

**WOMEN'S EFFORT TO RESIST AGAINST
PATRIARCHY AND POVERTY : A TALE
FROM AMRAPARI (WE CAN)**

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is based on the study of women's collective effort to fight against the twin structural violence of society: patriarchy and poverty. It revolves around the stories and struggle of the women associated with Amrapari and their attempt to use Amrapari as a space to enhance their socio-economic status in society. Amrapari is a registered cooperative society situated in Barpeta district of Assam. It tries to reinvent the art of 'ketha making' a unique traditional art of embroidery and stitching, mostly done by the minority women folk of the Barpeta district of Assam. Amrapari strives to unite rural women across the communities to engage in the making of that by upgrading their traditional skills and subsequently helping them sell their products globally. Poverty and patriarchy are the two biggest challenges witnessed by women for decades. Therefore 'Amrapari' can be seen as a light of hope for the women to resist the exploitation and deprivation done to women for generations. The present research paper is based on a focused group discussion with

different in-depth questions among the women of the Amrapari. The paper tries to deal with the two primary objectives: a) How Amrapari is helping women to resist patriarchy and poverty. b) How Amrapari has been able to reinvent the forgotten traditional skill of making ketha?

Keywords : Women, Patriarchy, Poverty, Ketha, Indigenous Knowledge.

Introduction

The ideological weight of hierarchy and power, the construction of spaces of binary oppositions, and the dynamics of superiority and inferiority cross every realm of human experience and system of possibilities. The hierarchical power relations manifest in existing societal structures, where the subaltern and subordinate are inscribed and reinscribed in the society. Culture, societal relationships, diverse institutions including family, education and religion, literature, sexuality- all bear the imprint of patriarchal hegemony and subjugation. The word “patriarchy” literally means the rule of the father or the ‘patriarch’ and originally it was used to describe a specific type of male-dominated family – the large household of the patriarch which included women, junior men, children, slaves, and, domestic servants all under the dominant rule of the male. Now it is used more generally to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women and, to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in several ways(Bhasin,1993).Patriarchy is thus the rule of the father or the powerful male head of a social unit over all women in the family and also over younger socially and economically subordinate males. The patriarch is typically a societal elder who has legitimate power over others in the social unit. According to Sylvia Walby patriarchy is the social structure and practices where men dominate, oppress and, exploit women. The concept of patriarchy is central to the understanding of the society (Walby,1990).Marxist feminism defines patriarchy as the development of

private property which is reinforced by the force of capitalism. Marxist feminists explained women's subordination in economic terms. According to radical feminists, patriarchy preceded private property. They believe that the original and basic contradiction is between sexes and not between economic classes (Bhasin 1993). Patriarchy is not simply hierarchical but a hierarchy in which particular people fill particular places(Hartmann, 1981). The ideology of patriarchy tends to reinforce an already entrenched system of exploitation.

The experiences of patriarchy are not even and common everywhere, it is contextual and situational. The everyday experience of patriarchy is different from woman to woman. The present paper tries to examine the role of *Amrapari*(We Can), which is a collective rural local enterprise consisting of rural artisans situated in the Barpeta district of Assam. The primary objective behind forming *Amrapari* is to develop itself as the agency of change to resist the forces of patriarchy and poverty. Women of *Amrapari* consist of both Hindu and Muslim communities mostly from char-chapori areas of the district. Women of both communities have been using *Amrapari* as a space to fight against the oppression of patriarchy. The paper tries to understand the experiences of women associated with *Amrapari*through the lens of intersectional feminism. Intersectional feminism is the study of overlapping or intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression, domination or discrimination. It explains how the different power structures interact in the lives of the women. Factors such as race, class and gender influence each other and intersect both. Here in the case of the char women of *Amrapari* besides their identity as women, their socio-cultural position, and economic situations also influence their experiences with patriarchy and poverty. Oppression cannot be seen or understood as something that exists in the same manner for everybody. There are layers to it that overlap and intersect and this is precisely what intersectional feminism tries to explain. Therefore the present research paper is an attempt to understand the multilayer experiences of patriarchy and women's fight against poverty and patriarchy through their own effort and collective voice called *Amrapari*.

