

CHAPTER-III

ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE POLITICS OF MEDIAVAL ASSAM

3.1: Introduction

The political status of women both in the ancient and medieval India was trapped in the domestic activities. Making a detailed study through that period, we find that women were mainly confined in the household activities entrusted the responsibility and duties of maintaining good order in the family. According to Prof. Indra, in ancient India, women were never thought fit for any sphere other than the domestic life. The intricate question of administration and government were held to be beyond their comprehension? The only duty they were given was of home management. A hymn on marriage in the RV and AV points out that in the domestic activities, women exercised the supreme authority and ruled over all the members of the family. The other important duty of the married women was to increase her husband's family by producing son. In an unambiguous verse of the AV, the ideal of marriage was stated in as 'God united the couple so that the wife might beget progeny for her lord and multiply the same, remaining always in the house'⁴⁸. Though the main role was limited only inside the four walls of the house, women belonging to the lower strata of the society, besides doing household chores, engaged themselves along with their husbands in the cultivation work and other arts and crafts, in order to maintain the family budget. Women of the upper strata of the society were not allowed to take any tasks outside the boundaries of the house.

⁴⁸. Indra, *The A Status of Women in Ancient India*, P—150.

Therefore, they used to spend their spare time in spinning and weaving, knitting, embroidery, kitchen gardening and household decorations. Spinning and weaving of clothes was one of the oldest industries in the country, which was run successfully by the women folk inside the house, which is indicated in the Rig Veda and Atharva Veda. From the above discussions, we may admit that women were not permitted to go beyond the border of house. They were thought to be incapable of any type of corporate activities, which was monopolized by men only. Women were even unaware of the political situation of the country.⁴⁹ The political upheaval, which was the common feature in the ancient and medieval ages, due to the external attacks and changes of ruling powers, was not their area of concern. They were physically and mentally thought to be too weak to understand and tackle about the political condition of the country. Therefore; one can hardly expect about the women's participation the political arena in ancient and medieval period.

3.2: Participation of Assamese women in the political affairs

The history of Assam was not different from that of Indian history. Throughout the ancient and medieval period, there was no democratic or representative system of government; naturally the question of arising political rights or adult suffrage for male or female does not arise. Only the village assemblies were democratic but only the men folk who were too aged people were allowed to participate in the discussions about the village matters. However, under the monarchical system of government, generally women were not given any share the administration of the country. In spite of this, we do get the instances of many Assamese women who were not lagging behind in contributing in the

⁴⁹. Shukra, IV-4-27, cited Indra, *The Status of women in Ancient India*, P-52.

administration by shouldering responsibilities as viceroy, governors, regents and managers of different institutions. Some ambitious women even manipulated political authority. They either ruled the country directly as a ruler or deftly influenced the court politics from behind the curtain. Some of them even fought gallantly at the head of the troops showing their valour in the battlefield. Let us first discuss about the women administrator in ancient Assam.

3.3: Women Ruler in Ancient Assam

In ancient Assamese history, there are references to women who actively participated in political activities with dexterity by sitting on the throne. Mention may be made of Nariraja referred to in the Mhb. The epic stated that Arjuna after performing Ashwamedha Yajna (for extending his sovereignty over the other kingdom) left his horse, which entered Manipur passing through Nariraja. According to some historians, this Nariraja was modern Jaintia hills. Nariraja was also known as Promilarajya or Strirajya that was ruled by the Jaintias in ancient times is referred to in the Jamini Bharata and Rajatarangini. According to Ahmed, this kingdom had a strange system of government wherein the state was ruled over by the womenfolk and the men were engaged in agriculture production and only in case of external dangers, they could come up for protection. But the authors like Madhavananda and RC. Majumdar opined that the kingdom of Strirajya was not ruled by any queen, but it was having a male king. But this statement is unlikely as the name of the state Nariraja or Strirajya itself means the "kingdom of women"⁵⁰. Even some tantrik work of Pag Som Zon Zan, referred to the ancient kingdom of kadali situated in the modern Nowgong district. The place is also associated with the activities of two famous Buddhist tantriks namely Minanatha and Gorakshanatha of a little period than Brahmapala. An elaborate description of the kingdom is found in the Bengali lyrics of Gorakshavijaya

⁵⁰ Altekar, *The position of women in Hindu civilization*, P-187.

