CHAPTER-IX

WOMEN AND GENERAL ISSUES

This Chapter focuses on the role performance of the women in their specific capacity as members of the Legislature. Their role as legislators and of the common women for the welfare of their family and the society at large. Their position and status determine the success of the political and social systems.¹ The State Legislatures are the focuses of the positional power. They are considered to be the best source to get any type of social, economic, educational, rural and urban developmental works get done. The woman leaders have been playing a key role of linkages between the State and the people. Most of the general developmental works like water supply, construction of roads, bridges, schools, are easily completed by the woman leaders. Most of the woman legislators concentrated themselves in providing the general facilities for the society during their terms. A few of them could also get the developmental works done at large scale due to their position as Ministers.

The Scheduled Caste woman legislators were busy for the development of their own Caste people, though the number of Scheduled Castes woman legislators is very few in number. Almost all the Scheduled Castes woman leaders have been demanding social justice for their own Caste people in the legislature.² However, joint action by all women has never been seen in such cases because the concerned party High Command guides their action. Again, if there is any injustice against their people, they don’t dare to raise their voice against the High command. The Scheduled Tribe woman leaders also fought for the justice of the Scheduled Tribe people. Mostly they raised their voices in favour of sanctioning grants from the various Governmental agencies for the infrastructure development of their constituencies and for the social welfare activities. They have helped in providing pure drinking water facilities and pucca roads in the Tribal areas of Assam (mainly in their constituencies). The various woman leaders appeared to draw the Government aid for the construction of roads, schools, libraries and girls hostels, flood etc. A few have been busy to improve the living conditions in their constituencies by providing various aids and assistances to the needy people, improving the streets, providing electricity in rural areas.

Woman leaders of Assam both in the Parliament and in the State Legislature lack exposure to political debates and issues, either on account of illiteracy or lack of communication facilities and are thus unable to form independent opinions. Mostly they handled general issues, which were their constituency problems. Even the women issues regarding dowry, rape, divorce etc. are handled by the male legislators.

**Women and General Issues in the Lok Sabha**

This Chapter attempts an analysis of the various issues raised by the woman legislators of Assam in the Lok Sabha since 1952. 8 women have represented in the Lok Sabha since 1952. Of the 8 women, Jyotsna Chanda has represented three times, Renuka Debi Barkataky two times and Ranee Narah has represented two times and Bijoya Chakraborty one time in the Lok Sabha. The women represented in the Lok Sabha are:

*Bonify Khongmen* was first elected to the Lok Sabha in 1952 as a Congress nominee. She was the first lady member from Assam and was most active in playing her role as a member of the Lok Sabha. She was elected twice as a member of the Gauhati University Court. She was member of the several Tribal educational institutions in Shillong. She also took initiative to establish Basic Training school for the Hill Tribal people of Shillong. In 1955, she joined the 10th General Assembly of the U.N.O, Newyork as Indian delegate to the U.N.O. During her tenure of office, she gave much importance to the improvement of the people of Assam and also to the Tribal people of Assam. She introduced Constitutional Amendment Bill (Sixth Schedule) in the Lok Sabha. She supported the Hindu Code Bill. She criticized the National Volunteer Force Bill as it excluded women from it. She also criticised the Government for not allowing women into the Administrative service. She mostly raised women issues and handled problems related to women of Assam.

*Rani Manjula Devi* was one of the pioneers of women movement in Goalpara District. She was connected with many women organizations of the country. She became the Vice President of Assam Pradesh Mahila Samiti. She was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1957 and also elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1967. As legislator, she always raised her voice on the floor of the Lok Sabha for the upliftment
of women. Taking part in the Dowry Prohibition Bill, she raised her voice on Dowry Prohibition, which is one of the main problems faced by Indian women. She raised her voice for the establishment of Gauhati Refinery, handicrafts centres in Assam. She demanded for scholarships for students of Other Backward Classes of Assam.

On the floor of the Assam Legislative Assembly she took part in the Budget discussion, debate on flood situation in Assam. She asked question about the differences of prices for acquisition of land, pending cases of rights of records of land. She also raised her voice on the floor of the Assembly about the Government’s concern about Tribal belts and blocks in Assam abolished. Raising question on the floor of the Assembly about the Quit India notice served to the Missionaries running educational institutes in Assam were served with notice banning their stay after the expiry of their residential permits. She raised her voice on the floor of the Assembly on demand for Kamtapur State, welfare of Rajbanshis and Santhals of Goalpara District, irregularity in payment of salaries to medical officers etc. She was the most active lady always raised her voice regarding the general as well as for the women related issues both in the Lok Sabha and in the State Legislative Assembly of Assam.

Renuka Debi Barkataky was Secretary of Women’s Department, Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, 1955 and in-charge of Women and Children Wing. She was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1962 and in 1977 and to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1972. As legislator, she played an active role both in the Lok Sabha and in the Assam Legislative Assembly. Regarding education, she questioned in the House on basic education and medical education in India. She raised a number of issues relating to women such as – basic education to adult women, completion of projects undertaken during International women year, implementation of equal wages for equal work to men and women. She raised her voice in favour of homeopathy medicine and supported the system in rural areas, survey for development of industries in Assam, construction of Bongaigaon Refinery and Petro-Chemical Complex, construction of hotels in Guwahati by I.T.D.C and Small-Scale industries in Assam. She also proposed on the floor of the Lok Sabha to encourage for setting up of cottage industries in the backward States. She demanded for the establishment of cement factory in Assam, extension of railway lines from Bongaigaon to Gauhati via Jogi-ghopa, establishment of new

3. Debates of the Assam Legislative Assembly, 23rd June-6th July.

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Railway Division at Rangia (Assam), railway hospitals and Health units at railway stations in Assam.

She raised question on the proper management of detoriated condition of Tea Gardens and gave importance to improve the Tea-Gardens because tea is a valuable production in the National and International market. She also questioned on the proper management of the All India Radio Station at Guwahati and also proposed to set up another radio station in the upper Assam area. She gave importance on different problems of workers and raised a number of issues relating to workers various problems like amendment of Worker’s Compensation Act, Bonus Review Committee, non deposit of employees Provident Fund by companies in Assam, payment to re-employed teachers of Aided Schools in Delhi etc. She also questioned on All India Services and ex-servicemen, expenditure on war operations in Cargo, 7 point programmes for unemployment problem, retirement of income tax officers, National Book Trust, Sahitya Academy etc.

On the floor of the Assembly, she asked various questions like the institution of enquiry Committee on the purchase of boats, Assam Span Silk Mill, appointment of Government Pleader, Petro-Chemical Project at Bongaigaon, Jorhat Tea Company, Tourist Lodge at Guwahati, rural water supply programme, training of agricultural engineers. She was always interested to take part in the debates and discussion of the House both at the National/ State and also at the International levels. She always spoke boldly and with arguments. On the floor of the Assembly, she also raised such issues like the State Irrigation Council and its reconstitution, Housing scheme for loan, State Scientific Society, translation of Indian Constitution into Assamese, branch of Lalit Kala Academy, rural electrification, community development blocks, life pensions to freedom fighters, functioning of North Eastern Council, dissolution of Panchayats, Chief Minister’s salary, Panchayat election, Gauhati Municipal Corporation, embankment of Bramhaputra, family pension for the Tea-Garden workers in Assam, Social Welfare Board, Administrative Training college, Sonapur Tea-Estate, report of Assam Pay Commission.4

She also raised a number of issues relating to spreading of education such as technological subject in Dibrugarh University, adult literacy programme, girl’s

Polytechnic school, protection force, Relief and Rehabilitation Department, scheme for weavers, provision for the Brahmaputra char areas, rural water supply, housing accommodation at Guwahati, profit earned through State lotteries, Govindapur Agricultural farm, agricultural investment, report of the assurance Committees, Voluntary Cultural Organizations, repayment of loan by A.S.E.B., Plain Tribal Council, raising the age limit of Government service up to 30 years, Housing Scheme and loan, demand for a separate State of Udayachal, Advisory Committee, increase of procurement of price of rice, Rent Control Act, arrest of persons under Misa, Schemes approved by Planning Commison, report on Assam Nagaland border situation, Additional Employment Scheme, Community Development Blocks, T.A. and D.A. of Ministers, grant of loans to flood affected people, Social Advisory Board etc.

On the floor of the Assembly, she demanded loans for the cultivators, purchase of Tea-Gardens, Pay commission, Nalbari Sanskrit College, eradication of poverty and unemployment, Khadi and Village Industrial department, demarcation of boundaries, Brahmaputra Flood Control Commission, Sundaram Commission, lapse of funds, pending cases in the Board of Revenue, Permanent Capital site, Assam Government Construction Corporation, office of the Auditor General, scarcity of drinking water, river erosion at Lowpara, Napara, Assam State jail manual, water supply in Hajo area, levy on sugar, extension of electricity, meeting of B.F.C. Board, development of homeopathy treatment in Assam, State Integration Council, appointment of local youths in railway service, State dispensary, functioning of the Relief and Rehabilitation Department. She asked questions relating to the Social Welfare Board, prices of match boxes, Amingaon South Salmara road, reform of Administrative system, about the pensioners, provision of tube wells, fertilizers unit, provisions of jute mills, Hazarika Committee to enquire into the causes and circumstances leading to breach of embankment by the flood has submitted its final report, Assam surveys, ration cards, School Board, seniority of doctors, Accountant General Office, Management of Gauhati Bank, rules for Panchayat Raj Administration, election of Gaon Panchayat and Mahakuma Plantation Labour Act, rice smuggled out of Assam, fertilizers unit of associated industries, royalty in crude oil, Joyti Chitraban, regional offices of the School Board, agricultural credit, textiles mills in


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Assam, rehabilitation of Bangladeshi refugees, exemption of entertainment tax, Fishery Corporation, assessment of construction of buildings, State Vigilence Cell, eradication of cholera, reorganisation of employment exchanges, State Prohibition and Excise Department, Assam Seeds Corporation, industrial units, adviser to Chief Minister, shifting of officers from Shillong to Guwahati, reorganisation of Police Department, schemes for construction of bridges over Brahmaputra, record of rights on lands, repairment of flood damages, Kopili project, Crime Department, nutrition programme in the State. She was busy in raising various issues of the people of Assam.

