CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The textual and lexical matrixes used in literature are so masculine, that it renders feminine expression obliterated by masculine hue. In much the same way, in relation to feminist literary criticism, Mary Eagleton points out that Eva Figes’ *Patriarchal Attitude: Women in Society* and Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* fall victim to this metamorphosis: “Firstly, and paradoxically, it appears that some of these feminists are as guilty as the most misogynistic men of marginalising women and not representing them at all” (M. Eagleton 105). When Eva Figes rebuts the traditional role played by women for centuries, in her introduction to *Patriarchal Attitudes*, she is addressing a fundamental issue related to women’s emancipation and empowerment; however, her book is mostly about men as pointed out by Mary Eagleton. Therefore, it is not surprising that the shelf for women in the western academia had to be supervised and sanctioned by male authority. Helen Carr writes in this connection: “Jane Austen and George Eliot had been placed by Leavis within the great tradition, and were allowed canonical status. Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* was judged to be a classic, though her sisters, Charlotte and Anne, had their writing dismissed as melodramatic, sentimental and lacking in form” (Carr 120). While this is in the context of the west, in India too we had a similar situation. As Meeta Deka points out, “Historiography in general suffers from an amnesia in respect to several categories that include women, peasants, workers and other marginalized voices… This Historical amnesia was diagnosed by the growth of feminism and feminist movements since the 1960s… (Deka xvii)”. In the same tone, Aparna Mahanta says, “History generally records the
achievement of men; as men write it the actions of women are ignored” (Mahanta 1). Aparna Mahanta has rightly detected the cause behind the exclusion of women’s presence in history. Since men often construct history, they tend to overlook the contribution of the ‘other’ (women) and seek to prioritize the participation and contribution of the menfolk because they see the events and interpret historical happenings from their point of view, which is essentially masculine. In this sense, one can say that the so-called history is partial and it lacks the women’s point of view. The lacuna may be bridged only when women’s narrative and voice will find a place; it will be heard and read. Of course, women have contributed to the body of literature; however, such contribution is sparse and sporadic. This shows that no conscious and systematic effort has been made to include the female voices. Aparna Mahanta says that, this lackadaisical behavior is to be seen in the women who do not care to preserve their contributions or achievements: “Women also do not care to keep records…. Done by their foremothers. (Mahanta 1)”

The fact is that women have seldom bothered to maintain records of their own achievements firstly; and even if there have been some efforts to keep records, those were soon forgotten and thrown into oblivion. As a result, the effort for women’s emancipation has to be started afresh as pointed out by Aparna Mahanta- “Women’s history is thus an endless cycle of struggles and retreats” (Mahanta 1). Although Gerda Lerner argues that, “women have a history, women are in history,” (Lerner 169), nevertheless there cannot be denying of the fact that women existed either in the periphery (Ray 1) or in the footnotes (Eagleton 106).

Women’s writing that begun in North-east India after the advent of the British and with the coming of the American Baptist Missionary points to the fact that the
social system in North-east India was not conducive for women’s contribution to literature from within. As Nizara Hazarika writes: “The first women writing in Assamese language started with the writing of the American Baptist missionary woman who had either accompanied their missionary husbands or have come as women missionaries to Assam” (Hazarika 106). The early Assamese writings, therefore, were penned by Eliza Whitney Brown, Herriet B. L. Cutter, Susan R. B. Ward, Marry F. Lawrence and Marry R. Bronson (First Assamese women poet) as catalogued by Nizara Hazarika in her book Colonial Assam and Women’s Writing. The earliest Assamese women writers to contribute to Assamese literature were either from affluent families or were Christian converts. Nedhi Levi Farell has the distinction of being the first Assamese Christian Convert, and a regular contributor to Orunodoi (Mahanta 150); on the other hand, women writers like Tarini Devi and Bishnupriya Devi belonged to liberal and affluent families. Whereas Tarini Devi was the sister of Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan, Bishnupriya Devi was the wife of Gunabhiram Baruah. Since both were from affluent and influential families whose family members were important contributors to Assamese literature, it was but obvious that they got the suitable environment to give articulation to their creative faculties. Educated women from such background not only contributed to literature but also participated in social movements and national struggle for independence. Meeta Deka writes,

