

Tribal culture & religion impacting women empowerment
A study on the Khasis of Meghalaya

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TRIBAL CULTURE AND RELIGION AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN

EMPOWERMENT

A STUDY ON THE KHASIS OF MEGHALAYA



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication
Acknowledgement
Abstract

Chapter 1: Introduction

- 1.1 Matriliney and Women Empowerment*
- 1.2 Tribal and the Sixth Schedule*
- 1.3 NFHS results- Meghalaya & Kerala Comparison*
- 1.4 Literature Review*
- 1.5 Research Problem, Area and Objective*
- 1.6 Methodology used*
- 1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study*
- 1.8 Structure of the Study*

Chapter 2: Meghalaya: An Overview

- 2.1 Religion*
- 2.2 Kinship and Marriage*
- 2.3 The Matrilineal Culture*
- 2.4 Political Structure of the Khasi society*
- 2.5 Economic Status of women in the rural society of Meghalaya*

Cultural Impact

Chapter 3: NFHS results and comparison of patrilineal and matrilineal societies

- 3.1 Patriliney and Matriliney*
- 3.2 Cultural Perceptions*
- 3.3 Empowerment Factors affected by perceptions*
- 3.4 Cultural Traditions, perceptions and empowerment*

Chapter 4: Impact of Land ownership on women

- 4.1 Understanding Khasi Traditions*
- 4.2 Social Empowerment and Micro-credit savings*
- 4.3 Methodology and Econometric Model*
 - 4.3.1 Determinants of Empowerment Status*
- 4.4 Results and Discussion*
- 4.5 Addressing the cultural impact*

Religion Impact

Chapter 5: Women empowerment and Contraception use

- 5.1 Family Planning in the Indian Context*
- 5.2 Conceptual Framework*
- 5.3 Literature Review*
- 5.4 Family Planning amongst the Khasis*
- 5.5 Khasi religion and contraception use*
- 5.6 Contraception prices and usage in India*
- 5.7 Methodology*
 - 5.7.1 Study Site*

- 5.7.2 *Data Collection*
- 5.7.3 *Variables*
- 5.8 *Discussions*
- 5.9 *Religion impacts Contraception use?*

Initiatives

Chapter 6: Role of NGO's, Government and Village Leader

- 6.1 *Child marriage, domestic violence and family planning*
- 6.2 *Meghalaya and the Sixth Schedule*
- 6.3 *Role of the Government*
- 6.4 *Role of NGOs*
- 6.5 *Role of village headman and SHGs*
- 6.6 *Difference in views*
- 6.7 *Importance of Women Representation*

Recommendations

Chapter 7: Impact of women participation in the Dorbar Shnong

- 7.1 *Significance of Women Participation in the political sphere*
- 7.2 *Women and Khasi Administration*
- 7.3 *Sample Demographics*
- 7.4 *Empirical Analysis*
 - 7.4.1 *Estimation Model*
 - 7.4.2 *Results and Discussion*
- 7.5 *Conclusion*

Chapter 8: Conclusion, Discussion and Suggestions

- 8.1 *Recommendations*
- 8.2 *Suggestions for Further Studies*

Appendix

Bibliography

DEDICATION

This dissertation is especially dedicated to my father, who would have been proud of me. It is also dedicated to my family and close friends, for all their support and understanding.

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ABSTRACT

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed by the UN in September 2015, are directed towards a broad range of development issues including achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. Women are often considered to fall under the vulnerable group, but instead, they should be considered as change agents whose participation is key to the advancement of our countries and societies. Hence making women's empowerment an essential component for economic growth, promotion of social development and the enhancement of business performance. Further investing in women's empowerment produces the double dividend of benefiting women and children and is pivotal to the health and social development of the family.

Since the 1980s, the Government of India has shown increasing concern for women's issues through a variety of legislation promoting the education and political participation of women. With approximately 270 million of the population in India living under poverty, the highest proportion of them is women and children. Approximately 43.4% of women suffer from crimes committed by their husbands or family members. As of 2015, the government's lack of action has positioned India as 125th out of 188 countries on the Human Development Report's Gender Inequality Index.

While several recent studies focus on the fact that culture and religion do impact women empowerment, this study focuses on how cultural beliefs and traditions of a matrilineal society have an impact on empowerment levels of women. Cultural beliefs and traditions in society play a major role in moulding various decisions of an individual belonging to a particular societal framework. Recognition of these beliefs and traditions is what anchors an individual to his/her society. In central to this, the need for social acceptance is what pushes women to adhere to these norms. This, in turn, results in an impact of empowerment levels on women.

The present research focuses on women issues in the Khasi matrilineal society of Meghalaya. In a state where traditional institutions function based on local customs and conventions that are not codified and yet religiously followed, it is questionable to whether the women are essentially empowered. The study has been designed to understand the core issues behind low empowerment levels of women of the Khasi society. It intends to check the influence of culture and religion on empowerment.

The objective of this research is to check if culture and religion do play a role in the empowerment levels of women of Meghalaya. Followed by evidence of how culture and religion have impacted

the respective empowerment levels in accordance to the National Family Health Survey- 4. Along with this, the research will also look into the various initiatives taken by the various NGO's, government and village leaders. While many authors have concluded that the underlying issue behind the empowerment levels is the exclusion of women from the political decision making at the village level, this study has also gone on to check the societal perception towards this recommendation.

The first two chapters of the study go on to give an introduction and an overview of the research issue and objectives. Chapter 3 goes on to focus on the first objective, which is checking if culture and religion have an impact on empowerment. Chapter 4 and 5 will focus on the second objective, that is to stress on the evidence of cultural and religion impact on empowerment. Chapter 6 will focus on the third objective which is to look into the various initiatives taken up by the various NGO's, the government and the village leaders. Chapter 7 will focus on the societal acceptance of the highly recommended suggestion to accept women into the village council. Chapter 8 will conclude this dissertation.

To get a better understanding of whether culture and religion have an impact on empowerment, chapter 3 compares the cultural perceptions of two societies- a patrilineal and matrilineal society. Along with which T-test analysis was used to compare certain empowerment factors of the two societies. It further not only focuses on the productional behaviour of the societies but attempts to understand the impact of tribal cultural traditions on empowerment levels of women as a whole. It also hypothesizes that cultural traditions of the Khasi matrilineal society have led to the prevalence of domestic violence and a high total fertility rate. From this chapter, it can be concluded that culture and religion do play a role in the empowerment levels of women in Khasi society.

With Meghalaya being a matrilineal society, women owning land is considered to be a cultural tradition. Chapter 4, checks the impact of land ownership on the women empowerment levels of the Khasi society and if it gives her decision-making power in the household. Probit regression was then used to analyze the data. The results stated that women who inherited land were more likely to have a savings account and be a part of a socio-economic group. From this, it can be concluded, that women who owned land through lineage were empowered, however, the fact that they still consider their husbands to be the head of the family, makes us consider that there may be a psychological component to it.

83.3% of the population in Meghalaya follow Christianity as their religion (2018). With 100% of the respondents following protestant Christianity, the question arises to whether religion has an impact on contraception usage behaviour. The current use rate of contraception to prevent pregnancy in Meghalaya is 4.7 (2.8 for sterilization and 1.9 for temporary methods), which is the lowest in India. Hence, Chapter 5, investigates the possibility of religion impact on the low contraceptive use and participation in family planning programmes. The effects of knowledge about contraception, the extent of urbanization, empowerment and demographic characteristics on contraceptive use and participation in family planning programmes were estimated in a logit regression analysis. Principal component analysis was used to construct a composite measure of women's empowerment. The results found a rural-urban difference in women's knowledge of contraceptive use. Women and men's educational attainments positively related to contraceptive use. Women's empowerment is positively related to knowledge about contraception. However, employed husbands were less likely to attend family planning programmes, suggesting the importance of providing programmes that do not conflict with work responsibilities.

According to NFHS-4 statistics, the major gender issues that Meghalaya is facing are in the fields of family planning, domestic violence and early marriage. Chapter 6, focuses on providing an overview of the role of the government, the NGO and the village leader in educating women on the repercussions of early marriage, advantages of family planning and combating domestic violence. In this study, four NGOs, the different government departments in the offices of Social Welfare, National Health Mission and the Women's Special Cell, and 20 village heads, 12 presidents of the female unit and 13 SHGs from each village, have been analysed. From this case study, it was found that while there may be a difference in interpretation of reality between the village head leaders and the government as well as the NGOs when it came to the eradication of social issues, the three agencies were closely connected.

With women in the Khasi society being excluded from political decision-making at local governance institutions, their inclusion has been recommended by several authors. Chapter 7, attempts to understand the view of women on the importance of women representation as decision-makers in society and to examine the determinants of the knowledge and attitude of Khasi women towards women representation. It is hypothesized that facilitating female representation in local governmental structures represents one of many routes towards empowerment. Probit and Logistic regression (reporting odds ratios) were then used to analyse the data. From the results, it could be deduced that women inclusion in the local governance system is of utmost importance. It is also

important that the women realise that their rights are not solely limited to placing a vote but having a say in the decision-making process as well.

With Meghalaya being considered a matrilineal state, it is taken for granted that the women of the state are empowered. While a lot is being done towards the empowerment of women, the exclusion of women from political decision-making at local governance institutions is the underlying issue behind their empowerment status. From the positive willingness of Khasi women to be a part of the village council and the acceptance of female individuals into one village council, it can be deduced that the decision of women inclusion is on the village leaders. It is hence recommended that the Sixth Schedule, which gives these village leaders the authority to enact various legislative and judiciary laws, is revised. Along with this, it is also recommended that the government collaborate with the church towards the implementation of family planning programmes.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Matriliny and Women Empowerment

Matriliny is an uncommon but recurrent type of social organization found in all regions of the world; in the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample, 31 of 186 societies (17%) are matrilineal (Murdock & White, 1969). Currently, matrilineal societies can be found in the tribes of African countries, in some parts of Southeast Asia and among 3 tribal groups in India.

Most of the anthropologists do not believe in the existence of any true matriarchy. They, however, suggest that there exist three characteristics of matriarchy, viz., descent through the mother (family name through mother), matrilocal residential system (husband lives at the residence of wife after marriage) and inheritance of property by females. Thus, any society, which follows these three norms, is presently called matrilineal society.

By a matrilineal society, we refer to a society where the ancestral descent in a kinship system can be traced through the mother instead of the father. Kapadia (1966) has mentioned that all children of a woman take the family name of their mother.

Matrilineal societies also exhibit an interesting variety of residence patterns, like, 'a man residing with his wife's matrilineal kin', 'a wife residing with her husband's matrilineal kin' or 'with his paternal kin', 'couples settling down together in a new residence', or the 'two living with their respective natal groups following the duolocal pattern' (Richards, 1950; Dube, 1969). Traditionally, it has been assumed that in those societies where married children live near or with kin, the residence will tend to be patrilocal if males contribute more to the economy and matrilocal if women contribute more (Ember and Ember, 1971; Divale, 1974).

According to the evolutionary theory, it has been theorized that in early human society, due to sexual promiscuity, it was easier to trace the biological relationship of children through their mothers. Thus, resulting in human organizations revolving around the mother rather than the father. From this rose patriarchy, a society where men could assert their superiority. However, these theories have been rejected and it is now theorized that patrilineal and matrilineal societies have developed and flourished independently.

According to Nongbri (2003), approaches in anthropological analyses of matrilineal institutions can be categorized into two predicaments. The first predicts the inevitable demise of matrilineality in the face of modernization, urbanization, and colonialism. This deduction is based on the fact that matrilineal institutions are more liable to change than patrilineal ones when confronted with economic differentiation. This theory can be traced to Morgan (1985[1877]) who regarded the matrilineal system as less advanced than the patrilineal system. However, these patrilineal systems, have led towards the subjugation of women, which has given rise to the importance of women empowerment.

As put forth by Wieringa (1994), empowerment-speak refers to a broad range of conceptualizations. It has been interpreted in various ways by politicians, health professionals, educators, social workers, managers, labour organizations as well as marginalized groups. The fact that a centralized definition is absent from the discourse is partially a reflection of these diversities; it also speaks to the salient nature of empowerment to a wide variety of issues (Vissandjee et al, 2005). Issues such as access to education, income and health care- some of the basic building blocks of social infrastructure- are the very issues daily hashed over and determined by local, national and international governing bodies and interests across the world (Lock, 1998).

According to Das (2011), empowerment is probably the totality of the following or similar capabilities:

- Having decision-making power of one's own.
- Having access to information and resources to make proper decisions.
- Having a range of options from which you can make choices (not just yes/no, either/or).
- Ability to exercise assertiveness in collective decision making.
- Having positive thinking about the ability to make a change.
- Ability to learn skills for improving one's personal or group power.
- Ability to change others' perceptions by democratic means.

Involving in the growth process and changes that are never ending and self-initiated.

Increasing one's positive self-image and overcoming stigma.

Increasing one's ability in discreet thinking to sort out right and wrong.

Any hindrance to even one of the points mentioned above results in an impact on empowerment levels.

In a fast-developing nation like India, the empowerment of women and the reduction of gender inequalities comprise a major part of the development policy. India ranks 141st out of 142 nations and 2062 districts in the world that are categorized as gender critical when it comes to health and survival of women as compared to men. The country ranks 127th on the gender inequality index and 114th on the gender gap in the world (Global gender gap report, 2015). Gender equality is one of the 17 Global Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of India (UNDP, 2015). Gender inequality is an issue found deep penetrated the Indian society. The pattern of society is predominantly patriarchal. Women in rural areas have been at the receiving end of caste and class divisions coupled with other inherent problems associated exclusively with women and they have been forced to play a subordinate role both within and outside the family.

1.2 Tribal and the Sixth Schedule

According to the Constitution of India, there are 645 tribes in India. They can be found across the country with major concentration being in West Bengal and the Northeastern Regions. There are 145 tribal communities in North-east India of which 78 are large, with a population of over 5000. They constitute around 12 percent of the total tribal population of India. The largest of all the tribes are the Bodos, Khasis, Khyntriams and Pnars, Garos, Mizos, Karbis and Mishings.

Tribes have a long and rich cultural past. They are considered to be a society that lacks positive traits of modern society and thus constitute a simple illiterate and backward society (Virginus, 1999). With changes in certain features like education, modern occupation, new technology, etc. In interest of the upliftment of such tribes, the Indian government chalked out several provisions to not only uplift the scheduled castes¹ and tribes of the country but to also protect and safeguard their ethnic culture. Along with articles 330,332,335,338 and 342 of the Constitution of India, entire Fifth and Sixth Schedule specify special provisions for the weaker sections of our society (Nath B.K., 2015). Specifically, these articles and schedules are limited to the tribes of Assam, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Tripura.

¹ 'Scheduled caste and tribe' can be defined as a particular group that:

- is geographically isolated from the main stream;
- exhibit ethnic distinctiveness and linguistic differences from the national society;
- has a strong sense of ethnic solidarity and an absence of the caste system;
- is minimally involved in the market economy and its subsistence needs guide their production decisions rather than market signals and they have a sustained-yield economic system;
- uses primitive (ancestral) technology that is suitable to the needs of their immediate environment (Goswami 1990).

Focusing on the Sixth Schedule of the Indian constitution, it provides the district and the regional council with real power to make laws on various legislative subjects. Along with this, it also provides different autonomous district councils to have a greater role in directing administrative requirements without depending on the Central State structure. Hence, allowing various scheduled tribes to continue administration following their cultural traditions.

1.3 NFHS- Meghalaya& Kerala

Though rare in India, matrilineal societies can be found in Meghalaya and parts of Kerala. Even though tribal, women empowerment levels in Kerala are higher compared to that of Meghalaya even though both the societies have characteristics of matriliney in them. Table 1, displays statistics of women empowerment levels of the two respective areas.

From Table 1, it can be made clear that Kerala stands out as a positive example of women empowerment in India. Female literacy rates here surpass the rest of India (97.3%). Historic reasons are usually given for women’s high status in Kerala, including the now dismantled matrilineal inheritance system practised by many groups in the state, and a tradition of women’s education and work participation (Nayar, 1989).

Table 1: National Family Health Survey: Women Empowerment & Gender Based Violence

Women Empowerment and Gender Based Violence	Kerala	Meghalaya
Women who are literate	97.3%	79.6%
Women with 10 or more years of schooling	70.5%	25.8%
Women age 20-24 years married before age 18 years	7.5%	19.7%
Total Fertility Rate (Number of children per mother)	1.6	3.5
Women age 15-19 years who were already mothers or pregnant at the time of the survey	3.2%	10.1%
Total unmet need for Family Planning	13.2%	21.2%
Usage of any method of contraception	52.9%	22.4%
Currently married women who usually participate in household decisions	92.4%	91.1%
Women who worked in the last 12 months who were paid in cash	19.4%	36.7%
Ever married women who have experienced spousal violence	14.8%	30.4%
Women owning a house and/or land	38.4%	66.6%
Women having a bank or savings account that they themselves use	70.8%	49.9%

Source: NFHS-4, 2017

On contrary to this, in Meghalaya, while the women literacy rates may be higher in comparison to that of women from other Indian states, literacy rates of men are still comparatively higher. Along with this, the percentage of unmet need for Family Planning and the low rates of contraception use

in Meghalaya, explains why Meghalaya has the highest fertility rate in the country. In light of this, the question arises to why vast differences exist between Meghalaya and Kerala when the societal frameworks are similar.

1.4 Literature Review

The status of women in society is an outcome of the interpretation of religious texts and the cultural and institutional set-up of religious communities (Klingorová, 2015). The role of religion is, obviously, complex and it varies across time and space. We accept the premise that everyone benefits from gender equality (Verveer, 2011). We consider gender equality and the emancipation of women as important factors for the economic, social, and democratic progress of the world's regions and for the development of human society. This process is influenced by institutional norms, as well as culture and tradition, which are both largely determined by religion. As the relationship between religion and culture is reciprocal, religious systems are locked in a circle of mutual influence with social norms and patterns of social organisation (Sinclair, 1986). It is apparent that the study of the status of women in religion also reflects the status of women in society as a whole (King, 1995), while considering the cultural, political and geographic factors.

Several studies focus on the impact of culture and religion on gender empowerment. According to Rwafa (2016), culture, religion and gender are problematic terminologies that merit analysis within the context of how these are used in some African communities to justify the oppression of women. The article focuses on how culture and religion are socially constructed and how they define gender roles in the context of Africa.

Socio-economic and institutional perspectives assume that women exhibit deterministic patterns of behaviour in that individual reproductive behaviour is shaped by social and cultural norms and practices; and that improved socio-economic variables such as education, income and labour force participation will result in a decline in fertility and improved health (Pradhan, 2003). According to Salusbury & Foster (2004), 'to claim culturelessness is to claim normalcy', which has implicit renderings of Africa as exotic and cultural. From a biomedical approach many sexual cultural practices associated with these localities (.g. polygamy, 'dry sex', ethnic male circumcision), became the centre of research as they were blamed for the high HIV prevalence rates in Africa (Hunter 2010; Venganai, 2012).

However, while the above-mentioned studies focus on Africa, in the Indian context, a study by Gauri Bhattacharya, specializes in the impact of culture and religion on contraception use in the Indian context. Through an analysis of diversification of the selected religions, as part of this assumption, we would like to expand on the study by Seguino (2011), which primarily concerned itself with the influence of religiosity on gender inequality within a set of socioeconomic parameters of the selected states. In this light, the present study aims to not only check the impact of culture and religion on empowerment levels of Indian women, but it also focuses especially on the matrilineal society of India. Along with this, this study will not only focus on contraception use but on the impact of religion and culture on other empowerment factors as well.

