed by the GII, ranged from 17 per cent to 85 per cent, with larger losses concentrated in the Arab States and South Asia (UNDP, 2010).

Along with those measures of gender inequality another measure to capture the magnitude and scope of gender-based inequalities was known as Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI). This was introduced by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2006. The Index benchmarks gender gaps on economic, political, education and health based criteria, and provide country rankings that allow for effective comparisons across regions and income groups, and over time. The GGGI examines the gap between men and women in four fundamental categories: *economic participation and opportunity*, *educational attainment*, *health and survival* and *political empowerment*.

Gender Gap at Global Level: According to the reports of WEF (2005-2011), the large populous nations such as India, Pakistan, Turkey and Egypt held some of the lowest ranks in respect of gender gap. The study put Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Iceland on the top of the list. These countries were characterized by strong liberal society, with an impressive record of openness and transparency in government and comprehensive safety net which provided security to vulnerable group of the population. As a result women of those parts of the world enjoyed greater access to education, work opportunity and a higher standard of living. Although no country yet succeeded in eliminating the gap, it was narrowed in case of Nordic countries. In 2009, 25 countries fully closed the gap on educational attainment as compared to 24 countries in 2008 and 15 countries in 2007. On the health and survival sub index, 39 countries fully closed the gap, compared to 36 in 2008 and 32 in 2007. However no countries in the world have been able to eliminate gender inequality. The 2010 report threw a valuable snapshot of the performance of 134 countries. On

an average, over 96 per cent of the gap on health outcomes, 93 per cent on educational attainment, 60 per cent on economic participation and 17 per cent on political empowerment had been closed. The three highest ranking countries— Iceland, Finland and Norway had been able to close their gender gaps significantly (over 80 per cent), while the lowest ranking country, Yemen, had closed only around 46 per cent of its gender gap. India's position was 112 among 134 countries.

The 2011 Report aggregated last six years of data and provided a snapshot of the situation as well as the changes over time, revealing a positive trend as the majority of countries continued to make progress on closing the gender gap. It also provided unique information on the policy frameworks that supported women's economic participation. It showed that the 135 countries covered in the report, representing over 90 per cent of the world's population, had closed almost 96 per cent of the gap in health outcomes between women and men and almost 93 per cent of the gap in educational attainment. However, the gap between women and men on economic participation and political empowerment remained wide: only 59 per cent of the economic outcomes gap and only 19 per cent of the political outcomes gap had been closed. The four Nordic countries that had consistently held the highest positions in the previous reports of the GGGI continued to hold those privileged positions, with Iceland still holding the top spot, closely followed by Norway, Finland and Sweden. Although no country had yet achieved gender equality, all of the Nordic countries, with the exception of Denmark, had closed over 80 per cent of the gender gap and thus served as models and useful benchmarks for international comparisons. While many developed economies had succeeded in closing the gender gap in education, few had succeeded in maximizing the returns from the investment. India with 113th position, the Islamic Republic of Iran with 125th, Nepal with 126th and Pakistan with 133rd position occupied the last places in the regional rankings. India and Pakistan performed above the average on the political empowerment of women, particularly India, but they lagged behind in the other three categories. In particular, the persistent health, education and economic participation gaps remained as detrimental to India's growth. India was the lowest ranked among the BRIC economies.

Area of Study: The northeast India comprises eight states namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. The region is multiethnic with heterogeneous cultural background and is different from mainstream homogeneous culture. Due

to the prevalence of tribal and indigenous culture it is generally perceived that women of the region are relatively much liberal than rest of the country. The general presumption is that women of the region are equal partners with their male counterparts in different spheres of lives. This belief is rooted because unlike Northern, Southern, Western and Eastern part of India, the entire northeastern region is almost free from social evils like dowry, *sati pratha*, female feticide, and female infanticide. However various gender studies reveal a totally different picture. The gender attainment study by Shiv Kumar (1996) revealed that Assam, one of the largest northeastern states, ranked 10th among 16 major states of India. According to the National Human Development Report the GEI at the national level was 0.620 in the eighties which improved marginally to 0.676 in the early nineties (Govt. of India, 2002). The study showed that northeastern states like Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Nagaland ranked above the national average in terms of GEI in 1990s. However the states like Assam, Sikkim and Tripura remained far below the national average in the same study. Moreover in the last few decades insurgency has been the part and parcel of the life of the people of the region. Various ethnic strife, rebel, militancy have been affecting the normal lives of the people and women are the worst victim of it. The region has been witnessing the violation of human rights. Due to armed conflict and militant activities women in the region has been more vulnerable. Keeping all these points in mind an attempt has been made in the present paper to analyze the issues of gender gap in the region.