These women were mostly of the Upper Caste/Class of Urban areas who offered leadership in the movement, while women of several ethnic communities of remote villages in the hills and plains remained outside its purview. Some of these urbane women were educated in their homes and some were spouses of English-educated men studying at Calcutta (Deka xv).
It is also pertinent to note in this connection that the contribution of women to literature has been confined mostly to children’s stories and devotional songs or religious stories. If we talk of the first wave of feminism (for the sake of convenience if we can at all differentiate among the approaches made by women in handling the issues in their respective writings), conflating it with women’s writing, then the earliest feeble efforts were made by Padmabati Devi Phukanani and Swarnalata as some of their perspective on women were published in the journal named *Assam Bandhu*¹ (1885-1886). Aparna Mahanta opines, “The voices of the two women were weak. Though Phukanani had published a novel, Swarnalata was still a schoolgirl” (Mahanta 20). The nineteenth century Assamese society was not yet ready for women’s education and active participation in social activities so it met with stiff resistance in the beginning. Eminent writers of that time like Ratneswar Mahanta, Purnakanta Sharma and Lambodar Bora had opposed women’s education tooth and nail (Mahanta 20). Since the Christian missionaries, the Brahmo Samaj and women’s activists like Gunabhiram Baruah, Pandita Ramabai Saraswati had been advocating the women’s cause; women’s education became a hot topic for discussion in the contemporary journals like *Assam Bandhu* (1885-1886), *Mou*² (1886-1887) and *Jonaki*³ (1889-1916). Writers like Ratneswar Mahanta, Purnakanta Sarma and Lambodar Bora cautioned the educated circles that women’s education would disintegrate the then Assamese society and culture. - “According to Sarma and Mahanta the habit of reading books not only diverted women’s mind from their household chores but could also deflect them from their wifely duties by invoking dangerous thoughts leading to unchaste, unwomanly behavior” (Mahanta 22). On the other hand, Padmabati Devi Phukanani in her article “Narir Muktabastha” argues in
favour of women’s education in a subtle way by stating that freedom may be
dangerous for women in her state of ignorance, hence education would make them fit
and sound (Mahanta 22-23).

The first woman to voice for women’s education was the daughter of Ananda
Ram Dhekial Phukan, Padmabati Devi Phukanani. As pointed out by Nizara Hazarika,
she not only advocated ‘women’s education and women’s emancipation’, but also has
the distinction of being the first female novelist in Assamese Literature. Her
Swadharma Upakhyan is the first novel by a female in Assamese literature. Like
Phukanani, Durgabasini Das4, a doctor by profession, advocated for women’s
education, as she believed “Women’s education is the prime mover of national
development” (Mahanta 41). Hemprova Das is another woman who espoused the
Gandhian view on women’s education. Her view is very parochial because, like
Gandhi, she also emphasizes “supreme importance of the domestic role as a wife,
mother or daughter-in-law for women” (Mahanta 51). Writers like Lakshminath
Bezbaroa, Sarat Chandra Goswami and Padmadhar Chaliha have advocated for
women’s education in the similar line of argument. Bezbaroa in his journal Banhi
advocated that women’s education should be for inculcating feminine qualities in
women, like “industriousness and readiness to help in every way in the domestic and
spiritual life of men” (Mahanta 44). On the other hand Sarat Chandra Goswami
“speaks of educating women to be “grihalaksmis” (The Goddess of the House)”;
Padmadhar Chaliha thinks that “women’s education is not to prepare them for work
outside the home but to equip them to be better mothers and wives” (Mahanta 41).
Among men, we find the only true reformer in the person of Gunabhiram Baruah, who
not only preached but also practiced the cause of women’s education and emancipation in the true sense just like John Stuart Mill.

