CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

The province of Assam at the far north eastern corner of India is a museum of nationalities.\(^1\) It is a colourful and picturesque land from geographical, racial as well as political points of view, roughly lying between the latitudes 28\(^\circ\)18' and 24\(^\circ\)N, and longitudes 89\(^\circ\)46' and 97\(^\circ\)4' E.\(^2\) Bordered by China and Bhutan in the North-East, Burma in the South East and penetrable from the Bay of Bengal in the South through the mighty Brahmaputra, it has three natural divisions, the Brahmaputra Valley, the Barak Valley and Karbi Anglong Hills. When it came under British domination in 1826, it comprised of territories lying on both sides of the Brahmaputra.

Assam, because of her geographical location and topography, had virtually remained isolated from the rest of the country. Centuries of isolation had resulted in Assamese society developing an insular social structure. The Brahmaputra formed the vital highway of communication between Assam and the world outside. The vast alluvial valley of Brahmaputra or Assam proper, on which the present study is mostly concentrated, extended at the beginning of the period under review (1826-1947) 'from the river Manas on the north bank of the Brahmaputra to the foot of the Himalayas close upon the frontier of China.'\(^3\) 'Communication bottlenecks bred geographical isolation, which in turn bred insularity........'\(^4\)

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\(^1\) A. Playfair, The Garos, Gauhati, 1975, p.xxix
\(^3\) H.K. Barpujari, Assam in the Days of the Company, Shillong, 1996, p.1
The nineteenth century is a landmark in the history of Assam. The century experienced the rule of two opposing systems of Government, the Ahoms, who had been in uninterrupted power for the last six hundred years ruling in almost physical and cultural isolation, and the British, who by the treaty of Yandaboo (1826) brought to an end the Ahom monarchy in Assam and paved the way for the eventual establishment of British rule. The new rule helped to forge the much needed links between the region and the rest of the country. The new regime, despite its many negative aspects, had also set in motion certain progressive forces. The introduction of a modern western system of education, the adoption of the British legal system, and improvements in the transport system had far reaching effects on the socio-cultural and political fabric of the province. The introduction of these new structural changes had ushered in new progressive ideas like Liberty, Humanism, Emancipation and Democracy from the West. The institutional and ideological changes led a section of the Assamese men, who were mostly educated in Western learning to question the many wrongs and injustice prevalent in the Assamese society. Among these, the sufferings inflicted on women loomed large. Their efforts to improve the condition of women were supplemented by those of the American Baptist missionaries who sought to spread education among them. These, together with the establishment of a vernacular Press went a long way in changing the socio-cultural canvas of the valley.

The present work is an attempt to discern the status and role of Assamese women under British rule, in the backdrop of progress in women's education, changing social attitudes and norms for women, and the growth of nationalism in Assam, especially in the Brahmaputra Valley. More emphasis is given on
women's education as education is perhaps the only institution that can counteract the tenacious foundation of social inequality. Also, female access to education expresses other social transformations and provides an index of future alterations in social norms, values, customs and traditions. In short, this work attempts to look closely at the social positioning of women in the wake of combined forces of modernization and nationalism during the eventful years under colonial rule (1826-1947), which in turn helped in the evolution of the 'modern' Assamese women. The term 'woman' is being used to identify a female human regardless of age. Here, the term 'education' refers to formal system of education, which is a process of training and developing people in knowledge, skills, mind and character in a structured and certified program, often at a location removed from the homes of pupils.

Pre-colonial traditional Assamese society possessed a few distinctive features. The status of the Assamese women varied according to caste, class and religion. Although their position was relatively better when compared to most of their other Indian counterparts, there remained many social obstacles for the Assamese women. There existed dual standards of power, status and morality for the male and the female due to the existence of a patriarchal society. Existence of several social evils like polygamy, early marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, especially among the upper castes Hindus had greatly lowered the position of women. Though the practice of 'Kulinism' and 'Sati' were absent in Assam, yet it cannot be overlooked that women, especially during the decadence

