



# A Study on Social Freedom of Women in relation to Demographic Variables of Goreswar Area of Baksa District, Assam

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## Abstract:

Social freedom is an important parameter for empowerment of women. As social freedom is very essential for development of women, so the investigator tried to explore the social freedom of women from rural area in relation to some demographic variables. Main objectives of this study are (i) To study the social freedom of women in relation to educational status; (ii) To study the social freedom of women in relation to occupational status; and (iii) To study the social freedom of women in relation to marital status. Descriptive survey method is applied in this study and sample women are collected from Goreswar area of Baksa district, Assam. For collection of necessary data, 'Women Social Freedom Scale' developed and standardised by Dr. L. I. Bhusan is applied and collected data are analysed with the help of simple percentage. Major findings of this study are: (i) Educational status of most of the respondents are illiterate and up to primary education level category; (ii) Social freedom thinking of highly educated women is high as compared to other categories of women; (iii) Most of the illiterate women's social freedom thinking is extremely low; (iv) Social freedom of women engaged in Govt. job and industry are high as compared to the women of other category regarding occupational status.

**Key Terms:** Social freedom, Women, Educational status, Occupational status, Marital status.

## Introduction:

*“Gender is undoubtedly one of the most important factors in our lives. The first question asked when a child is born is ‘boy or girl?’ Our lives are to a great extent, shaped by our gender..... I also realized that in a world dominated by male values, while the class and the class struggle are taken seriously, the gender struggle is not.”*

(Shashi Deshpande)

We are living in 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this era of profound scientific advancement and globalisation when the whole world is progressive in all spheres, the necessity of organising seminar on ‘gender sensitisation’ definitely posits forth certain queries in one’s mind regarding the status and predicament of women in society. Gender being a social construct, the normative understanding of womanhood is moulded by the prevailing discourses of patriarchy. Studies reveal that though the Indian women have progressed a lot, yet the liberation and equality of women in society have still remained a matter of grave concern. No doubt, some women have been placed in highly respectable positions in society, but this is not the norm throughout the country.

Indian women have to negotiate their continued existence through an array of oppressive patriarchal family structure. Throughout ages patriarchy has always wanted us to believe that there is an essence of femaleness that cocoons all biological women. In this point, society has always to emphasize that all standards and norms of femininity and femaleness that are imposed upon a women are natural and those who violate these social decrees with conviction and defiance are made to suffer or have become subjects of harsh criticism.

Freedom is very much essential for women for development of herself as well as for the nation. Social freedom means the will of women obtaining freedom from social custom tradition religious ritual which is giving them lower level financial freedom, political rights, self relevant freedom from bonds of cast, freedom from orthodox thoughts, own options for selection of life partner participation in decision making etc. Women all over the world lack access to opportunities, skill, knowledge, assets and fundamental human rights such as freedom from want and freedom from fear. Without social freedom thinking, it is not possible to develop the women counterpart of the world as a whole.

## Literature Review:

There were many studies undertaken which reveal social freedom of women. Few of them are mentioned below.

Sakamoto and Colarossi (2008) indicated that gender differences remain pervasive across many aspects of social work education including pay, rank, job duties, and tenure. Women appear disadvantaged in almost all areas analyzed when compared to men.

Jan (2009) indicated that with the increase in age of women, their decision-making power had also increased. Urban, educated, working and married women hold more decision-making power than rural, illiterate, non-working and unmarried women. In nuclear family set-up, women held more decision making power than in joint families.

Kumar, Deo and Sonam (2011) revealed working women excelled over non-working women in terms of desire for social freedom.

Kanjya & Joshi (2013) found that there was a significant difference in social freedom and depression among the married and unmarried women. But there was no significant difference in the social freedom and depression among the joint and divided families' women. However, there was an inverse relationship between social freedom and depression among women.

Kaur (2013) found that women empowerment and women social freedom in Kashmir were not significantly related to each other. The reason was the threading and suppressed culture of Kashmir in which the women who were enjoying social freedom did not feel empowered due to their snubbed voices at some levels.