The next wave of feminism strengthened in Assam with the formation of Assam Mahila Samiti (AMS) in 1926 under the leadership of Chandraprova Saikiani. Punyaprova Das, Dakheswari Brahmani, Chasme Nurjahan Begum and Kamalalaya Kakati belong to this period who actively participated in the movement for women’s education and emancipation in Assam. They are all connected to the contemporary journal *Ghar-Jeuti* which has become the mouthpiece of feminist movement in Assam from 1927-1932. Punyaprova Das has extensively written in *Ghar-Jeuti* about the “role of educated women in modern society. She advises Assamese women not to remain confined to household work but perform their duties in the public sphere alongside men” (Mahanta 52). Kakati, the co-editor of *Ghar-Jeuti*, also espoused a similar path for women. Despite of all these efforts women remained bogged down into the domestic sphere because the women’s movement has been only limited to issues like education, problems faced by women and freedom of movement. They have never questioned the patriarchal dominance in the society.

There have been very few women litterateurs until the last quarter of 20th century, and both in literary sphere and social sphere they remained contended with the question of women’s empowerment. The problematic with women’s empowerment is that whereas they recognize “customs like polygamy, prohibition of widow-remarriage and rights related to property inheritance- issues concerning the upper-class women in the main- as source of their subordination”; they overlook the genesis of the problem, which lies in the “patriarchy functioning within the class/caste structures” (M. Deka xv). This ‘lack’ in women’s literature in recognizing the
patriarchy (which is always taken as something axiomatic, universal and given), with its rigid structures is responsible in creating a paradoxical condition in women’s empowerment. Women’s position has not been independent of the patriarchal domination and patriarchal social structure; hence, the effort to empower women politically and through education is not producing the desired effect. What is more important than the recognition of the lack is the tracing of the cause of this ‘lack’. The reason can be traced in the century old tradition of societies, which have refused complete economic independence to women. Unlike their male counterpart, women do not enjoy equal economic rights. Since women participate in household activities, and peripheral works their contribution to the household is not visible, unlike their male counterparts. Meeta Deka says, “Women’s work in the forest, the field and the river ‘creates sustenance in quite but essential ways’ and is therefore invisible in providing sustenance and creating wealth for basic needs” (M. Deka 104). As a result, the indirect economic contribution of women is overlooked resulting in their deprivation. This idea has to be linked to what has been said earlier about the “human textuality” and knowledge of the world, which is essentially a male construct. To quote Spivak-

To my way of thinking, the discourse of the literary text is part of a general configuration of textuality, a placing forth of the solution as the unavailability of a unified solution to a unified or homogenous, generating or receiving, consciousness. The unavailability is often not confronted. It is dodged and the problem apparently solved, in terms perhaps of unifying concepts like “man”, the universal contours of a sex-, race-, class-transcendent consciousness as the generating, generated, and receiving consciousness of the text (G. C. Spivak, Feminism and Critical Theory 104).
Women are never considered a part of this discourse; neither the body of knowledge nor the “intertextuality” contains anything produced by the women. It is on this ground Spivak argues against the Marxist critics. Spivak further says that although “women in traditional social situation produces more than she is getting in terms of her subsistence” (G. C. Spivak, Feminism and Critical Theory 105), a compensation to women in terms of “use-value, exchange-value, and surplus-value” is not the solution to this. The Marxist problematic of capitalist structure is more complicated than this. According to Spivak, even Marxist critics fail to recognize the women’s womb as a “tangible place of production”: “In both so-called matrilineal and patrilineal societies the legal possession of the child is an inalienable fact of the property right of the man who “produces the child”’’ (G. C. Spivak, Feminism and Critical Theory 106). Unfortunately, the men become the sole proprietor not only of the economic affairs in the household but also of the women’s body.

