CHAPTER - I

REVIEW OF STATUS AND PROBLEMS OF WOMEN FROM VEDIC LITERATURE UPTO MODERN AGE
Along with the progress and freedom of women, the social position as well as the problems of women in the society and literature are a matter of much discussion. Therefore, many literatures are found to have dealt with the subject of women. In this respect novelist Sharatchandra while delivering lecture on his 57th birthday, said,

As in Bengal, the problems of women assumed a menacing proportion all over India. Assam, one of the neighbouring places of Bengal was also no exception. Many social pictures illustrating women's problem are still very glaring. However in this respect a comparative study of the problems of women in the society of Assam and that of Bengal can be made. The position of women in the society of Bengal under the control of powercult was adversely affected by Feudalism and Brahminism, whereas in the territory of Assam Feudalism was not strong enough. In this place separate status was accorded to women in the whole of society. And it can be said,
Hence, the women of Assam made a valuable contribution to the formation of ancient culture of Assam.³ Even though,

But in Vedic age the situation was different; the women were placed almost with perfect equality with men. No difference lied between men and women in this age,

In Shaunakrīta Brihaddevata is found the list of the following sages of the Veda,

oghga gogha vinābhārā apalalāp nishhhitā
dharmajaya juktam aṅgustā saṅadhiti
dharmi chetāmata ch sarma cāmashārini
dhriyamukha ch nadvadh yar shaktī
dhriyamukha cāmashārini ch hastī
dhriyamukha gopā pāvagadhi śaṁkara
dhriyamukha gopā pāvagadhi śaṁkara
Ghosa, Godha, Bisvabara, Apala, Upanishad, Nishad, Brahmajaya, Aditi, Indrani and landra's mother, Sarama, Somasha, Urbashi, Lopamudra and the rivers namely Yami or wife Shashati, Shree, Laksha, Sarparagyici, Bach, Shrahddha, Medha, Dakshina, Ratri, Surya and Savitri - all are sages or Brahmavadinis. It means,

In Vedic age in our country the women are known to have been held in high in society.⁸ In Vedic age women were given the status of goddess.⁹

After all, during this time there was no distinction between men and women. Like men much expectation was laid upon women. They were not only brought up with love and care but also had the complete right to shastra and rituals, such as Upanayana etc.

Beside this,

Brahmavadinis did not get married. In Garuda Purana mention has been made of two Brahmavadini women named Mina and Baitarani. And,
In this way a good number of Sadyabadhu were Devahuti, Shanta, Sita, Sabitri, Dayamanti etc. It means women were not prohibited from reading the Veda or from learning other knowledge. Vatsyana in his *kamasutra* praised about prostitute, princes etc. for their knowledge of *shastra*. And also he mentioned that the fine arts and art of composing poem are the most essential for women to be learnt. Rajasekhara, a prominent dramatist, poet, mention in his *Kavyamimangsha*, a woman may be a good poet like man. Intelligence is the characteristics of soul, it could not be differentiate in between men and women.

Women learnt foreign language, art, dance, singing, drama, logic, accountancy, the making of sweets and perfumes etc. as described in *Dashakumara*.

On the otherhand, it is worth mentioning that many people are of the view that women had no rights in the Veda. The following is an extract culled from the Upanishad *Nrisingha Purvatapani*, which contains,
In Surya Sukta (10-85) we find a beautiful description of the respected position that the daughter-in-law held in their husband's houses after marriage.

 madre śvarā śvarā śvarabāḥ śvarā.

Nanāndarī śvarā śvarā ādhi dēvṛṣy.

It means,

śvarer śvarāḥ śvarāḥ śvarāḥ śvarāḥ.

Nanāndarī śvarāḥ; dēvṛṣyānāṃ śvarāḥ (28)

This famous badhubaran mantra proves the special position of married woman belonging to that age.

We may lied reference to polygamy from Indrani and Sachi's Sukta.