and Mainamtir Gaan These works state that in the end of the 'til'" and ttm century AD., a courageous woman named Kamala, with the helpof Aher sister lylangala and ministers, ruled the kingdom, which was popularly knownat that time as Narirajya. The kingdom had a retinue of sixteen hundred femaleswho discharged the function of her ministers, cashiers, clerks, bodyguards etc.the male population was very poor and the females who were prominent in everyaffair of the country carried on business intercourse with the neighbouringcountry of Kamrup. This kingdom of Narirajaya was located by some in Nlanipuror Burma or Cachar or even in the north western frontier, but it is rather to belocated in the kadall, Nowgong ruled probably by a kachari or Jaintia queen,enjoying the liberty accorded to women by the Tantrik-Buddhists. According to P.C. Choudhury, the queen was ruling the kingdom possibly as feudatory of thePalas of Assam. Another women ruler of ancient Assam was one Mayanamati,the queen of Manikchandra of Rangpur (presently situated in Bangladesh, whichwas in ancient period a part of Assam), After the death of the later, king Dharmapala of Dharampura, who married Vanamali, the sister of Mayanamati, dared to take possession of the kingdom of Manikchandra. But queen Mayanamati wanted ti install her son Gopichandra on the throne of his father.Dharmapala was against this proposal.

Therefore, the widowed queen of Manikchandra had no other solution than asserting war against Dharmapala. Before that she formed a conspiracy with the ministers of Dharmapala and won over them on her side. A terrible bsttle on the bank of Tista was fought between queen Mayanamati and Dharmapala, where queen doggedly restored the kingdom of her husband by giving a fitting rebuff to the aggressive Dharmapala and installed her son Gopichandra on the throne with great elan.

3.4: Political participation of women in the Assamese folk tales

The folk-tales and legends also speak of such women who were not only courageous but also sacrificed their life for their welfare of Ahoms. All these kingdoms were always engaged in war to establish their domination by suppressing the others. But ultimately, the Ahoms subjugated most of the setribes and-built a United Kingdom expanding from Sadiya in the east to Manaha River in the west. If we go through this period, we find that the history is full of examples of accomplished women who participated in politics and administration either as a ruler or as a head of their troops in the battlefield. Some of the women, who could not serve the country directly, involved themselves in the political affairs of the other state by giving valuable suggestion to the king. Let us first go through such women who ruled the country as ruler⁵¹.

3.5: Women as Queen's Regent

The first instance we across was of the chief queen of Ahom king Taokhamti (1380-89). After Taokhamti occupied the throne of Ahom kingdoms, his first mission was against the Chutiyas to take avenging action for the death of Ahom king Sutupha (1384-78), who was treacherously killed by Chutiyas during a friendly visit to their kingdom. Before going out for expedition, Taokhamti appointed his chief queen as regent to look after the administration of the kingdom. The barren queen was power loving and jealous of her co-wife (mother of Ahom king Sudangpha). The latter was not only king's favorite queen but also an expectant mother at that time. The chief queen misused the authority entrusted to her by appointing and dismissing officers at her own resolve. The most heinous crime she did was by ordering the execution of her co-wife on charge of an alleged adultery. But the men who were to carry out the orders secretly spared the unfortunate victim of her life.

⁵¹ H. Chokladar, *Social life in Ancient India*, pp-59-60

They set her adrift on the Brahniaputra. A Brahman saved her life and gave shelter in his house at Habung. But her condition was critical. So, in spite of his best effort, the Brahman could not survive the life of the ill-fated queen. She died after giving birth to a son. This son afterwards became the powerful king of the Ahom kingdom namely Sudangpha (1397-1407). Because he was grown up and looked after by the Brahman as his own son, he was also known as Bamuni Konwar.

3.6: WOMEN AS AHOM RULER

3.6.1: Queen Phuleswari

The status of women reflected during the Ahom rule when women received golden opportunity to become the chief ruler of the Country. The instances of few queens, who achieved great success as a ruler. Queen Phuleswari, Queen Ambika and Queen Sarbeswari, the three consorts of Ahom king Siva Singha (1714-44) ruled the kingdom successfully, thus leaving remarkable records to their successors to be inspired with their ideals. These three queens had directly ruled the country successively assuming the title 'Bar—Raja'. King Siva Singha was greatly influenced by Brahman priests and astrologers. In 1722, his spiritual guides and astrologer forecasted that he was under the evil influence of the stars (chatra bhanga yoga). As a result he could be dethroned in the near future. Therefore, to avoid the wrath of the stars, he was advised by the priest and astrologer to hand over the charge of the administration of the kingdom to some convinced person.