Review of Literature: Wallace and March (1991) in their work explained the effects of global issues on the lives of women and explored the conceptual basis of gender awareness planning and implementation of development project. Moser (1993) focused on the interrelationship between gender and development, formulation of gender policy and implementation of gender planning and practices. Anand and Sen (1995) tried to develop a measure of gender inequality. They focused on the use of gender-equity-sensitive indicators and the formulation and utilization of measures of gender equality and inequality. Nussbaum (2001) held the view that international political and economic thought must be sensitive to gender difference as a problem of justice, and feminist thought must begin to focus on the problems of women in the third world. Hicks (2002) critically examined Sen's view on gender inequality and capability approach and its applicability in religious ethics. The edited volume of Mahanta (2002) sought to explain the question of women's access to or deprivation of basic human rights as the right to health,

education and work, legal rights, rights of working women besides issues like domestic violence, all the while keeping the peculiar socio-cultural situation of the North East in mind. Sullivan (2004) in her article examined the changing gender relations between heterosexual couples in the domestic spheres. While doing so she presented evidences for change of gender relation at home. She also discussed the changes in attitude to gender equality, images of masculinity and intimacy in personal relationship. She presented cross national quantitative evidence based on time use diaries suggesting long term changes in gender practices around the domestic division of labour. Gender gap reports of World Economic Forum assessed the status accorded to women in a broad range of countries. The first report on global gender gap published in 2005 attempted to measure gender inequality among 58 countries. India secured 53rd position among those 58 countries. Seven reports have been published so far and the coverage of countries has increased to 187. Global Monitoring Report reviewed the evidence on the relationship between gender equality, poverty reduction and growth (I.B.R.D., 2007). There was also compelling evidence that gender equality and women's empowerment were channels to attain universal primary education, lower under-five mortality rate, improve maternal health and lower likelihood of contracting HIV/AIDS. Rout and Panda (2008) opined that ensuring gender parity have become a great challenge for the modern world. Gender equality formed part of development strategy in many countries of the world including India. When both men and women had equal access to services and resources, enjoyed equal rights, and got equal opportunities to develop skills and capabilities then the country would be fast and balanced. Gaye, et al (2010) reviewed ways to measure and monitor gender inequality. They provided a critique to the existing measures including the first global gender indices that were launched in the 1995 Human Development Report, i.e., the Gender-related Development Index and the Gender Empowerment Measure. Further they also introduced a new index that was presented in the 2010 Human Development Report.

The sixth human development report put special emphasis on women empowerment (UNDP, 1995). It mainly concerned on formulation and utilization of measure of gender inequality and the identification of efforts and contribution made by women that went unrecognized in standard national income and employment statistics. The concepts of GDI and GEM evolved out in that report. Assam Human Development Report threw light on inequality in the achievement between men and women of Assam in different spheres of life (Govt. of Assam, 2003). The report viewed that poverty, violence and lack of political participation were the main issues of

concern for South Asian Women, and Assam was no exception. Human development reports of the northeastern states also showed that women of the region were at disadvantageous position relative to men. However the status of women in the region in areas like education, employment, health, etc were far better than that of the nation as a whole.

Bardhan and Klasen (1999) criticized GEM as an inadequate index of measuring women empowerment at aggregate level. While supporting the need to develop indicators that reliably track women's empowerment as well as the impact of gender inequality on overall human development, they argued that the particular ways in which these indices are constructed and the assumptions are made to overcome data gaps severely limit their usefulness and result in very misleading international comparisons. A paper prepared for the World Bank by Malhotra, Schuler and Boender (2002) highlighted the methodological aspects of measurement and analysis on women empowerment. Institute of Social Sciences and South Asia Partnership, Canada organized a workshop in 2003 which dealt with women's empowerment through political participation wherein presentations were made on various theoretical works and case studies. The workshop addressed issues like 'proxy women' which was the shorthand term used by some who perceived that women elected to *Panchayat* bodies were merely 'proxies' or puppets in the hands of their husbands, relatives and other male *Panchayat* members. So deconstructing the idea of proxy women, the workshop emphasized on training programme for elected women for their capacity building. In the keynote address, Mathew (2003) viewed that the equity and empowerment approaches merged together to form the 'gender and development concept'. Findings of Kishor and Gupta (2004) revealed that average women in India were disempowered absolutely and there have been little change in their empowerment over time. The authors viewed that there were several cogent and pressing reasons for evaluating, promoting and monitoring the level of women's empowerment in India, not the least of which was that household health and nutrition were generally in the hands of women and their empowerment were necessary to ensure not just their own welfare but the wellbeing of households. They also asserted that empowerment was critical for the very development of India, as it enhanced the quality and quantity of human resources available for development. Blumberg (2005) viewed that economic empowerment of women was the key to achieve gender equality as well as wealth and well being of nation. The author opined that financial autonomy would enhance women's capacity of decision making in various arenas of life. Moreover, it