1.5 Research Problem, Area & Objective

The non-codification of traditional laws pertaining to the land governance system has been a hindrance to the empowerment process. It has been found that societal issues like domestic violence, early marriages and the lack of family planning are very much prevalent in the matrilineal society of Meghalaya (as per Table 1). To aggravate issues, women are not included in the decision-making processes of the local governance system. (Panchayati Raj institutions).

The present research focuses on women issues in the Khasi matrilineal society of Meghalaya. In a state where traditional institutions function based on local customs and conventions that are not codified and yet religiously followed, it is questionable to whether the women are essentially empowered. The study has been designed to understand the core issues behind low empowerment levels of women of the Khasi society. It intends to check the influence of culture and religion on empowerment.

In respect to this, the following objectives for this research were chosen:

- (i) To check if culture and religion do play a role in the empowerment levels of women in India.
- (ii) How does tribal culture and religion impact empowerment levels in Meghalaya?
- (iii) What initiatives are being taken by the NGO's, government and Village leader?
- (iv) To check the views of the society towards the recommendation of women inclusion into the local governance institution.

Three surveys were conducted over a period of 2 years. The details of which are given below:

In September 2016, a questionnaire survey was conducted for 28 days in Meghalaya. The research was conducted in two districts, East Khasi Hills and West Khasi Hills.

Mawtawar (Village A) and Nongthliew (Village B) were the two research sites chosen because a majority of the residents were engaged in agricultural activities, similar to other typical rural communities. Mawtawar is a village situated in the district of East Khasi Hills, 15 km from the city centre, with a population of around 980 households, while Nongthliew is a village situated in the district of West Khasi Hills, 38kms from the city centre with a population of around 172 households. The distance between the two villages is around 58kms.

In June 2017, four NGOs, different government departments in the offices of Social Welfare, National Health Mission and the Women's Special Cell, and 20 village heads, 12 presidents of the female unit and 13 SHGs from each village, were interviewed.

In November 2017, a questionnaire survey was conducted in Meghalaya and Assam for 25 days each respectively. The research was conducted in two districts, East Khasi Hills and West Khasi Hills of Meghalaya and Kamrup and Moregaon of Assam. In total, 301 Khasi respondents from Meghalaya and 272 Karbi respondents from Assam were interviewed.

1.6 Methodology Used

(i) Selection of Study Area

For collecting primary information in regards to matrilineal societies, the two districts were of prime importance- the East Khasi Hills District and the West Khasi Hills district. In the case of patrilineal society, Kamrup and Moregaon were the two districts used to extract primary information.

These two research areas were selected keeping in mind that the research was based on the Khasi and Karbi tribe.

(ii) Primary information

Information was collected by interviewing the residents of the respective research areas. The respondents interviewed had to be married and female. With the help of a translator, each questionnaire was filled on a one-to-one basis. The respondents had to answer a questionnaire which focused on various cultural and religious perspectives that impact gender empowerment.

Along with this 4 NGO's and the 3 government departments were interviewed focusing on the areas of empowerment that they focused on, their mode of spreading information, their procedures of conducting various projects as well as their views on the issues concerning collaborations between the two bodies.

(iii) *Secondary information*

Apart from primary information, secondary information was collected from different sources. In particular, the statistical data of the National Family Health Survey was used primarily for highlighting the key issues in empowerment levels of Khasi women. From NGO's and government, various pamphlets were collected to give an understanding of the various projects and programmes implemented towards women empowerment.

(iv) *Selection of NGO's and Government Department*

For the present research studies, the 4 registered NGOs with the government were interviewed. These 4 NGOs are reputed for collaborating the maximum towards women empowerment in Meghalaya. The selection was also based on the volume of activities, coverage and their existence in the study areas.

(v) *Analysis of Data*

Various empirical tools were then used to analyze the data under STATA.

In chapter 3, T-test analysis was used to check the significance of empowerment factors between the two research societies (Assam & Meghalaya). In chapter 4, Probit analysis was used to check the impact of land ownership on women empowerment. In chapter 5, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to estimate a composite measure for empowerment, after which Logit estimation was used to check the relationship of contraception use in accordance to religious beliefs on empowerment levels. In chapter 6, T-test analysis was used to check the significance of the views of the village head leader and women leadership in the village on specific empowerment factors- family planning, domestic violence and early marriage. In chapter 7, Probit analysis was used to check the significance of the views of women towards women representation in the local governance institution.

1.7 Scope & Limitation of study

There is a growing concern towards the increase in total fertility rate amongst the Khasis of Meghalaya. In comparison to India, the number of births per woman is almost double. According to the National Rural Health Mission, special efforts are being taken towards family planning in Meghalaya. Including every month, a lecture being conducted on nutrition and contraception use, where mothers and local leaders are invited to attend. It is hoped that this study can look into the roots of the issue of a high fertility rate.

Along with this, the exclusion of women from local governance institutions is also of concern towards women empowerment levels in the state. This research study also hopes to not only emphasize the root causes behind this but also wishes to suggest a recommendation for the inclusion of women.

Despite the above scope, this study is also limited in the following ways:

- (i) The study is only limited to respondents from 3 villages in the East Khasi district out of 988 villages and 2 villages in the West Khasi district out of 1117 villages. Data collected from every village would have helped give a better perspective on the impact of culture and religion in the area
- (ii) The study was limited to only females. If the survey would have also interviewed the men on their perspective of women engagement in local governance institutions, a better perspective into their exclusion from the Dorbar Shnong would have been gained.
- (iii) Only 4 NGOs who were registered with the government were interviewed. There are several unregistered NGOs who work privately as well towards women empowerment, without government support. The research hence lacks the opinions and understanding of the struggles faced by a non-registered NGO towards the implementation of their programmes.
- (iv) With women exclusion from local governance institutions, it is important to do a more precise study into the conditions under which Meghalaya is considered to fall under the Sixth Schedule. Along with this it should also be reconsidered to whether Meghalaya should still be termed as a Sixth Schedule state with its recent advanced developments. The present research does not cover these questions.

1.8 Structure of the Study

The research has been divided into six themes and eight chapters. Some chapters are devoted to the theoretical aspect, while others on empirical studies. Most of the chapters such as third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh are a mixture of both empirical and theoretical aspects. The second and eighth chapter covers mostly the theoretical aspects. The first chapter covers the background, literature review, research problem, objectives and methodology, scope and limitation of the study.

The second chapter mainly is an introduction to the Khasi culture. It also stresses on the demographics of Meghalaya. The other areas of the chapter are Kinship, marriage and the political structure of the society.

The third chapter compares the cultural perceptions of two societies- a patrilineal (Karbis) and a matrilineal (Khasi) society. Along with which T-test analysis was used to compare certain empowerment factors of the two societies. It further not only focuses on the productional behaviour of the societies but attempts to understand the impact of tribal cultural traditions on empowerment levels of women as a whole.

With Meghalaya being a matrilineal society, women owning land is considered to be a cultural tradition. Chapter 4, checks the impact of land ownership on the women empowerment levels of the Khasi society and if it gives her decision-making power in the household. Probit regression was then used to analyze the data.

Chapter 5, investigates the possibility of religion impact on the low contraceptive use and participation in family planning programmes. The effects of knowledge about contraception, the extent of urbanization, empowerment and demographic characteristics on contraceptive use and participation in family planning programmes were estimated in a logit regression analysis. Principal Component analysis was used to construct a composite measure of women's empowerment.

According to NFHS-4 statistics, the major gender issues that Meghalaya is facing are in the fields of family planning, domestic violence and early marriage. Chapter 6, focuses on providing an overview of the role of the government, the NGO and the village leader in educating women on the repercussions of early marriage, advantages of family planning and combating domestic violence. In this study, four NGOs, the different government departments in the offices of Social Welfare,

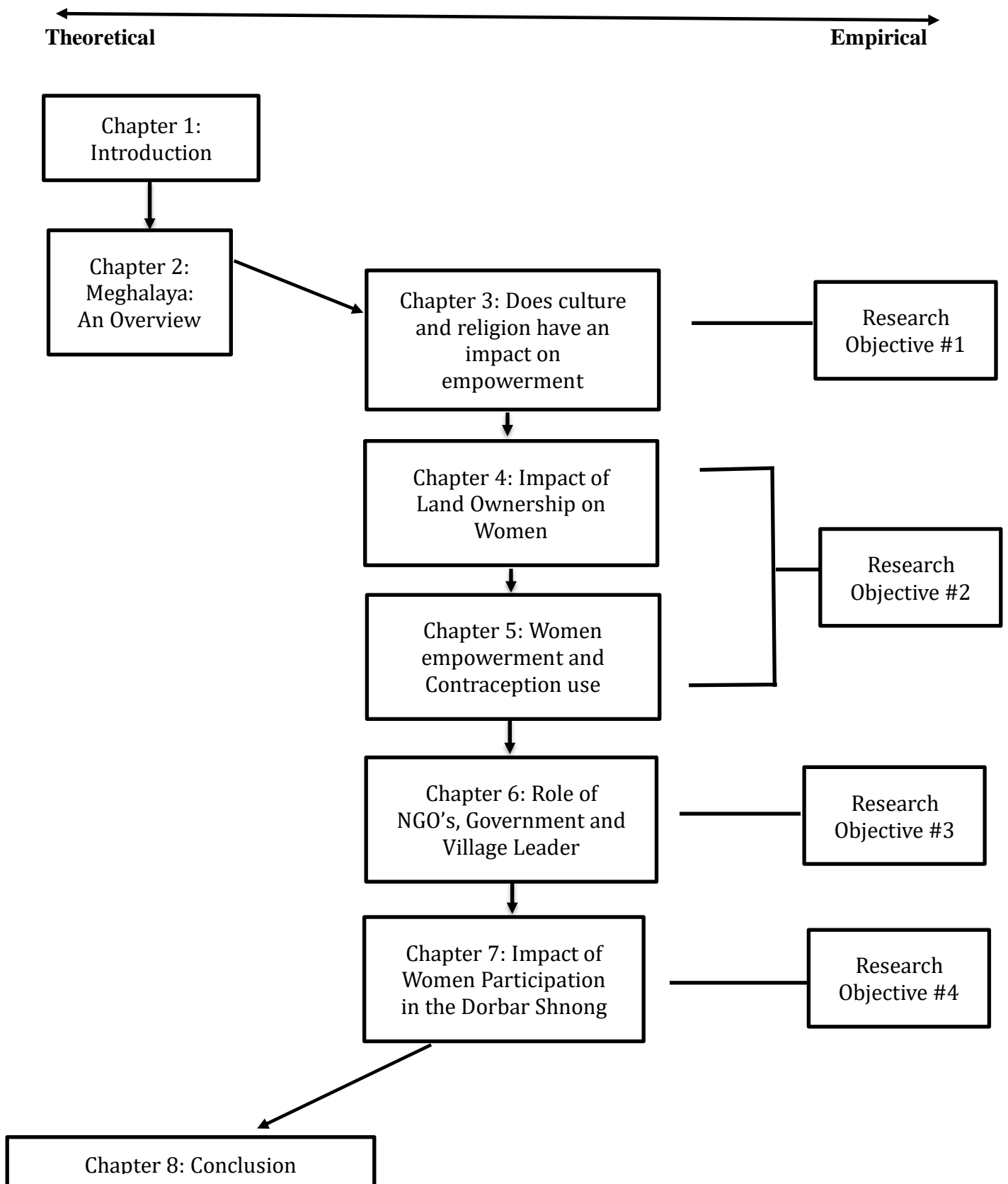
National Health Mission and the Women's Special Cell, and 20 village heads, 12 presidents of the female unit and 13 SHGs from each village, have been analysed.

With women in the Khasi society being excluded from political decision-making at local governance institutions, their inclusion has been recommended by several authors. Chapter 7, attempts to understand the view of women on the importance of women representation as decision-makers in society and to examine the determinants of the knowledge and attitude of Khasi women towards women representation.

Based on theoretical discussion and empirical studies, the whole thesis is concluded in the eighth chapter. This chapter includes the discussion, conclusion and further recommendations made based on results.

The whole thesis is designed coherently. The structure of the thesis is figured and presented in figure 1.

Figure 1: Proceedings of the Study



CHAPTER 2

KHASIS OF MEGHALAYA: AN OVERVIEW

Meghalaya, literally meaning the dwelling of clouds, is one of the seven states in the northeast region and one of the smallest in India. It is a strip of land surrounded by Bangladesh to the south and part of the west and Assam to the north and the east. It covers an area of 22,429 sq.km. The capital of the State is Shillong, which is situated in the East Khasi District.

Only about 100 people reside in a km² of an area in Meghalaya, making it a low-density region. The total population as per 2017 Census is 34,98,708 against 29,66,889 in 2011. While this makes Meghalaya one of the states in India with the lowest population, in spite of which it continues to have rapid population growth. From table 2, the gradual rise in population with a difference of 10 years can be seen. Nearly 81% of the population of the State live in rural areas. With most of its land covered by hills interspersed with gorges and small valleys, the economy is predominantly agrarian with around 75% of its total population being engaged in agricultural activities.

Table 2: Comparative descriptive statistics of Meghalaya

Description	2011	2001
Population	29,66,889	23,18,822
Male	14,91,832	11,76,087
Female	14,75,057	11,42,735
Sex ratio (for every 1000 males)	989	972
Literacy	74.43%	62.56%
Male literacy	75.95%	65.43%
Female literacy	72.89%	59.61%

Source: Rao, 2016

The population of Meghalaya is predominantly tribal, the main tribes are the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos besides other plain tribes such as Koch, Rabhas and Bodos. The Khasi people form a major part of the population in the eastern part of Meghalaya and are the state's largest community.

The females of the Khasi community were mostly engaged in cultivation activities. Cultivation covered activities related to horticulture, agriculture, and growth of forest produce. Horticultural activities were in terms of growing and maintaining orange orchards, banana gardens, jackfruit trees and pineapple plants. In agricultural activities, they were engaged in growing ginger, black pepper, betel leaves and sweet potatoes as cash crops, while arum, millet, certain varieties of nuts and bay

leaves were grown for consumption. Other than this they also maintained kitchen gardens to grow tomatoes, beans, and chillies for self-consumption (Nongkynrih, 2002).

2.1 Khasi Religion

While almost 75% of the population of Meghalaya have embraced Christianity, a minority still follow and practice their old age indigenous religion. After Christianity, Hinduism is the second most popular religion in the State.

Table 3: Religion distribution in the region

Religion	Population	Percentage
Christian	22,13,027	74.59%
Hindu	3,42,078	11.53%
Other Religion	2,58,271	8.71%
Muslim	1,30,399	4.40%
Buddhist	9864	0.33%
Sikh	3045	0.10%
Jain	627	0.02%

Source: Census, 2011

The Khasi Religion cannot be found in shrines, but it can be found in

- (i) In the rituals, ceremonies and the festivals of the people
- (ii) In the proverbs, riddles and wise-sayings
- (iii) In the customs of the people, especially the different aspects of life
- (iv) In the different expressions of their beliefs
- (v) In the use of religious objects and the expressions of their prayers
- (vi) In the manner of worship and the materials they use for making sacrifices and offerings

With no scriptural information of the Khasi religion, it has been considered to be a primal religion by P.R Gurdon. Although the scripts may have been lost, the Khasis continued living with the framework of their culture. Tremendous efforts were made to pass their wisdom based on oral traditions from one generation to another. In the present time, the Khasis, especially the non-Christian Khasis consider their traditional myths and legends as a storehouse of their thoughts, ideas, wisdom and conceptual formation.

In the 19th century, the Roman Catholic Mission began to send some Missionaries to North East India. These missionaries went on to learnt the Khasi language and in due course, they began

translating some Catholic religious writings. The growth and development of Christianity among the Khasi people strengthened gradually and steadily. It was towards the end of the 19th century that it gained strong momentum among all sections of the Khasi tribal society.

When Christianity came into Meghalaya, the Khasi family was faced with the question of whether a “*Ka Khaduh*” could hold the family property if she converted to Christianity. In 1918, the Government ruled that Christian converts should be allowed to inherit the ancestral property, and that property is divorced from religion. Though religion was divorced from the traditional rules, because of the modernisation process, such as, educational development along with the spread of Christianity, that had somehow changed the traditional system in any respect (Roy, 1964)

In marital ceremonies, Christian Khasis got their marriages solemnized in the church, while, non-Christian Khasi (following indigenous Khasi religion) solemnized in the bride’s household in the presence of members from both the sides. In the indigenous Khasi style of wedding, the ceremonies were followed by a public celebration in the form of a big feast. Christian weddings, on the contrary, were simple and devoid of any public pomp or show.

2.2 Kinship and Marriage

One of the most remarkable features of the Khasis that sets them apart from other tribes is that descendants trace their lineage through their mothers and not their fathers. In other words, the Khasi follow a unilineal principle of matrilineal descent (Nongkynrih, 2002). In addition to this, the Khasis follow matrilineal residence, that is the husband lives with the wife’s family.

Being the followers of a unique social system of matrilineality, the Khasi women enjoy a special place of status and dignity (Kyndiah, 1990). A Khasi woman (one who has been born and brought up in the Khasi society and who follows the Khasi way of life) after marriage gives birth to a number of children. When her female children get married they are supposed to perpetuate the lineage in turn by producing children.

In Khasi laws and traditions, daughters instead of sons inherit their fathers’ property when they die. Some marriages are arranged, but the practice is uncommon and is not the preferred method of choosing a spouse. Marriages in Khasi society are usually founded on emotions of ‘love’ and the preferences of those entering the union rather than on the parents’ designs for them. Women have complete freedom to choose their husbands, and, unlike India’s patrilineal culture, there are no

societal pressures to marry. A woman also has the right to end a marriage despite her husband's objection. Women's remarriages are more common and less disapproved of among the Khasi than in other parts of India, and men, as well as women, are free to remarry as many times as they want.

When a male gets married and shifts residence over to his wife's mother's household (i.e. if he marries the youngest daughter) or if he sets up residence in the land given by the village council (i.e. he marries an elder daughter) then he has three options for earning an income:

- to continue working on the field of or in the business run by his maternal family
- have an independent source of income
- to work on the field or in the business run by his wife's maternal family.

In a Khasi family, the mother-in-law of the daughter held a high position of respect because it is she who provides a male to perpetuate the lineage of the daughter. The mother-in-law commanded more authority over the grandchildren than the maternal grandmother of the children.

2.3 The Matrilineal Culture

According to Nongbri (2003), matriliney has been used as evidence that gender relations in Khasi society are egalitarian, that Khasi women are empowered, and even that women have too much power. While this common mindset holds true, the Khasi society can be described as a matrilineal society with elements of patriarchy. In other words, the privileges enjoyed by women are outweighed by those enjoyed by the men of the society. While men still make the decisions, women continue to bear the burden of caring for the extended family.

In addition to this, there are certain limitations to the matriliney privileges enjoyed by women. The youngest daughter does not inherit the family property if there is property to inherit, which is very rare in contemporary times. Along with this, even with the property inherited without the permission of male members of the family, the youngest daughter cannot sell it, lease it or use it to run a business.

After marriage, the eldest daughter moves out of her mother's house along with her husband to set up an independent residence. In such a situation, the '*Shnong*' or the village administration provide the young couple with land for which there will be no ownership rights. Such a system of acquiring land is known as '*Ri Raid*', while land acquired through lineage by the youngest daughter in the family is known as '*Ri Kynti*'. However, land received by the *Shnong* is limited to the receiver's usage alone.

Other than this, other interesting elements of the matrilineal culture that is seen in the Khasi society is the practice of giving the complete day's earnings to the wife. However, the mutual consensus of women, interviewed in the survey, the head of the household is considered to be the husband. While the father of the family has a definite role to play in the household affairs, his role is, however, limited to the final word of the maternal uncle.