## Rational of the Study:

Gender sensitisation is an emerging issue in our society from long time. In every spheres of our society, we normally observed gender inequality. From population, male-female ratio to literacy rate, employment, gender inequality is everywhere. For centuries women have been treated as weak, obedient, shy and timid partner of man and thereby enjoyed an inferior status in society. With the growth in education and vocational opportunities women throughout the world have become more conscious of their rights of equality and freedom and have revolt against the conventional norms. Women are now taking up non-traditional roles and are developing a new outlook in life. But this scenario is not seen in all areas. Till now, large numbers of women are not aware about their rights and not free from social taboos, conventions and rituals. Social freedom is an important parameter for empowerment of women. From women's perspective, social freedom refers to women's desire to be free from social taboos, conventions, rituals and roles which provide them lower status in society. As social freedom is very

essential for development of women, so the investigator tries to explore the social freedom of women from rural area in relation to some demographic variables.

Literature review brought out two things to light: (i) women in India are still subjected to discrimination, ill treatment and enjoyed lower status as compared to men and (ii) there is growing concern and resentment particularly among educated women and educated working women against all such customs and rituals which lower down their status in society and they carry strong desire for social freedom. Thus desire for 'social freedom' constitutes an important aspect of women's life and therefore, it is very significant to study the social freedom of women thoroughly.

### **Statement of the Problem:**

The problem of this paper is stated as given below: **“A Study on Social Freedom of Women in relation to Demographic Variables of Goreswar area of Baksa District, Assam.”** Here, the selected demographic variables are educational status, occupational status and marital status.

### **Operational Definition of Key Terms:**

- **Social freedom:** The term refers to women's desire to be free from social taboos, conventions, rituals and roles which provide them lower status in society. In this study, social freedom is comprises of different dimensions like freedom from control or interference of parents and husband, freedom from social taboos, customs and rituals, freedom concerning sex and marriage and economic freedom and social equality.
- **Women:** The term refers to adult human female. In this study, women comprises the adult female human of age group 18 and above of Goreswar area.
- **Educational status:** In this study, educational attainment or level of education of women is termed as Educational Status.
- **Occupational status:** The term refers to Government job and other income generating activities of women of Goreswar area.
- **Marital status:** The term refers to the state of being married or not married. In this study, the term refers to married, unmarried, widow and divorcee woman.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

Keeping in mind the purpose of the study, the following objectives are formulated:

- 1) To study the social freedom of women in relation to educational status.
- 2) To study the social freedom of women in relation to occupational status.
- 3) To study the social freedom of women in relation to marital status.

## Methods and Materials

- **Selection of research Method:** The Descriptive Survey Method has been applied for the present study. This method is designed to obtain pertinent and precise information concerning the current status of the phenomena and to draw valid general conclusions from the facts discovered.
- **Population and Sample:** All the women (Age group 18-60 years) of Goreswar area of Baksa district are the population of this present study. Out of these, 100 women are selected as sample for this study by using random sampling technique.
- **Tool for Data Collection:** For collection of necessary data, 'Women Social Freedom Scale' developed and standardised by Dr. L. I. Bhusan was used in this study. There are 24 items in this scale in which 16 are positive items and 8 are negative items. Reliability of this scale is calculated by three methods namely Odd vs. Even Split Half, 1<sup>st</sup> half vs. 2<sup>nd</sup> half Split Half and Test-Retest and it is found to be 0.76, 0.83 and 0.79 respectively. Validity and Norm of the scale is also significant.
- **Statistical Technique:** Percentage analysis has been applied to analyze the collected data.
- **Delimitation of the Study:** This study is confined to the women (age group 18-60 years) of Goreswar area of Baksa district of Assam.

## Analysis and Interpretation:

The collected data are analysed by using appropriate statistical treatment. The results have been explained below.

**Table No. 1: Percentage of Women in terms of Demographic Variables**

| Sl. No | Demographic Variables               | % of Women |
|--------|-------------------------------------|------------|
| 1      | <b>Educational Status</b>           |            |
|        | (i) Illiterate                      | 28.0       |
|        | (ii) Only read and write            | 13.0       |
|        | (iii) Up to Primary Education Level | 24.0       |
|        | (iv) Up to High School              | 12.0       |
|        | (v) H.S.L.C. Passed                 | 11.0       |
|        | (vi) Higher Secondary Passed        | 8.0        |
|        | (vii) Bachelor Degree Passed        | 4.0        |
| 2      | <b>Occupational Status</b>          |            |
|        | (i) Unemployed                      | 64.0       |
|        | (ii) Daily Wage Earner              | 12.0       |
|        | (iii) Worker of Industry            | 19.0       |
|        | (iv) Govt. Job                      | 5.0        |
| 3      | <b>Marital status</b>               |            |
|        | (i) Married                         | 51.0       |
|        | (ii) Unmarried                      | 37.0       |
|        | (iii) Widow                         | 10.0       |
|        | (iv) Divorcee                       | 2.0        |

Table No. 1 revealed that educational status of the respondents varies from illiterate to education up to Bachelor degree passed. The study reveals that 28% are illiterate, 13% are only read and write category, 24% have education up to primary level, 12% have education up to high school, 11% are H.S.L.C. passed, 8% are higher secondary passed and 4% are Bachelor degree passed.