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5 Kulinism, the name derives from a Sanskrit word 'kulina' of good family. Brahmins were divided into a number of 'mels' or groups that could not intermarry. Within a mel, each partner had to be of the same generation in descent from a common ancestor according to specially kept lists. This produced in times a shortage of approved husbands in the top group, which led to polygamy, with husbands having many wives, most of whom he never maintained. The custom was attacked by reformers in the nineteenth century and had since died out.
of the Ahom rule, were regarded as ‘private property’, subjected to a secluded life and denied education. Spaces were sharply divided into private and public. The private or the home space was identified with the women and public space or that of the outside world with men. In fact, in the sphere of structural elaboration, sex differentiations gradually but inevitably involves in a manner such that societal roles which are linked to production, governance and ecclesiastics became more or less the exclusive domain of men. Concurrently, the biological capacity of the female to reproduce the human species and ensure its survival, has led to her being assigned roles which have progressively tied her down to the home and withdrew her from the wider economic, political and religious arenas of social participation. Thus, “although the Assamese women generally played a multifarious role – that of a wife, mother, cook, homemaker, weaver and in most cases as a farm worker, work outside the home was seen merely as an extension of her duties as a wife and mother.” In the absence of any organised efforts as in Bengal, to improve conditions of women, the women led reclusive lives.

In such an atmosphere of deprivation and discrimination against women, it would be important to discover as to how the agents of modernization sought to tackle the women question by defining or redefining gender relations, and the social changes generated thereof.

It was colonial Assam that sought for changes largely within the Assamese society. Social inequalities had given rise to an upsurge of social sentiments and reforms in India especially during the nineteenth and early

6 Amit Kumar Gupta, ed., Women and Society, the Development Perspective, N. Delhi, 1986, p.vii
7 Ibid.
8 Priyam Goswami, ‘Tradition and Modernity; Nineteenth Century Discourse on Assamese Women ’ in Priyam Goswami, ed., Gauhati University Journal of Arts, Vol. XLI, Gauhati, 2010, p.120.
twentieth century, and which had similar repercussions in Assam. Of the many social inequalities, gender inequalities involving women have perhaps generated the greatest concern. The messengers of change were a handful of educated men belonging to the upper strata of society with close association with Bengal. They were the first to cherish a new social outlook, though many of them, as in Bengal, tried to strengthen the patriarchal norms in society. Infact, Bengal, due to its geographical proximity, intellectual and cultural environment, acted as a prism, through which Western ideas were refracted into Assam. As such, there were many rambling voices, concerning social reform vis-à-vis the status and role of the Assamese women. The significance of these ‘voices’ was that it gave women a visibility which was denied to them earlier and for the first time women issues were articulated in the public sphere, though the women themselves were not partners in the schemes meant for their regeneration. The advent of Western liberal concepts along with the ‘print culture’ had widened the scope of women’s questions.

Thus, in Assam as elsewhere in the country, the social bases of the new ‘awakening’ or consciousness to reform the society were the newly emerging middle classes, who were the major beneficiaries of western education, print culture and the colonial state. The Assamese middle class had begun to establish its hegemony over the society by the end of the nineteenth century. Therefore, the values, norms and preferences of that class came to exercise enormous influence. But as the reform agenda was mainly male engineered and was concerned with caste Hindu social norms, the nature of the problems of the lower class or lower caste women were largely left unattended. The middle class was closely tied to their tradition and the reforms advocated by them in most cases had nothing
original to offer, but to reinterpret traditions to suit their limited agendas. Like in all patriarchal societies, they too did not make any effort to involve women in their reform activities. They dreamed of a world where women would be educated and free from some of the worst customs of society — child marriage, polygamy etc. However, simultaneously it was also hoped that these new women would be devoted to home and family. Thus, the ideology that emerged to redefine gender relations led to great social debates and controversies in the province, especially through the different vernacular newspapers and social organizations, ‘as not all agreed that gender relation needed modifications.’

The pioneers for a meaningful social reform movement in Assam could be attributed to Anandaram Dhekial Phukan; Gunabhiram Barua and Hem Chandra Barua. These men used both reason and ancient Hindu literature to uphold their arguments in an attempt to sensitize Assamese society on gender issues. ‘Gender’ is being used as an imprisoning frame of reference as it limits female potentiality to fit the needs of the male. Both Anandaram and Gunabhiram’s ideas on gender were rooted in personal experiences, and during their lives they attempted to change those with whom they lived and worked. “Their widow remarriage campaign was in fact the catalyst which initiated the first generation of western educated Assamese into social, religious and political activities. A symbolic effort to change the status of women, it posed a fundamental challenge to orthodox concepts of women and their role in family and society.” However, men like Dattadeva Goswami, the all influential Satradhikar (Vaishnavite Chief Priest) of the Auniati Satra whose words had profound impact on his large