2.4 Political Structure of the Khasi Society

Every Khasi village has its own *Dorbar Shnong* (village or local council) which plays a pivotal role in the village administration and is presided by the *Rangbah Shnong* (village headman) that is, the village headman, who is elected by adult members of the village. With the village headman having legislative or judiciary powers, the role of the *Dorbar Shnong* (village level assembly) in women's issues is important. The village assembly is the lowest level of governance. Each Village unit is headed by a male village headman. He is elected by the village council, which comprises adult male members from every family residing in the village. The village headman is required to maintain peace and harmony in his respective village. He is the judge in all conflicts and quarrels and he can summon 'defaulters' and punish them.

The *Dorbar Shnong*² is the decision-making body and organises the activities of the village collectively. The female unit and the male unit do not attend the village council meetings but are active participants in village activities. It meets once a month and may meet often as and when the need arises.

The president of the village female unit primarily worked towards the upliftment of women in their village. They attend awareness programmes, arranged by the government, that concern women and intervene in cases of domestic violence in the village. The functions of the president of the female unit involve eradication of gambling and illegal sale of alcohol, maintaining the cleanliness of the village, awarding students at school, looking after the well-being of the society, and eradicating poverty.

2.5 Economic Status of women in the rural society of Meghalaya

² Along with the village headman, there is the female unit, and the male unit (Seng-Samla) of the village. All together, they form the village administrative structure.

A women's economic status can be evaluated through their control over economic access and power. In terms of the Khasi society, this can be understood through whether the female household is an earner or dependent, their holding of tangible and intangible assets, nature of inheritance of ancestral property and the nature of job opportunities in which women are involved in comparison to their male counterparts. Along with this, their social position which can be evaluated through their involvement in social functions and duties is also an important content.

According to Utpal Kumar De and Bhola Nath Ghosh, while 16% of all family heads are dependent, 84% are earners. When it came to family heads, through the surveys conducted it was seen that women considered their male counterparts to be the family head even though the land was in their name. This indicates that nowadays the male counterpart who contributes significantly to the family income gain command over their female counterpart. With 80% of women in the Khasi society being earners and the rest being dependents, it can be understood that earning is not a criterion for a female to be the head. With that being said it can also be said that even if they do not earn and depend on the income of either the husband or younger children they can act as the head and thus decision maker. However, the chance of becoming the head of a non-earner female member is relatively more than a non-earning member even in a joint family of the rural Khasi society.

When we talk about inheritance, with the society being matrilineal in nature, it is the youngest girl child that inherits property. The male inherited property either due to the fact that there was no daughter of his parents. However, through the surveys conducted it was seen that most mothers were open to dividing the inheritance amongst their children. However, the overall fact remains that though one of the males inherit parental property, the females had more privilege to inherit property.

The most important economic feature of the Khasi society is that the return in the unverifiable investment in the human capital towards girls is retained within the household, whereas, in other cultures, only the verifiable component of investment can be retained through bride price or dowry. In other words, the Khasi family can choose to raise exactly the daughter they would like to keep in their household, not the daughter most likely to be preferred by other households (Uri Gneezy, Kenneth L. Leonard and John A. List, 2009).

CHAPTER 3

DOES CULTURE AND RELIGION HAVE AN IMPACT ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA?

3.1 Patriliney and Matriliney

Patrilineal descent refers to a system in which one is a member of a descent group as one has all male links back to the male founding ancestor. Patrilineality is the most common descent system followed by various societies in India. Matrilineal descent refers to a system in which one is a member of a descent group because one has all female links back to the female founding ancestor (Cronk & Gerkey, 2007). Though rare in India, matrilineal societies can be found in Meghalaya and parts of Kerala. The Khasis of Meghalaya were chosen as our research subjects to represent the matrilineal society and the Karbis of Assam were chosen to represent the patrilineal society of India.

Focusing on the statistics of rural women as compiled in the National Family Health Survey (IIPS, 2017), it is interesting to note that even with a strong matrilineal kinship system, the percentage of women in Meghalaya who have experienced domestic violence are higher than that of Assam. Along with this, the percentage of unmet need for Family Planning and the low rates of contraception use in Meghalaya, explains why Meghalaya has the highest fertility rate in the country. In addition to this, even though the Indian Constitution states the reservation of seats for women in local government institutions, the non-inclusion of Khasi women in the local governance institutions has been aided by cultural traditions and further by the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The customary democratic norms of the Khasis, which have been hailed for years have gone without female representation possibly because it is considered that in a matrilineal society the interests of women are already well protected (Langstieh 2000). Table 4, shows the respective statistics of women empowerment and gender-based violence in Assam and Meghalaya.

It is hence, hypothesized that perceptions of women, influenced by cultural traditions in a matrilineal society, is the reason behind which their empowerment levels are relatively low compared to a patrilineal society. In order to get a better understanding, this case study compares the cultural perceptions of the two societies. Studies by Saikia, Steele and Dasvarma (2001), which also focuses on the Khasis and the Karbis, argue that the perceptions and behaviour related to reproduction are strongly, even predominantly, determined by prevailing cultural and religious

values, which form the basis of socially-sanctioned realities in these communities. This research not only focuses on the reproductional behaviour of the two societies but attempts to understand the impact of tribal cultural traditions on empowerment levels of women as a whole. In order to do so, with special emphasis on the matrilineal society, the study will look into the differences of cultural traditions between a patrilineal society and a matrilineal society, and its respective impacts on women empowerment.

Table 4: National Family Health Survey: Women Empowerment & Gender Based Violence

Women Empowerment and Gender Based Violence	Assam	Meghalaya
Women age 20-24 years married before age 18 years	24.7%	19.7%
Total Fertility Rate (Number of children per mother)	2.3	3.5
Women age 15-19 years who were already mothers or pregnant at the time of the survey	14.4%	10.1%
Total unmet need for Family Planning	14.4%	21.2%
Usage of any method of contraception	52%	22.4%
Currently married women who usually participate in household decisions	86.2%	91.1%
Women who worked in the last 12 months who were paid in cash	16.7%	36.7%
Ever married women who have experienced spousal violence	26.2%	30.4%
Women owning a house and/or land	53.7%	66.6%
Women having a bank or savings account that they themselves use	42.1%	49.9%

Source: NFHS-4 (2017)

Cultural beliefs and traditions in society play a major role in moulding various decisions of an individual belonging to a particular societal framework. Recognition of these beliefs and traditions is what anchors an individual to his/her society. In central to this, the need for social acceptance is what pushes women to adhere to these norms. This in turn results in an impact of empowerment levels of women.

3.2 Literature Review

Various studies show evidence that cultural perceptions do tend to impact empowerment levels of a woman. Table 5, displays various studies of authors that show the impact of cultural perceptions on empowerment.

With very little research being done on how cultural perceptions impact empowerment levels of tribal women, this chapter will be covering the above-mentioned objective with special emphasis on the patrilineal culture of the Karbis and the matrilineal culture of the Khasis.

Table 5: Literature Review of Perception view on Empowerment Factors

Perception view on Empowerment	Article Title	Author	Year	Research Area
Evidence of cultural perceptions effect on Gender systems	Unpacking the Gender System: A theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations	Ridgeway, Correll	2004	
Impact of marital cultural views on Decision making	Cultural Intelligence: Its Measurement and Effects on Cultural Judgment and Decision Making, Cultural Adaptation and Task Performance	Soon Ang , Linn Van Dyne, Christine Koh, K. Yee Ng , Klaus J. Templer, Cheryl Tay and N. Anand Chandrasekar	2007	
Impact of cultural perceptions on Working women	Understanding some cultural barriers to women's access to education	Sanumaiya Bhandary	2017	Nepal
Impact of cultural perceptions on contraception use	Sociocultural and Behavioral Contexts of Condom Use in Heterosexual Married Couples in India: Challenges to the HIV Prevention Program	Gauri Bhattacharya	2004	India
Impact of cultural perceptions on women being a part of the political system	Rising tide: Gender Equality & Cultural Change around the world	Ronald Inglehart & Pippa Norris	2003	USA

3.2 Cultural Perceptions

In November 2017, a questionnaire survey was conducted in Meghalaya and Assam for 25 days each respectively. The research was conducted in two districts, East Khasi Hills and West Khasi Hills of Meghalaya and Kamrup and Morigaon of Assam. In total, 301 Khasi respondents from Meghalaya and 272 Karbi respondents from Assam were interviewed. The respondents had to be

females married and each questionnaire was filled on a one-to-one basis. The respondents had to answer a questionnaire which focused on various cultural perspectives that impact gender empowerment.

Table 6: Cultural Perceptions of two areas

Cultural Perceptions	Meghalaya		Assam	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Marriage Views				
Is Marriage important?	97.34%	2.66%	79.41%	20.58%
Can Unmarried people be happy?	75.08%	24.91%	61.76%	38.23%
Should only men be the head of the household?	39.20%	60.8%	58.08%	41.92%
Family Planning				
Is it important to have children right after marriage?	95.68%	4.32%	73.89%	26.10%
Are large families the happiest?	80.39%	19.6%	71.32%	28.67%
Is sex education important?	93.02%	6.97%	77.20%	22.79%
Job Views				
Is there equality in pay?	52.15%	47.84%	80.88%	19.12%
Should jobs be gender specific?	69.10%	30.9%	64.33%	35.66%
Should only men earn and women take care of home?	38.20%	61.80%	55.88%	44.12%
Political Participation Views				
Is women representation important in governance institutions?	88.03%	11.96%	61.39%	38.60%
Are reservations made for women in the parliament futile?	60.46%	39.53%	53.67%	46.33%

Own Survey, 2017

The Khasi people form a major part of the population in the eastern part of Meghalaya and are the state's largest community. One of the most remarkable features of the Khasis that sets them apart from other tribes is that descendants trace their lineage through their mothers and not their fathers. In other words, the Khasi follow a unilineal principle of matrilineal descent (Nongkynrih, 2002). According to Khasi laws and traditions, the woman and her youngest daughter inherit property, and not the man. After marriage, the eldest daughter moves out of her mother's house along with her husband to set up an independent residence. In such a situation, the 'Shnong' or the village administration provide the young couple with land for which there will be no ownership rights. Such a system of acquiring land is known as 'Ri Raid', while land acquired through lineage by the youngest daughter in the family is known as 'Ri Kynti' (Keeni, 2017). However, land received by the Shnong is limited to the receiver's usage alone.

The Karbis, popularly known as Mikirs, constitute one of the important tribes of Assam.

The Karbi is a patrilineal tribe and descent, inheritance, succession, authority and residence after marriage are traced through male line among them. After marriage, a girl has to leave her family of orientation and live with her husband in the husband's family of orientation or a neolocal residence.

An interesting aspect of the women of the Karbi folk is that she does not change her surname after marriage but instead, her children would have to take her husband's surname (Zaman, 2008). The Karbi culture has been imbued with many elements of the cultures of Assamese Hindus and the Khasis.

A compilation of the various questions asked and the views of the various respondents have been presented in Table 6.

From the above-mentioned statistics, it can be understood that Khasi women appear to enjoy a higher status in the field of household decisions as compared to Karbi women, mainly because of the inheritance rules and their comparative freedom in establishing a home (Saikia, Steele & Dasvarma, 2001). Khasi women enjoy a much greater share of liberty in their household decision-making compared to women in other societies of India, this is due to cultural traditions which emphasize the home to be a woman's domain. Along with this, it is also seen that it is the duty of the husband to provide his wife with his earnings. In this way, Khasi women manage household expenditure, contribute to the family income and make their own decisions, in contrast to Karbi women.

The Khasis believe in big families and hence tend to want more than one child in comparison to Karbi women. This can be deduced from the Total Fertility rate in Table 5. This supports the percentage of Khasi women that feel large families are happier. It is interesting to note, that while a higher percentage of Khasi women believe that sex education is important (Table 6), the percentage of contraception use among Khasi women is lower than that of Karbi women. This may be due to the fact that 100% of Khasi respondents are Protestant Christians, who do not believe in modern methods of contraception. From Genesis IV 29 of the Bible, it can be understood that Christians, especially protestants, condone the use of contraceptives while Catholics forbid its use on the basis of the biblical teaching that, God instructed man to "multiply and fill the earth".

The state government of Meghalaya has made provisions for rural women to earn and support themselves. One such provision is the Job Card, which is a 100-day labour-intensive work for which women can earn a certain amount of money. Payments are made directly to their respective savings account, which supports the higher percentage of Khasi women having a savings account in comparison to Karbi women (Table 5). This also supports the view of Khasi women where the percentage of women who agree that only men should earn is comparatively less. However, it is interesting to note, that Khasi women don't feel that equality in pay is important, in fact, they also

believe that certain jobs can only be carried out by men and hence should be gender specific. On the other hand, according to S.K Das (2011), bank accounts of the family are handled by the males in the Karbi society, this explains the low percentage of women having a savings account.

The participation of women of Assam in the electoral politics started before independence. However, it is to be noted that traditionally, women were not allowed to be a part of the local government institutions amongst the Karbis, however, with time this tradition has changed. For the 420 Zila Parishad³ constituencies, the present ruling party has given 102 seats to women candidates (Bhattacharaj, 2018). This clearly shows that provisions have been made for women representation in case of Karbis, however, with the tradition of no women representation in the Khasi society, Khasi women are exempted from inclusion in any political activity in local governance institutions. However, in terms of views, it is interesting to note from Table 7, that Karbi women feel that seats allotted to women are futile in addition to which the percentage of women representation requirement is low, this is due to the inefficiency of the state government in providing electoral cards for a number of residents.

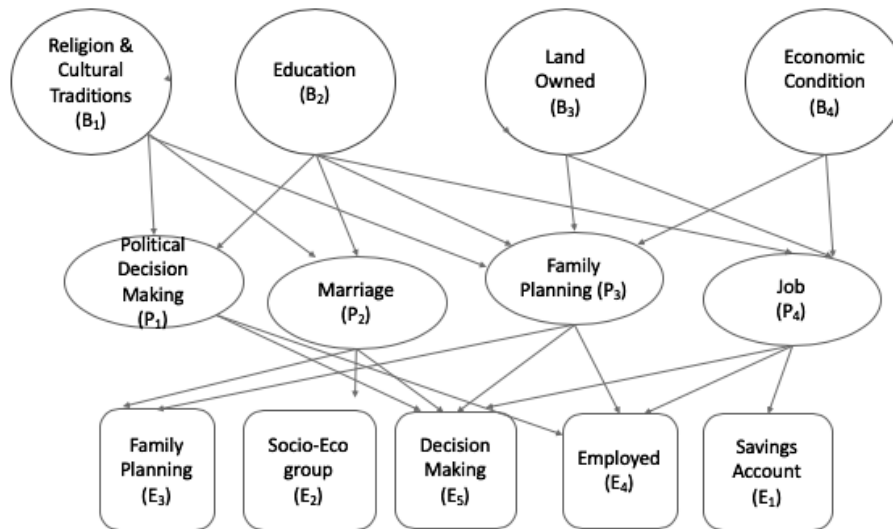
3.3 Empowerment Factors affected by cultural perceptions

Social and cultural norms that prescribe women's roles limit their access to education and restrict their networks (Sen 1993; Subramaniam 2011). Hence only through the development of such defining cultural beliefs that a system of difference like gender or race becomes constructed as a distinct organizing principle of social relations (Ridgeway 2000).

Figure 2, goes on to explain how the conditions in which you are born to (B_1, B_2, B_3, B_4) go on to affect perceptions (P_1, P_2, P_3, P_4) in various fields which in return affects empowerment levels (E_1, E_2, E_3, E_4) of women. When an individual is born into a family, the individual is brought up into a particular economic condition, followed by depending on the type of society, the individual may or may not inherit land. In addition to this, the individual's educational decisions, as well as religion and culture, are decided by the parents. These characteristics go on to mould an individual's behaviour which goes on to impact his perceptions over political decision making, marriage, family planning and job. This results in an impact on empowerment levels of the individual.

³ The Zila Panchayat or District Council or Zilla Parishad or District Panchayat, is the third tier of the Panchayati Raj system. Zila Parishad is an elected body. Block Pramukh (president) of Panchayat Samiti (Block) are also represented in Zila Parishad.

Figure 2: Basic Characteristics influencing Perceptions that impact empowerment



Note: B₁, B₂, B₃, B₄- Basic Characteristics
 P₁, P₂, P₃, P₄ – Perceptions
 E₁, E₂, E₃, E₄- Empowerment Factors
 Source: Own Survey, 2017

From Table 5 and Table 6, it can be deduced that cultural and social norms do tend to affect women empowerment levels. Figure 2, attempts to show the influence of basic characteristics like religion & cultural traditions, education, land ownership and economic status on an individual’s perception which hence results in an impact on empowerment factors- family planning, socio-eco group involvement, decision-making (household and political), being employed and having a saving’s account. In order to clearly distinguish the empowerment levels between the Karbis and the Khasis, t-test analysis was used. Table 7 displays the results of the T-test.

Family Planning refers to practices that help individuals or couples to avoid unwanted births, bring about wanted births, regulate the intervals between pregnancies, control the time at which births occurs in relation to the age of parents and determines the number of children in the family (Deb, 2010). However recently, these programmes have gone on to cover immunization, pregnancy, delivery and postpartum care, and preventative and curative health care. It was interesting to note, that with Meghalaya having the highest number TFR, families that attended family planning programmes in Meghalaya (Mean=0.21, St.Dev= 0.40) were higher than that of Assam (Mean=0.14, St.Dev= 0.35). This can be supported with 93% Khasi women understanding the importance of sex education (refer to Table 3). With religious views in Meghalaya, supporting the use of more traditional methods of contraception rather than modern methods of contraception, as well as the idea of larger families, it can hence be understood that couples are joining these programmes more for the need of immunization, natal care or post-partum care, rather than that of contraception use.

Table 7: T-test analysis of women empowerment factor's

Women's Empowerment Factor	Meghalaya			Assam			Pr (T < t)
	No. of Observations	St. Dev	Mean	No. of Observations	St. Dev	Mean	
Attendance in family planning	301	0.40	0.21	272	0.35	0.14	0.02**
Socio-eco group	301	0.48	0.39	272	0.49	0.43	0.87
Vote in Panchayat ⁴	301	0.45	0.29	272	0.40	0.79	0.00***
Employed	301	0.46	0.31	272	0.40	0.20	0.00***
Savings Account	301	0.30	0.89	272	0.41	0.78	0.00***

Source: Own Survey, 2017

The role of socio-economic groups in rural areas is to improve the quality of life and economic well-being of people in relatively isolated areas. Other than that, socio-economic groups does give women an atmosphere to bond, gather and have a social life. With the church fulfilling that role in Meghalaya, the number of Khasis (Mean= 0.39, St. Dev=0.48) involved in socio-eco groups are relatively lower to that of the Karbis (Mean= 0.43. St.Dev= 0.49).

With women not being allowed to be a part of the local government institution the great difference in women participating in electing of the new headman in Meghalaya (Mean=0.29, St.Dev=0.45) to that of Assam (Mean= 0.79, St.Dev=0.40) is understandable. However, it is to be noted that Umsaw, a village in Meghalaya, has recently been accepting women into the activities of the local governance institution. This development is a big step towards women inclusion in the decision-making processes of the society. It has been 2 years since the headman of Umsaw has opened up to women. This might have led to women having a positive attitude and understanding their importance as a part of the decision-making process. This can be supported with 88% of Khasi women feeling the importance of women representation (refer to Table 6).

The state government of Meghalaya having made provisions for women to have an income, the difference in employment of women in Meghalaya (Mean=0.31, St.Dev=0.46) and Assam(Mean=0.20, St.Dev=0.40) can be understood. This can also be supported by the cultural views of 55% Karbi women who believe that it is the job of men to be the ones to earn for the family (refer to table 6).