*Mofida Ahmed* was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1957. She was associated with some women organizations of Assam. She was the Assistant Secretary of Tezpur District Mahila Samiti. She was also the Secretary of the Maternity Welfare Centre and she worked for the rescue of fallen women. As legislator she raised her voice in the House on different border incidents and International disputes such as Indo-Pak border demarcation, occupation of Ladakhi territory by Chinese forces, Pak atomic weapons, air base, Pakistani air craft, violation of Indian territory, U.K. jet bombers for Pakistan, Indian soldiers killed in Congo, Indian air crafts for Congo, Indians kidnapped by Pakistani army. On the floor of the House she questioned about some International issues like Canberra Air craft, compensation for loss, Chinese army personnel for Tibet, Soviet assistance for Barauni Oil Refinery, foreign owned hospitals on India etc. On the floor of the Lok Sabha, she questioned on ammunition purchase, Cooperative Laws, Agra Fort, Dewan- e-Am Red Fort, Durgapur Steel Plant, documentary films on exportable goods, films on Mahatma Gandhi, State awards for films, petroleum excise duty, air accident cases, provision of woman pilots, attack on woman passengers etc. She asked the Railway Minister about the railway accident at Nagpur on 17th February 1961, proposal to build a buffer stock of foodgrains in the country, infiltration of Bhutanese to Assam, development of small-scale industries in India, enquiry into the number of Chinese in India. 6 She also asked about the progress made in the setting up of a refinery at Noonmati, Naharkatiya, Barauni Oil Pipeline, convention of Naga leaders etc. Mofida Ahmed did not raise many issues in the Lok Sabha and in most of the times remained silent.

*Rashida Haque Choudhury* was a political and social worker, associated with


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the Congress party since 1950. She was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1977. As legislator, she was not active. After consultation of the Parliamentary proceedings, it is found that she did not play any active role in the Parliament. In most of the times she remained silent in the House.

*Ranee Narah* was first elected to the Lok Sabha in 1998 from the Lakhimpur constituency as Congress nominee. But the 12th Lok Sabha did not last long and was dissolved and she was re-elected in 1999 to the Lok Sabha. As legislator, she raised a number of issues on the floor of the Lok Sabha. She asked whether literacy among female particularly belonging to SC/ST is very low in most States particularly in the North East, financial help to the indigenous artists, steps to increase the percentage of reservation for the disabled in all the Governmental educational institutions.⁷ On the floor of the Lok Sabha she raised her voice about the Operation Blackboard and adult education programme, new railway line in Assam and for other North Eastern States, up-gradation of Gauhati Airport. She raised her voice about the construction of Bogibeel, road-cum-rail-bridge, formulation of Foreign Policy, trade barriers on wool, functioning of the Rastriya Ispat Nigam Ltd., New Industrial Policy of the Government. She asked whether the Central Government have decided to set up a Review Committee to liberalise the foreign direct investment (FDI) regime, self sufficiency in power sectors, investment by US Company, emergency health care scheme. Raising her voice on the floor of the Lok Sabha, she demanded for the setting up of Film Museum in the country, revival of Defence Intelligence Agency, import of onion seeds for distribution to the farmers during the next season, total number of cases registered by CBI under the Official Secret Act, 1923, security in Andaman and Nicobar islands, power projects by Foreign Companies. She also asked whether the Government of Assam has approached the Union Government for providing help for cultivation of rapid growing summer rice, military hardwares to Burma, agricultural scenario of the country is looking very bleak, total loan sanctioned by the Government since 1996, provincialisation of higher education, present status of the Ranganadi Hydel Power Project of North Eastern Electric Power Corporation, total domestic demand of crude oil, flood control and soil erosion. She raised some issues related to general matters and had no time to speak for the women of Assam.


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Women and General issues in the Rajya Sabha

The Constitution of India provided the Parliamentary system of Government in our country. The Parliament consists of two Chambers—the Lok Sabha (House of the people) and the Rajya Sabha (Council of States). The people, who attain 18 years of age, have the right to vote popularly and elect the members of the Lok Sabha and the elected representatives of the State Legislature elect the members of the Rajya Sabha. Rajya Sabha is a permanent Chamber and consisted of 245 members, out of these 12 are nominated by the President of India as representatives on the ground of specialties in literature, science, art, culture and social service. The number of representatives depend upon the size of the population of the State. Assam sends 7 representatives to the Rajya Sabha.

The following woman representatives represented to the Rajya Sabha from Assam

Puspalata Das was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1952 and in 1958. In 1967, she was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly. As legislator Puspalata Das played an important role both in the Rajya Sabha and in the Assam Legislative Assembly. She took initiative in solving the problems of tea industries of Assam. She raised question regarding the foreign investment in the Tea Estates and foreign employees in those Tea Estates as managers and assistant managers. She also asked question in the House whether Government proposed to lay down any condition for foreign investment and employment of foreign officials in Tea Estates of Assam. She has taken part in the debate of the Tea Bill 1952 and congratulated the Government for introducing the Tea Bill and expected that Bill would solve the problems faced by tea industries of Assam.8 She welcome the Dowry Prohibition Bill 1959. She also took an active role in the Special Marriage Bill, 1952 and expressed her view in favour of women. She demanded in the House about the traffic difficulties due to the railway crossing line in Guwahati. So, in 1952, on the floor of the House, she tried to draw the attention of the Railway Minister and to remove the traffic problems of Guwahati. She raised the issue to set up flying club at Guwahati and asked about the annual subsidy proposed to be given to that club. She never followed anything

blindly and boldly protested against the loopholes of the Congress party. She even
never hesitated to protest against the wrong decision of the party on the floor of the
House. Taking part in the General discussion of the Budget (1957-58), she
criticized the Congress party failed to keep the promise which the party gave to the
Nation. She criticized the Government as refused to establish the proposed oil refinery
in Assam and demanded for the establishment of oil refinery providing transport
facilities to that area.

Puspalata Das became the member of the Assam Legislative Assembly in
1967. She played an active role in the Assembly. She took part in the General discussion
of the Budget, voting on demands for grants and debated on the Governor’s address.
She was the Chairman of Employment Review Committee and Assam Agricultural
Maintenance Better Committee. She supported Surendra Nath Das resolution, which
demanded more funds from the Government of India for minor and major Irrigation
projects in the State. She took active part in the different irrigation schemes. She was
the most active lady and handled all the problems including women and general
problems.

Bedavati Buragohain was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1960 as Congress
nominee. Her biographical data is not available. Bedavati Buragohain on the floor of
the Rajya Sabha took part in the debates of the Constituton (Thirteenth Amendment
Bill, 1962) and the State of Nagaland Bill, 1962 Prevention of food Adulteration
(Amendment Bill, 1964). In 1962, she was appointed as the Member of the General
Purposes Committee. After consultation of the documented proceedings of the Rajya
Sabha, it is found that she was not an active member. She remained silent and did not
raise any issue on the floor of the House.

Bijoya Chakraborty was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1986 and elected to
the Lok Sabha in 1999. She became the State Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation
in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ministry. As legislator, she raised various issues on the
floor of the Rajya Sabha. She asked about the Master Plan for Brahmaputra river,
seizure of heroine, new Commission for demarcating boundaries of Assam with
Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya, total number of Assamese medium
High schools run by railways in Assam, superfast train between Delhi and Guwahati,
selection of Indian table tennis team for Seol Olympic, Cricket Control Board of
India, programme producing centres at Jorhat, Non-Plan for improvement of Guwahati, development of tourism in the country, price revision of drugs, technical posts in the department of chemicals, setting up of public sector units in Assam, publication of Telephone Directory of Mangaldoi, number of vacancies in Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangthan, accepting the Kelkar Committee recommendations, setting up of drugs to non-associated companies, working of Information and Broadcasting Ministry concerning Assamese language, functioning of Peerless General Finance and Investment Company Ltd., asked about the working of the M.R.P.T Act, rapid action force to tackle communal riots, vital cancer drugs etc. She was the most active lady and raised many issues on the floor of the Rajya Sabha. She was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1999 and became the State Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation and she got no chance in raising issues in Lok Sabha.