हे उद्युख पत्र शालिनी, सौभाग्यहेतुदृष्टा, देव प्रेरिता, शभिशालिनी (विभिन्न! आमर सप्तश्रीके अपसृता कर, पतिके केबल आमराइ कर।

उद्यानपर्णे सूर्या देवजुज्ते सहवति।

सष्ट्टिं में परामं पतिं में केबलं कुयं। (28) (10/145/2)

But it can be mentioned that, monogamy was the best ideal in the society and that is why indifferent suktas. This blessing was made repeatedly that the daughter-in-law, being united with her husband, being the empress of the house and a symbol of welfare, might spend her life happily for good or till her death.

And in Vedic age widow marriage prevailed but Sati system did not,

When the woman was married a new woman entered the house, sometimes her new husband. This blessing was made that the widow, being united with her husband, being the empress of the house and a symbol of welfare, might spend her life happily for good or till her death.

Sages were also known to have practiced widow marriage. In addition,
The fact that widow marriage was practiced is also found in Jataka's tales. In one of Jataka's tales lies that the king of Kushal attacked Banaras, and having killed its king, accepted the main queen of Kushal as his own queen. In Kautilya's Arthashastra it is found that a women can marry the brother of her dead husband if she establishes that her husband has gone abroad for a long period of time or has adopted the life of sages or that she has waited for seven years for her husband.

In Vedic age woman had sufficient freedom. There was no existence of Purdah system. They could have access to any place be it the tol or the place of Yajna (a vedic sacrifice) or the battlefield. In addition, in the Royal court the queen sat on the left of the king. In case there was no prince, the princes came to the throne.

Even though it may be mentioned that,

Besides this in Veda,
And in the age of *Mahabharata*, *Niyog* system is also seen to have an strong existence. But later it ceased to have existed. Moreover,

Widows would have to take shelter in the house of their father or brothers.

In this subsequent ages of the Veda, *Smritishastra* etc. had shown the position of women being degraded.

*During the period of the Smritis - the period of condification of social lows - women were bracketed with 'Sudras' and were denied the right to study the vedas.*

They were tied to various rules. In *मनुसंहिता* it is said, the women do not have any *brata* (a vow religious or secular), fasting is to be done by them separately. To serve her husband is the highest virtue of a woman.

*पिता रक्षिति कौमारे भूर्वी रक्षिति दौँबन। पुत्रा रक्षिति वानरके न गृह स्तात्संहितांशि॥* 

It means that women shall remain under the protection of their father before marriage and as a wife of her husband; in old age, they will remain under the custody of their son. Besides this, somewhere *Manu* however,
has put congenial comments also on woman. Manu says,

\[ \text{তিনি বলেছেন যে বংশে শ্রী জাতি পৃজিত হন, সেখানে দেবতারাও প্রসম হন.} \]

Again, in ancient India, there was indeed immense differences between man and woman.

\[ \text{প্রাচীন ভারতবর্ষে পুত্র জন্মালে শাখ বাজত, কন্যা জন্মালে নয়। তাছাড়া ভাইফোটা, জামাইফলী, সর্বই পুরুষকেদিক অনুটান। জন্মদিনও ছেলেদেরই হয়, মেয়েদের হয় না.} \]

\[ \text{Aitareyo Brahmana also says, the woman who issues forth a male child is the best woman. And the woman who gives birth to a female child is to be dejected after twelve years.} \]

\[ \text{With this, some rituals are performed during pregnancy, so that the child is sure to be a male child, not a female one.} \]

Here it is also mention that,

\[ \text{লক্ষ্মীর মতো কল্যাণী, বসুভার মতো সর্বস্থ, স্বামীরতনিশ্চিত নারীতৈহই ছিল প্রাচীন বাঙালী নারীর চিন্তাদশ, বিখ্যাত, সহচর, বন্ধুত্ব এবং স্নেহ, শাপি ও আনন্দের উৎসর্গরতা তীর হওয়াই ছিল তীতাহারে একনাথ কামনা। স্বামী ইচ্ছায় রাজকীয় হওয়াই তীতাহারে বাসনা, এবং শাস্ত্র যেমন প্রসার করে মৃত্ত তেমনই মুক্তিকার বীর ও গুলী পুত্রের প্রসবক্রীয় হওয়াই সকল বাসনার চরম বাসনা।} \]

