

# Education: Its Positive Effects On The Nyishi Women Of Arunachal Pradesh

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**ABSTRACT:** Kra Daadi is one of the 25 districts of Arunachal Pradesh, a state that is situated in the northeastern corner of India. Many tribes and sub-tribes inhabit this pristine state with breath-taking natural beauty. The Nyishi tribe is numerically the largest in the state. However, quality education is not yet accessible to the vast majority of this tribe. A study was done among the Nyishi women of Kra Daadi district to assess the effects of education in their lives. For this study, the data was collected from 86 samples using a questionnaire. Among the sample, 43 were educated while 43 were uneducated or semi-educated. The samples were selected from one of the 8 Circles of the district, namely Palin Circle. A total of 30 questions were included in the questionnaire on their social, economic, religious, and political insights. The responses were then analyzed to evaluate the effects of education on them. It was noticed that there is a vast difference in the responses of the educated and the uneducated women not just in the field of literacy, but on a much wider spectrum of areas that affect their day-to-day lives and decisions. This study emphasizes the need to encourage and support Nyishi women to pursue their studies and to bring about social changes that can be achieved only through the education of women.

**Key Words:** Arunachal Pradesh, Education, Kra Daadi District, Nyishi women.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh, home to several ethnic groups is situated in the northeastern part of India. It is called the 'land of the rising sun' due to its geographical position. It was known as the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) till 1972 and on 20 January 1972, it got the name 'Arunachal Pradesh'[1]. This northeastern state is comparatively less known to the rest of the world and even to the rest of the Indians, due to its remoteness and tough terrain. This helped to preserve its forests and natural pristine beauty. However, this remoteness had its toll on the development and progress of this region too.

Among the tribes settled in the state, the largest tribe is the Nyishis. This tribe too has suffered

the negative impact of their habitat making it difficult to implement successfully various initiatives of the government and other NGOs. This factor was a hindrance to the successful implementation of most of the policies. One of the major factors of development – education suffered too. Although the center and state governments brought out varied educational reforms, the successful implementation of such policies was by no means easy. In the recent past, however, efforts are made to implement and evaluate more seriously the policies in the field of education. The effects of such initiatives are seen in all realms of society.

Education is making headway even to the remotest areas where the Nyishis live. This has

set this community on a fast track to progress and development. As more and more women get educated, the outlook of society itself gets transformed. The feminist school of international relations has the opinion that a truly matriarchal world would experience fewer conflicts in comparison to the present male-dominated political world[2]. It was Swami Vivekananda who pointed out the importance of respect and progress of women for any society. He said that “all nations have attained greatness by paying proper respect to women. That country and that nation which do not respect women have never become great, nor will ever be in the future.”[3]. Yet taking the world scenario today, much is to be desired in this regard. As more and more women participate in various social institutions and agencies, they truly turn out to be agents of social transformation. As preparation for women to effectively participate in such social and political agencies, we need to ensure that they get protected and proper educational facilities are provided for them. This cannot be achieved by providing only elementary education to women. This study attempts to evaluate the positive changes that have come about due to higher education, especially among the womenfolk in the Nyishi tribe of Arunachal Pradesh.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

**Nussbaum, (1999)** shows that by speaking of ‘human worth’ we speak of the quality of both man and woman put together. This is therefore built on the concept of ‘equal worth’ of both males and females. This consideration must begin with the concept of equality. This would guide us in our political planning and be guided by the components of the capabilities of humans as a whole – where the competency of the male and the female is considered as making a whole.

**Joshi, (2005)** points to the fact that social segregation is not seen in Arunachal Pradesh, as it does not practice any kind of ‘caste system’ quite unlike some of the other parts of the country. But classes of people are evident in society, and the areas in which the women exercise their power and influence in society are well described, even without any written code of law.

**Equality, (2009)** shows that on average 37% of all researchers in the Higher Education Sector are women. The involvement of women in the Government Sector is only 39%. This is also true in the Business Enterprise Sector where the women representation is seen as only 19%. However, there are signs of improvement in these figures in the recent past.

**Gender Equality, (2005)** United Nations for the Advancement of Women points out that there is a distinction between women/girls and their accessibility to modern information technology than men/boys. This difference is not linked to their economic conditions alone. Kofi Annan the then United Nations Secretary-General pointed out during the World Summit on 10 December 2003, at Geneva, that this divide between men and women is true of rich and poor countries alike.