⁴ Panchayat – Local governance institutions

The employment provisions made by the state government of Meghalaya also supports the use of a savings account, this hence explains the difference in women having a savings account in Meghalaya (Mean=0.89, St. Dev=0.30) and Assam (Mean= 0.78, St.Dev =0.41). With Karbi men handling most of the household finances, Karbi women seem to not find it important to have a saving's account. Referring to Table 3, 58% of Karbi women agree on the fact that men should be the head of the household. However it's important for an individual to have a savings account, it not only instils the sense of having a savings but it also gives one a self-identity and the confidence to make decisions. This stresses the importance of the government to come up with provisions that would inspire women to have their own savings account.

3.4 Cultural Traditions, Perceptions and Empowerment

From the NFHS results, it can be clearly deduced that the major societal issues faced in Meghalaya are domestic violence, early marriage and family planning. From the empirical analysis results, it could be understood that the statistics of cultural perceptions of women on various factors could explain the t-test analysis of the empowerment factors, which goes on to show that cultural perceptions do tend to have an impact on empowerment.

The difference in cultural traditions between a patrilineal society and a matrilineal society shows the difference in perceptions of women in the respective societies. Likewise, it can be deduced that the cultural traditions of women in Meghalaya, which is a matrilineal society, is the reason behind the empowerment levels of Khasi women. It is hence recommended that the government re-evaluate the Sixth Schedule and its implications on empowerment levels of women. It also needs to work along with the church for better implementation of family planning programmes, in order to lower the TFR of the state. Additionally, the tradition of exclusion of Khasi women from local governance institutions could be the reason behind them not having a voice against domestic violence. This stresses the importance of women representation in local governance institutions.

CHAPTER 4

IMPACT OF LAND OWNERSHIP ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Land is a major indicator of an individual's social status (Ghosh and Chowdhury, 2009). Like a landlord or a capitalist, the patriarch typically owned and controlled the means of production, and could impose economic sanctions on his agents, or workers. He had a legal claim on the labor and income of his wife and children and was required by law to provide them, in return, with a subsistence income (Braunstein and Folbre, 2001: p.31). Consequently, women tend to become economically dependent on their male counterparts, leading to a reduction in the empowerment quotient (Giovarelli and Wamalwa, 2011). Entitling women with land could, on the one hand, empower them economically, and on the other hand strengthen their ability to challenge social and political gender inequalities, both within and outside the home (Agarwal, 2000). Empowerment is a process, that expands women's agency or, more simply put, it is an increase in women's ability to make choices about their lives and environment (Malhotra & Schuler, 2005). Based on this understanding of empowerment, land ownership should act as a source of empowerment by increasing women's security and influence and increasing their control over household decisions (Agarwal, 1997; Haddad, Hoddinott & Alderman, 1997).

Women in Gujarat who participated in a loan program which insisted on joint legal titles for the husband and wife on land said that they gained security from the joint title, in that the family would not expel them from the household, nor sell the land without their permission (Unni, 1999). Similarly, in Rajasthan, it was found that widows who owned land were given greater respect and consideration than widows who did not (Agarwal, 1994).

In India, the basic units of society are patrilineal in nature, with very few exceptions. Meghalaya and Kerala are two states in India where matriliney is known to be practised. While various studies concerning women's issues in patrilineal societies can be found (Kurian, 2004; Kulwika, 2002) or Kerala (Mitra and Singh, 2007; Chacko, 2003; Jeffrey, 2005) with very little research being done on the matrilineal society in Meghalaya, the following research area was chosen.

4.1 Understanding Khasi Traditions

According to Khasi laws and traditions, the woman and her youngest daughter inherit property, and not the man. Women are free to choose their husbands and there are no societal pressures for

marriage as opposed to society in a patrilineal framework. Women also have the right to end the marriage without any objection from their husbands.

After marriage, the eldest daughter moves out of her mother's house along with her husband to set up an independent residence. In such a situation, the '*Shnong*' or the village administration provides the young couple with land for which there will be no ownership rights. Such a system of acquiring land is known as '*Ri Raid*', while land acquired through lineage by the youngest daughter in the family is known as '*Ri Kynti*'. However, land received by the *Shnong* is limited to the receiver's usage alone.

This land received by the *Shnong* is then passed on from generation to generation following the true Khasi matrilineal tradition. In the case of demise of the couple, the land will be returned to the *Shnong*, under the circumstances of the absence of an heir. In case of marriage to the youngest daughter, it is the man who moves in with his wife's family. With the youngest daughter being the sole heir to the inheritance, the elder daughters find it difficult to access bank loans as they have no valid legal documents to provide as collateral. In fact, even in the case of the youngest daughter, their husband or even brothers/uncles decide the use of the property like the agricultural land (Mukhim, 2008). Hence it can be deduced that out of tradition, the ownership of land is restricted to women, however, with time, decision making on the usage of land remains in the hands of their male counterparts or other male members in the family.

While many families religiously follow the tradition of the youngest daughter inheriting ancestral property, with modernization, several families have also begun to desire to exercise the option of distributing land among children equally. However, this practice is still rare.

An explanation of understanding social empowerment and micro-credit savings is explained in the next section. Followed by the methodology used to analyze the data collected from the two in the next section. The details and overview of the conducted in the two districts are presented in section 4.4. Section 4.5 concludes the whole chapter by addressing the cultural impact on empowerment.

4.2. Social Empowerment and Micro-credit savings

Jejeenhoy's (1997) study, explores the effects of a range of variables on women's autonomy. Measures of women's autonomy included their role in decision-making; mobility; the incidence of

domestic violence; access to, and control over, economic resources. For this research, the respondent's participation in a socio-economic group and her having a saving's account were chosen to check if she has decision making powers in the household and if she is empowered.

Unless and until women are empowered to fully participate in national programmes and projects by gaining access to and control of both material and information resources, they will not be able to challenge patriarchal ideology and transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and social inequality. When it comes to empowerment it has to be in all dimensions- political, social and economic.

Social empowerment also includes the extent of freedom a woman has to participate in various social affairs, such as attending functions or meetings on community development-related matters even outside their own village (BholaNath, 2009). A socio-economic group can empower a woman economically, socially, physically, and mentally. Such a group is a small homogenous affinity group of the rural poor who have volunteered to organize themselves into a group for the eradication of poverty for their members (Dr Dash, 2013). The formation of Self-help groups (SHG) has resulted in attitudinal and visible changes among women and increased their ability to deal with their problems. SHGs serve as decentralised channels for reaching benefits to poor women who have so far been beneficiaries rather than participants in developmental programmes. Through these programmes, women can learn from each other through exposure, visit similar programmes implemented at neighbouring villages, group discussions and case examples.

Women's lack of access to credit, training, shelter and services, and to education and decision-making positions are obstacles that prevent them from improving their living conditions. Women's participation in microcredit programs helps to increase women's empowerment. Empowerment through socio-economic groups has also proven to help women to mobilise their own savings and help groups to build 'money' power. It is seen that there is a positive impact of women having a micro-savings account on both household decision-making power and self-perception of savings behaviour (Ashraf and Yin, 2009). To examine the empowerment status of women of the two districts, the following variables were regressed through probit analysis.

4.3 Methodology

In September 2016, a questionnaire survey was conducted for 28 days in Meghalaya. The research was conducted in two districts, East Khasi Hills and West Khasi Hills.

Mawtawar (Village A) and Nongthliew (Village B) were the two research sites chosen because a majority of the residents were engaged in agricultural activities, similar to other typical rural communities. Mawtawar is a village situated in the district of East Khasi Hills, 15 km from the city centre, with a population of around 980 households, while Nongthliew is a village situated in the district of West Khasi Hills, 38kms from the city centre with a population of around 172 households. The distance between the two villages is around 58kms.

Fifty female respondents were chosen at random from each village. The data of four respondents had to be eliminated, as they were unmarried and in addition, 18 respondents had to be dropped as they were either widowed or separated, as it is difficult to check empowerment status unless they have a husband. The respondents had to be females engaged in agricultural activities. Each questionnaire was filled on a one-to-one basis. The respondents were made to answer a questionnaire on the socio-economic characteristics of their household, such as information on family members, income, head of the family, and decision-making skills. The respondents were also questioned based on whether they had a savings account with a microfinance institution and if whether it was a joint account with their spouse or not. The questionnaire also covered their participation in a socio-economic group.

A probit estimation is applied to the following equation:

$$\text{Socio-economic group} = \beta_{10} + \beta_{11}\text{Household Characteristics} + \beta_{12}\text{Empowerment Factors} + u_1.$$

(1)

Similarly, a probit estimation is applied to the following equation as well:

$$\text{Savings Account} = \beta_{20} + \beta_{21}\text{Household Characteristics} + \beta_{22}\text{Empowerment Factors} + u_2. \quad (2)$$

4.3.1. Determinants of Empowerment Status

Table 8 displays an overview of the characteristics of a Khasi household.

From the above travel, the following deductions can be made; most of the Khasi women agreed with the fact that the girls in their community were more educated in comparison to the opposite gender. One of the major reasons being that the boys were required to help the family in the fields. In rural areas, children spending time in schools is considered to be time lost in the economic sustainability of the family. According to statistics presented by NFHS (2009) of India, for 1081 girls around 1000 boys attended school between the age groups of 6-17. A government school at

Nongthliew provides free education till class 5 for both genders. Along with this, the school also provides mid-day meals to the students. The staff including the teachers were women.

It was also observed that 13.3% of the women in Village A and 43.1% of the women in Village B, were a part of a socio-economic group. 65% of the women in Village A had a savings account, while it was observed that every respondent in Village B had a savings account. It was also seen that all the respondents of Village B inherited land through lineage (*Ri kynti*), while 65% of the respondents from Village A inherited land through lineage. Most of the women who participated in socio-economic activities were from West Khasi Hills as well as the majority of the women who owned land through *Ri kynti* were also found to be from the same district.

Table 8: Characteristics of Sample Household

Characteristics	Unit	A	B	Total
Age	Years	40.76	41.36	42.91
Spousal Age	Years	45.30	43.19	44.29
Education	Years	6.74	8.19	7.44
Spousal Education	Years	6.79	5.36	6.10
Second Marriage	Years	11.62	5.71	9.2
Spousal second marriage	Years	16.27	14.28	15.38
Age at marriage of woman	Years	19.88	21.21	20.59
Percentage of Girls	%	47.74	46.65	47.20
Land (<i>Ri kynti</i>)	%	81.39	100	90.69
Socio-economic group	%	13.3	43.1	28.2
Savings Account	%	65	100	82.5
Sample Size		43	35	78

Source: Own Survey, 2016

4.4 Results and Discussions

The household characteristics, as well as empowerment and economic factors used in the probit models, are summarized in Table 9.

Table 10 shows the results of our estimation. It shows the relationships of female respondent's participation in socio-economic activities and having a savings account with the other possible functions.

The positive effect of *Ri kynti* on socio-economic group means that women who inherit land through the lineage and own it are more likely to join a socio-economic group. An explanation to this could be that such women felt an entitlement to earn for the household and to take care of her parents who will pass on the land to her. Participating in such social economic activities does give much power to a woman in society.

Table 9. Descriptive Status of the Explanatory Variables

Variables	Unit	Description	Mean	St.Dev
Dependent variables				
Socio-economic group	Dummy	Take 1, if she is a part of Socio-economic activity	0.28	0.45
Savings Account	Dummy	Take 1, if the female respondent has a Savings Account	0.84	0.36
Household Characteristics				
Age	Years	Age of the female respondent	41.05	11.52
Spousal Age	Years	Age of the male respondent	44.29	12.59
Educational Qualification	Years	Years of schooling of female respondent	7.44	4.4
Spousal Educational Qualification	Years	Years of schooling of husband	6.10	2.85
Second Marriage	Dummy	Take 1, if female respondent married again	0.08	0.27
Spousal Second Marriage	Dummy	Take 1, if male respondent married again	0.17	0.38
Age at Marriage of Woman	Years	Age at marriage of female respondent	20.23	3.15
Percentage of Girls	%	Percentage of Girls in the Household	47.37	17.22
Empowerment Factors				
Land Ri Kynti	Dummy	Take 1, if the female respondent owns land	0.56	0.49

Note 1) Sample Size:78
Source: Own Survey, 2016

It was also seen that there was a positive effect of *Ri kynti* on a savings account. Land is the only major asset of rural women that they can use as collateral security in acquiring bank loans (Toro, 2016). Along with this, being a part of a socio-economic group has a positive impact on mobilizing women into having a sense of savings. This explains the positive relation of land received by the woman through inheritance (*Ri kynti*) and her having a savings account.

Other than this, two other significant factors shown in the result were that of the negative impact of husband's educational qualification on both socio-economic group and savings account. This means that higher the educational qualification of the husband, the less likely for the woman to join a socio-economic group and have a savings account. From this, we can deduce, that women tend to have less freedom and choices if the educational level of their husband is higher than theirs.

Along with this, the negative impact of a women's age on saving's account, means that older women tend to not have a saving's account giving the impression that they may not be acquainted well with owning one or that they find the procedure of opening an account with a microfinance institution complicated.

Table 10. Probit Analysis

Variables	Socio-economic Group		Savings Account	
	β	P> z	β	P> z
Age	0.03	0.54	-0.09	0.09*
Spousal Age	-0.03	0.51	0.04	0.46
Educational Qualification	0.01	0.66	0.00	0.90
Spousal Educational Qualification	-0.10	0.09*	-0.12	0.09*
Second Marriage	-0.79	0.30	-0.83	0.14
Spousal Second Marriage	0.26	0.65	-0.53	0.41
Age at marriage of woman	-0.04	0.38	0.00	0.89
Percentage of Girls	0.18	0.11	0.19	0.17
Ri kynti	0.90	0.02**	0.79	0.01**
Pseudo R2	0.15		0.24	
Correctly Classified	76%		85.3%	

Note: 1) ***, **, * indicates significances 1%, 5% and 10% levels respectively

2) Sample survey =78, Own Survey,2016

Source: Author's Estimation

Other than these factors, from the results it can also be seen that a spousal's age, second marriage of the wife, second marriage of the husband, age at marriage of the wife, educational qualification of the wife, educational qualification of the husband and the percentage of girls in the family had no significance.

4.1 Addressing the cultural impact

In summary, to check if there is a cultural impact on empowerment in the context of a matrilineal society, the focus was put on the impact of land ownership on women empowerment and if whether it gives the decision making power in the household. We can conclude from our findings that the women who owned land through *Ri kynti* were more empowered.

However, in a Khasi society, women's customary rights over land continue to mainly be limited to that of a custodian, which still gives them a certain amount of bargaining power. From the survey conducted, it could be understood that women who received land through lineage were a part of a socio-economic group and as well as had economic security by owning a savings account. We can hence then consider that women who receive land through 'Ri kynti' to be considered more economically empowered in comparison to the ones who received land through 'Ri raid'. However, the fact that even if a woman earns or if the land is in her name does not translate into her being the head of the family still remains. This could be due to the actual decision making on the land being in the hands of the brother or husband or uncle. This results in most women considering their husband to be the head of the family.

CHAPTER 5

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT & CONTRACEPTION USE

The global importance of reproductive and sexual empowerment stems partly from a recognition across cultures that intimate human relationships frequently occur in contexts of vastly unequal extents of power (Amaro, 1995; Blanc, 2001; Dixon-Mueller, 1993; Pearson, 2006; Pulerwitz, Gortmaker, & Dejong, 2000). These relationships are relevant to family planning, which is used to control population size, improve aspects of women's health and reduce poverty. Family planning also plays a major part in determining the extent of gender equality and women's empowerment

In many developing countries, the uses of various family planning methods have increased from less than 10 per cent in the 1960s to about 60 per cent today; however, despite their interest in it, many women lack access to knowledge on family planning (Sinding, 2007). About 214 million women want to prevent pregnancies, but they are not using effective contraceptive methods (Cauterucci, 2017).

5.1 Family Planning in the Indian Context

In India, despite a 40-year old family planning programme, the national census enumerated a population increase of about 160 million people between 1981 and 1991 (Basu, Kapoor, and Basu, 2017). Contraceptive use among sexually active single women in India has increased from about 2 per cent to about 12 per cent during the past 10 years. The National Family Health Survey 2015–2016 conducted by the Ministry of Health found that condom use was most prevalent among unmarried women aged 20 to 24 years old.

Considering its matrilineal cultural context, it is curiously interesting that Meghalaya has the lowest recorded rate of contraceptive prevalence (about 24 per cent) in India and the third highest total fertility rate (TFR) in the country. The average number of children born to an Indian woman is about 2.2, whereas the average of the number of children born to a woman in Meghalaya is about 3.0 (NFHS-4, 2017). The National Family Health Survey-4, 2015–2016 (NFHS-4, 2017) fact sheet on Meghalaya reported that about 3.4 per cent of urban women aged 15–19 years were mothers or pregnant, whereas, in the state's rural areas, the percentage was 10.5. Because rural women are more likely than urban women to engage in manual labour (farming) activities (FAO, 2011), and the birth rate among women aged 19 or younger is relatively high (NFHS-4, 2017), it is unlikely

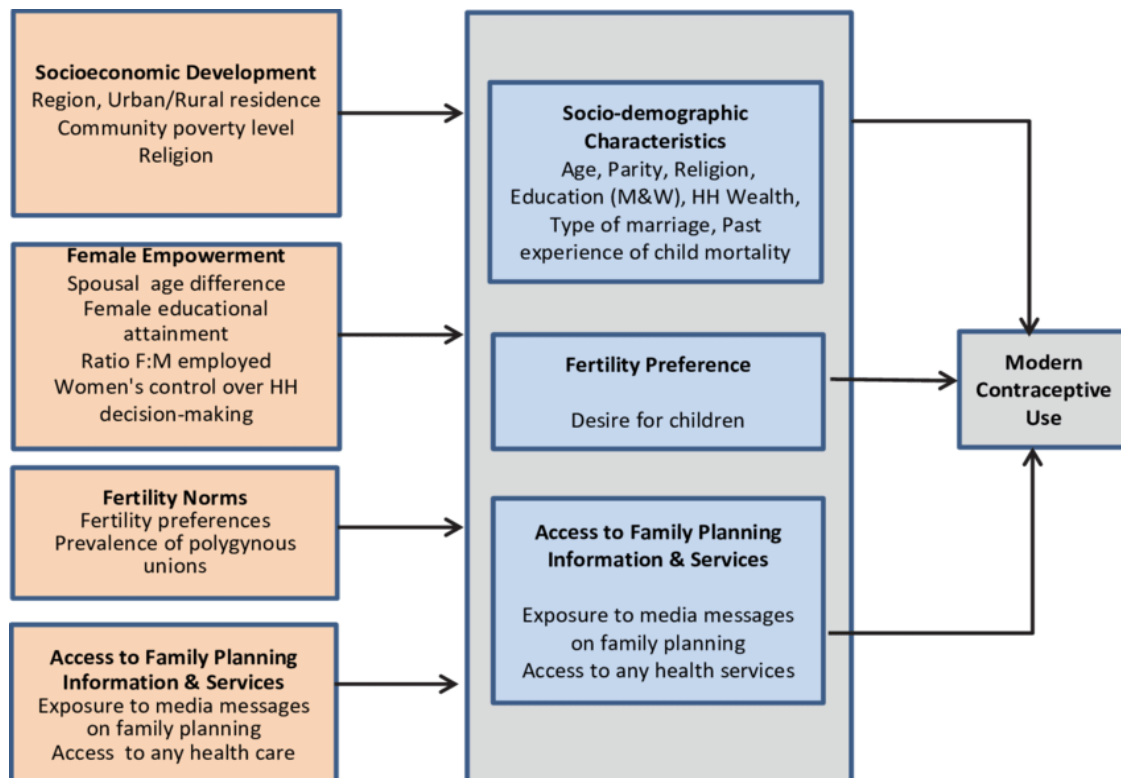
that the extent of sexual empowerment among women in Meghalaya, a predominately farming region, is high.

