

## CHAPTER 5

### PRINT MEDIA AND WOMEN

*The Fifth Chapter analyses the data collected from the selected Assamese Newspapers and Magazines in terms of the coverage of women issues and portrayals during the period of 2000-2002 applying the method of Content Analysis. Subsequently, to examine the attitude of Assamese Print Media towards women the chapter employs quantitative and qualitative methods to analyse every single datum found throughout the collection of the data. For convenience the chapter is divided into two sections concerning newspapers and magazines respectively.*

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Mass Media, the Fourth Pillar of Democracy<sup>1</sup>, portray the dominant images in societies of the industrialized world and depict life in our society (Creedon:1998)<sup>2</sup>. Media have the potential to shape, change, and reinforce values and attitudes (Bandura: 1986; Fink: 1998; Kane, Taub, & Hayes: 2000; Edward M.Kian:2007). As in the other parts of India, Print Media, one of the most important branches of Mass Media that is also revered as facilitator of development and disseminator of information<sup>3</sup>, is popular in Assam, too. This chapter is completely dedicated to every single datum which is collected from selected units of contents of the Assamese Print Media through Content Analysis. It has already been mentioned that the Assamese Print Media i.e. the contents of the Assamese Newspapers and Magazines have been taken for the study regarding the portrayal of women from the year 2000 to 2002. The two newspapers, namely *Dainik Agradoot* and *Asomiya Pratidin* and two Assamese Magazines — *Bismoy* and *Asomiya Maya* have been taken into consideration for Content Analysis from a Feminist Perspective .

This chapter consists of two sections: the first section analyses the data collected from the selected newspapers namely, *Dainik Agradoot* and *Asomiya Pratidin* and the se-

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<sup>1</sup> Radhakrishnan B. Radhakrishnan B. (2012) Role of Media in promoting Communal Harmony, National Foundation for Communal Harmony. New Delhi.

<sup>2</sup> As cited in Edward M. Kian (2007). Gender in Sports writing by Print Media:An Exploratory Examination of writers' Experiences and Attitudes, The Smart Journal.vol-4, Issue 1.

<sup>3</sup> Radhakrishnan B. (2012) Role of Media in promoting Communal Harmony, National Foundation for Communal Harmony. New Delhi.

cond section will be of the analysis of the data taken from the selected Assamese Magazines *Bismoy* and *Asomiya Maya*.

## 5.1 PROFILES OF NEWSPAPERS

A newspaper can be defined as those serial publications containing news, informative and intellectual writings in the forms of articles, special articles, columns or editorials. Newspapers are typically published on daily and weekly basis. Most of the newspapers publish their online versions. The online versions are called online newspapers or news sites.

### 5.1.1 *Asomiya Pratidin*

*Asomiya Pratidin* is one of the popular Assamese language daily newspapers which was launched in Assam in 1995. It is a widely read newspaper in Assam. It is published from four centers of Assam, namely, Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Bongaigaon and North Lakhimpur.



**Figure 5.1** Head-Office of *Asomiya Pratidin* in Guwahati

**Table 5.1**

Details of <i>Asomiya Pratidin</i>								
Type	Format	Publisher	Editor (Present)	Editor (In 2000-2002)	Founded	Language	Head-Quarter	Circulation
Daily Newspaper	Broadsheet	Jatin Choudhury	Nitya Bora	Haidar Hussain	1995	Assamese	Guwahati	1,78,162

### 5.1.2 *Dainik Agradoot*

*Dainik Agradoot* is also one of the highly circulated and powerful newspapers of Assam. The Editor Chief of this newspaper is Kanak Sen Deka, who is one of the respectful authors of Assam. He has been three time president of “Axom Sahitya Sobha<sup>4</sup>” in the years 2005, 2006 and 2007.



**Figure 5.2 Present Head-Office *Dainik Agradoot* in Guwahati**

**Table 5.2**

Details of <i>Dainik Agradoot</i>									
Type	Format	Publisher	Editor (Present)	Editor (In 2000-2002)	Editor-in-Chief	Founded	Language	Head-Quarter	Circulation
Daily Newspaper	Broadsheet	Agradoot Publishers Pvt.ltd	Pranjal Sen Deka	Kanak Sen Deka	Kanak Sen Deka	1995	Assamese	Guwahati	1,78,162

## 5.2 QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

### Section I: Newspapers

This Section deals with the space analysis of the editorial pages of all the selected newspapers during the period under study. An attempt has been made to present the views, coverage and non-news items on women and different articles of the editorial page in the selected Newspapers.

<sup>4</sup> Assamese Literary Society (Axom Sahitya Sobha) was founded in Assam to promote the culture of Assam and Assamese Literature.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Assam\\_Sahitya\\_Sabha\\_presidents](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Assam_Sahitya_Sabha_presidents)

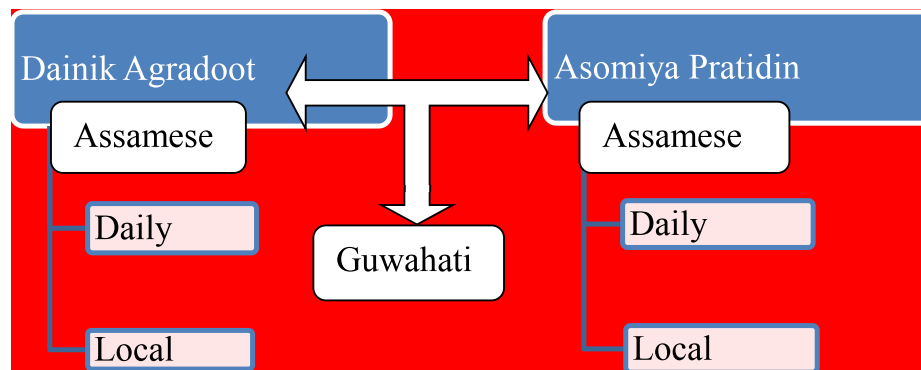
Regarding the newspapers, the editorials and articles play a significant role in the press or the print media. So, this present chapter is dedicated to the study of every single datum published in the editorials and the articles of the editorial page of the *Dainik Agradoot* and in *Asomiya Pratidin*. Editorials elucidate the perception of the newspaper on a particular topic and, thus, mould the view and opinion of the readers. They distinguish one paper from the other and through arguments promote a view point. This study is especially concentrated on the editorials and the articles on the editorial page of any of the women related news stories.

Articles also put forward the columnists' point of view through facts, figures and arguments and can mould public opinion on a certain topic. However, the language pattern of the articles and the reported news stories differ widely as they are not necessarily in tune with the newspaper's perception on a certain topic. Although they play a wide role in creating the public opinion, all the articles that the researcher came across, were published during the same period of time on issues related to women.

The types and names of the newspapers selected for the content analysis under the period between 2000 and 2002 are shown in the table 5.3 and the figure 5.3.

**Table 5.3: Types and names of the Newspapers selected for the study**

Types/Name of the newspapers	Mode of publication	Range of circulation	Language	Edition
<b>Dainik Agradoot</b>	Daily	Local	Assamese	Guwahati
<b>Asomiya pratidin</b>	Daily	Local	Assamese	Guwahati



**Figure 5.3: Types and names of Newspapers**

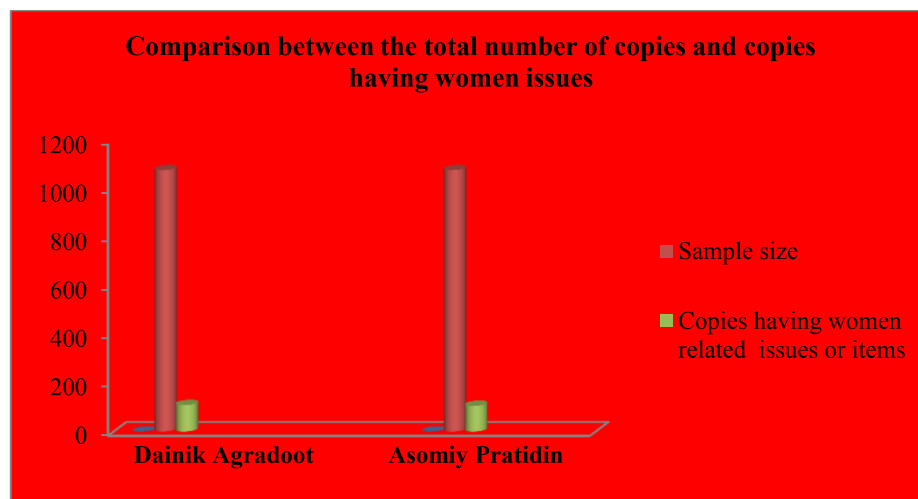
The table 5.3 and the figure 5.3 show the types and names of both the Assamese Dailies namely *Dainik Agradoot* and *Asomiya Pratidin* which are local dailies of Assam

itself and the edition of both the newspapers for the study is selected from Guwahati from the period between 2000 and 2002. *Dainik Agradoot* has three editions - Guwahati, Jorhat and Sibsagar and *Asomiya Pratidin* also has three editions which are published from Guwahati, Bongaigaon and Jorhat. These two newspapers are taken into consideration for the study keeping in mind the popularity and readership during the period from 2000 to 2002.

The following table presents the comparison between the total number of published copies and the copies of newspapers having the coverage of issues of women in the forms of editorials and articles in *Dainik Agradoot* and *Asomiya Pratidin* during the period between 2000 and 2002.

**Table 5.4: Comparison between the total number of copies and copies having women issues**

Row label	Sample size	Copies having women related issues or items
<b>Dainik Agradoot</b>	1077	109
	100	10.12%
<b>Asomiya Pratidin</b>	1077	106
	100	9.84%



**Figure 5.4: Graphical representation of Table 5.4**

In Table 5.4 and Figure 5.4, it is seen that the total number of newspapers is 2154 - 1077 copies of each newspaper, and among the total number of copies only 109 copies were found having women related items in *Dainik Agradoot* while 106 copies of *Asomiya Pratidin* were found having women issues. This table and figure are meant to

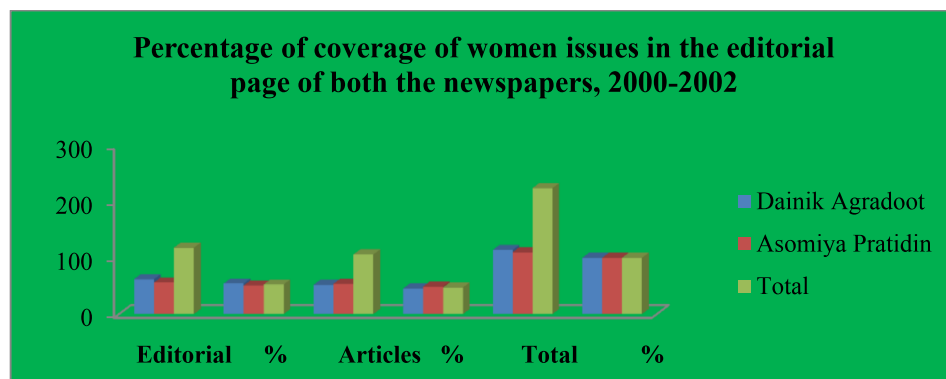
show the comparison between the total numbers of newspapers and copies having women related items. So, the comparison made on the basis of data show the attitude of both the newspapers towards women and it is quite observable that women issues did not get proper importance in both the newspapers in the period from 2000 to 2002, while *Dainik Agradoot* stands at 10.12%, *Asomiya Pratidin* is having only 9.84% regarding the coverage of women issues.

The following table and the figure show the data regarding coverage of women issues in the Editorial page of both the newspapers in percentage in the form of editorials and articles during the period from 2000 to 2002.

**Table 5.5: Percentage of coverage of women issues in the editorial page of both the newspapers, 2000-2002**

Row labels	Dainik Agradoot	Asomiya Pratidin	Total
	No of items	No of items	No of items
<b>Editorials</b>	62 (54.38)*	56 (50.90)	118 (52.67)
<b>Articles</b>	52 (45.61)	54 (49.09)	106 (47.32)
<b>Total</b>	114 100	110 100	224 100

\*figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage.



**Figure 5.5: Graphical Representation of the Table 5.5**

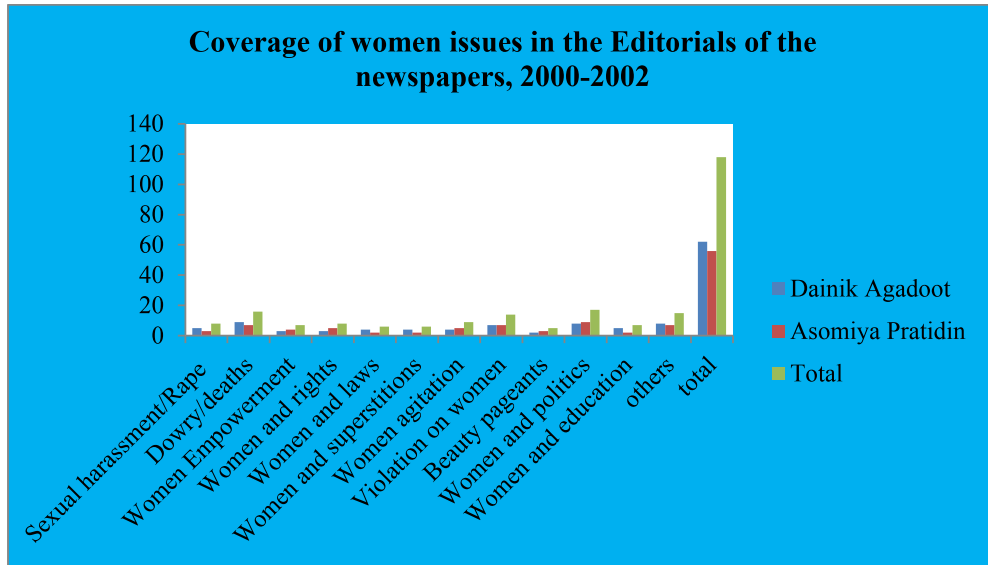
It is already shown in Table 5.4 that out of 1077 copies of each newspaper 109 copies are found to be on the women issues in *Dainik Agradoot* whereas 106 are found in *Asomiya Pratidin*. Both the Table 5.5 and the Figure 5.5 show the percentage of the coverage of the women issues in editorials and articles of the editorial page. It is observed that out of 109 copies, 114 items regarding women issues are covered in *Dainik Agradoot* whereas in *Asomiya Pratidin* out of 106 copies, 110 items of women

issues are found. In comparison to the articles of the editorial pages, editorials had covered maximum numbers of women issues during the period between 2000 and 2002. Regarding editorials *Dainik Agradoot* has stood with highest number of items having 54.38% in comparison to *Asomiya Pratidin*. In the context of articles, *Asomiya Pratidin* is having highest number of items regarding women with 49.09% in comparison to *Dainik Agradoot* (45.61%). The above figures represent the attitude of the newspapers between 2000 and 2002. It displays the comparative coverage pattern by the two newspapers. Besides, the coverage pattern has been compared on the basis of editorials and articles published in those particular newspapers during the period from 2000 to 2002.

The following table shows the nature and attitude of the editorials and articles regarding women in these two Assamese newspapers during the period from 2000 to 2002.

**Table 5.6: Coverage of women issues in the Editorials of the newspapers, 2000-2002**

Row labels	Dainik Agadoot	Asomiya Pratidin	Total
	Number of Items	Number of Items	Number of Items
<b>Sexual harassment/Rape</b>	5	3	8
<b>Dowry/deaths</b>	9	7	16
<b>Women Empowerment</b>	3	4	7
<b>Women and rights</b>	3	5	8
<b>Women and laws</b>	4	2	6
<b>Women and superstitions</b>	4	2	6
<b>Women agitation</b>	4	5	9
<b>Violation against women</b>	7	7	14
<b>Beauty pageants</b>	2	3	5
<b>Women and politics</b>	8	9	17
<b>Women and education</b>	5	2	7
<b>Others</b>	8	7	15
<b>Total</b>	62	56	118



**Figure 5.6: Graphical Representation of the Table 5.6**

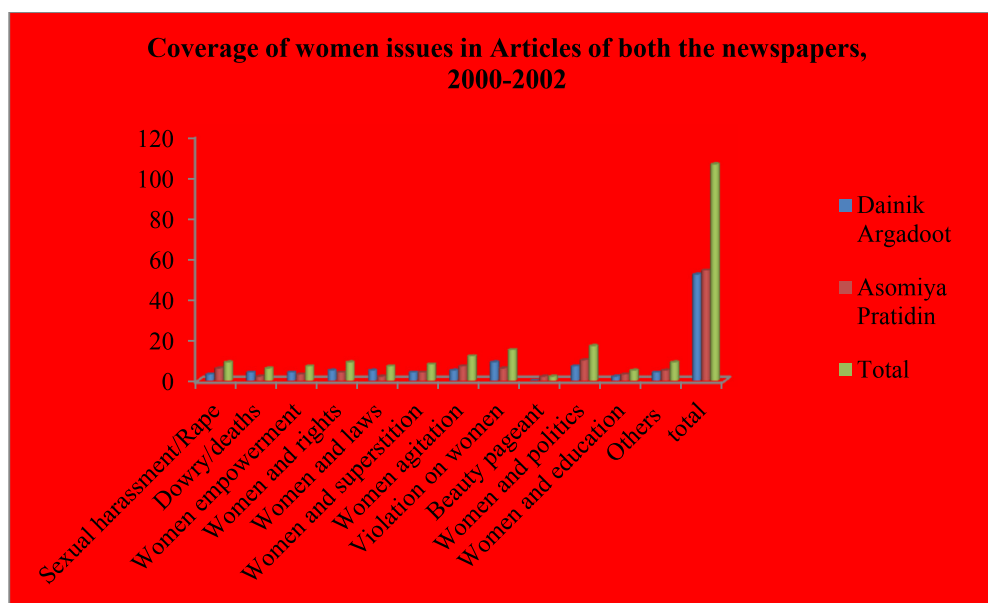
The Table 5.6 and the Figure 5.6 show the coverage of different women issues in the Editorials by both the newspapers during the period from 2000 to 2002. In the table issues relating to women are categorised into such heads as sexual harassment/rapes, dowry/dowry deaths, women empowerment, women and rights, women and laws, women and superstition, Women agitation, Violation against women, Beauty pageants, women in politics, women and education and others. From the data analysed in the Table 5.6, it is seen that in the editorials of *Dainik Agradoot*, issue related to dowry and dowry deaths was published most of the times, followed by women in politics, others and violence on women respectively. Out of 62 items *Dainik Agradoot* published 9 items on Dowry/ dowry deaths. *Asomiya Pratidin* published total 9 items on women and politics. The category of ‘others’ comprises of contents written by the editor and some topics include both men and women in general, which cannot be considered in the present study.

The following table and the figure show the total number of articles on women issues that were found during the study period 2000-2002.



**Table 5.7: Coverage of women issues in the Articles of both the newspapers, 2000-2002**

Row labels	Dainik Argadoot	Asomiya Pratidin	Total
	Numbers of items	Number of items	Number of items
Sexual harassment/Rape	3	6	9
Dowry/deaths	4	2	6
Women empowerment	4	3	7
Women and rights	5	4	9
Women and laws	5	2	7
Women and superstition	4	4	8
Women agitation	5	7	12
Violations on women	9	6	15
Beauty pageant	0	2	2
Women and politics	7	10	17
Women and education	2	3	5
Others	4	5	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>106</b>



**Figure 5.7: Graphical Representation of Table 5.7**

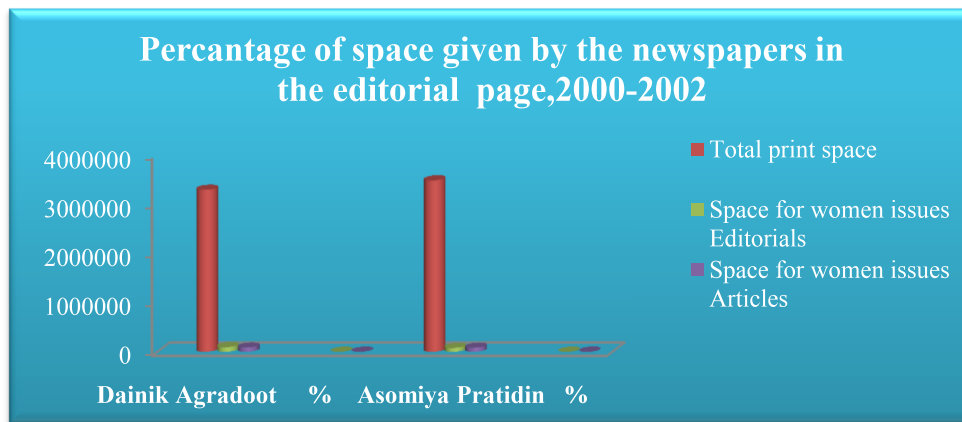
The Table 5.7 and the Figure 5.7 show the coverage pattern of total number of articles on all the related women issues, during the period 2000-2002. In the table, issues relating to women are categorised into such heads as sexual harassment/rapes, dowry/dowry deaths, women empowerment, women and rights, women and laws, women and superstition, women agitation, violation against women, beauty pageants, women in politics, women and education and others. Articles put forward the writer's point of view through facts, figures and arguments and helps in moulding public opinion on certain topics. In most of the articles of *Dainik Agradoot*, issue relating to violence on

women was covered. Out of 52, 9 items were published on violence on women. Regarding *Asomiya Pratidin*, it is seen that out of the 54 items, 10 items were published on women in politics.

The following table displays the percentage of individual space dedicated to present women issues in the editorials and articles during the period 2000-2002.