Basanti Sarma was elected to the Rajya Sabha on September 1991 as a Congress nominee. She became the Chairperson of the Women Commission of Assam. As a Member of the Rajya Sabha, she raised many issues on the floor of the House. She asked about the private sector power plants in Maharashtra and Assam, total number of IAS/IPS officers in the country, monitoring procedures evolved by department of bio-technology, joint exercise held by Indian Navy, request of Gulf States for AIR presence in India. She asked about the drug addiction among the students of various Universities particularly in the NE region, details of the exploration activity of Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited with respect to coal, number of Health sub-centres without female workers, maternal death during child birth due to obstructive cause, regular supply of yeam, promotion of bamboo, cultivation on waste lands, harassment of Indians to Saudi Arabia, telephone connections in rural areas of North East region, complaints against CGHS doctors in Delhi, new dispensaries under S.M and H (Indian system of Medicine and Homopathy), policy formulated for increasing export. On the floor of the Rajya Sabha, she raised issues like new scheme for Handloom weavers in rural areas, new power policy, filling up of vacancies in reserved category, amount for Women and Child Welfare Scheme of Assam, production of natural rubber, regularization of unauthorized colonies in Delhi,

promotion of tourism in Assam, number of model villages in Assam, funds for rural electrification programme, State-wise pending proposal of power prospects in Assam, development of agriculture in N.E region, development of animal husbandry and dairy industry in Assam, supply of L.P.G. connections in N.E. region, L.P.G. agencies in waiting list in Assam, Central assistance to the States under minimum needs programme, Homeopathic Pharmacy Act, opening of Post offices in NER, 22 comprehensive programme for development of tourism, export of textile items, promoting production in cotton mills, funds for agricultural development, assessment of flood and natural calamity situation in Assam, vacant post of SC/ST categories, import and export of sugar, ISM (Indian system of Medicine) and Homopathy in the new population policy. She was busy in dealing with the issues that affected the people as a whole. She asked question relating to tiger population in the country, trade with neighbouring countries, import and export growth, survey for sick industries in NER, poverty alleviation programme in NER, textile mills in NER, agreement between US Exim Bank and SBI, capital market Ltd. Bombay, lack of fund to maintain annual plan for 1992-93, promotion of fisheries in Assam, rise of prices of essential commodities, assistance from Central road fund to Assam, Governments for development of KVIC (Khadi and Village Industries) in Assam. After the consultations of the Rajya Sabha proceedings it is found that she raised some issues but that did not support her to be the most active woman legislator of Assam.

Jaysree Goswami was elected to the Rajya Sabha during the A.G.P regime in Assam and remained for 2 years as member of the House. As member of the Rajya Sabha, she raised some issues on the floor of the House. She asked about the cross-border crimes in North East, incentives for the surrendered militants of North East, Assam Government's request for change of funding pattern, amount payable to Assam University etc. under non-lapsable Central pool of resources.11 She asked about the dual Tribunals, namely Foreigner's Tribunal and IMDT are applicable in Assam for detection and deportation of illegal Migrants in Assam, North East Industrial policy 1997, operation of international flights from Guwahati airport, implementation of Numaligarh-Bongaigaon product pipelines, the sale of Naphtha produced by refineries in Assam, loss of natural gases etc., illegal migrants Act, representation of cultural

groups of Assam under pipelines of ICCR, exemption from requirement of spending plan, allocation on North East. So, the study of the documented proceedings of the Rajya Sabha reveals that she handled some problems but was totally silent about the women matters.

**Women and General issues in the Assam Legislative Assembly**

The Constitution of India has adopted the same pattern of administration both at the Centre and in the States. The State Legislature may be Unicameral i.e consisting of one Chamber or Bi-cameral i.e consisting of two Chambers. The Assam State Legislature is at present is Unicameral Legislature, the Second Chamber was abolished in 1947. The members of the Assembly are elected by the people of Assam on the basis of adult franchise as provided by the Constitution of India. The male members always dominated the Assam Legislative Assembly. The data of election from 1952-2001 reveals that only 7-8% women represented in the Assembly. The maximum number of women represented in the 10th and 11th Assembly. The various issues raised by the woman members from 1952-2001 of the Assam Legislative Assembly are:

**Usha Barthakur** was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1952 and in 1957. In 1967, she was elected to the Rajya Sabha. Taking part in the Budget discussion on the floor of the Assembly, she raised her voice for the improvement of child education, technical education, women education, adult education, medical facility to rural areas and improvement of social welfare project. She proposed for girls' hostel in every district girl's school. She demanded more funds to provide medical facilities in the rural areas. She also demanded hospital and project for physically handicapped children. She proposed to increase the number of maternity home and children clinic in each Block in the State. She also demanded to start scheme by the rural development for the upliftment of the rural women. On the floor of the Assembly, she asked question about the number of woman officers employed in community project areas. She proposed to increase the number of woman officers and equal facilities should be provided to both male and female officers. She gave more importance to the development of silk and weaving industries and demanded more funds. She became the first lady Deputy Minister in the State for

Health and Social Welfare after independence. She was in office of the Ministry from April 1957 to December 1957. She was in the office for short term. She was the most active member in her constituency and served the people of her constituency from 1952-1962. She was the member of the State Social Board. On the floor of the Assembly, she demanded that the subject Home Science should be included in every girl's school that through Home Science education girls can manage their homes properly. She also raised her voice against the scarcity of doctors in some State dispensaries. She said that doctors should be attracted by adequate facilities of Government quarter or home allowance so that they will not hesitate to go to interior villages.

Usha Barthakur, one of the founders of Nowgong District Mahila Samity. She was the President of Assam Provincial Mahila Samity. In 1967, she became the member of the Rajya Sabha and went to U.S.A. and joined in the International Women Conference of Associated countries. In 1976, she was President of Nowgong District Congress. In 1977, she was selected as leader of an Indian women group, which represented the women of the country at the International Conference in Russia. So the documented proceedings of the Assam Legislative Assembly and Rajya Sabha reveals that she fought for the cause of women mostly in the Assembly.

Jyotsna Chanda was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1957 and to the Lok Sabha in 1962, in 1967 and in 1971 respectively. On the floor of the Assembly, she asked many questions such as how many High schools are to turn as Higher secondary schools, whether girls' schools are included in the list or not, regular bus services through Silchar to Shillong and Silchar to Agartala, deteriorated condition of the Silchar Hospital, problem of displaced persons, flood problem in the Cachar district, provision of oil refinery in Assam, recommendations of the Pay Committee, extension of area of Silchar town, family planning and child welfare centres, disparity of salary to teachers between male and female, provision of Ayurvedic and Homeopathic dispensaries in each Sub-division, sanitation of Silchar town, proposed to start second Medical College of Assam in Silchar, to start Polytechnic Institution, Post graduate classes should be started in Silchar, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, and Cotton College, to start 200 beded hospital in Silchar. On the floor of the Assembly, she

took part in the debates on Governor’s address. Raising question on licentiate doctors in Assam she wanted to know whether Government proposed to raise the status of those doctors to class I, progress of the Silchar–Imphal road. She was the Panel of Chairman in the Assam Legislative Assembly.

_Jyotsna Chanda_ in her political career, mostly represented in the Lok Sabha. On the floor of the House, she took part in the Budgetary discussions. She raised a number of issues relating to railway problems such as—accidents in N.F.Railway, night running of trains from Badarpur to Lumding, railway overbridge near Silchar town, loss to Railway Department due to floods, protection of railway lines in Assam and Nagaland, railway saloons, constructions of railway quarters in Delhi. In the Lok Sabha she asked about the Administrative Reforms Commission submitted its report or not, the State Government and the Union Territories have taken steps to introduce the triple benefit scheme proposed by the Centre to improve the lot of the Government and private school teachers, ancient city at NEFA foothills, offer of Nagas Namrup Fertilizer project, hostile activities of Nagas, traffic between West Bengal and Assam through Pakistan, strike by statesmen employees etc. She represented the people of Barak Valley and she was more interested for the people of her region. On floor of the House, she demanded for the Barak river multi purpose project, industrial development in Cachar and All India Radio Station in Silchar. So, it is clear from the above discussion that Jyotsna Chanda paid more attention to the problems of the people of Cachar District

_Kamal Kumari Barua_ was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1957 and in 1962 and became the Minister of Education and Social Welfare. As legislator she raised many issues like-U.G.C. scale of pay to Aided college teachers of Assam. She asked on the floor of the Assembly about the Engineering College at Jorhat, cattle loans to be given to the peasants, State dispensary at Mariani, Assam Agricultural College. She took part in the Budget discussion. She supported the Government decision of sufficient funds to be provided to the department of Social Welfare to help the children and women organizations of the State. She raised question on appointment of Auditor for every Inspectorate Circle to check the accounts, constructions of quarters for gazetted officers of Extension Training Centre, Jorhat. She raised question about the Government’s awareness regarding the lecturers and
professors of the Engineering institutes are not allowed to go to other department and their pay scales are also not raised. She raised her voice against the annual change of text books create problems and to stop the yearly change of text books and the Government must have control over the Text Book Committee. On the floor of the Assembly, she asked question about the total number of Girls High schools in the State. She demanded to start an Industrial Research Institute of cottage industries at Jorhat. She also asked whether the Government is aware about the acute scarcity of building accommodation. On the floor of the House, she demanded loan to Tea-Estate. She introduced Anti-Beggary Bill as Private Member Bill and took part in the discussion of other Bills in the Assembly. She was the member of the House Committee, Library Committee, Public Accounts Committee, and Committee on Petitions. She as a representative of All-India Women Committee visited the backward States like Bihar, UP, Orissa, Jammu and Kashmir. She raised women issues and forwarded economic assistance to the widows of her constituency.

