**Topic: STATUS OF WOMEN UNDER THE AHOMS IN MEDIEVAL ASSAM.**

**SUBMITTED BY**

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**Introduction**

The status of a women is a universal phenomenon and the development of a society is notably depends on the status of them. Women have constitutes half of the human dominion throughout the annals of history. So without participation of the women the activities of human civilization can never progress. Therefore the participation of women in all sectors of works throughout the age scan never been ignored.

 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. The ancient Assam was historically known as Kamrupa kingdom. The historical account of Assam begins with the establishment of Varman dynasty by Pushya Varman of ancient period of Assam and the 12th century has marked the end of Kamrupa kingdom and the period of ancient Assam. Medieval Assam history may be said to have begun with the coming of the Ahoms 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 and modern Assam covers till India became independent in august 1947 and thereafter.

 In our projected study we have clearly discussed all the relating matters of the women in the reign of Ahom dynasty. We find that during this period women enjoyed very dignified status and played very important role in political, social, economic, religious and cultural affairs. Though the status of some of the women were poor, who lives were as slave (dakhi, ligiri, nattaki) but some of the women were able to keep their steps at the pages of history. They had special status in the family matters. They are main preserver of a family economy. Women are main source of cultural matters of a society. In the political matters, they play very high position. Among them queen Bar Raja Phuleswari, queen Ambika, queen Sarveswari, Mula Gabharu, Ramani Gabharu, Jayamati, Chauching etc can be remembered. They stood as the icon of the power and strength of the women during that period and also the mothers of queens or prience was played special role to assist the kings in court matters.

 Thus, women also enjoy a prestigious place in religious matters.Women are considered as the symbol of knowledge and wisdom, they are the central point of strength and energy. Therefore women were worshiped as the Goddess of Saraswati, Kali, Durga. They are also considered as Lakshmi. All these images signify the status of women in the society. Thus we find that the status of women was high. They enjoyed their life. The Ahoms could provide the people a life of peace and security.

**Objectives of the study**

History is the evidence that this Ahom dynasty, during their whole period of reign paid due honour and status to their women counterparts. So that our work aims to study the status of women during Ahom reign and how they directly and indirectly played political economic role in different times, their contribution to the state administration and development of political relation with other states along with the study of how they played role to society and contribution to the socio-cultural aspect.

**Methodology**

 The present study follows historical and descriptive method. The study solely based on secondary data. Various secondary sources like books, journals, published works of different scholars etc have been used to collect the required data.

**Significance of the study**

History is the evidence of the status of women during the reign of Ahom dynasty. During this time women status was high, they received important place in the royal court, 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. But unfortunately very few research works has been carried out on this important subject matter, hence the present study has under taken a humble attempt to explore this unexplored zone of the Ahom dynasty.

**Status of women under Ahom in medieval Assam**

 **“**Assam, is situated in ‘one of the greatest routes of migration of mankind’. Down the ages she received people of different strains particularly the Indo- Chinese Mongoloids, pouring into India, who added new elements to the country’s population and culture-complex.”**1** Early thirteenth century becomes important in the pages of history of migration into the province of Assam. In this time Ahom migrated to Assam in 1228 under the leadership of Chaulong Sukapha. They were the successful warrior. They could gradually occupy the political suzerainty of the whole province and ruled the country for a long period of six hundred years. “Sukapha left his homeland in about 1215 A D to seek his fortune elsewhere. He was accompanied by a few nobles, few hundred followers and a retinue of two elephants and 300 horse.”**2** He had as weapons swords, spears, bows and arrows, besides 10 special sword called ‘Hengdans’. “For thirteenth years he

**1**S.L. Baruah, A Comprehensive History of Assam, munshiram manoharlal publishers pvt ltd., New Delhi,1997,p3

**2**Ibid, pp220-221

wandered about the hilly country of the Patkai, making occasional raid on Naga villages and in AD 1228 he arrived in Khamjang.”**3** On the way towards Kamrupa, Sukapha faced a few obstacles which he reduced to submission with the policy “blood and repine”, finally he reached Namruk (Namrup) in the year 1228 and founded his head quarter at Tipam. He reached the Brahmaputra Valley in 1228 and had been moving from place to place till he settled at Charaideo in 1253. Sukapha, bydint of his policy of peace and conciliation subjugated the local tribes like Moran and Borahis. Thus he started the beginning which continued his successors and they conquered almost all the local tribes and expanded the geographical boundary of the mighty Ahom kingdom.