Monogamy was just a common usage prevalent in the society,

\[ \text{তবে, রাজ্যাক্ষেত্র, সমস্ত-মহাসাম্পদের মধ্যে অভিজাত সমাজে, সমস্ত বাল্যের মধ্যে বহ বিবাহ একেবারে অপচলিত ছিল না.} \]

Again, one of the greatest curses of women was widowhood. They, other than their being as daughters and women, did not have any right to property. Jimutabahana said, a childless widow, in absence of her husband, could claim all his property, but he also said,
The widow would have to live in her husband's house till her death, she had a live a austere life without having no cosmetics and ornament, and luxury. During those days the widows had to take vegetarian food. Apart from this, they could not participate in a marriage or any other such occasions. It was the Sahamaran (act of dying together) system which was also prevalent during that time. Among the Brahmin society widows were instigated to die on the pyre of her dead husband.

Angira said, the only way that a widow should choose is that of voluntary burning on the feneral pyre of her dead husband.

In respect of taking education,

From the description of Bijaypur in Pawandut it can be deduced,

But Vatsayana wrote, Bengali princes of old age were not permitted to go anywhere freely. They were permitted to converse with unknown man only behind the purda.
In *Puranas*, women were given rights in most of the ceremonies.

The comment that women were only worthy of respect was not true. *Devi purana* is merely the mouth piece of Brahmin *tantra*. Even though *Kumari puja* was suggested as a solution, in selecting Kumaris (girls) only Brahmin girls were given recognitions. What was propagated was that all the girls were not honourable, only the Brahmin girls were worthy in respect.

But is short, it may be said thus -

Thereafter society underwent a change, then middle age began,

In middle age there was a denial of men's manhood and women's womanhood and in this respect the role of Advaitavada introduced by Sankaracharya was no less great. Sankaracharya, through his Advaitavada, propagated that the world is just an illusion and had created a notion in the mind of the people to have negative attitude towards life and world. Therefore, earthly value of life and world was ignored and as a result both
men and women considered their manhood and womanhood meaningless respectively. Had Rammohan not been born in modern age the emancipation of suffering people would have been impossible. On one hand, there was an antilife philosophy of Sankaracharya, on the other hand, there was an age of Muslim Nawab. This was an age of nightmare for the lives of women. In this context it was said,

During the Moghul rule, the socioeconomic status of Hindu women were very much lowered and had to depend on the Hindu male in every activity. The social evils like Purdah System came into force. Child marriage was prevalent.

On the other side, during pre-Ahom age child marriage was prevalent among Brahmana and Kayastha in the social system of Assam. However prevalence of child marriage was not found among other communities, widow marriage was not found to exist among them. But among others prevalence of polygamy and widow marriage was noticeable. And instances of polyandry are found as well. In Arunachal Pradesh polyandry has continued to exist among tribes.

Dowry system is not there in Assam. Even in the society of tribes high status is given to women,
Besides these, there exists another custom called চলনীয়া (a man living at the house of his wife) system. where the bridegroom stays in the house of the bride forever. Before the marriage of Non-Aryan there is an opportunity for free union. Both men and women are free to choose their own life partners. মংঃ is one type of camp of unmarried men. In short, it can be said that the rituals that non Aryan followed had an effect on the marriage system of Hindus and Hindu minded people of Assam.

Reference must be made also of sati and concubine. Bhaskarbarman had many concubines. In addition from a book named কুঠিনিতম্ব র িিত by Damodar Gupta in the 8th Century it is known that the concubine of a king turned into Sati after the death of the king. In যোগিনীতত্ত্ব also mention is made of Sati. However,

Moreover, women, specially having the equal standard of a queen had higher education and were conscious of art culture along with the knowledge of household affairs. Musical instruments and dancing statues of women in dancing posture are the sufficient proofs of the existence of fine art of that time.