**Eagly, (2007)** points out that although in the United States women are increasingly praised for having excellent skills for leadership, more people prefer male than female bosses. This attitude, especially among the menfolk, makes it difficult for the women to take up and succeed in roles that are generally dominated by males.

**United Nations, (2007)** in Women, Gender, and Equality in Sports points out that one way of improving the social empowerment of women is through their participation in sports. Besides providing them with skills and values through sports, it gives them self-confidence and

recognition in the society. This in turn creates a positive attitude among the younger generation and transforms the society in working towards the much-desired gender equality.

**World Bank, (2012)** in the World Development Report 2012, sees gender equality as an important development factor. This would ensure that our institutions, both public and private would be more representative of both men and women alike. Participation of men and women alike would improve productivity and development factors.

**Alkire et al., (2013)** show that the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) measures the empowerment of women based on five domains. They are (a) agriculture decisions, (b) decision-making power about productive resources, (c) control of the use of income, (d) leadership in the community, and (e) time allocation. While studying these five domains, much is to be desired to achieve equality – especially in the domains of decision-making and control of the use of income.

**UNESCO et al., (2015)** point to the Incheon Declaration that was signed at the end of the World Education Forum (WEF) held in Incheon, Republic of Korea, in May 2015. This forum was attended by over 130 Education Ministers and more than 1500 participants. This Declaration views Education 2030 which aims at an inclusive, equitable quality education. It is a clear indication to the world that we are going forward to an educational system, wherein gender equality would be a priority.

**UNO, (2015)** launched its Sustainable Development Goals at its summit in September 2015 and 195 nations participated in the summit. It aims to involve every possible stakeholder like governments, businesses, media, institutions of higher education, and local NGOs in the

development process. The UN has aimed to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" by 2030.

**David, (2015)** speaks of the Robbins Report which inaugurated a process of change and educational expansion through various social transformations, including feminism. It aims to open up possibilities to both the middle class and working-class women to be first-in-the-family to go into university studies.

**Management, (2017)** studied the women-health workers in England who make up 77% of the healthcare workforce. Yet only 37% of the members of clinical commissioning group governing bodies are women. Thus the women remained under-represented in the higher healthcare domain.

**World Economic Forum, (2019)** points out that, in strengthening human capital, women-force needs to be considered seriously as they make up half of the world's population and human capital. Economic growth and development would speed up if we prepare both men and women as contributors to the world economy. This is more serious when we experience human resource shortages. This shows that gender gaps need to be closed to improve the economic condition of the world.

**Yaya et al., (2019)** child marriages were encouraged among the economically weak regions to reduce economic burden. But women's education would be a good factor to prevent early marriage and improve her status in society.

### **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- 1) To study the effect of education on the Nyishi women of Arunachal Pradesh.
- 2) To make a comparative study on women who are educated and uneducated and

their attitudes to Nyishi society and development and their participation in it.

- 3) To suggest recommendations to ensure the education of women and empower them to participate in policy-making for the development and growth of the Nyishi society in Arunachal Pradesh.

#### **4. HYPOTHESIS**

1. There is no significant difference between the outlook of the Nyishis of Arunachal Pradesh towards their sons and daughters.
2. There is no significant difference between the thought pattern of educated and uneducated women in the Nyishis of Arunachal Pradesh.
3. There is no significant difference in the contribution between the educated and uneducated women towards the overall development of the Nyishis of Arunachal Pradesh.

#### **5. THE NYISHIS OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

There are no written historical data available as to the origin of the Nyishis. As per the oral sources, the Nyishis had migrated from the north-eastern part. They seem to have crossed a river named Supung, which might be the river Tsangpo in China. The Nyishis belong to a group of tribes known as the Tani tribes, descended from 'Abu Tani', numbering about 1.5 million. They are the Nyishi, the Adi, the Galo, the Apatani, and the Tagin [17].

#### **6. STATUS OF WOMEN AMONG THE NYISHIS OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

Women have a great role to play in any society, particularly in their own family. This is no different in a tribal family. In a Nyishi family, the women see to the day-to-day management of her family. She puts her hand to all sorts of

household chores even from a tender age. As children, they babysit for their younger siblings. Together with that, they do small household chores. As they grow up a little more, they go to the fields to help the family prepare the fields for cultivation and all that is connected to it. By that age, they pick up the skill of cooking traditional food and preparation of 'apong' so essential to the traditional festivals and celebrations. The Nyishi women in general are good dancers. The traditional dances are performed for various purposes like to welcome good spirits and keep off the evil spirits. The belief systems and myths show reverence to female divinities and deities. Sun is considered the omnipotent Goddess while Moon is considered as the male God [18].

