CHAPTER SEVEN

Problems of Plains Tribal women's Education in Kokrajhar District:

The Plains Tribes of Kokrajhar specially means the Boros and the Rabhas communities. Though the women of the Boros and the Rabhas have progressed to some extent in some spheres of life, yet it has given rise to many unheard problems also, and they have yet to go a long way to achieve equality in a real sense. The vast majority of tribal women are very backward in all fields, so subject to this field experiences, it is observed that the tribal women are far behind to those who belong to the upper class. At the time of interview, they express their views and answered without any hesitation. Through this interviews it becomes to obvious that there are so many hurdles, for which women have to face in their lives. Even among some of their families, there is no environment of education. Still there are thousands and thousands who donot think that it is necessary for them to send their children to the schools. So the tribal women are facing various problems in receiving their education. These problems are studied and find out in the following headings:

I. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS:

(1) During the field studies it has been observed that despite
of all the privileges, financial and others that the Government has given to them in the field of education, majority of the tribal women section is still illiterate. After taking interviews and analysing their responses it is seen that these economical problems or their backwardness in economical field are due to many factors. Most of the deprived section is also the poorest section of society. Every girl that is born to them is seen as potential wage earner and is made to start working at a very early age. It is found that in a good number of families a girl is considered to be a helping hand in the family and also an earning source. In this regard, this system of the long progress of education and its long-term benefits seen like a farfetched dream for which they neither have the patience nor the resources to wait.

(2) It is true to a large extend, from the eye witnesses that the majority of tribal people belongs to poor families and under their compulsion of poverty, their girls have to work at home or on the family farm or anywhere in order to be helping hands and earning ways to their parents. The parents also depend upon their labour and send their girls to anywhere to earn something instead of sending them to schools. As a result, their schooling age are utilised in other ways for which the girls have to remain apart from receiving their education.

(3) The financial handicaps are the main responsible factors for the education of the tribal women. Because, the financial condition of the tribal people is so miserable that even if provision
is made for free education of the tribal women, the family find themselves unable to meet other expenses connected with the education. Besides this, they have always before them the question as to whether they should send their girls children to schools or to a place, where they may earn something to contribute to the meagre income of their parents. For example under the operated area in the Kachugaon, Haltugaon, Gossaigaon in this specialised District, where the "Boro" and the "Rabha" communitiees are living according to their own tradition and culture, in the time of interview some girls are met who remain as maid servant only for economic hardship of their family.

(4) The Financial condition of the tribal people is very poor and majority of the rural areas are in so under-developed condition that it is difficult for the people living there, to make arrangements for even the bare necessities of life. Since the parents are not able to collect even the minimum possible money to meet the bare necessities of life, the question of sending their girls to schools does not at all arise for them. In this case, if they will send than their male child will get preference.

(5) Further more previously, there was a system of "Bonded labour" in tribal society. But now a days it is reformed to some extent and instead of "Bonded labour" there is prevailed the systems of "Bokhali" as keeper of children or child rearer, and "Ruathi" as helper in home work and agricultural field work in the Tribal societies. According to these systems, the female childs have stayed in
other families (tribal or non tribal) as "Bokhali" and "Ruathi". In this regard, the family have beared all the expenditures of fooding and lodging of the labourer. Besides these, the families have to pay paddy rice or money price to the labourers. As a result, it creates a hindrance to the education of girls.

(6) The tribal women those are livings in the grassroot level, they are giving more priority for their economical development rather than the education. It is only for their poverty. For example in specialise operated areas Gossaigaon, Kasugaon, Bishmuri, Ramfalbil, Tengapara of Kokrajhar district, the Boros and the Rabhas tribal villages where the tribal community are living according to their dialogues, in the time of the filed studies, they want their own economical development and for that only they will think for education. So it is seen that the tribal women are utilising themselves and their children as the working women and children for the daily wages purposes and they are concretely thinking that their physical labour is supporting for the economical development of their family. They are totally not at all giving more attention for future of the girl children and due to lack of their poverty they are not giving trace for the education.