would lead to less corruption, less armed conflict and less violence against female in the long run. Kabeer (2005) discussed the third Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on gender equality and women's empowerment. It explored the concept of women empowerment and highlighted ways in which the indicators associated with this Goal. January 2008 issue of a journal on rural development focused mainly on women's empowerment and opined that although women were the active agents for sustainable development, and their empowerment was very important for the process of development, they had not actively participated in their own emancipation mainly due to low economic independence (Govt. of India, 2008). The above review of literature reveals that a number of studies have been undertaken on the issue of gender inequality at the national and global level but no such serious attempt has been made in case of northeast India. The present paper in this regard is a humble attempt to bridge the research gap.

Data and Methodology: The present paper is solely based on secondary sources of data. The extent of gender gap in northeastern region has been examined in four fundamental areas like economic participation and opportunity, education, health and political participation using the indicators like work participation rate (WPR), literacy rate, enrollment ratio, sex ratio, infant mortality rate (IMR), life expectancy at birth and political participation.

Gender Issues in North East India: To examine the status of women in North East India let us first have a look at the GDI values of all the individual states of the region as well as India (Table 1). The figures reveal that all the states have satisfactory GDI values. Mizoram has the highest GDI value and is placed in the first rank among the northeastern states as against Arunachal Pradesh which is placed in the last rank. Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya are placed below the national average in terms of GDI ranking while the other four states have GDI values far above the national average indicating that women of the region enjoy greater autonomy and less disparity in the attainment of various indicators of lives.

Let us now examine the status of gender gap in North East India using indicators like literacy rate, enrolment ratio, WPR, sex ratio, IMR, life expectancy and women's political participation.

Gender Differential in Educational Attainment: Education is one the important factor which determines the status of women. Taking into account the literacy rate and enrolment rate at various level of education, one can find out if there exists any discrimination and the extent of

discrimination which prevails in a society at a given period of time. The gender gap in education in North East India has been analyzed using these indicators in the following paragraphs:

Literacy Gap: Literacy is the first step to formal education. It is seen that for all the northeastern states the gender gap in literacy rate exists and males were observed to be more literate than that of the females (Table 1). However the gender gap in literacy rate was lower in the region than that of the national literacy rates of 21.6 per cent and 16.68 per cent in 2001 and 2011 respectively. It was significantly lower for Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland. Arunachal Pradesh had the highest gender gap in literacy rate. However in the last decade there has been significant improvement in literacy rate. Besides, the gender gap in literacy has been narrowed down for all the states in the region excepting Assam. Surprisingly, the gap has been widened in case of Assam. Huge influx of Bangladeshi population might be one of the reasons for widening gender gap in literacy rate.

Enrolment Gap: Enrolment ratio at different levels of education is another dimension in which gender gap is witnessed. When we compare the enrolment ratio of classes I to V and VI-VII over the period from 1999-2001 to 2009-10 a noticeable change was observed over a period of 10 years (Table 2). In 1999-2001 the gender gap in enrolment ratio existed in all the states for the class I-V. The gap was highest for Assam (18.89%) and lowest for Sikkim (0.84%). However it was still above the national average. In 2009-10 the gender gap was narrowed down. Except Assam and Meghalaya all other states of the region had gender gap more than the national average. However the states like Assam and Meghalaya performed well and gender gap became negative implying the fact that enrolment ratio for girls exceeded that of boys. But in classes VI-VII, the enrolment rate for girls in some states exceeded that of the boys. For instance in Meghalaya, Nagaland and Sikkim the enrolment rates of girls at high school were more than that of boys and the gender gap were narrowed for other northeastern states excepting Assam as compared to the national average in 1999-2001. However in 2009-10 the gender gap was narrowed down. Tripura and Assam were able to reduce the gender gap to a significant level. In states like Meghalaya, Nagaland, Sikkim and Assam the gender gap in enrolment ratio in classes VI-VII were negative. Contrary to this in Arunachal Pradesh the gender gap was increased. In Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur gender gap was less than that of the national average.