 The Ahoms established a strong and stable Government, gave peace and prosperity to the subject of Assam and successfully resisted many foreign invasions including mighty mughals. The social life of the Ahom kingdom was very simple and liberal. At the time of the advent of Ahoms, the people of the Brahmaputra valley were divided in two broad division i.e. the hindus and the non-hindu ethnic groups. The hindu included Brahmanas, caste hindus and the hinduised royal families, converters and sudras. The non-hindu tribe was the second group. In medieval time though the position of women was subordinate to men, but they enjoyed great freedom in the society, women played an important role in all family affairs. In our projected study we explain that what was the status or position and right have a woman during the reign of Ahom dynasty in medieval period of Assam.

**Political and administrative status of women during the reign of Ahoms**

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,

**3**Sir Edward Gait, A History of Assam, Globel Net Publication, fourth edition,2022, p8

we find that women were mainly confined in the house hold activities entrusted the responsibility and duties of maintaining good order in the family. Though the main role was limited only inside the four walls of the house but which women are belonging to the lower class of the society, besides doing households cores, engaged themselves along with their husbands in the cultivation work and other art and crafts, in order to maintain the family budget. Women in the upper class of the society were not allowed to take any tasks outside the boundaries of the house. Therefore they used to spend of their time in spinning weaving, knitting, embroidery, kitchen gardening and household decorations. 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. However, under the monarchical system of government, generally women were not given any share the administration of the country. But 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 curtains. Some of them even fought gallantly at the head of the troops showing their valour in the battlefield.

 The status of women reflected during the Ahom rule when women received golden opportunity to become the chief ruler of the country. “Monarchy was the normal form the Government although it was somewhat peculiar. The king was the head of the administration.”**4** By the way, a few queens also achieved great

**4** Sir Edward Gait,Ibid, p268

success as a ruler. Queen Phuleswari, queen Ambika, queen Sarbeswari, the three consorts of Ahom king Siva Singha ruled the kingdom successfully. These three queen had directly ruled the country successively assuming the title ‘Bar Raja’. “In 1722, king Siva Singha’s spiritual guides and astrologer forecasted that he was under the evil influence of the stars( chatra bhanga yoga).”**5** As a result he could be dethroned in the near future and he was advised by the priest and astrologer to hand over the charge of the administration of the kingdom to some convinced person. Then siva singha hand over his administration to his chief queen Phuleswari. “Phuleswari was originally a dancer attached to the Siva temple at Dergaon. Her original name was Phulmati.”**6** She assumed the title Bar Raja and made coins in the joint names with her husband Siva Singha, where she used Persian language, 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. Phuleswari was more under the influence of the Brahmans, particularly the Pravatiya Gosain. 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.

 But the Vaisnava avoided the worship of Sakti or Durga. They did not speak of any animal sacrifice made before the goddess of power. Respect the command of king they went to the royal court. Where they obliged to bow their heads before the goddess and have their foreheads be smeared with the blood of the sacrifices animals and accepted nirmali and Prasad. All the Vaisnava followers were very offended. They considered it as a serious insult to them. As a consequence, Moamoria Rebellion was fought in the future which was one of the

**5** S.L. Baruah, op. cit., p294

**6** Ibid., p294

most factors for the collapse of the Ahom monarchy. Phuleswari also changed the

age old burial system of the Ahoms and introduce the system of burning the dead. Queen phuleswari offered many important title of her own relatives. She also did some construction works. The Gaurisagar tank 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 Sanskrit school.

 “After the death of Queen Phuleswari, king Siva Singha married her sister Draupadi and she was replaced in the place of Phuleswari as Bar Raja.”**7** She was renamed with Ambika. Ambika was a great sponsor of learning and education. At her inspiration the composite of her 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. “After her death, she was succeeded as Bar Raja by another wife of Siva Singha, named Enadari, who was renamed as Sarveswari.” **8**She also built a temple at Sivasagar in the honour of her mother.

 Thus, this three Bar Raja administered the state in their own style. Though the King helped the queens by giving valuable suggestions but he did not middle to much activities of the queens. The three consorts of king Siva Singha namely Phuleswari, Ambika and Sarveswari ruled the country successfully except a few instance of the display of feminine indiscretion.

 Though we do not get any other instances of queens, ruling directly as a ruler but they influence the court policies remaining behind the main scene.