Padma Kumari Gohain was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1957, in 1962 and in 1967 for three consecutive terms. In 1967, she was appointed as Minister of State for Social Welfare, Relief and Rehabilitation in the B.P.Chaliha Ministry. B.P.Chaliha resigned on November 6th, 1970 due to illness. His successor Mahendra Mohan Choudhury formed his Ministry and appointed Padma Kumari Gohain as Cabinet Minister for Social Welfare, Sericulture and Weaving. She was the first lady Cabinet Minister after independence. So she represented the Assam Legislative Assembly for three consecutive terms from 1957-1972. She contested from the Moran constituency as a Congress candidate.

As legislator, she raised a few issues on the floor of the Assembly. She took part on the General discussion of the Budget, debates on Governor’s Address. She has supported the proposal of oil refinery in Assam. On the floor of the Assembly, she raised her voice about the abolition of liquor canteens within industrial areas. She had participated in the Budget session and supported the Government sanction on children and women. She has not supported the local tax on the poor peasants and she also informed about the Pakistani immigrants to Assam. After consultation of the

Assembly proceedings, it is found that she did not play an active role both as legislator and as Minister. On the floor of the Assembly, she raised a few general issues which did not influence the women of Assam.

*Lily Sengupta* was a social worker. She was closely associated with various cultural organizations and educational institutions, co-operative institutions, Mahila Samities and Mahila Congress. She was the Treasurer of I.N.T.U.C, Vice-President of Assam Chah Majdur Sangha, Vice-President, Dibrugarh District Congress and A.P.C.C. She was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1957, in 1962 and in 1967 respectively. As legislator, she supported the proposal of establishment of oil refinery in Assam. She asked question regarding the number of Tea Gardens in Assam. On the floor of the Assembly, she drew attention of the House about why most of the Tea Garden authorities did not allow leave to the labourers for casting their votes in the Assembly election of 1957, inspite of Government circular.\(^\text{16}\) She as woman legislator tried to safeguard the voting right of the women labourers that is guaranted by the Constitution of India. She asked about the number of villages in Assam, number of tube wells supplied in Saikhowa area, hospitals for labourers in Tamulbari Tea-Estate, number of jails in Assam. She asked question on Saikhowa ghat, Sadiya ferry service, seating arrangements in the steamer for lady passengers, the grant of agricultural loans in the different districts of Assam, grant for women's education. Taking part in the Budget discussion on grants, she supported provision of cottage Industry and through this not only male section but female section will also be benefitted. On the floor of the Assembly, she demanded for the small industries like radio, engineering, neatting, tailoring. She proposed for the supply of cooking gas in the Tea Garden areas. She raised the issue of political sufferers, the number of political sufferers receiving pensions from the State Government. On the floor of the Assembly, she asked about the agricultural farm, flood in a vast area of cultivable land in Dibrugarh Sub-division, problem of Government servants face problems in getting their retirement benefits after a long period.\(^\text{17}\) So, she demanded to improve the matters in these respects, so that Government officials get their benefits immediately after their retirement. She demanded for the establishment of schools in

\(^{16}\) Debates of Assam Legislative Assembly, 24th February-13th March, 1958.

\(^{17}\) Ibid, 23rd June-6th July, 1967.
the Tea-Estate because there was no school in some Tea-Estates. She also demanded scholarships for the students of Backward communities. She asked question about the number of employment exchanges in Assam. She raised question about when the Assam Prevention of Begging Act passed and where it has applied. She also asked question about the Grade IV workers of Assam. On the floor of the Assembly, she demanded holiday for the Grade IV employees of Assam Medical College, the settlement of forestland, proper drainage system in Dibrugarh town. She proposed for Sericultural Farm in Dibrugarh District, about weekly hats, village Women Organizations. So, after studying the documented proceedings of the Assam Assembly, it may be said that she was an active member who played her role in solving many problems of Assam.

_Begum Afia Ahmed_ was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1962 as a Congress candidate from the Jamunamukh constituency. On the floor of the Assembly she took part in the discussion on debate on Governor’s address. She took part in the General discussion of the Budget. She raised question related to the scarcity of fish in the Nagaon District. She has taken part in the General discussion of the Budget and supported the Finance Minister and the various steps taken by the Government. She asked whether the Public Health Department implemented the supply Scheme at Doboka under National Water Supply Programme. She questioned whether the President of the Gaon Sabha is male or female, welfare steps taken by the Government for the women of Plains and Hill areas. So as legislator, she was not an active member. She did not raise any issue on the floor of the Assembly.

_Prannita Talukdar_ was closely associated with children and cultural organisation of Assam. In 1967 and in 1972 she was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly from Sorbhog constituency as Congress nominee. On the floor of the Assembly, she raised many issues relating to different problems faced by the people of Assam. She asked questions relating to the repairment of roads, digging of tanks at Charphuli forest at North Lakhimpur division, number of industrial Estates, proper reliefs to the political sufferers, number of beds at the G.M.C Hospital. She also raised her voice about the havocs caused by the river erosion in the State every year. She asked whether the Indian Medical Council has reorganized the Gauhati Medical College. 18 She has

taken part in the General discussion of the Budget. She demanded a bridge over the Burha Channel, construction of a bund to make a boundary demarcation between India and Pakistan. She asked on the floor of the Assembly why Jute Research Sub station was shifted from Sorbhog to Nagaon, scarcity of sugar, supply of cement, establishment of Jute Mill. She raised question about the Sorbhog aerodrome in Kamrup District, compensation for acquisition of land for National highway, cold weather bridge, illegal movement of rice, paper pulp Mill at Jogighopa, improvement of National highway, the number of rivers taken up by the Brahmaputra Commission, requisition of land from Fatamabad Tea Estate, Baranagar Circle Office, amount of money spent for the village electrification, Primary Health Unit, Basic Health Service Scheme, construction of Beki bridge etc. She raised her voice on the floor of the Assembly that why the price of food commodities are rising constantly. She demanded for rural electrification, Assam –Meghalaya dispute, to bring all the private colleges of Assam under deficit scale system, functioning of the Governing body of the colleges, to bring all High schools under deficit system, damage caused by the flood in Barpeta, number of educated unemployed women in Assam, number of colleges having faculty of Science in Assam. She demanded on the floor of the Assembly about construction of I.B., Gandhi Hall and Sub Treasury at Sorbhog, Beki embankment, Water Supply Scheme in the Barpeta area, erosion at Kamargaon, requisitional land, creation of district, high price of thread, Assam State Publication Corporation, allotment of lands at Barpeta, construction of forest road, whole sale trade in wheat, setting up of Agricultural Corporations, closure of the mouth of Beki river, protection and preservation of wild animals, engine marboat, cattle loan, death due to malaria, Barpeta Treasury Office, scarcity of cement etc.

On the floor of the Assembly she questioned relating to scarcity of kerosene oil, Veterinary Sub-Centre at Odalguri, Kamargaon Veterinary dispensary, bridge over Hokwa river on the Sorbhog Kahitoma P.W.D road, Sorbhog Town Committee, permission for opening Honours course in colleges, selection of college teachers, Bank loans to Weaving Societies, Cooperative Weaving Societies, construction of Managing Committees of colleges, development of Handloom industry, Sorbhog State Transport office etc. She paid more attention to the problems of Assam and also to her constituency.
Anandi Bala Rava was General Secretary of Goalpara District Mahila Samiti. She was the General Secretary, Reception committee of the All Assam Tribal Sangha session held at Modhapur in Jorhat, 1958. She was member of the State Social Welfare Board, Assam. She was elected as Commissioner of Goalpara Municipality. In 1972, she was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly from Dudhnoi constituency as a Congress candidate. On the floor of the Assembly, she raised a few issues. She asked question relating to Social Welfare Board, reconstruction of State dispensaries, weaving training centres, public out-post in Goalpara Sub-division. She requested the Speaker 'as women permit us to speak’. She demanded for the maternity and child welfare centres, the rehabilitation centres, the number of helpless women in the women houses, distribution of medicines from the medicine stores, provision of State Transport buses, yarn mill in Assam, family planning centres, construction of new court buildings at Goalpara, water supply in Dudhnoi. She asked on the floor of the Assembly that when the B.T.college at Goalpara will be started. She also questioned about how many areas of land have been distributed for constructing houses to the landless people under the 20th programme at Gwahati. She asked whether the Government is aware about the unauthorized occupation of land at Guwahati and among these how many are from the SC/ and ST people. As legislator, she asked questions relating to irregular scheme, distribution of medicine, Jagiroad Spun Mill, reopening of general hospital at Dudhnoi, creation of two separate districts, refugees at the Dudhnoi camp, relief to the cyclone heated people, total amount of losses, grants to schools, reconstruction of State dispensaries, epidemic type of diseases, Ashok Paper Mill at Jagiroad, railway line from Guwahati to Panchatantra, expenditure for the indoor patient in civil hospital, post of primary school teachers, number of local boys working in the railway division, steps to protect malaria, agricultural school at Dhemaji.

