

Awareness Of Gender Rights In Imphal West District, Manipur

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Abstract Gender rights developed from the perspective of the state have effective implementation problems in the larger consciousness of the people. Awareness makes the conscious decision of deprived genders the safe space to develop in a patriarchal setting- whether institutional or personal.

The study conducted in Imphal west district of Manipur will aim to discuss the lack of awareness among the people of the state, what are the causal agencies, and the effective spatial conditions which can overcome them.

Through a survey method, this paper is an attempt to signify the major barriers prevalent among inhabitants of Imphal west district. For this developing region, contemporary inquiries can help bridge the gap between gender differences through awareness of rights.

Keywords Women's rights; Political awareness; Socio-economic development; Gender sensitization; Inclusivity

INTRODUCTION

Conscious awareness of women's rights and its *raison d'être* pertains to a collective sense of human rights, which exist outside of the individual. From the perspective of the people, the 'elitist' development of women's rights over the years has failed to incorporate into a diverse country like India, where several factors pertaining to an individual's community, class, caste, and religion have overplayed their part in limiting the scale of reform through negligence of its understandings on a wider, universal scale.

The interest in women's rights largely owes itself to the bourgeoisie democratic development of the 19th century in Europe (Chitnis & Wright, 2007). Ever since the shifting terrains of women's rights have pushed democratic governments towards challenging the patriarchal attitudes prevalent in all areas of collective society. In the Indian state, the universality of women's rights is being pushed to the sidelines due to neglect of several complexities emerging from institutional settings and complex conservative mindsets throughout its regions and their unique

compositions. The argument that women's rights in India are recognised under the patriarchal lens, is to bring the fact that women's objectification, subjugation, oppression and other disadvantageous positions need to be studied individually and in their own uniqueness to fully understand the level of awareness among a particular section of society. Keeping in mind universal women's reform movements and their rights that guarantee basic human dignity and freedom, the development of women's statutes reveals the need to incorporate effective implementation of these rights. For the women of Manipur, their repute for their contributions to the state's economic, social and political affairs have been well established and have been prominent areas of study for several social scientists (Yumnam, 1999).

However, persistent forms of oppression in Manipur state have corroded the idea of an egalitarian society. Several social scientists have linked violence towards women with communal tensions, bringing to the forefront the negligence of state implementation of awareness of women's rights. Therefore, the paradoxical situation of women's issues that deal with occurrences of missing girl children, domestic violence, child marriages, lack of education, social exclusion, and workplace issues are contradictory to universal women's rights. Moreover, persistent campaigns to put pressure on the government to enact reforms are yet to occur, despite some real attempts to modify drafts that would safeguard women's rights. Deprivation in all these sectors encompasses all ages, classes, and castes in the uniquely formulated state with people from different backgrounds. Stringent recognition and implementation of women's rights effectively becomes the first step towards women's development. The only way to approach the level of awareness about women's rights from the tangle they are now in is to take a methodical approach to enacting small, targeted reforms through focused campaigns, and by assessing the prevalent rights and its impact through regional inquiries. Through this inquiry, a new mode of rights will also be assessed- that of a mental

perspective of women's lives, which will help in developing the awareness of women's rights in the region of Imphal west, Manipur.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Awareness of women's rights can be studied in several contextual events of time and space. Earlier, the laws that were closely modelled to fit the needs of the colonial state- such as changes in consent laws, widow inheritance laws, and abortion laws took shape under the pretence of 'women's rights'. However, the formulation of rights guaranteed to serve the needs of the colonial, patriarchal state (Chitnis & Wright, 2007) and served little to no purpose for the upliftment of women. Early twentieth-century formations of the Women's Indian Association (1917), National Council of Indian Women (1926) and All India Women's Conference (1927) which began as voices against women's oppression with strong nationalistic tones, remaining elitist and inaccessible to the larger population.

Widespread grassroots movements in the post-independence era emphasized the economic and social rights of women. The third wave emerged in the late 1980s, linking women's issues to the environment with a focus on alternative strategies of development (Chhibber, 2018).