**7** Ibid., p 295

**8** Ibid., p295

In this context, we can remember the queen Chauching, the consort of Swargadeo Suklenmung, popularly known as Gargayan Raja. He 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 Buranjis also recorded that according to her suggestion the king fortified the Ahom capital, which was called Gargaon and because of that the king achieve the title Gargayan Raja. Thus we told that the Ahom courts, the status of the queen were also very respectful. One such queen mother was Numali Rajmao, mother of the Ahom king Kamaleswar Singha and Chandrakanta singha, who had a great influence in the administration of Ahom kingdom during the reign of her sons. During the reign of above two kings the real administration was in the hand of the Purnananda Burhagohain but he used to take help of Rajmao in the matter of state. During that time Ahom monarch was facing a critical situation of internal disturbances and the insurgence of neighboring land. In this difficult situation Rajmao helped Purnananda by consulting and giving valuable suggestion to him in all complicated matters of the state.

 It was not that only the women of the royal family participated in the politics. The common women also participates the politics. When the Ahom army under the leadership of Momai –Tamuli Barborua, seriously defeated the Mughals in October 1639 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. On the other hand during the moamoria rebellion some of the women were also provided the art of military Training.

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. They exercised their influence in the government of the country by engaging themselves in different political activities.

**Social status of women**

 The nature and the mind of human being both combine to form an organization. This organization is known as society. Both early and medieval society was predominantly rural society in nature. They also constituted and characterized by powerful sentiments of kinship, locality, caste and community. In the traditional rural Assamese society, despites a subservient status, the Assamese women of various castes suffered less from social disabilities than her counterparts in some other region of India. Some of the strict social customs, like child marriage, sati did not affect the Assamese women like the women of other parts of India. The social structure of a civilization to a great extent is based upon the status of women in its various periods. Since the origin of society, women have become an integral part of the social structure. “Women were placed under no disability in their social life and activities. They were refined and enlightened and active and versatile in their accomplishment.”**9**

 Women play a very significant role in forming and shaping a house. She played different types of role in a family such as mother, wife, adviser, cook, and an honorable host for the guest etc. she is chiefly responsible for domestic care and love and the socialization of her children. As a wife she not only helps her husband in some his work but also provide moral support to her husband during his

**9** Sir Edward Gait, op. cit., p290

up-hill struggle for the family’s survival. The household and the family was the place where the women enjoyed abundance of honor, affection and sympathy. In the Ahom period, we get the reference of royal consorts, who occupied proud positions. We find that the kings were highly influenced by their queens. The queens began to exercise their influence in the politics also. At the instance of Chaoching ahom king suklengmung created the third minister Barpatra Gohain. When the Ahom king Siva Singha came to know that he might lose his throne due to the evil influence of the stars, he handed over the reign of the government to his Chief Queen Phuleswari who took the title Bar-Raja. Her sister Ambika and Sarveswari succeeded her as Bar-Raja respectively. These references help us concluded that women of the royal families were given the status equal to their husbands.

 Marriage played a significant role in the society. Along with the vedic rites, the Assamese people followed some special rites and procedures. “Though they followed the role of Assamese Hindu marriage ceremony but their real rite is called Chaklang.”**10** During this ahom age polygamy was a common practice. It was commonly practiced by princes or nobles. Purdah system was unknown in the ancient and medieval Assamese society. The Assamese society were free to move and take equal share in the agricultural works with the men folk in the society without covering their faces. Purdah system was not found in the Assamese society in the beginning of the medieval period. The reason was that firstly, the Assamese society was highly influenced by the tribal women were given a large degree of freedom in every matter and they never wore veil or covered their heads. Secondly, purdah system was found to be introduced in the Indian society by the Mohammedans and Muslims rulers. The muslims could not invade Assam for a

**10** Ibid., p 291

longer period and that is why the purdah system was unknown for the women of Assam. But after the initiation of the Vaishnavite movement and rigidly practiced among the women of the Assamese Hindu society.

 The stress of purdah in the Assamese society certainly brought degradation in the position of women. Widowhood was a curse for any hindu women. After the death of her husband, she had only two paths to track on. One she had to sacrifice her life by immolating on the funeral of her husband by becoming a Sati. Another, she has to lead a life of piety and absolute abstinence. The treatment, which she received from the family and the society was inhumane and humiliating. But gradually the system was changed and a little towards the widow, who were subsequently allowed to marry.

 Thus, we find that women have high status of the social life during the time of Ahoms but some of the times they felt lowest position of the society.