A conceptual framework of factors that indirectly impact fertility is chalked out in the next section. Literature review on the subject has been touched upon in section 5.3. Understanding marriage and family culture in the Khasi society is important to any interpretation of this study’s findings; therefore section 5.4 and 5.5 provides that context. A description of the survey conducted in two districts and the methods used to analyse the data are presented next, followed by the presentation and discussion of the empirical results and conclusions.

5.2 Conceptual Framework

A women’s status is also said to be linked to that of contraception use and fertility (Dyson and Moore, 1983; Fort, 1989; Jejeebhoy, 1991). Among the indicators of female status are level of education (Chatterjee, 1991; Sathar and Kazi, 1990), employment (Dharmalingam and Morgan, 1996; Sathar and Kazi, 1990; Shapiro and Tambashe, 1994), mobility, and involvement in political activity (Vlassoff, 1992; Mason, 1983; Balk, 1994; Murthi et al., 1995). Greater autonomy for women is shown to lead to greater contraceptive use (Morgan and Niraula, 1995).

Figure 3: Conceptual framework of factors affecting modern contraception use



Source: Ejembi, C.L., Dahiru, T., & Aliyu, A.A. (2015)

Figure 3, displays the conceptual framework of factors that indirectly influence fertility acting on the proximate or intermediate (individual and household) determinants at different levels to influence a women's use of contraception. All the contextual factors either function independently or through their influences on the individual factors selected to influence the use of modern contraceptives.

Factors are known to affect contraceptive use extend from the attributes of the individual through resources of the household and community in which the individual lives to socio-cultural norms and institutions that affect autonomy, behaviour and lifestyle and access to health care services (Chacko, 2001).

Education is another factor that impacts contraception use. Female education, in particular, is known to affect a host of socio-economic and demographic variables such as age at marriage, employment status and fertility (Cochrane and Bean, 1983; Martin, 1995) and is positively related to the use of contraceptives (Islam, 1991).

5.3 Literature Review

Reproduction, whether at high or low levels, is so important to the family and the society everywhere that its level is more or less controlled by the cultural and religious norms about family size and related behaviours such as age at marriage, the timing of first intercourse, use of contraception and abortion. As described by Freedman (1963), in each society the norms about these vital matters are consistent with social institutions in which they are deeply embedded. In view of the special importance attached to kinship ties in the ethnic groups under consideration, it is argued that differentials in fertility levels can largely be attributed to the differentials in normative values set by local and religious institutions (Uday Sankar Saikia, Ross Steele & Gour Dasvarma, 2001). In addition to these several authors (Dyson and Moore, 1983; Basu, 1922) have carried out research for the factors responsible for regional variations in fertility in India.

Some previous studies have investigated women's empowerment and contraceptive use among the Khasi. For example, Dabral and Malik (2004) found that attitudes towards fertility regulation, knowledge of birth control methods, access to means of fertility regulation and communication between husband and wife about desired family size are essential to effective family planning. Nazary and Sharma (2013) found that even after the desired sex distribution of their children was achieved, as much as 61.8 per cent of the women in their sample were not using any contraception

and about one-quarter was using temporary methods, which they mainly attributed to programme factors. The remaining 13.2 per cent used a terminal method of contraception.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the reasons why Khasi women and their husbands do not use contraception and participate in family planning programmes. It will also look into the possible influence of religion on family planning methods. The study investigated the extent of knowledge of contraception among men as well as women, by urbanization level, and it examined the influences of a composite measure of women's empowerment on contraceptive use and participation in family planning programmes. Hence this study also wishes to question the impact of culture and religion on contraception use.

5.4 Family Planning amongst the Khasis

According to Roumi Deb (2010), 52.7% of ever-married women were adopting any of the family planning methods in East Khasi Hills district, whereas, according to Reproductive and Child Health, District Level Household Survey (2002-2004) in the East Khasi Hill district the combined male and female users were much lesser (14.9%). The use of family planning method among currently married women in Meghalaya was only 20.2%, was found to be lowest among all north-eastern states (NFHS-2), and RCH-DLHS(2002-2004) shows a similar trend in Meghalaya where 17.1 percent women were using any method of family planning, which was much lesser as compared to the other states of north-east India 957.5% in Assam, 33.5% in Manipur, 53.8% in Mizoram, 39.6% in Nagaland and 65.3% in Sikkim).

While in India the median age at first marriage is 19 years for women and 22 years for men, according to the survey conducted the median ages at marriage for the Khasis were 21 years for women and 25 years for men. In that context, the demand for children is high among the Khasi. As pointed out above, the TFR is high compared to the country overall. Between 1996 and 2000, the TFR was estimated between 6.0 and 7.0 children per woman (Leonetti, 2002). Since 2000, it has decreased to about 3.7 (Niti Aayog, 2018); however, it remains high compared to India's 3.1 (CIA World Factbook, 2015).

5.5 Khasi Religion and Contraception use

Traditional religions, as well as Christianity, have very different specific notions and attitudes towards the usage of contraceptives. Traditional doctrines emphasize on large family sizes as a symbol of fertility and blessings from God. Therefore, they do not condone or support contraception (Maleche, 1990). Christians, particularly protestants, condone the use of contraceptives, however, Catholics forbid its use on the bases of the biblical teaching that God instructed man to “multiply and fill the earth” (Genesis I V 29). Until the twentieth century, the church doctrine on contraception, including abortion, was consistently negative, although there were some variations across sects. The only acceptable ways to lower fertility was sexual abstinence and breastfeeding (Gudorf, 2003). Christian acceptance of traditional methods of contraception is a new change.

A study on the Nandi community found that religious affiliation influenced contraception use (Rono 1994). Protestantism religion had a positive, but moderate, effect on contraceptive use among men. This is due to the fact that the Protestant doctrine permits the use of contraceptives to avoid unwanted pregnancies.

The Khasi believe that its religion was given to them by God, and hence they try to preserve it as the core of their culture. However, under the influence of Christian missionaries, about 85 per cent of Khasis turned to Christianity, which is mostly dominated in Meghalaya by Protestant Presbyterian and Roman Catholicism. Religion has had been a major influence on marital and childbearing behaviours among the Khasi.

5.6 Contraception prices and usage in India

Table 11 shows the minimum and maximum prices of contraception in India for an individual quoted in the years 2015–2018.

Table 11. Prices of types of contraception in India for an individual (INR)

Type of contraception	Number of items per package	Minimum (INR)	Maximum (INR)
Birth control pill ^a	10	20.80	200
Condom ^b	10	60	230
Emergency contraception ^c	1	49	80
Intrauterine device ^d	-	300	500
Vasectomy ^e	-	18,000	30,000
Tubectomy ^f	-	20,000	40,000

Source:

^a[1]Dhivya (2018)

^b2 Condom Prices in India (2018)

^c3Top 8 Emergency Contraceptive Pills in India:- Top Brands and Effectiveness (2018)

^d4Sachan, .D. (2015). Contraceptive Chaos

^e5Dr.Patil (2015). Male Vasectomy in Bangalore & Cost

^f6Dr. Patil (2015). Laparoscopic tubectomy in Bangalore & Cost

There are six popular types of contraception in India which has been sponsored by the Indian government since 1965. Contraceptive pills and condoms are distributed free of charge in rural areas by the National Rural Health Mission through family planning programmes.

Table 12. Uses of contraceptive methods among married Khasi women

Type of contraception	Urban (%)	Rural (%)
Pill	7.8	12.5
Condom	3.1	0.9
Intrauterine device/post-partum intrauterine device	3.7	1.8
Vasectomy	0.0	0.0
Tubectomy	12.4	4.8
Subtotal	27.0	20.0
None	73.0	80.0
Total	100%	100%

Source: National Family Health Survey 4, 2015–2016

Note: i) n=9201

ii) Age of respondents: 15-49 years

Most Indian couples believe that the responsibility for permanent contraception lies on women alone (Srivastava, 2018). This finding seems to resonate with men in Meghalaya, where tubectomy, which is considered painful and relatively expensive, is popular. One reason for its popularity might be Khasi marriage norms. In a society where second marriages and divorces are rampant, vasectomy eliminates the possibility of the man to have children with his new wife. Additionally, when a man is divorced, he loses his wife's property, and he either remarries or lives with his parents. The responsibility for his children rests with the mother, and the lack of paternal responsibility for children might decrease men's sense of the importance of contraception (Marsiglio, 1991). Table 2 shows the distribution of reported uses contraceptive methods among Khasi women in urban and rural areas.

5.7 Methodology

5.7.1 Study site

Four villages from the East Khasi Hills district and two villages from the West Khasi Hills district were chosen as the research site, where 300 female respondents were interviewed at random. The distances of each village from the city centre and their numbers of households are shown in Table 13. The extent of remoteness has been closely related to the modernization of a village, which might influence women's perspectives and behaviours. According to the National Family Health Survey 2015-2016 (NFHS-4, 2017), about 59.4 per cent of urban women received obtained 10 or more years of schooling education compared to 25.8 per cent of rural women. The villages in the West Khasi Hills (E and F) are far from the city and considered undeveloped, which might explain the

women's conservative perspectives on the traditional norm of excluding women. The National Family Health Survey-4, 2015–2016 (NFHS-4 2017) found that the average number of children born to a woman in Meghalaya is 3.0. However, this study's data found that the number of children born in 2017 to a woman living in East Khasi Hills was 3.5 and parity in West Khasi Hills was 4.

Table 13. Distribution of sample by village at the two study sites

Village	Distance from city centre (in kilometres)	Number of households	Number of respondents
East Khasi Hills			
Village A	10	138	70
Village B	15	980	50
Village C	4	148	30
Village D	54	2,252	50
West Khasi Hills			
Village E	61	84	50
Village F	38	172	50

Source: Author, 2017

Note: n= 300

5.7.2 Data collection

A questionnaire survey was fielded for 25 days in Meghalaya in November of 2017. The data were collected in two districts, East Khasi Hills and West Khasi Hills. Altogether, 300 respondents were interviewed. The criteria for inclusion were: (1) female, (2) married, and (3) engaged in agricultural production. The survey was conducted through face-to-face interview questionnaires. The respondents provided data on the socioeconomic characteristics of their households regarding, e.g., family members, income, head of household, decision-making and contraceptives. 100% All of the respondents were Presbyterian Christians.

5.7.3 Variables

This study used four indirect indicators of women's empowerment to construct a composite variable of empowerment using principal component factor analysis (Table 14).

Table 14. Measures of empowerment used in the principal component analysis^a

Measure	Definition
Savings account	Holding a bank account and access to insurance services facilitates savings and provides security for future challenging events.
Employment	An independent income through employment improves investment decisions and provides a sense of security.
Part of a self-help group (SHG)	Women in SHGs have advantages and SHGs promotes the sense of having a savings.
Landownership	Land is an important indicator of social status through which women tend to be economically independent.

^a All variables were measured as dichotomous indicators and statistically analysed as dummy variables where 1 = *yes* and 0 = *no*.

To understand Khasi women’s knowledge about contraception, it was important to consider differences and similarities by gender, the influences of the extent of women’s empowerment on contraceptive use and participation in family planning programmes. One way to measure women’s empowerment is indirectly through their incomes, educational attainment, organizational participation and exposure to family-related programmes.

5.7.4 Empirical Analysis and Results

The variables measuring contraceptive use, residence, demographic characteristics and empowerment are summarized in Table 15.

Table 15. Measurement of the variables in the analysis

Variables	Unit	Description	Mean	St.Dev
Dependent Variables				
Women using contraceptives	Dummy	Take 1, if respondent uses contraceptives	0.12	0.59
Husband using contraceptives	Dummy	Take 1, if husband uses contraceptives	0.11	0.58
Family planning programmes attended	Dummy	Take 1, if respondent attends family planning programmes	0.21	0.40
Location				
East Khasi Hills	Dummy	Take 1, if respondent is from East Khasi Hills	0.66	0.47
Household Characteristics				
Age	Years	Age of the female respondents	37.17	11.26
Difference in Ages	Years	Difference of age between wife and husband	3.22	5.93
Wife Education (5-8)	Dummy	Education between 5 to 8 years by female respondent	0.24	0.43
Wife Education (9<)	Dummy	Education beyond 9 years by female respondent	0.41	0.49
Husband Education (5-8)	Dummy	Education between 5 to 8 years by male respondent	0.21	0.40
Husband Education (9<)	Dummy	Education beyond 9 years by male respondent	0.32	0.46
First Marriage	Years	Age at marriage of the female respondent	21.34	4.38
Age at First Born Child	Years	Age at birth of first child	22.14	5.53
Husband employed	Dummy	Take 1, if male respondent is employed	0.97	0.17
Empowerment Factors				
	Measure	Empowerment Measure	0.33	0.16

Source: Author, 2017. Note: n=300

Table 16. Results of logit regression analysis

Variable	(Model 1) Women uses contraception		(Model 2) Husband uses contraception		(Model 3) Family planning programme	
	z	P> z	z	P> z	z	P> t
Residence						
East Khasi Hills	0.93*	0.,06	0.86*	0.08	-0.01	0.96
Respondent age	-0.04*	0.07	-0.03	0.16	-0.03**	0.03
Difference in ages	-0.04	0.21	-0.03	0.37	-0.03	0.19
Woman's educational attainment (ref: < 5 years)						
5–8 years	.31	0.11	1.07	0.13	-0.28	0.52
> 8 years	1.9**	0.02	1.05	0.14	0.66	0.11
Husband's educational attainment (ref: < 5 years)						
5–8 years	0.56	0.34	1.04	0.09*	-0.16	0.87
> 8 years	0.92*	0.09	1.55***	0.00	-0.91	0.36
Church Regularity	0.10	0.87	0.49	0.45	0.95	0.03**
Age at first marriage	-0.35	0.01	-0.32**	0.02	-0.03	0.48
Age at first birth	0.25**	0.04	0.20	0.88	-0.02	0.48
Husband employed	0.06	0.96	-0.19	0.88	-0.98	0.27
Empowerment	2.14*	0.09	0.71	0.58	1.22*	0.08
Pseudo R2	0.18		0.15		0.07	
Correctly classified	90.37%		91.03%		78.41%	

Source: Author, 2017

Note: i) n= 300

ii) *= p < .10, ** = p < .05, *** = p < .01

To estimate the statistical relationships, a logit regression analysis was used according to Equation 1, Equation 2 and Equation 3, as shown.

$$Y_1 = \beta_{10} + \beta_{11} \text{ Location} + \beta_{12} \text{ Household Characteristics} + \beta_{13} \text{ Empowerment Measure} + v_1 \quad (\text{Eq. 1}),$$

$$Y_2 = \beta_{20} + \beta_{21} \text{ Location} + \beta_{22} \text{ Household Characteristics} + \beta_{23} \text{ Empowerment Measure} + v_2 \quad (\text{Eq. 2}),$$

$$Y_3 = \beta_{30} + \beta_{31} \text{ Location} + \beta_{32} \text{ Household Characteristics} + \beta_{33} \text{ Empowerment Measure} + v_3 \quad (\text{Eq. 3}),$$

where:

Y_1 = Women that use contraceptives

Y_2 = Men that use contraceptives

Y_3 = Attended a family planning programme

Table 16 presents the results of the logit regression analyses. The dependent variable in Model 1 is the indicator of contraceptive use among women; in Model 2, it is the indicator of contraceptive use among husbands; and, Model 3 regressed the dependent variable of participation in a family planning programme. The influences of residence, educational attainment and husband's employment, along with the four age variables and the composite empowerment score, were tested.

5.8 Discussions

The East Khasi Hills district is more urban than the West Khasi Hills district because it includes the city centre. Education is important to knowledge about contraception. In the West Khasi Hills, the maximum educational attainment available is nine years, after which education can be obtained in East Khasi Hills. In rural areas, school attendance is considered a time that should be spent on behalf of the household's financial support. Another factor is sex education is usually introduced in the ninth year, which helps to explain the positive influences of living in East Khasi Hills and educational attainment beyond the eighth year on women's and their husbands' contraceptive uses.

The negative influence of respondent's age and age at first marriage on women's and their husbands' uses of contraception might be related to a desire for more children as the end of the reproductive years draws near. The positive influence of age at first birth on contraceptive use is that post-partum intrauterine devices are inserted in mothers before they go home after giving birth in a government hospital. These devices prevent pregnancy and couples are usually advised at that time to avoid pregnancy during the new child's first year.

Compared to the educational attainment of five or fewer years, more than eight years of education increased the likelihood that the women were using contraceptives. Regarding empowerment, the higher a woman's empowerment score, the higher the likelihood that she was using contraceptives. Respondents who were in a self-help group were relatively more likely to attend or have attended a family planning programme, which is likely because information about these programmes is easily available from the leaders of these groups. However, the negative influence of age on attending

family planning programmes was unexpected, although it might relate to the fact that women in self-help groups are rarely young women.

A recent study found that women valued the parenting role more than men valued it and men deemed the work role more salient to their sense of identity after the birth of a child (Kazmierczak & Karasiewicz, 2018). This result is supported by the current study's finding of a negative influence of husband's employment on attending family planning programmes. After they become fathers, men tend to be the main sources of household income and, in rural areas, they usually are highly dependent on daily wages. Thus, rural fathers might be relatively more likely to lose a day's wages by attending a family planning programme. Further, because family planning programmes are organized for couples, wives might be hesitant to participate if her the husband is unwilling to do so.

With Presbyterianism being one of the sects of Protestant Christianity, it can be considered that traditional methods of contraception are being followed by the respondents. This explains the positive impact of church regularity on contraceptive usage. However, the significant positive impact of church regularity on attending family planning programmes can be explained by the church's function as being a viable channel for non-traditional social and civic inclusion and exposure to new ideas, practices and preferences.

5.9 Religion impacts Contraception use?

The analysis found that knowledge about contraception aided women's empowerment. Educational attainment and religion also impacted contraceptive use. Although, the influence of the husband's employment status on attending family planning programmes was interesting.

The TFR difference between East Khasi Hills and West Khasi Hills implies the effects of urbanization on family planning behaviours. The introduction of sex education in Class 9 has an influence; however, higher education might be unreasonably expensive, particularly for families in West Khasi Hills who would need to transport their children to school. This finding suggests that introducing higher education in the West Khasi Hills might influence contraceptive use among those residents.

All of the respondents were Presbyterian Christians, who, therefore, strongly believed that children are a gift from God. While the Presbyterian church accepts traditional methods of contraceptive usage, with 12% of the respondents being comfortable with using contraception, collaborating with

the church for the implementation of family planning programmes may be effective. The church is the best mode to spread information and education, it is hence recommended that village heads communicate with church leaders about family planning programmes as a way to control population growth.

The negative influence of a husband's employment status on attending family planning programmes suggests that men need incentives, such as financial compensation for lost wages, and encouragement to improve the likelihood of their attendance.

CHAPTER 6

ROLE OF NGO'S , GOVERNMENT AND VILLAGE LEADER

6.1 Child marriages, Domestic violence and Family Planning

From the comparisons made between Meghalaya and the other matrilineal state(Kerala) as well as patrilineal state (Assam), it can be deduced that child marriages, domestic violence and family planning seem to be the major societal issues.

Child marriages or early marriages have been a practice prevalent in India since time immemorial. Although its incidence has decreased over time due to changes in law and society, it continues to be an issue. Meghalaya has figured among the top 10 states with the highest percentage of child marriages among both boys and girls (NCPCR , 2017).

