

ABSTRACT

Women have constituted half of the human dominion throughout the annals of history. Therefore women are called as better half or half of the sky. It is without the share in all types of activities the human civilization can never progress. Therefore the participation of woman in all sectors of works throughout the ages can never be ignored. The participation of woman in house hold activities, social reforms, and political events is the factors that exhibit the status of woman of a country or a society.

Assam is situated in 'one of the greatest routes of migration of mankind'. Throughout the ages she received people of different stains particularly the Indo-Chinese, mongoloids, pouring into who added new elements to the country's population and culture complex. Assam is situated in the extreme north-east frontier of India in between 28^o and 24^o north latitude and borders on the hill states of Bhutan, Arunachal, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya in the vicinity of china and Tibet on the north of Burma on the east and the south and of Bangladesh on the west.

Among the three period of Assam history ancient Assam history roughly covers the period from the days of the epics to the every part of the thirteenth century. Medieval Assam history may be said to have began with coming of the Ahom to this land in the early part of the thirteenth century and covers the entire period of their rule till the formal inauguration of the British rule in 1826 begun the modern Assam covers till India became independent in august 1947 and thereafter.

The medieval Assam was absolutely ruled by the Ahom who hailed from Maulong, established their political supremacy in the year 1228 A.D. gradually they expanded and consolidated their position. The Ahom ruled over the country for a long period of 600 years when they had to subdue in the hands of British East India Company in 1826. The Ahom while hailed to the country did not accompany any woman with them. They made

matrimonial relations with the local people and thus survived their generations. In course of time they assimilated themselves with the local tribes and formed greater Assamese society. The Ahom rulers as well as the Ahom nobles paid high status to the women folk both in political and social matters. History is the evidence that this Ahom dynasty during their whole period of reign paid due honour and status to their women counterparts. Their social status was high, they received important places in the royal court, and they even participated the royal discussions during the time of emergency. Thus women played important role and enjoyed dignified status during the rule of Ahom dynasty. In the present study humble attempt has been taken to explore this unexplored dominion of women during Ahom rule in Assam.

The introductory chapter is the first chapter where the statement of the problem, significance of the study, review of related literature, objectives of the study, period of the study, sources of the study, methodology, hypothesis are mentioned with a short conclusion.

The second chapter deals with the physical phenomenon of the medieval Assam including her location, geographical background, origin of the name of Assam, people of Assam, origin of Ahom, advent of the Ahom in Assam, expansion of Ahom empire, formation of greater Assamese society during Ahom rule, social stratification, administrative system of medieval Assam, political conditions, Koch administration, Ahom administration, the king, mantra-parishad, the local governors, other officials, military administration, revenue administration, law and justice, socio-economic conditions and a short conclusion.

The third chapter deals with the role of women in the politics of medieval Assam with the sun points like, short introduction, participation of Assamese women in the political affairs, women ruler in ancient Assam, political participations of women in the Assamese folk tales, women as queen's regent, woman as Ahom ruler, queen Phuleswari, role of queen Phauching, role of NangabaklaGabharu, political influence of queen mother,

Assamese women in the Burmese court role of common women in politics. Muslim women and politics, political status of tribal women and a conclusion.

Fourth chapter elaborates the status of woman in medieval Assamese society by discussing the condition of early Assamese Society, the brief description of early Assamese society, the caste system in Assamese society, the position of women in Indian society, women and their importance in society, position of women in Assamese society, position of women in family and household women as housewife, women as mother, women as spouse, women in marriage and married life, types of marriage, polygamy in Assamese society, women and the concept of chastity, women and the practice of prostitution, women and the system of Pardah, status of widows, women and the system of sati, niyoga (marriage with the brother of husbands), social status of Muslim women, emergence of the Muslims in Assam, the conditions of women before Islam, Allah (SWT) gave the women their right, rights that Islam gives to women, human rights, civil rights. Muslim women have the right to outside of her home, Islam gives men and women equal rights, the social aspects of women in Islam, as a mother, as a sister in faith (in general), as a daughter, as a wife mahr (dowry), maintenance, good treatment, consideration and companionship, rape, marriage and sexuality, who may be married?, polygamy & polyandry behaviour within marriage, sexuality, both control, divorce, social status of tribal women, social and family structure of the different tribes, women of north eastern states, position of a girl child in a tribal family, job of women in tribal societies, marriage system, practice of exogamy, clan exogamy, cross cousin marriage, parallel cousin marriage, widow marriage, levirate marriage, stepmother marriage, daughter-in-law marriage, marriage with widow mother-in-law, and step daughter marriage forms, marriage by negotiation, marriage by exchange, marriage by service, marriage by elopement, marriage for the poor, marriage by mutual consent, marriage by force or capture, marriage among the matriarchal tribes, marriage by service. Seka or elopement, marriage by capture, marriage by temptation, Marriage by secretly becoming sleeping

partner, marriage by offering food, marriage with nephew or Nokrom, bride price, marriage gifts, polygamy, polyandry, female, chastity, adultery, divorce.

Chapter five discussed the economic status of women during the period of study elaborating the economic status of Assamese women, women in agriculture, women as salves and agricultural labourer, women in the cultivation work, women as salves and agricultural labourer, women in the cultivation work, women in crafts and industries, women in spinning and weaving, women in manufacture of cotton garments, women in embroidery works, property rights of women, economic rights of the wife. Stridhana, right of woman over her Stridhana, economic status of Muslim women, property rights, the right to seek employment, economic position of tribal women, agricultural contribution of women, weaving, inheritance of property.

The next chapter elaborates religious status of women. In the part of religious status Hindu women discussion is made on religious status of women in Vedas, religious cuts and beliefs of Assamese women, Saktism, Saivism, Vaishnavism, solar cult, Buddhism, other sects, religious status of women of ancient Assam, women compared to goddesses. Devadasi system, religious activities of women in medieval Assamese society, women as media and religious heads, temples and tanks by queens, religious zeal of Queen Phuleswari and so on. IN the part of the religious rights of Muslim women discussion is made on the Sufi female mystics and current female religious scholars in chapter is concluded with the religious right of tribal women.

Chapter seven deals with the role of women in the cultural life of Assam. Here discussion is made on the cultural status of Assamese women, cultural status of the tribal women and cultural status of Muslim women with the sub points like education and literature, music and dancing, Art of painting spinning, weaving and embroidery, dress, ornaments and articles of painting, spinning, weaving and embroidery, dress ornaments and articles of luxury used by Assamese women, food and drinks, dress and ornaments, a woman in

Islam has the right to get education, dress code of the Muslim women. The Thesis has been summed up with the concluding chapter. IN the conclusion it has been found that during the medieval period of Assam women enjoyed a life of dignity. They enjoyed proper status in the social matters, political affairs, and cultural events. They played special role in the economy of the Country. In the religious field. Assamese women had enjoyed dignified status. The life of Assamese women was far better than the women of other parts of India.