The king at the instruction of the Parvatiya Gosain (priest) Krishnaram Bhattacharya, resolved to bestow the supreme vest of his kingdom to his chief queen Phuleswari and assumed the title 'Bar-Raja' or the 'chief-king' and minted coins in the joint names of her and her husband where she used the Persian legend, the first of its kind in Assam. Besides her fair name, the religious intolerance and bigotry of queen Phuleswari brought about a dreadful civil war in the country which continued down for half a century, thereby

disintegrating the strength of the country to such an extent that the once glorious Assamese nation,"who had not bowed the head of submission and obedience, nor had they paid tribute or revenue to the most powerful monarch; but who had curbed the ambition and checked the conquests of the most victorious princes of Hindustan and had baffled the penetration of heroes who had been styled conquerors of the world", became an easy prey to the first touch of Burmesespear. It seems that Phuleswari was more under the influence of the Brahmans, particularly the Pravatiya Gosain, in comparison to her husband. At the initiation of the Gosain, she intended to give Saktism the designation of state religion. To implement her plan fervently, she organized a Durga puja in a Sakta shrine and summoned all the Vaisnava preceptors and Sudra Mahantas.

The Vaisnava creed of Assam enjoyed upon all its followers a rigid avoidance of any association with the worship of Sakti or Durga and the most orthodox among them will not even cast a glance at any image, not to speak of any animal sacrifice made before the goddess of power. But the Gosains had no other alternative but to obey, as the command came from a sovereign to whom they were bound by the customs of the country to display implicit homage and obedience. So the Vaisnava Gosains went to the royal court near the hall of worship. They were obliged to bow their heads before the goddess, have their foreheads be smeared with the blood of the sacrificed animals and accepted nirmali and Prasad. All the vaisnava preceptors and Mahantas were very offended by the act of sacrilege by the queen. More than others, the powerful Mayamara Mahantas considered it as a serious insult to them. As a consequence, this incident began the confrontation of Maomariyas against the Ahom kingdom, which resulted in Mamariya Rebellion in the near future, which was one of the most factors for the collapse of the Ahom monarchy. Queen Phuleswari also changed the age-old burial system of the Ahoms and introduce the system of burning the dead. Queen Phuleswari offered many important titles to her own relatives.

Her brother Harinath was first made Bargohain and later Barpatra Gohain, her uncle Joyananda was made Dekial Barua and three of the maternal uncles subsequently were made Khanikar Barua, Chaudang Barua and Debi-gharar Barua. She also did some construction works. The Gaurisagar tank near the capital city was excavated by her and three temples were constructed on its bank dedicated to Siva, Vishnu and Devi. She was also a great patron of Sanskrit learning and started a Sanskrit school in the palace campus and also donated a number of lands. After the death of queen Phuleswari in 1731, king Siva Singha married her sister Draupadi. She was renamed as Ambika and was replaced in the place of Phulaswari as 'Bar-Raja'. This queen was a great sponsor of learning and education. At her inspiration the composite of the Hasti Vidyarnava, a great work on elephantology of international repute was cracked. Like her sister, some construction works were on her credit.

The Sivasagar tank at Rangpur was excavated by queen Ambika, which is the second biggest tank in Assam. On its bank, she erected the three temples dedicated to Siva, Vishnu and Devi. The siva temple with its large gold covered dome is the biggest and tallest of the temples in Assam. After her death in 1738, she was succeeded as 'Bar-Raja' by another wife of siva singha, named Enadari, who was renamed as Sarveswari. Emulating the senior two 'Bar-Raja' she also built a temple at sivasagar in the honor of her mother in law Keri Rajmao. Thus the three 'Bar-Raja' administered the state in their own style. Though the king helped the queens by giving valuable suggestions, but he did not meddle too much in the activities of the queens. The three consorts of king Siva Singha namely Phuleswari, Ambika and Sanleswari ruled the country successfully except a few instances of the display of feminine indiscretion.

About their success, Charles Rose, who in his edition of the correspondence of Lord Cornwallis wrote about the government of Assam by Queens, " The Assamese were

a most warlike nation, and had for a length of time successfully resisted all foreign invaders. Even Aurangzeb had failed. They never prospered more than when governed by females, as was the case in earlier part of the eighteenth century?

