

# Women Violence and Discrimination of Assam in the Medieval Society

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**Abstract-** *Violence against women (VAW), also known as gender-based violence, is violence primarily committed by men or boys against women or girls. Such violence is often considered a hate crime. VAW has an extensive history, though the incidents and intensity of violence have varied over time and between societies. Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportions. At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime, with the abuser usually known to her. In medieval Assam, women's experience of violence and discrimination was complex, showing both relative freedom due to tribal influences and strict patriarchal norms, particularly in upper-class and lower Hinduized society. The royal women held significant influence; the society also saw limitations like restricted mobility and the promotion of the senior disciple, chaste and devoted wife. In this paper an attempt has been made to explore the women's violence and discrimination of Assam in the medieval society.*

**Key words:** *Women, Violence, Discrimination, Medieval Society, Equality, Assam.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the last few decades women violence and discrimination has become a burning issue in many parts of the world, including in India. Women have demanded equality with men in terms of education, empowerment, politics, religion etc. as they were forced to remain within the four walls of their house hold. But the women folk of Assam are comparatively free from in other parts in India. Since ancient period there was no restrictions in their movement, like men folk they were equally able to take charge of the administration of the kingdom in absence of the king. There were no proofs of practicing Veil system. This was possible due to the practice of the principle of granting equal status of the women by the rules of Assam which was practiced not only in royal families but also in the mass. Even in contemporary period in rural areas women never sat at home; they took equal part in planting and harvesting crops with the men folk. Women's status in medieval Assam was lowered by the practice of polygamy. Same as discrimination

against women's any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex with the purpose or effect of impairing the enjoyment by women of political, economic, social, cultural or civil human rights on equal footing with men. Some discrimination includes direct discrimination that is treating someone less favorably because of a protected characteristic, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimization. Discrimination can be based on various 'protected characteristics' such as race, gender, age, religion and sexual orientation, violence against women has been accepted and even condoned through our history. More than 2000 (two thousand) years ago, Roman law gave a man life and death authority over his wife. In the 18th century, English common law gave a man permission to discipline his wife and children with a stick or whip no wider than his thumb. This 'rule of thumb' prevailed in England and America until the late 19th century. Many feminists claim violence against women is the result of deeply entrenched patriarchal culture that encourages and rewards male domination. They say that in a patriarchal culture men are more likely to use violence to keep their dominant position. In the medieval time violence against women was pervasive and widely accepted, often rooted in patriarchal social structures. That treated women as property; legal systems offered women little to no protection and violence was used to reinforce male power and control.

## II. OBJECTIVES

The present paper is an attempt to achieve the following objectives.

1. To study the role of women in administration in the medieval society.
2. To cite some instances of the medieval period to encourage women for their better future here.

**Data Sources and Methodology:**

This work is based on the secondary data which is collected from different sources including various books, journals, contemporary records, internet etc. Mainly descriptive method is adopted here.

Medieval period women position in Assam:

In medieval period women's positions were complex, characterized by significant domestic responsibilities, economic contribution through crafts like weaving and some freedom within a patriarchal society. Through this varied by class and the influence of the Vaishnava movement which imposed strict social codes on behaviour. While they managed households, women also participated in economic activities outside the home and were respected for their roles as homemakers and mothers through their autonomy was limited compared to men from the ancient period due respect and importance were given to the women folk. In this inscription of the ancient period reference to women are found in parasites mainly. Parasites refer to the queen women official to the royal palace and to views of Brahman donees in that time women were cultured and pious.

King Vanamalaya Medeva was a king of ancient Assam (835 AD - 865 AD). Recorded in his inscription at Tezpur is that Queen Jivada, mother of Harjaravarman is started as like Prabhata Sandhya. Who was adorned and worshipped many and treated as the mother of great splendour. He again recorded goddess Lakshmi assuming all the grades of womanly beauty came over to his place.

