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## Attitude of Deori Women towards Higher Education: A Study Based on Lakhimpur District of Assam, India

**Latika Hazarika**

Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy,  
Madhabdev College, Narayanpur, Lakhimpur, Assam, India

### **Abstract:**

*Deori tribe is a small plain tribe of Assam. Deoris are found in Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Jorhat and Sivsagar districts of Assam. According to 2001 Census Report, total Deori population of the state is 41,161 and out of which 20,121(48.88%) live in Lakhimpur district of Assam. In the Lakhimpur District of Assam, the scheduled tribe female literacy rate is significantly lower than that of male. In the Lakhimpur district, scheduled tribe male literacy rate is 73.37 %, whereas scheduled tribe female literacy rate is only 51.22%. (Source: Statistical Hand Book, Assam 2009). But the literacy may merely refer to the ability to read and write. Majority of these literate people did not pass the 10<sup>th</sup> standard and many of them can put their signatures only. This is more applicable to the Scheduled Tribe women population. Many Scheduled Tribe literate women are deprived of any forms of higher education. On the other hand, attitude and motivation has great influence on learning, as it indicates a learner's willingness or unwillingness what is taught. This study, therefore, will attempt to find out the attitude of Deori Women towards higher education. The main objective of the studies is-to find out the attitude (Positive and Negative) of the Deori women towards higher education. The primary data required for the study will be collected from total 150 scheduled tribe Deori women. Deori women, who completed their 10+2 stage and pursuing their higher education at undergraduate level, will consider for the study. The data will be collected from the three different rural college of the Lakhimpur district of the Assam. The primary data required for the study will be collected with the help of questionnaire.*

**Keywords:** Schedule tribe, woman, literacy, attitude, higher education

### **1. Introduction**

Assam is the homeland of different tribes. Here, the great social reformers and religious leaders like Sankardev and Madhabdev taught people to consider all devotees of God with equal dignity. Owing to these fare social practices, in Assam, the scheduled tribe people do not feel social aloofness due to class division or any other discriminative social practices. The overall scheduled tribe literacy rate of Assam stands higher than that of the entire India. According to the Census Report of 2011, scheduled tribe literacy rate of Assam is 72.1%, which is well above the national average for scheduled tribe (58.96%). Yet the life of tribal women reflects a different picture than the general women. They are considered as economic asset. They are hardworking, laborious in every field of their personal life. They are fully involved in household activities. They even earn more than the men for their family. They do every hard work to support their family. They are capable of taking every responsibility related to domestic affairs. Even they play a dominant role in cultural, religious and traditional field. But in spite of all these, they are deprived of their rights in social, political and educational field due to the barriers prevailing in their communities for some illogical beliefs based on rituals and customs. Most of the tribal societies like other society are patriarchal in which men dominate in public sector. And all these sufferings of the tribal women are due to the lack of education. They even cannot imagine about higher education as more than 50 per cent of tribal women are not getting a chance to take the primary education which is a human right.

### **2. Deori Tribe of Assam**

Deori tribe is a small plain tribe of Assam. Deoris are found in Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, and Sivsagar districts of Assam. The Deori community is linked to the Eastern Bodo-Garo. It is believed that after being ill-treated by the Mongol rulers, these Deori tribe came down to India via Tibet and Burma and then had taken refuge in the mountainous regions of Cachar Hills. According to 2001 Census Report, total Deori population of the state is 41,161 and out of which 20,121(48.88%) live in Lakhimpur district of Assam. As per the Census Report 2011, 23.93% of the total population of Lakhimpur district is consisted of scheduled tribe people, while in case of Assam 12.45% of the total population of the state is consisted of scheduled tribe people.

In the Lakhimpur district of Assam the scheduled tribe female literacy rate is significantly lower than that of male. In the Lakhimpur district, scheduled tribe male literacy rate is 73.37 %, whereas scheduled tribe female literacy rate is only 51.22%. (Source: Statistical

Hand Book, Assam 2009). But the literacy refers merely to the ability to read and write. Majority of these literate people did not pass the 10<sup>th</sup> standard and many of them can put their signatures only. This is more applicable to the scheduled tribe women population. Many scheduled tribe literate women are deprived of any forms of higher education.

