PREFACE

Women's rights constitute an integral part of human rights. The inherent and inalienable rights which every individual is entitled to for having been born as a human being are called human rights. These rights are essential for every person to lead a dignified life and to develop personality. However, women's rights are often systematically violated by family, society and the state. At present, the issue of women's human rights is in the limelight more for their violation rather than for application. It may be mentioned that in spite of the declaration of the United Nations and other covenants and conventions about the universality of human rights, the lack of understanding of women's rights as human rights continued.

The concept of women's human rights emerged as a consequence of the exclusion of women's issues from the human rights issues. Even the two Commissions set up by United Nations, i.e., the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women developed in isolation from each other. The marginalisation of women's issues naturally led to the demand for recognition of 'women's rights as human rights' and it acquired a concrete shape in the U.N. World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, 1993 and in the Beijing Conference of 1995. In the Vienna Conference, it was proclaimed - it is no longer enough that existing human rights mechanisms merely be extended to women: women's rights must be understood as human rights.

However, the ongoing violation of women's human rights in social, economic and political fields indicates that mere recognition of women's rights as human rights is not enough to secure the rights of women. It seems that few governments are committed to
consider women's rights as basic human rights. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979 which may be considered as a standard setting instrument for the realisation of human rights of women has been ratified by most of the states of the world with reservations. Government of India, though a signatory, has not so far done anything noteworthy for realisation of the provisions of the Convention.

In India, the incidents like female foeticide, female infanticide, dowry, bride burning, rape, molestation, kidnapping etc., occur very frequently. In recent times, the records of crime against women indicate an increasing trend. The position of women in India, in social, economic and political fields is by no way equal to that of their male counterparts. A similar situation may be observed in Assam also.

The topic of the study, "Violation of Women's Human Rights : A Case Study in Kamrup District, Assam" has been selected in view of the fact that till now women's rights are considered to be of lesser importance than human rights. Women's freedom, dignity and equality are persistently compromised by religion, custom and law, which no other section of society has to face. Gender is the main factor on the basis of which subordination of females is justified. Gender based violation of rights is basically a human rights issue which deprive women of their inherent rights and dignity. Thus, the prevalence of violation of women's human rights has become a matter of serious concern and their containment is a necessity so that women can enjoy their rights and live with dignity.

Kamrup district has been chosen as the study area for a number of reasons. It is comprised of diversified population groups. Internal diversity and plurality based on
caste, religion and regional background exist in the study area. Disproportionate sex ratio, low literacy rate of women, crimes committed against women etc., are the distinct features of the district. The region, therefore, assumes tremendous significance for study.

This thesis comprises of seven chapters. Chapter- I deals with the concept of human rights from a historical perspective. The contribution of the natural law theory to the emergence of the concept of human rights and the idea of human rights in Indian context have been briefly discussed in this chapter. Chapter -II examines women's human rights scenario in global and national spheres. It further considers some theoretical perspectives of women's human rights. The role played by religion, custom and law in determining the position of women in society has been analysed in chapter-III, while chapter -IV focuses on women's human rights scenario in Assam with special reference to Kamrup district. Chapter -V identifies the causes of some of the specific violations of women's human rights. The analysis of the field survey conducted in the selected areas of Kamrup district and the methodology used for the field survey have been discussed in this chapter. Chapter-VI examines the role played by the enforcement mechanisms towards the containment of violation of women's human rights. Chapter -VII sums up the work and offers some recommendations on the basis of the research findings.

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