**Economic status of women**

Assamese women played a vital role in socio-economic functioning of the state which cannot be ignored in any way. They contributed in many ways to the family wealth and income by engaging themselves in different economic activities. But unfortunately their works were not accounted as economic share to the family or country. Therefore it becomes very necessary to make a comprehensive and expedient study of contribution of women in the Assamese society. Due to the scarcity of the availability of the reliable sources it is very difficult to find the actual economic status and the economic activities of women in the ancient and medieval Assamese society. To find out the economic contribution of women, let us analyze in brief the economy of Assam in those days and the role of women in it.

 The economy of Assam was depended mainly on agriculture and cattle rearing. Women were engaged in both the above works and played a major role. Rich people did not engage themselves in the agricultural work. They employed male and female laborers for the purpose of plough and reaping. During the Ahom period we find that wealthy landlords hired servants for the agricultural works. Through we do not get any details about the work of the female slave but observing the low class female slaves and laborers in the rural society of Assam in the present days, which undoubtedly comes as a tradition from the previous days, so we may told girl slaves were not only engaged in the household woks but were also occupies in the agriculture works during transplanting the seeding and reaping the crops. Similarly women of the peasants and lower classes also helped their husbands by engaging themselves in the cultivation work by sorting of seeds, uprooting of seeding, transplanting harvesting etc. they also took economic burdens of the family in their shoulders.

 On the other hand spinning and weaving were entrusted to women from the very early period. Women of early Assamese society were engaged in this occupation. Assamese women contributed a large part of share in the form of handloom industry. “Industry was highly developed in the Ahom period. There are references to weavers, spinners, gold-smiths, potters and wokers in ivory, bamboo, wood, hide and cane, according to muhammadan historians the people were very skilful in the weaving of embroidered silk cloths.”**11** In the Ahom period the professional weavers known as Tatis, occupied a important place in the society.

**11** Ibid.,p303

During this period, spinning and weaving not just a hobby for the females but it was made compulsory for every woman by the royal court during the reign of Ahom king Pratap Singha. By this art female of the region were able to become self dependent in the worse situation, they could even share the economic responsibilities of the family. The credit goes to Momai Tamuli Borbaruah for molding weaving habit of Assamese women in to professional form and consequently become a source of livelihood for many Assamese women.

 Various examples can be cited to prove that women of Assam of all status and position were proficient in the art of spinning and weaving. Even queens and ladies of high birth considered this part of their household duties. To supervise th duties of every man and women, one officers was appointed in each village and anybody found neglecting his or her works without any responsible case was punished. The women also appointed to supervise the looms in the royal herem. Some queens also took interest in training the girls as well as looking after the activities of the looms, which were in the royal place campus. Queen Sarveswari, consort of king Siva Singha started as a school on the place campus, where under her own supervision the young girls of different communities were taught the art of spinning, weaving and singing and dancing, batch by batch. The government appointed some persons to supply raw materials for the looms of the prominent queens of the Ahom kings. The Raidangia Phukan and Raidangia Barua were under the Raidangia queen to manage her state as well as to see the activities of the paiks who were in change of supplying yearns and other raw materials for the looms of the queen and in the same way under the parbatia queen, there were there were the other officers known as Parbatia Phukan and Parbatia Barua for such work. Further there were higher officers appointed by the state to supervise the activities of these people. Expertise in the art of weaving and spinning has always gives a highest status of Assamese women. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan commented about the proficiency of weaving and spinning of an Assamese women by saying, “every Assamese women, be she daughter of a Brahman or a sudra, a Buddhist or animist, a mohammedan or Christian, a price or a bagger, is a weaver by birth.” Knowledge of weaving was an essential qualification of her in those days to get a ready disposal in the matrimonial market. Apart from weaving, Assamese women were also made embroidery on the cloth to give a good look.

 There after we discuss about the status of the women in property right during the reign of Ahom kings. “The family was patriarchal and daughter had no right to their father’s properties. She had, however, her claim to the bridal gifts and presents and was entitled to maintenance, after the death of her husband, by her sons or by the brothers of her husband. At the death of the father, usually in case of commoners, separation and division took place, the youngest son getting the first preference in choosing his own share. Among the nobility, the usual practice was to hold the land in joint partnership and divide the profits at the end of the year.”**12**

 Thus, the position of women was subordinate to man in some of the economic condition. But some of the property absolutely control under the women i.e. Stridhana. Stridhana might be acquired by women through inheritance or partition or in the form of her parents, husband or relatives. Stridhana originated through the customs of the bride price obtained by the bride’s father from the groom, when the marriage was performed. She had fully liberty to spend it during her life time. After her death, this property went to her children but if she died childless the property went to her parents or their next of kin. She might enjoy it herself and her husband has no right over it.