**Table 5.8: Percentage of space given by the newspapers in the editorial page, 2000-2002**

Name of newspapers	Total print space	Space for women issues	
		Editorials	Articles
<b>Dainik Agradoot</b>	3289158	94674 (2.87)	85512 (2.59)
<b>Asomiya Pratidin</b>	3480345	80080 (2.30)	83160 (2.38)



**Figure 5.8: Graphical Representation of the Table 5.8**

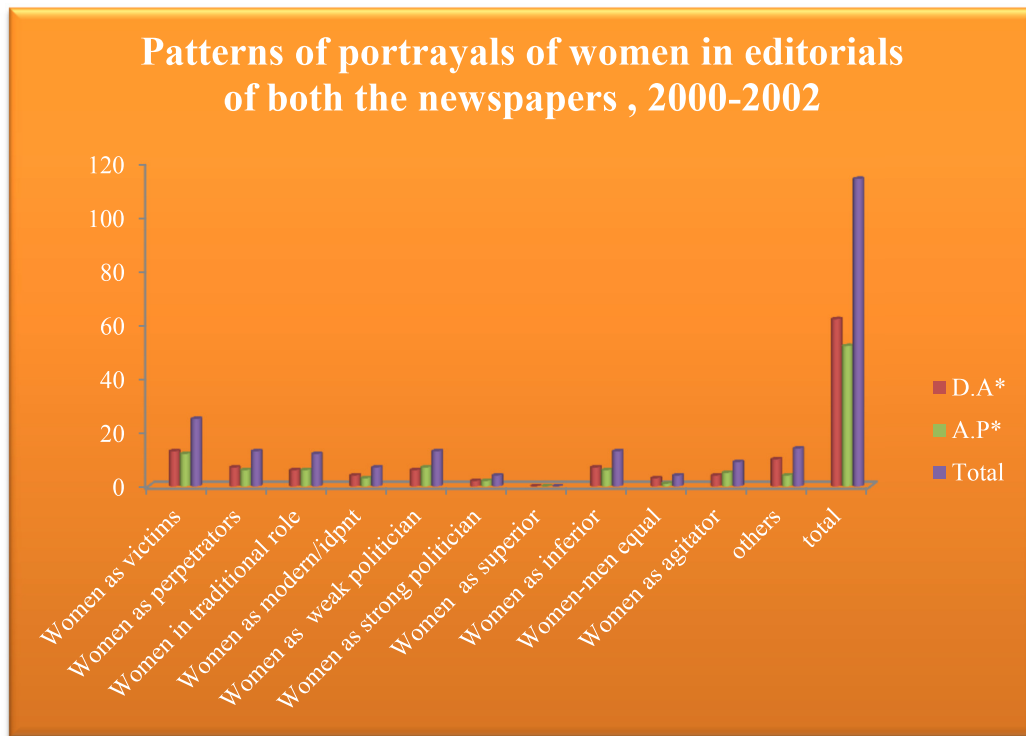
It is clear from Table 5.8 and Figure 5.8 that in terms of the percentage of space dedicated to women, on the daily basis, the attention given by the particular newspapers is negligible. Here, it is found that the editorials of the *Dainik Agradoot* with 2.87% had the highest percentage of dedication to women issues in comparison to the editorials of *Asomiya Pratidin* (2.30%). Regarding articles, again *Dainik Agradoot* had the highest percentage 2.59 comparisons to *Asomiya Pratidin*.

The following table shows the nature of portrayal of women in the editorial page through the editorials of *Dainik Agradoot* and *Asomiya Pratidin* during the period 2000-2002.

**Table 5.9: Pattern of portrayals of women in the Editorials of the Newspapers, 2000-2002**

Row labels	Women as victims	Women as perpetrators	Women in traditional role	Women as Modern /independent	Women as weak politician	Women as strong politician	Women as superior	Women as inferior	Women-men equal	Women as agitator	others	total
D.A*	13 52	7 53.84	6 50	4 57.14	6 46.15	2 50	0	7 53.84	3 75	4 44.44	10 71.42	62 54.38
A.P*	12 48	6 46.15	6 50	3 42.85	7 53.84	2 50	0	6 46.15	1 25	5 55.55	4 28.57	52 45.61
Total	25 100	13 100	12 100	7 100	13 100	4 100	0 100	13 100	4 100	9 100	14 100	114 100

**D.A-Dainik Agradoot & A.P-Asomiya Pratidin**



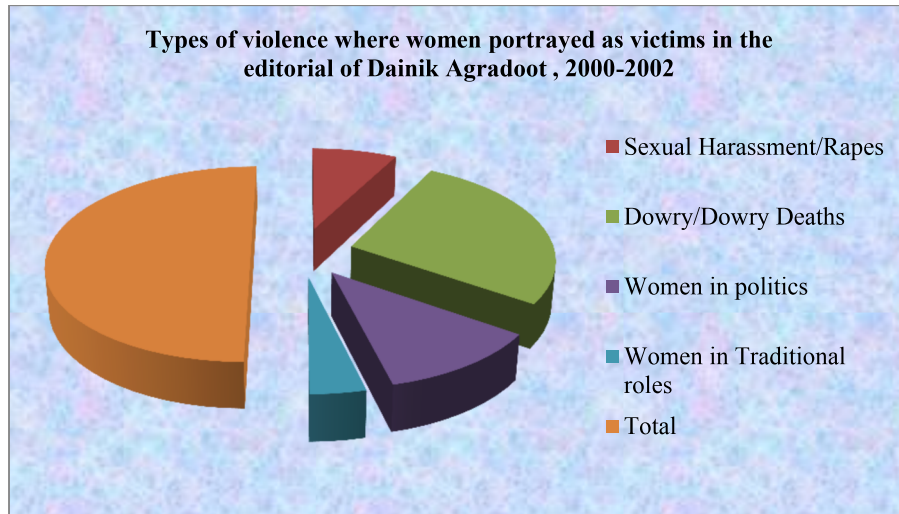
**Figure 5.9: Graphical Representation of Table 5.9**

It is seen in Table 5.9 and in Figure 5.9 that, most of the editorials were published in both the newspapers showing women as victims. In this regard *Dainik Agradoot* stands at 52% (13) out of 62 editorials and *Asomiya Pratidin* stands with 48% (12) out of 52 editorials showing women as victims. In the table victim is categorised giving importance on the meaning and words of the particular content of the editorials of the particular newspapers. Here, those women have been shown as victims of sexual harassment, dowry, politics and in traditional roles where they have to experience the aggression of men. The manner to victimise women is analysed on the basis of the parameters of sympathetic, judgemental, non-judgemental and myth-laden grounds.

The following table and the figure focus on the types of violence where women had been shown as victims in *Dainik Agradoot*.

**Table 5.10: Types of violence where women are portrayed as victims in the Editorials of *Dainik Agradoot*, 2000-2002**

Names of the Newspapers	Sexual Harassment/Rapes	Dowry/Dowry Deaths	Women in politics	Women in Traditional roles	Total
<b>Dainik Agradoot</b>	2 15.38	7 53.84	3 23.07	1 7.69	13 100



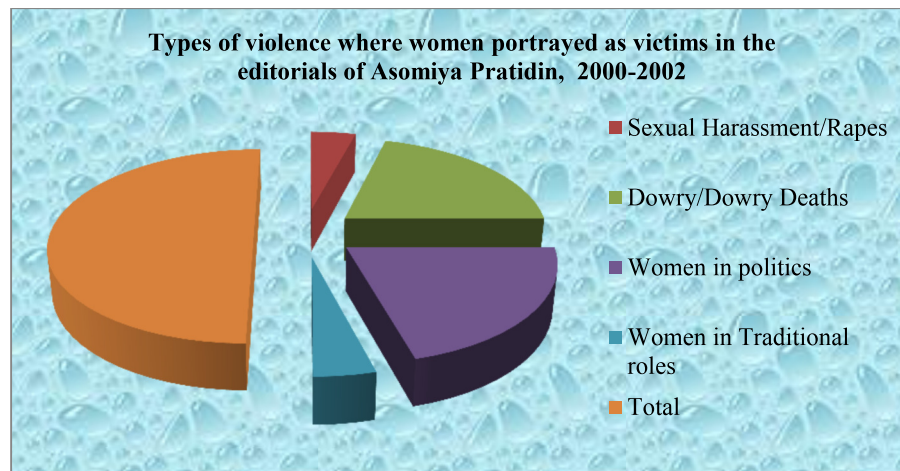
**Figure 5.10: Graphical Representation of Table 5.10**

Table 5.10 and Figure 5.10 indicate different types of violence against women because of the aggression of the men folk towards women. It is evident in the way the written contents i.e. the editorials of *Dainik Agradoot* portrayed women's victimisation during the particular period of time. It is alluded in the table and in the figure, as well, that most of the women were shown as victims in case of dowry or death related to dowry with 53.84% out of 13 editorials.

The following table and the figure display the types of violence where women had been shown as victims in *Asomiya Pratidin*.

**Table 5.11: Types of violence where women were portrayed as victims in the Editorials of *Asomiya Pratidin*, 2000-2002**

Names of the Newspapers	Sexual Harassment/Rapes	Dowry/Dowry Deaths	Women in politics	Women in Traditional roles	Total
<b>Asomiya Pratidin</b>	1 8.33	5 41.66	5 41.66	1 8.33	12 100



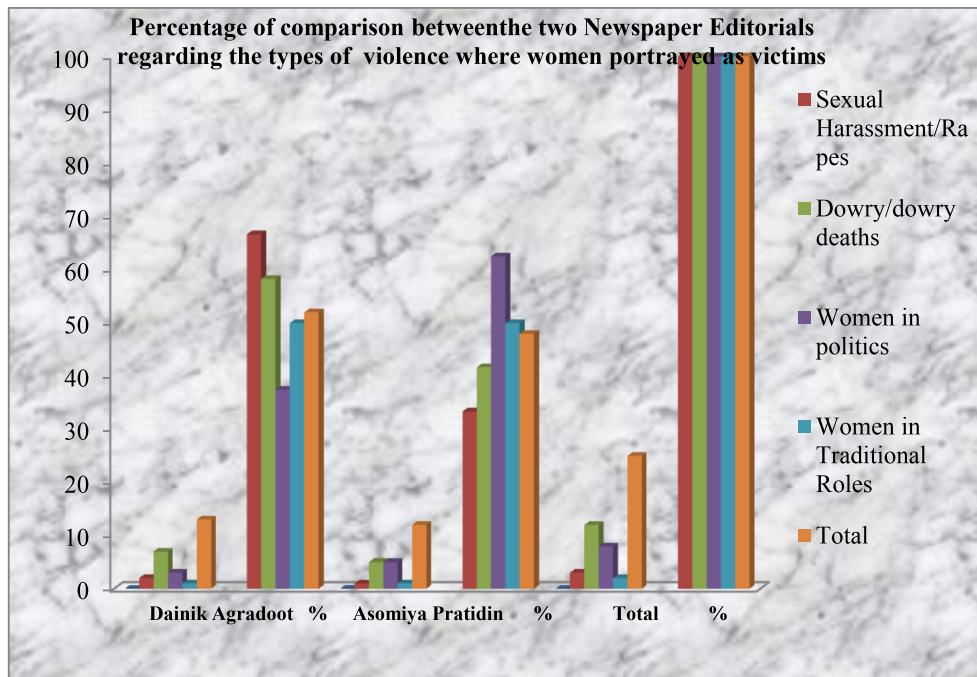
**Figure 5.11: Graphical Representation of the Table 5.11**

Table 5.11 and Figure 5.11 reveal the fact that during the period 2000-2002, the editorials of *Asomiya Pratidin* presented women as victims in cases of dowry and politics. During data collection, the researcher had seen that in the period between 2000 and 2002 some of the women of India were in the peak to establish themselves as strong political leaders of India in the national and regional platforms. But, there were some occasions when these women had to face certain problems, for example, Sonia Gandhi's citizenship status in India created hurdles in her way to become the Prime Minister of India, Mayabati of U.P. and Mamata Benerjee of West Bengal etc. In certain cases, it was seen that the some of the editorials presented these women politicians as victims in the male dominated political field, which was adjacent to portray women as weak and victim in the political field. In *Asomiya Pratidin* women were shown as victims of dowry and male dominated power politics with 41.66% out of 12 items of its published editorials.

The following table and the figure focus on making comparisons between the newspaper editorials where women were shown as victims.

**Table 5.12: Percentage of comparison between the two Newspaper Editorials regarding the types of violence where women were portrayed as victims, 2000-2002**

Names of the newspapers	Sexual Harassment/Rapes	Dowry/dowry deaths	Women in politics	Women in Traditional Roles	Total
<b>Dainik Agradoot</b>	2 66.66	7 58.33	3 37.50	1 50	13 52
<b>Asomiya Pratidin</b>	1 33.33	5 41.66	5 62.50	1 50	12 48
<b>Total</b>	3 100	12 100	8 100	2 100	25 100



**Figure 5.12: Graphical Representation of Table 5.12**

Through Table 5.12 and Figure 5.12, the comparison has been made between the two Newspapers regarding the portrayals of women as victims and it is seen that in the category of sexual harassment/rape, *Dainik Agradoot* stands first in the table having 66.66% in comparison to *Asomiya Pratidin* which stands at 33.33% as far as these 3 issues are concerned. In the second category of dowry and Deaths related to dowry, *Dainik Agradoot* is having 58.33% which is higher than the percentage of *Asomiya Pratidin* which has 41.66% out of 12 issues. In the third category of politics and women *Asomiya Pratidin* stands at 62.50% which is higher than *Dainik Agradoot* that has only 37.50% out of 8 issues. In the fourth and the last category that is women as

victims in traditional roles, both the newspapers have the same percentage i.e. 50% out of 2 issues. Now, it is proved that *Dainik Agradoot* has presented women as victims in different types of cases and has 52% out of 25 issues in this regard.

The following table and the figure show the manner of expression in showing women as victims in the editorials.

**Table 5.13: Manner of Expression in portraying women as victims in Editorials during 2000-2002**

Row Labels	Sympathetic	Myth-laden	Judgemental	Non-judgemental	Total
<b>Dainik Agradoot</b>	7	3	2	1	13
<b>Asomiya Pratidin</b>	4	3	3	2	12
<b>Total</b>	11	6	5	3	25



**Figure 5.13: Graphical Representation of 5.13**

Table 5.13 and Figure 5.13 reveal the manner of portrayal of women as victims. The manners, through which both the newspapers are being judged are categorised as Sympathetic, Myth-laden, Judgemental and Non-Judgemental. In *Dainik Agradoot* out of 13 items 7 items presented women as victims in a sympathetic manner and in *Asomiya Pratidin*, out of 12 items, 4 items were sympathetic in manner regarding portrayal of women. Similarly, both the newspapers out of the respective total number of items, in 3 items presented women as victims based on the category of myth-laden. *Dainik Agradoot* presented women, in 2 items, as victims in a judgemental manner whereas *Asomiya Pratidin* did this in 3 items. In the same manner, *Dainik Agradoot*

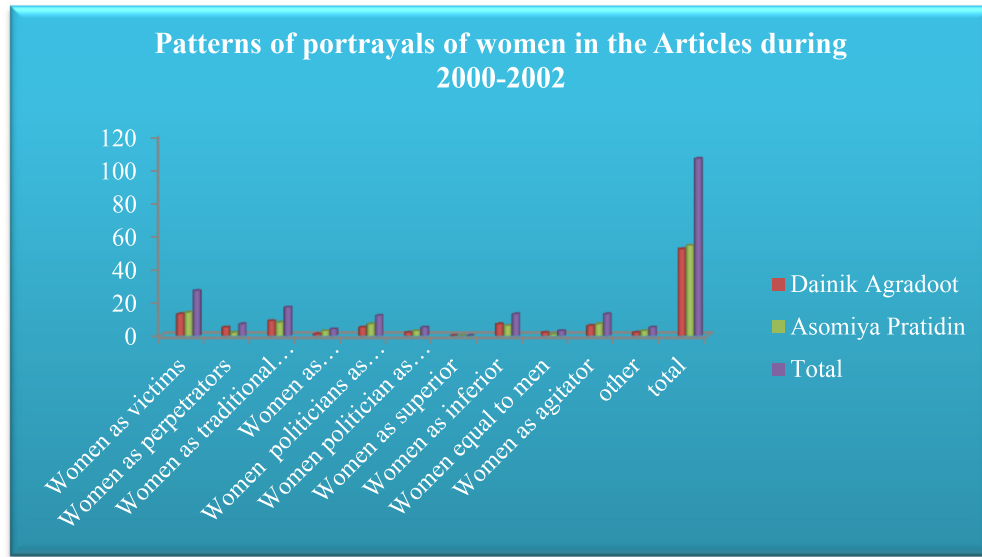


presented women as victims in 1 item in non-judgemental manner and *Asomiya Pratidin* did it in 2 items. Such women issues published in the form of editorials have been given place in the category Myth-Laden. This category refers to stereotypes by nature in the case of women. Editorials which presented the issues on the basis of the personal judgment of the editor are categorised as Judgmental and, on the other hand, which are based on data are categorised as non-judgemental.

The following table and the figure show the patterns of portrayals of women in the articles of both the newspapers.

**Table 5.14: Patterns of portrayals of women in the Articles during 2000-2002**

Row labels	Women as victims	Women as perpetrators	Women as traditional role model	Women as modern/independent	Women politicians as weak	Women as politician as strong	Women as superior	Women as inferior	Women equal to men	Women as agitator	Other	Total
Dainik	13	5	9	1	5	2	0	7	2	6	2	52
Agradoot	48.14	71.42	52.94	25	41.66	40		53.84	66.66	46.15	40	49.05
Asomiya Pratin	14	2	8	3	7	3	0	6	1	7	3	54
	51.85	28.57	47.05	75	58.33	60		46.15	33.33	53.84	60	50.94
Total	27	7	17	4	12	5	0	13	3	13	5	106



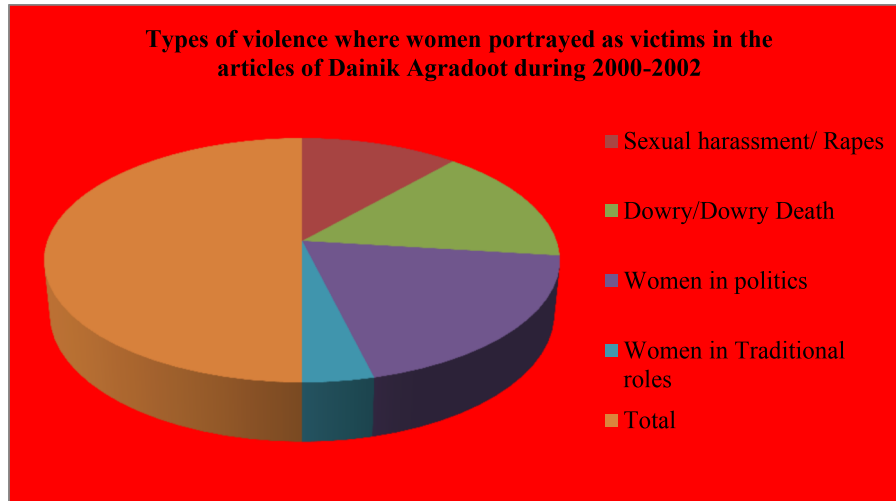
**Figure 5.14: Graphical Representation of Table 5.14**

It is seen in Table 5.14 and Figure 5.14, that most of the articles were published in both of the newspapers showing women as victims. In case of articles, *Asomiya Pratidin* stands at the highest position in showing women as victims with 51.85% out of 27 items. On the other hand, *Dainik Agradoot* stands second in the table with 48.14% out of the same number of the items (27). In the table victim is categorised giving importance to the meaning and words of the particular content of the articles of the particular newspapers.

The following table and the figure represent the types of violence published in the articles of *Dainik Agradoot* between 2000 and 2002.

**Table 5.15: Types of violence where women were portrayed as victims in the articles of *Dainik Agradoot* during 2000-2002**

Name of the newspaper	Sexual harassment/ Rapes	Dowry/Dowry Death	Women in politics	Women in Traditional roles	Total
Dainik Agradoot	3 23.07	4 30.76	5 38.46	1 7.69	13 100



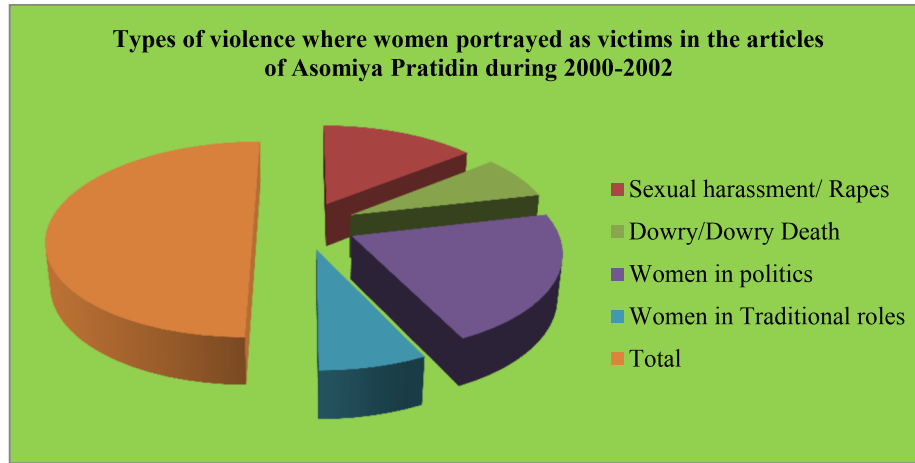
**Figure 5.15: Graphical representation of table 5.15**

Table 5.15 and Figure 5.15 show types of violence in which women are portrayed as victims in the articles of *Dainik Agradoot* during 2000-2002. It has been seen that in the category of sexual harassment or rape 3 items were published showing women as victims with the percentage is 23.07% out of the 13 items. But, it is revealed in the table that most of the items were published showing women as victims in the political field and 5 items were published with the percentage of 38.46.

The following table and figure represent types of violence cited in the articles of *Asomiya Pratidin* during 2000-2002.

**Table 5.16: Types of violence where women were portrayed as victims in the articles of *Asomiya Pratidin* during 2000-2002**

Name of the newspaper	Sexual Harassment/ Rapes	Dowry/Dowry Death	Women in politics	Women in Traditional roles	Total
Asomiya Pratidin	4 28.57	2 14.28	6 42.85	2 14.28	14 100



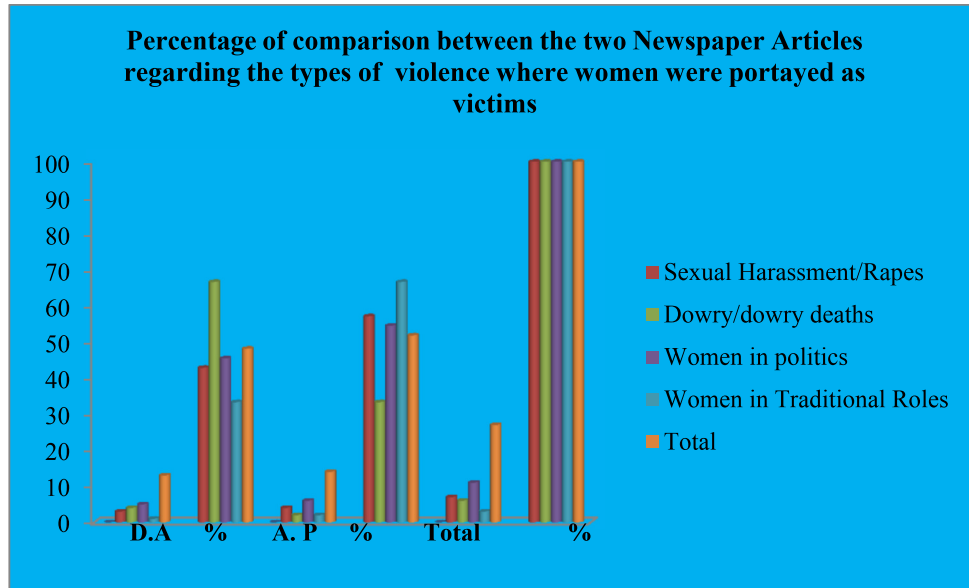
**Figure 5.16: Graphical Represent Table 5.16**

In Table 5.16 and figure 5.16, it is seen that during the period from 2000 to 2002, *Asomiya Pratidin* portrayed women as victims. Those women were women of politics either in the national or regional level. Out of 14 times in total, 6 times women were portrayed as victims of political field and the percentage is 42.85.

