



## **SOCIAL STATUS AND ROLE OF WOMEN AMONG THE KHASI TRIBE OF MEGHALAYA**

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### **Abstract**

*The basic aim of this study is to understand the change that has taken place over the period of time among the Khasi women of Meghalaya with the advent of modernisation and globalisation. Since all societies inevitably undergo social change, this paper will attempt to enquire about the path and direction to which women in Khasi Hills, Meghalaya has moved.*

### **Introduction**

Anthropologists and Sociologists have long been interested in the study of the position of women in various parts of the world especially among the tribals. Different views and opinions have been highlighted and expressed with regards to the role and status of tribal women. There are scholars who are of the opinion that primitive societies generally assign high status to women whereas the other view point proposes that in the tribal world, women are generally suppressed group, have low status and are under subjugation, oppression or under male dominance (Lodha 2003: 3). In Meghalaya the Khasi woman enjoys a certain amount of freedom in comparison to women in other parts of the country. It is relevant to enquire about the direction to which the position and status of women are moving with the development of the society.

For this study 100 households were chosen; 45 male-headed households and 55 female-headed households. Data have been collected, from the chosen households, on different aspects like family size, gender, education, occupation, marital status, etc. Their attitude/opinion towards social, political, cultural economic aspects and psychological aspects of the heads as well as other members of the families were considered. From that information the process of changes that has taken place among the Khasi women was analysed. The study is mainly descriptive and exploratory.

### **MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

Hence the above examination on the status of women in the khasi society of Meghalaya reveals that while matrilineal system is being followed, patriarchal ideologies and matrilineal principles also operate within the system and ultimately define the roles and responsibilities

of the Khasi women with modernisation and globalization. Though Meghalaya is known as the matrilineal society, now many of the families are headed by the males. The tendency is changing with the increasing involvement of male in the socioeconomic activities, expansion of education, emergence of nuclear families etc. However in the family there is no discrimination among the male and female child. This is partly because of the economic independence of the females and their customary laws, which is still dominant in the Khasi society.

### **Conclusion**

The present study points out the fact that the role of women and the corresponding status that they occupy in the social structure is limited. Their participation in decision making was limited. It was the male members of the households who were the prime decision makers.

Religious and political participation of the women folk in the village were however limited. Performance of religious rites and rituals were all in the hands of the men. All the office bearers in the political institutions of the village were with the men. From the preceding observations it is clear that the women in the structure of the village still occupy a position that is subordinate to the men.

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