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10 Ibid, p. 14
11 Priyam Goswami, op.cit., p.123
following in Assam\textsuperscript{12}, along with influential educated men like Ratneswar Mahanta\textsuperscript{13} strongly opposed the suggestions. And as Sekhar Bandyopadhyay writes, 'Widow celibacy was lauded by the elite as a hallmark of respectability.'\textsuperscript{14}

The practice of early marriage of girls, especially among the upper caste Hindus of Assam as in other parts of India, had generated much debate and discussion during the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The issue evoked mixed responses among the literati. The Assamese women were also not altogether silent on this issue, though their voices were rather feeble. Hence, it is very important to reconstruct the discourses and recover the hidden voices of women, many of whom are yet to be utilized in writing history.

A study of the colonial Assamese women would be superficial, without referring to the overwhelming importance of the introduction of formal system of education in Assam under the British rule. Infact, education is a particularly appropriate place to seek evidences of social change. Yet, female education in Assam as in the rest of India, was hampered by a whole set of mutually dependent ideas and traditions that define and limit the female role.

Prior to the coming of the British, female education was informal and largely limited to acquiring of practical household skills as men and women occupied separate spaces. In this context, the nineteenth century in particular and the early twentieth century is important as it witnessed the entry of girls into formal systems of education due to the collective efforts of the Christian Missionaries, the British Indian Government and the social reformers of the age.

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid}, p. 125.
\textsuperscript{13} 'Bibah' in \textit{Jonaki}, vol I Saka 1811, IV (Ashar) VIII (Bhada), IX (Aahan) issue.
\textsuperscript{14} Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, 'Caste, Widow - remarriage and the Reform of Popular Culture in Colonial Bengal' in Bharati Ray, ed., \textit{From the Seams of History, Essays on Indian Women}, Delhi, 1995, p. 34
Dominant patriarchal attitudes in the Valley, however, held female education not only irrelevant to the traditional female roles of wife and mother, but also potentially disruptive. Prejudice against women's education and later against its expansion in non-traditional areas, had generated intense social debates and discussions. Yet, women's education progressed, though in varying degrees and the development of publications intended for and written by women gave women a voice. The educational experiments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century produced a 'new woman' with interests that went beyond the home. It would be worthwhile to decipher the role of the educated women in establishing communication with women outside their families and forming associations and organizations to relieve women from the varied constraints afflicting their lives. These women organizations were relatively free from male tutelage, yet they operated within the same disabling structures of patriarchy. This in itself is important and it is interesting to recall their activities played in an environment with severe limitations.

Lastly, the momentum of the nationalist movement for independence in India had stirred women's political consciousness. In Assam also, thousands of its womenfolk had enthusiastically responded to the call of the nation and their involvement in the public sphere stretched from the Non-Cooperation Movement of the 1920's to the Anti-Grouping Movement just prior to independence. And as elsewhere in the country, the initial flush of participation was provided by the urban educated elite women. The contributions of these women are recorded, though not very prominently documented. A more in-depth study is required for those 'other' women who were from the extended female space and unlike those

15 Geraldine Forbes, *op.cit.*, p. 64
from the female intelligentsia were less or not educated. Further, social constraints did not allow them any form of public activity. It was Gandhi who legitimized the mass active participation of women. He brought about steady reconciliation of domestic and public values with his political language and strategy. The success of Gandhi lay in the fact that he was reaffirming and not contradicting existing sexual stereotypes.\(^{16}\) Hence, it is important to review the role of the female intelligentsia who took over leadership roles and facilitated the participation of ‘women of the extended female space’, creating in the process an ‘intermediate social space’ between the household and the public world.\(^ {17}\) The public activities were shown as an extension of household roles, thus helping women to step out from their homes. It provided an important metaphor in facilitating women’s activities beyond the domestic sphere, and into the public sphere.\(^ {18}\) Hence, these women came to be associated with the policies and programmes of formal political organizations like the Indian National Congress. In this context, Zoya Hasan puts up an interesting question as to whether activism should be defined as being political only when it engages in formal politics.\(^ {19}\) The question immediately offers an exciting proposition to understand the lives of those ordinary middle class women, who due to many social restrictions could not or did not participate in any form of organized public resistance to colonial rule, but contributed in their own ways to the success of the movement. It is therefore important to bridge the gap between the elite women’s activities and those ordinary middle class women’s activities that have not been documented, but without whose contribution, the movement could not have sustained itself.