The following table and figure focus on showing comparison between the two Newspaper Articles regarding the types of violence where women were portrayed as victims during 2000-2002.

**Table 5.17: Percentage of comparison between the two Newspaper Articles regarding the types of violence where women were portrayed as victims during 2000-2002**

Names of the newspapers	Sexual Harassment /Rapes	Dowry/dowry deaths	Women in politics	Women in Traditional Roles	Total
<b>Dainik Agradoot</b>	3 42.85	4 66.66	5 45.45	1 33.33	13 48.14
<b>Asomiya Pratidin</b>	4 57.14	2 33.33	6 54.54	2 66.66	14 51.85
<b>Total</b>	7 100	6 100	11 100	3 100	27 100



**Figure 5.17: Graphical representation of table 5.17**

Through Table 5.17 and Figure 5.17, the comparison has been made between the two Newspapers regarding the portrayals of women as victims in the articles and it is seen that in the category of sexual harassment /rape *Asomiya Pratidin* stands first in the table having 57.14% in comparison to *Dainik Agradoot* which stands at 42.85% considering the 7 items. In the second category of dowry and Dowry Deaths *Dainik Agradoot* is having 66.66% out of 6 items which is higher than *Asomiya Pratidin* which has 33.33%. In the third category that is politics and women, *Asomiya Pratidin* stands at 54.54% which is higher than *Dainik Agradoot* which have only 45.45% out of 11 items. In the fourth and the last category that is victim in traditional roles both the newspapers *Dainik Agradoot* and *Asomiya Pratidin* are having percentage of 33.33% and 66.66% respectively out of 3 items. In this regard *Asomiya Pratidin* has the highest position. So, it is proved that *Asomiya Pratidin* has presented women as victims in different types of cases and has 51.85% out of 27 items in this regard.

The following table and figure focus on the Manner of Expression in portraying women as victims in Articles during 2000-2002

**Table 5.18: Manner of Expression in portraying women as victims in Articles during 2000-2002**

Row Labels	Sympathetic	Myth-laden	Judgemental	Non-judgemental	Total
<b>Dainik Agradut</b>	7	2	3	1	13
<b>Asomiya Prtidin</b>	5	3	3	3	14
<b>Total</b>	12	5	6	4	27



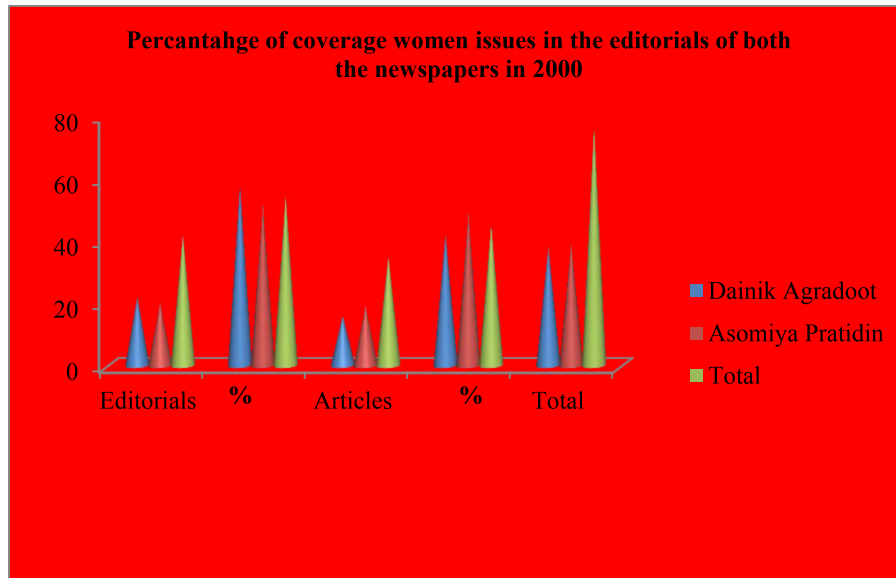
**Figure 5.18: Graphical Representation of Table 5.18**

Table 5.18 and Figure 5.18 show the manner of portrayal of women in the articles of both the newspapers in the period 2000-2002. It is seen that out of 13 items, in *Dainik Agradoot* 7 items were published during the period 2000-2002 portraying women as victims in a sympathetic manner, without trying to explain the real causes of the incidents happened to women. In *Asomiya Prtidin*, too, 5 items were published showing women as victims in a sympathetic manner out of 14 items during the same time.

The table and the figure given below focus on the percentage of coverage of total number of women issues in the Editorials of both the newspapers in the year 2000.

**Table 5.19: Percentage of coverage of total number of women issues in the Editorials of both the newspapers in 2000**

Row Labels	Dainik Agradoot	Asomiya Pratidin	Total
<b>Editorials</b>	22 57.89	20 51.28	42 54.54
<b>Articles</b>	16 42.10	19 48.71	35 45.45
<b>Total</b>	38	39	77



**Figure 5.19: Graphical representation of table 5.19**

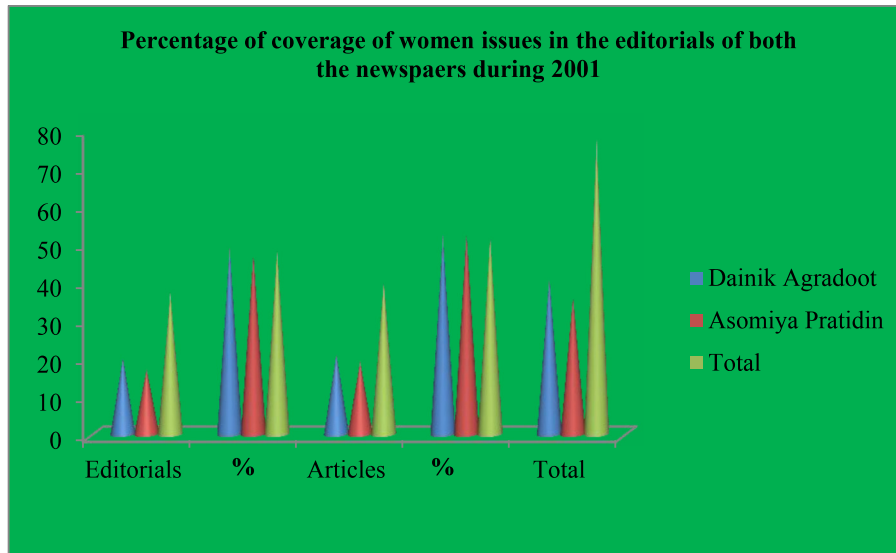
In Table 5.19 and Figure 5.19, it is seen that editorials of *Dainik Agradoot* was in the highest position regarding publication of the women issues with 57.89%. On the other hand, *Asomiya Pratidin* stands with 51.28% out of 38 items. Regarding articles, *Asomiya Pratidin* was in the highest position regarding publication of the women issues with 48.71% whereas *Dainik Agradoot* stands with 42.10% out of 39 items.

The table and the figure given below focus on percentage of coverage of total number of women issues in the Editorials of both the newspapers in 2001.



**Table 5.20: Percentage of coverage of total number of women issues in the Editorials of both the newspapers in 2001**

Row Labels	Dainik Agradoot	Asomiya Pratidin	Total
<b>Editorials</b>	20 48.78	17 47.22	37 48.05
<b>Articles</b>	21 52.21	19 52.77	40 51.94
<b>Total</b>	41	36	77



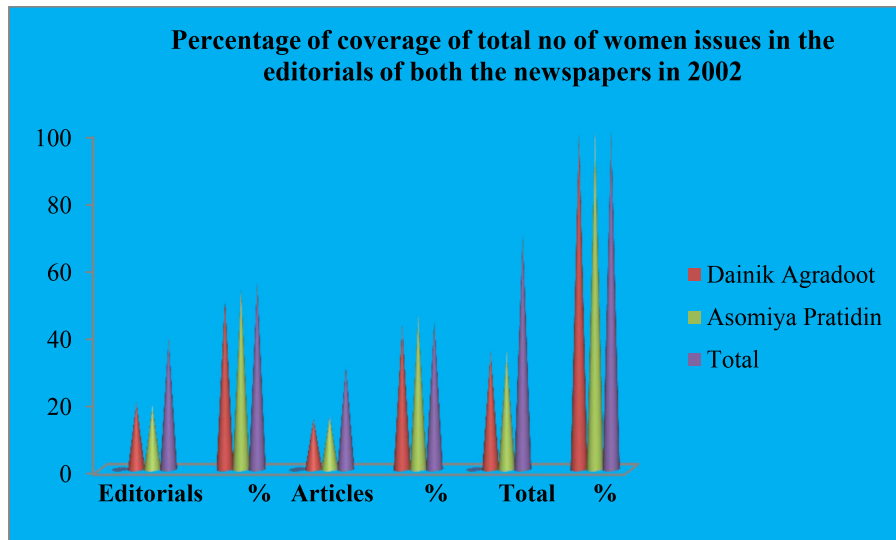
**Figure 5.20: Graphical representation of Table 5.20**

In Table 5.20 and Figure 5.20, it is revealed that during the year 2001, *Dainik Agradoot* stood at the highest position in case of coverage of women issues in both the sections of Editorials in comparison to *Asomiya Pratidin* which stood at 47.22% out of 41 items and regarding the section of articles, *Asomiya Pratidin* had 52.77% whereas *Dainik Agradoot* had 52.77% out of 36 items.

The table and the figure given below display the percentages of coverage of total number of women issues in the Editorials of both the newspapers in 2002.

**Table 5.21: Percentage of coverage of total number of women issues in the editorials of both the newspapers in 2002**

Row Labels	Dainik Agradoot	Asomiya Pratidin	Total
<b>Editorials</b>	20	19	39
	51.14	54.28	55.71
<b>Articles</b>	15	16	31
	42.85	45.71	44.28
<b>Total</b>	35	35	70
	100	100	100



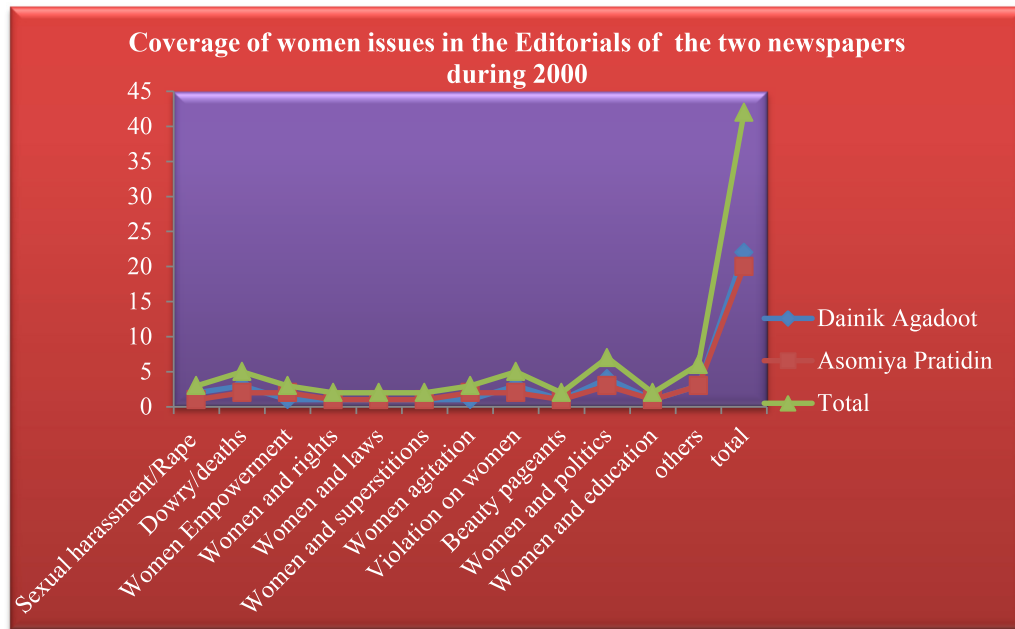
**Figure 5.21: Graphical representation of Table 5.21**

In Table 5.21 and Figure 5.21, it is revealed that during the year 2002 *Asomiya Pratidin* stood at the highest position in case of coverage of women issues in the Editorials with 54.28% out of 35 items in comparison to *Dainik Agradoot* which was having 51.14%. Regarding the article section *Asomiya Pratidin* stood at the highest position regarding articles having 45.71% out of 35 items whereas *Dainik Agradoot* stood at 42.85%.

The table and the figure given below focus on the coverage of women issues by the editorials of the two newspapers during 2000.

**Table 5.22: Coverage of women issues by the editorials of the two newspapers during 2000**

Row labels	Dainik Agadoot	Asomiya Pratidin	Total
	Number of Items	Number of Items	Number of Items
Sexual harassment/Rape	2	1	3
Dowry/deaths	3	2	5
Women Empowerment	1	2	3
Women and rights	1	1	2
Women and laws	1	1	2
Women and superstitions	1	1	2
Women agitation	1	2	3
Violation on women	3	2	5
Beauty pageants	1	1	2
Women and politics	4	3	7
Women and education	1	1	2
others	3	3	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>42</b>



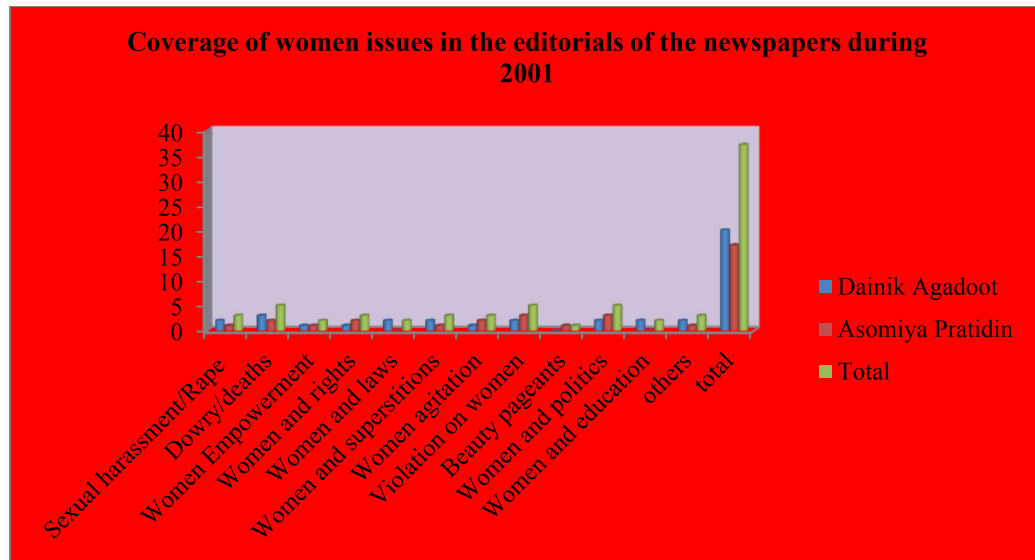
**Figure 5.22: Graphical representation of Table 5.22**

Table 5.22 and Figure 5.22 show the coverage of women issues in the editorials of both the newspapers during 2000. It is seen in the table that as many as 4 items were published in the editorials of *Dainik Agradoot* on women and politics in comparison to other issues. Similarly, in *Asomiya Pratidin* as many as 3 items were published regarding women and politics.

The table and the figure given below display the coverage of women issues by the editorials of the two newspapers during 2001.

**Table 5.23: Coverage of women issues by the editorials of the two newspapers during 2001**

Row labels	Dainik Agadoot	Asomiya Pratidin	Total
	Number of Items	Number of Items	Number of Items
Sexual harassment/Rape	2	1	3
Dowry/deaths	3	2	5
Women Empowerment	1	1	2
Women and rights	1	2	3
Women and laws	2	0	2
Women and superstitions	2	1	3
Women agitation	1	2	3
Violation on women	2	3	5
Beauty pageants	0	1	1
Women and politics	2	3	5
Women and education	2	0	2
Others	2	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>37</b>



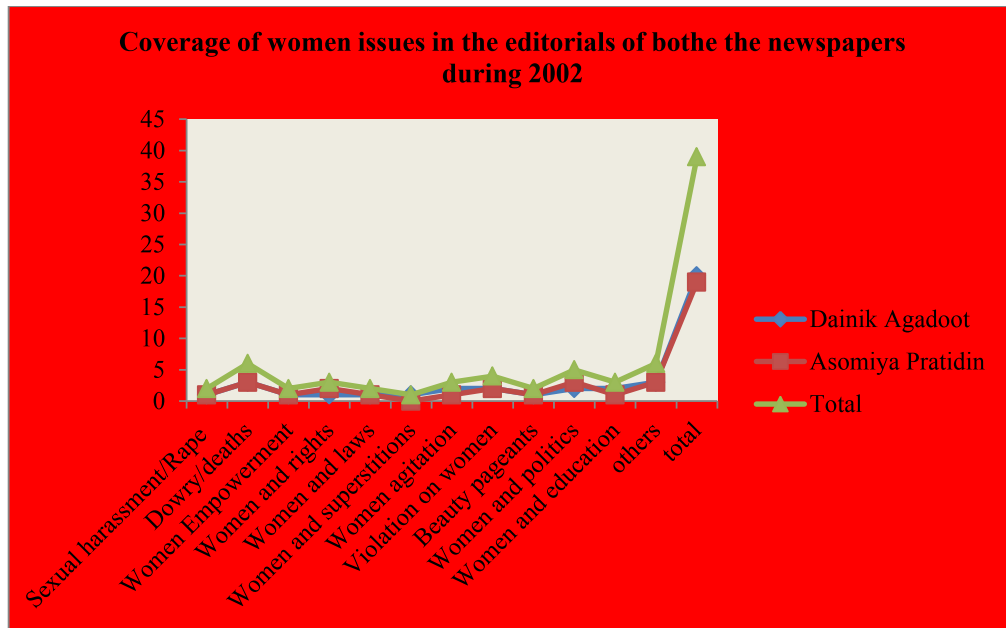
**Figure 5.23: Graphical representation of Table 5.23**

Table 5.23 and Figure 5.23 show the coverage of women issues in the editorials of both the newspapers during 2001. It is seen in the table that as many as 3 items were published in the editorials of *Dainik Agradoot* on Dowry in comparison to other issues. Similarly, in *Asomiya Pratidin*, too, not more than 3 items were published regarding women and politics and violence on women.

The table and the figure given below focus on the coverage of women issues by the editorials of the two newspapers during 2002.

**Table 5.24: Coverage of women issues in the editorials of the two newspapers during 2002**

Row labels	Dainik Agadoot	Asomiya Pratidin	Total
	Number of Items	Number of Items	Number of Items
Sexual harassment/Rape	1	1	2
Dowry/deaths	3	3	6
Women Empowerment	1	1	2
Women and rights	1	2	3
Women and laws	1	1	2
Women and superstitions	1	0	1
Women agitation	2	1	3
Violation on women	2	2	4
Beauty pageants	1	1	2
Women and politics	2	3	5
Women and education	2	1	3
Others	3	3	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>39</b>



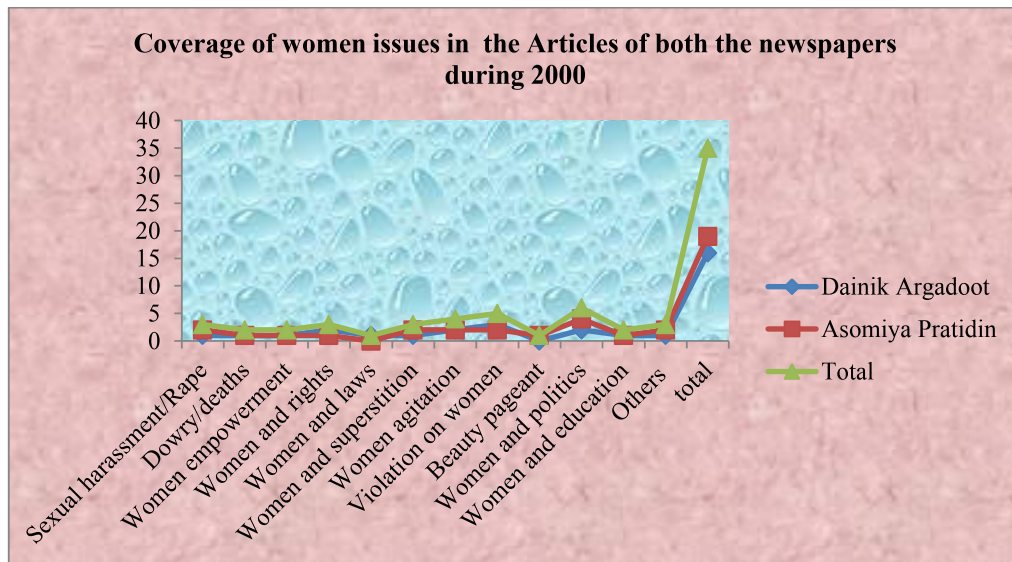
**Figure 5.24: Graphical representation 5.24**

Table 5.24 and Figure 5.24 show the coverage of women issues in the editorials of both the newspapers during 2002. It is seen in the table that the highest number of items were published in the editorials of *Dainik Agradoot* on Dowry and others having 3 of each category ( $3+3=6$ ) in comparison to other issues. The category of others comprises of the items such as short articles telling some memorable moments of a woman's life which cannot be taken into consideration for the content analysis. Similarly, in *Asomiya Pratidin* the highest numbers of items were published on dowry, women in politics and the category of others having 3 ( $3+3+3=9$ ) from each category.

The table and the figure given below display the coverage of women issues by the articles of the two newspapers during 2000.