3.6.2: Role of Queen Chauching

Though we do not get any other instances of queens, ruling directly as a ruler, but they influenced the court policies remaining behind the main scene. In this context, we can mention the name of Queen Chauching, the consort of Swargadeo Suklenmung, popularly known as Gargayan Raja (1539-52). She was the combination of brain and beauty. The king often used to take her suggestion in the affairs of the state policies. She diplomatically creates the office of the Barpatra Gohain, the third minister of the Ahom kingdom. The queen attracted the king by giving the logical argument that the administration of the country was like a cooking pot, which was balanced only when it was placed over three supports. In the same way the balance of the government of the Ahom kingdom could not be depend on only two ministers, therefore the creation of the third minister was essential to maintain the balance of the administration. After the post of third minister was created, the Buragohain and Borgohain raised great objection. Then she clarified that, "The creation of the third noble in the king's cabinet is only just and proper. You cannot place the golden vessel of the country's administration on two supports only. A third party support is indispensable, and the king has given you that. The Buranji also recorded that according to her suggestion the king fortified the Ahom capital, which was then called Garhgaon or the city of ramparts and the king achieved the title Gargayan Raja.

3.6.3: Role of Nangabakla Gabharu

Another woman Nangabakla Gabharu, wife of the premier Thaomunglung Bargohain was a very daring lady and set an example of courage and determination. She even did not hesitate to arraign the king and his ministers in the open court when they decided to send

her son as a hostage to the Koch king after their defeat in the hands of the latter. During the reign of Chaopha Sukhampha, alias Khora raja (1553-1603), the Ahoms were terribly defeated by the Koches in the battles fought at the mouths of the Dikhou and Handia River in 1562. The Ahom kong then concluded a treaty with the koch king Naranarayana on most humiliating terms, according to which not only did the former acknowledged the suzerainty of the koches, but also surrendered the whole territory on the bank of the Brahmaputra and promised to pay war indemnity to the koch king. Along with these terms, the Ahom king also agreed to deliver the son of the chief nobles as hostages to the Koch kingdom. When it was decided to send Bargohain Thaomunglung's son along with the son of other nobles as .. hostages, the Bargohain's wife Chaochao Nangbakla invaders appeared on the scene, reducing the once prosperous valley of Assam practically to desert. Though the dream of Badan Chandra to get the power was fulfilled, but the latter will always be-criticized for the exhibition of his narrow self-interest at the cost of the independence of Assam.

3.6.4 : Political influence of Queen mothers

In the Ahom Courts the status of the Queen were also very respectful. They were also not lagging behind in intervening in the matter of politics. Oneisuch queen mother was Numali Rajmao, mother of the Ahom king Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811) and king Chandrakanta singha (1811-1817) who had a great influence in the administration of Ahom kingdom during the reign of her sons. Lt has been already discussed that during the reign of the above two Ahom kings, the real administration was in the hand Of the premier Purnanda Burhagohain. Though Purnanda was used to govern the country but he was used to take help of Rajmao in the matter of Statecraft. She was very diplomatic and far-sighted in the political affairs of the state. So purnanda sought the advice and guidance of the

Rajmao before implementing any subject of the statecraft. During the reign of Kamleswar singha and Chandrakanta singha the Ahom monarchy was facing a critical situation of internal disturbances and the insurgence of neighboring land. In this difficult situation Rajmao helped Purnanda by consulting and giving valuable suggestions to him in all complicated matters of the state. Along with Purnanda Burhagohain, Rajmao also was fed up by arrogance and atrocities committed by Badan Chandra upon the innocent subjects of kamrup. She was very upset at the death of Purnanda Burhagohain and could not forgive Badan Chandra for his activities. After the first Burmese invasion the latter become the de facto ruler of the Ahom kingdom, which the Rajmao could not tolerate. Therefore, when a quarrel ensued between Badan and Barbaruwa Dhani, the queen mother leaned towards the Barbaruwa and on her instigation Badan Chandra was assassinated by a mercenary soldier Rup singh.

3.6.5: Assamese women in the Burmese Court

Some Assamese women influenced the court policies of Burmese king also. In this connection, we find a daughter of one Ahom prince Bijay Barmura Gohain was presented to the Burmese king Badawpaya in 1797. These princes soon became a concubine of Burmese king and the latter made her his favorite consort. It is said that the people of the entire city celebrated on her arrival at the Burmese capital Ava. The entire town was decorated by unprecedented pomp and magnificence. Many sweepers were appointed to sweep the roads and clear the entire city. The most expensive and stylish articles were exhibited on the shops for the occasion and cannons were accumulated at every corner of the streets. Captain Cox, the British resident at Ava wrote in his diary on June 26, 1797, "In compliance with a request from the king, and with a view to conciliation, I have decorated in my house in honor of the arrival of an Assamese prince for his Majesty". Badawpaya, toward his newly married consort and also to fulfill his imperialistic desire against the British, renewed his attempt to place the father of his Assamese consort on the throne of Assam in August 1797.