#### **6.1 POLYGAMY AND EARLY MARRIAGE**

Polygamy is common in the Nyishi society and is practiced in many Nyishi villages even today. A man may marry multiple women and live under the same roof with a separate hearth for each of his wives and their children. It also happens that the senior wife chooses one of her close relatives, or even her own younger sister, as the next wife of her husband. This is done to ensure that she has a helping hand in the fields and household chores. This makes the bonding of the family stronger.

Child marriage too was a common factor among the Nyishi tribe. In child marriage, the marriage of a child (normally that of a girl child) is fixed at a very young age. The girl then goes on to live with her parent till she reached maturity after which, she is taken to live with her husband in his home. It would be possible that a young bride would have a man much senior in age as her husband. This practice is not very common nowadays although in the interior villages a few incidents of this sort are seen.

Early marriage is a troubling factor among girls even these days. Girls are given in marriage at a young age even before they reach the age of 18. Many of them get married before they complete their senior secondary education and prevent them from striving to reach higher educational qualifications. This leads to a marriage of a highly qualified man with a comparatively less qualified girl, who could be much younger than him. This scenario badly affects the education of the next generation, especially of their girl children. As the mother in the family is less educated, they are not able to provide guidance and counseling to their daughters for higher and better education.

## **6.2 EARLY MARRIAGE AND ITS REASONS**

When we study early marriage in the Nyishi society, we must understand the circumstances in which this was practiced.

- A) The number of the society gave them strength. In the earlier days, polygamy and early marriage were practiced to ensure the survival of the tribe and increase the number of a particular clan.
- B) The number of children a man had gained him respect in society. Polygamy and early marriages were seen as a possible means to ensure more children in the family.
- C) Polygamy was a status symbol of a man as it involves 'buy many wives'. This also announced his financial condition, as wives are to be bought with a bride price, usually with several mithuns. During later years, this helped a man to get more political alliances from various clans, during elections as they would be marrying from various other clans of the same tribe.

## **7. INITIATIVES IN MAKING EDUCATION AVAILABLE TO ALL**

The government of Arunachal Pradesh is making every effort to improve the educational conditions of the state, especially focusing on remote areas. It is difficult to motivate both students and teachers to attend school in difficult conditions. As per the records of 2019 teacher absenteeism is a major challenge in 3,513 government schools, and 211 community schools in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Chief Minister Pema Khandu, approved the Arunachal Pradesh Teachers' Transfer & Posting Policy, 2020, for ensuring "need-based distribution of teachers to protect the academic interest of students and optimize job satisfaction among the teachers in a free and transparent manner." As per this policy, all government schools will be divided into three categories a) hard, b) medium, and c) soft, according to the topography, accessibility, and degrees of difficulty in staying at the place of posting. It was reported that "All recruits will be given a hard posting for a mandatory three years, inclusive of their probation period. The next five years will be in schools with levels of medium difficulty, followed by posting in soft schools," [19]

However, the recent past has witnessed a surge of new interest in learning, especially among girl children. The result of which is a new generation of women who has a liberated mindset that is quite different from those who are semi-educated or uneducated. This study makes a comparison between the responses made by both the educated and uneducated women to the same query.

## **8. AIM AND METHODOLOGY FOR THE STUDY**

The aim of this study was to find the difference in the mindset among both educated and uneducated Nyishi women. This could point to the positive influence education has on the