Again we find, in many books, the prevailing tradition of the Devdasis, mainly from the books of Tantras. Of course,

Moreover in the social system of Ahom is seen a form of marriage called Chaklong marriage (a kind of marriage system of Ahom). And,


dharmo purusas samyutah prajnaparamo devah
dharmo purusas samyutah prajnaparamo devah


Other Hindus performed marriages in accordance with the Vedic rites and ceremonies specially in accordance with Yajur Vedic rites. At that time also polygamy prevailed, Hindu women accustomed with polygamy also followed widowhood, but Ahom women had the right to remarry. Even when a marriage was sometimes dissolved, both divorced men and women could re-marry.

The status of women in the society was almost the same as that of men.

During the pre-Ahom age women did not wear odhni (a piece of thin cloth worn as a scarf by women) and the women had equal participation in every work, be it cutting, wood, fishing or cultivation. Moreover it is only in case of weaving that they had monopolistic right. In Ahom age side by side with an orderly system of government there was severe punishment as well. Brahmin and women, in other words, the women both could escape death sentence. The punishment of Jaymati Kunwari is the only example of death penalty received by the women.

Moreover Kumari puja was also in vogue in Assam.

Kamakhya temple is famous for Kumari puja. Besides this womens are equal right in the occasion of Ratikhova community (a form of tantric religion; night worshipping).
During Ahom rule, there was no system of female education in a school. But there is a proof that the women belonging to rich family were imparted education and for this purpose teachers were appointed. Receiving education from father, father-in-law and husband many woman had been able to in their lives. Among them mention must be made of Bhabani Devi, wife of Purushotyam Vidyabagish.

Again, literature is the mirror of human society. Hence, in the very beginning of the history of literature some small pictures of various problems of woman are drawn in *Charyapada* as well. The mental suffering of poor pregnant women facing economic problems is distinct. In one of the stanzas of Kukkari pada we have seen.

\[
\text{হঁউ নিবাসী খমণ ভাতারে।}
\]
\[
\text{মোহোর বিগোআ কহন ণ জাই।}^{57}
\]

It means,
\[
\text{আমি নিরাসী, ভত্তা কপণক।}
\]
\[
\text{আমার পতিসনকুথ অবর্ণীয়।}^{68}
\]

Similar picture is seen in one of the stanzas in Dhendhanpada.

\[
\text{টালত মোর ঘর নাহি পড়তেষী।}
\]
\[
\text{হাড়ির লাজ নাহি নিতি আবেশী।}^{69}
\]

It means,
\[
\text{টোলায় আমার ঘর, পড়তেষী নাই।}
\]
\[
\text{হাড়িতে ভাত নাই, নিতাই রাতের অতির্থি।}^{70}
\]

That dowry system was prevalent during that age finds mention in *Charyapada*. For the sake of dowry people did not even hesitate to marry girls belonging to low caste. In the 19th number of *Charya* composed by Kanhapada, it is seen that people felt no regret for marrying Dombi if they received sufficient amount of money or land as take as of dowry.
Widow marriage in doms (a Hindu caste whose duty is to burn the dead and look after the crematorium) are also Kahnapada mentioned in his Charya.73

Again, in the journey of the evolution of Assamese literature it is rare to find any example to prove the existence of written form of Assamese literature before 14th century. In this place, like Bengali literature we find.

It means, 

And it is said about Dak's saying,

But in other place it is said that the tendency to lower down the position of women and to keep them under the control of men in the classified society is also present in Dak's saying just as it was in Manu.76 Dak suggested that we must check a girl well before marrying her like a commodity in the market, and in this context he said,
Women were prohibited not only from thinking and moving freely but also from speaking anything laughingly.