Whereas the first generation of women writers did not question the patriarchal domination at all; the second generation of writers like Chandraprabha Saikiani, Punyaprova Das, Dakheswari Brahmani, Chasme Nurjahan Begum, Kamalalaya Kakati, Nalini Bala Devi made some progress in the struggle for women’s emancipation by showing the audacity to go against the patriarchal domination and patriarchal codes of the society. Mamoni Raisom Goswami have not only fought with her widowhood, but also fought for women’s rights. As Meeta Deka points out that “in the pre and early colonial period the issues that were taken up by women were mainly on morality and ideals of womenhood as envisaged by patriarchal society. Women literature of the colonial period became bolder and handled issues like childmarriage, widow remarriage, social ostracism, prostitution and other issues
related to women” (M. Deka 40). Other writers like Hiranmayi Devi, Praneeta Devi and Nirupama Borgohain also belongs to this second phase of feminism. Mamoni Raisom Goswami belongs to the latter part of this period and has successfully given a new dimension to Assamese literature by women. Meeta Deka further writes that in the post-independence period, Mamani Raisom Goswami’s “defiance of social norms regarding widowhood by wearing what is considered a taboo, a big bindi on her forehead and red cloths, is a contemporary example of standing up for human rights” (M. Deka 151). This legacy has been furthered by women writers like Anuradha Patangia Goswami, Nirupama Buragohain and Rita Choudhury. If we compare with the feminist movement of the west, we can see the beginning of the third wave of feminist movement with writers like Anuradha Patangia Goswami, whose *Kallolini* is an instance of women discovering herself. These writers have moved on from the process of internalization to the process of protest and rebellion in a way. Mary Eagleton writes that “Showalter’s three phases for women’s literature – the feminine, the feminist and the female – may start with imitation and the internalisation of the established tradition but they move to responses of protest and demands for autonomy and then to a phase of self discovery that breaks free from both acquiescence to and rebellion from the social norms” (Eagleton 110). One may assume that the point of self-discovery for women through their writings and a process of experimentation have begun in the literature of North-east India. Whereas, this has been the case for women writers in Assamese language, the writers in English language did not follow the same chronological development as in the case of women’s writing in Assamese Literature. The North-east writers in English language have a different background and a different socio-political setup; therefore, they have a direct entry into the third
phase of feminism, if we can really divide these different waves of feminism for the convenience of research. It is in this connection that this research shall focus on the writings in English from the North-east India.

The research analyses the transition of women through various stages in the society in North-east India. The four novels selected for this purpose show the various stages of development in the position of women in the society. Mitra Phukan’s *The Collector’s Wife* exposes the present day so-called modern society, where the older generation of women till day tries to control the reins of tradition, of female subjugation and male superiority; whereas, the younger generation of educated women breaks free from the chauvinistic world. Easterine Kire Iralu’s *A Terrible Matriarchy* also depicts a similar world where the patriarchal values have been internalized in such a manner as to give rise to a formidable matriarchal oppression. Anjum Hasan’s *Lunatic in My Head* presents a new kind of problem related not only to gender but also to identity: a problem that cannot be conceived of so easily in the European nations. It grapples with the challenges faced by women in a postcolonial society under the banner of a modern nation-state. Lastly, Mamang Dai’s *Stupid Cupid* opens up a completely new vista, where the women who have the full freedom to live their life by their choice encounter numerous challenges in the metropolis, a miniature of western society. This again brings home the fact that, outside patriarchal domination, the women may face new types of threats and challenges. Thus, novels discussed here present the paradox of women empowerment in Indian society in general and North-east India in particular.