Domestic Violence in India is endemic. Around 70% of women in India are victims of domestic violence, according to a former Union minister for Women and Child Development. This occurs even though women in India are legally protected from domestic abuse under the Protection of women from Domestic Violence Act (Vision IAS, 2015). In Meghalaya, 11.7% of women reportedly experience physical violence, 1% experience sexual violence, and 5.6% experience emotional violence (NFHS, 2004).

Family planning plays a major role when it comes to gender equality and women's empowerment. From 1965 to 2009, contraceptive usage has more than tripled (from 13% of married women in 1970 to 48% in 2009) and the fertility rate has more than halved (from 5.7 in 1966 to 2.4 in 2012), but the national fertility rate is still high enough to cause long-term population growth (NFHS, 2009). In Meghalaya, the contraceptive-use of 20.2% was the lowest, and the total fertility rate of 4.57 was the highest in the country (NFHS, 2000).

During the past few decades, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have increased in number and have established themselves in pivotal positions in social, economic and political landscapes across the globe. According to Lester Salmon, NGOs may constitute the most significant economic and social development of the twentieth century, much as the nation-state was of the nineteenth century.

In Meghalaya, there are over 8500 NGOs of which only 5127 are registered and the rest are unregistered (Nongkynrih, 2008). It is essential for the NGO's to register themselves in case they wish to apply for government aid. In the Khasi society of Meghalaya, volunteering is a part of traditional values, spirit and norms.

With very little study being done on how the government and NGO work together towards the eradication of women issues, the objective of this study is to not only focus on the role of the government, the NGOs, and the village leader in educating women on the repercussions of early marriage, combating domestic violence, and the advantages of family planning but to also throw light into how they work together. It will also present the disconnect in the views of the village headman and the village on various women's issues.

This study is a compilation of data from the three governmental departments that deal with women's issues, four NGOs that work towards women's empowerment, 20 *Rangbah Shnongs* (village headmen), 12 *Seng Kynthei's* (presidents of the female unit), and 13 SHG (Self-help group) leaders. Subsequently, the T-test analysis was used to check the difference in views of the two genders in the above-mentioned women's issues. The study was conducted across 20 villages from two districts in Meghalaya – the East Khasi Hills and the West Khasi Hills.

An explanation of the Sixth Schedule, around which Meghalaya's administration stands, has been given in the next section. Sections 6.3 and 6.4 deals with the role of the government and the NGO, followed by section 6.5 that stresses on the disconnect between the understanding of the male village headman and the female leaders of the society on how they perceive domestic violence, early marriage, and family planning in their society. 6.6 goes on to stress on the difference between the views and 6.7 recommends the importance of women representation in the *Dorbar Shnong*.

6.2. Meghalaya and the Sixth Schedule

Meghalaya is a federal state in the Union of India. It is the only state in northeast India where the autonomous district councils have power over the entire population of the state. Meghalaya's ethnic composition is 85 percent tribal and 12 percent others. Nearly 81 percent of the population in the state lives in rural areas and more than 49 percent of the population, living in the East and West

Khasi Hills, is below poverty line, with the male-female density ratio per sq.km being 1000:975 (Nongkynrih, 2002).

There are two major ethnic tribes in Meghalaya – the Khasis and the Garos. Scheduled Tribes, the category used to describe these ethnic groups in the Indian Constitution, make up 87% of Meghalaya’s population of 2.3 million (S. Baruah, 2003). The non-tribal communities in the region are made up of migrants from other parts of India and neighbouring countries, particularly Bangladesh and Nepal, and include those who have migrated in recent years and those who have lived in the region for centuries.

Tribal areas in India are divided into Fifth Schedule and Sixth Schedule as per the Indian Constitution. While administrative autonomy has been given to the district councils as they follow the Sixth Schedule, people in the Fifth Schedule area are striving to implement PPESA⁵, a law that recognizes their customary practices, for the last 20 years (National Resource Knowledge Activist Hub, 2016)¹. As per the Sixth Schedule, the four states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram contain tribal areas. Though these areas fall within the executive authority of the state, the Sixth Schedule gives the district councils and regional councils the right to exercise certain legislative and judicial powers.

6.3. Role of the Government

There are primarily three departments in the Indian government structure that focus on women and societal issues:

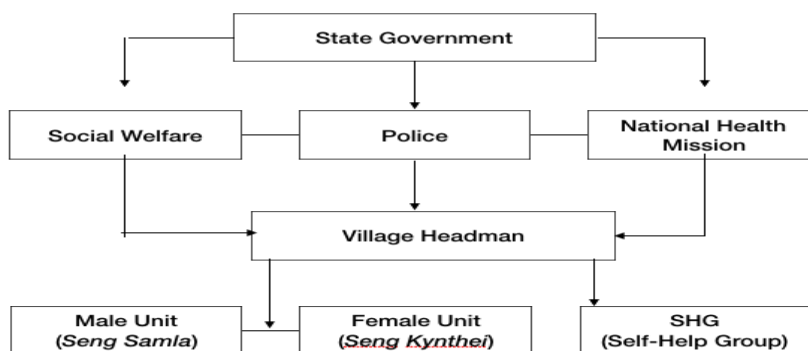
1. Meghalaya Social Welfare Department
2. The National Rural Health Mission
3. Women’s Special Cell

The Meghalaya Social Welfare Department’s main focus is on the holistic development of the Meghalaya society. It aims at the social and economic development of women, children, disabled and juvenile delinquents in the state. The department, as of now, is trying to focus on making the village headman understand that women’s issues relating to domestic violence should not be handled by the village but instead should be reported and handed over to experts.

⁵ PPESA - Provision of Panchayat Extension to Schedule Act, 1996.

The National Rural Health Mission Department’s main focus is to ensure effective healthcare through various interventions in society. The department works on various health issues including family planning and maternal and child care. Every month a lecture is conducted in all districts, on nutrition, where mothers and local leaders are invited to attend.

Figure 4: Flow of authority in a Khasi society



Source: Own Survey, 2017

The Women’s Special Cell is an initiative by the National Commission for Women and TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences). The department conducts community meetings, awareness programs in schools, gender sensitisation, and looks into cases involving intimate partner violence and domestic violence. They also take up cases involving cyber security and brief the police on how to work with child sexual abuse. In cases of domestic violence, first-level counselling is given along with reality orientations if the female wishes to continue the marriage and have a non-violent reconciliation. Its services were started on 14 June 2016, and in one year the department has intervened in over 48 cases of violence and registered 12 such cases. They coordinate with ChildLine, One Stop Centre, and the District Social Welfare.

It was interesting to note that the three departments often worked together on various interventions or programmes and also worked closely with registered NGOs on most of these programmes. For example, in certain cases, the Women’s Special Cell do coordinate with the social welfare as both the departments share similar goals. When it comes to NGO’s, the social welfare department of the government and North-east network have been able to work together in setting up the One Stop Centre, which is a support centre for women. Another observation made was that, for the government to hold any awareness programme at the village level, the permission of the village

headman was essential; followed by which the village headman would inform the president of the female unit, the male unit and the SHG. Figure 4 gives a better understanding of how the Khasi administration works.

Table 16: Forms of Reach

Methods	Social Welfare	NRHM	Women's Special Cell
TV	O	O	x
Radio	O	O	x
Website	x	x	x
Newspaper	O	O	x
Billboard	O	O	O
Pamphlets	O	O	O
Other	Audio-visual guides	x	Distribute contact numbers

Source: Own Survey, 2017

Amongst the barriers faced by different government departments, when it came to the implementation of various awareness programmes, the most difficult barrier was that of male participation; the reasons for which were many while some of them felt that these programmes were not fruitful, others were too shy to take part. This issue was seen mostly in awareness programmes involving domestic violence and family planning. According to the National Rural Health Mission, it was difficult to educate the men on vasectomy as an option for family planning.

Table 17: General Description of the State Government Departments

	Social Welfare	National Rural Health Mission (NRHM)	Women's Special Cell
Annual Budget (INR)	8,030,000	2,546,000	-
No. of Workers	35	60	2
Male	4	42	0
Female	31	18	2
Activities	Awareness, Workshops, Seminars, Rally, T.V & Radio shows, research and others	Maternal Care, Child Care, Family Planning, Training	Community meetings, Awareness programmes, Gender sensitization, Sexuality, Intimate partner violence
Goals	Women's Empowerment	Women's Empowerment	Women's Empowerment & Trafficking
Sector Focused	Family Planning, Early Marriage and Domestic Violence	Family Planning	Early Marriage and Domestic Violence
NGO meets	As per required	Monthly	As per required

Source: Own Survey, 2017

Table 16 shows the various methods used by the three respective departments while organizing an awareness programme. Table 17 gives a general description of the respective departments as well as

the methods used by the department to create awareness. Another difficult barrier was that of gaining people's trust in the village. Due to the disconnect between the government and the people, the departments would often find it difficult to hold awareness programmes. The village headman would disseminate information to the public regarding an awareness programme. Only on the village headman's notice would people be willing to attend. Hence, the village headman plays a pivotal role in the success of an awareness programme.

6.4. Role of NGOs

NGOs contribute immensely to various developmental programmes. They work at the grassroots level in remote areas and their reach is much wider (Sohtun, 2016). They are an important link between the people and the state. There are several organizations actively addressing gender issues in the Khasi Hills districts, however, they are relatively few in number compared to other parts of India. Amongst the approved NGOs, there are four that work closely with women's issues in Meghalaya. A general description of the four NGOs is given in Table 18.

NGO A is the first non-governmental organization in the North East to address gender issues with a liberal feminist perspective. It works on identifying rape cases, training individuals in dealing with such cases, governance and state accountability, sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as giving recommendations to the government to improve policies involving women's security. The department collaborates with the police, health, social welfare, and the Meghalaya State Legal Services Authority in handling cases. One major barrier that they face with the government is building a relationship whenever a new director comes into office, for support in various cases. This organization acknowledges the fact that cooperation with the government is of utmost importance and it has led to a number of successful cases.

NGO B focuses on educating women in rural areas on family planning and dealing with domestic violence cases. The organization works very closely with the National Rural Health Mission and the police department. They worked closely with women alone when it came to workshops and awareness programmes.

'A world without human trafficking and exploitation' is the vision of NGO C. This organisation follows the 'impulse model', which is an internationally acknowledged, holistic method to address human trafficking. They spread across the seven states of north-east India and to countries that India

shares borders with, such as Nepal, Myanmar, and Bangladesh. However, the core team operates from Meghalaya. The NGO follows the six R's for the management system of victims- Reporting, Rescue, Rehabilitation, Repatriation, Re-integration, and Recompensation. They work closely with social welfare, health, and Meghalaya State Legal Services Authority.

Table 18: General Description of the Four NGOs

	A	B	C	D
Headquarters	Guwahati	Meghalaya	Shillong	Shillong
Founded	1995	2007	1992	2000
Registered	1995	-	1995	2002
No. of Branches in Meghalaya	1	1	1	1
No. of Branches Nationally	3	1	2	1
Yearly Budget (INR)	3,14,24,507	2,12,030	-	-
Funding & Donors	FCRA & Non-FCRA	FCRA	FCRA	Government
Goal of Organisation	Women's Empowerment	Women's Empowerment	Women's Empowerment & Human Trafficking	Women's Empowerment
Sector Focused	Family Planning & Domestic Violence	Family Planning & Domestic Violence	Domestic Violence & Human Trafficking	Family Planning, Domestic Violence & Human Trafficking
Government Department Collaboration	Women's Special Cell & NRHM	Women's Special Cell, NRHM, Social Welfare and Meghalaya State Legal Services Authority	Women's Special Cell, NRHM, Social Welfare and Meghalaya State Legal Services Authority	Social Welfare
NGO Collaboration	B	A	D	C

Source: Own Survey, 2017

NGO D is devoted to the empowerment of women and the welfare of society. The organisation conducts various training programmes for female school drop-outs, single mothers, domestic workers, and women in difficult circumstances. The training involves various activities like tailoring, handicraft, candle-making, embroidery, knitting, weaving, flower-making, basket-making, and card-making. It has carried out various developmental activities especially in the formation of various SHGs. It has also helped train several SHGs in rural areas in various activities which has led to income generation and creation of micro enterprises such as livestock rearing, kitchen garden, vermicompost units, grocery shops, agriculture, fishery etc (WISE Annual Report, 2011).

These NGOs understand the importance of such amenities and work at the grassroots level of society for women to feel empowered. They collaborate with each other in various cases. The NGOs receive most of their funding through the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act, 2010 (FCRA) and private organizations. However, NGO D receives its funding from the government.

6.5. Role of the Village Headman and SHGs

This section focuses on the overview of the role of the village headman, the president of the female unit and the SHG's. For this, 20 village headmen, 12 presidents of the different village female units and 12 presidents of women self-help groups were interviewed following a structured questionnaire method. After which, T-test analysis was used to get a clear understanding of the views of the village headmen and the presidents of the female unit and the self-help groups. It was seen that not every village had a female unit as well as a self-help group. Hence out of the 20 villages that were chosen, 12 of them had female units and 13 of them had women's self-help groups.

The village council⁶ is the decision-making body and organises the activities of the village collectively. The female unit and the male unit do not attend the village council meetings but are active participants in village activities. For this study, the village headman of 20 villages and the presidents of the village female unit from each village were interviewed.

Table 19: General Description of respondents

Descriptions	Village Headman	President of Female Unit	SHG
Age (years)	51	52	40
Gender (%)			
Male	100	0	0
Female	0	100	100
Education (years)	10	8	9
Years of Experience	10	10	5

Source: Own Survey, 2017

⁶ Along with the village headman, there is the female unit, and the male unit (Seng-Samla) of the village. All together, they form the village administrative structure.

One of the female units had their own baby day-care centre for free, which enabled single mothers to work and have a source of income. This baby day-care centre was aided by the Meghalaya Social Welfare Department. From the survey conducted, it was seen that not every village had a female unit.

Another important component of the village unit that works towards women’s empowerment and upliftment in the SHG. The main objective of an SHG is to bring about personal, social, and economic change for its members and society. An SHG is a group of rural poor who have volunteered to organise themselves into a group for the eradication of poverty of their members (Chandrasekhar and Lokesh, 2009). The functions of an SHG are to give loans at a low interest to develop themselves, to develop a sense of saving amongst the members, to achieve self-reliance, and to make an assessment of individual credit needs of its members and submit applications to the bank for sanction of collective loans with the help of an NGO.

It was observed that just like the female unit, not every village had an SHG. In fact, in certain villages, some of the women played dual roles of being the president of the female unit as well as the secretary of the SHG. In such cases, the female unit and the SHG would collaborate to organise programmes. However, in other cases, the female unit worked independently of the SHG.

At the head of the village administrative structure was the village headman, and it was the duty of the female unit as well as the SHG to report to him. In case of domestic violence or any other disturbance in the village that would require the law to get involved, the duty of the female unit and the SHG is to first report it to the village headman who would then decide the next course of action and involve the police, if required.

Table 20: T-test analysis of gender views

Women’s Issue	Male		Female		Pr (T <t)
	No. of Observations	Mean	No. of Observations	Mean	
Family Planning	20	3.15	25	3.8	0.03**
Domestic Violence	20	3.15	25	3.88	0.04**
Early Marriage	20	4.15	25	4.76	0.02**

Source: Author’s Estimation

Note: 1) ***, **, * indicates differences 1%, 5% and 10% levels respectively

2) Sample survey =45, Own Survey,2016

For the purpose of this survey, out of the 20 villages interviewed, 13 villages had SHGs that worked towards women's empowerment. The village headman, president of the female unit, and the president of the SHG were questioned on what they felt were women's issues in their society. Table 19 shows a general description of the respondents who were questioned separately following which a T-test analysis was conducted to compare the views of the two genders. Table 20 displays the results of the T-test.

6.6 Difference in views

It was interesting to see the difference in views of the two genders regarding varied women's issues prevalent in their society. While the village headmen mostly felt that family planning was not required in their respective villages, according to Meghalaya Times, the lack of proper education and awareness programmes on the issue is a pressing matter as expressed by the Chairperson of the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights.

While it is difficult to obtain the official statistics of domestic violence cases, according to the National Family Health Survey (2009), Meghalaya has the highest level of domestic violence among the north-east states, with 31% of women being physically mistreated. Clearly, from the analysis, it can be understood that females felt the issue to be more grievous than the males.

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in the Indian Constitution states that a girl under the age of 18 and a boy under 21 cannot be married. However early marriages seem to be on the rise in Meghalaya. With the Sixth Schedule in place, it seems that the society fears the laws laid down by the village headmen rather than the constitution. It was noticed that most of the village headmen had placed fines amounting to around Rs. 5000 for couples who married early.

6.7 Importance of women representation

With the village headman being in the position of power in society, the government has come up with the 'One Stop Crisis Centre' to cater to women who are facing violence within their homes and community. A helpline number which can be reached 24 hours in a day and all days of the week, has been made available to the public to make services more accessible to them. This scheme came into place in 2015. However, upon interviewing women in leadership positions, it was noticed that

they were neither aware of the scheme nor were they aware of the helpline number, while few of the headmen were aware of it. From this, we can conclude that the spread of knowledge of government schemes have not been successful in society. It can also be deduced that for any type of help, the women of the village had to contact the village headman first.

The four NGOs have emerged as potential developmental agencies that can contribute to the welfare of the people. They have also demonstrated their ability to operate in remote and inaccessible areas and deliver services at the grassroots level. However, when the village headmen were questioned on who they preferred approaching – the government or the NGO – in case of an issue, most of them felt more comfortable approaching the government than the NGO. Some of the headmen interviewed felt that the NGOs were more of a nuisance to society.

While the four NGOs did hold various projects independently there were various other projects that they collaborated with respective government departments. The NGOs collectively had no complains when it came to seeking help from the government, excepting for the fact that the process was long. With every NGO mentioned above, is a registered NGO they could apply for support and funds from the government.

In Meghalaya, decisions over the nature of development, access to resources, and ownership have enormous implications on women and a majority of these decisions are made in institutions in which women have little or no representation. From the T-test analysis, it can be seen that there is a clear difference in how women perceive women's issues in their society in comparison to men. These stress the importance of women's representation at the lowest level of governance, which is the village assembly.

While women were keen on being a part of the village administrative body, the psychological factor of it being a male domain is a hindrance. It is important for Khasi women to understand that their political rights are not limited to placing their vote but having a say in important political decisions as well.

CHAPTER 7

IMPACT OF WOMEN PARTICIAPTION IN THE DORBAR SHNONG

7.1 Significance of women participation in a political sphere

Political reservations for women are often proposed as a way to rapidly enhance women's ability to participate in policymaking. The importance of women being a part of political dimensions in the society is paramount as governments impact the way that resources, opportunities, responsibilities and rights are distributed, accessed reinforced. Compared to economic opportunities, education, and legal rights, political representation is the area in which the gap between men and women has narrowed the least between 1995 and 2000 (Norris and Inglehart, 2000). Increasing the political representation of women is often thought to be a "win-win" proposition. Women and men have different political agendas, so it would improve equity, by ensuring a better representation of women's needs, and efficiency, because women are supposed to be better politicians (less likely to be corrupt, more altruistic), and because the political agendas of women are thought to lead to investment in child health and education, which have positive long-term consequences on growth (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2001).

In the matrilineal state of Meghalaya, where women are considered to own land, women are excluded from the proceedings of the local governance system. Resulting in them not having a say in any of the decisions made for the smooth functioning of the society.