Knowing the unknown:*Amrapari*

Amrapari is a rural women's artisan's collective effort in the Char-Chapori areas (Riverine Island) of Barpeta district of Assam. The Brahmaputra and other rivers of Assam are replete with numerous sandbars, which are locally called chars. Chars are home to nearly 10 per cent population of Assam. The Brahmaputra is an extremely braided river. An enormous volume of sand and silt flows with the water and gets deposited on river banks and the river bed. Almond-shaped river islands are formed out of these alluvium deposits (Chakraborty, 2012). These sandbars born from silt deposits of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries are locally known as chars and chaporis. In the Assamese language, the two different words chars and chaporis sometimes appear as a single compound word char-chapori. Chars are river islands, while chaporis could be river islands or land masses formed by silt deposits on river banks (Kumar and Das, 2019). Many villages of the Barpeta district of Assam are surrounded by river islands known as 'Char-Chapori'. These villages are the worst affected by floods and erosion yearly, making their settlement impermanent and highly volatile. Life of the char dwellers is not easy as they have to adjust their lives with frequent erosion, flood and displacement. The process of inhabitation in chars is intimately linked to the history of British rule in Assam. Most chars, especially those in western Assam, are inhabited by Bengali-speaking Muslims. The migration of peasants from East Bengal started in the late nineteenth century and picked up in the early twentieth century, especially after 1905 when Bengal was partitioned and Assam was merged with East Bengal. This was the economic imperative of the colonial state to maximize revenue generation from land. This interest shaped the colonial state's policy of settling East Bengali migrant peasants, who were mostly Muslims, in sparsely populated flood-prone zones (Das & Saikia, 2011). More than a hundred years later, the lasting impression of the colonial policy is present in terms of neglect and backwardness of char dwellers. Many such things characterize the lives of char dwellers, besides the channels of the Brahmaputra, which separate the chars from the rest of Assam—which is considered to be a neglected territory of the Indian republic. Located at the margin

of the margin, chars have registered a lackluster record of human development. The Assam Human Development Report 2014 estimated that char areas have the highest multidimensional poverty among all regions of the state (GoA, 2016). Economic backwardness limits char dwellers' livelihood options. Severe floods adversely affect char areas and further restrict their economic opportunities. When the char residents migrate to mainland Assam, they face discrimination(Chakraborty, 2012).Internally displaced char dwellers are worst affected due to land and soil erosion. These people whose lives have no permanency are left with dislocated, ruptured and fragmented memories. Forced to move to other parts of the state, these people are often termed illegal immigrants from a neighbouring country.

Historic subjugation, deprivation and the patriarchal power structure of the society force many char-chapori women to lead deplorable lives. It is to bring change in the lives of women of char-chapori areas, *that Amrapari* started to work under the leadership of Manjuwara Mullahwho is a local social activist of Barpeta district of Assam.*Amrapari* began its journey from Rupkuchi village, located between the Beki and Chaulkhowa rivers. Initially, five women became a part of the group. They were daily wage labourers and also started working for *Amrapari*.Manjuwara herself started by procuring raw materials (e.g., fabric, embroidery thread, and sewing supplies) and provided basic training to the five women. Now it has included 140 women artisans who are working for *Amrapari* in three different units: Firstly for Weaving, Secondly for Designing and third group works for Tailoring. Here the designing for different garments including Kethasis done by the women from char-chapori areas. It is now a registered cooperative society. It has been able to expand its business all over the world and earn good revenue also giving financial security to women of different groups and ages.

Dare to Dream: Story of the Manjuwara Mullah

Manjuwara Mullah hails from Khandkarpara village in the Char area of Barpeta district of Assam. Manjuwara belongs to the Mia community and has witnessed different forms of gender discrimination and women's oppression right

from a young age. Since her young age, she has been observing the women's subordination in the society. It is due to rigid gender norms, lack of education, child marriage, lack of knowledge on reproductive health, domestic violence etc all made the lives of the women of the Miya community marginalized. She had to cross through all these patriarchic rules of the society for which she could only finish her studies till graduation and was forced to get married. But her journey of hardship did not end here, although she joined a private company in Guwahati for work, she had to discontinue her work due to the workplace harassment done against her. *'I received the best employer award, but suddenly after my pregnancy things changed, I was not capable enough according to the office authority, and although I took my child into office and continued to work in that condition, they forced me to resign'* said Manjuwara. Returning home, she started building her confidence and began her work with her husband and the JharFoundation for the welfare of the women of the char-chapori areas of Barpeta district. Manjuwara started working to organize awareness campaigns for health rights and social-political rights of women of char-chapori areas. She is also vocal against child marriage, supporting women in education and fighting for equal wage pay. However, it was in 2020, that she started realizing that she needed to integrate women to bring real changes in their lives. The year 2020 was marked by the horror of the COVID-19 pandemic and the situation worsened with recurrent floods and livelihood insecurity battles among the many dwellers of char-chapori areas. The COVID-19 pandemic and flood made the lives of the women of char-chapori more tough and challenging. Many of them were battling food scarcity and witnessing domestic violence which has increased during lockdown in covid-19 pandemic period. A devastating flood has displaced many people from their places. Moreover, pregnant women, lactating women, adolescent girls, and disabled people were facing serious challenges as they had to share their living spaces with both males and animals during the flood time and continue to live in inhumane conditions. Manjuwara has provided every possible help to this section of women but she led a distressful life during that period because her help was unable to