(7) Due to their unhealthy economic condition, the girl child since she is six or seven years old is trained to take all responsibilities of the house hold as well as to be labourer for "Bokhali" and "Ruathi" in Boro and "Kamlini" in Rabha. So instead of going to school, girls have to fetch water, collect fodder, firewood look after
the younger ones like a "little mother" saw, weed, reap and husk paddy, cook rice and prepare rice-beer, perform all other domestic druggery and also spin and weave for the family. When the question of education comes, they are compelled to sacrifice for their brothers even though in many cases, they prove themselves a better students, because their services are required at home either for taking care of the youngsters or helping in cultivation or earning money by weaving. The family can not bear the expenditures for both of them brother and sister. So sister is generally sacrificing for her brother and this is created problems for girls education.

(8) The duties and responsibilities that are required to be performed by tribal women in their day to day life have also stood in the way of girls' education. In fact, a tribal women does not have any leisure since leaving her bed early in the morning and still going to bed at night. They start their routine at dawn and continue it till late at night. Through the whole day, the women have to keep themselves busy in performing not only the indoor house-hold works, but out-door works also. They are required to cook food, wash clothes, spin yarn, weave clothes, collect fire woods and eatable things from the nearby forest, attend to agricultural works in the fields and so on and so forth. A girl of schoolgoing age, therefore has to help her mother and other elderly women in the family.

(9) Women playing a vital and responsible role in tribal economy is contributing much more labour then men. In most of the tribal areas, thousands of women are engaged in selling fire-wood.
vegetables in the town or rural market. During field study it has been observed that the sale of firewood, vegetables and other eatable things as a profession has rapidly grown with the rise of landlessness and joblessness. Cutting firewood and head loading and its sale is both hazardous and back breaking and remuneration is poor. But women do this because they have not relied on man to bring any cash home. So in this way they are thinking only to solve economic hardship but not for their education. Though, they have an interest and hopes for education, yet, they have no time for their education. Whereas a boy child leading a life of ease and pleasure. They have enough time comparatively than girl. In fact, this makes them as workingwomen instead of educated one and creates problems.

(10) Child labour is also another problems of economical sides. Although it is prohibited to use children as labour, yet so many children are using as labourer in Hotels, Tea-stalls, in constructional works etc. In this regard family poverty and illiteracy leads to child labour and for which during their schooling time they go for earning in lieu of their labour and creates problem in education.

II. CULTURAL PROBLEMS:

The tribal women are educationally very backward. The percentage of Tribal women is only 30.92 and the other seventy percent of tribal women are illiterate. It is seen and observed that a poor percentage of Tribal women received their education and there is a great disparity between men and women. So, the number of educa-
It is no doubt that the preamble of our Indian constitution provides equal status to each and every citizen of the country. Yet half of the population of our country is still deprived of this constitutional right. As for example "Article-45 of the Constitution also directs the states to make efforts to provide free, compulsory and universal education for children upto the age of 14 years". Another "Article 17 of the Indian Constitution declared that untouchability is abolished and its practices are not only equal treatment but also further encouragement. Again, another Article 46 under directive principles of State policy states - "The State shall promote with special care the education and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitations". In this regard, the Government has taken up programmes for expanding education of the Scheduled Tribes. Even special attention is paid to the development of tribal languages also. But it is a matter of great regret that after providing all these privileges, girls are deprived to these rights. Though the women are worshipped and place in the literature, history and others very highly, yet they are suffering innumerable miseries and sorrows in the field of education. There are so many obstacles that are exposed during the time of interview, which confronting the expension of tribal women education. These are studied in this ways :

(1) The majority of tribal people is illiterate. Still they are group-
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ing in the dark, because of lack of education and they do not understand the social and cultural importance of their education. Parents are not conscious culturally and socially. Hence, they consider it as wastage of time and money to give education to their girl child. Their cultural attitude is always in favour of their boys not for girls. They have their culture that girls will look after everything and maintain household activities. Girls are trained up in domestic activities from their early childhood than education. Because Tribal Society specially Boro and Rabha are male dominated society. Women have to do what their tribal male dominators will say and they also bound to obey. During the field studies it is observed and heard their opinions that they do not realise that education is a must for girls. Likewise many people are of the view that education is received only for professional or practical gain and they are of the view that it is proper to educate the boy but it is useless to educate the girls because after their marriages they have to look after domestic works. As a matter of fact, this wrong attitude is proving to be detrimental for the expansion of tribal women education and creating problems.