Whereas the history of women’s writing in Assamese dates back to the nineteenth century, women’s writing in English is a very recent phenomenon. In the
past decade, there has been an effervescence in literary output in English language from the North-east India, which is drawing the attention of national and international publishers as well as readers. Although English education started in the nineteenth century in Assam, Easterine Kire Iralu from Nagaland is the first women novelist to write in English followed by a host of prolific writers. As women and gender studies also gained importance following the women empowerment and emancipation movements, there have been many important literary works that examined the women’s writing. However, such research has only been confined to Assamese Literature. *Journey of Assamese Women* by Aparna Mahanta, *Women Pioneers in India’s Renaissance: As I Remember Her*, edited by Sushila Nayar and Kamla Menkekar, *Lekhikar Jiboni* edited by Sheela Barthakur, works of Karabi Deka Hazarika, Meera Devi’s *Axomiya Upanyaxot Naaribad*, Nizara Hazarika’s *Colonial Assam and Women’s Writings* are some of the pioneering works in Feminist critical review. Since the trend of writing in English in North-east India is quite recent, there has been very little research work done systematically to trace the growth and origin of English writing and contribution of women writers. However, various UGC sponsored seminars have been held in the past few years and the individual research papers have been published as anthologies in some cases, for example Indiu Swami’s edited volumes: *Exploring Untouched Shades of North-East Indian Literature in English*; and *Exploring North-east Indian Writing in English (2 Volumes)*; *Myriad Mirrors: Reflections on North-East Indian Literature in English*. Margaret Ch Zama’s *Emerging Literatures from North-East India: The Dynamics of Culture, Society and Identity* published by SAGE is another notable work. Since it is an emerging
literature, it offers the scope of many critical research inquiries for future researchers to come.

Since literature is the reflection of the society we live in, and the society in turn gets influenced by many of the ideas dealt with in literature allowing the society to think in a new possible way- ought to be, the present research automatically comes within the ambit of a sociological framework. In other words, the society from where the characters in the novel emanates is the subject of inquiry in this research. Feminist and post-colonial theories have been used to analyze the primary texts in question. Apart from the main novels, other works of literature have also been discussed. Critical analytical method has been used to trace the growth and development of the genre of novel writing in North-east India in the context of Indian literature as well as world literature. Since women’s emancipation is undoubtedly a concern of social science, the backgrounding of social science theories stand justified. Moreover, the trend of writing by women itself is associated with women literacy movements; the paradigm shift in the social outlook regarding women’s education naturally comes within the purview of the research. Since the change in the pattern of women’s approach to society and women question dealt in literature is directly reciprocal to the changes in the society brought about by social and political changes; both literature and society invariably get intertwined in this research. Literature and society becomes inseparable.

In foregrounding the problematic to understand and negotiate the problems concerning the empowerment of women in North-East India, one has also to see it in the pan-Indian context as well as regional context. The coming of the British and the spread of English language and literature are crucial to the positioning of women in
the contemporary society. Since education has played a great role, and its role is always emphasized in all government policy documents, the analysis should start with the education system in India and the role of English in this education system.

With the emergence of English education system in India and North-East India, English language and literature opened up new vistas about the role of women in society. The modern education system introduced by the British also changed the structure of the society. With the creation of new administrative/clerical jobs, social mobility became possible and people went to cities in search of jobs. With the spread in women’s education, women also started vying for these jobs, and eventually women became powerful agencies of social change. Further, it infused the Indian society with new debates on religious faith and pushed Christian doctrines through structured syllabus specially designed for that purpose. It created opportunities wherein women could be conceived in new roles, which have never been thought of earlier. This brought a dichotomous representation of women in the interface of tradition and modernity. Therefore, even before women started writing about themselves, the Indian writers and British policy makers have addressed the role and representation of women. Whereas, social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy and British administrators like William Bentinck were trying to bring reforms by abolishing sati system and introducing widow-remarriage; there were a section of Indians who protested against such reforms. Moreover, there were oppositions against women’s education, but the rise of nationalism and the entry of Gandhi into the Indian political scenario gave a new dimension to the role of women in Indian society. The visit of Gandhi to Assam also inspired the women from Assam to participate into the freedom struggle. The participation of women in freedom struggle, which started in
the 20th century, did not end with Indian Independence in 1947. It went much beyond that. Soon after independence, when the different regions in North-east India started their secessionist movements to liberate themselves from India, the women also participated equally in these movements.