Amongst the studies done on the women and the traditional institution of the Khasi society, Laloo (2014), states that if the Khasi traditional institutions were recognized by the government it would be able to perform and implement rules more effectively. In Meghalaya, it is interesting to note that at the local governance level, only adult males tend to take part in the political affairs of the state. This trend is adhered to even today where Khasi states, especially in rural areas are reluctant to allow women to participate in state affairs (Khatso, 2004). According to Roy (2017), the rapid shift from communal to individual ownership of land has been eroding women's status with regards to land ownership in the state, which is further exacerbated by their exclusion from traditional institutions involved in local governance. Supporting this, Bhardwaj (2017), states the majority of the Khasi women feel that the women folks should be allowed to take part in the "dorbars". With the absence of empirical evidence in the above mentioned paper, to promote women's political

attendance as a decision maker, we need to understand whether Khasi women wish to have women representatives in the traditional system, as well as what are the determinants of willingness of the Khasi women to join in the political decision making. In this context, we statistically examine Bhardwaj's statement, it also goes on to show the willingness of women to stand for elections as heads of the village

The objective of this chapter is to understand the view of women on the importance of women representation as decision-makers in the society and to examine the determinants of the knowledge and attitude of Khasi women towards women representation. For this, probit regression was used to check the awareness of knowledge regarding women representation and the wish of female respondents to stand for elections as the village head. OLS regression was also used to check the interest of female respondents in political issues. The data analysed also includes that of a sample village where women representation is present in the local governance system. The results of which will show its impact on women's attitudes.

An explanation of the functions of the Khasi local governance and the status of the Khasi women have been stated in section 2. The methodology used to analyze the data collected from the two districts have been explained in section 3. Section 4 focuses on explaining the results and section 5 concludes the paper.

7.2 Women and Khasi Administration

Every Khasi village has its own *Dorbar Shnong* (village or local council) which plays a pivotal role in the village administration and is prescribed by the *Rangbah Shnong* (village headman) that is, the village headman, who is elected by adult members of the village. A significant feature of a Khasi village administration is that the village headman alone cannot decide on any issue, and that it is only after long deliberations and discussions on all issues before the *Dorbar* or council that consensus is arrived (Simon, 1991). The village headman looks after law and order of the village and as such performs the dual role of magistrate and police officer in the village administration besides seeing to the payment of tributes to the chiefs or the territorial headmen by the villagers (Mathur, 1979).

To understand the gender limitations in the *Dorbar Shnong*, it is important to note the three factors behind it pointed out by Lyngdoh (1996). Firstly, he notes that it was the *kur* or clan and not the individuals who formed the political unit. The second factor is that the *syiem* or chief was

elected only from the *syiem* clan. Thirdly, smaller *kurs* or clans had no voice in the *syiem*'s election and lastly women had no share or role in the political and administrative set-up of the Khasi society. According to Bareh (1985), in no case were women elected to the councils. A woman was also not allowed to hold the office of the *syiem* nor could she speak up in the *dorbar* (Singh, 1985). The administration is regarded as a burden for men to take in the society, while at home, it is the women's domain.

The Khasi traditional political institutions are a perfect blend of partial democracy and limited monarchy. Partial democracy as the political roles is limited to the adult males of the society. Secondly, we use the words limited monarchy as the headman acts on decisions made after consulting with the *dorbar* and the *dorbar* alone. The present-day functioning of these traditional political institutions remains the same.

Women in the Khasi society believed and followed a few principles:

- a) Deliberations and decisions, planning, administration and politics and the burden of management belong to man
- b) Woman is the keeper of the home and the who prepares and collects the things connected with the rituals
- c) A woman is forbidden to speak or deliberate before the *dorbar*.

While writing on the position of women in the Khasi society, Nongbri (2002) writes that- "Implicit in the division of gender roles among the Khasis is the hint that women lack expertise and skill to handle important and major matters. The exclusion of women from politics and the denial of rights to manage their property gives the impression that society finds them lacking in administrative and managerial abilities-roles which demand tact, shrewdness and decisive action. Thus, while formal stratification of gender is absent in Khasi society, ideologically, women have always been seen as inferior to men. This inequality is camouflaged by matrilineal descent, which creates a false impression of aura and prestige around women. Ironically, matrilineal descent helps to keep women in subjugation. By conferring descent rights on women, men not only succeed to isolate women from politics but also in legitimizing their own position as their protector".

In keeping with the present time, it's of wonder to whether the woman of the society is still in acceptance with the traditional system of the decision-making bodies. Hence, to get a clear understanding of the view of the Khasi woman's attitude towards women representation a questionnaire survey was carried out.

7.3 Sample Demographics

In November 2017, a questionnaire survey was conducted for 25 days in Meghalaya. The research was conducted in two districts, East Khasi Hills and West Khasi Hills.

Table 21: Demographics of Village Site

Village Name	Distance from City centre	Number of Households	Number of Respondents
I. East Khasi Hills			
Village A	10kms	138	70
Village B	15kms	980	50
Village C	4kms	148	30
Village D	54kms	2252	50
II. West Khasi Hills			
Village E	61kms	84	50
Village F	38kms	172	50

Source: Own Survey, 2017

Umsaw (Village A), Mawtawar (Village B), Laitlum (Village C) and Sohra (Village D) were four research sites chosen from the East Khasi Hills, while Nongkhlaw (Village E) and Nongthliew (Village F) were two research sites chosen from West Khasi Hills, because a majority of the residents were engaged in agricultural activities, similar to other typical rural communities. The distance of each village from the city centre and the population of households in each of them are shown in Table 21. The remoteness of the villages are closely related to their level of modernization and this might affect the women's view. In this context, villages in West Khasi Hills (Village E and F) are far from the city and are considered comparatively backward, hence constraining the views of the women on the traditional women-exclusion norm.

Table 22: Composition of Dorbar Shnong

Village Name	Number of members	Male	Female
I. East Khasi Hills			
Village A	20	18	2
Village B	22	22	0
Village C	16	16	0
Village D	24	24	0
II. West Khasi Hills			
Village E	17	17	0
Village F	18	18	0

Source: Own Survey, 2017

Table 22 shows the composition of a Dorbar Shnong of each village. Village A is the only village among the villages chosen where women were being allowed to sit through the proceedings as an active participant of the Dorbar Shnong, as well as vote for the village head. This development is a big step towards women inclusion into the decision-making processes of the society. It has been 2 years since the headman of Village A has opened up the Dorbar to women. This might lead to women having a positive attitude and understanding their importance as a part of the decision-making process.

Table 23: Percentage of Attitude of women towards women representation

Village Name	Women Representation Required (All levels)	Women Representation Required (Panchayat)	Number of Respondents
I. East Khasi Hills			
Village A	0.20	0.67	70
Village B	0.19	0.07	50
Village C	0.04	0.20	30
Village D	0.18	0	50
II. West Khasi Hills			
Village E	0.18	0.05	50
Village F	0.18	0	50
Average Value of Total Sample	0.12	0.36	

Own Survey, 2017

The respondents had to be females married and engaged in agricultural activities. Each questionnaire was filled on a one-to-one basis. The respondents had to answer a questionnaire on the socio-economic characteristics of their household, such as information on family members, income, head of the family, and decision-making skills as well as their political views.

7.4. Empirical analysis

7.4.1 Estimation Model

In order to understand the views of Khasi women towards women representation, it is important to understand their interest into political affairs, their awareness of the 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution (a part of the 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution clearly states that in every Panchayat, not less than one-third of the total number of seats are to be reserved for women) and if they would be interested in standing for elections as the village head. . Therefore, we regressed the following equations.

Table 24: Descriptive Status of Variables

Variables	Unit	Description	Mean	St.Dev
Determinants of Attitude				
Awareness	Dummy	Take 1, if respondent is aware of women representation	0.25	0.43
Wish to Stand for Elections	Dummy	Take 1, if respondent wants to become village head	0.27	0.44
Interest in Political Issues	Degree	Take 3, if respondent is interested in political issues Take 0, if respondent is not interested	1.22	0.95
Household Characteristics				
Age	Years	Age of the respondent	37.17	11.26
Difference in ages	Years	Difference of ages between wife and spouse	3.22	5.93
Education (5-8)	Years	Education between 5 to 8 years by respondent	0.24	0.43
Education (9<)	Years	Education beyond 9 years by respondent	0.41	0.49
Spousal Education	Years	Education of the husband	6.03	5.35
Location				
Village A	Dummy	Take 1, if respondent is from Village A	0.23	0.42
Village B	Dummy	Take 1, if respondent is from Village B	0.17	0.38
Village C	Dummy	Take 1, if respondent is from Village C	0.08	0.27
Village D	Dummy	Take 1, if respondent is from Village D	0.16	0.37
Village E	Dummy	Take 1, if respondent is from Village E	0.16	0.37
Empowerment Factors				
Employed	Dummy	Take 1, if respondent is employed	0.33	0.53
Land Owned	Dummy	Take 1, if respondent owns land	0.67	0.46
Socio-Eco Group	Dummy	Take 1, if respondent is part of a socio-economic group	0.39	0.48
Savings Account	Dummy	Take 1, if female respondent has a savings account	0.9	0.30

Source: Own Survey, 2017

While a probit estimation is applied to the following equations:

$$Y_1 = \beta_{10} + \beta_{11} \text{ Household Characteristics} + \beta_{12} \text{ Location} + \beta_{13} \text{ Empowerment Factors} + u_1. \quad (1)$$

$$Y_2 = \beta_{20} + \beta_{21} \text{ Household Characteristics} + \beta_{22} \text{ Location} + \beta_{23} \text{ Empowerment Factors} + u_2. \quad (2)$$

A logistic regression (reporting odds ratio) is then applied to,

$$\Pr(Y_3) = \phi (\beta_{30} + \beta_{31} \text{ Household Characteristics} + \beta_{32} \text{ Location} + \beta_{33} \text{ Empowerment Factors} + \mu_3). \quad (3)$$

Where,

$$Y_1 = \text{Awareness}$$

$$Y_2 = \text{Wish to Stand in Elections}$$

$$Y_3 = \text{Interest in Political Issues}$$

The determinants of attitude, location and household characteristics have been summarized in Table 4. The variable interest in political issues was measured from 3-0, depending on the degree of interest the respondent has with 3 being the most interested and 0 being not interested at all.

7.4.2 Result and Discussions

Table 25 displays the results of our probit and logistic estimations. It shows the relationship of a woman's awareness regarding women representation, her wish to stand for elections and her interest in political issues, with other possible functions.

Table 25: Result of Probit and Logistic Analysis

Variables	(1)		(2)			(3)			
	Awareness		Wish to stand for elections			Interest in political issues			
Estimation Method	Probit		Probit			Logistic Estimation			
	z	P> z		z	P> z	Odds Ratio	P> t		
Age	-1.18	0.24		-0.52	0.63	1.05	0.00	***	
Difference in ages	-2.21	0.02	**	0.02	0.98	0.97	0.34		
Education (5-8)	0.53	0.59		0.63	0.53	1.40	0.41		
Education (9<)	0.02	0.98		-0.67	0.50	1.23	0.58		
Education of Husband	2.43	0.01	**	0.27	0.79	1.04	0.19		
Village A	3.44	0.00	***	4.58	0.00	***	4.53	0.00	
Village B	0.45	0.65		2.91	0.00	***	1.26	0.60	
Village C	3.14	0.00	***	0.10	0.92	25.12	0.00	***	
Village D	2.32	0.02	**	-1.42	0.15	0.91	0.84		
Village E	4.27	0.00	***	0.12	0.90	1.40	0.45		
Employed	-0.60	0.54		-0.20	0.83	0.56	0.02	**	
Land Owned	0.04	0.96		-0.08	0.93	1.99	0.12		
Socio-Eco Group	0.56	0.57		0.24	0.81	1.18	0.58		
Savings Account	0.96	0.33		-0.70	0.48	0.49	0.03	**	
Pseudo R²	0.13			0.17					
Adjusted R²							0.18		
Correctly Classified	77.48%			76.41%					

Note: 1) ***, **, * indicates significances 1%, 5% and 10% levels respectively

2) Sample survey =300, Own Survey,2017

Source: Author's Estimation

The positive impact of columns awareness, wish to stand for elections and interest in political issues on Villages A, B and C are due to urbanization. With women from the respective villages living very close to the city centre, it makes them more susceptible to agents of empowerment. Along with this, higher education (above class 9) is only available near the city centre. Hence the likelihood of women being more educated in these villages is higher than that of Village D, E and F.

The positive impact of awareness on Village D and Village E is difficult to explain. However, NGO activity towards women empowerment is very strong in the respective villages, which may result in such an impact. From the negative impact of the difference of ages between the husband

and wife, and the positive impact of the education of the husband on a woman's awareness goes on to show the dependency of women on the husband towards awareness of political issues.

The positive impact of both a woman's awareness and her wish to stand for elections in column (2) can be explained as Village A is the only village in the East Khasi Hills district where the women are allowed to be a part of the *Dorbar Shnong*. However, the positive impact of a woman's wish to stand for elections on Village B could be explained as an impact of modernization

With women being a part of the *Dorbar Shnong* in Village A, the positive impact of woman's interest in political issues in column (3) can hence be understood. The positive impact of the same on Village C can be explained with it being the village closest to the city centre, hence more urbanized. The allowing of women into the *Dorbar Shnong* in Village A may be the reason for women having an interest in politics. The positive impact of a woman being employed and having a savings account on being interested in political affairs as most of the job employments in the society are provided by the government. Additionally, payments made by the government are done directly to the employee's bank account, hence the women found it important to have an interest in the political affairs of the state.

7.5 Conclusion

The research aims to understand the view of women on the importance of women representation as decision-makers in the society and to examine the determinants of the knowledge and attitude of Khasi women towards women representation. In conclusion, women's wish to stand for elections and her keen interest in standing for elections for the post of the village head shows the positive attitude of Khasi women.

The results of the descriptive statistics show low levels when it comes to the awareness of women regarding women representation in decision making bodies of the society, indicating the requirement of awareness programs that educate women on understanding the importance of their involvement.

Empirical analysis shows the influence of the education of the husband on the knowledge of women stresses the importance of the inclusion of men in awareness programs as well. In addition to this, there was also the influence of the husband on adhering to the traditional laws of the society, which refrains women from being a part of the *Dorbar Shnong*, is the main reason behind women's

exclusion from the Dorbar Shnong. It is also interesting to note that women of an older age group have begun to take interest in political issues, which shows the changing attitude of women.

As discussed by Wieringa (2005), empowerment is indeed an on-going process to be negotiated in our homes and communities, with democratically-elected state leaders and throughout international governing bodies. In this context, it is important for Khasi women to understand that their political rights are not limited to placing their vote for state elections but having a say in important local political decisions that directly impact them as well.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research problem was to check whether culture and religion have an impact on women empowerment in a tribal society. In respect to this, the following were the objectives chosen:

- (i) To check if culture and religion do play a role in the empowerment levels of women of India.
- (ii) How do culture and religion impact the affected areas of empowerment deficiency? (in accordance to the National Family Health Survey-4)
- (iii) What initiatives are being taken by the NGO's, government and Village leader?
- (iv) To check the views of the society towards the recommendation of women inclusion into the local governance institution.

From the present research, it can be deduced that culture and religion plays a great role in tribal life and is also one of the major factors that impact empowerment levels in women. The difference in cultural traditions between a patrilineal society and a matrilineal society shows the difference in perception and empowerment levels of women in the respective societies.

Early marriage, domestic violence and the lack of family planning are one of the major factors that are impacting empowerment levels in Khasi women. The difference in views between the women leaders and headman in society goes on to show the importance of women representation in the *Dorbar Shnong* in order to tackle these issues.

It was also seen that women who earned land had higher empowerment levels, which goes on to show that land ownership does impact empowerment levels. However, even though the land inherited were in the hands of male members in the family, with women being brought up as the owner of the property than as of that who will leave to live with her husband is what makes the difference. Efforts made by NGO's, government and village leaders towards the eradication of societal issues have also been evaluated in this research. Along with that it also checked the extent of acceptance of proposed recommendations made by previous authors in the society.

6.1 Recommendations

6.1.1 Re-evaluation of the Sixth Schedule

The Khasi women have no place in the political sphere and that her main role was that of a homemaker. Even though there are such restrictions imposed on women participating in the decision-making process of these institutions, Khasi history tells us of women who did rule. According to Bareh (1985), in a few western and northern states women were ruling heads of states which distinguished them from the role of the high priestesses, concerned with religious functions. These females reigned till 1869. It is theorized that due to the unavailability of a male successor were women in office. Existence of such female rulers indicates that women could take part in the administration and that they were also accepted.

The difference in views between the village headman and the women of the society towards various empowerment issues stresses the importance of women participation in the *Dorbar Shnong*. The implementation of the Sixth Schedule in Meghalaya leaves all political decisions to that of the village headman. With one village headman opening its doors to women in the *Dorbar Shnong*, it gives us the impression that it is the decision of the village headman to whether he wishes to have women on his council or not. Along with this, the positive response of women towards being involved in political affairs of the society goes on to show their willingness to join the *Dorbar Shnong*.

This calls for a re-evaluation of the implementation of the Sixth Schedule in Meghalaya. The sole purpose of the Sixth schedule was for the upliftment and development of the tribal folks. While the Nagas did away with it once they attained statehood, the Mizos apply the Sixth schedule only in respect of minorities in the region. This hence raises the question to why has Meghalaya then continued to be a part of the Sixth Schedule when it defeats the purpose in terms of women development.

If the Sixth Schedule is re-evaluated in favour of administration being under the state and not the village councils, by law the reservation of seats for women in the *Dorbar Shnong* will become compulsory. This will help give a voice to women in dealing with the above mentioned societal issues. Along with this, it will also motivate other women to take interest in political affairs.

6.1.2 Collaboration between the government and church

While religious institutions handle the spiritual aspects of an individual, the government addresses the social, economic and political needs of the society. The importance of the church and the state working as partners in order to get through to the society has always been underscored.

One of the major concern of the Meghalaya state is its high total fertility rate. With the religion followed by the Khasis being open to contraceptive use, the collaboration of the government with the church for the implementation of family planning programmes may help towards the reduction of high fertility rates. With both the agencies battling the objective of unwanted pregnancies, the collaboration will help in better implementations of the programmes.

6.1.3 Smoother collaborations between the government and the NGOs

It is said that in being ‘non-governmental’ NGOs constitute a platform for people to participate in the development and social change in ways that would not be possible through government programmes. They constitute instruments for turning these alternative ideas and alternative forms of participation, into alternative practices and hard outcomes (Bebbington, Hickey and Mitlin, 2007). The relationship of NGOs to development, therefore, takes many forms and their diversity cannot be overemphasized. For some, NGOs are useful actors because they can provide cost-effective services in flexible ways, while for others they are campaigners fighting for change or generating new ideas and approaches to development problems (Lewis and Kanji, 2009).

NGO’s that were interviewed were all registered NGOs with the government, yet they all complained that one of the major issues in the implementation of certain programmes was that of going through way too many channels for permissions. It is hence recommended that a new department be created in each governmental department, working on women empowerment, that solely will work in handling NGO collaborations.

6. 2 Suggestions for Further Studies

The re-evaluation of the Sixth Schedule is one of the primary concerns that need to be addressed to increase empowerment levels amongst the women of the Khasi society.

In Northeast India, the links between tribal identity and anti-modernity are still central to the politics of development. The debates about the ‘tribal problem’ after Indian independence and the formulation of the Sixth Schedule of the constitution have ensured that tribal/non-tribal distinctions

and hill tribal identity remain central to politics, economics and society in the Northeast especially Meghalaya. Along with this, it also provides different autonomous district councils to have a greater role in directing administrative requirements without depending on the Central State structure. Hence the social, economic and political status of people in the Northeast depends upon their membership and inclusion in tribal ethnic people. It is the application of this schedule in Meghalaya is what differentiates the two regions, other than that of different tribes residing in the respective areas.

While the purpose of the Sixth Schedule is to grant self-rule and to initiate development efforts in the respective areas, it instead showed a mixed outcome of development and underdevelopment. Meghalaya's statistic reports according to the National Family Health Survey 2016-2017, reflects the sluggish rate of development of the state. With this schedule being one a hindrance towards culture change, in-depth understanding into the schedule is required.