provide long-term economic security to women. She felt that until the women get economic security they cannot get rid of patriarchal domination. It was in 2020 that she started embroidering a plain white bed sheet with a floral design only to cope with the stress. When she put her bed sheet on a social media platform she started getting huge appreciation for her work. This forgotten art of 'ketha making' got huge responses from people across different sections of society. '*That is the time when the idea generated my mind for the possibility of establishing a women's self help group and collective to stitch and sell khetas. I shared this idea with women in several chars and was met with unequivocal enthusiasm. I felt that if I could make this ketha , why not these women who already possess this traditional knowledge of making ketha. That was the beginning of our collective Amrapari*' narrated the story of the beginning of *Amrapari* by Manjuwara Mullah. *Amrapari* has got Rs 10lakhs from selling these ketha, and also started making masks for different hospitals and organizations. Now it has been successfully generating revenues and giving financial security to the women of cahr-chapori areas. Women have been preparing not only Ketha, but also reusable sanitary pads, kurtas, bags, sarees etc. '*We are now making reusable sanitary pads. In our society where women are struggling to have sanitary pads during their menstruating days, these reusable pads will help women to use them for a maximum of one year. These pads are made of cloths and after using one can reuse them by cleaning and drying them*', said Manjuwara Mullah.

While asked about the challenges Manjuwara Mullah faces as a woman entrepreneur, she replied '*Making Ketha from very grassroots level to selling it to the market is a huge challenge, apart from that being a single parent I have to manage from household to the business, sometimes I felt that if I were a man I would not have to carry the household work which I am doing presently*' said Mnajuwara. Her views deeply reflect despite being an entrepreneur she is also unable to come out of the rigid gendered division of work and has to go through the public/private dichotomy of work. '*Once I attended a programme outside my home station wearing a jeans t-shirt but due to the sudden health*

issues of my father I had to come back, but my family members and other members of the society were not allowed to see my father, because I was wearing jeans t-shirt. I had to change my dress wearing a salwar suit and covering my head, only then I was allowed to see my father'. It still shows the gendered practices that restrict and limit the personal freedom and choice of many women like Manjuwara. It shows how even though she becomes a well-known entrepreneur and leader, sometimes it becomes challenging for her to break the patriarchal norms of society. She is optimistic and hoping to bring change in the society. *Amrapari* is not just a financial enterprise; it is more beyond that. It is the women artisans' collective effort to live their dreams and stitch the threads of empowerment. Patriarchy normalizes the subordination of women. The patriarchal system provides self-definitions and norms for women. These social norms restrict the social roles of women as mothers and wives. The story of Manjuwara manifests her efforts to resist everyday sites of patriarchy.

Resistance against Poverty

Experiences of poverty cannot be homogenous; it is a heterogeneous and linked with other factors. Similarly, women of different groups and communities, castes and classes experience poverty in a varied way. According to Beijing Platform for Action, 1995, Paragraphs 48 and 50, "In the past decade, the number of women living in poverty has increased disproportionately to the number of men, particularly in the developing countries. In addition to economic factors, the rigidity of socially ascribed gender roles and women's limited access to power, education, training and productive resources are also responsible. While poverty affects households as a whole, because of the gender division of labour and responsibilities for household welfare, women bear a disproportionate burden, attempting to manage household consumption and production under conditions of increasing scarcity." This unequal experience of poverty by women has led to the development of the phenomenon called, 'feminization of poverty'. 'Feminization of poverty' has been referred to as an attempt to analyze poverty from the gender perspective. The