Anandi Bala Rava asked on the floor of the House that in what purpose money is granted for adult education and what steps are taken for the development of Harijans, the trained doctors from the Assam Medical Colleges donot want to work in the villages, assistance to the hospitals. She also asked whether medicines for the protection of malaria are distributed to the village hospitals or not, Tribal rest house


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Satyabati Goswami was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1972 as Congress nominee from the Chaygaon constituency. As legislator she did not play an important role in the Legislature. She demanded bridge over Gumi cutting. She has participated in the General discussion of the Budget. She has appreciated the Government surplus amount of 10 lakhs 42 thousand in the Budget of 1975-76 and there is no provision of new taxes. She said that the economic measures taken by the Government are suitable or not and the measures through which the economic system will be weak such steps should not be taken by the Government. She said that the developmental works cannot be stopped due to price rises. The annual income of the State is comparatively less than other States of the country and for that reason there is the need of economic development of Assam. She asked that Rs. 37 lakhs has been sanctioned for nutritious food to children and Rs. 10 lakhs for social welfare but how that amount will be spent has not been mentioned.

On the floor of the Assembly, she demanded that there is no developmental project for women’s welfare and for the helpless widows of the State. She proposed that 50% of the population is women, so there must be developmental project for women. She demanded that there must be irrigation plan in the State, otherwise the agriculture of the State would have to depend on monsoon. She said that until and unless corruption is uprooted from the country, unemployment problem couldn’t be solved. She requested the Government to solve the problem of the people who are below poverty with this surplus amount of the Budget. Though she did not raise many issues in the Legislature but she had participated in the Governor’s address and requested the Government to solve the unemployment problem that has created burning problem in the State. She also stressed on the cottage industries. She said that there should be the limit to education and gave much importance to the technical education. She proposed that inspite of the appointment of the retired personnel to various jobs, young unemployed youths should be employed to various jobs. So, the documented
proceedings of the Assam Legislative Assembly reveals that she did not raise many issues on the floor of the Assembly and she was not an active member of the Assam Legislature.

_Rebati Das_ In 1972, she was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly from the Jalukbari constituency as a Congress candidate. As legislator, she asked the question on weaving training centre and Social Welfare Board. She raised question relating to on what basis fire brigade centre is sanctioned, number of deficit—grant-in-aid schools, Apex Marketing and F.C.I. She asked on the floor of the Assembly, whether the cooperative societies are allotted to collect grains, oranges produced in Assam are sent to outside Assam or not, transfer of Central Jail from Fancy Bajar. 20 She demanded Rest House at Sualkuchi Cottage Industries, soil examination reports, criticized rape cases and suggested for resettlement of the victims. She also asked that after the training of the women about various farming what facilities are provided to them, scarcity of muga insects, Handloom development project at Sualkuchi, communication problem in Sualkuchi, Hajo and Guwahati. On the floor of the Assembly she raised question relating to the qualification of the members of the Assam State Social Welfare Board, number of colleges applied to open Honours course. On the floor of the Assembly she stressed on irrigation problem, provision for scientific education. She has participated in the discussion of the Budget and gave importance on the development of industries, backward classes, fisheries and communication system. She also gave importance to improve the communal relations among the various sections of the society. As legislator, she did not play important role in the Legislature and most of the time she remained silent.

_Tarulata Bora_ was elected from Saikhowa constituency in 1972 as Congress candidate. As legislator she has taken part in the Budget session. She raised the issues like - the establishment of plywood factory in Dibrugarh District, the electrification of village at Kakpathar area, Village Health and Training Centres and appointment of women doctors in that centre, women centres for helpless women in every district, granting of maternity leaves for the Harijan women, the strength of women police in the State Police department, whether MS qualified doctors are appointed at family planning centres, electrification system at Sadiya, D.C Court building at Dibrugarh

demolished by flood, construction of bund, facilities to the More Backward people, police check post at boundary areas, Tinsukia Civil Hospital, village electrification project at Kakpathar, qualification of the police, Head office of Tinsukia Sub-division, provision for the handicapped boys and girls, Hindustan Motors, protected forest, project for the prevention of malaria, Tourist Lodge at Guwahati, Assam House at Delhi, maternity leave for the Harijan women, Sugar Mill at Gaipani, Kakpathar Primary Health Unit, number of doctors attached to the Police department and number of police hospital, inter-State permit, women police and women homeguard, etc.21

As legislator she also proposed to increase the number of women police, Flood Control project, corruption in the police department, pick-pocketing incidents, adulterated medicine and food-stuff, promotion of village nurses to officers, deteriorated condition of the Saikhowa Bus Station, 10 beded hospital. She demanded operation theatre in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, Tinsukia Government bus station, Irrigation project at Phelbari area, Jonai English High School, development of cottage industries, Agricultural Science College district-wise, Dibrugarh District Library, qualified principal in the colleges, proper training centres for weaving, Cooperative Society, responsibility of the block development officer, fire at siding market etc. She asked about the agricultural instruments, rented house for Sub-Treasury Office at Doomdoma, re-organization of the veterinary departments. She said that women should be properly trained about animal husbandry. So after studying the proceedings of the Assam Legislative Assembly it is noticed that she was busy in raising the general issues that were mostly related to her constituency.

Swarna Prava Mahanta was the Zonal Organizing Secretary of Assam Pradesh Mahila Samiti. She was the Convenor of Women Department of Bharat Sevak Samaj, Tezpur and executive member, Assam Chah Karmachari Sangha, Na-Duar Circle. She was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1972 and appointed as Minister of State for Social Welfare, Sericulture and Weaving in the Sarat Singha Ministry for two years. It has been found that on the floor of the Assembly she did not speak a single word on any issue.

Syeda Anowara Taimur was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in

21. Ibid, 19th March, 1974

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1972, in 1978, in 1983, in 1985 and in 1991 from the Congress party she was State Minister of education in Sarat Singha Ministry. She became the Chief Minister of Assam from 12th December 1980 to 19th March 1981. She also became the Cabinet Minister for Public works in Hiteswar Saikia Ministry from February 1983 to December 1985. She also became Agricultural Minister in 1991 and elected to the Rajya Sabha in 2004.

As legislator, she took part in the discussion on voting on demands for grants. She raised questions on matters under Rule 50 and youth welfare centre and cultural development centres. She asked questions relating to the people and property damaged by the fire at Bhakatpur bajar, and steps for helpless women particularly Tribal women establishment of training centres and weaving centres, irrigation facilities at Mangaldoi, establishment of tourist bhawan. So the documented proceedings of the Assam Legislative Assembly reveals that in most the times she remained as Minister to different portfolios and did not get enough scope to remain as legislator. She did not raise many issues on the floor of the Assembly.

Mridula Saharia was elected to the Assembly in 1983 from Panery constituency as Congress nominee. As legislator she took part in the discussion on voting on demand for grants. She became the member of the House Committee and Chairman of Library Committee. On the floor of the Assembly she raised such issues regarding the damages of State Transport Corporation bus, construction of permanent bridge over Nainoi river on the way of Tangla-Dergaon, demarcation of boundary of the newly constituted Sub-division, single-teacher primary Schools, number of Government Hospitals, provincialisation of primary schools, P.W.D. roads etc. After consulting the Assembly proceedings it is found that Mridula Saharia did not play an active role on the floor of the Assembly.

Jyotsna Sonowal was elected to the Assembly in 1985. As legislator, she took part in the discussion of the Budget. On the floor of the Assembly she raised some issues relating to the land area of Sadiya Subdivision, river erosion, unauthorized occupation of lands near roadside, number of State Corporation buses at Sadiya Sub-division, provision of hundred beded hospitals in all the Sub-divisions, scarcity of

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nurses at the Guwahati and Dibugarh Medical Colleges, provision of Battalion Camp at Assam-Arunachal border area, provision of child bhawan at the Block level, separation of the post of Principal and hospital Superintendent in Assam Medical College, development of Assam Medical College, improvement of Sadiya State Hospital, Tirup Tribal Belt, transferring of A.G. office at Sadiya, development of Tinsukia and Sadiya road. On the floor of the Assembly, she raised her voice relating to the issues like Kakpathar Primary Health Unit, Chenamora river erosion, to establish flood control office at Sadiya Subdivision, measurement of land of Sadiya Subdivision, unauthorized occupation of land for Tea Garden, steps taken regarding the Tea Garden in the Tribal belt, bus communication of Arunachal Government, area of land of Sadiya, number of Health units in Assam, etc. She asked about the protection of erosion of Kundil river, provision of car to the S.D.C office, need of expert doctors in Assam Medical College, abolition of the Nurology and Nefrology department in the Medical Colleges, provision of full-fledged Hospital at Sadiya, permanent solution of the flood problem in Assam. Jyotsna Sonowal by participating in the voting of demands for grants expressed that the role of the electricity department in the border areas are very bad, people of the border area of Sadiya Sub-division are deprived of electric facilities. People below poverty line are suffering from the crisis of kerosene, so there is the need to improve the electric department. So, Jyotsna Sonowal was the active woman legislator but she was busy with her constituency and with the general issues.

Amiya Gogoi was elected in 1985 and in 1991 from Duliajan constituency as Congress candidate. As legislator, she took part in the voting of demands for grants. On the floor of the Assembly, she raised issues relating to agitation by the Duliajan Students Union, the centre of fire brigade at Duliajan, the river erosion problems, the provision of tractors to the poor peasants, establishment of Health units, the devastated conditions of National highway, Girl’s College at Duliajan, development of Police Station at Duliajan, appointment of teachers in the primary schools, sanitation grant to be provided to the primary, middle schools for pure drinking water etc. She also raised issues relating to Buridihing river erosion, provision of tractor to the poor people, irrigation project, anti-social activities in Duliajan, bridge over Dihing river.