(2) On the other hand, due to the lack of awareness many girls students have to leave their studies after attending School one or two years. For example, when interviews were taken from maidservant and women of the family, it was found that some of them attended school for one year, some of them leave school at class IV or class V etc. It is only because of their parents. They are responsible for wastage of education of their girl child. The parents think that their girl childs are earning sources. In this regard if they will
Problems of Plains Tribal Women's Education in Kokrajhar District remain absorb in education, then who will work at home or earn money, so the withdraw their girl children from the school, Consequently, so far as the education of girls is concerned, they are taken out of the schools only after receiving the knowledge of alphabets etc. It is because of the fact that guardians do not get in return any financial help from the education of the girls.

On the other hand, due to the lack of importance from parents side for girls education, lack of facilities, heavy loaded work at home, causes inadjustment and disinterestness among girls. In this way they loss interest in their education and lapse into illiteracy.

(3) Another wrong attitude is developed by the parents that women who are educated also remain as unemployed. So, they think that there is no necessity of education. Because 90% percent of the total tribal women labour force is engaged in the unorganised sector at a low wage and education is not necessary for this job. This type of attitude is a sheer waste of our limited national resources. Therefore, most of the parents, give up the attention for educating their daughters.

(4) Another discouraging attitude of the parents is that to get ready and efficient for their marriage. It has been observed that most of the tribal girls who go for higher education, they go only without any interest or social purpose. Many of them go to school or College only because their parents have not been able to find a suitable match for them. The fostals of higher education for them place where
they go only to while away their times. This attitude to higher education or education generally discourages, the girls education and hindered in the development of education.

(5) The tribals living in remote areas, are not yet aware of the importance of girls education. Many of them consider it sufficient if the girls can cross the primary level. This type of consideration stands against the girls education. Again, some of them think that their women will loss their character if they are allowed to go to school and mixed with other male members. They can not accept whole heartedly the free mixing with male members of talking with them etc. etc. In this regard, if there are no girls' schools, then they generally feel hesitation to send their grown up girls. The tribal people in remote areas are equally unaware of many of the special privileges initiated by the Government to better their lot.

Besides these cultural problems other some problems which are associated with their education and these problems are studied by this following headings. Therefore, girls have to remain confind at home keeping themselves as busy with their domestic works. This confinement deprive the girl students from taking their proper education. In this regard it is seen that the parents give less importance in case of their girls' education.

(6) LACK OF TRIBAL GIRLS SCHOOLS AND WOMEN TEACHER : There is a great lack of separate tribal girls' schools at all the stages of education. In the majority of villages, the girls have
been receiving their educations along with the boys, and this condition prevails at all stages of education. During field studies in Kokrajhar district it is found that there is no separate tribal girls' school even the number of tribal co-education school is very few. There are so many high schools and Higher secondary schools having two mediums both for tribals and non-tribals. In this way co-education is proving and obstacle in the way of tribal women education because even to-day many parents are strongly against co-education and donot like to send their grown up daughters to a mixed schools where the girls have to study with the boys.

Likewise there is also a great lack of women teacher in the school of tribal areas of Kokrajhar district. The number of educated women can be counted in fingers. Many educated women are unable to work as teachers due to their family burden or ill health etc. Therefore, the girl children are generally lost their interest and psychologically feel hesitation and become irregular in their studies. This is also another cause added in the problems of Tribal women education.