Another eminent lady in the harem of Burmese king Badawpaya was Rangili. Badan Chandra was successful in getting aid from the Burmese king Badawpaya due to the influence of Rangili, the Assamese consort of the latter. Rangili, who belonged to the respectable Assamese aristocrat family, was offered by Purnanda Burhagohain to a powerful Singpho Chieftain Bichanong as a peach proposition in 1805. Bichanong in his turn presented Rangili to the Burmese king Badawpaya. The princess soon became a favorite of the Burmese monarch. Her influence on the Burmese king is best illustrated by her ability to persuade the Burmese king to assist a force of Burmese soldiers to Badan Chandra Barphukan, when he was fugitive at Amarapura for 16 months. Badawpaya, conceding to the queen's Pursuit, sent a strong army of 8000 to assist Badan Chandra.

Hemo Aidew was another important Assamese lady, who was presented along with heavy indemnity to the Burmese commanders by Badan Chandra after the first Burmese invasion. Hemo was handed over to the Burmese king Badawpaya by the Burmese commanders. She influenced the court politics of Ava, the capital of Burmese during the reign of Burmese king Bagyidaw (1819-37), successor of Badawpaya. Her supreme and unrivalled influence in the court of Ava continued till 1835 as is clear from the account of Captain S.F. Hannay, who went to 'Bhamo about that time, "Bhamo is the Jaghir of the Assamese Raja's sister who is one of the ladies of the king of Ava".

3.7: Role of common women in politics

It was not that only the women of the royal family participated in the politics. The common women of upright moral fiber, valor and patriotism were not rare. In the Ahom Mughal conflict in 1636-38, during the reign of Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-41), not only the Assamese men but also the women-folk of Assam were interested to join the royal forces of the Ahom king to fight against the Mughal enemy. When the Ahom army, under the leadership of Lomai-Tamuli Barboruwa, seriously defeated the Mughals in October 1638

on the bank of Bharali, then the defeated Mughal soldiers retreated to Gauhati. According to the Buranjis the Women-folk started beating the fleeing Mughal soldiers with bamboo rods.

During Mir Jumla's invasion of Assam in 1662, when king Jayadvaja Singha failed to defeat his kingdom from the former, Jayadvaja Singha made his escape first to Charaideo and then to Namrup in upper Assam, leaving the charge of the capital to Burhagohain, Bargohain and Barpatra Gohain. On his way to Namrup, a woman of the fisherman community met king Jayadvaja Singha on Dalaugiri road and daringly reprimanded the king saying, "Oh king, you have spent the last fifteen years of your reign in pleasure and luxury only; had you been conscious enough to give at least fifteen sods of soil where it was necessary, in these long fifteen years, why such a state of things should have befallen you. Now leaving us in such a state of affairs where do you want to go?"

During the Moamariya regime in 1769 A.D. the old king Lakshmi Singha was imprisoned and Ramakanta, son of Naharkhora Saikia, was declared king. Taking the opportunity of the dethronement of Lakshmi Singha many of the nobles and princes wanted to usurp the throne. With that view, they organized a series of intrigues called in the buranjis 'Konwar Bidroh'. In these intrigues many of the betrayed princesses, court-ladies, wives of nobles and so also many ligiris participated with a hope of getting power and status or chance to improve their lot. The foremost among the ligiris were Bhakti, Langkoli, Rupohi, Chandmati and Sahita etc. In the second stage of the revolution by the Moamariyans, women were also provided the art of military training by a weaver Harihar tanti on the north bank. When the insurgent defeated the royalist forces sent against them under the leadership of the latter in 1786 at the Garaimari bil and other places, the army not only contained the male soldiers but also a good number of women stalwarts who joined the force with elan.

Thus, we find that Assamese women played a very gallant and significant part with great distinction in shaping the destiny of her country. They did not bind themselves in the four walls of the house but daringly came out of their limited spheres. They participated in the political field along with the men folk by casting aside their traditional customs and native conservatism. They were successful in achieving for themselves the esteem and regard in society. They exercised their influence in the government of the country by engaging themselves in different political activities.