Shashee Sarma writes,

Radha wants to reverse the relationship of male superiority and women slavery in the social stratum. As Krishna says,
deduced that many women during Rathayatra went to Puri to visit Sri Chaitanya every year. Nityananda’s wife Jahnabi Devi took the leadership of Vaishnava society in Kheturi great festival. She initiates spiritually of her disciple. Hemalata Thakurani, the daughter of Srinivas also initiates spiritually of many disciples.91

On the otherside, it was restricted to converse between woman and Vaishnava fonds in Chaitanyadeva’s adda. He gave up his favourite disciple, Haridas only for the reason of wanting rice from an old woman for his meal.92

In the subsequent era Radha is established in the imaginary world of Vrindabana, after the modes from the realistic society.

Here, Radha surrendered to Krishna, its spiritual meaning is surrendered to the supreme being of great devout and in other words it can be said that in gender ruled society women’s surrendered as selfless and demandless. Though Chandidas Radha became Bengali house wife. Family and social rule were also forced in her life.

Indeed many poets write Manasamangal Kabya during the middle ages. In Manasamangal story Manasa established like Devi and with this Behula established became a wife. Here the help of Behula, Manasa worshiped by Chand Sadagar and by this she established women right strongly in patrimonicals society. Again, critics are also found the reason behind
Manasa's revengefulness. Manasa was a symbol of deserted, oppressed, unhonoured women. Before birth Siva forgave her, Durga oppressed her, Jarutkaru also left her and Chand Sadagar unhonoured her. All these happened in her life because of gender ruled society. Again in Behula's story, we notice that, Behula takes the opposite position of Sita in Ramayana,

On the other hand, in Manasamangal Kabya,

On the other hand in this time, child marriage resulted in the increase of child widows. Attempts were made so that by their parents the child widow could not feel the absence of Shakha Sindur (symbol of married women). In Kshemananda's Manasamangal it is,

Moreover, the system initiated by Smarta Raghunandan was strict. During Ekadashi (fast observed by Hindus on the eleventh day of a lunar fortnight) all the widow had to go fast. Polygamy also prevailed. In various Mangalkabya, it is found that various kinds of medicines as preventive measure and process were applied to subdue the husbands. Moreover the
fact that polygamy caused family troubles is present in the contemporary literature.

During marriage many girls and even the sister of bride were given as dowry with the new bride. In *Kabita* it is found that during Phullara marriage dowry was given.

Again,

In *Manashamangal kabya* is found *Astapariksha* conducted on Behula. When Khullana in *Kabita* was grazing the goats in the forest, guest of her husband Dhanapati Sadagar, expressed suspicion over her virginity. According to rules prescribed by the scholars she was subjected to different kinds of *Dibya Paraiksha* namely, submerging in water, snakebitting, burning in flame etc. During those days *Sati* system was also in vogue. Some women willingly became *Sati*, they did not listen to any prohibition. In *chhaya's* death is noticeable.

\[\text{আনি বহ ঘৃত-ভাব} \quad \text{জ্ঞালিল অনলকুন্দ} \quad \text{সুরনদ-তট সুরপাগতি।}
\]
\[\text{দুই কুলে দিরা বাতি} \quad \text{পরাণ তাজিল সতী} \quad \text{পতির অনলে ছায়াবতী।} \]
And the widows who were unwilling to become Sati were persuaded to do so either in the name of Sastras or by any other means. Even then, they were not willing to die, people forcefully burnt them alive. In Manasamangal Kabya after the death of Lakhindar when Chand Sadagar staying close to Behula wanted to know,

বধূর ঠাই জিঙ্কাসা কর কি আছে সাহস।
লখাইর সঙ্গে পুড়িয়া মরক যুচুক অপমাহ। ॥১০১

then,

শ্বশুরের কথা বেঁচলার প্রাণে লাগে ভয়।
হস্ত মোর কারিয়া শ্বশুরের আগে কয়।॥

* * *

কলার মাধুর্যে করি ভাসাও গাধরী।
আমি অভাবিনী বাবে প্রভুর সংহোণ॥১০২

Of course,

নিম্ন সমাজের হাসির হসির উদ্বুদ্ধির সমুদ্রে অসহায়া বালিকার এই ক্ষুধার প্রার্থনা করো। আমার মধ্যে প্রচলিত সমাজ ব্যবস্থার বিরুদ্ধে বেঁচলার প্রতিবাদের সুর প্রশস্ত হইয়া আছে।১০৩

Again, the whole picture of the Bengali bride is clearly reflected in the following two stanzas.