12 S.L. Baruah, op.cit., p421

 The tribal women of Assam during the ahom reign played a vital role in the economic configuration of the family as well as that of society. Their valuable contribution can be observed by their. They Engaged a variety of economic activities to increase the family wealth and income. Their economic share of the family call be scrutinized by their different fundamental and non ending activities of household such as pounding the peddy, food preparation, collection of firewood from the jungle, cleaning and washing clothes and utensils, child bearing and caring, family management, water carrying, rearing and feeding of domestic birds and animals and a host of other activities associated with the house. Outside the

household too, tribal women carry out many tasks such as selling of vegetables and fruits in the market.

 So we told that the contribution of Assamese women to the economy of the country was very high. But it may be seen that their status was low in some of the parts or time.

**Religious status of women**

Religious right and the privileges play a dominant role in every person’s life, be it man or women. It has been observed that women enjoyed a good position in respect to the religious matters in the history of medieval Assam. From the ancient time religion was female worship centric. There was a belief that women were especially related to the earth. Women actively took part in the religious ceremonies. From the very beginning of the civilization Assamese women were deeply religious minded and worshiped many deities. But they did not have ant distinct faith or religious belief. All the religious duties and activities performed by the husband were equally shared by his wife. In the Assamese society we do not get any direct evidence regarding the religious position and status of women. But sometimes they have the equal status to Goddess. So we told that women were highly respected in the society. During the Ahom reign, they did not restrict the religious milieu to any certain tradition.

 During the reign of ahom dynasty, we find about devadasis, institution of natis or dancing girls, which was prevalent in ancient Assam. The duties of dancing girls were to fan the idol with camara to prepare garlands and seeing and dance before the god. The introduction of dancing girls in temples, no doubt tended to affect their moral and spiritual atmosphere. Some people used to visit the shrines not for paying respect to the deities but for enjoying the services of the devadasis. Dancing girls were also employed as spies and the custom was in vogue even during Ahom period. Women in the medieval period became aware in religious discourse, by reading the religious books. Some women are teachings of the Gita and could also take part in the logical discussion. The religious fervor of some of the queens resulted in construction of temples. Queen Phuleswari was a great devotee of Saktism and tried to make it the state religion. But her passion as saktism created great danger for the Ahom kingdom. She forced the mahantas to bow down their heads before the goddess of durga in a sakta shrine and compelled them to besmear their foreheads with the blood of the sacrificed animals and made them accept nirmali and Prasad. The moamoriya mahanta considered it as a great insult. Which resulted in moamoriya rebellion and this was the most important factor for the downfall of moamoriya rebellion. However, Phuleswari was a great patron of literature and Sanskrit education. She started a Sanskrit school within the place campus. Queen and upper classes women of Assamese society were educated and they showed their interest in the field of education by patronizing poets and writers.

 In the tribal society during the time of ahom reign, they believe in one supreme god. They did not have any idol or place of worship. They believe in god and evil spirits and other god heads dwelling in the rocks, forest, grove, streams and rivers. They have fear of the in finite and have respect for nature form this arose the practice of ceremonial offerings and sacrifices.

 Thus it has been observed that women enjoyed a good position or status in respect to the religious matters in the history of medieval Assam during the reign of Ahom dynasty.

**Educational status of women**

 Women in the ancient period were highly educated with full knowledge of grammar, logic, lexicon and had power of reasoning. Some of them were able to mount to the peak of victory and achieved profound admiration from the society. Through we find only few examples of educated ladies in ancient Assam, but the sources of the medieval period, reffered to lots of learned women belonging to royal rich and well to do families and to the class of dancing girls. Chouching the consort of the ahom king Suklengmung, gargaya raja, who hailed from the neighbouring Nara country, was an accomplished scholar in the ahom language and it said that she could write in ahom language with toes of her feet. During that time the ladies of the Bhuyan families were comparatively well educated. The daughter of Pratap Bhuyan named Bhanumati, who was married to Koch king Naranarayana was well educated and had great interest in Sanskrit literature. She became chief queen of king and changed her name from Bhanumati to Ratnamala. On her and his husband inspriration, the great Sanskrit scholar Purusottam Bhattacharya wrote the Sanskrit grammer in order to make the learning of Sanskrit easy for all classes of people and named it on the name of queen called “Prayog Ratnamala”. Queen Phuleswari was a great patron of education. She was the first person who established a Pathsala at the place campus. Where education was mainly impart in Sanskrit. “On the other hand, sukumar Barkaith under the order of the Ahom king Siva Singha and his queen Ambika a profusely illustrated voluminous work “Hasti Vidyarnava”, which dealt in the diseases and treatment of elephants.” **13**Along with this, many queens and support of the king patronizes the poets and writers for the advancement and improvement of Sanskrit and Assamese literature and development of other branches of culture in the kingdom.