Attitude has great influence on learning, as it indicates a learner's willingness or unwillingness what is taught. An attitude can be defined as a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, event, activities, ideas, or just about anything in your environment. An attitude is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's degree of like or dislike for an item. Attitudes are generally positive or negative views of a person, place, thing or event. The attitude is the status-fixing behaviour. Attitude is also defined as the totality of those states that lead to or point toward some particular activity of the organism. The attitude is, therefore, the dynamic element in human behaviour, the motive for activity. This study, therefore, will attempt to find out the attitude of Deori women towards higher education.

### 3. Objective of the Study

The main objective of the studies is- to find out the attitude (positive and negative) of the Deori women towards higher education.

### 4. Methodology

The primary data required for the study was collected from total 150 scheduled tribe Deori women. Those women, who completed their 10+2 stage and pursuing their higher education at undergraduate level, were considered to be eligible for the study. The Data was collected from three different rural colleges of the Lakhimpur district of Assam.

The numbers of students from the colleges are listed below:

Sl. No.	Name of the College	1 <sup>st</sup> Semester	3 <sup>rd</sup> semester	5 <sup>th</sup> semester	Total
1	Madhabdev College	25	15	10	50
2	Bihpuria College	25	15	10	50
3	Sankardev College	25	15	10	50
	Total	75	45	30	150

Table 1: Distribution of the sample

The primary data required for the study were collected with the help of questionnaire. Most of the questions of the questionnaire were of objective type. Though several readymade attitude scales constructed and standardized by different psychologists but researcher constructed her own tools on the basis of Likert 5-Point Attitude Scale (1932) (A-Agree, SA-Strongly Agree, DA-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree, U-Undecided).

The secondary data were collected from various official sources- especially from Deori Autonomous Council offices and from various books, journals and also from internet sources.

### 5. Findings

Analysing the data found from the questionnaire used for the study, the following facts are found-

Attitude	Total No. of Responses	Total No of PC
Positive (A, SA)	104	69.3
Negative (DA, SD)	46	30.7
Total	150	100

Table 2: Attitude of Deori women towards higher education

Table 2 reveals that out of the 150 respondents, 69.3% respondents have positive attitude towards higher education and 30.7% respondents have negative attitude towards higher education.

Response Options	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Most of my friends are continuing their study, therefore I am also continuing	34	14.8
I think higher education will give me a better social status	67	29.1
Higher education will give me economic empowerment and better job.	58	25.2
It is necessary for better motherhood	22	9.6
Higher education helps in getting married	45	19.6
I do not have any special reason	04	1.7
Total	230	100

Table 3: Basis of positive attitude of Deori women towards higher education

Table 3 shows that out of the 69% respondents who have positive attitude towards higher education, 14.8% responses considered that most of their friends are continuing their study therefore they have also continued their study, 29.1% respondents believe that higher education will give them better social status, 25.2% respondents think that higher education give them economic empowerment and better job, 9.6% respondents say that higher education is necessary for better motherhood and only 1.7% respondents say that they have no special reason for getting higher education.

Response Options	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
Now-a-days, higher education cannot ensure job opportunity; therefore, it is useless	31	50.8
Higher education sounds boring	10	16.4
Highly educated women have to live a lonely life in society	3	3.3
Higher education cannot help me anyway	0	0
Higher education is barrier of marriage	3	4.9
I do not have any special reason	15	24.6
Total	61	100

Table 4: Reasons of negative attitude of Deori women towards higher education

In the above table it is observed that out of the total 31% respondents who have negative attitude towards higher education, 50.8% respondents think that now-a-days higher education cannot ensure job opportunity, therefore it is useless; 16.4% respondents say that higher education sounds boring, 3.3% respondents feel that highly educated women have to live a lonely life in society, 4.9% respondents think that higher education is barrier of marriage, 24.6 % respondents have no special reason for negative attitude towards higher education.

Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
65	15	58	12	150
43.3%	10%	38.7%	8%	100

Table 5: Do the parents encourage their daughters to pursue higher education?

Table 5 shows that out of the 150 respondents, 43.3% respondents agree that their parents encourage them to pursue higher education, while 10% respondents strongly agree that their parents encourage them to pursue higher education. On the other hand, as much as 38.7% responses reveal that their parents do not encourage their daughters to pursue higher education, while 8% respondents show strong disagreement to the statement that their parents are against their higher education.

## 6. Discussion

From the above discussion it is found that Deori women have more positive attitude than negative attitude towards Higher Education. Most of the Deori women having positive attitude towards higher education because higher education gives better social status as well as economic empowerment, as unlike many women of Indian society, most of the Deori women have to earn for their family, for which they understand the meaning of economic empowerment in a better way. At the same time, in tribal society though women play the major role not only in looking after the household activities and pets, but also in earning for the family, or works in agricultural fields, the society is still male dominated, where the women usually cannot take part in the decision making system in the family, as well as in society. Therefore, many Deori women hope that apart from bringing economic empowerment, higher education can give them a better position at home as well as in society. Many of them think that higher education will help them in getting married.

The study shows that those Deori women, who possess negative attitude towards higher education, believe that at present, higher education cannot ensure job opportunity; therefore, it is useless and sounds boring. They also told the investigator that as they have so many works to do at home as well as at fields, they cannot think of wasting time by going to college. Moreover, they have seen that many of their friends, both boys and girls, who have completed graduation, are still unemployed. Therefore, higher education is basically for those girls, who are from rich family, and for those who do not have much family burden.

In case of the parental attitude of Deori women it is seen that unfortunately a large number of parents do not encourage their daughters to pursue higher education, some of the parents totally disagree to send their daughter to pursue higher education, and their reason behind this is, if the girls will go to college, who will do the household works. Pursuing higher education is boys' business, for girls, it is a mere wastage of time and money. Yet there are a good number of parents, who believe that it is equally essential even for the girls to get higher education.

The study also reveals that most of the Deori women prefer professional education than technical and theoretical education. It shows that most of the Deori women are materially motive to get education. They want education either which can help them make them professional expert, so that they can earn some money for them and their family.

Now, it can be said that though Deori women have positive attitude towards higher education, they have faced various socio-cultural and economic problems. The overall attitudes of young people towards higher education are strongly influenced by socio-economic

background, gender, and geographical location. Socio-economic background is the major factor in the variation in student perspectives on the value and attainability of higher education.

### 7. Conclusion

Traditionally, Deori tribe has been living in the bank of the river. Even in this age of science and technology, they have been living in their own traditional type house “chang ghar” (scaffold house), without electricity, without sanitary system and running water. Their living style is very simple; they like to live a plain and natural life remaining in remote place. Though they are economically poor, their educational status is low, socially backward; they live a happy and religious life. Yet, most of the Deori women live a tradition bound superstitious life, and remain untouched by the advent of science and technology. Deori women also lead a busy life. From the study, it is observed that though Deori women have positive attitude towards higher education, lack of proper motivation and inconveniences faced in the process are the main hurdles in their way to higher education. There are some other factors such as poor economic condition, mother’s illiteracy, early marriage, household activities; more importance on boy child in the family, lack of sufficient higher educational institutions, bad communication, and some illogical beliefs can be identified as major hurdles of tribal women’s higher education. This is truer in case of the lower economic class of the society, i.e., the poor families. It has been seen that from the very grass root level, the women (daughter) of these families are never motivated by their family members to have higher education. Due to the poor economic condition the parents cannot afford the cost of higher education. Somehow they take the minimum education and prepare themselves to get married. Their parents also want to get rid of their responsibilities by getting married their daughters away as soon as possible. They have hardly thought of the necessity of higher education in their life. So they have never made their mind to take it before or after marriage. They prefer domestic life than to have higher education. It is bitter truth that women are never free from the domestic responsibilities and lack of motivation has made the women education even tougher.

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