Burns, Scholzman, and Verba (2001) identify traditional patterns of political socialisation as a reason for women's perception of 'political right' as a 'man's game'. Such assumptions further downplay the role of women as equal contributors to those who deserve their rights. By following certain programs of gender stereotypes, Thakur (2019) provides educational interventions, economic independence and gender sensitisation as imperative measures to tackle the disconnections between people and awareness of gender rights. With India's independence, women gained significant rights as the right to life, liberty and dignity of the individual was recognised by the state. While several articles (Article 15, Article 51A, and Article 39) gave recognition to the universality of women's development through traditionalist perspectives, past and contemporary

research have continuously served the patriarchal dominant society creating gender gap differences in the political fields (Chibber, 2018).

In Manipur, an attempt to enter the debate on the explanations for gender differences in awareness of women's rights, developed significant inquiries of gender-relevant political knowledge to help us more clearly understand the apparent gender gap in the state. Prominent works by Yumnam (1999), Arambam (2013), and Khuraijam (2015) demonstrate the role of women in prominent socio-political and economic spaces.

For their active participation in political and economic affairs in Manipur, Khuraijam (2022) has provided a detailed contribution of women from various communities making conscious efforts towards collective empowerment during the colonial period.

Moreover, the diverse women of Manipur state belonging to different communities have significantly contributed to the state's development, and active political agencies gave women of Manipur significant recognition (Khuraijam, 2022).

According to Babulu (2023), the increasing number of persons receiving assistance in Manipur state, under various programmes for empowerment and rights, is not increasing the coverage potential for these individuals and is significantly lower than what is necessary. He brings out the immediate demand for voluntary efforts in providing the services and resources required to satisfy the high demand.

Khuraijam (2021), further discusses the issue of the lack of basic education and technological facilities among rural women of Manipur, who even after significant contributions in agricultural markets are unable to empower themselves fully.

Therefore, an important implementation issue with welfare organisations in playing awareness roles is limited according to Babulu (2023) and Chhibber (2018). The stereotypical mindset of women as projections of mere 'moms and spouses', especially for those living in rural regions, is not benefiting these individuals in the State to the intended extent because of the lack of institutional assistance programs.

An important institutional effect of patriarchy on human rights has been discussed by Khuraijam (2022), on the increased violation of rights on its transgender population, facing high levels of marginalisation and neglect of the state, and brings to the forefront patriarchal systems within institutions, societal perceptions, and economic deprivations. Furthermore, patriarchal norms have affected the women of the

region over the years. In an early attempt to present the ideality of women's conditions in Manipur by Kipgen (2010), a matrilineal culture with increased economic contribution of women in general takes place. But in Khuraijam's (2021), detailed studies, we find evidence of increased work-life balance constraints among women, with several responsibilities prevalent among the selected women and responsibilities of organisations to bring about beneficiary practices for them.

However, economic well-being with depreciating recognition of women's rights awareness can also be a significant factor towards this problem.

The credit given to the contemporary digital age and internet connectivity which has made it possible for women's awareness and rights to reach a significant amount of people has reached the epitome of virtual collective action. For Gurumurthy et. al (2014) developments in Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) have significantly contributed to the development of the gender justice agenda, by transforming public-political spheres of women's lives through active intervention in online debates and opinions citing concerns for women's future in the country.

Through this development, social media provides a platform for awareness generation and acts as a new tool for campaign and collective action. However, studies conducted by Mishra (2016) also bring to the forefront the issue of gender-based contemporary violence to several women, citing experiences of women being subject to stalkers and online harassment. While new-age digital activism can further uplift awareness of rights for women, credibility and authentic developments on women's situations are still lacking. Therefore, while one should not ignore the role of online communication in spreading awareness of women's rights, scholarly research on the level of awareness of women's rights, becomes the prerequisite of the developing state of Manipur.

Lastly, with the provision of gender-based empirical enquiries, this study aims to map the awareness of gender and gender laws across a wide range of political and historical contexts and investigate tactics that could protect women's rights in the face of intricate personal, economical, social and political constraints.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to investigate the levels of awareness of women's rights in the Imphal west district, situated in Manipur state. The survey incorporates a series of questions that measure attitudes and information about women's representation in their political life as well as their economic, social and personal spheres of which, degrees of political efficacy, interest, and participation will be assessed. A simple random sampling procedure was adopted to bring the authenticity of awareness levels amongst a generic population and to compare the level of awareness of males and females of both unmarried and married persons residing in the state of Manipur. A questionnaire was developed with 25 statements with yes/no options to determine the level of awareness of rights. Questions were primarily situated around aspects related to fundamental, political, economic and social rights.