It has been alleged that the entire North-east region is deprived by the centre time and again because of its peripheral location. Moreover, the reorganization of geographical boundaries in the North-east India by the British Administration and later by the Indian administration for the convenience of administration, had caused internal rifts and disputes, giving rise to militancy in the North-east India. Because of this, it can be argued that the North-east is a ‘subaltern region’ which was undermined, overlooked and dominated for more than a century, and gradually this domination resulted in the rise of ‘militant subnationalism’. Tilottama Misra in her Introduction to ‘The Oxford Anthology of Writings from North-East India’ claims that “Violence features as a recurrent theme because the story of violence seems to be never-ending one in this region and yet people have not learnt ‘to live with it’, as they are expected to do by the distance centres of power” (Aier xix). Whereas, Temsula Ao subtitles her ‘These Hills Called Homes’ as “stories from war zone”; The oxford publication has published two recent anthologies edited by Tilottoma Misra which introduces the books from “region marred by decades of violence”. Although the literature from these regions is diverse, yet there has been a tendency to group them under literature from trouble zone, indicating the violence that has enmeshed the history of this region since the past few decades. For example, Temsula Ao’s short story ‘The Jungle Major’ published in the collection ‘These Hills Called Homes’, the female protagonist, Khatila, displays her courage and wit in defending her husband,
however, the credit goes to her husband for his narrow escape. The story can have a double reading, firstly, the position of women in the society; and the effects of war between the Indian government and militant groups on women. These stories record the experiences of women in the silhouette of violence. In much the same way, *The Collector’s Wife* by Mitra Phukan, ‘A Bowstring Winter’ by Dhruba Hazarika, ‘Neti, Neti’ by Anjum Hasan and ‘Surface’ by Siddhartha Deb are all set to the paraphernalia of violence, where one can see the effect of violence on women. In the backdrop of such violence, the representation of women in literature, and their condition are important milestones in the trajectory of women’s emancipation.

The representation of women in literature in North-east India and its impact on the readers vis-à-vis explains further the paradoxical position of women’s emancipation. The fourth chapter deals with the influence of the myths created to subjugate women since antiquity, which is responsible for their gendered position. It also analyses the representation of women from the angle of diverse ethnic groups in the fiction from North-East India. The North-East India is made up of eight states viz, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura and Sikkim. The writers from these states tend to reflect the culture and belief of their respective tribes and their strife with life through their literature. For instance, *A Terrible Matriarchy* by Easterine Iralu inspects the life of a young Naga girl who is brought up by her traditional grandmother with strong hands, and as the name suggests we can see the effects of matriarchal society on women. Similarly, the Khasi, which is a matrilineal society, does not either give much privilege to women as Abhijit Choudhury writes: “In spite of being a matrilineal society, woman does not play, nor does want to play, a more active role in the body politic” (Choudhury 49).
The chapter examines the causes of the gendered position of women, the role of religion and the eventual impasse created because of it.

The novels discussed in this research also bring out the transition in social values and provide a stark contrast between tradition and modernity. The resistance from the Indian patriarchal society in stalling that change also becomes apparent in literature and society. This conflict has further problematised the question of women’s emancipation in the Indian society. The research discusses threadbare the various women related issues that cause impediment and barrier in the path of women’s emancipation. Four texts have been selected for this purpose. The research tries to justify the paradoxical position of women’s emancipation, and presents the emerging challenges for women and the society in future.

Thus, from the emergence of a new education system under the British and American missionary’s patronage, and the rise of nationalism in India and North-east India, the rise of sub-nationalism and government policies on women, all have contributed to the problematic of women’s emancipation in North-east India. To ensure the success of women’s emancipation, the detection of the cause of women’s subjugation has to be traced. This enquiry naturally leads to the past when the world order had been created and the vast gamut of information organized from the male perspective.

**Problem to be investigated.**

The existing social structure in North-east India tends to relegate women to a secondary status, despite their active participation in many affairs, allowing men to take the centre. Although critics refer to ideal and revered image of women in Hindu
The truth is that, in practice, this reverence has culminated into ‘protective discrimination’ in Indian societies thereby pushing the women to a subaltern position. It is in this relation that this research examines that instead of women empowerment; women are living within a gendered enclosure. The research analyses (i) the social structure that helps to understand how women are relegated to this inferior position; (ii) how women have accepted and internalized this position, (iii) that emancipation of women is in no way possible within the existing social structure and (iv) how disintegration of culture and tradition is occurring in the name of liberalization and modernization. The last statement is crucial because the value on which the society is built is itself the problematic, and any attempt to reverse the process would come into direct conflict with the age old tradition.