Again in case of occupational status, it is found that 64% women respondents are unemployed, 12% women are engaged in daily wage earning activities, 19% women work in industry as lower level work and 5% women are engaged in Government job.

Regarding marital status, it is found from table 1 that 51% women respondents are married, 37% women are unmarried, 10% women are widow and 2% women are divorcee.

**Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Level of Women's Social Freedom Thinking in regard to Educational Status**

| Educational Status            | Level of Women's Social Freedom Thinking |              |                 |            |                     |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------|-----------------|------------|---------------------|
|                               | Extremely High (20-24)                   | High (15-19) | Average (10-14) | Low (5-9)  | Extremely Low (0-4) |
| Illiterate                    | 0  | 10.72% (3)   | 14.28% (4)      | 21.43% (6) | 53.57% (15)         |
| Only read and write           | 0  | 7.69% (1)    | 15.39% (2)      | 30.77% (4) | 46.15% (6)          |
| Up to Primary Education Level | 0  | 16.67% (4)   | 25.0% (6)       | 16.67% (4) | 41.66% (10)         |
| Up to High School             | 8.33% (1)                                | 16.67% (2)   | 41.67% (5)      | 25.0% (3)  | 8.33% (1)           |
| H.S.L.C. Passed               | 18.18% (2)                               | 27.27% (3)   | 45.45% (5)      | 9.1% (1)   | 0                   |
| Higher Secondary Passed       | 25.0% (2)                                | 62.5% (5)    | 12.5% (1)       | 0          | 0                   |
| Bachelor Degree Passed        | 50.0% (2)                                | 50.0% (2)    | 0               | 0          | 0                   |
| Overall                       | 7.0%                                     | 20.0%        | 23.0%           | 18.0%      | 32.0%               |

Table No. 2 shows that under illiterate category 10.72%, 14.28%, 21.43% and 53.57% women's social freedom thinking is high, average, low and extremely low respectively. Again under only read and write category 7.69%, 15.39%, 30.77% and 46.15% women's social freedom thinking is high, average, low and extremely low respectively. Under up to primary education level category, 16.67%, 25%, 16.67% and 41.66% women's social freedom thinking is high, average, low and extremely low respectively. Again under up to high school category 8.33%, 16.67%, 41.67%, 25% and 8.33% women's social freedom thinking is extremely high, high, average, low and extremely low respectively. In regard to H.S.L.C. passed category, 18.18%, 27.27%, 45.45% and 9.1% women's social freedom thinking is extremely high, high, average and low respectively. 25%, 62.5% and 12.5% higher secondary passed women's social freedom thinking is extremely high, high and average respectively. Again, 50% and 50% bachelor degree passed women's social freedom thinking is extremely high and high respectively.



**Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Level of Women's Social Freedom Thinking in regard to Occupational Status**

| Occupational Status | Level of Women's Social Freedom Thinking |              |                 |             |                     |
|---------------------|--|--------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------------|
|                     | Extremely High (20-24)                   | High (15-19) | Average (10-14) | Low (5-9)   | Extremely Low (0-4) |
| Unemployed          | 1.56% (1)                                | 18.75% (12)  | 18.75% (12)     | 23.44% (15) | 37.50% (24)         |
| Daily Wage Earner   | 0  | 16.67% (2)   | 25.00% (3)      | 16.67% (2)  | 41.66% (5)          |
| Worker of Industry  | 15.79% (3)                               | 21.05% (4)   | 42.11% (8)      | 5.26% (1)   | 15.79% (3)          |
| Govt. Job           | 60.00% (3)                               | 40.00% (2)   | 0               | 0           | 0                   |
| Overall             | 7.0%                                     | 20.0%        | 23.0%           | 18.0%       | 32.0%               |

Table No. 3 shows that under unemployed category 1.56%, 18.75%, 18.75%, 23.44% and 37.50% women's social freedom thinking is extremely high, high, average, low and extremely low respectively. Again under daily wage earner category 16.67%, 25%, 16.67% and 41.66% women's social freedom thinking is high, average, low and extremely low respectively. Under worker of industry category 15.79%, 21.05%, 42.11%, 5.26% and 15.79% women's social freedom thinking is extremely high, high, average, low and extremely low respectively. Again under Govt. job category 60% and 40% women's social freedom thinking is extremely high and high respectively.

**Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Level of Women's Social Freedom Thinking in regard to Marital Status**

| Occupational Status | Level of Women's Social Freedom Thinking |              |                 |            |                     |
|---------------------|--|--------------|-----------------|------------|---------------------|
|                     | Extremely High (20-24)                   | High (15-19) | Average (10-14) | Low (5-9)  | Extremely Low (0-4) |
| Married             | 9.80% (5)                                | 25.49% (13)  | 27.45% (14)     | 17.65% (9) | 19.61% (10)         |
| Unmarried           | 5.40% (2)                                | 18.92% (7)   | 16.22% (6)      | 8.11% (3)  | 51.35% (19)         |
| Widow               | 0  | 0            | 20.00% (2)      | 50.00% (5) | 30.00% (3)          |
| Divorcee            | 0  | 0            | 50.00% (1)      | 50.00% (1) | 0                   |
| Overall             | 7.0%                                     | 20.0%        | 23.0%           | 18.0%      | 32.0%               |

Table No. 4 reveals that under married category 9.8%, 25.49%, 27.45%, 17.65% and 19.61% women's social freedom thinking is extremely high, high, average, low and extremely low respectively. Again under unmarried category 5.4%, 18.92%, 16.22%, 8.11% and 51.35% women's social freedom thinking is extremely high, high, average, low and extremely low respectively. Under widow category 20%, 50% and 30% women's social freedom thinking is average, low and extremely low respectively. Again under divorcee category 50% women's are under average and low category in respect to social freedom thinking.

## Discussion:

On the basis of above analysis and interpretation, major findings of this study are summed up in the following way:

- Educational status of most of the respondents are illiterate and up to primary education level category.
- Most of respondents are unemployed and only few are employed in Govt. sector. Other respondents are engaged in company and daily wage.
- Almost half of the respondents are married and remaining are unmarried. Only few are widow and divorcee.
- Social freedom thinking of highly educated women is high as compared to other categories of women.
- Most of the illiterate women's social freedom thinking is extremely low.
- Social freedom of women engaged in Govt. job and industry are high as compared to the women of other category regarding occupational status.
- Maximum numbers of unemployed women's social freedom thinking is extremely low.
- Social freedoms thinking of married and unmarried women's are better than widow and divorcee women in extremely high category.
- Again, while comparing between married and unmarried women, social freedoms thinking of married women's are better than unmarried women in extremely high, high and average category.

The above mentioned finding reveals different opinion regarding social freedom of women. This study mainly focussed on social freedom thinking of women in relation to educational status, occupational status and marital status. Education is a very influencing factor for social freedom thinking of women. Education develops the insight of women and broadens their outlook towards different issues. Educated women especially highly educated women are more concern about society and have deep thinking towards social freedom as compared to illiterate women. Economic independency is another determining factor regarding for social freedom of women. Employed women have more social freedom as compared to unemployed women. As they go outside for different work and interact with different people in their job place, they able to know different ups and down of human life. If the parents and husband of women have dynamic outlook and modernity attitude, than it helps the women to develop their social freedom thinking.



## Educational Implications:

On the basis of results and discussion, following implications are made from this study:

- It should begin from the schools and colleges in which the students' community should be properly educated in favour of social freedom of women and they should take a vow that they will respect the women.
- Efforts should be made to raise the socio-economic status of people only then they may give freedom to women.
- It should help the social activists and NGO's to adopt new methods for inquiry, hence to facilitate research and to spread the message against the evils of crime against women by conducting periodical camps and offering counselling to the victims as well as the general public thus will help to spread the awareness about social freedom of women.
- It should help the government and society to make objective plans to give more freedom to women in future.

## Conclusion:

Educational status, occupational status and marital status of women are some determining demographic variables for social freedom thinking. Women have equal right and responsibility towards the family and society as the men. The development of the society not only depends on the development of the men but also on women. So, the women folk of the society should social freedom and empowered to a certain level. For the development of the society it is important to make the women not only literate but also highly educated. Proper education helps them to engage different income generating activities. And liberal parents and husband help the women in developing their social freedom to some extent.

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