শায়ুড়ী নন্দী নাহি নাহি তোর সতা।
কার সঙ্গে চন্দ্র করি চন্দ্র কৈলি রাত।॥১০৪

Through the character of Phullarar Baramasi (a heroine's statement of her weal and woe described month by month) the writer paints a picture of object poverty of women's life.
Again in Assam, in pre-Sankari age, it is found that during that time women had high social status although they did not have any freedom. In the *Ramayana* composed by Madhaba Kandali, it is found,

Like ancient saints he echoed, let the women be loyal to their husbands; have respect for the teacher forever. Let the women have affection for brothers and well-wishers and behave the general people nicely. In this book it is also seen that devotion of wives to husbands or vice-versa is the best chastity of goodness.

Through this book the poet expresses the mind of the Assamese people. In *Ramayana* it also found,

Even if the husband committed a misdeed, they could not raise and voice.

In Kandali’s *Ramayana* being suspicious about Sita, Ram said,

And widows also followed strict rules,

With the incarnation of Srimanta Sankaradeva in the middle of the 15th century, began the propagation of Vaishnava religion and views in Assam. Here it can also mentioned that,
Besides this, unagreeable words is used for women in Sankaradeva's writings,

加倍难看的死亡是她的罪行。
被达古里·库蒂克的憎恨。

demonstrating the care for women that has however been recorded by his disciples in different works.

Again, Sankaradeva's compassion for woman has also however been recorded by his disciples in different works.

One of the characteristic features of Assamese Vaishnava Renaissance is that in the context of this movement education was imparted not only to men but also to women. Among the women poets Kanaklata or Lakshmi Tai deserve prominent mention. She, being the daughter-in-law of Sankardeva composed a few devotional poems of Pranatistotra. She was not only the first woman poetess of Assam but also the first girl to be elevated to the post of Satradhikar in a Satra. Wife of Sarbabhauma Bhattacharya was also educated. Moreover, it can be mentioned that Vaishnava poetess Padmapriya was the first woman writer in the history of Assamese literature,
In Sankaradeva's *Ramayana*,

Another important aspect of Sita's character is seen when she expresses her anger in the court.

Sankaradeva reveals the painful side of Sita's character. Though Sankaradeva's *Uttarakanda* is based on Valmiki's *Ramayana*, it was written with a distinctive style.

It also said,
For this rebuke from Sita, Ram in the middle of the court bowed his head down; out of unfathomable sorrow Sita was suddenly ignited.

And so having seen Sita, out of overpowering sorrow Sita was suddenly ignited.

Again in Assam, from 16th century till the end of 17th century there was an expansion of Charit books (a biography of a person). And apart from painting a picture of social life of Assam during middle age these Charit books have shown the activities and position of women in the society. The impact of Vaishnavite movement led by Sankaradeva was influenced on women. The housewives have equal part in observing family life. The wife of Ananata Kandali was a great devout of Hari. But as a result of striking that devout of Hari, religion had got out of the house of Ananta Kandali. So, Sankaradava said,

Moreover, he also gave Sarana (initiation into the vaishnava religion) to Chilaray Dewan's wife. In Sri Sri Sankaradeva charit by Bhusana Dwija also we find the mention of the wife of Chakrapani Brahmin as well as Aai Bhubaneswari. After the death of Sankaradeva's son Kamalochan, someone was suggested to Aai Goshani, the wife of Sankaradeva to get the widow of their son remarried. It is remarkable that during that time also remarriage of widow was prevalent in the society.