(7) LACK OF HOSTELS FOR GIRLS': Another factor that stands in the way of tribal women education in Assam, specially in the Kokrajhar district is the absence of girls' Hostels in the high schools and colleges. In most of the high schools located in the tribal areas of Kokrajhar district, even there are no boys' Hostels and the question of girls' Hostels do not arise. So, boys hailing from away places using to either construct some temporary thatched
shades with in the school campus or stay at high price rented house to prosecuting their studies. But for girls, such type of temporary accommodation without any provision for safety as well as security are not practically feasible. So, the girls/ women of interior areas cannot receive their education for poor communication. They can not pay a high price for rented house and are compelled to discontinue their education.

(8) LACK OF RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES FOR WOMEN TEACHERS: It has been observed that some teachers of interior schools loss their interest in job due to lack of security and residential facilities. It is also difficult for daily passenger due to non availability of Bus communications. So, this creates a hindrance in the development of women education.

(9) EMPLOYMENT OF GIRLS IN DOMESTIC WORK: The most important and main responsibility for the backwardness of women education rests with the Guardians. Because generally when tribal women go to outside field to collect fuel, fodder as well as other wild vegetables or eatable things or some other places in search of money, they compel their daughters to stay at home and look after the young ones and other household activities like cooking, cleaning etc.

(10) UNTRAINED TEACHERS: The women teachers of tribal schools are mostly untrained. There are only three training Institutions for teachers in Kokrajhar district. Among which one Govern-
ment B.Ed. College, and two centres, viz. (BTC) Basic Training Centre and one DIET respectively. Recently there is another B. Ed. college which are newly established at Gossaigaon. According to 1991 census, there are 13 B. Ed. colleges and 32 Teachers training centres in Assam and out of which the number of Scheduled Tribe Trained women teachers are only 104 in post Graduate level. In different training institutions and college of Kokrajhar district the number of Tribal women trainees is very poor. According to the latest information the numbers of Tribal women trainees in B.Ed. college is (nine) 9 out of 90 trainees and the number of tribal women is 14/118 and 6 out of 66 in BTC and DIET of Kokrajhar district respectively. So from all these view points it is clear that there is a great lack of Trained Tribal women teachers in different schools of tribal areas.

(11) UNSUITABLE CURRICULUM : Unsuitable curriculum is also creating some problems in the education of Girls of the Tribal communities. More or less similar curriculum is followed in the Tribal schools for boys and girls. There is no any changed in the curriculum and no any importance is given specially for women, on the other hand in the district of Kokrajhar (in Bodo medium section) there is also a dearth of Bodo medium books. So due to the lack of separate curriculum for women they get no special importance in education and loss their interest in education.

(12) LACK OF CO-OPERATION BETWEEN HOME AND SCHOOL : In the tribal areas, the guardians are not bother about
what their children are doing in the school nor how much they can make progress in their studies. On the other hand, schools also does not intimate the guardian about the activities of their children. This is one of the causes of dropping out and failure of female students in various stages of education.

(13) WASTAGE AND STAGNATION IN EDUCATION: From the field investigation, it is seen that the rate of wastage is more in the field of women education than that of men. Because due to the lack of interest in education, family burden, lack of necessary reading materials, heavy loaded work at home etc. many girl students leave their school after attending one or two years. On the other hand many parents break the education of their daughters only after giving them education up to class IV or VII or etc. Some parents think that their girl childs are earning source. In this regard if they will remain absorb in receiving education, then who will work and earn money, so they withdraw their girl children from the school.

In certain cases the parents are so poor that they cannot pay for the cloths, stationery and books for their both children boys and girls. In fact, due to this lack of facilities, the girl child generally loss interest in schooling as well as can not pay their full attention in the studies. At last they fail in the examinations and remain in the same class for a period of more than one year. In certain cases a girl child lapses into illiteracy when on account of failing a number of times she leaves the school all-together.
(14) It is true to some extent that the absence of high schools in some remote tribal areas like Binakhata Panbari of Kokrajhar district prevent tribal girls from having higher education but on the other hand, sex biasness is also an important deterrent towards women's education. Generally, it is seen that parents encourage more to their male child and give less importance to girl children. Because, the lack of awareness with regard to benefits of education is one of the important factor which discourages the parents to educate their girl children.