**Table 5.25: Coverage of women issues in the Articles of the newspapers during 2000**

Row labels	Dainik Argadoot	Asomiya Pratidin	Total
	Numbers of items	Number of items	Number of items
Sexual harassment/Rape	1	2	3
Dowry/deaths	1	1	2
Women empowerment	1	1	2
Women and rights	2	1	3
Women and laws	1	0	1
Women and superstition	1	2	3
Women agitation	2	2	4
Violation on women	3	2	5
Beauty pageant	0	1	1
Women and politics	2	4	6
Women and education	1	1	2
Others	1	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>35</b>



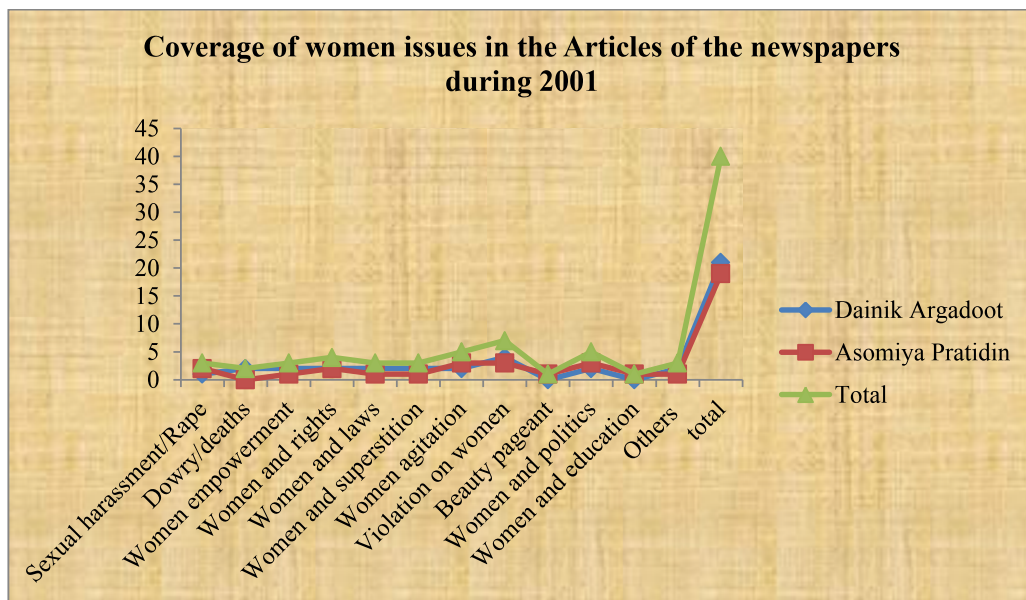
**Figure 5.25: Graphical representation of Table 5.25**

Table 5.25 and Figure 5.25 show the coverage of women issues in the articles of both the newspapers during 2000. It is seen in the table that the highest number of items (3) were published in the editorials of *Dainik Agradoot* on violence on women compared to the other issues. On the other hand, in *Asomiya Pratidin* as many as 4 items were published on women in politics.

The table and the figure given below focus on the coverage of women issues by the articles of the two newspapers during 2001.

**Table 5.26: Coverage of women issues in the Articles of the newspapers during 2001**

Row labels	Dainik Argadoot	Asomiya Pratidin	Total
	Numbers of items	Number of items	Number of items
Sexual harassment/Rape	1	2	3
Dowry/deaths	2	0	2
Women empowerment	2	1	3
Women and rights	2	2	4
Women and laws	2	1	3
Women and superstition	2	1	3
Women agitation	2	3	5
Violation on women	4	3	7
Beauty pageant	0	1	1
Women and politics	2	3	5
Women and education	0	1	1
Others	2	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>40</b>



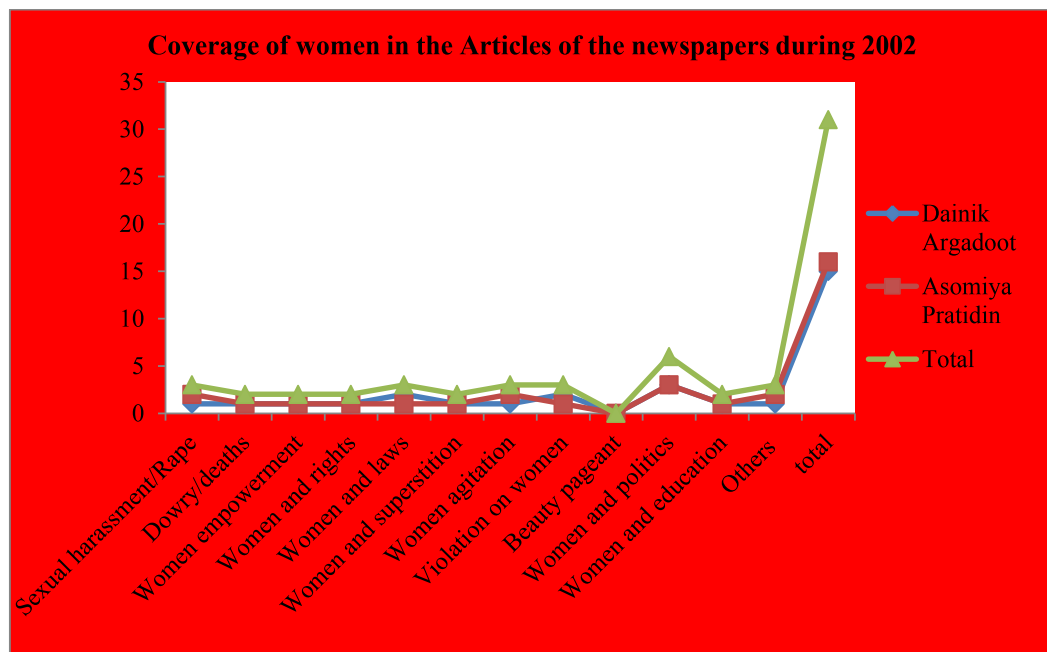
**Figure 5.26: Graphical Representation of Table 5.26**

Table 5.26 and Figure 5.26 show the coverage of women issues in the articles of both the newspapers during 2001. It is seen in the table that the highest number of items (4) were published in the editorials of *Dainik Agradoot* on violence on women in comparison to other issues. On the other hand, in *Asomiya Pratidin* 3 items from each of the categories of women in politics, women agitation and violation on women were published.

The Table and the Figure given below focus on the coverage of women issues by the articles of the two Newspapers during 2002.

**Table 5.27: Coverage of women issues in the Articles of the newspapers during 2002**

Row labels	Dainik Argadoot	Asomiya Pratidin	Total
	Numbers of items	Number of items	Number of items
Sexual harassment/Rape	1	2	3
Dowry/deaths	1	1	2
Women empowerment	1	1	2
Women and rights	1	1	2
Women and laws	2	1	3
Women and superstition	1	1	2
Women agitation	1	2	3
Violation on women	2	1	3
Beauty pageant	0	0	0
Women and politics	3	3	6
Women and education	1	1	2
Others	1	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>31</b>



**Figure 5.27: Graphical Representation of Table 5.27**

Table 5.27 and Figure 5.27 show the coverage of women issues in the articles of both the newspapers during 2002. It is seen in the table that as many as 3 items were published in the editorials of *Dainik Agradoot* on women in politics in comparison to other issues. Similarly, in *Asomiya Pratidin* 3 items were published on women in politics.



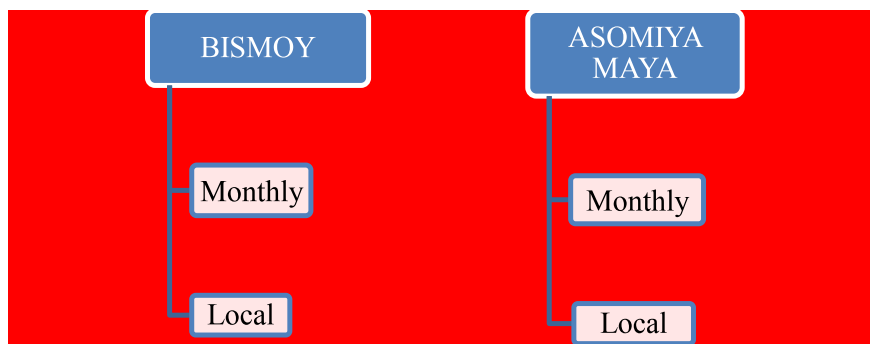
### 5.3 SECTION II: MAGAZINES

In this section data collected from the selected Assamese Magazines namely, *Bismoy* and *Asomiya Maya* published during 2000-2002, have been analysed. The following table shows all the names and types of the magazines that were current during the period 2000-2002.

The following table shows the types and names of the Magazines selected for the study.

**Table 5.28: Types and names of the magazines selected for the study**

Types/Names of the magazines	Mode of publication	Range of circulation	Language	Head office
<b>Bismoy</b>	Monthly	Local	Assamese	Guwahati, Assam
<b>Asomiya Maya</b>	Monthly	Local	Assamese	Jorhat, Assam



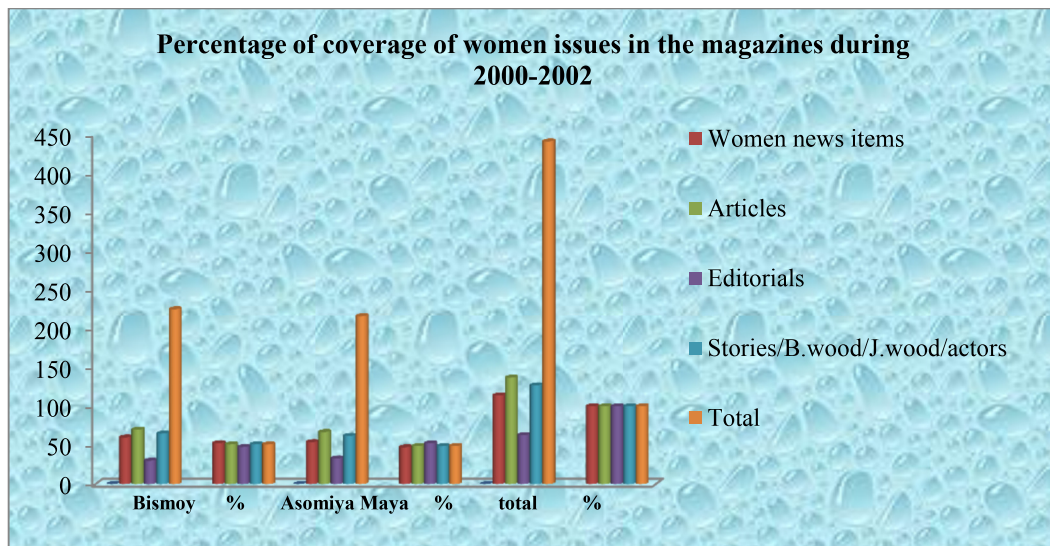
**Figure 5.28: Types and names of the magazines selected for the study**

Table 5.28 shows that two Assamese Magazines namely, *Bismoy* and *Asomiya Maya* have been selected for the content analysis as a part of this research work. Both of these magazines are monthly, and are circulated locally. *Bismoy* has its head office in Guwahati and *Asomiya Maya* is published from Jorhat.

The following table shows the comparative coverage of the news items, stories, articles, films and actors/actresses by the two particular magazines namely *Bismoy* and *Asomiya Maya* during the period 2000-2002.

**Table 5.29: Percentage of coverage of women issues in the two magazines during 2000-2002**

Row labels	Women news items	Articles	Editorials	Stories/B.wood /J.wood/actors	Total
	Number of items	Number of items	Number of items	Number of items	Number of items
<b>Bismoy</b>	60 52.63	70 51.09	30 47.61	65 51.18	225 51.02
<b>Asomiya Maya</b>	54 47.36	67 48.90	33 52.38	62 48.81	216 48.97
<b>Total</b>	114 100	137 100	63 100	127 100	441 100



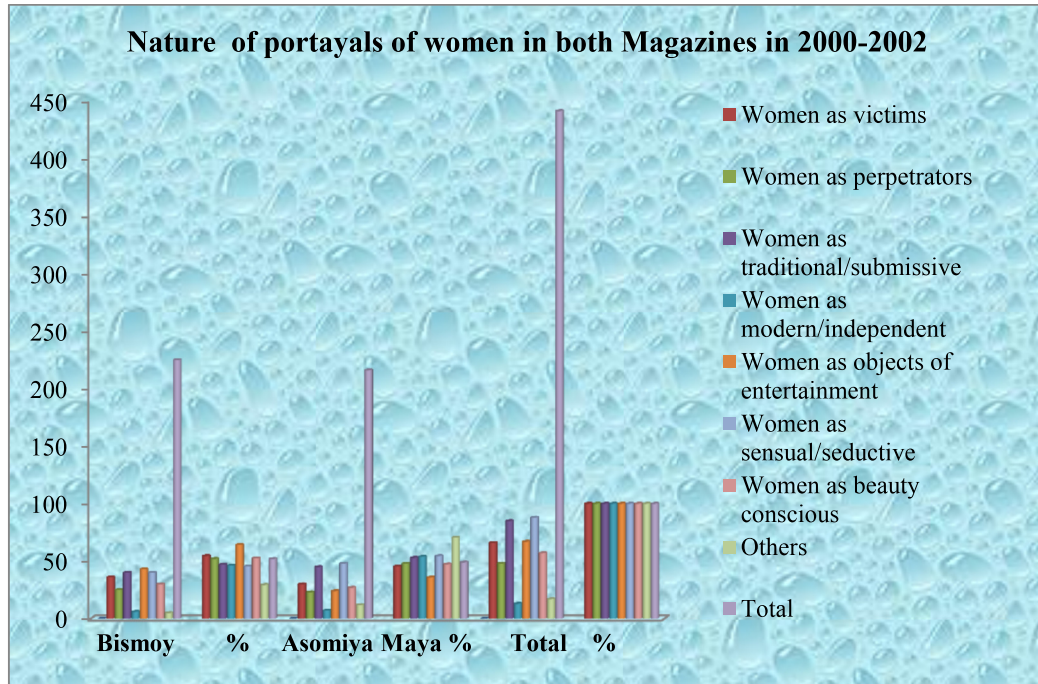
**Figure 5.29: Graphical Representation of Table 5.29**

In Table 5.29 and Figure 5.29, it is seen that during 2000-2002 the overall coverage pattern of *Bismoy* is the highest in the table with 51.02% as compared to the other magazine *Asomiya Maya* having 48.98% out of 441 items.

The following table shows the nature of portrayal of women in the magazines through the news items, stories, articles or through the editorials.

**Table 5.30: Nature of portrayals of women in the selected magazines during the period 2000-2002**

Row labels	Women as victims	Women as perpetrators	Women as traditional/submissive	Women as modern/independent	Women as objects of entertainment	Women as sensual/sexuctive	Women as beauty conscious	Others	Total
	No of items 54.54	No of items 52.08	No of items 47.05	No of items 46.15	No of items 64.17	No of items 45.45	No of items 52.63	No of items 29.41	No of items 52.02
Bismoy	36 54.54	25 52.08	40 47.05	6 46.15	43 64.17	40 45.45	30 52.63	5 29.41	225 52.02
Asomiya Maya	30 45.45	23 47.91	45 52.94	7 53.84	24 35.82	48 54.54	27 47.36	12 70.58	216 48.97
Total	66 100	48 100	85 100	13 100	67 100	88 100	57 100	17 100	441 100



**Figure 5.30: Graphical Representation of Table 5.30**

In Table 5.30 and in Figure 5.30, it is seen that *Bismoy* has portrayed women as objects of entertainment with 64.17% out of 67 items in comparison to *Asomiya Maya*, while *Asomiya Maya* has portrayed women as sensual/sexuctive objects with 54.54% out of 88 items.

The Quantitative Analysis of data has made it clear that Assamese Print Media’s attitude towards women cannot be dilated as positive: the issues which were to be given space in the newspapers and magazines did not get proper representations during 2000-2002. Whatever issues were published in these papers and magazines in the forms of editorials and articles and in other segments, the portrayal of women through the contents of those items cannot be seen as positive. The contents did not forsake the patriarchal attitude towards women. As a result, women were portrayed in a derogatory manner which could never be the real picture of the existing scenes of women’s sufferings and pains.

## 5.4 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE DATA COLLECTED FROM ASSAMESE PRINT MEDIA

A Qualitative Methodology is basically used to analyse the latent content of the Mass Media. This requires a more interpretative framework as opposed to a reductionist approach which is more suited to the analysis of manifest data. Classic content analysis in its various manifestations is routinely used in print media studies (Greer, 2003; Hay et al., 1980; Rowe, Tillbury, Rapley, & O'Ferrall, 2003; Soothill & Jack, 1975; Soothill, Francis, Pearson & Ackerley, 2002). In this study the contents used by the editors and the writers of the articles are analysed to emit the meaning of the used texts.

### 5.4.1 Portrayal of Women as Victims

Women are defective by nature—Aristotle<sup>5</sup>

There is a good principle, which has created order, light and man; and a bad principle, which has created chaos, darkness and woman — Pythagoras.

The great question that has never been answered and which I have not yet been able to answer, despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul, is 'What does a woman want?' - Sigmund Freud<sup>6</sup>

Women - 52% of the world's population are barely present among the faces that are seen, voices that are heard and opinions that are represented in the media. The 'mirror' of the world provided by the media is like a circus mirror. It distorts reality, exaggerates the importance of certain groups whilst pushing the others towards the margins. When it comes to reflecting women, women's world outlook and perspectives, this mirror contains a big and persistent black spot. (WACC: 2005)

“.....the wounded child inside many males is a boy who, when he first spoke his truths, was silenced by paternal sadism, by a patriarchal world that did not want him to claim his true feelings. The wounded child inside many females is a girl who was

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<sup>5</sup> *Greek Philosophy on the Inferiority of Women (n.d)*, Retrieved from [http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/infe\\_gre.asp](http://www.womenpriests.org/traditio/infe_gre.asp) on 16.07.2016.

<sup>6</sup> *Metaphysics of Feminism / Feminist Philosophy (n.d)*. Retrieved from <http://www.spaceandmotion.com/Philosophy-Feminism.html> on 13.07.2016.

taught from early childhood that she must become something other than herself, deny her true feelings, in order to attract and please others” — Bell Hooks.

Assamese media, one of the mainstream agents of Assamese culture, are the essential parts of Assamese society as these are serving the region with information, knowledge and entertainment since its beginning in Assam. Its role towards women is the main issue of this particular research work. Women of Assam are the smaller fraction of the entire women of India; who are in the midst of myriads of problems and struggling for their emancipation out of the caste oppression, cultural demoralisation, socio-economic and political inferiority, religious myths, patriarchal sufferings, class suppressions, globalisation, racism, capitalism and many more. Dolly Phukan States:

India is every inch in the grip of the problems of large scale of poverty, illiteracy, patriarchal religious practices and beliefs, and gendered socialisation processes have facilitated much towards the conditions of inequality and discrimination against women which lower the status of women. (Phukan: 2009).

Indian women are still governed by customs, habits, prejudices and unwritten code of conduct. Though the Indian Constitution has been, fair and square, in the enforcement of equality in the form of the fundamental rights that there should not be inequality on the basis of sex, both are to get equal rights and liberties and opportunities, but, due to the strong Patriarchal tradition, women are being treated like inferior beings compared to men. *“In many places of India, the birth of a girl has never been treated as joyous event and son is more preferred as he is considered as main asset of the financial security of the parents”*, Phukan says. So, Coonrod writes:

In most of the Indian Families a daughter is viewed as liability and she is conditioned to believe that she is inferior and subordinate to men. Sons are idolised and celebrated. May you be the Mother of hundred sons is a common Hindu wedding blessing<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Phukan Dolly (2009). Status of women in Assamese Community. In Lal Neihzovi (eds.) *Changing Status of Women in North-eastern States: Felicitations Volume in Honour of Prof. C. Lalkima*. New Delhi: Mittal Publications.

Likewise, in the North-Eastern societies, too, women are in a fix and go hard with the gender inequalities. Though they are equal in black and white but the ultimate reality is something different from it, which make hush of everything in the lives of women to be identified as human beings in terms of identity, empowerment and development. In words of Phukan, “*Like their counterparts of other regions Women of North-East encounter number of specific problems over the ages --- Patriarchal culture, inadequate access to productive resources, non-accounting of women’s domestic works, insufficient advancement facilities, powerlessness, etc*”.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, in this particular study, in most of the articles and the editorials in the editorial page of both the newspapers, it is seen that, they are amenable to showing women as victims. Victims of rapes or other sexual harassment, dowry, witch hunting etc. are given space in both the newspapers during 2000-2002. These are the burning problems of Assam. The poetic portrayal of status of women in Indian society and media is given below. This was cited by Nassem A. Khan:

I am Chandrika

I am Gayatri

I am Fatima, Banu, Uma,

I am Jayalakshmi, I am Saraswati

I am one of those faceless women who die every day in your morning newspapers

And go on to become crime number in the Police Station

And then a file to be pushed around in the Courts.....”

(Poem published in “I cry for help, no one’s there”, pamphlet by Vimochna, Bangalore) Naseem Ahmed khan<sup>11</sup>

The term ‘victim’ is dilated by the *New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, whose definition starts by referring to ‘a person killed or tortured by another’, but then continues: ‘a person subjected to cruelty, oppression, or other harsh, or unfair treatment, or suffering death, injury, ruin, etc., as a result of an event, circumstance or oppressive

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<sup>10</sup> Dolly Phukan Status of Women in Assam: Continuity and Change (2009) in Lalneihzovi (ed), Changing Status of Women in North-Eastern States. New Delhi: Mittal Publications.

<sup>11</sup> Khan N.A. (2013). Women Security and Legal Safeguards in India. *Journal of Business Management & Social Sciences Research (JBM&SSR)*, 2(4). Retrieved from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.403.5348&rep=rep1&type=pdf> on 15.07.2016.

or adverse impersonal agency<sup>12</sup>. Beings without power are more likely to be victims, to be victimised and assigned the status of victim. Being made a victim --- of crime, unfair treatment, abuse and so on can make even a once equal human into a less than-equal-human. Victimisation itself brings about power loss in other words<sup>13</sup> (Coston: 2004).

The word “Victim<sup>14</sup>” has symbolised the state of **Powerlessness<sup>15</sup> and Helplessness<sup>16</sup>** of the women of Assam, due to existence in stringent Patriarchal culture and the traditional dominant subordinate patterns of male-female relationships<sup>17</sup>. The contents symbolically mean that men are authorities and women are not. Through this annihilation, media are facilitating the long-standing cultural ideals of masculinity where they are posited as hard, tough, independent, sexually aggressive, unafraid, violent, totally in control of all emotions, and, above all, in no way feminine.