term “Feminization of Poverty” was used to describe the poor low-income female-headed households in the United States. Women’s vulnerability to poverty is associated with the existence of gender inequality in household resource allocations and decision-making, in public policies and legal codes. Women are more prone to poverty due to lack of property rights in land or access to employment, lower wages, illiteracy, and early marriage and childbearing, unpaid domestic and care work. Women are victims of poverty in three ways, first, gender inequalities. Secondly, women work for longer hours than men and earn less. Finally, women face difficulties in extricating themselves out of poverty is decided by cultural, legal and labour market trends. Often the term ‘feminization of poverty’ is used to mean an increase in poverty due to gender inequalities. The phenomenon of feminized poverty extends beyond the economic domains of income and material needs to the core of individual and family life. The ‘feminization of poverty’ is linked with the ‘feminization of household headship’. Women-headed households are the ‘poorest of the poor’ and female household headship transmits poverty to children (‘inter-generational transmission of disadvantage’). (Bradshaw, Chant and Linneker,2017). In this context, the effort of ‘*Amrapari*’ can be seen as a modest attempt to struggle against the ‘feminization of poverty’.

Amrapari as a collective effort of rural women artisans promotes gender justice via women’s self determination, dignity, and sustainable livelihoods in Miya communities primarily from the Char-chapori areas of Barpeta district. This is primarily accomplished through the creation of self-help groups of women artisans who have revived a centuries-old legacy of quilt making. Women who relied on daily wages (e.g., those who work in fisheries, agricultural work, brick kilns, etc.) suddenly found themselves out of work during covid-19 pandemic and without any means to secure food for their families. *Amrapari* was a ray of hope for many women living in the char-chapori areas of Barpeta district. ‘*We used to provide relief materials to the women, food, and clothes including sanitary pads to the women in char areas. But gradually women of the char areas requested me to provide long-term economic security, instead of relief materials, which*

instigated me to think about starting Amrapari to help them to fight against poverty, narrated Manjuwara Mullah. Women in char areas experience poverty more intensely than the women living in rural or urban areas of Assam. Grinding poverty and poor socio-economic indicators characterize char areas. Char dwellers of Western Assam including the Barpeta district of Assam are mostly inhabited by Muslim people. In the eastern part of the state, several tribal groups, and riverine communities like the kaibartas and also Nepali grazers have been dwelling on chars. Char areas are deprived of education, health facilities and most importantly their land. Due to frequent floods and land erosion, char dwellers have been experiencing severe land loss, which subsequently pushes them to a state of marginalization and poverty. Experiences of poverty and communal violence which erupted in different periods due to the issue of illegal immigration, and perceptions of mainstream communities towards Muslim char dwellers of Assam as outsiders or illegal immigrants have made their lives not only insecure but also uncertain. The precarious economic condition is made worse by the uncertainties wrought by the rivers. According to one study of chars of Barpeta district, during the period 1989–1998,

‘[W]hen there was no high-intensity flood in Assam, 45 per cent of the total households were affected and 51 per cent of the total land was lost by the surveyed char households. A similar study over 25 years (1980–2004) in the Beki River, a tributary of Brahmaputra in Barpeta district reveals that 77 per cent of the surveyed households suffered due to land erosion and 94 per cent of their land was lost.’ (Chakraborty, 2012, p. 23).

These damages that the chars suffer have to be seen in the context of the high degree of flood incidents in the state. Devastations wrought by seasonal floods and soil erosion are experienced by Assam almost regularly. Damages caused to crops, cattle, houses and utilities between 1953 and 1995 was ‘4,400 crore as per Shukla Commission, 1997 (Goyari, 2005). The estimated flood-prone area in the state was 31.5 lakh hectares or as much as 92.6 per cent of the cultivated land

in 1992–1993. In the period from 1990 to 2008, every year, 62 sq. km of land (excluding forest land) was lost due to erosion (Ahmed, 2016). It also displaces the inhabitants of the Chars almost every year forcing the population to shift with all their belongings. Thus the Chars in Assam contribute the highest Internally Displaced Population of the state. Women suffer most in this forced displacement due to natural causes in Chars of Brahmaputra in Assam.