When we analyzed the gender gap in enrolment in high school and higher education we found that all the northeastern states had lesser gender gap in enrolment at IX-X level as compared to all India average (Table 3). Even for most of the states it was negative implying enrolment of girl was more than that of boys. However in classes XI-XII, Manipur and Tripura had more gender gap as compared to national average. In case of higher education i.e. above class XII, the enrolment rate of boys and girls were significantly lower as compared to classes IX-X and XI-XII. But gender gap in enrolment at higher education was higher for all the northeastern states compared to all India average (3.2%) except in Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland. Sikkim (5.7%) had highest gender gap in higher education followed by Assam (5.0%). However in Meghalaya with prevalence of matriarchal society, gender gap was observed to be negative.

Gender Differentials in Employment: Female work participation rate is one of the indicators of employment status of women. The gender differential in employment is presented in Table 4 and analyzed taking the difference in male and female work participation rates of rural and urban areas of various states. It is found that for all the northeastern states except Manipur the difference was positive implying existence of gender gap in the region. But the gender gap in work participation rate was relatively more in urban areas than that of rural areas. Work participation rate of rural women were relatively more than urban women. Except for Sikkim, Tripura and Assam all other northeastern states were having the gender gap in rural areas being less than that of the national average. In case of urban area, the situation was adverse for Assam and Tripura where gender gap was above the national average.

Gender Differentials in Health and Wellbeing: Health is one of the broad indicators in which gender disparity is seen all over the world. An improved sex ratio always indicates a better status of women in the society. As far as northeastern states are concerned we examined it using the indicators like sex ratio, infant mortality rate, and life expectancy at birth.

Sex Ratio: The sex ratio for all the northeastern states was higher than the national average except for Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Sikkim both in 2001 and 2011 (Table 5). However in 2011, all the states of the region experienced a better sex ratio as compared to 2001. Sex ratio for Manipur (987), Meghalaya (985) and Mizoram (975) were significantly higher than that of the national average (940). Yet sex ratio was not favorable to women in all the states of the region.

Infant Mortality Rate: The influence of tradition and its valuing of the girl child have a positive influence on health and nutritional status of girl children. The impact is seen from the favorable figures on female infant mortality rates that northeastern states cherished (Table 5). When disaggregated by gender, we found that the gap between boys and girls was narrow and the mortality profiles of female infants were lower in most of the states of the region in comparison to the national figure. Gender gap was highest in Assam as compared to other NE states and nation as a whole. However the male and female infant mortality rates were equal in case of Meghalaya implying no gender gap in the state. As regards data on rural-urban segregation it was available only for the state of Assam. Gap was observed to be more in rural Assam as compared to urban Assam.

Life Expectancy at Birth: Life expectancy at birth is another indicator which shows the longevity of life of a person. It is one of the indicators of human development index too. In the absence of life expectancy tables for different states in the region we had to be dependent on various sources to present a sketchy idea about the region. The life expectancy at birth was higher for women than that of men both at the national level and in different states in the region. However the states like Arunachal Pradesh (54.51 years) [Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, 2005: 93] and Manipur (61.5 years) (Govt. of Manipur, 2011) and Assam (58.1 yrs) (SRS based Abridged Life Table, 1998-02) had lower life expectancy at birth for women than that of the national figure (63.3 years) (SRS based Abridged Life Table, 1998-02). Tripura (74 years) had longer life expectancy at birth for women than men (Govt. of Tripura, 2007: 17). But female life expectancy was always higher than that of male life expectancy for all the states of the region.

Gender Differentials in Political Participation: Women's political participation is another input to their empowerment. It is one of the important factors that contribute to their wellbeing. Empowered women have political freedom which in turn translates into their decision making capacity at the community, state and national level. Women's representation in political field even in its most modest form of local government has the ability to transform and reinterpret the practice of politics (Mathew, 2003). It helps to create better village communities based on harmony and cooperation achieved through gender balance and justice. However in case of India and even in the northeast, the strong family based structure of Indian politics makes it difficult for women to assert independent political choices, as distinct from the male headed families. Therefore judging women's political agency on the basis of their representation in political

bodies is hazardous; women standing proxy for men are quite common in India (Govt. of Assam, 2003).