Table- 1.1 Comparison between Men and Women Regarding Awareness of Gender Rights of Imphal West District

Category	Total (N)	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	Standard Error (SE)	Error-radio
Men	N1= 50	M1= 43.28	$\sigma_1 = 4.693$	0.887	0.676
Women	N2= 50	M2= 43.28	$\sigma_2 = 4.467$		

df= 98

Critical value at 0.05= 1.99 Remark= Not significant

Table 1.2- Comparison between Unmarried and Married People Regarding Awareness of Gender Rights of Imphal West District

Variables	Total (N)	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	Standard Error (SE)	t-radio
Unmarried people	N1=50	M1=43.08	$\sigma_1 = 4.081$	0.9067	0.2205
Married people	N2= 50	M2= 42.88	$\sigma_2 = 4.369$		

df= 98

Critical at 0.05=1.99 Remarks= Not significant

Table 1.3- Comparison between Married Men and Unmarried Men Regarding Awareness of Gender Rights of Imphal West District

Variables	Total (N)	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	Standard Error (S.E.)	t-radio
Married Men	N1=25	M1=43.68	$\sigma_1 = 4.295$	1.196	0.669
Unmarried men	N2= 25	M2= 42.88	$\sigma_2 = 4.159$		

df= 48

Critical value at 0.05= 2.02 Remark : Not significant

Table 1.4 Comparison between Married Women and Unmarried Women Regarding Awareness of Gender Rights of Imphal West District

Variables	Total (N)	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	Standard Error (S.E.)	t-radio
Married Women	25	42.08	4.299	1.167	0.719
Unmarried Women	25	43.28	3.994		

df= 48

Critical value 0.05 = 1.69 Remark= not significant

Analysis

Table 1 It shows that there exists no significant difference between men and women regarding awareness of gender rights in Manipur.

The context of awareness of rights in its fundamental state can be associated with a political lack of knowledge. As discussed by Kalpagam (2000), the simple pretexts of early feminist movements in India were associated with personal symbolic movements as motherly figures and their association with their traditional roles.

Due to traditional family structures which existed within the larger caste sections of Manipuri society, there was limited awareness between both men and women of the society. The societal impact was highly affluent in the neglect of awareness of women's rights.

In contrast, progressive feminist rights awareness was limited to 'fragmented' and 'educated' sections of Imphal West society, of which, several were highly distant from popular conceptions of the existing

awareness drives taking place. Lack of awareness of gender rights, also equally contributes to the oppression and subjugation of women in the state. In the survey, the absence of political positions of women in government institutes marked a major hindrance towards the lack of their rights. Studies conducted by Khuraijam (2021), demonstrate the prevalence of sexual abuse, lack of education, low access to entrepreneurship opportunities and absence of digital presence for a large section of the rural women. Several of these factors are equivalent in contributing to the lack of awareness of women's rights.

Contemporary studies to bring the lack of awareness amongst the population on gender rights can be encouraged to fully incorporate sustainable development into the state. To reach this goal, governments and NGOs must take full cognisance of utilising awareness mechanisms- such as local media and online communication to ensure the issues of minimal significance regarding awareness of gender rights.

Moreover, state intervention in public spheres- such as schools, government offices, public centres, hospitals, etc can incorporate the role of gender rights as a means of sustainable development among people.

Table 2 The result between unmarried and married people reflected the issue of no significant awareness of gender rights. In this section, a major noticeable change was found in which, married people scored lower on tests of political knowledge related to rights and opportunities. It was because of the respondents' higher levels of risk aversion, and the resulting fear of being wrong, that led to them relying more often on "no" responses. These results signal that there is a psychological element to answering questions that are separate and apart from the amount of information individuals might have.

A second set of explanations suggests that the gender gap exists because the determinants of political knowledge are themselves gendered: that is, they are experienced differently by women and men, which results in different knowledge levels for each (Dow, 2009). Researchers point to women's historically lower levels of education and occupation, their greater time commitment to childrearing and family life, and their lower levels of political interest and discussion as sources of the gap (Khuraijam, 2023). Therefore, the identification of gender rights awareness makes it difficult for the awareness to take cognition of, rather than focussing on prevalent rights, the respondents preferred to stay aloof given the plethora of mental strains they were suffering from.

Table 3 The comparison between married men and unmarried men regarding awareness of gender rights in Imphal West District remained insignificant.