In most of the countries an illusion of changed approach towards women is created but, in reality the state and the legitimate authority continues to deal with the patriarchal violence by blaming or ignoring women and pay almost no attention. So, it is quite clear that women are still not being taken seriously by the patriarchal socio-cultural institutions. Griffin linked this powerlessness of women to being harassed in their everyday lives. It is well stated in the following:

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<sup>12</sup> Paul Rock (2014) Victims’ Rights in Inge Vanfraechem, Antony Pemberton and Felix Mukwiza Ndahinda (eds.), *Justice For Victims: Perspectives on Rights, Transition and Reconciliation*. UK:Routledge.

<sup>13</sup> Coston C.T. M. (2004). Worries about Crime among Foreign Students studying in the US. In Coston Charisse Tia Maria (eds.) *Victimising Vulnerable Groups: Images of Uniquely High Risk Crime Targets* [e-book]. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com/books?isbn=0275966143> on 16.07.2016.

<sup>14</sup> We use the term “victim” to remind us of violence and control the victims while the survivors remind us of the ways in which individuals who experience violence are surviving every day and working hard to stay safe (Trauma Informed Care—Best Practices and Protocols for OHIO’s Domestic Violence Program).

<sup>15</sup> Justification for violation frequently are on based on gender norms—that is social norms about the proper roles and responsibilities of both men and women. These cultural and social norms socialise males to be aggressive, powerful, unemotional, and controlling and contribute to a social acceptance of men as dominant. Similarly, expectations of females as passive, nurturing, submissive and emotional also reinforce women as weak, powerless, and dependent upon men. The socialisation of both men and women has resulted in an unequal power relationship between men and women.(Causes and Effects of Gender-based Violence:2003)

<sup>16</sup> According to Judith Herman Psychological Trauma is characterised by the feeling of---intense fear, helplessness, loss of control and threat of annihilation (Trauma Informed Care—Best Practices and Protocols for OHIO’s Domestic Violence Program).

<sup>17</sup> According to a UN report of 1980 ‘Women constitute one-half of the world’s population, perform nearly two-thirds of its work hours, receive one-tenth of the world’s income and own less than one-hundredth of the world’s property.’ Feminist scholars point out that violence is both open and latent. The ever-present background possibility of violence is the main mechanism by which unequal power relations are sustained.(Maria Akram:2015)



The manifestation of gender relation of power is obvious structural fact that men control the economic, religious, political and military institutions of authority and coercion in society. In addition to such large scale institutional power, gender power organises advantage and inequality within smaller social groups and institutions (e.g., the family, peer group, and work place), thereby providing men the legitimate authority to impose a definition on specific situations. (Connell: 1987, p.107)<sup>18</sup>

Regarding the power relations existed between men and women Smart observes that the debates over sexuality became a strategy for exercising power in society through categorisation and control. She says power in this sense is never the property of one class or group: it is never merely punitive and coercive, but is also productive of knowledge. This is not necessarily to deny the fact that Patriarchy is a part of women's unconscious, so that 'the way we think and the way we desire, cannot be separated from the cultural meanings attributed to gender difference'. Smart argues:

To understand more adequately the specificity of women's oppression it might be useful to turn away from trying to integrate the monolithic structures of capitalism and patriarchy and instead concentrate on concrete instances of gender domination and its interrelation with factors of race and class in specific instances. (Startup: 2000)<sup>19</sup>

According to the Radical Feminists, gender itself signifies oppression. One cannot escape from the socially constructed identity of being women and men as they are socialised into the sexes in such a manner that mere change of appearance does not affect the gender roles. As such, women are still victimised as being women and objects to be oppressed.

Females are socialized from birth onward into a subordinate sex class for whom exploitation by males is so ingrained into the social norms that we cannot recognize it any more. It has become a “choice”,<sup>20</sup> it has become our “identity”. On the other

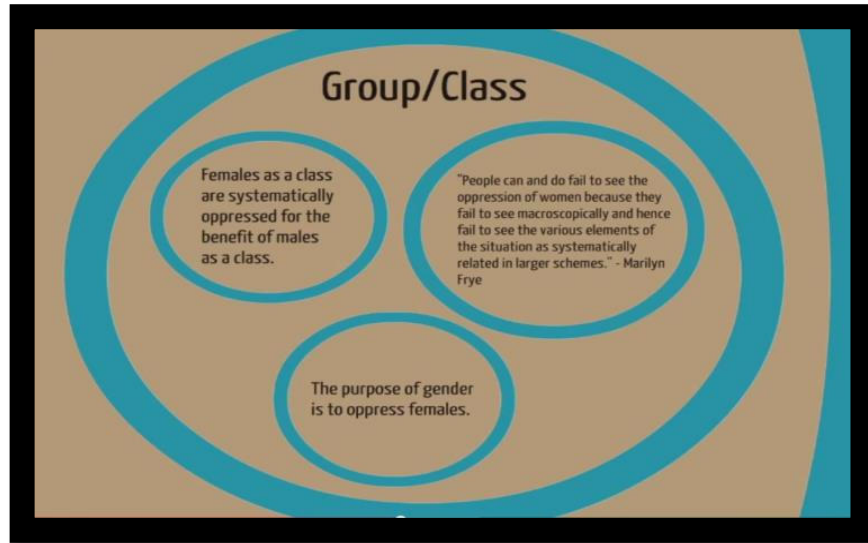
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<sup>18</sup> Messerschmidt James W.(1993) .Masculinities and Crime: Critique and Reconceptualization of Theory [e-book]. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com/books?isbn=1461639174> on 17.07.2016.

<sup>19</sup> Startup R. *Damaging Females: Representations of women as victims and perpetrators of crime in the mid nineteenth century* retrieved from <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1348856/1/326168.pdf> on 18.07.2016.

<sup>20</sup> “Gender is a choice, or gender is a role, or gender is a construction that one puts on as one puts on clothes in the morning that there is a ‘one’ who is prior to this gender, a one who goes to the wardrobe

hand, the fact that males are socialized from birth onward into a privileged sex class that feeds on violation and subordination of not only women, but as all of you can recognize, of the oceans, of the earth, of life itself<sup>21</sup>.



**Figure 5.31 Group and Class<sup>22</sup>**

Besides, Radical Feminists insist that, in gender relations there often prevail the interests of the men over the interests of women which symbolize the authority and control and coercion over women. Such power provides men with the means to be advantageous in socio-cultural life which paves the way for greater legitimacy for men and illegitimate opportunities for women. It is well stated in the following:

Indeed, the idea of gender has challenged the very notion of a "women's history" that is conceived as a narrow and exclusive compensatory project, for it questions the extent to which women can be studied in isolation from the experiences of men, and discourages the treatment of women as a unified group pursuing common aims, interests and occupations<sup>23</sup>.

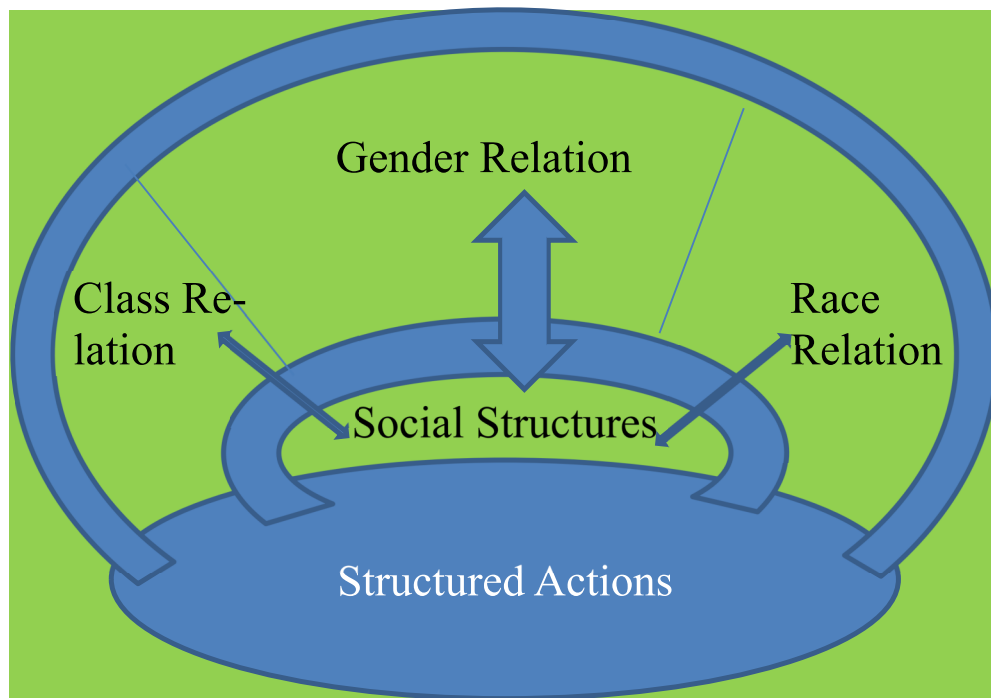
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of gender and decides with deliberation which gender it will be today".(Judith Butler, Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity)

<sup>21</sup>Rachel Ivey (2015). End of Gender: Revolution, Not Reform. Retrieved from <http://dgrnewsservice.org/deep-green-resistance/essays/> on 17.07.2016.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Startup R. *Damaging Females: Representations of women as victims and perpetrators of crime in the mid nineteenth century* retrieved from <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1348856/1/326168.pdf> on 18.07.2016.



**Figure 5.32 Social Relations, Social Structures and Structured Actions**

Gender, thus, pervades social ideals, activities and expectations, and intersects with historically specific ideas of class, nation and locality in the construction of identities, social institutions and structures; it is an 'integral element in the formation and operation of the legal, political and economic frameworks of society'.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the difference between culturally constructed gender and biological sex has been put into the minds of the individuals so deeply that it becomes the *cultural myths*<sup>25</sup>, which in turn create the situation where stereotypes take place in determining the roles and behaviour between men and women — these stereotypes often delineate women as weak, soft, timid or dependent.

So, Feminism as a Movement and Ideology towards the liberation and emancipation of women from the age old oppressions and suppressions, theorise women's problems

<sup>24</sup> Startup R. *Damaging Females: Representations of women as victims and perpetrators of crime in the mid nineteenth century* retrieved from <http://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1348856/1/326168.pdf> 18.07.2016.

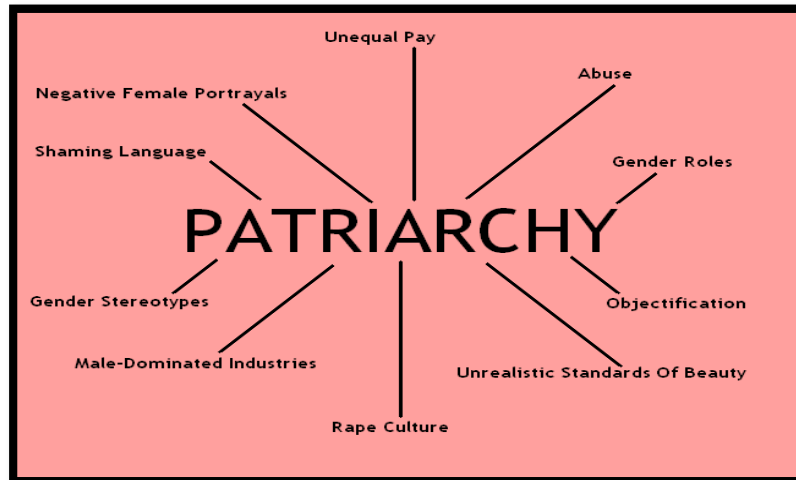
<sup>25</sup> As we grow up we accept the ways looking at the world, ways of thinking and being that might best be characterised as cultural frames or reference or cultural myths. These myths helps the people to understand their place in the world—our place as prescribed by our culture. Cultural myths gain such enormous power over us by insinuating themselves into our thinking before we are aware of it. Gender roles are good example. As children we get gender role model from our families, our schools, our churches, and other important institutions. We see them acted out in the relationships between the family members or portrayed on television, in the movies, or in song lyrics. See <http://web.pdx.edu/~tothm/pluralism/Critical%20Thinking.pdf>.

in examining the differences between sex and gender on which the gendered relations and power relations have been based.

Though “Feminism” as a Movement entered the field of “Movement for women” in eighteenth century but, it was just a movement for the “vote”. But, literally it can be said that through different waves and patterns of Feminism, it is quite clear that women are not only the victims of the sexual harassment or rape, dowry, kidnapping or such other atrocities, since they are being put into the status of “victim” from their birth to death in every moment of their lives.

According to the Feminist interpretation, the concepts of Sex, Gender, Chivalry, Paternalism and Patriarchy are major key factors behind the sufferings of every woman in the world. Sex differences exist in terms of the productive and reproductive roles and the sexual organs that a person is born with. Gender differences are all about socially constructed concepts of what it means to be a man and a woman.

Chivalry pertains to the attitude and behaviour of men towards women and according to the concept of chivalry men are more powerful than women, women are weak and inferior, without having decision making capacities. Similarly, one of the most important concepts that the Feminists deal with is paternalism which denotes that women should be protected for their own good as they are not enough capable to safeguard themselves. In a broader sense, this system implies the independence of men and bondages of women. Lastly, the word patriarchy refers to that society where male dominance exists pushing women into a subordinate status. Dominance can be seen everywhere. According to the Radical Feminists, Patriarchy is the root cause behind all the oppressions that women experience which affect women to be suppressed, to get unequal pay, to be cast as stereotypes, to conform to male dominance, objectification, negative portrayals and so on.



**Figure 5.33 Patriarchy**

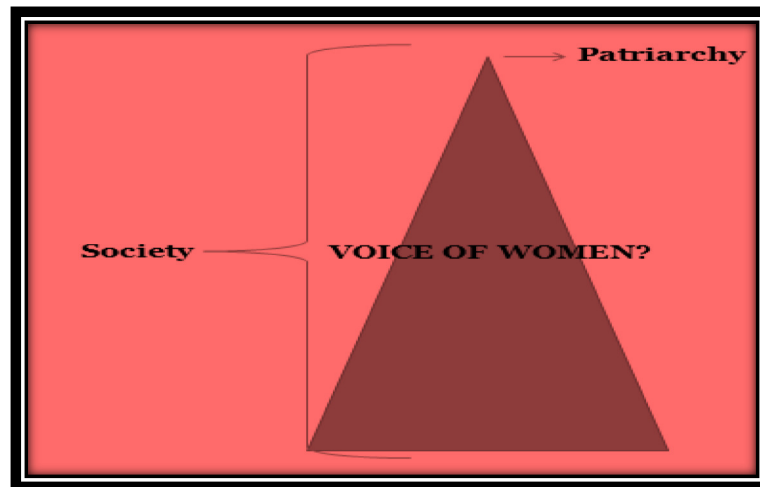
Indian society cherishes Patriarchy as an ideology and practice according to which men and women have been put in different spheres and given different roles. From birth to death both have to play those roles. Being woman, an Indian woman always has to surrender herself to the needs and desires of her male counterpart. Throughout her life an Indian woman is guided and supervised by men, be it father, husband or son. They are socialised through different socio-cultural institutions which train them to be subordinate and submissive to and dependent on men. But, men are trained to dominate and guide their female counterparts who are often viewed as childlike, vulnerable, and easily led astray. Bell Hooks stated thus:

Patriarchy is a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence. When my older brother and I were born with a year separating us in age, patriarchy determined how we would each be regarded by our parents. Both our parents believed in patriarchy; they had been taught patriarchal thinking through religion. (Bell Hooks<sup>26</sup>).

Thus, a woman's worth is often based on her function in regards to these relationships. It should be mentioned here that the more that Indian men embrace these

<sup>26</sup>bell hooks (n.d) '*Understanding Patriarchy*' retrieved from <http://imagineborders.org/pdf/zines/UnderstandingPatriarchy.pdf>

stereotypical meanings of the woman's role, the more likely the men are to accept and justify violence against women.



**Figure 5.34 patriarchy affecting women's voice**

Feminists believe that the voice of women is not being refracted in society for the simple reason that Patriarchy dominates their lives. For instance Jane E. Brody writes in the NY Times, “Nearly every woman I know can recall one or more instances in which she was sexually assaulted, harassed, threatened, inappropriately touched or even raped. Yet few told anyone about it at the time, or reported it to the police”. (Akram: 2015)<sup>27</sup>

We can see the same tradition of dominance of women in the Assamese societies, too, based on the myths of sex, gender role, paternalism, patriarchy etc. As a matter of fact, the role of media towards women is no exception compared to the others. But, it should be referred to here that the nature of portrayal of women reinforces the stereotype dominant-submissive relationship between men and women because Media are one of the most powerful transmitters. Julia Woods states:

Of the many influences on how we view men and women, media are the most pervasive and one of the most powerful. Woven throughout our daily lives, media insinuate their messages into our consciousness at every turn. All forms

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<sup>27</sup>Akram M. (2015) . Feminist Legal Theory [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://apakistaninotebook.wordpress.com/2015/01/20/feminist-legal-theory> on 20.01.2015.

of media communicate images of the sexes, many of which perpetuate unrealistic, stereotypical, and limiting perceptions. (Wood:1994, p.31)<sup>28</sup>

Regarding the position of women in the history of Assam, it can be assumed that, as an integral part of the Indian society, the Assamese womenfolk are no way an exception from the other Indian societies. They are guided by the same Indian beliefs and customs prevalent in other parts of the country. That is why, the Assamese women have to accept more or less everything just as the other Indian women.

It should be mentioned that according to the report of 'The National Crime Report Bureau of India' Assam has topped the list as far as crime against women during the last couple of years in the six North-Eastern States are concerned. Reported instances<sup>29</sup> of crime against women jumped to 17,449 in 2013 as against 13,554 in the previous year. Assam heads the list of all recorded crimes against women including rape, kidnapping and abduction, dowry deaths and cruelty by husbands and relatives. The evil of 'dowry culture' has taken nearly 850 lives in Assam in the last six years. In the year 2013<sup>30</sup> (till October), as many as 135 dowry deaths were reported in the State, while in the year 2012, the figure was 140 (deaths). Statistics available with the Assam Police, however, reveal that not a single case was registered under Dowry Prohibition Act in any of the police stations of the State in the year 2013 (till October) during the course of which 135 dowry deaths were reported.

In the Editorial of *Dainik Agradoot* entitled "Joutukar Axubho Parampora", (The Inauspicious Tradition of Dowry), published on May 10, 2002, it is found that, the content, in a narrative way, expressed the system of dowry as 'inauspicious' (Axubho) and women as the victims of it in a sympathetic manner. The editor tried to highlight elaborately the dowry system of Assam and its destructive effects with reference to the role of the government, legal Acts and the punishment of those people who committed that particular crime. But, when the researcher reads it carefully stressing importance of each word (through word counting and measurement of column in cm) in the paragraph written by the editor, he comes to know that it was not based on

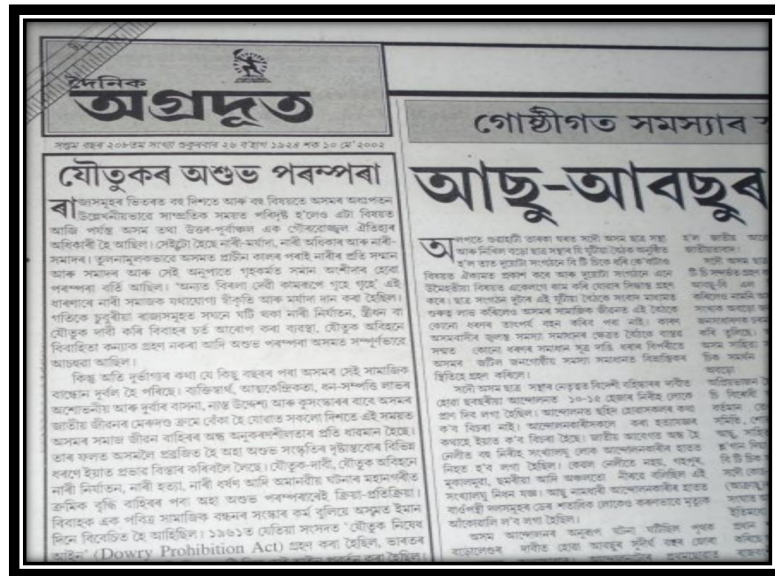
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<sup>28</sup> Wood J. (1994). The Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on views of Gender. Retrieved from <https://www1.udel.edu/comm245/readings/GenderedMedia.pdf> on 17.07.2016.

<sup>29</sup> Sources: Crimes Against women up in 6 NE State; Assam tops list, by PTI, Posted 5 jul.2014 <http://www.mid-day.com/articles/crimes-against-women-up-in-6-ne-states-assam-tops-list/15426152>

<sup>30</sup> Sources: Assam Tribune850 Dowry Deaths in last 6 years, January 4, Satur Day, 2014. <http://www.assamtribune.com/scripts/detailsnew.asp?id=jan0414/at085>

scientific analysis of the whole crime scenes but an utterly judgemental opinion trying to express that women are helpless, they have nothing to do with that kind of injustice happening to them. According to him it was the government and the legal procedure which had a decisive role to play regarding this matter. Lastly, he concluded saying “Axa Korisu” (with a hope) if the criminals of such cases could receive major punishments the number of such crimes might be decreased.



**PLATE 1: The Inauspicious Tradition of Dowry, 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2002**

If the researcher illustrates it from women’s perspective it can be said that it is very dangerous for the women folk as they are being showed only as victims without understanding the intensity of the situation, social structure, cultural myths and patriarchal institutions in the society as a whole. This diminishes the position of women to a subordinate and inferior status in the society. The only problem of the subordination of women, as expressed by the Feminists is that Patriarchy and customs, institutions, structures, laws, rules and rights are based on patriarchy. If the society, laws, customs etc. are put as structures then the role of these structures is to serve in a positive role in regard to the necessities of humanity (both men and women).

In recent times, it has been noted that the increase in the incidents of violence against women has changed the total environment for women to feel secured and safe. The increase in the marital violence against women due to dowry has already crossed the demarcation and transforms the marital family into a danger zone. Feminists interpret



the story of women's sufferings in terms of the legitimised imbalanced power structure which leaves women as powerless. It is well stated in the following:

Feminists theorize violence as a consequence of social roles of newly married couples and the legitimized social norms of male domination of resources, institutionalized gender inequalities and consequential perceived male entitlement to manipulating the lives of women. In Indian context, the most important factor in dowry violence is that both victim and abuser are related to each other through the relationships to a man. (Biswas: 2013).