When we analyzed the gender differentials in women's political participation in northeastern states, we found that elected women members in Legislative Assembly of the states were negligible. For instance in Assam, in 1972 there was not even a single woman MLA. However the number and percentage had increased over time. In 2006 about 10 per cent of MLAs were women. Similarly in Arunachal Pradesh, percentage of women MLA never exceeded 5 per cent. In the last 25 years there had been only one woman MP from the state. However at the local level women's representation was almost one third. Participation of women at village, intermediate and district Panchayat level of Arunachal Pradesh was 39.6 per cent, 34.99 per cent and 33.82 percent respectively (Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, 2005). Mizoram also tells the same story. In the past only once a single woman was elected as a Member (Lalthansangi, 2005). In Manipur at the local level the participation of women was about one third of the total. However in hilly districts of Manipur women were not allowed to have any representation in any political institution (Govt. of Manipur, 2011). In Tripura no woman had been elected as MP till date. However only one woman was elected to the State Legislative Assembly, but representation in local bodies had been good and about one third of the total members (Govt. of Tripura, 2007). In Nagaland also no woman had been elected till date. But representation in local bodies had been relatively good (Govt. of Nagaland, 2004). Till date Meghalaya had represented one woman in parliament. Although representation in local bodies did not always indicate empowerment of women as in most cases they acted as proxies to their male counterparts yet it is desirable from the point of view of progress in the long run. It is believed that elected women in the long no longer remain as proxies rather they become politically active and empowered. Overall information revealed that there had been a huge gender gap in political participation at higher bodies in northeastern states but grounding was being prepared for future as revealed from their participation at local bodies.

Findings and Conclusion: In the above analysis an endeavor was made to study the extent of gender inequality in northeastern states of India in four different areas viz., education, employment, health and political participation. The gender related development indices of the eight states were compared with the corresponding national figure. It was found that four states had GDI above national level and the remaining four states had GDI values marginally below

than that of India implying that women of the region enjoyed less disparity in terms of longevity, educational attainment and thus control over resources. The gender gap was estimated in the areas like literacy rate, enrolment rate, work participation rate, sex ratio, infant mortality rate, life expectancy at birth and women's political participation etc. We found that the gap was narrow for the states like Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland in respect of literacy rate. The gender gap in literacy was the largest for Arunachal Pradesh among northeastern states. However it was always better than national figure. Similarly Meghalaya, Nagaland and Sikkim had done well in case of enrolment rate. Even in high school level the enrolment rate of girls was more than that of boys in those states. But in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam the gender gap was wide in enrolment rate at different levels of education. Gender gap in work participation rate was less in Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram. The prevalence of women market in Manipur might be the cause of the low gender gap in the state. However the situation was worse in Tripura, Assam and Sikkim where tribal population were relatively lower in comparison to other northeastern states. As regards sex ratio we found that Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Assam had better sex ratio and states like Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland had sex ratio much lower than that of national average. Infant mortality rate was lower for northeastern states. Female infant mortality rate was higher than male infant mortality rate in the region except in the states of Sikkim and Tripura. Similarly life expectancy at birth was more for women than for men in North East and India. So it seems that the women of the region enjoyed better health status as compared to national level. Political participation of women at state and national level was lower for those states except Assam. However the participation at local level was almost one third for all the states of the region. But this might not indicate that women of the region were politically empowered or aware. There might be influence of male members of the family on the women as a result of which they acted as proxies of their male counterparts in the political domain. Although the status of women were relatively better in northeastern states viz., Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and Meghalaya as compared to national level yet there were gaps in educational attainment, access to employment, health, political participation etc. Giving property right, access to employment and educational opportunity to women thus might not change the picture. A revolutionary change in the social and cultural values and behavioral pattern is necessary to foster the process of achieving gender equality. As soon as women feel that they

have the capability to operate the society at the same term as men then achieving gender equality would not remain as a distant dream.