The ‘values’ are created by the relationships shared by individuals based on the forces of production as identified and determined by the base, and those gradually become the norms of the society, and responsible for the superstructure, until further changes brought forth by some revolution (be sudden or gradual) to usurp the established ones by the radical interlude (which in due course of time becomes the norms again), or else it happens as a process of evolution that the changes are so slow that it becomes imperceptible but only when compared with a distant past, the change becomes prominent.

**Description of each chapter in brief.**

The thesis consists of six chapters including the Introduction and the conclusion. The introduction contains the background of the work and the justification for undertaking the research. It also contains the thesis statement and the method adopted for
investigating the problem. Each chapter has a separate work cited page; and endnotes have been used at the end of each chapter to explain words, phrases or ideas that are indirectly related to the research.

The second chapter is entitled “Negotiating a new narrative: Moving from tradition to modernity” which deals with the problem of representation of women in a new genre (novel). This chapter is subdivided into three sections, namely, “Emergence of English language and literature in India and North-East India”; “The new genre and the portrayal of women in India”; and “Refashioning women in the literature of North-East India: The Tradition versus Modern”. This chapter deals with the transformation that began in India after the introduction of English language and literature by the British. This becomes crucial in understanding the process of women empowerment because it has sufficiently altered the various forces of production and the dynamics of human relationship along with the family structure in India. The language and literature with the introduction of new thoughts and possibilities have also been discussed in this second chapter. It also discusses the difficulty faced by women in handling a new genre (novel), language and culture, which has come from the west. The chapter also examines the didactic and aesthetic literatures produced by men in giving a stereotype portrayal of women. The discussion then moves from the Indian context to the context of north-east India in the context of Macaulay’s Minute and Woods’s Dispatch. The language policies and the political scenario have also been discussed because they are in the background of all policy formation from women empowerment.

The third chapter discusses issues of subalternity and misogynistic representation of women, which becomes a part of the grand narrative in the context
of northeast India. The advocates against women education like Ratneswar Mahanta and Lambodhar Bora has been contextualized in showing how the women are relegated to a subaltern position by means of coercive forces like rape, isolation, segregation and prostitution in the backdrop of violence and militancy problem in North-east India. It brings in reference of the novels that have been included in the research. Apart from the novels, representation of women in the oral literatures from the entire north-east region has been discussed.

The fourth chapter discusses the identity issues of women and the ideal representation of the women in the wake of nationalist movement in India and North-east India. This chapter also discusses the paradox that lies in women’s empowerment because the participation of women in India’s struggle for independence is followed by the ideas of Modernity and nationalism, which becomes the problematic core. Knowledge for power and knowledge for salvation come as contradictory forces resulting in the impasse for women’s emancipation. The transformation of women and the role of film and media have also been discussed in this chapter.

In the sixth chapter, the novels under consideration are analyzed from the perspective of the issues discussed earlier. Each novel has been discussed from a particular point of view relating it to a particular issue. The concluding chapter discusses the need to alter the base and superstructure without outright rejecting the age-old Indian culture and tradition. The role of media in this becomes crucial and thereby one may look forward to the true scope for women’s empowerment and emancipation.
Endnote

1 Published by Gunabhiram Baruah when he was posted in Nagaon (Mahanta 12).

2 Published from Calcutta under the editorship of R. Bora but was actually edited and maintained by Bolinarayan Bora (Based in Nagaon) (Mahanta 27)

3 Published from Calcutta by young Assamese students who went to study there. (Mahanta 31)

4 She was the second Assamese women to qualify as LMP from Campbell Medical College, Calcutta. She passed away in 1934 (Mahanta 41).

5 It was published by Sibsagar Mahila Samiti as was considered as the mouthpiece of AMS. It was published from 1927 to 1932).

6 Sanjib Baruah discusses the issue at length and analyses the causes and the consequences in his book (S. Baruah, India Against Itself).
Works Cited