From women's perspective it is important not to think women as weak and inferior or that women have nothing to do about the injustice or violence that are going on towards women and that they have to be guarded and protected by the male society, government and laws. But, these ways of thinking, in other words, these customs in turn legalise Manu's dictum that a woman should be protected by her father in childhood, then her brother and husband and sons in the rest of her life as women cannot think of freedom and independence. As a matter of fact, with this kind of concept, the power relation between men and women deteriorates and becomes distorted. These age old sufferings of and oppression towards a woman in the society has led to the crisis of identity. It is well stated in the following:

Social values and status cause diverse obstacles for escaping abuse (e.g., belief in the sanctity of marriage vs. financial necessity to stay for survival). India provides a unique opportunity to explore the interplay of status and corresponding patriarchal values in relation to the incidence of domestic violence and how it is viewed, coped with, and psychologically impacting native women (L.L. Tichy & Judith V. Bechar:2009)<sup>31</sup>.

According to M.P Kishwar (2005)<sup>32</sup> the absurd arguments, among the masses, about the continuity of dowry, can be categorised in the following way.

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<sup>31</sup> L.L. Tichy & Judith V. Bechar (2009). The Downside of Patriarchal Benevolence: Ambivalence in Addressing Domestic Violence and Socio-Economic Considerations for Women of Tamil Nadu, India. *Journal of Family Violence*, 24(8), pp.547-558. Retrieved from <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10896-009-9253-4/> on 18.07.2016.

<sup>32</sup>Madhu Purnima Kishwar in *Strategies for Combating the Culture of Dowry and Domestic Violence in India*, Manushi, India.

- Since in most cases only sons inherit parental property and family businesses, it is only in the form of dowry that daughters get a share – albeit an unequal one – of the parental property. After marriage, even the parental home comes to be their brothers’ and their wives’ home. A dowryless wedding would not work in a woman’s interest because that did not bring any benefit to her as a daughter. It only meant their brothers would end up with an even bigger share of family resources.
- When a young woman enters a new family, she feels diffident to ask for basic things she needs for her daily use. If she goes to her marital home without anything to call her own, her dependence on her in-laws and husband increases, unless she has a reasonable income of her own – which most women cannot bring because they do not have any. Therefore, all the household requirements and clothes parents provide their daughters with help them feel they have something to call their own in their new home.
- If young women go “empty-handed” to their husband’s home, how can they expect that they would be treated as equal partners? The dowry is, therefore, an “investment” made by parents to secure a share for their daughter in their husband’s family property.
- When women go as new brides, their in-laws are also expected to provide them with expensive new clothes and jewellery. How can gift giving be one-way? Why should women’s parents not give gifts to their husband’s relatives as a gesture of goodwill when the bride is going to become claimant in the husband’s income and property?
- When I raised the issue of marital violence and abuse due to demands of dowry they responded with this question: “Are you suggesting that women get beaten and abused only in India, and that too only among communities that give dowry? Don’t women in America, Europe, Australia, the Philippines, and Africa also get beaten and killed, even though in these countries dowry giving is not an issue?”

That forced me to think: ‘Who am I helping by my stand? If women themselves are not able to perceive their interest in a wedding that is devoid of dowry, who am I to

decide what is good for them? Thus, “dowry makes daughters ‘burdensome’ only because daughters are unwanted to begin with.” (Kishwar).

From the above discussions it can be said that dowry is the means to fulfill husband’s and their relative’s consumable greed by means of marriage. This very approach signifies that women are born to suffer<sup>33</sup>. Neha Gupta states:

[...] as our social structure is very much patriarchal in nature, women from their very childhood remain dependent economically and psychologically upon the male members of the family. This dependency curtails them from breaking their brutal marriage and thus women face continuous physical and psychological trauma during their marriage life. (Neha Gupta: 2014)<sup>34</sup>

Women who are unable to bring dowry to their in-laws’ house are likely to be beaten, burnt alive and threatened for their survival. They still cannot leave their house because of economic dependence, fear of the outside world, love for their children, lack of confidence, social pressure and stigma, lack of support, of structures and facilities and their inherent ignorance about their own rights,.

From the entire scene of this particular discussion, it is to be stated that the Assamese Print Media is still Patriarchal in nature in regard to women’s sexuality. The role of these as the “Just Public Sphere (Usha Singh) for the development of humanity” can be criticised on the ground of its vogue as transmitters of negative images of women.

If the entire scenario of the Assamese media’s role towards women is seen through the liberal feminist angle, which emphasises on positive human nature having equal footing with men in regard to the enjoyment of rights, liberty, justice and rights then the Assamese media are playing biased role towards women as they have shown women as the “Puppets” of the society, especially for men. According to the Liberal Feminists, women are equal and they should be treated equally with men. Women

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<sup>33</sup> Beauvoir says throughout history, women have been generally oppressed and repressed by the patriarchal society in which men are dominants. They were denied the right to live in the same kind of freedom as men and to get their share of education and career. Instead they were forced to stay at home and raise the family: “Women are born to suffer”. (Nadja Beden: 2011)

<sup>34</sup> Gupta N. (2014) Socio-economic status of women in Northeast India: Causes and consequences of domestic violence against women in Assam: Case analysis. *Shiv Shakti International Journal in Multi-disciplinary and Academic Research (SSIJMAR)*. 3(2), 2278-5973. Retrieved from <http://ssijmar.in/vol3no2/vol3%20no2.4.pdf> on 18.07.2016.

should not be placed in such a situation where they feel insecure and unsafe due to men and manly brutal activities.

In the Liberal Feminist discourse media is seen through a reformist approach, as an agent of social change, it is expected that the Assamese media, too, create such an environment where women can have the right to be equally treated as human beings with their male counterparts. The media should not concentrate on sex role stereotypes, prescription of sex appropriate behaviour, appearance, interest skills and self-perception. So, from the Liberal Feminist Perspective it can be expected that the Assamese media contribute to change by portraying more women and men in non-traditional roles and by using non-sexist language.

In the Editorial published in *Dainik Agradoot* entitled “Duskritir Probhabh” (Effects of Bad Culture) on September 15, 2002, the editor tries to figure out reasons behind different effects of the contemporary problems such as extremist problems in Assam, juvenile delinquency among the youths, rape or other sexual harassment, eve-teasing etc. When the researcher tries to understand the latent meaning of the contents, it is revealed that regarding the problems of rape, eve-teasing and other sexual harassment the editor deadly criticises the growing trend (and this trend is symbolised as “Duskriti” by the editor in the item) among women about fashion, modelling and independent carefree mind, wearing short dresses breaking the societal norms, bindings etc. The editor stresses that only to show her body a woman wears short dresses which in turn harms them and so, they are raped and sexually harassed. Here, he is trying to victimise women as he thinks that the situation is created by women themselves.



PLATE 2: Effects of Bad culture, October 15, 2002

So, it is a subject of discussion and examination and a quest of reality through scientific and radical manner. The following passage makes it clear.

The theory of historical materialism has brought to light some most important truths. According to this, Humanity is not an animal species, it is a historical reality. So, woman could not be considered just as a sexual organism only, for among the biological traits, only those have importance that take on concrete value in action. Woman's awareness of herself should not be defined in terms of her sexuality. Because it is the reflection of such a situation which depends upon the economic organisation of society, which in turn indicates what stage of technical evolution mankind has attained over the centuries<sup>35</sup>.

Most of the times male biasness can be seen in the writings of men towards women: a male writer always describes women, their character or life style or behaviour or status on the basis of their (male writers) own interpretation of the stereotyped concept of "Ideal Women" and this reflects the dominance of masculinity over femininity. They being judgmental in the explanation, just try to regenerate and re-enforce the dominance of male to preserve patriarchy. In this regard, Simone de Beauvoir writes critically in her famous text "The Second Sex" that the representation and interpretation of woman, her life and nature in the writings by men are not free from hidden male bias. She illustrates thus:

Woman is not feminine by birth, but she is made so by importunate process of socio-cultural conditioning: one is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the female presents in a society; it is civilisation as a whole that produce this creature.....which is described as feminine<sup>36</sup>.

Her (woman) role was only nourishing, never creative ... whereas man went on monopolizing the functions which threw open that society towards nature and towards the rest of humanity, war, hunting, fishing represented an expansion of existence, its projection towards the world. The male alone remained the incarnation of transcendence. He did not as yet have the practical means

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<sup>35</sup> Simone De Beauvoir (1949). The Second Sex. Retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/2nd-sex/ch03.htm> on 12.06.2015.

<sup>36</sup> Simone De Beauvoir (1949). The Second Sex. Retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/2nd-sex/ch03.htm> on 15.07.2016.

for wholly dominating Woman-Earth; as yet he did not dare to stand up to her - but already desired to break away from her.” (Simone de Beauvoir: 1949)<sup>37</sup>

It can also be discussed in terms of the Feminist set of basic principles through which the entire story of the above can be elevated. According to Foss and Griffin,<sup>38</sup> the three basic principles — equality, immanent value, and self-determination serve as a starting place for a new rhetoric and explicitly challenge the positive value placed on patriarchal domination on others. It is well stated in Murry:

The crucial principle of equality and the goal of developing relationships of equality is one of the biggest concerns of feminism. The ability to see others as equals and not as an opportunity for domination is what feminists strive for. (Murry: n.d)<sup>39</sup>

The first and foremost goal of Feminism, as an Ideology and Movement, is to reject the principles of Patriarchy and its oppressive nature, where women are left as the puppets or the object in the hand of men. The ultimate goal of Feminism is equality and to curtail the act of dominance or oppression, whether it comes from males or females, is unacceptable in the eyes of the Feminists. That every individual is important and they have unique value in society, is illustrated by the Immanent value, one of the most important principles of Feminist beliefs. The concept of dominance is also rejected in this principle because when people contain immanent value, they are not a subject to be judged or compared to others. Murry illustrates:

Ranking individuals within a hierarchy or valuing one person over another, due to external factors, is not a determination of worth according to this principle of feminism. Individual worth or immanent value is something that resides in every individual’s uniqueness and therefore cannot be ranked. (Murry:n.d, p.12)<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin (1995) Beyond Persuasion: a Proposal for Invitational Rhetoric. Retrieved from [www.sonjafoss.com/html/Foss21.pdf](http://www.sonjafoss.com/html/Foss21.pdf) on 18.07.2016.

<sup>39</sup> The Deceptions of Powerful Female Roles: A Feminist Critique of *Homeland (project, Bachelor of Arts, California PolytechnicState University)*. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1158&context=comssp> on 19.07.2016.

<sup>40</sup> The Deceptions of Powerful Female Roles: A Feminist Critique of *Homeland (project, Bachelor of Arts, California PolytechnicState University)*. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.calpoly.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1158&context=comssp> on 17.07.2016.

The third and the most important principle, self-determination, is a massive aspect of a Feminist paradigm which is rooted in the concept of the mutual respect for others. Foss and Griffin says that self-determination allows individuals to make their own decisions about how they wish to live their lives (Foss and Griffin). This bestows upon the humans to have complete autonomy for individual lives and to foster the ability to control every aspect and decision in their life. This autonomy will empower individuals to become experts of their own life.

From this perspective, it is clear enough to judge the role of the Assamese print media on the above mentioned editorial of *Dainik Agradoot*. Everyone, in the society, has the freedom or the autonomy to live their lives to expert their innate development.

The Feminists felt that women had been poor victims of male oppression and exploitation, and expressed anger and strong resentment against injustice done to the mankind<sup>41</sup>. In keeping with this, in an essay titled “Men and Women” (1920), Virginia Woolf analyses man-woman relationship in accordance with the historical context and literacy and remarks:

The history of mankind is in fact history of the achievement, aspirations and failures of men only. We know nothing about the status of women — their feelings, responses, attitudes, attributes or predicaments. It is only through fiction that we get some intimate, although second hand, knowledge about the lives of women within a particular time span. (Woolf: 1920, as quoted in Gaur: 2003 p.2)<sup>42</sup>

It is very sad and even dangerous for women-folk that everyday media make sensational stories regarding their bodies. It is a fact and is even proved through historical analysis that everybody wants his or her identity to be high or become independent in terms of economy, and be a part of the development of the society, as well as, the nation itself. It is seen that it is quite easy for men but, not so for women. She has to make compromises for it. She gets it at the expense of her body. Moreover, the editor is accusing women’s choice of dressing as, according to him, that leads them to be the victims of rapes and other sexual assaults. Gardner says:

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<sup>41</sup> *Schizophrenic Experience in the Light of Psychoanalytical Feminism* (n.d). Retrieved from [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/2678/9/09\\_chapter%202.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/2678/9/09_chapter%202.pdf) on 19.07.2016.

<sup>42</sup> Gaur R. (2003). *Women’s Writings: Some Facets* [e-book]. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com/books?isbn=8176253960> on 18.08.2016.

With (Gardner, 1980) women's increasing involvement in activities outside the home, the opportunity for a woman to be victimized increased. Those women who break the patriarchal norms of ideal women being the secondary sex or dependent on men, and the bindings they are often victimised of such assaults.

Feminism has interpreted this violence as a form of social control<sup>43</sup> inflicted directly or culturally by men on women. In this regard Brown Miller (1975) is one of the firsts to make the argument that rape or the implied threat of rape functions to keep women in their place, second place subordinate to men.

With the feminist movement of the 1960s, rape is reconceptualised as a mechanism for maintaining male control and domination, a violent means of inducing fear in women and reinforcing their subordination to men. This reconceptualization has made a clear difference in the way our culture defines and understands sexual assault, but much still needs to change. (Donat & Emilio: 1992)<sup>44</sup>

Under the rubric of Feminism, women's situation has been as a consequence of biology and reproduction and mothering, social organisation of biology as caused by marriage law or as, extensions, by the patriarchal family, becoming society as a "patriarchy" or as caused by artificial gender roles and their attendant attitudes. Feminism fundamentally identifies sexuality as the primary social sphere of male power. The centrality of the sexuality emerges from the Feminist practices of issues like abortion, birth control, rape, incest, lesbianism, sexual harassment. In all these areas feminist efforts confronts and change women's lives concretely and experimentally<sup>45</sup>

Susan Brownmiller's (1975) *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, the classic work provided with feminist analysis on sexual violence<sup>46</sup> delineates the relationship

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<sup>43</sup> Susan Griffin argued that rape is not a crime rather a crime of violence that serves to maintain social control over women, as cited in feminist Approaches to Addressing Violence by Jane Schiutemen.

<sup>44</sup> Patricia L. Donat & John D. Emilio (1992). A Feminist Redefinition of Rape and Sexual Assault: Historical Foundations and Change. *Journal of Social Issues*. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1992.tb01154.x/abstract> on 18.07.2016.

<sup>45</sup> Meyers Diana Tietjens (2010). *Feminist Social Thought: A Reader* [e-book]. Retrieved from <https://books.google.co.in/books?isbn=1135025029> on 18.07.2016.

<sup>46</sup> Jayne Schiutemen (2001) *Feminist Approaches to Addressing Violence Against women*. In Allen J. Ottens and Kethy Hotteling (eds) *Sexual Violence on Campus: Policies, Programs and Perspectives*. New Work: Springer Publishing Company.



between sexual aggression and women's fear, defining rape as "a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear" (p. 5). Suzanne Pharr and Carole Sheffield have discussed sexual violence as corner stone of patriarchy<sup>47</sup>. But, it is because of men's dominance over the female sexuality they are being victimised, Brownmiller observes:

His forcible entry into her body, despite her physical protestations and struggle, became the vehicle of his victorious conquest over her being, the ultimate test of his superior strength, the triumph of his manhood. (Brownmiller: 1975, quoted in Jaggar: p.5)<sup>48</sup>.

The victims of rape often are portrayed in media as victims and as secretly enjoying their victimization. The images and contents of media often present the woman as resisting only initially and eventually becoming overwhelmed by sexual desire despite her original protests. These images reinforce rape myths, and they prompt many feminists to speak out against the way women are portrayed in the media (Jozsa & Jozsa, 1980; Read: 1989). The images themselves represent women as inferior and as victims rather than agents in their own sexuality and reinforce the sex role stereotypes, adversarial sexual beliefs and acceptance of interpersonal sexual assaults. (Patricia L. Donat & John D. Emilio)<sup>49</sup>

But, unfortunately the Assamese Print Media is not an exception to that. They are playing the same role reinforcing the sex roles and gender discrimination. Thus, in the male writings, where women's issues are taken up, a double standard is evident. They want women to be educated and free, but, at the same time, follow traditional values.

It has been known to all that media is the mirror of the society and it is proved that the Assamese media is also patriarchal, myth oriented and biased towards women and continue the tradition [...] <sup>50</sup>. It has been stated in Hinduism that:

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Jaggar A.M Feminist Politics and Human Nature (Philosophy and Society) [e-book]. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com/books?isbn=0742579948> on 18.08.2016.

<sup>49</sup> Patricia L. Donat & John D. Emilio (1992). A Feminist Redefinition of Rape and Sexual Assault: Historical Foundations and Change. *Journal of Social Issues*. Retrieved from <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1992.tb01154.x/abstract> on 18.07.2016.

<sup>50</sup> Deka N. (2015). Colonial Assam and Women's Writing. Retrieved from <http://feministsindia.com/colonial-assam-and-womens-writing-nizara-hazarika/> on 19.07.2016.

[...] women, more delicate than men, require and deserve protection. Hindu texts extol the virtues of womanhood and of the essential role women have in nurturing future generations. Though Hindus are themselves re-examining and restructuring the roles of women, there still remain powerful ideals, exemplified by ladies such as Sita, Gandhari, Draupadi, Mandodari, and Savitri<sup>51</sup>.



**PLATE 3: International Women’s Day and Contemporary Thinking, March 8, 2001**

In the article “Antarjatik Naari Dibosh aru Prasangik Sinta”, (International Women’s Day and Contemporary Thinking) Chandika Dutta Konwar discusses about the age old discrimination existed between men and women in every respects, where women have always been seen as victims of the injustice done to them in the name of culture, tradition, rites etc. She says from the ages immemorial, laws are being interpreted, courts are being established, and different commissions are being formed, but the status and position of women in the society have not been changed. They have been the victims of rape or other sexual harassment, deaths related to dowry, trafficking, prostitution etc.

Here, it can be said that the writer’s outlook to write this article is inspired from the sufferings which women experience in Assam, in a narrative way, examines the whole scene of sufferings of women in general. Though the government, judiciary, social groups are always talking about to the need to take positive actions for labelling the

<sup>51</sup> Women's Dharma (n.d). Retrieved from <http://iskconeducationalservices.org/HoH/practice/703.htm> on 17.07.2016.

status and position of women, still women are never to be out of the same situation where women cannot have the environment of empowerment and development.

The whole scene of these sufferings of women symbolise the patriarchal structure of our society in which women are taken for granted and the structures of the society for example, the government and the judiciary just try to disseminate the concept of “Victim” regarding women in the minds of the general people. So, the Feminists feel that women had been poor victims of male oppression and expectation, and express anger and strong resentment against injustice done to the mankind (Betty Frieden: 1963). As a result, women are still in a derogatory position, as indicated by the present scene of women’s suffering as a whole, and struggling for a secured and safe place for developing their identity. It is well stated in the following:

Betty Friedan (1963) and the National Organization for Women (founded in 1966) believed that changing laws and educating people against erroneous prejudices would remedy gender discrimination, giving women equal opportunities with men to exercise individual choices in life. They sought gender equity through changes in law and childhood socialization. They lobbied for equal treatment of boys and girls in school and wrote children’s books featuring cooperative boys, as well as, resourceful girls. (Gardiner: 2004, p.37)<sup>52</sup>

Liberal Feminists having been trying to focus on the establishment of equality between the sexes are in favour of the equal distribution of social resources of the state. The twentieth century Liberal Feminists seek gender equity through bringing changes in the law, legal procedures and the socialisation processes and are in favour of the enjoyment of privileges as men do. It is well stated in the following:

Current versions of liberal feminist theories, however, are more sophisticated in their analyses and offer to men’s studies models for inquiries into the gendering of the law, the media, the state, and the professions; civil rights organizations open to male members with accessible goals for social reform; and ideals such as androgyny for combining traditionally masculine and feminine personality characteristics in individuals. (Gardiner: 2004, p.37)<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Gardiner Judith Kegan (2004). Retrieved from [https://www.corwin.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/5177\\_Kimmel\\_Chapter\\_3.pdf](https://www.corwin.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/5177_Kimmel_Chapter_3.pdf).

<sup>53</sup> Ibid .

From this perspective, women should be given proper rights and liberties, opportunities, laws and all the structures of the society should be based on the equality but the real scene is totally different from this, because the existing structures are seen regenerating the unequal enjoyment of resources of the society and the state, as well. Women are neglected in every respect; in both enjoyment and participation in the society, as well as, in the state.

Legal Theorist Catharine MacKinnon who is the best-known exponent of a Radical Feminist viewpoint says male oppression of women is first and foremost pervasive of all oppressions. She outlines the experiences of a woman from birth thus:

Imagine that for hundreds of years your most formative traumas, your daily suffering and pain, the abuse you live through, the terror you live with, are unspeakable — not the basis of literature. You grow up with your father holding you down and covering your mouth so another man can make a horrible searing pain between your legs. When you are older, your husband ties you to the bed. (MacKinnon:1993)<sup>54</sup>

Through the above mentioned passage MacKinnon remarks, the traumatic situation out of the domination of males over the bodies and minds of women from the birth to their death, which upholds every woman eternally as a victim. So, Judith Kegan Gardiner says, “such institutionalisation of gender relations legalises the “sexuality of male supremacy”, which fuses the eroticization of dominance and submission with the social construction of male and female.”

Women are prevented from participating in the affairs of the management of the society and the state as a whole since there is a perception regarding women that they lack the intelligence and intellect in which men are stronger than women. So, women, in every field, are stumbled in the way of development and empowerment. And media’s social responsibility towards women should have been positive but, it is seen through the contents contained in media that they are reinforcing the sex role stereotypes constructed by the male society.

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<sup>54</sup> Gardiner J.K. (2005). Men, Masculinities and Feminist Theories. In Kimmel, Michael S., Jeff Hearn & Connell R.W. (eds.) *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*. New York: Sage Publications.

The article entitled “Bhut-pret, Andhabiswash and Cable TV” (Ghost, Superstitions and Cable TV) written by Girish Chandra Sharma, published in *Dainik Agradoot* on July 1, 2000 (Saturday) tries to relate one of the burning problems of Assam i.e. Witch Hunting (Dayinee Haitya) with superstitions and the shows relating to ghost shown in the Cable TV. Here the writer tries to show the role of superstitions and the shows (serials) of Cable TV in the growth of the witch hunting in Assam and other parts of India. He illustrates two factors — superstitions and Cable TV Serials in regard to that particular problem.



**PLATE 4: Ghost, Superstitions and Cable TV, July 1, 2000**

The problem arises when the writer tries to say that today the TV shows are based on the ghosts, haunted place, evil souls which may be a reason behind establishing the fact that these are the real things happening in the society.