This dreadful socio-economic condition of char dwellers made the women's lives more marginalized. Women in the char areas of Assam face unique problems and challenges amidst the prevailing disparities. Apart from the daily struggle of survival in the geographically most hostile terrain, the women in Chars of the Brahmaputra endure additional burdens both from the society within and from the state as well since various programmes and initiatives for their empowerment, health, nutrition, education, and financial reliance do not reach these areas. A survey conducted by the Directorate of Char Areas Development (DCAD), Govt. of Assam in 2002-03 shows that about 81% of the males and 92% of females in Chars of the state are illiterate. In Barpeta district, which has the highest numbers of permanent and semi-permanent Chars the educational status of Char women has no difference. Gender inequality, discrimination, deprivation and violence are very common amongst the women of Char areas of Assam. The biggest burden that the women in Chars in Assam carry is early marriage and frequent and high childbirth (Ahmed, 2016). These experiences of char-chapori women can be seen through an intersectionality framework. Intersectionality scholars and activists argue that women's experience is also shaped by privileges and disadvantages stemming from other social groups that they are part of. Women of char areas of the Barpeta district are experiencing systematic power differences stemming from multiple identities such as gender, class, religious and social identity, and geographical and social locations which intersect and jointly impact women's experiences. Char women bear the burden of multiple subordinate identities which double the sufferings for them. It shows that oppression of the women in all circumstances must be understood and overlapping and layered.

Amidst all these difficulties and challenges *Amrapari* allows the women of char areas of Assam to earn and assure a sense of financial security. Most of the women artisans associated with *Amrapari* are agricultural labourers, small fishing net makers or homemakers. Several of them are also D-voters (sometimes also referred to as Dubious voters or Doubtful voters is a category of voters in Assam who are disenfranchised by the government on the account of their alleged lack of proper citizenship credentials) and facing litigation to prove their Indian citizenship. The condition of charwomen can be related to Dalit women. Many feminist scholars have narrated about the condition of Dalit women in their writings. Char women's socio-economic condition is reflexive of Dalit women who can be categorized as, 'downtrodden amongst the downtrodden' (Omvedt, 1979). Institutional patriarchy, feminization of poverty, and structural violence acted as 'Thrice burdened' for the char-chapori women.

For the women of *Amrapari*, the Ketha-making work brought them together and they extended support to each other as a group and fostered deep solidarity (Baruah, 2021). Before *Amrapari*'s intervention, these women who were engaged in different daily wage-earning jobs had to face gender-based discrimination in the workplace. They were paid less than their male counterparts for the same type of work. *Amrapari* is a platform that provides them the opportunity to earn a modest income in an environment that is free from gender-based discrimination (Baruah, 2021). Manjuwara notes a decrease in domestic violence in the places where *Amrapari* has helped with livelihood building. The women of char areas started valuing their skills and it helped them to feel dignified about their work. '*Amrapari gives them financial security it enables them to earn for their families and provides support to them in reclaiming equal status in the household. They no longer stand silently before violence. Now, their husbands sometimes help with stitching or caring for the children while the women artisan works*' narrated Manjuwara with a sense of joy. '*Amrapari enables me to intervene more effectively on the ground and revive women's traditional skills. It will take time to break deep-rooted patriarchal and economic patterns.*

Furthermore, a highly mechanized market is also a challenge' said Manju. Her desire to design Katha and the changes she sees in women's lives stimulates her work with hope and determination (Agarwal, 2022).

'Before Amrapari came into our life, we were leading a life without any aim and hope. We the women of char areas have been witnessing a lot of struggles in our daily lives. After joining Amrapari our life has undergone a huge transformation. Now when we sit with five or six women together, we generally talk about how our life used to be; now we don't have any reason to be sad. When our children asked for only Rs 5 to spend on schools, we couldn't help them and couldn't control our tears by seeing our helpless condition. We couldn't manage Rs5; being women our condition was more deplorable as our lives were dependent on the income of men in our family. Now Amrapari has given us this scope for earning, we can not only help us our family but also help ourselves' said Inuwarakahtun a woman artisan. Amrapari is not only a rural women artisans group, it also conducts regular programmes and awareness camps on women's health rights, reproductive rights, issues on domestic violence, child marriage and women's maternal mortality issues etc. Amidst all the darkness in the lives of char-chapori women, Amrapari is a source of light for them. It is committed to elevating women's labour. It also creates space for women's stories where women's stories are shared, heard and received with dignity, respect and compassion. It honours their struggle, stories and experiences. Women's retelling of stories catalyzes space of resistance and empowerment.