24. Debates of the Assembly, 2nd April, 1986
construction of P.W.D road, construction of Primary Health Unit at Panitola of Dibrugarh District, appointment of vacant post of teacher, construction of Gas Cracker project at Tengakhat of Dibrugarh, Government Agricultural Farm at Kathalguri of Dibrugarh, permission of licence to the vendors, development of Duliajan Police Station, deficit grant-in-aid to only Girls College at Dibrugarh etc.  

As legislator she commented that to protect the lives of the people, police has no responsibility. There are police check-posts that are to be up-graded. They need modern arms ammunitions and those police officials died at the encounter must be compensated and at least one member of the family must be employed. She also demanded the Chichia Bakulani Health Unit must be up-graded into 30 beded hospital. She also became the Minister of State Handloom and Textiles in 1991. Though she raised some issues on the floor of the Assembly but mainly relating to her constituency.

Kumari Rabidas was elected in 1985 from Ratabari constituency as Congress nominee. As legislator Rabidas has participated in the voting of demands for grants. On the floor of the Assembly she raised such issues like-whether the facilities under N.R.E.P. would be extended to the Tea-Garden area. She demanded communication facilities for the irrigation office, economic assistance to the flood affected people. She proposed to increase the number of workers in the Secretariat. On the floor of the Assembly, she raised the issues like-appointment of teachers, closure of Chargola and Singlacherra Tea Estate, closure of Cachar Sugar Mill. She also demanded and requested the Minister concerned to take proper steps for the Ratabari agricultural land that was submerged by water. She also raised the issue relating to the construction of Nevia hospital, number of 30 beded hospital. As legislator, she demanded about the issues relating to Ratabari irrigation project, P.W.D. road, Priya Neog Higher Secondary School, vacant post in the Government hospital, financial grant to 30 beded hospital, construction of second developmental Block at Ratabari constituency, closure of the Tea-Garden till 1985, village electrification at Ratabari constituency, workers of the Gaon panchayat, etc.  

After studying the proceedings of the Assam Legislative Assembly it is found that she has handled some problems related to her constituency.

25. Ibid, 19th December, 1986
Rekha Rani Das Boro was an active member of the All Assam Students Union. She has participated in the Assam Agitation against the illegal migrants. She was the executive member of the Asom Gana Parishad. She became the Vice President of the A.G.P. She became the President of the all Assam Mahila Parishad. She was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1985 and in 1996 from the Barama constituency as A.G.P. nominee. She became the Minister of State for Social Welfare. So, Rekha Rani remained as Minister in both the terms and there was no chance to act as legislator and raise issues on the floor of the Assembly.

Pramila Brahma She was an active social worker since her student life was associated with many social and youth organizations. She remained as President of the All Assam Bodo Mahila Parishad. She was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1991, in 1996 and in 2001 from the Kokrajhar East constituency as Independent candidate. Pramila Brahma continued as member of the Assembly for three consecutive terms and she was the most active woman legislator who always raised her voice against any kind of injustices in the society. She asked question regarding the number of judges in the High Court, the settlement of landless families of Kokrajhar District, the staffing pattern of the I.C.D.S. project, erosion of Saralbhanganga river, posting of doctors in the Kokrajhar Civil Hospital, post of Lokayukta of Assam. On the floor of the Assembly, she raised her voice about the irrigation projects taken at Kokrajhar, supply of pure drinking water, provision of rehabilitation taken for the landless religious minority people of Bijni and Amteka area of Kokrajhar, in which districts Punjab Commandoes have been deputed. She demanded what are the developmental schemes have been adopted for the Tribal weavers in the Kokrajhar area, identification of boundary of the B.A.C. area, D.R.D.A scheme, electrification of rural areas of Kokrajhar District, provision of loan to fishermen, additional posts for M.E. and L.P. schools, minor irrigation project, Sports Complex in Kokrajhar District.

Pramila Brahma raised her voice on the floor of the Assembly relating how many posts of O.B.C have been released by the Central Government to the Elementary Education Board of Assam, Champamati Irrigation project, non-payment of scholarship to the S.T. students in maximum colleges, formation of new blocks, construction of Kokrajhar University campus, establishment of girls college, science
college, and commerce college at Kokrajhar District, employment facilities to the educated disabled persons, Bodo medium schools, development of the area of Plain Tribals, vacancies of subject teachers in Kokrajhar Government B.Ed. College, B.A.C area fund, annual budget allocation of Bodoland Council etc. On the floor of the Assembly, she raised her voice on the issue of no librarian is provided in the University Library of Kokrajhar. She demanded at least one Medical College at Kokrajhar, Chairman of the Kokrajhar Municipal Board, number of handicapped youth have been employed in the Government services, B.T.C. area fund from the Prime Minister Package Scheme, Annual Budget allocation for Bodoland Autonomous Council, project undertaken by the Government at Kokrajhar etc.

On the floor of the Assembly she asked questions relating to the staff position in the Tribal Research Centre, irregular appointments in the L.C.B. College, number of employees in Assam. She asked whether rehabilitation is finished to rehabilitate the affected Bodo and Adibasi families who were staying in the relief camps, solution of Bodoland problem, upgradation of P.H.E, number of SC/ST population in Assam, Operation Blackboard posts, number of industrial centres have come under Prime Minister’s special package for the North East, provision of industry in B.T.C. area, formation of new blocks, Kokrajhar Art and music college, political discussion needed on the issue of Bodoland, distribution of water pump sets under World Bank schemes, Loda Irrigation project, rehabilitation of refugees in the relief camps, non-inclusion of Kokrajhar District under the Assam area project, number of recognized International border area, M.E. school in the Tea Garden areas are there in Kokrajhar District, disruption of interlinked roads of Kokrajhar due to flood, provision of employment to the educated disabled persons, meeting of Advisory Council of W.P.T. and B.C. held since 1996, fund allotment of Kokrajhar Municipal Board, the Bhutan foothills, the extreme Northern part of Assam is regarded as International border area, M.E. school in the Tea Garden areas are there in Kokrajhar District, disruption of interlinked roads of Kokrajhar due to flood, provision of employment to the educated disabled persons, meeting of Advisory Council of W.P.T. and B.C. held since 1996, fund allotment of Kokrajhar Municipal Board, the Bhutan foothills, the extreme Northern part of Assam is regarded as International border area, M.E. school in the Tea Garden areas are there in Kokrajhar District, disruption of interlinked roads of Kokrajhar due to flood, provision of employment to the educated disabled persons, meeting of Advisory Council of W.P.T. and B.C. held since 1996, fund allotment of Kokrajhar Municipal Board, the Bhutan foothills, the extreme Northern part of Assam is regarded as International border area, M.E. school in the Tea Garden areas are there in Kokrajhar District, disruption of interlinked roads of Kokrajhar due to flood, provision of employment to the educated disabled persons, meeting of Advisory Council of W.P.T. and B.C. held since 1996, fund allotment of Kokrajhar Municipal Board, the Bhutan foothills, the extreme Northern part of Assam is regarded as International border area.
Rupam Kurmi was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1991, in 1996 and in 2001 from the Mariani constituency as Congress nominee. She was appointed as State Minister and then became the Cabinet Minister. She was first lady Cabinet Minister from the Tea Tribes. On the floor of the Assembly she asked question relating to river erosion in the Jagi river, solution of boundary dispute, modern methods of fishery, 30 beded hospital, steps taken for the development of Mariani town, construction of road. She participated in the Budgetary discussion and raised the issues like irrigation planning at Mariani, construction of A.S.T.C. night bus services from Jorhat to Mariani, establishment of health unit for the Scheduled Caste people of Mariani, land patta to the Tea Garden labboueurs, road construction, appointment of educated men and women of Mariani, distribution of land to the landless people, sanctioning grant for library at Mariani, to establish mini stadium at Mariani, distribution of sports articles to the enlisted sports and youth welfare centres, police out-post at the border area near Nagaland. She also demanded the establishment of veterinary centre at the middle point of Mariani and Teok. On the floor of the Assembly she demanded the provision of security personnel for the protection of lives and property of the people. She also raised the issues relating to the supply of electricity in some areas of Mariani, repairment of roads in the various areas of Mariani constituency. She asked the number of homeless people at Mariani i.e. mainly flood-affected and landslide-affected people, river erosion of Bhogh river, closure of plywood.
factory, control of river erosion, scarcity of houses and pure drinking water of the Tea Garden labourers, rural electrification, appointment of Principal in Mariani College, modernization of Mariani market etc.