The article makes the researcher say that the persecution of women by their fellow people of a particular place leads us to think over and again about the low status of women in a patriarchal society. The male superiority or the patriotic culture is rooted so deeply that women are killed brutally in front of a society. It crosses all the limits of brutality of humans towards humans. It is well stated in the following:

It is worth mentioning here that it is rooted in our culture and religion. Even it was prevalent in the period of the Vedic Dark ages and in the later Puranic dark ages of Hindu civilisation.[...] the mass burning of the witches during the Vedic Dark Ages (1500-500) and the later Puranic dark ages (100-1000 AD)

make the European Medieval ecclesiastical witch hunts pale in comparison. (Agarwal: 2011).

Besides V. Geeta observes that:

A Hindu woman is compared with a crow or with a shudra without having intelligence and commonsense. Women should be always like “Sita<sup>55</sup>” of Ramayana, an ideal woman, revered by the Hindu society, as she adored her husband as ‘Pati-paramiwshwar’ or god. “The Manusmriti<sup>56</sup> lumps together animals, shudras and women and considers all of them equally unclean, polluting and fit to be subdued and controlled by the men of upper caste.” (Geeta V.: 2009)<sup>57</sup>

In Quran also women’s inferiority is established under the superiority of men where women are just seen as the objects to satisfy the men sexually and provide them with their offspring. It says:

Men are superior to women on account of the qualities with which God had gifted the one above the other . . . Virtuous women are obedient, careful during the husband’s absence, because God hath on them been careful<sup>58</sup>.

In this regard Bible is not behind to prioritize men over women emphasizing women’s submission to their husbands as women were created out of men, so men are superior and women are the subservient.

It is well stated in the following:

Religion has been a significant contributor to the oppression of women for millennia. For most religions, particularly monotheistic religions, God is depicted as a male and addressed as “Father”. In the Biblical creation story, Eve

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<sup>55</sup> Sita is the central female character of the Hindu Epic Ramayana, daughter of Janaka. She is the consort of the Hindu God Rama and is an avatar of Laksmi, the Goddess of Wealth and wife of Vishnu. She has been a much revered figure among the Hindus. She has been portrayed as an ideal daughter, an ideal wife and an ideal mother in various texts, stories, illustrations, movies and modern media. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sita>

<sup>56</sup> Manusmriti was the first book written on Laws of the world, which deals with social and moral conduct of a person. It falls in the smriti category of Hindu Scriptures and hence it is less authoritative than Vedas and Upnishads. Manusmriti is also known as Dharmasutra of Manava. Retrieved from <http://hinduismfacts.org/hindu-scriptures-and-holy-books/manusmriti/> on 18.07.2015.

<sup>57</sup> Geeta V. (2009). *Theorizing Feminism*. Kolkatta:stree.

<sup>58</sup> *Introduction* (n.d). Retrieved from

[http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/11071/5/05\\_chapter1.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/11071/5/05_chapter1.pdf) on 18.08.2016.

is created from Adam's body, suggesting male superiority. Eve is also often blamed for committing the "original sin" because she gave in to temptation and then persuaded Adam to sin as well (other cultures have similar notions. In Christianity, God gave the world a "Son" to save mankind, not a daughter. Many of the prophets of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are men, including Moses and Muhammad. The majority of religious authority figures are males, and in some religions, like Roman Catholicism, women are not permitted to become priests. Religious institutions and their respective ideologies have contributed to patriarchal cultures around the world. While some religions are backing away from such patriarch (e.g., Unitarian Universalists, many religions are continuing to repress women<sup>59</sup>).

Although it is (assumed) that male domination is universal, MacKinnon (1987) believes, it is also shaped by contemporary society, "women are the property that constitutes the personhood, the masculinity, of men under capitalism" (p. 159). Furthermore, in her view, the standards for all aspects of culture are masculine: "masculinity, the male standard for men" (p.71) establishes patriarchal law and relegates women to the "private, moral, valued, subjective"; men, on the other hand, accrue to themselves the values of the "public, ethical, factual, objective" (p. 151)<sup>60</sup>. She claims that every quality that distinguishes men from women is affirmatively compensated by society:

Men's physiology defines most sports, their needs define auto and health insurance coverage, their socially designed biographies define workplace expectations and successful career paths, their perspectives and concerns define quality in scholarship, their experiences and obsessions define merit, their objectification of life defines art, their military service defines citizenship, their presence defines family, their inability to get along with each other...defines history, their image defines God, and their genitals define sex. (MacKinnon, 1987, p. 36)<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Sociological Theory/Feminist Theory (n.d). Retrieved on August, 15, 2016 from Wiki books: [https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Sociological\\_Theory/Feminist\\_Theory#Religion](https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Sociological_Theory/Feminist_Theory#Religion) .

<sup>60</sup> Gardiner. Judith Kegan (2005). Men, Masculinities and Feminist Theories. In Kimmel, Michael S., Hearn Jeff and. Connel R.W. (eds.) *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*. New Work: Sage Publications.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Thus, it can be said that in a patriarchal society, any single cause is not the root of violence in all cases but a mix of causes can be observed in sufficiently large number of cases. Economic abuse is another form of on-going violence against women in Assam. It is the result of dependency - objective, subjective or both. Religion, society and culture not only attribute the characters of dependence in economic field, rather women are dependent in every respect on men. Their livelihood and lifestyle take shape on the basis of male's decisions. The major forms of economic abuse are preventing a woman from taking a job, forcing her to leave the existing job, collecting full amount of her salary by force, pressurizing her for bringing money from her parents' family again and again and prohibiting her from making purchases of her choice.

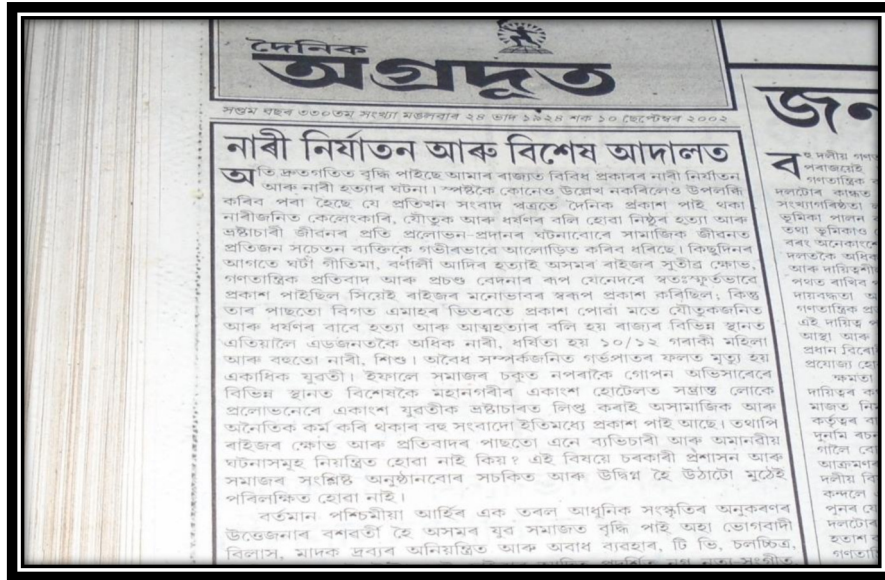
But, media as an active agent of social transformation and change, have the responsibility to transform the society in a positive way, where every human can have equal share in the enjoyment of rights, liberties, facilities, justice, freedoms. In this regard portrayal of women as equal being with men is very much necessary to drag women from the derogatory position to the equality in every aspect of their lives. Otherwise, women will be killed in the names of witch, crow or shudra or ignorant.

In "Nari Nirjatan and Bishesh Adalat" (Atrocities on Women and Special Court) the editor of *Dainik Agradoot* has dilated on the scenario of atrocities that have been hurled on women in a narrative way. While discussing he focussed on the topic of dowry, rape, suicide, murder, women trafficking, bounded prostitution, use of girls for sexual satisfaction by the so called aristocrats etc. and in the last sentence of the first paragraph he says,

"Ei bixoye sorkari prasason aru samajar sangsliststa anusthan bor sochokita aru ud-bigna hoi uthatu muthei porilokhita hoa nai" --- Though different types of atrocities are going on women but neither the administration nor the social institutions are seen taking steps against it, they are not even aware of it.

Through this sentence written by the editor two basic things can be brought to light --- firstly the secondary status of women in the society and secondly attitude of society and societal institutions towards the women-folk.





**PLATE 5: Atrocities on Women and Special Court, September 10, 2002**

But, in the second paragraph the editor suddenly moves towards the description of the causes of the violence on women. Speculating on the materialistic lifestyle of the youths (both men and women), addiction of youths towards sex, sex centred videos, films, pornographic items, vulgarity, he tries to present women as victim and also as perpetrators. Women are being used in the sex videos; women are being used to spread vulgarity --- and in turn while watching these videos men become stimulated to harass women sexually, physically and mentally. It can be criticised on the grounds that one cannot be judgemental regarding atrocities happening on women by simply saying that only because of the vulgarity shown in media, materialistic pattern of lifestyles women are being violated against. It is value-laden. Because these vulgarities do not harm men to produce their identity, it devalues the position of women. Beauvoir says:

[...] in all the societies there exist the essential and the inessential; the self and the other, and all the societies reflect this duality. From this perspective, woman is socially constructed in relation to male and considered as inferior to the superior male. The man from his infant age has been cherished to assume an unquestioned superiority. Later on his superiority defines woman's role, cre-

ates and maintains a mythology of woman based on her feminism, weakness and subordination to his power<sup>62</sup>.

From birth to death women struggle to make her own space in their homes being a daughter, after marriage they struggle in the husband's house and till death they have to struggle to environ themselves with a positive space. A woman is basically known as a good daughter, a good wife and a good daughter-in-law and a good mother. In every stage of her life she has to be loving and caring and making good family. But, she has no space for herself, she is known by the judgements of other people. So, being brought up in Patriarchy, men attain the social control over women and it seems to be the birth right of men. The following describes it perfectly:

The concept of women is well explained in the traditional and continuing stereotyping framework which regarded the women as the bearers and nurturers of the children, the homemakers and thus confined the role of women with the four walls of the house. The result of this restrictive role of women further perpetuate the low expectations for women and the lesser involvement of them in other areas, whether these areas are social, economic or political.<sup>63</sup>

Indian women having been subservient throughout their lives, have to survive through a ladder of oppressive and suppressive Patriarchal family structures where identity prevails only when it is attached to men, ordinary status, relationship to men through family of origin, marriage and procreation, as well as, patriarchal characteristics — such as dowry, preferences of birth of a son instead of a girl, kinship, caste, community, village, market and the state.

As a part of the great Patriarchal organisations Indian media cannot free from the shackles of Patriarchal attributes — so, they portray women with some popular stereotyped role models such as “women are the enemies of women themselves”, “women are weak”, “women should be protected for the good of themselves”, “women are dependent”, “women are timid”, “women can be used as sex objects”, “women have no right to make choices”, “women can't have the decision making power” --- these

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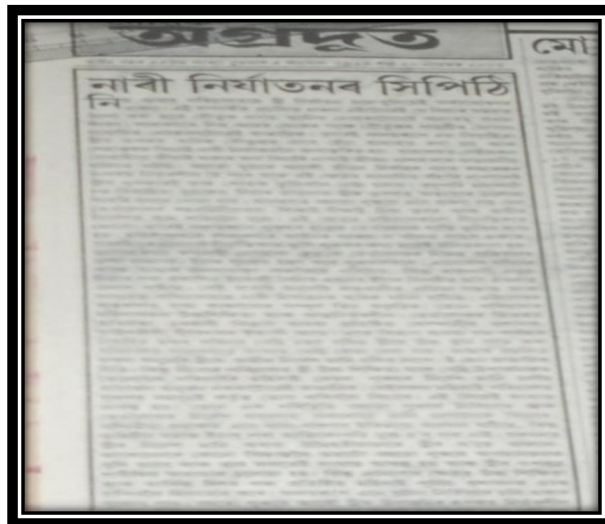
<sup>62</sup>Introduction (2014). Retrieved from [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/20322/5/05\\_chapter%20i.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/20322/5/05_chapter%20i.pdf) on 17.07.2016.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

are enough for the establishment of the secondary status of women. The following will throw light on it:

By creating a certain type of message, media can manipulate people's attitude and opinions. But the main aim of mass media is to be universal and suitable for everyone, in order to gather the largest possible audience. However, because of stereotypical way of explaining the reality, some groups are underrepresented or ignored, and therefore the society image is incomplete<sup>64</sup>.

In the editorial titled "Nari Nirjatanar Sipithi" (The other side of atrocities on women) published in *Dainik Agradoot* in November 20, 2002, (Wednesday), the editor tried to figure out the reasons behind the on-going violence (especially dowry, deaths related to dowry) on women. He narrated in the first paragraph of the content that women of those families that have low income capacities, were seen as victims of deaths related to dowry in most of the cases. He said that in such families, husbands could not earn proper money for the maintenance of the family. As a result, they would pressurise women to bring money from their own houses or parental family, and gradually this would transform into a brutal torture on women and, in many cases death would be the ultimate end of such women.



**PLATE 6: The other side of atrocities on women, November 20, 2002**

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<sup>64</sup> Malgorzata Wolska (2011) Gender Stereotypes in Mass Media: Analysis of the Gender Stereotyping Phenomenon in TV Commercials. Available at <http://krytyka.org/gender-stereotypes-in-mass-media-case-study-analysis-of-the-gender-stereotyping-phenomenon-in-tv-commercials/>

In the second half of the first paragraph he said that as it was a general thought in the society, especially in the “husband community” that wives were inferior in every respect (education, money, intelligence) so wives (women) were bound to obey them. Women would also do that because they would suffer from the inferiority complex in front of their husbands and would not voice against the sufferings they had been experiencing every day at home. He said,

“Aanhate bohutu purukhe ene dharana loi jene teolokar sahadharmini sakal sikkhai-dikkhai nimna starar aru swamir nirdekhat kam koriboloi badhya.” (Most of the men have such conceptions about their wives that they are inferior in regard to education and so bound to work the way their husbands want).

He even reiterated that the women having higher educational qualifications like doctors, engineers, advocates and other women having settled in higher position would also be victimised. Due to higher education and position, women would get troubles in their own families as they would want to have the same position in family as their husbands, and this would make the situation more complex for women. At last, they would have to be victimised to such brutal acts of atrocity or torture of husbands.

Here, the researcher stresses some points written by the editor. He tries to portray women as victims with the emotion of sympathy and some cultural myths, stereotypes which are not based on radical thinking which should be scientifically tested. However, that is hardly possible in the patriarchal society.

In the first half of the first paragraph he tries to figure out the reasons of the problems and arrives at a judgemental conclusion that husbands having low incomes commit such crimes. Is this not putting men in higher position? Women cannot do anything or they have no role in it. They have to abide by their husbands, as they have no other choice for returning to her father’s house or stay isolated in another place away from the husband’s house. According to the society those women are regarded “ideal” who accept all the sufferings and tortures from their husbands or the patriarchal society. In any case, a woman has to suffer, when she is a wife, even when she is not, she will be the victim of the injustice of the man’s world. She will have no safe space for herself and no environment to voice the injustice that she suffers.

Even most of the magnificent civilizations of the world sanction the inferior status to women. In the great Roman civilization, which has been revered as one of the magnificent civilisations, women's position was no better than today. Following are the characteristics of the then Roman society:

1. No women could be without a guardian.
2. When unmarried, she would be under her guardian's perpetual tutelage and her guardian would exercise Patripotestas over her.
3. No marriage could take place without the consent of the father.
4. She would become the property in the truest sense of the term, be sold and conveyed in Coemptio in manum.
5. The husband could kill his wife for misconduct and adultery.
6. No civil and public office could be held by women.

Similarly, in the Greek societies, too, women are thought to be inferior in every field in regard to men. Greeks recognised two orders of womanhood — first, to offer fidelity to her husband and secondly, there was the hetaera or mistress “who subsisted by her fugitive attachments. She would never attend any public function or receive any male visitor. Even, Plato classified women as children and servants and stated that generally women were inferior in any regard to men.

Aristotle once said that women were the defective part of humanity, having only developed as a mistake when the temperature during conception was too low (Weitz: 2003). In Tulsidasa's work, Dasaratha, the king of Ayodhya, blames the banishment of his favourite son Rama on the fact that he trusted a woman ---“*What a thing to happen at a time such as this! I am undone by putting trust in a woman like ascetic who is ruined by ignorance when he is about to win the fruits of austerities*<sup>65</sup>.”

In addition to the suggestion that women ought not to be trusted, Dasaratha's outburst is also revealing because of the comparison that he chooses to make. He compares his own plight to that of an ascetic who is destroyed by ignorance when his spiritual en-

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<sup>65</sup> Anantanand Rambachan (2001) A Hindu Perspective in John C. Raines and Daniel C. Maguire (eds) *What Men owe to Women: Men's Voices from world's Religions*. New Work: State University of New Work Press.

deavours are just about to bear fruits. This is a significant analogy because of the fact that women are also held responsible for the spiritual fall of men. In a conversation between the sage Narada and Rama, in the same text, the former asks the latter why he did not allow marriage. Rama offers a lengthy denunciation of women as obstacles to all that is noble and worthy in the life of men<sup>66</sup>. Rama says,

*Lust, wrath, greed, pride and all other violent passions form the sturdy army of infatuation, but among them all the most formidable and calamitous is women, illusion incarnate.*

*Listen sage, the Puranas, the Vedas and the saints declare that women are the vernal season to the forests of infatuation; like the heat of summer she dries up all the ponds and lakes of prayer and penance and devotional exercises.*

Later, in the Ayodhyakadya, Bharata, the younger brother of Rama, also vents his anger against all women which pronounces many of the prevalent stereotypes. Women are difficult to understand, they are deceitful, sinful and they exploit the simplicity and good nature of men. He compared women to drums, rustics, animals and members of the lower caste and all of these are described as objects that are fit to be beaten (ibid).

The passages like these, which prioritise men over women can be taken as the justifications behind the violence and abuse against women. Such views encourage complacency towards domestic violence and convince women that is a deserved form of punishment.

From birth to death an Indian woman has to be secondary without having any say in the house hold affairs or in the public. The place of women in the private sphere, blocking the stepping of women in the public sphere has generalized Manu's dictum that women can never be independent. But, media are not focusing those problems. They are only busy to publish gossips surrounding the actors and actresses and the love stories between them. It is well stated in the following:

Her identity and status is derived from her relation to the gendered categories of mother, daughter, daughter-in-law and wife. She is always defined not only

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid

in relation to man but as dependent on man and subordinate to him. The discrimination begins right from her childhood as she is treated differently: Boys will be boys. Girls shouldn't get dirty. These are just a couple common misconceptions of gender commonly heard in our society<sup>67</sup>.

This negative attitude towards women in real life is very much reflected in the way the media represents them. Media representations of Indian women reveal that they are less accepted and respected as persons and more looked upon as objects. She has three projected roles --- biological, domestic and decorative. Media are hardly challenging the gender attitudes promoted and perpetuated by the society.

So, it can be said that the Assamese Print Media, from this perspective, are playing the role of the transmitters to regenerate and reinforce the Hindu Philosophy loaded with Patriarchy, Teachings of Manu, signifying women as dependent, inferior among the masses. And the words used in this content are identifying women as secondary creatures and inferior in regard to men. But, media's contents have a deep impact on the lives of the general people, so media in a democratic country have to be more democratic and should have the power to eradicate the gender biasness and inequalities. It is well stated in the following quotations:

Media plays a large role in influencing the younger generation. When exposed to multiple gender messages, children are more likely to endorse the stereotype than if presented with a counter-stereotype. (Aubrey & Harrison: 2004, as cited in Espinosa: 2010, p.5)<sup>68</sup>

[...] such stereotypes can negatively impact and restrict opportunities, especially for women, by lowering self-dignity and body satisfaction, as well as career and self-development (Eisend: 2010, as quoted in Espinosa: 2010,p.5)<sup>69</sup>

#### **5.4.2 Portrayal of women as victims in politics**

The article published in *Dainik Agradoot* entitled "Narir Hatat Rajnoitic Khyamata: Sangskarat Anya Ek akha" (Political Power in the Hands of Women: A Hope of

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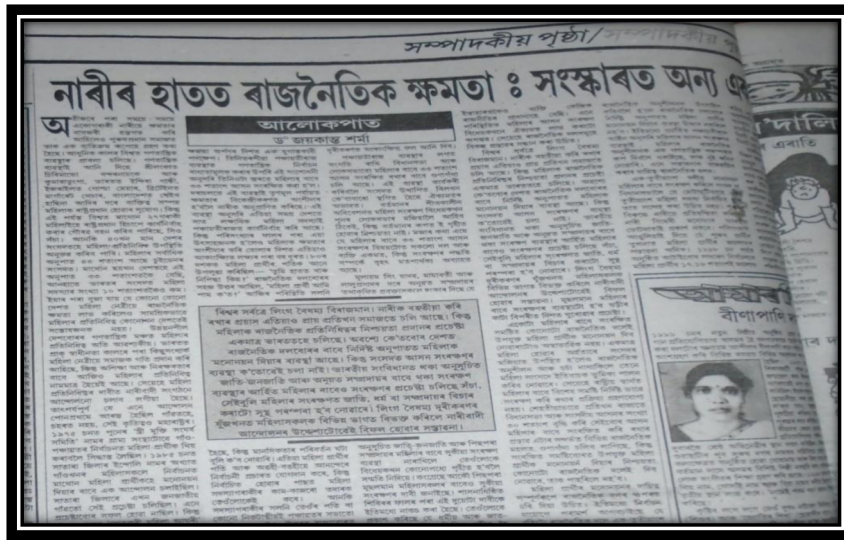
<sup>67</sup> Introduction (2014). Retrieved from

[http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/20322/5/05\\_chapter%20i.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/20322/5/05_chapter%20i.pdf) on 18.07.2016.

<sup>68</sup> Espinosa Daniya (2010). Gender Roles In The Media And Debunking Society's Stereotypes: *Glee As A Pop-Culture Reflection* (Project, Master of Science, Winona University). Retrieved from [https://www.winona.edu/counseloreducation/Images/Danya\\_Espinosa\\_Capstone.pdf](https://www.winona.edu/counseloreducation/Images/Danya_Espinosa_Capstone.pdf) on 15.07.2016.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Reformation), by writer Dr. Joykanta Sharma is trying to discuss elaborately the shift of the trend in India where political powers are about to come in the hands of some women in India. He mentions the names of Indira Gandhi of India, Chirimako and Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka, Gelda Mayer of Israel and Margaret Thatcher of Britain who have had the glory of having ascended to political power. He says only 27 women have had this glory.