In light of this the following questions need to be addressed:

- i) Under what conditions were the decision taken for Meghalaya to be a Sixth schedule state?
- ii) Do the same circumstances exist in the contemporary Khasi society?
- iii) What are the socio-economic developments ever since?
- iv) Did it have a positive impact on empowerment levels of women?
- v) What would be the impact on the Khasi society, if the Sixth schedule is lifted?

6.3 Concluding Note

The present proposal for amendments made to the Sixth Schedule as far as Meghalaya is concerned is in the increase in the number of seats in each of the three councils, increase in financial allocations and administrative powers. This proposal is short-sighted and caters to a male-centric demand of keeping women out of grass root politics.

The misconception of women in Matrilineal Meghalaya being socially empowered and do not need reservations overlooks the entrenched gender biases that operate in the Khasi society. Assuming that women would automatically be able to create a level playing field in the political arena without any affirmative action is a misplaced idea. Preliminary studies have shown that Meghalaya has the highest number of female-headed households with kids having to drop out of school due to acute financial stress.

As far as elections to the urban municipalities and village councils are concerned, the resistance has been largely because of the fear that the 'tribal and traditional' characteristic would change. The faster that village headmen understand that in keeping with modernity, women participation is essential, the easier it will be for Meghalaya to cope with its issues.

With Meghalaya being termed as a 'matrilineal' state, it has given women a sense of confidence that they are privileged and that it is the male that is the victim of social practice. However such is not the case. While some of the women realize this and bring it up as an issue, yet they feel that their issues are still less as compared to that of women in a patrilineal state. This raises the question of whether Meghalaya should still be termed as 'matrilineal'?

- 2- Job Satisfaction
- 3- Opportunity to spend time with others
- 4- Increased opportunities
- 0- do not know
- X- No answer

11) why did you stop working?

- 1- Lost the job
- 2- Had to take care of children or family
- 3- did not like the job
- 4- husband did not want me to work
- 5- Other reason
- 0- Do not know
- X- No answer

Other reason:

12) When did you start working- (year)

13) When did you stop working- (year)

14) Annual Income-

- 1- Less than 11000
- 2- 11000 to 25000
- 3- 50000 to 75000
- 4- 75000 to 100,000
- 5- Above 100,000

15) Is the land in your name?

- 1- Yes
- 2-No
- 0- Do not know
- X- No answer

IF ANSWER IS NO to Q.8

16) If not,

- 1- Would like to have a job
- 2- would prefer to stay at home
- 0- Do not know
- X- No answer

17) If you had someone to help in the household and around the house, then

- 1- would like to have a job
- 2- would prefer to stay at home
- 0- Do not know
- X- No answer

18) If you work at your own farm and you had the opportunity to take a job, which would you choose?

- 1- would work on own farm
- 2- would take a job somewhere else
- 0- Do not know
- X- No answer

19) Are you looking for a job now?

- 1- yes
- 0-No

20) Have you ever held a job?

- 1-yes
- 0-No

Part of Organisations

1) Are you a member of any organisation?

Organization	yes	no	No answer
Church groups			
Trade Unions			
Women Organisations			
Political Organisations			
Self Help Group			
Other			

Other Please Specify:

2) When did you join? (year)

3) Did you vote at the last parliamentary elections?

1- yes

2- No

0- Do not know

X- No answer

4) Did you vote at the last panchayat elections?

1- yes

2- No

0-Do not know

X- No answer

5) Do you think women representation is required at every level of political institutions?

1- Yes

2-No

0- Do not know

X- No answer

Political Views

1) Do you want to ever stand for elections if given a chance at the Panchayat level?

1- Yes

2-No

0- Do not know

X- No answer

2) Has there been an increase in women members participation in Gram Panchayat?

1- Yes

2-No

0- Do not know

X- No answer

3) If yes, give reason

1- Because of the 73rd amendment

2- Because of increasing scale of literate women

3- Because of increasing women's interest in politics

0- Dont know

X- No answer

4)Do you think seats reserved for women of the backward class and economically backward class are futile?

- 1- Yes
- 2-No
- 0- Do not know
- X- No answer

5) Do you think that women representation at the Panchayat level will be a step towards an egalitarian society?

- 1- Yes
- 2-No
- 0- Do not know
- X- No answer

6) Does giving political support to rural women lead to gender equality in the society

- 1- Yes
- 2-No
- 0- Do not know
- X- No answer

For Individuals who voted

1) How interested are you in political issues?

- 1- Very interested
- 2-somewhat interested
- 3-not too interested
- 4- not interested at all
- 0- Do not know
- X- NO answer

2) Was there women representation at the Panchayat level?

- 1- Yes
- 2- No
- 0- Do not know
- X- No answer

3) Are you aware that the Indian constitution stresses the reservation of seats for women?

- 1- Yes
- 2- No
- 0- Do not know
- X- No answer

Religious views

1) How often do you go to church/ temple?

- 1- more than once a week
- 2- once a week
- 3-once a month
- 4- less than once a month
- 5- Not at all
- 0- do not know
- X- No answer

2) Was your upbringing

- 1- Very religious
- 2- religious
- 3- not religious
- 0- Do not know

X- No answer

3) If it was not religious, would you have liked to be brought up as a religious person?

1- yes

2- No

0- Do not know

X- No answer

4) How would you describe yourself as?

1- very religious

2- somewhat religious

3- not religious

X- No answer

Respondents Views

1) Please indicate how do you feel about the following statements:

	Strongly Agree		Strongly Disagree					
Marriage is necessary for happiness	1	2	3	4	5	0	X	
Women and men should get equal pay for equal work	1	2	3	4	5	0	X	
Jobs are gendered	1	2	3	4	5	0	X	
A man should have a job, and a woman should take care of the household and the family.	1	2	3	4	5	0	X	
A man should make decisions and a woman should obey	1	2	3	4	5	0	X	
A woman respects a husband who does not dominate her	1	2	3	4	5	0	X	
Unmarried people can be happy	1	2	3	4	5	0	X	
Children have an obligation to take care of their elderly parents	1	2	3	4	5	0	X	
Its important to have a child after marriage	1	2	3	4	5	0	X	
large families are the happiest	1	2	3	4	5	0	X	
Sex education is required in schools	1	2	3	4	5	0	X	

Household Details:

1) Head of the household:

2) Please list those family members who are in the same household as you (share your expenses and income with).

0- do not know X-No answer

First Name	Age	Relation to the head of the household	Education	Income (Monthky)

3) Who makes decisions on different family matters in your household. Who decides

	Me	Husband	Both	Do not know	No answer
When and where to go on vacation					
To join a job					
Borrowing money					

High household expenditure					
Children's level of education					
Having another child					

4) Does your husband help with child care?

	often	Occasionall y	Never	Do not know	No answe r
Putting the child to sleep					
Playing with children					
Helping with homework					

5) Does your husband help with the housework?

1- a lot 2- a little 3- not at all 0- Do not know X- No answer

6) According to you, on an average, how many hours a week goes your husband spend taking care of the household and the children?

Hours -

7) If you have purchased any machine or tools for production purpose in the last 6 months, please tell us about it.

	Year of Purchase	Price when purchased	Individually owned or shared
Thresher			
Plough			
Pump			
Sprayer			
Cart			
Rice mill			

7) If you have obtained any livestock in the last 6 months, please tell us about it

	Number	Price when purchased	Individually owned or shared
Cows			
Calves			
Oxen			
Chickens			
Pigs			
Ducks			
other			

8) If you have newly obtained any durable consumer goods in the last 6 months, please tell us about it.

	Number	Year of Purchase	Price when purchased
Bed			
Chair			
Table			
Desk			
Radio-Cassette			
TV-set			
Clock			
watch			
camera			

bicycle			
motor cycle			
car			
battery			
Others			
-			
-			

9) If you have newly obtained any asset in the last 6 months, please tell us about it

Kind	Year of Purchase	Present Evaluation
House		
Trees in home garden		
Jewelery or gold or silver		
Deposit		
Credit		
Others		
-		
-		

Family Planning

- 1) How many times were you pregnant?
- 2) How many times did you give birth?
- 3) Are you doing anything to prevent pregnancy?
 - 1- yes
 - 2- No
 - 0- Do not know
 - X- No answer
- 4) If not, do you plan to do anything to control the number of children?
 - 1- yes
 - 2- No
 - 0- Do not know
 - X- No answer
- 5) Is your husband taking any steps to prevent pregnancy?
 - 1- yes
 - 2- No
 - 0- Do not know
 - X- No answer
- 6) Do you want to have more children?
 - 1- yes
 - 2- No
 - 0- Do not know
 - X- No answer
- 7) How many children would you like to have if you could choose?
- 8) What are your views on abortions?
 - 1- It should be permitted to anyone whenever desired
 - 2- It should be permitted to anyone whenever desired, after consulting a doctor
 - 3- it should only be permitted when the life/ health of the mother or the child is in danger
 - 4- it should be prohibited under all circumstance
 - 0- Do not know
 - X- No Answer

Husbands Data

- 1) Does your husband have a job
 - 1- yes
 - 0- No

2) What is his employment category?

1- Full time worker

2- Work on own property

3- retired

4- disabled retired

5- unemployed

6- maternity aid

7- househusband

8- student

9- other

0- do not know

X- no answer

Other:

3) Husband's educational Qualification:

4) Age of Husband

5) Age of Husband at marriage

6) Is this his first marriage?

1- Yes

0- No

7) If no, at what age did he end his first marriage?

8) Did your husband vote at the parliamentary elections?

1- Yes

0- No

9) Did your husband vote at the Panchayat elections?

1- Yes

0- No

Self Help Group, Women's Representative and Village Head Leader Questionnaire

Name:

Gender:

Area:

Age:

Since When:

Name of SHG:

Coverage:

1. a) Village Head Leader b) Self Help Group Leader c) Women's leader

2. Number of Members:

Population of Village:

a) Male:

b) Female:

c) How are the members chosen?

Voluntary:

Elected:

Appointed:

d) How?

e) Does each block have a representative?

f) Main Aim of SHG

g) Functions:

Savings: Training Activities: Mediate: Others:

h) Any collaborations between the Segenthai & SHG?

3. Socio- Economic Conditions of the Village or Self Help Group

4. Number of NGO's near the village (generally)

Closest NGO name

Distance:

5. Number of NGO's working on women empowerment near your village

Closest NGO name

Distance:

6. Name of the Project Last attended on women empowerment:

7. Name of the NGO

What sector did the project work on:

a) Family Planning

b) Domestic Violence

c) Others Specify :

8. Number of Participants:

9. From a scale of 1 to 5, rate the following (5 being the highest):

i) Useful

ii) Organising

10. What did the project lack?

11. Number of Self-help groups in your village-
Women-

12. How many times do you communicate with the government?
the government?

13. How many times do you communicate with the NGO?/

14. Family planning given to children? If yes at which class?

15. Have you heard of Domestic Violence in your village?

16. What kind of workshop do you require (From scale 1 to 5)

Personal Take

Village Perspective

- i) Family Planning
- ii) Domestic Violence

17. Approachable for villagers (more than one answer is okay)	Y/N	Exist/Not (*)
a) State government (including hotline, police)		
b) District Government		
c) NGO		
d) Village leader		
e) Women's representative (*)		
f) Women's SHG(*)		
g) Church		
h) School		
i) Others		

Role of NGO's for Women Empowerment: Case Study of Shillong Questionnaire

Name:

Gender:

Age:

Designation:

Organization:

Headquarters:

Branch:

Educational Qualification:

2) Founded:

8) Established

a) Registered Locally

b) Government registered

2) Number of Branches in Meghalaya : Name and Areas

Tick if Respond-ents Branch	Branches In Meghalaya		Workers		SHG
	Name of The Branch	Area Of the Branch	Voluntary Male : Female:	Paid Male: Female:	

5) Number of Branches Nationally:

2) In which sectors does your Organisation focus on:

Sectors	Yes/No	Goals	Budget Share (%)
Family Planning			

Domestic Violence			
Others			

2) What are the other goals of your organisation?

- a) Only women Empowerment
- b) Women Empowerment & others

Specify:

2) How do you communicate with the government, which department?

2) How many times do you communicate with the government?

- 3) Weekly
- 4) Monthly
- 5) Annually
- 6) Others

10)

Collaborations	Y/N
State government	
Sub-district officer	
Other NGOs	
Village Leader	
Women's representative	
Women's self help group	
Church	
School	
Other	

4) How do you announce to the villagers?

12) What are the obstacles you face with the government?

2) What are the obstacles you face in these projects?

14) How do you follow up in these areas?

- a) Re-surveys
- b) Programmes
- c) Others

- 15) What is the socio-economic impact of your initiative?
- 16) How do you estimate your success and failures in these projects?
- 17) Fundings and Donors
- 18) When you conduct a workshop/training who & how do you choose the location?
19. Would you be interested in a collaboration for an experimental workshop?

Legend For Table

Source Of Budget

- a) International - Specify
- b) Government
- c) Private- Specify

Sector Focused

- a) Domestic Violence
- b) Family Planning
- c) Others

Implementation tools

I. Family Planning

- a) Interviewed both Genders together
- b) Interviewed Both Genders separately
- c) Interviewed only the men
- d) Interviewed only the women

II. Domestic Violence

- a) Interviewed both Genders together
- b) Interviewed Both Genders separately
- c) Interviewed only the men
- d) Interviewed only the women

Questionnaire for the Government on their role in Women Empowerment

Name:
 Gender:
 Designation:
 Educational Qualification:

- 1) State Government District Government

If district, name of the district:

- 2) Annual Budget Received:
 Annual Budget for Women:

3) Has there been an increase in the budget since the previous years? Why?

- 4) Number of workers

Male
 Female

5) What are the various activities that you conduct to promote women empowerment?

6) In which sectors are your focus intensive:

Sectors	Yes/No	Goals	Budget Share (%)
Family Planning			
Domestic Violence			
Others			

7) What are the other goals of your organisation?

- a) Only women Empowerment
 b) Women Empowerment & others

Specify:

8) What are the obstacles you face in these projects?

9) How do you follow up in these areas?

- a) Re-surveys b) Programmes c) Others

10) What is the socio-economic impact of your initiatives?

11) How do your departments communicate with the NGO's?

12) How many times do you hold meetings with the NGO's?

- a) monthly
 b) Annually
 c) weekly
 d) others

13) When a new programme is launched, how is it communicated to the local villagers?

- a) through district office
- b) through NGO's
- c) others

Details:

14) Do you feel any difficulty collaborating with the NGO's?

15) Question to Police/ Health (family planning)/ Welfare (family planning & Domestic Violence)

Advertisements

a) TV

How often?

Cost?

b) Radio

How often?

Cost?

c) Website

URL:

d) Newspaper/magazine

detail:

e) Board on the street

How many:

Location:

f) Pamphlets

How many:

How are they distributed:

Location:

g) Other

Details:

16) Any collaboration with following on Domestic Violence prevention & reaction?

e) Other State government

Department:

How:

b) Subdistrict office

How:

c) Village Leader

How:

d) Women's representative

How:

e) NGO's

Name:

How many:

How:

f) Women's Self help group

How:

g) Church/religious organisation

How:

h) School

How:

g) Other:

Details:

17) If you do workshop/training/advertisement who& how do you choose the location priority?

e) How do you estimate your success and failures in these projects

Questionnaire on Land Inheritance

Name :

Location:

Age (Optional):

Total number of members in the family:

Boys:

Girls:

3) Weight:

4) Height:

5) BMI:

6) Religion:

0=Hindu, 1=Christian, 2=Buddhist, 3=Muslim, 4= traditional religion, 5=Others

If 4, then specify:

9) Tribe:

0= Khasi, 1=Jaintia, 2=Garro, 3=Others

if 3, then specify:

3) Educational Qualification:

0=Primary School, 1=Secondary School, 3=College, 4=Others

If 4, then specify

7) Age at Marriage:

8) Origin of Spouse:

9) Land owned:

0=Ri raid (Land given) , 1= Ri kynti (Land owned)

10) Land cultivated by family

0= Yes 1=No

11) Agricultural activity carried out by the woman:

12)Agricultural activity carried out by the man:

13) Net income/Salary :

14) Land leased out

0=yes 1=No

15) Net income/Salary:

5) Occupation:

0=Cultivator, 1=Agricultural labour, 2= Industrial Labour, 3=Unspecified Daily labourer, 4= Government service, 5=Private service, 6=Business, 7=Housewife, 8=Self-employed, 9=Others

3) Salary:

Code	Net income/salary

15) Occupation of Spouse:

0=Cultivator, 1=Agricultural labour, 2= Industrial Labour, 3=Unspecified Daily labourer, 4= Government service, 5=Private service, 6=Business, 7=Housewife, 8=Self-employed, 9=Others

16) Salary:

Code	Net income/salary

17) Other source of income:

18) Control on the use of own income:
0=Both, Man=1, Woman=2

18) Decision on the use of spousal income:

19) Decision on household matters done by which member:
0=Both 1=Man 2=Woman

Medical:

Financial:

Education:

20. Decisions taken on usage or sale of land:
0=Both, 1=Man, 2=Woman

d) Part of any social or economic group:

e) Time spent on primary activities:

f) Time spent on secondary activities:

g) a) In your society, are the girls given an equal opportunity for education as the boys?
0=yes, 1=No

b) Was the same true in your case?
0=yes, 1=No

f) a) Have a savings account or any form of bank account?
0=Yes, 1=No

b) Share a savings account with spouse?
0=Yes, 1=No

a) Have you heard of domestic violence in your village? If yes, how frequently? Any solutions reached?

b) What are the reasons that you have heard of for domestic violence?
0=Drunk; 1=Economic issues; 2=Parental issues 4=Others

d) Do you feel that it has become a norm for women to be hit?

31) a) Do you go alone for your health check ups?
0=Yes, 1=No

b) If no, reasons why?
0= Spouse does not allow, 1=Not safe, 2= Too far 3=Others
if 3, please specify:

c) Is it necessary that a female doctor attends to you?
0=Yes, 1=No

d) Does your spouse have a say in your health care decisions?
0=Yes, 1=No

32) To which form of media are you exposed to?

0=radio, 1=television, 2=newspaper & magazines 3=others

33) a)Do you ever travel for work or to meet relatives (for more than 2-3days)?

0=yes, 1=No

b)If yes, Do you take permission from your husband?

34) a)What is the age that females are required to get married as per the traditions?

b) Do the females have the final say for their marriage?

0=yes, 1=No

c)Is a girl child preferred as compared to a boy child?

0=yes, 1=No

d) d) Reasons:

35) a)Are you aware of the traditional inheritance laws, specially related to ownership of property?

0=yes, 1=No

b)Does the ownership right of property in the family lie with the female member?

0=yes, 1=No

36) a)Do women in the family exercise their political rights ?

0=yes, 1=No

b)Do you feel that women should enter the political field?

0=yes, 1=No

c)Why do you feel so?

37) Do you consider yourself as the head of the family? Why?

38) How is the land being transferred to the next generation?

39) What do you feel should be the change that should be brought about?

Primary activities-Taking care of children,family and other household activities

Secondary activities- Occupational activities

Name of Interview

Appendix 2: English translations for Khasi words

<i>Dorbar Shnong</i>	: Village Council
<i>Ka Khaduh</i>	: Daughter
<i>Kur</i>	: Clan
<i>Rangbah Shnong</i>	: Village Headman
<i>Ri Kynti</i>	: Land received through inheritance
<i>Ri Raid</i>	: Land received from the Shnong
<i>Shnong</i>	: Village Administration
<i>Seng Samla</i>	: Head of Male unit
<i>Seng Kynthei</i>	: Head of Female unit
<i>Syiem</i>	: Chief

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