Moreover, though we find a picture of social life in Padmapuran written by the great poet Narayanadeva by the character of Behula presented in it.
For that Behula,

সুকুবি নাবায়ণেরপে নহয়, অসমীয়া সাহিত্য জগতেতো এক সার্থক সৃষ্টি।

In this way in the light of the society and literature concerned, we have examined critically the social position as well as the problems of the women in Bengal and Assam during the Middle Ages. During the modern period changes in the social spheres have led to many changes in the lives of the women, but it can not be ignored that their problems more or less remained the same.

After this, in the 19th century, about this time in Bengal it is said,

একাদের মেয়েরা অতিশয় বিলাসী হইয়া উঠিয়াছে, কোনো কাজকল্প করেনা,
কেবল বিছানায় �.Diya নেবেল পড়ে, চেয়েরে বসিয়া কাপড় বুনে।

Moreover, on the other hand in the middle of the 19th century regarding house wives of Hindu family it was said,

নগরীর ঠাকুর গোষ্ঠী, রাজগোষ্ঠী ... প্রধান প্রধান সকল গোষ্ঠীর অন্তমুদ্রে স্ত্রীরা
প্রতিবন্ধন ও পুজণিয় জ্ঞাপ ব্যাখ্যা করে জলশ্রী করতেন

But the condition of women belonging to general family was not good enough.

In আমার জীবন Rassundari Dasi said,

তখন মেয়েছেলের এই প্রকার নিয়ম ছিল, যে বৌ হইবে, সে হাতখানেক ঘোষটা
দিয়া ঘরের মধ্যে কাজ করিয়ে, আর কাহার সঙে কথা কহিবে না, তাহা হইলেই
বড়ো ভালো বৌ হইল।
And about these *Purdanashin* (living behind the purdah) women Rammohan Roy said,

> দেখ কি পর্যবস্ত দৃঢ়, অপমান, তিরিক্ষি, যাতনা, তাহারা কেবল ধর্ম ভবে সহযোগী করে। ... বিবাহের সময় তীর্থ অদ্ভুত বলিয়া তীর্থকার করেন কিন্তু তাহাদের সহিত পশ্চাৎ অথবা ব্যবহার করেন।

Even though men in this century wanted to educate women, but,

> পুরুষ চেয়েছে নারী তার ভুমিকা পালন করে যাবে মনুষ্যহিতানুসারে; এবং হবে সহচরী, উন্নত জাতের শ্রেষ্ঠত্বগ্রাহী, প্রসব কারিগরী, ধাতী; হবে শিক্ষিত পরিচারিকা।

> তারা চেয়েছে ভিক্ষুবাদী নারীরূপে দেখা দেবে সীতাসাবিকী, তারা চেয়েছে শিক্ষিত সতী ও পতিনন্দ।

Again,

> তাহার সকল শিক্ষার লক্ষ্য একাকিভীক্ত পরিবারের সকলের মন রক্ষা করিয়া চলো, সকলের অধীন ইহুদি থাকু, নিজে গৃহের কাথী না-হওয়া পর্যন্ত নিজের অতিশয় লোপ করিয়া থাকু।... এখানে নারী, কী শিক্ষা করে? আমরাজসরণে, আমারিলোগ, পরিচার্যানুরূপে, ধ্বংস, ক্ষমা, পরিশ্রমশীলতা এবং অবশ্যকতারূপে অসমর্থ বা নীরবতাঃ

What the women actually are can be understood if we have a look at the magazines such as *বামাবোধিনী পত্রিকা* (1863), *অবলাবাদ্বন্দ্ব* (1869), *পরিচারিকা* (1878), *মহিলা* (1897), *অক্ষুপুরুষ* (1898) etc. appeared in this century.