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State/Country	GDI in 2001 *	Literacy Gap in 2001 **	Literacy Gap in 2011 **
Ar. Pradesh	0.48	20.33	14.12
Assam	0.49	8.64	11.54
Manipur	0.58	18.17	13.32
Meghalaya	0.51	5.73	3.39
Mizoram	0.67	4.56	4.32
Nagaland	0.42	9.19	6.60
Sikkim	0.59	15.60	10.86
Tripura	0.56	16.10	9.03
India	0.54	21.60	16.68

*Sources: * National Human Development Report 2001; ** www.indiastat.com*

State/ Country	Classes I-V (6-10 Years)						Classes VI-VIII (11-13 Years)					
	1999-2001			2009-2010			1999-2001			2009-2010		
	Boys	Girls	Gap	Boys	Girls	Gap	Boys	Girls	Gap	Boys	Girls	Gap
Ar. Pradesh	126.14	108.55	17.59	169.99	163.42	6.57	72.42	66.68	5.74	106.14	96.21	9.93
Assam	124.25	105.36	18.89	91.67	94.15	-2.48	81.02	64.63	16.39	67.32	70.32	-3.00
Manipur	101.87	87.41	14.46	189.66	182.26	7.40	79.62	71.34	8.28	107.21	99.19	8.02
Meghalaya	119.46	111.64	7.82	169.95	174.09	-4.14	57.42	62.28	-4.86	80.45	91.44	-10.99
Mizoram	121.84	107.52	14.32	173.95	162.2	11.75	78.77	76.17	2.60	100.83	94.98	5.85
Nagaland	92.21	87.78	4.43	99.63	98.89	0.74	58.67	61.14	-2.47	59.13	60.70	-1.57
Sikkim	139.32	138.48	0.84	157.91	152.75	5.16	70.96	76.59	-5.63	70.89	86.59	-15.70
Tripura	118.28	100.86	17.42	146.81	143.72	3.09	69.96	60.26	9.70	93.33	93.14	0.19
India	104.08	85.18	18.90	115.55	115.39	0.16	67.15	49.66	17.49	84.53	78.30	6.23

Source: www.indiastat.com

State/Country	Classes IX-X (14-15 Years) Year 2010-11			Classes XI-XII (16-17 Years) Year 2010-11			Above Class XII (18-23 Years) Year 2008-09		
	Boys	Girls	Gap	Boys	Girls	Gap	Boys	Girls	Gap
Ar. Pradesh	73.3	67.9	5.4	49.1	45.7	3.4	15.5	11.4	4.1
Assam	52.0	46.9	5.1	18.2	14.6	3.6	10.7	5.7	5.0
Manipur	83.5	80.1	3.4	39.0	32.1	6.9	14.5	11.1	3.4
Meghalaya	49.0	49.9	-0.9	13.7	17.3	-3.6	15.4	17.0	-1.6
Mizoram	75.4	78.3	-2.9	41.2	40.2	1.0	25.0	22.4	2.6
Nagaland	27.4	29.5	-2.1	18.3	16.7	1.6	13.4	11.6	1.8
Sikkim	44.9	50.3	-5.4	27.6	29.5	-1.9	25.2	19.5	5.7
Tripura	73.0	73.3	-0.3	31.9	25.0	6.9	19.4	15.8	3.6
India	69.0	60.8	8.2	42.2	36.1	6.1	12.3	9.1	3.2

Source: www.indiastat.com

State/Country	Rural			Urban		
	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
Ar. Pradesh	50.0	41.0	9.0	46.1	14.8	31.3
Assam	55.1	20.9	34.2	55.1	10.9	44.2
Manipur	52.4	35.1	17.3	45.6	55.1	-9.5
Meghalaya	57.2	47.8	9.4	45.4	30.3	15.1
Mizoram	59.4	44.1	15.3	48.4	28.1	20.3
Nagaland	54.9	50.4	4.5	45.7	25.7	20.0
Sikkim	55.4	31.8	23.6	54.5	16.8	37.7
Tripura	54.9	8.5	46.4	50.4	10.0	40.4
India	54.6	32.7	21.9	54.6	16.6	38.0

Source: www.indiastat.com

Table 5: Sex Ratio and Infant Mortality Rates in NE States

State/ Country	Sex Ratio in		Infant Mortality Rate in 2009								
			Total			Rural			Urban		
	2001	2011	M	F	Gap	M	F	Gap	M	F	Gap
Ar. Pradesh	893	919	31	34	-3	na	na	na	na	na	na
Assam	935	953	58	64	-6	61	67	-6	35	38	-3
Manipur	978	987	14	18	-4	na	na	na	na	na	na
Meghalaya	972	985	59	59	0	na	na	na	na	na	na
Mizoram	938	975	33	38	-5	na	na	na	na	na	na
Nagaland	909	931	23	28	-5	na	na	na	na	na	na
Sikkim	875	889	35	33	2	na	na	na	na	na	na
Tripura	948	961	33	30	2	na	na	na	na	na	na
India	933	940	49	52	-3	54	56	-2	32	35	-3

Source: www.indiastat.com Note: na stands for not available