III. SOCIAL PROBLEMS:

The tribal women are facing so many social problems in receiving their education as like as educational and economical problems. Because of their societies' traditional pattern and other rules and customs resist them from receiving their education. So, there are uncountable social problems that are discuss below.

(1) Social evils: Our country is beset with many social evils and superstitions and the tribal societies also not free from beseech of social evils. It is because of the lack of education that most of the tribal peoples of our tribal society are still the victims of many social evils and there are still many tribal peoples who are of the view that there is no need of educating the girls because ultimately they are to be married and have to go with their husbands to do domestic work there after.
On the other hand, parents are unwilling to send their grownup girls to a mixed school. Because co-education of girls and boys is still looked with suspicion, consequently, if at one place there is no separate provision for the education of girls then they remain deprived of education and in case they are fortunate to get admission in some schools, then they are forced on account of certain circumstances to leave education after a few years. It is because of the prevalence of social evils. In this regard, this suspicion is responsible to a great extent for the education of the girls.

(2) TRADITIONAL RESISTENCE: The tribals are one of the most deprived and disadvantaged sections of the population. In some areas of tribal population, they have suffered from isolation. In tribal population, the tribals have their own traditional custom for their own functioning society and women are comparatively more deprived section. The bulk of the tribal societies are patriarchal and as such women's position is subordinate to that of man. They have poor access to nutrition, health and education. The women will do what their tribal male dominators will say they bound to obey. Therefore, they have to perform the most arduous and monotonous jobs in the household. During this field studies it is seen that the tribal women have engaged not only in household activities, but also engaged in marketing, selling product things in the market, collecting fuel and fodder by trekking a long distances. In this cases, they have no spare time for education as they too busy with their day to day activities. This traditional systems of tribal societies, really resist
them in their education and so it creates a problem in women's education.

(3) In the tribal societies the Boro and the Rabha, there is a traditional system of preparing 'Jou' (wine). They use this 'jou' in different purposes as marriage ceremony, Saradu, rites and rituals, festivals etc. Sometimes, they use this traditional liquor in business purposes to relieve themselves from their economic hardship. It is no doubt that this type of business helps the family to solve the economical problem for a while, but on the other hand it makes the environment noisy and vicious for the family members. It is observed that during the time of liquor business the parents engaged girl childs in offering liquor to their customers, cleaning and washing of utensils etc. and in this way it creates hinderance in the studies of girl child.

(4) NEGATIVE ATTITUDE : The negative attitude of the parents creates a hindrance to the education of girls. Because, generally the parents give their importance to male child and they feel no any hesitation about their education. But in case of girls education, they think that they do not get in return any financial help from the education of the girls and develop negative attitudes for women education.

(5) CONSERVATIVE ATTITUDE OF SOCIETY : Even now there is apathy of masses towards the education of the girl children. In the remote place of Tribal villages, it is also contended that if the women
would be educated, they become free and characterless. That is why the tribal people are unwilling to send their girls children to school for receiving education. This factor stands really in the path of women's education.

(6) CHILD MARRIAGE: Child marriage in the tribal society is also a deleterious factor of tribal women's education. In remote and backward areas, girls are married at an early age. Hence education of girls has positive relations with marriage age. This child marriages are proving to be great obstacles in the expansion of tribal women's education. Besides this, in their societies, more emphasis is given on the marriage of women rather than on their education. So, many of their parents try to get relief from all the responsibilities by getting marriage of their daughters. When questions in regard to the indifference towards girls education are asked to the heads of the families, it is generally found a simple but straightforward answer. The answer when translated properly is like this, when the girls come of age, she is to be given in marriage and hence earning from an educated girl does not any way help the concerned family. Hence to spend money for girls education has no meaning at all. Because of such pre-conceived ideas, the tribal parents don't like to send their girls to school for education. This "child marriage" orthodox beliefs have led the women to turn a deaf ear to such matters like education to girls, family planning etc.

(7) PROBLEMS OF COMMUNICATION: Tribal villages are generally located in remote and backward areas having no facilities
what so ever of modern communication. As a result, they are, even today, cut off from the main stream of our modern society. Television, radios, cinema etc. are something not easily accessible to them as their economy does not permit them. So there are no way for broadcasting the women education and they do not have schools and colleges in the area by their habitation. In this regard, during rainy season, women have faces problems and many of them cannot solve this problem and give up their education life.