As legislator she demanded on the floor of the Assembly for the new out-post for Chelenghat area, land for the Tea Company, employment exchanges, irrigation for Mariani constituency, facilities for appointment to the unemployed Tea Tribes, incomplete water supply project, provision of tax office, A.S.T.C. night super at Jorhat-Mariani, Block Development Centre, modernisation of daily market at Mariani in Jorhat, veterinary hospital at Teok in Mariani, State Corporation Bus, security of the people and property, list of employed youths through Employment Exchange at Mariani, pattas have given to 30 landless people in Mariani constituency. On the floor of the Assembly she demanded economic aid to the families of the youth who were killed by the Naga miscreants, grants for library at Dohotia in Mariani, technical education project, Helengapar reserved forest, deplorable condition of Inspection Bungalow at Mariani, number of licenses issued to the liquid shops, number of homeless people, Assam Tea Corporation at Mariani, deprivation of small Tea peasants etc. post lying vacant in the PWD and Home Department, electrification of the Gaon Panchayat, pension scheme of the Tea Garden labourer formed by the Government, 30 beded hospital at Nagajanga, Health Unit at Gachpuria, river erosion of Janji river etc. As legislator, she was the most active lady and fought for the cause of her community. She has taken part in the discussion of the Budget. She, appreciating the Governor’s address said that there are some projects for the development of women and children of Assam. She requested for restarting of providing lunch to the primary schools of Tea Gardens, to provide pension to the Tea Garden widows, to utilize the funds properly for the welfare of the widows allotted for them, non-availability of medicines in the Tea Garden area, scarcity of doctors and nurses in the Tea Garden area etc. She was always busy and raised her voice against any kind of injustices. She gave more importance to the Tea Tribe people.

Renupama Rajkhowa was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1991 and in 1996 from the Teok constituency as A.G.P nominee. As legislator she participated in the voting of demand for grants. She raised the issues relating to the construction of Teok Hahchara P.W.D. road, Banaighat bridge, resettlement of raped
women, provincialisation of primary schools, supply of pure drinking water in every villages of Assam, Bonai Veterinary Centre, running of State Corporation buses, construction of mini stadium at Jorhat, rural electrification, agricultural development centre, incomplete programme of the P.W.D Department, provision of 30 beded village Health unit at Teok. On the floor of the Assembly, she asked about how many days a doctor can avail leave, Government Planning on the Tribal people, step should be taken for the development of small scale industries in Teok. She questioned about how many police check posts have been upgraded into police station, establishment of Forest Research Centre at Teok, number of raped cases in Assam and proper step should be taken to punish the culprits, payment of contractors in the Flood Control department in Jorhat, new Irrigation Planning, number of illiterate people in the State etc.

On the floor of the Assembly, she asked about the establishment of primary health centre in Simulguri in Teok. She also demanded for the establishment of engineering college. She asked about the number of village libraries in Assam, establishment of Treasury, Radhika Sati Primary School, number of incomplete irrigation projects in the agricultural field, number of grinding mills in Assam, submission of report about the clash at Barpeta, opening of Post Graduate classes in different colleges of Assam, to reactivate the irrigation projects, reasons for the closure of Central Cooperative Bank at Shibsagar. She questioned on the floor of the Assembly whether compensation has been given to the families of the workers and students who have died in the police custody. She demanded that the labourer should be treated with honour and should get all the facilities according to the Labour Act. On the floor of the Assembly she raised her voice on the issues relating to the torture of a girl in the Jorhat Engineering College and the authority could not provide safeguard to her, to restart the closed water supply project, establishment of mini stadium in all the constituencies of Assam, the introduction of Government language, Hatigarih Primary Health Unit, Central Library, repairment of dam, payment of U.G.C. scale to the college teachers started at 1985, development of Science College in Teok, Janji river erosion in Teok, application of Assamese language for official purpose. She demanded on the floor of the Assembly that some honour should be given to the

women prisoners and equal facilities to be provided to the women like men, inspection of jails. She said that the condition of women prisoners are deteriorating mainly in Guwahati Jail. She asked about the village library, amount of grants under Planning Commission, construction of Sub-treasury at Teok, issues of SC/ST founder teachers appointment, salary of the village librarian and workers, import of fishes from Andhra Pradesh, foundation of Forest Research Centre at Teok, equal facilities to all the labourers according to the Labour Act, 30 beded Hospital at Simulguri Mouza for the women and children, fire brigade centre at Patharkandi, number of villages under village electrification project, agricultural developmental centre at Teok, incomplete project of the PWD, silk farm at Jagduar in Teok, land for mini stadium at Jagduar at Teok, development of science college in Teok, irregular electricity, of the Chatai (Jorhat). She demanded that doctors generally do not want to go to villages. She requested the Government to provide the facilities to the doctors and compel them to go to villages.

She became the Deputy Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly on May 14th, 1999 and remained on the Chair up to May 17th, 2001 in the Prafulla Mahanta Ministry. So the documented proceedings of the Assam Legislative Assembly reveal that Renupama Rajkhowa was busy in dealing with the different issues related to different sections of people of Assam.

*Sushila Hazarika* was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1996 from the Dergaon constituency as A.G.P. nominee. On the floor of the Assembly she raised many questions relating to the various programmes for the development of villages, number of posts reserved for the SC and ST Tribes in the high and middle and primary schools are vacant, 30 beded hospital started at East Brahmaputra Gaon Panchayat under Golaghat Subdivision, number of reserved posts for the SC/ST remained vacant in the various departments of the Assam Government, number of agricultural scientists under Assam Agricultural University, water supply project at Naharani village in Golaghat, water irrigation project, the amount of money received by the P.W.D. department from the World Bank, village electrification project etc. On the floor of the Assembly she has participated in the voting of demand for grants.
She raised the issues regarding the irrigation project in Khangia Mouza at Jorhat, village development project of the Government, grants received for the development of SC/ST under the VIII Five Year Plan, about the Prime Minister’ Rozgar Yojana, number of subject matter socialists in the Agricultural Department, supply of power tiller in agriculture. She asked question relating to village water supply project and how many villages are benefited by this project under Dergaon constituency. She raised the issues relating the rehabilitation of the bankrupt families, sanction of money to the flood-affected people, scarcity of doctors in the Kalabari Primary Health Unit at Dergaon, the retired officials under State Government are not receiving the pension, the Scheduled Caste posts are properly fulfilled or not etc.

On the floor of the Assembly she raised the issue relating to construction of bridges on Golabil river, development of town in Assam, the projects implemented for the development of SC people in Assam, substitute planning for the SC people, aims of Jyanta Madhab Committee, instruments used for the development of agriculture, amount of fertile land, Irrigation project at Jorhat, village developmental project, number of deplorable roads and bridges, pension of the workers. She demanded that Dergaon constituency is a SC dominated area and steps should be taken for the development of the area. The proceedings of the Assam Legislative Assembly reveal that she raised some issues related mainly to her constituency and she did not bother about the women of Assam.

Alaka Desai Sarma was elected to the Assembly in the bye-election of 2000 from the Nalbari constituency as A.G.P candidate. She was in the Assembly for nine months and did not get a chance to raise any issue on the floor of the Assembly. By taking part in the Budget session, she said that the industrial position of Assam was better in 1951 than the rest of India. She said that the opposition parties only could criticize the Government but they do not forward any suggestion. The State has to pass with critical situation, the child mortality rate has increased. There is no scope for productivity and consumers. So there is the high cost of production. Assam has to bring eggs and fishes from Andhra Pradesh. She also praised the self-employment scheme in the Budget and suggested the Government to increase the production.

Komoli Basumatary was elected to the Assembly in 2001 from Panery
constituency as an Independent candidate. As legislator, she has participated in the sessions of the Budget. On the floor of the Assembly she raised issues relating to her constituency and the issues are- irrigation project of Assam Government, illegal migrants, number of irrigation projects for the Darang District, land patta to the non-tribal people, up-gradation of police check-post to police station, repairment and construction of PWD roads, cultivation of small Tea Estate, destruction caused by flood in the Panery constituency, construction of bridges etc. On the floor of the Assembly she asked about the number of sanctioned irrigation planning and how many for her constituency, Bamadi forest etc. She raised the issues like construction of bund, small tea cultivation, damage done by flood in Kalikhola area of Panery, unauthorised occupation of forest by illegal migrants in Tangla, Block Development Centre at Panery constituency, steps taken by the Government for giving land to the small tea peasants, amount of Government land in Darang District, number of projects sanctioned by the Government in Darang District etc. She asked about the number of water supply projects in Panery, number of non-provincialised schools in Assam, number of post of O.B.B teachers and how many teachers are appointed in Darang District. She has taken part in the discussion of the Budget and said that in every year money is sanctioned for the villages of Assam but there is no improvement in the living status of the villagers of Assam. She also demanded for the improvement of the communication system of her constituency. She was from a very backward area and automatically was busy in solving the problems of her area. Most of the time she remained silent on the floor of the Assembly.

Jibontara Ghatoar was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in the bye election of the Moran constituency on 13th October, 2004 as Congress candidate. So as legislator she did not play any active role. She did not raise any issue on the floor of the Assembly. On 17th December 2004 she requested the Chief Minister about the formation of a Subdivision in the Moran area. Jibontara Ghatoar as legislator could not play her active role due to shortage of time. She did neither raise any general nor women issue on the floor of the Assembly.

Jonjonali Barua was elected to the Assembly in 2001 from the Marigaon constituency as Congress candidate. On the floor of the Assembly she asked whether

31 Ibid, 6th March, 2002
Dindayal Achani has been sanctioned for Morigaon District. The documented proceedings of the Assam Legislative Assembly reveal that Jonjonali Barua was not active woman legislator of Assam Assembly. She did not raise any issue on the floor of the Assembly and most of the time she remained silent.

Hosenara Islam was elected to the Assembly in 2001 from the Mankachar constituency as N.C.P nominee. She was not active as legislator. She did not speak on the floor of the Assembly. She did not raise any issue and remained silent.