Forgotten Art: Making Women's Work Visible

Amrapari is not just a collective effort of the women artisans to fight against poverty and patriarchy but also an attempt to revive the traditional knowledge of women. Katha embroidery stitching—a unique embroidery artwork of the community, initiated by *Amrapari*. Womenfolk of the Miya community

traditionally have unique expertise in Katha stitching with different embroidery designs and they make traditional quilts with the stitch to use at home. *Amrapari* came forward to engage them in making wide-ranging products upgrading their traditional skill and subsequently linking them to the market to sell their finished products. Traditionally, Ketha making was considered a dignified skill for women who would stitch during their leisure time and varieties of design, patchwork and motifs were innovated. Threads of several colours were used aesthetically. To market the products, *Amrapari* started to publicize its Ketha works through social media platforms in October 2020. Within a short period, it gained popularity and support. Traditional designs along with a contemporary pattern are used to stitch Amrapari's Ketha [Cotton quilt]. These are century-old designs and were used by women wearing old cotton clothes. Once made, it was used solely for family members or gift items for close relations or simply as a decorative piece. Manju states, "*We continue to expand our repertoire of designs, patterns and colours. For a group of 5-6 women, it takes 5-6 days to stitch a ketha apart from doing all their household work and other caregiving responsibilities.*" She adds that the work speaks for itself, and their dreams are beautifully woven as Ketha stitches by the hands of these artisans. Ketha is an old indigenous art form originating in Bengal and is slowly emerging again from the edge of extinction. It is said to be over 1000 years old and has been mentioned in Vedic and pre-Vedic literature. Ketha originated as an art form where stories (katha) of the villages and the people were woven on cloth. It is a new source of livelihood for thousands of rural women and men. This indigenous art form would have died if not for the efforts of a few individuals who were keen to revive and sustain it (Roy, 2020). Ketha may be most closely described as layers of patched old clothes stitched with a pattern of stitching called 'running stitch' exclusively by the respective household ladies. The making of aketha or the art of stitching has remained an ethnic household art of Bengal including Bangladesh and also in Assam and Odisha. This stitching of Ketha is a unique traditional process of reusing old, torn, or unusable clothes of the house like sarees, dhoti, bed sheets etc primarily used for wrapping

newborn babies. However, ketha are also used for multipurpose and gradually evolved with different forms of art and embroidery and it can be used both in summer and winter as a lightweight blanket. *Amrapari* has taken the initiative to protect and promote this ethnic art and reinvent ketha patches as designer motifs on sarees, kurtas, apparel or other garments. Women are the repository of traditional knowledge which is an undeniable fact. However, due to the patriarchal nature of society, the traditional knowledge of women remains unrecognized and unrewarded. Women are entrusted with the task of the custodians of practising and preserving the unique traditions of their respective communities. The gender roles assigned to women as the caretaker of the household responsibilities subsequently made women learn many traditional skills and these skills are transmitted from mother to daughter. In this context, the art of making ketha can also be called a traditional skill in which women folk are engaged mainly. Due to socialization, women were always assigned to the private sphere that is the domestic sphere. This societal division of the public and private spheres enables women to learn such traditional skills related to weaving, and food processing and also helps them to learn medicinal plants and their uses. In that case, women became experts in their fields and were able to maintain their identities. Therefore *Amrapari* can be seen as a strategy to use women's expertise and skills, which has been harnessed and made as a primary tool for the empowerment of women and their self-sufficiency. Due to the patriarchal power structure in society, the household work of the women is never given importance. But *Amrapari* has given not only a scope to develop the work of the women but also made the invisible work of women visible. This traditional art of Kethastitch is well etched into the hands, hearts and memories of women of this region of Assam. This art is a traditional knowledge of women passed through different generations. But as it became the norm of the patriarchal society to neglect the work of women, this art has also been neglected and submerged. Earlier this art of practising kethastitching has been considered as the work of women to be done by women in their leisure time which hardly has any market value and is therefore not acknowledged as a very

valuable skill that women hold with them. However, their work has gained market value and it also provides them self-identity with self-confidence with the help of *Amrapari*.

Concluding Observation

Women in the patriarchal society are subjugated due to the structure of patriarchal forces, gender discrimination and exploitation of poverty. All these forces affect women in different layers. Char-Chapori women have gone through multiple layers of oppression emerging from varied sources. The shared experiences of the identity as women, social stigmatization as char women, difficult geographical terrain, poor socio-economic condition, etc togetherly shaped their collective effort against the force of patriarchy and poverty. *Amrapari* has made the work of women visible and enables them to claim access to decision-making and equally giving them financial security. Since its inception, it has been trying to secure gender justice, self-reliance and self-determination, economic security and sustainable livelihood for women. It has been working as a platform to reflect women's skills, build their self-confidence, earn self-respect and ensure women's empowerment through action.

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