But as a result of female education in India, the names of Pandit Ramabai, Doctor Anandibai, Chandramukhi Basu, Kamini Sen, Krishnabhabini Das, Girindramohini Dasi must be mentioned. In the Autobiographic penned by the women in the 19th century it was published that eagerness for education of women, Rassundari Dasi gave a description of it. Moreover, foreigners specifically men were the first to have
voiced concern about the female education followed by natives but the women played passive role in this respect. Christian missionaries with a view to providing education to female children founded Calcutta Female Juvenile Society in 1819. Meryiyan Kook also established school to educate female children. Bethun sahib set up Hindu Balika Vidyalaya in 1849. Young husbands come out as teachers,

Beside this, many organization was established by the leader of Brahma Samaj for the development of women. Keshabchandra Sen’s wife established like Aryan Nari Samaj, and institutions like Madhya Banga Sanmilani, Bikrampur Sanmilani and Svarnakumari Devi’s Sakhi Samitee were constituted for the purpose of dissemenating education among women as well as for education among widows must be mentioned. The contribution made by Nibedita, disciple of Swami Bibekananda to the development of female education in Hindu societies is also remarkable. Beside this, some woman wrote poem in Sambad Prabhakar (1855-56).

By this it was proved the versatality of women on that period.

In the subsequent years karya kusumagali by Mankumari Devi and छाया by Kamini Ray occupied a very high position among Bengali poets.

After a long movement and much debate the Hindu widow remarriage Act was enacted on 26th July, 1856. But the widow marriage has not been prevalent fully in our society so far.
is the child marriage.

After a movement against child marriage an act was enacted in 1927 according to which whoever being a female under 14 years and a male under 18 years contract a marriage shall be punishable.

Besides this, in the 19th century there had been widespread agitation against the polygamy as well. Vidyasagar in his book वैद्यासागर vehemently condemned this system,

This is how in the 19th century the condition of woman had gradually developed.

On the otherside, in pre-British Assamese society it was for the sake of traditional thought that women became the victim of various oppressions. There was also an instance of discarding wife even in trivial matters. Such incidents may be mentioned in আনন্দবাহ ঢেকিয়াল ফুকনব বচনা সংগ্রহ. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan was one of those pioneers who worked for the development of female education. He himself educated his own wife. Padmavati Devi Phukanani was his daughter. Showing respect for female education, Hemchandra Baruah again wrote articles. Moreover Gunabhiram Baruah also wrote,
By advocating widow marriage, he created sensation in the society.

In the books of Nalinibala Devi we find a dismal picture of child marriage.

Even Nirmalprabha Bardaloi, a distinguished woman in the history of Assamese literature had to be a victim of child marriage. Dilip Dutta wrote,

Polygamy was also present in the society of Assam,

In Assamese society besides Purdah system women were prohibited from writing letters. Bezbarah in एक, जीवन लेखक wrote that,
After all though some followers of old, persons like Lambodar Bora were against the spread of female education and liberty but the approach that Hemchandra Baruah and Gunabhiram Baruah outlook was humane and modern.145

During this period in magazines such as Jonaki and Bahi there began the publication of various articles of women, keeping in view the gradual degradation of the position of women in the society. Padmavati Devi Phukanani wrote articles under title of ধর্ম, সমাজ ও বিবৃতিতোলা স্থান, of women in the society. Moreover Chandraprabha Saikiani, আজলিতা নেগো ও ব্যাহি, Aajalitara Neog also wrote an article entitled ধর্ম, and in the magazine Bahi. Rajbala Das, through her essay সন্তুষ্টির চেষ্টা, নবীন্ত্রিত অনুষ্ঠান বিবৃতিতোলার বিবিধতা, introduced us with social position of Assamese women.

In this way an awareness of women awakening was realised and women problems in the modern age is found to have began.

To sum up, three or four diverse forces were reflected in the literature of the later period. They are - regressive pull of male-chauvinistic society, inborn simplicity of the female sex, and the clarion call of Rammohan and...
Vidyasagar. In Assam Anandaram Dhakial Phukan, Gunabhiram Baruah may be seen to set a call towards a newly inspired world. These have been combined with family conflict, love, problems in married life, and multidimensional problems of the society.

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