Women of Assam in medieval period were comparatively free from other parts of India. There were no restrictions in their movement like men folk, they were equally educated. If competent they had to participated in state affairs. Thought they used to show their veil in the presence of certain relatives like father-in-law, elder brothers that was just to show their respect towards elder person. Otherwise there were no proofs of participating of veil system. Shihabuddin Talish, a Muhammadan writer who accompanied Mir Jumla on his invasion of Assam (1662) wrote that wives of the Rajas and peasants like never veil their faces before any body and they move about the market place with bare heads. This was possible due to the practice of the principle of granting equal status for men and women by the rulers. Which was practiced only in royal families but also in village areas. Women never sit at home. In the medieval period they took equal part in planting crops with the men folk and harvesting. Through the marital relationship was basically monogamous, some of the Ahom Kings of the medieval period were polygamous. But they maintained them respectfully. From these records, it is clear that womenfolk

received some status and honors including property rights like men folk.

Women violence in medieval period.:

The history of violence and discrimination against women is a deeply rooted, global phenomenon, with roots in the patriarchal system and the empowerment of men in the ancient and medieval societies and religious structures.

Sati in Assam

A cultural practice where a widow sacrifices herself on her husband funeral pyre, highlighting the extreme pressures and ideologies surrounding women's chastity and role within a patriarchal structure as noted by historians like Uma Chokavarti.

War Rape

In ancient and medieval periods warfare often involved rape which was sometimes seen as a reward for soldiers a way to assert dominance over the defeated or a tangible benefit of military success.

Property not person:

A common thread across many ancient and medieval culture - was the view of women as a property. Meaning sexual abuse was primarily a defilement of the father or husband's honor and possession rather than an ancient of the women's autonomy.

While direct historical records on violence against women in medieval Assam are limited. The introduction of Neo Vaishnavism and the decline of the Shakti cult are seen as factors that lowered women's social status, contributing to indirect forms of discrimination and patriarchal control that impact their position in society. However, women in the medieval period of Assam also held significant influence, with royal women participating in political affairs and women play vital roles in economic and religious spheres.

Evidence of violence and discrimination :

Throughout the Medieval period, women were treated as second-class citizens and their needs always were an after thought. They were either held to be completely deceitful, sexual, innocent or incompetent. Therefore, women were mostly withheld from the portions of power or speaking their voice, only male decisions for them and their lives were dictated by the men that run in the society. Evidence against women and discrimination against

women is not found available in the medieval record. I can found only relevant information by searching for the theses on women's society in medieval Assam such as one by Borah available on Shodh Ganga and by reviewing works that discuss the broader historical context if women status during that period. Such research often explores social norms and practice that could have led to violence even if not explicitly document and record is not available.

### III. CONCLUSION

Women's violence and discrimination encompasses any harm, suffering or deprivation of fundamental freedoms that women and girls experience due to their gender. This includes their physical, sexual, psychological and economical violence and it can be manifest as threats or arbitrary restrictions of public and private life. At last it has been observed that since the ancient period Assam is a land of religion where the feminine principle as “goddess Shakti” is worshipped up by all mind. But as of now a days, women are facing violence, discrimination are taken place every part of India. Assam is also seen to be an exception to that. Here all things are changing rapidly. Women are facing problems, the majority of which is with hunting in Assam, where many women were burnt alive due to superstitious belief. Women are discriminated due to gender inequalities, lack of economic rights, political consciousness, sexual violence, illiteracy etc.

This is the call of the owner to take place in the issue of empowering women as a challenge and to set an example for the present society as women used to do earlier in ancient and medieval periods for the protection of women themselves and for the protection of society too. So if women dared to come out from their traditional home work and even participated in war in those periods, then why not we today can take some radical step for the betterment of the entire women generation. We can take the example of the young girl Malala Yousafzai, a seventeen-year-old female Pakistani activist for girls' education who was shot by Taliban gunmen in 2012 but survived. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 and became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Prize of peace.

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