\(^{16}\) S. Ram Sharma, ed., *Women and Education*, N. Delhi, 1995, p. 132

\(^{17}\) Geraldine Forbes, *op. cit.*, p.47


during such a long struggle for independence. The study in unraveling the nature of political participation and contribution of women, also includes the ‘thrill’ of being able to go beyond their secluded lives.

**Review of literature:**

A review of some of the works relating to the present study that deserves mention covering biographies and autobiographies, reports, letters, memoirs, articles which were extensively surveyed and contributed to quite an extent in preparing this study has been thematically grouped hereunder.

In acquainting with the issues of social inequality, especially in reference to the functions, norms and social positioning of the colonial period Assamese women, a few among the accessed works had helped in providing direction to the present work. S. L. Barua, ed., (1992), *Status of Women in Assam (with special reference to Non Tribal Societies)*, elucidates on the social attitudes towards women in Medieval Assam, the social status of working women, the women tea garden workers, the status of women as reflected in Assamese literature and the role of women in the freedom struggle. On the other hand Nalinibala Devi (1976), in her autobiography, *Eri Aha Dinbor*, clearly depicts the picture of the elite class women and also those belonging to the lower caste and class. It gives a detailed account of the position of women in her times, the practice of *purdah* and seclusion especially among the women of the educated middle class and the strong, entrenchment of patriarchal ideology and practices in the Assamese society. An almost similar narration of the issues could also be found in Nirupama Borgohain’s (1993) work *Abhijatri*. It is a biographical account of Chandraprobha Saikiani, the founder President of the *Assam Mahila Samiti*, also a prolific writer and freedom fighter. The book unveils a vivid picture of the
patriarchal society of Assam, the role and status of women, and the part played by a handful of individuals including a few women to undo the social evils associated with women and the restrictions imposed on her. Further, an article entitled ‘Tradition and Modernity: Nineteenth Century Discourse on Assamese Women’ written by Priyam Goswami in *Gauhati University Journal of Arts*, 2010, gives a dispassionate analytical review of the nineteenth century debates and discussions of the Assamese intelligentsia reflected primarily in the print media and caught in the vortex of ‘modernization’ and traditions on issues relating to the emancipation of women. On the other hand Tilottama Mishra (1987) in her book *Literature and Society in Assam*, has attempted to recognise and distinguish those trends in Assamese literature during the period 1826-1926, which was characterised by a new awakening in Assam brought about by a movement generally known as the Indian Renaissance. It also reflected certain social changes that took place in society as a whole. Aparna Mahanta (2008) in her book *Journey of Assamese Women, 1836-1937* explores the Assamese women’s progress into the modern world by challenging the traditional notions of womanhood. The book in its attempt to record the progress of women reconstructs some of the early debates on women’s education in Assam along with the formation of women’s associations, release of women’s magazine in the twentieth century and to the beginnings of women’s writings in Assam which was initially ignored or ridiculed. M.K. Gandhi’s (1947) *Women and Social Injustice* contains his preaching and articles written to espouse the cause of women. The book is a reflection of his views against enforced widowhood, *purdah*, the dedication of girls to temples, prostitution, early marriage, the dowry system, the economic bondage and marital slavery of women. *Visibilising*
Women, Facets of History Through a Gender Lens is an anthology of selected seminar papers published by Kirit K Shah and Radhika Seshan (2005) on behalf of the Department of History, SNDT Womens’ University, Mumbai. The general theme of the book is gender though the chapters are mostly on women. The book clearly reflects the notion that gender as a category of historical analysis is synonymous with women. Kalpana Shah (1984) on the other hand in her book Women's Liberation and Voluntary Action gives an altogether new perspective as she attempts to analyse the relationship between ideology, leadership and programmes of the women’s movement by focusing on the ways in which voluntary organizations like the All India Womens Conference, AIWC (also later known as Akhil Hind Mahila Parishad) organized its activities to achieve its objectives. The volume examines the central issues of development of women’s consciousness in the context of mobilization of middle class women. Geraldine Forbes (2009), Women In Modern India gives a comprehensive study of Indian women during the period of Colonial rule. The work then gradually extends to the post independence period of the twentieth century. The social reform movement, the education of women and its impact on them, women’s organizations and their role in the freedom movement, the status and role of women in the post independent era have all been dealt with systematically. Lastly, Jasbir Jain, ed., (2005), Women in Patriarchy, Cross Cultural Readings, contains stories, essays and extracts which trace the history of women’s struggle for space against hegemonic control and oppression, and their reactions against the social pressures exerted upon them.