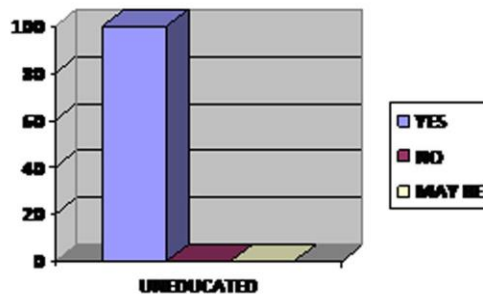
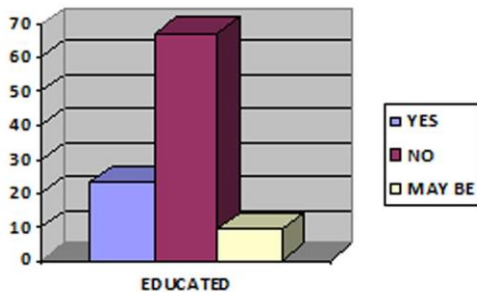
Nyishi women. For this, a survey was planned using a questionnaire consisting of 30 closed ended questions. With the help of the local people, the data was collected. In the survey the same questions were directed to both educated and uneducated women from the Nyishi community. The sample consisted of 43 educated women, and 43 uneducated or semi-educated women in the Nyishi community. The study revealed that education not only provided them with literacy, but affected in their social,

political, economic and religious thoughts and convictions.

### 9. CHANGING STATUS OF NYISHI WOMEN AND THEIR EDUCATION

Education has brought about a tremendous change in the status of women and their thinking patterns. When asked questions relating to their status in society, the responses were quite different.

*Q. Do you think that the Nyishi women are considered as help hands in the house/paddyfield works?*



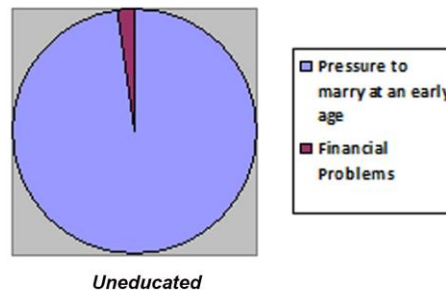
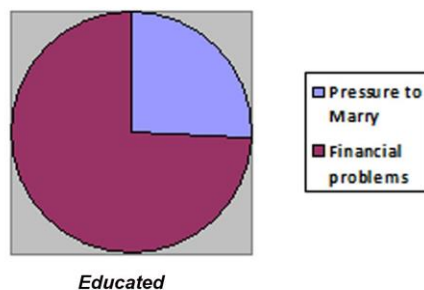
Among the educated women, 67.4% believed that women are not considered only as help-hands in household works. While among the uneducated group of women, 100% of women felt that they were considered as help hands for the family. It shows how education can change the opinion of women and can open up better opportunities for them, other than just the household chores.

Indian Census (as revised in 2019) shows the total literate population of Arunachal Pradesh was 766,005. The literacy rate of Arunachal Pradesh is 65.38% which is less than the average literacy rate of 72.98% of India. The male literacy rate is 72.55% and the female literacy rate is 57.7% in Arunachal Pradesh [20].

When asked about the hurdles they faced in pursuing higher studies, the responses had some similarities.

The development of educational facilities in Arunachal Pradesh is far from satisfactory.

*Q. What are the two hurdles that you faced in attaining higher education?*

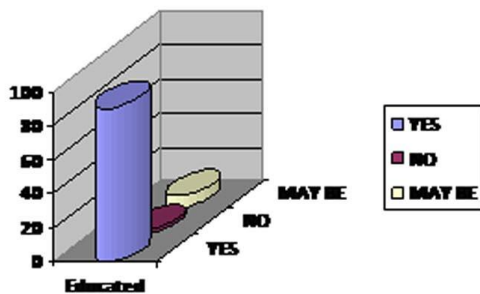


Although various steps have been taken by the government to improve the situation, 81.4% of the women felt that they had a lot of hurdles to face in higher education. There is lack of an adequate number of quality educational institutions in the area is still a huge hurdle for students – especially the female students. In the survey, 60.5% of the educated women (Gr-A) spoke of ‘lack of quality institution in the area’ as a major factor preventing Nyishi girls in reaching

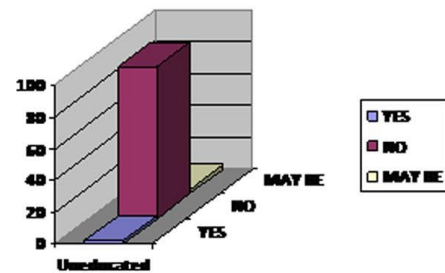
higher educational standards; but among the uneducated women (Gr-B), 43% showed ‘pressure to marry at an early age as the major hurdle.

Education brings along with it a lot more of self esteem and confidence among the women. When asked if they were as good as men in higher studies, the answers were quite different among the educated and uneducated women.