Sarifa Begum was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 2001 from the Rupahihat constituency as Congress nominee. On the floor of the Assembly she asked about the salary of Hindi teachers. She became the State Transport Minister in the Tarun Gogoi Ministry. As legislator she did not play active role. She did not raise any issue on the floor of the Assembly. She remained silent in the Assembly.

Uttara Kalita was elected to the Assembly in 2001 from the Kamalpur constituency as Congress nominee. On the floor of the Assembly she asked whether child development project have been taken in all the Block Developmental centres. She said that people suffered much for the post-mortem report mainly the poor people but in the interference of the political leader the reports are despatched. She asked about the Tikha project, no police check-post from Baihata to Goreswar in the Kamalpur constituency, number of Assistant teachers post in the Secondary and Higher secondary schools in the Kamrup District, number of Dindayal projects in Kamrup District, number of Child development projects in Assam etc.Uttara Kalita was not active in her role. On the floor of the Assembly she did not speak and most of the times she remained silent.

Dr. Hemoprava Saikia was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 1996 and in 2001 from the Nazira constituency as Congress nominee. She became the Minister of Handloom and Textiles, Sericulture, Cultural Affairs and Fisheries of Assam. As Legislator she has participated in the General discussion of the Budget. She raised many issues on the floor of the Assembly. She asked about the water irrigation project, number of kidnapping cases happened in Assam, distribution of land pattas to the people living 15 years at a stretch to both in the hills and in plain areas, World Bank aid, welfare steps taken for the people of Assam, construction of
Simulguri I.T.I. river erosion of Dikhou river, retention of post of teachers, money spent on D.R.D.A. and P.M.R.Y. in Nazira Block, formation of new Moujas, declaration of full-fledged Head offices, Bodoland Autonomous Council, pensions to the retired persons, number of setting centres for Statefed, projects under the Assam Tea Estate Corporation, distribution of pattas of surplus land, number of teachers appointed by the present Government and non-Government Organisation etc.

On the floor of the Assembly she raised the issues about economic crime vigilance and how many cases has been listed by the various departments, number of killings done by the terrorists, amount of loan of the State Government, National programme for control of blindness in Assam, Tikha project in the Kamrup District, number of military and para-military forces in Assam. She demanded the suppression of the killing of people by the terrorists in Assam, construction of Health unit, extension of Nazira S.H.C, formation of new Subdivision, rehabilitation of victims of communal clash, the half-constructed stadium at Amingaon of Rajib Gandhi Sports project, declaration of full-fledged head office, Irrigation project in Nazira, construction of I.T.I. centre at Gargaon, regularization of the post of Hindi teacher, misuse of grants, water supply project in Nazira, construction of Health centre at Simulguri, permanent capital, Jyoti Chitraban, loan of the State Government, whether Government officials are receiving pensions, grants sanctioned by the Central Government for the repairment of National Highway, construction of roads and bridges by the World Bank assistance project, deplorable condition of the P.W.D. road, number of complaints in the Chief Minister’s Vigilance Cell, investigation of financial scam, number of teachers appointed by the Government, project of Dikhou river, number of peasants inspired by the Government to produce more agricultural products in the State, development of the Gauhati Medical College, number of the private buses in the city etc. She also asked about when the Valika Samridhi Yojona started in Assam. She also demanded for the rectification of the police department in Assam. So the documented proceedings of the Assam Legislative Assembly reveal that Dr. Hemopraya Saikia as legislator was active in dealing with the various issues of Assam.

Pranati Phukan was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 2001 from Naharkatia constituency as Congress nominee. She became the Minister of State for

Revenue and Culture in the Tarun Gogoi Ministry. On the floor of the Assembly she raised many issues like- assistance to the Weavers Cooperative Society, distribution of wheat in the Dibrugarh District, provision of scholarships, number of Weaving Cooperative Societies in Dibrugarh District, modification of salaries of the staffs of the Assam Petro Chemical Ltd., number of welfare officers appointed at the Tea Garden of Assam, amount of grants sanctioned for the SC/ST people, scarcity of doctors, nurses and medicine at the 30 beded hospital at Naharkatia, number of I.C.D.S. officers, provision of electric transformer in the Naharkatia constituency, number of jails in Assam, number of electrified villages under Naharkatia constituency, supply of gas at Naharkatia, distribution of land to the landless peasants, inclusion of Gaon panchayats, number of doctors in the Namrup State Hospital, repairment of Hospital at Dibrugarh, deteriorated condition of roads at Naharkatia, devasted condition of Naharkatia veterinary, certificates for the Backward Classes, number of incomplete health units at different places, provision of appointments of inspectors in the Social Welfare department, construction of bridge at Delhighat in Namrup, the amount of grants for Kaziranga National Park, land distribution to the Tea Garden labourers, number of water supply projects in Naharkatia constituency, Gas Cracker project at Tengakhat in Dibrugarh, the upgradation of High school to Higher secondary school, Namrup Fertilisers, provision of loan to the poor peasants of tea Industry, Assam Petro Chemicals project, bi-furcation of Namrup Petro Chemicals Ltd., State Sports Association, number of projects in Assam, amount sanctioned for the construction of cricket playing ground at Guwahati, number of I.C.D.S projects in Assam etc.

She questioned about the number of professors and lecturers in the Assam Medical College, grants for sports and N.C.C, Drug Testing Laboratory, World Bank help for the agricultural development, system of appointment, creation of Naharkatia Subdivision, appointment of women in weaving and knitting etc., rehabilitation of the flood-affected people, 50% reservation of women in the primary, High, and Higher secondary schools, deplorable condition of Naharkatia Veterinary, number of village Mini Stadium, grants to the sports and Youth Welfare departments, electric transformer at Naharkatia, number of Weaver’s Samiti at Tinsukia, construction of bund at Naharkatia, number of Block Development Centres in Assam, number of ill projects in Assam, number of devasttaed bridges under P.W.D. at Naharkatia, Namrup Music
College, amount spent on fishery project, Central assistance for the Youth Welfare, Cricket Stadium at Guwahati, implication of village development project, A.S.T.C. bus station at Naharkatia, production of silk insects, occupation of Government land, river erosion of Dihing river, implementation of various projects etc. On the floor of the Assembly, she asked about the new water supply project for Naharkatia, no function of the O.B.C./ Development Corporation, to activate the recommendations of Mandal Commission, distribution of rice and sugar, deadly condition of the State Sports Association, deplorable condition of the Guwahati jail, number of activated water supply projects in Assam, number of lecturers and professors in the Cardiology department of Assam Medical College, etc. The documented proceedings of Assam Legislative Assembly reveal that Pranati Phukan was active but most of the time she was busy with her constituency. She had no time to speak for the people of Assam.

Ajanta Neog was elected to the Assam Legislative Assembly in 2001 from Golaghat constituency as Congress candidate. She as legislator raised many issues on the floor of the Assembly. She asked questions relating to permission of licences to open foreign wine shops, water supply project in Golaghat, replacement of Golaghat jail remaining in the middle of the town, pension schemes to the families of the freedom fighters, reports relating to the village development in Golaghat, number of wine shops in Assam and the amount of taxes collected from these sources, occupation of the youth hostel in Golaghat by the C.R.P.F., illegal ration cards in the State, Government project on agricultural land etc. She has participated in the Budgetary discussion and said that the Government should take bold step in the development of the peasants in the State because 90% of the people are peasants. She also raised the issues like the condition of Jyoti Nagar Water Supply project in Golaghat town. She requested the Government for the development and modernisation of the Health department. On the floor of the Assembly she said that there are Medical colleges and Government hospitals in Assam but inspite of that thousands of patients go to out side Assam for medical treatment. The Minister concerned should take the necessary step, so that the people need not go to Chennai, Delhi and Calcutta etc. She also suggested that the Health department should be treated as Human Treatment department.

33. Ibid, 6th, 2000
On the floor of the Assembly, she raised her voice about the absence of seniority of teachers in the provincialised High schools, inactivity of the residential Girl's Poly-technique School at Golaghat, steps taken to activate the agricultural Sub-division at Merapani of Golaghat, absence of drug inspectors's office at Golaghat, Garampani of Karbi Anglong District as Tourist Spot, boundary dispute between Assam Nagaland border area etc. The proceedings of the Assam Legislative Assembly reveal that she remained as legislator for a short period during the 2001-2006 and became the Minister of Assam. She was the active lady and raised many issues related to various matters.

An analysis of the role performance of the woman legislators reveals that whether woman legislators raised issues specific to the problems of their own constituencies or general issues related to the State as a whole. The level of their participation in the Parliamentary and State Assembly proceedings has been cursorily examined. An attempt has been made to find out how many woman legislators have been actively participating in the Parliamentary and in the Assembly proceedings and the kind of issues raised by them.

It is needless to say that the visibility of woman legislators is very clear in the Parliamentary and Assembly proceedings and deliberations. This is despite the fact that their numerical strength is low in comparison to male members. It is also found that though woman members have been participating in the debates on various Bills and raising questions related to the local problems of their constituencies but their participation has been very low. Woman leaders of senior age were more active. They protested against any kind of social injustices inside or outside the State. A few woman members were less active and they did not give importance in raising issues. Some members raised issues related to their constituencies and they had to overlook the greater National matters. Some members of the 12th Assembly totally remained silent on the floor of the Assembly and they never spoke.