A brief retrospective review of at least some of the books consulted for reconstructing the progress of women's education in colonial Assam is important.
Bina Lahkar (1987) in her book, *Development in Women Education* covers a full century from 1874 to 1974. It exclusively deals on women's education in Assam, acknowledges the important role played by Christian missionaries and also enlightens us on the various programmes and policies of the colonial government with regard to female education. Renu Debi (1987) in *Progress of Education in Assam* takes stock of the growth of education since the establishment of British rule, with emphasis from 1882 and down to the late thirties of the twentieth century. The work thereby gives indication of the trends of educational development prior to independence. It further makes a critical analysis of the educational policies and programmes of the colonial government. In the book, *History of Education in Assam, 1826-1990*, Archana Chakravarty (1989), describes the nature and progress of education in Assam from the commencement of East India Company’s rule in 1826 to the grant of diarchy in 1919. It also includes introductory notes on the salient features of the indigenous system of education prevalent under the former government. The work further assesses the achievements and failures of government educational policies during the given period. Lakshahira Das (1990), *Development of Secondary Education in Assam*, gives a short historical background of education in Assam prior to 1874. It also examines the educational policies of the colonial administrators in Assam since 1874, the organization and administration of Secondary education in the province. The text also makes reference of the progress of education among women. On the other hand, Siddhartha Saikia (1992), in his unpublished thesis, *Growth of Higher Education in Assam and its impact on the socio economic life of the Assamese people*, attempts to trace the growth of higher education in Assam. It further makes a detailed study on whether the institutions of higher
learning in Assam is influencing the different aspects of social life of the Assamese people, their culture, language, heritage, hopes and aspirations.

The various Christian missions to Assam, notably the American Baptist mission had contributed immensely towards the upliftment of women, especially through the agency of education. H.K. Barpujari (1996) in his *The American Missionaries and North East India 1836-1900*, although documentary in nature, traces the early history of the American Baptist missionaries, the earliest and largest group of foreign missions in North East India. The text brings to light endeavours of the missionaries for evangelisation, the problems and difficulties that they faced and their contributions in diverse fields. The resultant socio-economic and political impact it had on the region are also observed. Frederick S. Downs (1991), in his work, *The Christian Impact on the Status of Women in North East India*, explores in a systematic way the impact of Christianity on the status of women among the hill tribes of NE India, besides assessing its contribution towards them. The book also attempts to find out the motives which led the Christians to involve themselves in such work, the relationship between female education and the mission, the priesthood systems from which women were for the most part excluded. Further, another missionary, Victor Hugo Sword (1935, Indian reprint 1992) in his work, *Baptists in Assam, A Century of Missionary Service (1836-1936)*, narrates the story of the Baptist missions of Assam. V.H. Sword, as a member of the Mission had authentically documented its activities, and portrays the dedicated service of the Missionaries of the province, along with their sufferings, adventure, heroism and the triumphs in the North eastern corner of the country. Written on somewhat similar lines, Milton Sangma (1992) in *History of American Mission in NE India*, Vol.I and Vol II,
highlights various aspects of the activities of the American Baptist mission in the region, the knowledge of which helps to understand the social and cultural changes affected among the people in a historical perspective. A very recent work, *Christianity and Change in North East India*, edited by T.B. Subba, Joseph Puthenpurakal and Shaji Joseph Puykunnel (2009) is a compilation of twenty four selected papers presented in the National Seminar on Cultural Change among the Tribes of North East India, Shillong. The studies, besides taking stock of the cultural changes among the North-Eastern tribes, deliberate upon the contribution of Christianity towards the development of education and literacy in the region. It also examines the revival of traditional institutions under the impact of Christianity and the role of women missionaries in the development of female education.