(8) PREVALENCE OF AGE-OLD TRADITIONS: There is a prevalence of age-old superstitions, tradition customs, orthodox, wrong socially taboos and conservation for which most of our tribal women folk have to spend their valuable lives within their kitchen in a male dominated society. This is also prime obstacle in the way of women education.

(9) LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LAW: Women of tribal society have no knowledge about their own dignity, rights and potentialities, legislation, laws, rules and regulations etc. Due to the lack of education, they donot know what hights and responsibilities as well as privlege have offered by the Government. So, lack of knowledge about law keeping the tribal women away from enjoying so many privileges and remain as deprive sections.

On the other hand, majority of tribal women are totally unaware of the provisions of the law. Many women believe that if she is barren the husband can take another wife. There is no awareness
about the prescribed age for marriage and divorce laws, laws of inheritance etc. and for which they are facing so many problems in their life.

(10) FEELING OF DEPENDENCY ON MEN: It is also one of the factors that closely related to the tribal traditional societies. This feeling of dependency fostered by tribal culture in men and women that women are weak and powerless and it is the duty of male to give her protection. Even if the tribal women want to learn and become independent by entering some job she is not the one who decides. In taking any family decision they are not given preference to take part in that discussion. This ultimately has made her suspicious, dependent and helpless.

IV. POLITICAL PROBLEMS:

(1) The tribal women also have been facing the problem of finance in regards of their education. Most of the schools in tribal areas suffer from lack of finance for building, equipment etc. During field investigation it has been observed that there are some schools having buildings without proper equipments. In the name of equipment there were few numbers of benches and desks, and a simple black-board. So in this connection, due to non availability of proper fund or adequate fund, schools fail to supply the necessary furnitures for students. Therefore, schools fail to attract the students mind for their education.
(2) Another important problem of tribal women education is indifference of government and defective educational administration. Comparatively, tribal women are not getting proportionate attention from the government than boys. Moreover there is no any special and sufficient money and also administrative reforms in favour of girls education. So the women feel isolation and lack of importance from the government in their education.

(3) Another major hurdles for development of employment opportunities and entreprenurship amongst women is the lack of adequate training facilities in the areas in which they are considered to be most potential.

In most of the occupations where women are employed as law paid unskilled labourer in large number, in agriculture and construction areas. There is hardly and training facilities available to upgrade there skills and competence. In this cases government fail to provide adequate facilities for women to over come their burdens.

(4) There has never been a systematic approach to deal the rural and tribal women to develop their knowledge, skills, attitudes and confidence so that they can able to get better employment opportunities. Due to the lack of proper policy of the government women have to face so many obstacles in their education employment.

(5) IN ADEQUATE INSPECTION : Education is also another
problem of girls. Improvement of education, implementation of various educational schemes depend to a great extent on proper inspection and supervision. Our educational institutions for female have suffered a great deal due to improper inspections and supervision from government side.

(6) The Government launch various programmes as well as have made many provisions for development of women education it is no doubt. But it is also true that development programmes have not yet touched women at the grassroot level. Plans are made from above. So there is a communication gap between the planners and the groups of women for whom the programmes are designed. On the other hand there is a lack of proper seriousness on the part of government and also other agencies like to grow of those thought to be more civilized and reasonable in tackling this age long problems of tribal women.

(7) The Governments already launch the programmes like Adult Education Scheme, National Literacy Mission, Total Literacy Campaign etc. to make the illiterate people literate. But due to the failure of the proper implementation of such scheme, it fails to convince the illiterate men and women of tribal societies. As a result, they remain as illiterate and these schemes have no any influence on tribal women education. The illiterate tribal women donot know to teach and encourage their children for education. Even they do not know the needs and importance of education for then as well as their children. On the other hand, these schemes also fail to draw the interest of the learners and appreciate them for their educations. As a result, in the tribal areas, the women section remain as illiterate.