Intersectional unawareness was largely an influencing factor towards these results. While men belonging to deprived sections of society were highly unaware of women's rights, there was also an equal ignorance noticed among the upper sections of the male population in the Imphal west district.

For the economically and socially weaker male sections, there needs to be active intervention of human engagement in addressing the implementation of women's rights. According to Verma et. Al (2006), the opportunity to discuss and reflect on women's issues is fairly a recent phenomenon, especially for those situated in the rural regions of the state. It was often the first time they had had the opportunity to discuss and reflect on these issues. The interviews showed that attitudes towards gender and sexuality, as reported behaviour in relationships, had decreased in support for inequitable gender norms and sexual harassment of girls and women. Engaging young men to critically discuss gender dynamics and health risks, and shifting key gender-related attitudes, can be beneficial for women in several sections of Manipuri society. Moreover, interventions of provision women's agencies in providing recognition to them can develop both, deprived genders who can uplift themselves on a holistic basis.

Table 4 The comparison between married women and unmarried women regarding awareness of gender rights in Imphal West District was considered not significant. The patriarchal setup which persistently influences the social and cultural conditioning of the Imphal west district area has created the cognition amongst women's beliefs into their subversive roles in Manipuri society. Undoubtedly the recognition of women as agents of change can be achieved with awareness programs in the fields of education, health, and economic independence. For this, access to resources has a positive impact not only in terms of women's freedom and well-being but also on the well-being of the whole family, society and the nation.

It is now widely accepted that gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental foundations for accomplishing development milestones. Women in India are discriminated against at every level in society whether it is social economic or political participation, economic prospects, educational status or

access to resources etc. The majority of Women in India are poor, uneducated, underprivileged, dominated and insufficiently trained, unaware, uninformed and unable to push themselves out of the authoritarian and regressive socioeconomic circumstances. Equality for women does not necessarily mean treating everyone in the same manner. Women often require different treatment than men to enjoy the same rights. (Bunch, 1999, p 20). As man and women are biologically different and woman has to play different roles than men. A woman gives birth to a child i.e. has a reproductive role to play and owing to the biological differences goes through so many bodily changes throughout her life. So she needs a more sensitive and nurtured treatment than men to enjoy her basic rights for example safe transport, flexible schedules childcare support etc which will lessen their burden. This, in fact, will provide the platform measures for women to develop their situation through awareness of gender rights.

CONCLUSION

From the above inquiries, it is evident that the need to incorporate awareness-driven interventions in the state of Manipur is evidentiary. The lack of significant awareness between males and females, married and unmarried people, married males and unmarried males, and lastly, married females and unmarried females contribute towards gender deprivation of political, social, and economic rights for women. The worst form of these forms of awareness lack is directly attributed to the state's ongoing tensions about women's conditions. The environmental applications of women's rights programs, through means of systematic education at elementary school levels, and incorporating gender-sensitised cognition amongst the youth, can bring effective change,

Through the above inquiries, it is evident that the prevalent women's rights are incapable of delivering the desired outcome of gender equilibrium in the state. We can hence, utilise this study as a building platform for more inclusive gender rights that incorporate a diverse community such as Manipur. The diverse hilly and plain communities, people of different religions, transgenders, and economically backward sections have to be taken into account while drafting more gender-sensitised rights. Future research must be encouraged based on different sections of people to fully understand the personal issues and how awareness of gender rights can solve the problem.

The above standardisation people helps in serving the notion that marriage acts as a barrier, especially for those women who want to develop and grow economically, socially and politically. Marriages must account for the safe platform for their growth, and the transgression of it into a hindering factor in women's development must be addressed. Women's support in work, as well as their homes, can create a safe platform for them to outgrow their issues.

A significant contribution towards increased awareness of women's rights can be conducted through the development of education spheres which removes all age barriers. Special education drives that encourage more sensitisation of biological and physical surroundings to bridge the gaps of gender difference at all ages and for all people can encourage the effective role of gender awareness. In an attempt to connect gender differences, contemporary issues of social media influence, political news, and authentic information must be encouraged as an increased form of communication between males and females.

In conclusion, the globalisation and universality of gender rights can be induced to accommodate and take shape keeping in mind the region's spatial culture. Rights when discussed among a variety of different communities can bring out the existing dominant perception of gender-constructed roles of society, which can be furthered developed via increased educational drives, removal of stereotypes, workplace opportunities, and marriage support can increase the engagement of rights and discussions.

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