3.8: Muslim Women and politics

Participation of women in politics in a controversial matter in Islam, yet many classical Islamic scholars, such as al-Tabari, supported female leadership⁵². In Wearly Islamic history, women including Aisha, Ume Warqa, and Samra Binte Wahaib took part in political activities⁵³. Other historical Muslim female leaders include Razia Sultana, who ruled the Sultanate of Delhi from 1236 to 1239,⁵⁴ and Shajarat ad-Durr, who ruled Egypt from 1250 to 1257⁵⁵.

In 1988 Pakistan became the first Muslim Majority state with a female Prime Minister. In the past several decades, many countries in which Muslims are majority, including Indonesia⁵⁶, Pakistan,⁵⁷ Bangladesh⁵⁸, and Turkey⁵⁹, and Kyrgyzstan have been led by

⁵² Benazir Bhutto: *Daughter of Tragedy*" by Muhammad Najeeb, Hasan Zaidi, Saurabh Shulka and S. Prasannarajan, *India Today*, January 7, 2008

⁵³ Joved Ahmed Ghamidi, *Religious leadership of women in Islam*, April 24, 2005, *Daily - Times, Pakistan*

⁵⁴ Ahmed, Nazeer. *Islam in Global History: From the Death of Prophet Muhammed to the First World War*. Xlibris (2000), p284—86..

⁵⁵ Shajarat_ (Shaggar, Shagar) *al Durr And her Mausoleum in Cairo*

⁵⁶ Karon, Tony. "Megawati: The Princess Who Settled for the Presidency." *Time* (July 27, 2001).

⁵⁷ Ali A. Mazrui, Pretender to Universalism: *Western Culture in a Globalizing Age*, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Volume 21, Nazeer Ahmed. Number 1, April 2001.

⁵⁸ MacDonald Elizabeth and Chana R. Schoenberger. *"The 100 Most Powerful Women: Khaleda Zia."* *Forbes* (August 30, 2007).

⁵⁹ "Tansu Qiller." *About.com*.

women. Nearly one—third of the Parliament of Egypt also consists of women ⁶⁰. According to Sheikh Zoubir Bouchikhi, Imam of the Islamic Society of Greater Houston's Southeast Mosque, nothing in Islam specifically allows or disallows voting by women.[m] Until recently most Muslim nations were non—democratic, but most today allow their citizens to have some level of voting and control over their government. The disparate time at which women's suffrage was granted in Muslim-majority countries is indicative of the varied traditions and values present within the Muslim world. Azerbaijan has had women's suffrage since 1918. Saudi women have been allowed to vote in some election ⁶¹. But Assam is concerned, during Medieval period any instances of political participation of Muslim Women are not seen. The cause might be that they did not receive any opportunity as the Government was of the Ahoms. But in the modern politics Muslim women are very commonly seen in the active participation of state politics.

3.9: Political Status of Tribal Women

The present political system was unknown to the tribal societies in the beginning. From the time immemorial; the different tribes formed traditional village councils, which dealt with the customary laws that ran the village in a systematic way. Only the males were allowed to become the members of the village councils. Women of the tribal community of Northeast India were not permitted to be the members of the village councils. They could not give their opinion in any public affairs whether it was decision making for marriage,

⁶⁰ Shaheen, Jack G. (2003). "Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People". *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 588 (1): 171-193 [184]. doi: 10.1177/0002716203588001011

⁶¹ Saudi women take part in election, "BBC News.

divorce, dispute or planning strategies for war and raids, kidnapping etc. They were thought to be incapable in the process of decision-making and were considered fit only as the in charge of household works and co-worker in the agricultural activities. But the Akasociety was different from the other tribal societies of Arunachal Pradesh. In Akasociety, 'Rani' system was found to be prevalent and even the two important Akavillages jamiri and Hushigaon both still have Ranis⁶². The ancestors of these Ranis used to rule the Aka villages in the past days. As successors of the royal lineage, the Ranis are given high social honour and privilege in the entire Akasociety even in the present days. The Ranis not only captured the respectable position, but also commanded influence in the political life of the village. She used to be present in all the vital meetings of village council and her opinion was also given due weight in any important decision-making process of the village. As inheritor of the ruling dynasty, the Ranis were expected to help the poor and needy people of the village. These reflected their superlative position in the political life of the Aka society in the past days.

3.10: Conclusion:

The Chapter very clearly shows that how women had enjoyed the political status in the Country under the Ahoms. This was possible only due to the liberal and cooperative mentality of the Ahoms as well as the people of the Country.

⁶² Raghuvir Sinha, *The Akas*, 1962, pp. 61-62.