 So that all section of people could read and understand the religious book of the vaisnava religion, the vaisnavite age brought about a renaissance in the field of education. Which put some affect on women too. So that women were inspired to become educated. They read holly books of vaisnava religion such as Ghosa, Kirtana, Bhagavata etc.

**Cultural status of women**

The role of the women in cultural activities is very important. The sculpture of the period portrayed different dancing poses. Before the advent of vaisnavism dancing was considered as the exclusive accomplishments. They appointed women as dancers. During the ahom period there was a class of people known as Devadasi. It seems that devadasis were given protection by the royal court in the ahom period. Dancing girls also employed as spies in the ahom court. It appears that natis in the later part of the ahom period snatched a privileged position in the society. Queen Sarveswari, taught a large number of young girls of different communities, the art of singing and dancing within the royal herem under her own supervision. Singing and dancing also become more popular during the

**31** S.L.Baruah, ibid., p426

Vaisnava age. In fact, it was an integral part of the Vaisnava culture. Regarding the other part of cultural status of women was in the art of painting. During the ahom rule some of the queens were also interested in the art of painting and inspired the painters to paint the picture some literary works to make it more interesting and valuable. Sankhachura badh, the literary work of Kaviraj Chakrabarty was illustrated with beautiful painting on the instance of king siva singha and her queen Phuleswari. Similarly Hastividyanava, the famous work of Sukumar Borkaith and he illustration of the beautiful pictures of the same work by Dilbar and Disai were patronized by queen Ambika and king Siva Singha. Other cultural phenomenon was that spinning, weaving and embroidery. Assamese women of all class and status were efficient in the art of spinning and weaving. In fact art was considered as one of the most important accomplishment and qualification of the women of Assam. It was firm belief in the Assamese society that if women could send their husband warrior to the battlefields by presenting ‘kabach-kapor (a kind of garment for warrior) which they had spin and weave within a single night, then their husband would not definitely meet defeat. It is said that Mula Gabharu could not give general Phrasengmung, her husband, the kavach kapor while he was going to the battlefield and so he met a tragic end.

Some of the expert women weavers were employed in the royal harem of the ahom kings as in charge of the royal looms. Even some of the ahom queens were accomplished weavers and they personally used to give guidance in weaving to the young girl. Queen Sarveswari guided the girls in the art of spinning and weaving in the royal harem. Thereafter we discuss about the dress, ornaments etc. which throw some light on the discussion of the cultural status of women in ahom period. Women were maintains their dress according to their higher or lower status of the society. The dress and garments of upper class women were beautifully embroidery with gold and silver threads and also made muga and silk.

 The festivals, which were observed by Assamese hindu women, were the various religious festival and functions as puja festival of goddess durga, kali puja, lakshmi puja, saraswati puja, manasa puja, ambubachi, etc on the different religious festivals, women used to keep fasting or eat fruits or vegetarian food with some restrictions.

 All of the above discussion was about the status of the women in cultural phenomenon. We find that women from the very beginning of the civilization were more religious minded in comparison to their male counterparts and participated in the religious and cultural affairs of society with full enthusiasm and devotion. The religious contribution of women was even accepted by men also and they were given the opportunity to act as religious heads of different sects and they played their role very successfully.

**Conclusion**

All the above discussion we find that without the share of women in all types of activities the human civilization can never progress. The participation of women in household activities, social reforms, and political events is the factors that exhibit the status of women of a country or a society. Based on our study we told that during the Ahom reign women enjoyed very dignified status and played very important role in political, social, economic, religious and cultural affairs in the states. They had special states in the family matters. Women are the key person in the family. She was the backbone of the family. Women also enjoyed a prestigious place in religious matters. The status of women in tribal families was also better and congenial. Thus, the study may be summed up with the conception that women enjoyed a life of high dignify. The ahoms could provide the people a life of peace and security where people could lead a life of mutual coexistence with their male counterparts.

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