For being conversant with the subject of Assamese women’s participation in the freedom struggle, some of the books consulted had been of help to a certain extent. H.K.Barpujari (1980) in *Assam in the Days of the Company 1826-1858* sheds light on the affairs of Assam and her people during colonial rule. It traces the successive stages in the establishment of British Paramountcy in Assam, and the subsequent reaction generated against colonial rule and the beginning of the freedom struggle in the province. Anuradha Dutta (1991) in her book *Assam in the Freedom Movement*, critically looks at the origins and growth of the nationalist movement in Assam since the twentieth century and till the attainment of freedom. The leading events of the preceding century have also been touched upon to give a background and continuity of the national movement. Exhibiting a similar approach, Arun Chandra Bhuyan (1993) in his book *The Quit India Movement*, traces the development of the Indian nationalist movement during the
period of the Second World War. The war accelerated the growth of political consciousness in India with the author making important references of the political development in Assam during the same period. Dipti Sharma (1993) through her book, *Assamese Women in the Freedom Struggle* reflects a new dimension in the study of the freedom movement in Assam by giving an elaborate narration of the role played by the women of the Brahmaputra valley in the freedom movement. A brief picture of the position of women in the pre 1921 period has also been added to understand and appreciate the nature and extent of women's contribution to the movement. On an almost identical approach, Guptajit Pathak (2008), in *Assamese Women in Indian Independence Movement with special reference to Kanaklata Barua*, attempts to throw fresh light on the role played by Kanaklata Barua, a martyr, along with other Assamese women in the nationalist movement for independence in 1942. The work is an analytical reconstruction and interpretation of historical events. On a different note M.S.A Rao ed., *Social Movements in India*, brings together twelve empirical studies of diverse social movements in different parts of the country. The book includes six types of movement, - peasants, backward classes, sectarian, tribal and women. The section on women's movement shows the combination of traditional symbols and new roles in social mobilization during the freedom movement. Lastly, one cannot but mention the work of Suruchi Thapar Bjorkert (2006), *Women in the Indian National Movement*. The author retrieves the experiences of ordinary middle class women whose lives were touched by the nationalist ferment in their society during the stormy decades of 1930s and 1940s in the Hindi speaking heartland of India. The book at the same
time does not sideline the contribution of elite women, whose narratives are well archived and documented.

The advent of the print media during the period of colonial rule in Assam had helped considerably in interpreting the happenings of the bygone period. Profulla Chandra Barua (1997), *A Short History of Assamese Newspapers 1846-1947*, discusses the first hundred years of Assamese newspapers. The book further examines the contribution of the Assamese Press in arousing and moulding the political consciousness of the masses during the struggle for freedom. Further, Chandra Prasad Saikia ed., (1998) *A History of One Hundred and Fifty Years of Newspapers and Literary Magazines of Assam* 1846-1996 is a compilation work. It gives a comprehensive history of Assamese newspapers and magazines right from *Orunodoi* (the first Assamese newspaper published in 1846) to *Jonaki*, from *Jonaki* to *Ramdhenu* and upto the middle half of the twentieth century, and further makes an analytical review of the same. The book also reflects upon the impact of the print media on the culture, tradition and social norms of the people.

It was found after review that as far as the proposed topic of the study is concerned in the strictest sense, the existing works has given limited coverage to this area of study and to the best knowledge of the investigator, no exclusive research has so far been undertaken on the issues of women and education in colonial Assam and the consequent impact and changes it generated. The scope of previous studies is limited and has not concentrated on the main issues of the present study.
Objectives of the study:

1. To trace the development of women's education in Assam.
2. To study the role of the American Baptist missionaries in promoting female education in the province.
3. To determine the attitude of the influential Assamese middle class regarding women's education and their role and functions in society.
4. To find out whether progress in women's education had ushered in a level playing field for women vis-à-vis men.
5. To learn whether women's perception of 'tradition' had stood ground or underwent changes under the influence of modern education and rationalism.
6. To ascertain the attitudes and reactions of women to the various social and political issues of the period under review and recover the 'mild voices' of the Assamese women, which unfortunately has largely been ignored in Assamese historiography.
7. To examine the nature of participation, role and contribution of Assamese women in the freedom movement.

Methodology:

In view of the multidimensional complex nature of the study involving several categories of respondents over a fairly long period of time, the research work has been subjected to several established methods and techniques for obtaining relevant information. Primary sources like archival records, official and private correspondences, newspapers, unpublished and published documents etc has been consulted, besides the Secondary sources. Further, the investigator has
also accessed libraries and the internet for reviewing available important publications, journals, reports of government and non-government organizations from a historical perspective.