**Q. Are you as good as men in higher education?**



**Educated**



**Uneducated**

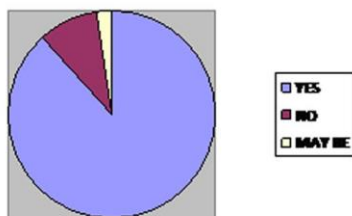
While the majority in the educated group (90.7%) felt that they were as good as men in higher education, among the uneducated group the opinion was the opposite. Among them, 95.3% felt that they were not as good as men in higher education.

government, while in the uneducated group 100% of women felt that they were not as capable as men.

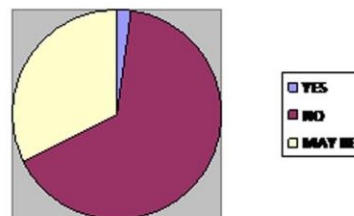
The response was quite similar when they were asked if they were as capable as men in handling responsible jobs in society. and in the government. A majority (90.7%) of in educated group felt that they were as capable as men in handling responsible posts in the society and the

A similar type of response was received when asked about their religious choice and freedom. Among the educated women, 88.4% felt they had freedom while 9.3% said that they had no power to choose and 2.3% were not sure. But among the uneducated women, 2.3% said that they had the power to choose, 65.1% said no and 32.6% said ‘may be’.

**Q. Do you have the freedom to choose and practice the religion of your choice?**



**Educated**



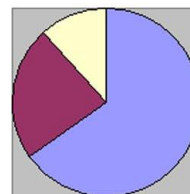
**Uneducated**

With accessibility to education, the concept of economic dependency too gets a transformation in the mind of women. Among Gr-A it was noticed that 93% of them felt that they would not want to depend on men for money; while in Gr-B 100% of them preferred to depend on men for monetary needs. They too expressed the view that education and employment would lead them to enjoy more freedom. Education makes them bolder to depend on themselves more.

**Q. Do you wish to always depend on your men for financial support?**



**Educated**



**Uneducated**

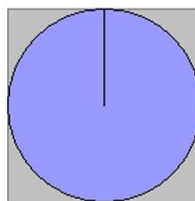
When asked they supported early marriages for girls in the Nyishi society, the responses were as follows.

As women are provided with possibilities of higher education, it becomes all the more clearer to them the evils of early marriage and polygamy. There is no doubt that such progressive thoughts and decisions from the

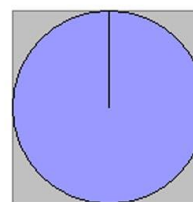
womenfolk will transform the society much more than the laws and directives provided to them.

When asked if women's education can transform the Nyishi society, both the educated and uneducated group had exactly the same answer. They all (100%) agreed that higher education among the women in the Nyishi society can bring about transformation to the society.

**Q. Do you think that higher education among the women in the Nyishi society can transform it?**



**Educated**



**Uneducated**

It is evident from these responses that education provides women not only with literacy but gives them the confidence to participate in decision-making roles in society. It gives them freedom and possibilities of decision-making. This empowers the women as a responsible members

of the society and would ensure the development and growth of the same.

**RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION**

It is important to note that early marriages still exist in the Nyishi society and therefore the evil



effects of the same are experienced too, especially by the womenfolk. Taku Stephen, a contemporary Nyishi author would assert that early/child marriages still exist in many areas among the Nyishi community. However, forced marriage as it was practiced is not common these days [21].

When planning the development of society, both men and women are to be taken into consideration. Undoubtedly, education is one of the chief components that would ensure development. It is clear from this study that education has a far-reaching consequence in the life of a society. Therefore education of women must be encouraged and followed up more seriously too. As of now, the literacy rate of women is much lower than that of men in Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore better policies and programs are required that would ensure better education for women.

We must understand 'respect for women' from a different perspective altogether. In every case, it should change from 'we have to', to 'we must' to make them partners in the sustenance and progress of society. This would be the beginning of the empowerment of women. Without this basic recognition that we give to the women in society, no policies or laws would benefit women in the way they ought to. In its turn, the responsible role of women will take our society to higher levels of growth and development [3]. This would include providing them with better accessibility, ensuring their ongoing studies, and preventing dropouts at various stages. Together with this, every effort need to be taken to delay marriages and ensure that women get opportunities and encouragements for higher education.

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