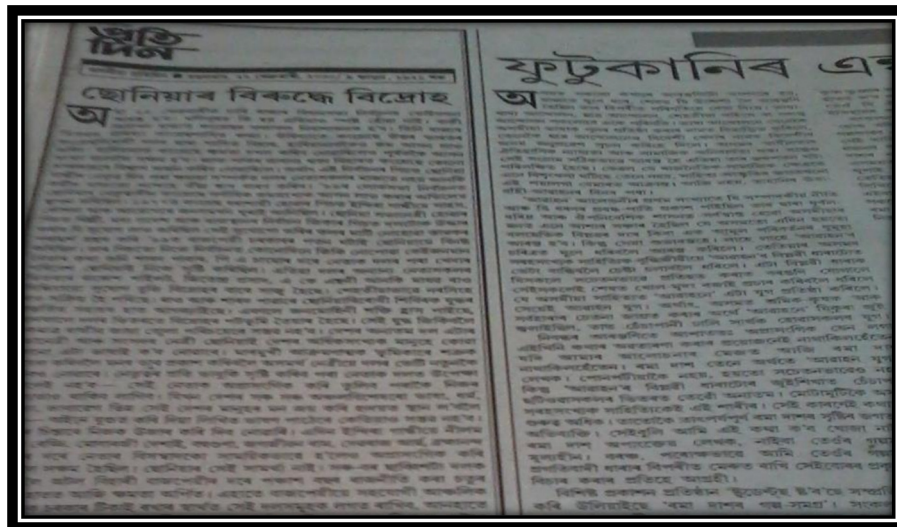
**PLATE 7: Political Power in the Hands of Women: A Hope of Reformation, December 7, 2000**

Besides, he reiterates about the low representation women in the Parliament of India and the other countries of the world; he mentions Sweden where the proportion of 43% regarding women representation can practically be seen. But, in India the representation of women in Indian Parliament is less than 10%. Being the victims of “Gender Discrepancies” and “Gender Inequality”, according to him women are not getting the proper representation in the male dominated power politics of India and the world in general. As a result, women are forming different movement to equalise the situation, he says.





**PLATE 8: Foreign President in Congress, March 15, 2000**



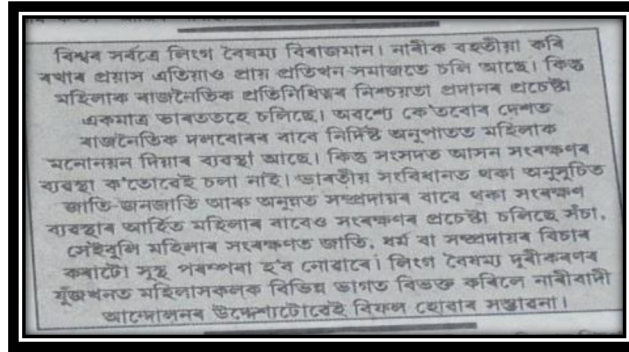
**PLATE 9: Revolt against Sonia, February 22, 2000**

Similarly, the article entitled (Plate 8) “Kogressot Bidekhi Mular Sobhapati” (Foreign President in Congress) by writer Dr. Joykanta Sharma in *Dainik Agradoot* and the editorial entitled “Soniar Birudhye Bidroh” (Revolt against Sonia) published in *Asomiya Pratidin* reiterate the prevailing concept regarding women as unskilled politicians.

In India attempts are being made to give proper representation to women folk but, it is not possible because of the existing gender discrimination and, so, women are becoming the “Puppets” of the entire society. Women are being stratified into several groups such as Hindu, Muslim, SC, ST etc. which is harming the status of women in the po-

litical field, and this will make the motto of the Feminist Movement for equalising women, to forsake the discriminations in the name of “biological concept of Sex” and the “Social interpretation of it discriminating Gender conception” would be a failure. According to him,

“*Biswat Sarbadhik linga baikhanya bidyamaan. Narik bohota kori rokhari proyakh etiao prai protohon somajate soli ase. Kintu mohilar rajnoitic protinidhitwar nis-chayata prodanor prosesta akmatra Bharatat he solise. Oboswe ket bor dekhari rajnoitic dal boror babe nirdista anupatat mohilarmononoyan diar byabostha ase. Kintu sangsadat akhan sangragkhanar byabostha kotuei nai. Bharatio sangbidhanat thoka anususita jati-janajati aru anunnata sampradayar babe thoka sangrakhan byabosthat arhit mohilar babeo sangrakhanar byabostha solise khosa, xeibuli mohilar sangrakhanat jati, dhorma ba sampradayar bisar koratu sustha porompora hobo noware. Linga baikhyanya durikoronor juj khonot mohila sokolak bibhinna bhagat bibhokta korile naribadi andolanar uddeshyatuei nohoa howar sambhabona*”.

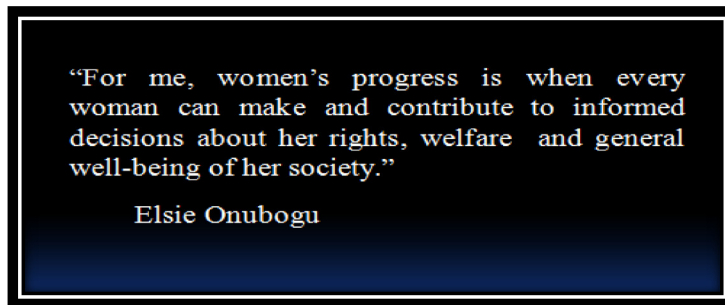


--- *“Gender discrimination is present in everywhere in the world. In every society attempts are made to enslave women. But it is only in India that attempts are being forwarded to give political representation to women. Certainly there are some countries for the political parties to nominate women on proportionate basis. But there is nowhere to give reservation in the parliaments of the world. In Indian Constitution, the way of having reservation for the SCs and STs, attempts have been made to get reservations for women also, however, it is not justifiable to divide women on the basis of religion, caste or community. For this, the feminist movement for establish gender-equal society will be a failure one.” (Sharma, the writer himself)*

Here, the writer, with the help of some data regarding women and their positions in politics in India and in the world, tries to elucidate the whole scenario behind the low

representation of women in politics. However, it has been seen through his expression of words that he put women as victims of the manly world of politics in a non-judgemental manner, which in turn harm a woman for being a woman.

It should be mentioned here that though women constitute half of the population yet women's representation in politics is not the same as men. It is a matter of great concern for the feminists because, without the fair representation in politics empowerment and development are not possible. In this regard Elsie Onubogu says --



**Figure 5.35 Elsie Onubogu's views on women**

Women's political under-representation could be recognised as a failure in today's democracy. Representation in politics where men and women are equally represented is called a gender-balanced representation (Emelie Bomgren: 2010). It is well said by Sushma Swaraj that:

[...] it is very difficult for a woman to make up her mind to enter politics. Once she makes up her own mind, then she has to prepare her husband, and her children, and her family. Once she has overcome all these obstacles and applies for the ticket, then the male aspirants against whom she is applying make-up all sorts of stories about her. And after all this, when her name goes to the party bosses, they do not select her name because they fear losing that seat.' --- Sushma Swaraj says. (Alom: 2015)<sup>70</sup>

The above quote of Sushma Swaraj (Union External Affairs Minister) gives a glimpse of the real picture of women who ever want to enter the political field and how women have to face problems and criticisms while entering the politics in a patriarchal society. India, being the largest democratic country in the world has witnessed a very

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<sup>70</sup> Shah Alom (2015). Participation of Women in Indian Politics and the role of Media, International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and social sciences, 4(1).

low representation of women in politics. Very few women are seen in holding key positions and decision making positions in the political arena. The marginalization of Indian women in politics is as old as the Indian society. Their scanty representation in political sphere is one of the main reasons for the exclusion of the interests of women in governance and developmental paradigms. They have been kept aside from political discourse since their childhood. (Alom: 2015)<sup>71</sup>

Among the political obstacles that women face in entering the field of politics, the following feature some prominently (Nadezhda Svadova)<sup>72</sup>:

- The prevalence of the ‘masculine model’ of political life and of elected government bodies;
- Lack of support from the party, for example, limited financial support for women candidates, limited access to political networks, and the more stringent standards and qualifications applied to women;
- Lack of sustained contact and cooperation from other public organizations such as trade (labour) unions and women’s groups;
- Lack of access to well-developed education and training systems for women’s leadership in general, and for orienting young women towards political life; and
- The nature of the electoral system, which may or may not be favourable to women candidates.

Women and men are taught different roles in life, for example, the home is women’s area whereas politics and public life is seen as the man’s world. Another point in this sex-role problematic is the fact that house work and family responsibility hinders women from participating in politics and public life. She mentions the theory of male conspiracy which derives from the Feminist Ideology and is based on the idea that men are discriminating women; therefore, women have low representation in political office. She continues with institutional constraints that women are less likely than

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid .

<sup>72</sup> Nadezhda Svadova (n.d). Obstacles to Women’s Participation in Parliament. Retrieved from [http://www.idea.int/publications/wip2/upload/2.%20Obstacles\\_to\\_Women%27s\\_participation\\_in\\_Parliament.pdf](http://www.idea.int/publications/wip2/upload/2.%20Obstacles_to_Women%27s_participation_in_Parliament.pdf) on 16.07.2016.

men to become incumbents and, therefore, have less chance to get into office. The power, prestige and desirability of political office, she concludes, has also been seen as a factor determining the level of representation of women since these characteristics are seen as male dominated where women have strong difficulties to compete with men. (Clark: 1991, 70-75)<sup>73</sup>.

From the Feminist perspective power can be understood as the domination of men over women having all the rights, liberties over the resources of the society. In a society power relations can be observed in the hands of men in the shape of “Oppression”, “Patriarchy”, “Subjection”, “Gender Discrimination” over women. S.D Beauvoir says in “The Second Sex” thus:

“[...]men always have assumed the status to be as transcendent subject and women have been relegated to the status of immanent other. Beauvoir designates men as “He is the subject, he is the absolute — she is the other (Beauvoir)<sup>74</sup>.

Hassim (2006) stated, women’s role in politics has always been a supportive one and as a result of this history women in politics are often undervalued, and often used to meet a quota<sup>75</sup>. Gender in politics has two sides and, although separate, it is associated with each other. One is women’s representation and the other is concerned with women’s issues. Representation increases the likelihood for the consideration of women’s issues, as well as, brings in gender perspective; however representation on its own cannot guarantee the desired outcome (Sumbadze 2008:33)<sup>76</sup>.

Several arguments for a gender-balanced representation have been brought up including one of the ground pillars of democracy; everyone’s equal right to participate in politics, to vote, become a candidate and participate in decision making processes

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<sup>73</sup> Blogren Emelie (2010) Women and Political Participation: A Minor Field Study on hindrances for women’s political participation in Georgia. Retrieved from <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:384843/FULLTEXT01.pdf> on 17.07.2016.

<sup>74</sup> Simone De Beauvoir (1949). The Second Sex. Retrieved from <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/2nd-sex/ch03.htm> on 17.08.2015.

<sup>75</sup> Pillay Nerisa (2008) The Portrayal of Women in Television Advertisements on Sabc3: A Reflection on Stereotypical Representation. Faculty of Humanities. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Retrieved from <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/8264/Corrections%20final%20draft%20copy.pdf?sequence=1> on 13.07.2016.

<sup>76</sup> Latif A., Usman A., Kataria J.R., Abdullah A. (2015). Female Political Participation in South Asia: a Case Study of Pakistan. *South Asian Studies A Research Journal of South Asian Studies*, 30(2), pp. 201 – 213. Retrieved from [http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/13%20Arfan%20Latif\\_30\\_2.pdf](http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/13%20Arfan%20Latif_30_2.pdf) on 14.07.2016..

(Held 2006, Dahl 2007:345). When arguments for democracy are brought up it is usually about demands on what could be called *politics of presence*. This implicates that all parts of society should be able to participate in politics to ensure that all opinions are represented in the decision making process. This politics of presence includes equal representation of men and women (Phillips 2002:15)<sup>77</sup>.

The gender-power-order according to the Feminist Theory is always present in our society; it shapes structures and sets current power relations. Marysia Zalewski writes that it appears that all feminists share the notion that different social benefits and burdens follow depending on what sex you are born as (Zalewski 2000:97). A central feature of feminist political theory is the notion that women and their situations are central to political analysis. Its interest lies in questioning the fact that men appear to have more power and privilege than women and asking how it can be changed (Bryson 2003:1).

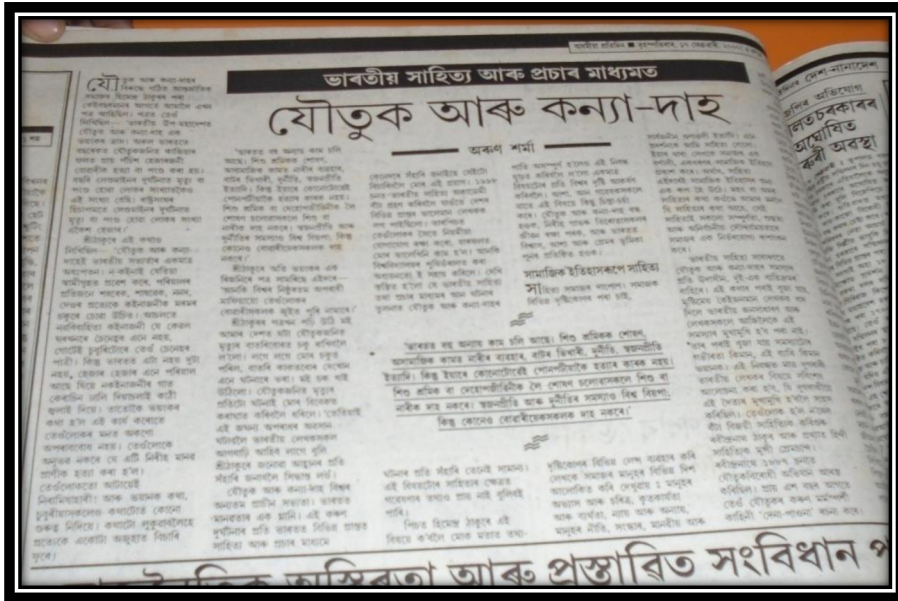
The Italian revolutionary Antonio Gramsci coined the term Hegemony to describe the dominance of one social class over others (Gramsci, 1971). Pedersen (2002) defined Hegemonic Masculinity as the general acceptance of masculinity as the primary characteristic of Western society that places women in positions below men. In Hegemonic Masculine societies, masculinity is the standard from by which everything else is measured, and masculine traits are the most desired and valued in society (Connell, 1995). Numerous scholars have contended that media serves as a hegemonic institution to preserve the power of men over women (e.g., Bryson, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994).

So, it has been seen in the article that the same situation of women is portrayed in the contents of the article. Women, being women, having the attributed stereotype qualities by the society, are still experiencing the status of victims in every field.

In the article entitled “Bharatiya Sahitya aru Prosar Madhyamat Joutuk aru Kanyadaah” (Dowry and burning brides alive in Indian literature and the Mass Media) published in *Asomiya Pratidin*, the writer Arun Sharma tried to portray women as victims of the age old tradition of dowry.

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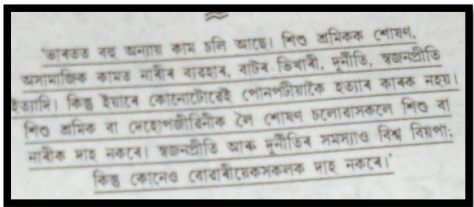
<sup>77</sup> Blomgren Emilie (2010). Women and Political Participation :A Minor Field Study on Hindrances for Women’s Political Participation in Georgia (G3 Thesis, Linnaeus University). Retrieved from <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:384843/FULLTEXT01.pdf> on 17.07.2016.



**PLATE 10: Dowry and burning brides alive in Indian literature and the Mass Media, February 17, 2000**

He has based his writings especially on the role of media and literature towards the age old oppression of women and lamented for the indifferent attitude of these two towards the brutality on women. The writer sympathetically illustrated the contemporary scenario of dowry and deaths caused by dowry in Assam and in India at large.

He says that it has been a part of Indian society since human civilisation began in India and women have been the victim of such an inhuman brutality of the society.



He says, "In India, there prevails lots of injustices, Oppression on the child labourers,

use of women in inhuman activities, corruption etc. But among these no single factor can be regarded as the direct factor of killing. Those who keep on carrying oppression on the child labours and prostitutes, or the corrupt people don't kill or burn the women or the daughter-in-laws."

The writer elaborately dilated on the topic of his writings but, nowhere does he recommend any solution for the problem. Having been judgemental he just victimised women in certain cases.

### 5.4.3 Portrayal of women as Inferior

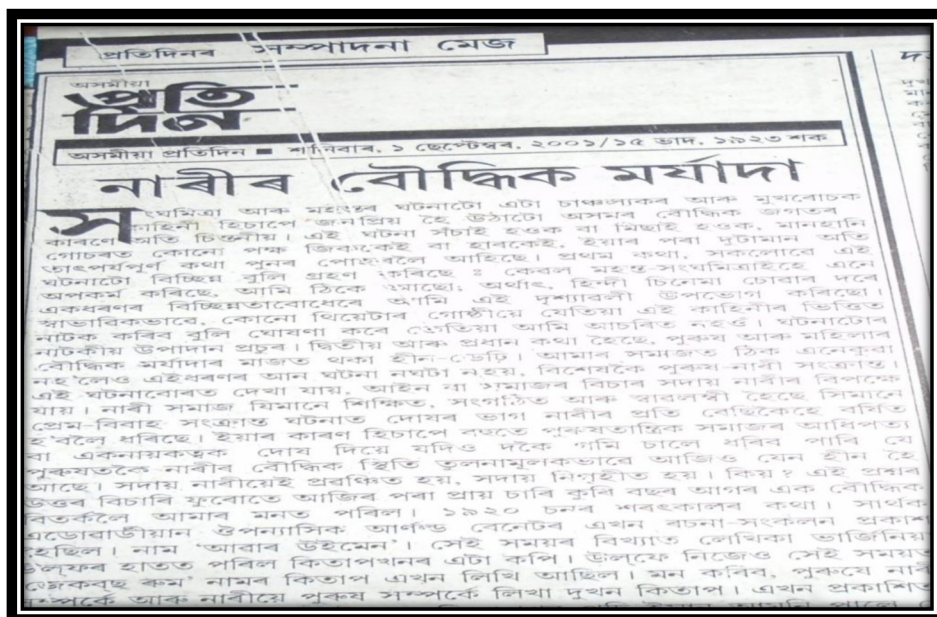


PLATE 11: Intellectual Dignity of women, September 1, 2001

In the editorial of *Asomiya Pratidin* entitled “Narir Bouddhik Marjada” (Intellectual Dignity of Women) the editor directly uses some words, attributing some stereotype qualities upon women, portrays women as inferior being in regard to intellectuality in comparison to men. In the first half of the content he mentions about the love affair of Prafulla Mahanta and Sanghamitra Bharali and after that he raises the question of women’s intellectual power.

In the second half of his passage he tries to find out the answer he made earlier. So, he refers to the controversy between Arnold Bennett and Virginia Woolf over the intellectual power of women. Bennett in his book *Our Women* mentioned women’s lower intellectual power than men. He even said with a higher intensity that women could not be changed even though they received higher education and freedom. Reiterating the same, the writer said that in some secret moments women might dominate men but, when it came to the front of the society they would always weep or would choose the path of suicide. So, the editor, in the last sentence, is actually establishing the sayings of Bennett that women are inferior in case of intellect when compared to men and confirming that Bennett said the truth.



It has already been mentioned that women live in such a society where they have no right to make a choice. Whatever men want to do with them, directly or indirectly, they do. The concept of gender inequality and gender based power structure can be found in the writings of the editor. The impact of this writing among the people will be in the shape of negative and stereotyped thoughts on women. It is well stated in the following:

According to Painter and Ferruci (2012), gender socialization can become a part of a young girl's conception of her identity, and media portrayals of specific characters, professions or roles provide with socializing messages about women in general. This can be detrimental to gender equality. Studies have shown that men are more likely to endorse traditional gender ideology, more so than women do, and this is because traditional ideologies regarding femininity and masculinity uphold traditional gender-based power structures (Levant et al, 2007)<sup>78</sup>.

Beauvoir said:

In all the societies there exist the essential and the inessential; the self and the other, and all the societies reflect this duality. From this perspective, woman is socially constructed in relation to male and considered as inferior to the superior male. The man from his infant age has been cherished to assume an unquestioned superiority. Later on his superiority defines woman's role, creates and maintains a mythology of woman based on her femininity, weakness and subordination to his power.”

Woman is an integral part of the society. No society or country can progress without the active participation of woman. Although the place of woman in society has changed from age to age and culture to culture, one fact common to all societies is that woman has never been considered equal to man. The discrimination begins right from her childhood as she is treated differently. Male superiority is inculcated in her. Even most of the scriptures of the world including *The Bible*, *The Quran* and *Manusmriti* define the role of woman, putting her in the “confines of household”.

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<sup>78</sup> Roussel Stephanie Ortego (2007). An Analysis of Femininity: How Popular Female Characters in the Media Portray in Contemporary Womanhood (Thesis, Master of Communication, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College). Retrieved from [http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-04092013-114158/unrestricted/StephanieRoussel\\_FinalThesis\\_041213.pdf](http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-04092013-114158/unrestricted/StephanieRoussel_FinalThesis_041213.pdf) on 19.07.2016.

According to Gender stereotypical perceptions women are supposed to be dependent, weak, incompetent, emotional, fearful, flexible, passive, modest, soft-spoken, gentle care-takers while men are powerful, competent, important, logical decision-makers, aggressive, focused, strong and assertive (Sharda Adhikari:2014, p.44)<sup>79</sup>.

Gender stereotype and gender inequality is so deeply engraved in the long history of social consciousness that it is now believed that only the media with its tremendous reach and power would be the ideal tool to bringing about gender equality (ibid).

In India where a patriarchal society flourishes, ‘preference for a son’ is an age-old gender bias, in which the male of the family bears the responsibility of ‘carrying forward’ the family’s name. He is supposed to support his parents in old age and also perform their last rites when they die. The fact that daughters are generally regarded as ‘Parayadhan’ or ‘somebody else’s wealth’ and the giving away as dowry to the groom ensures that daughters are often seen as an ‘economic liability’ (ibid).

In the concept of traditional femininity, a “girl” or a “woman” is associated with “weakness, vulnerability, gentleness and to some extent invisibility” (Jeanes: 2011, p. 404). Based on Freud’s theories of the Oedipus and castration complexes, Laura Mulvey, in her seminal work about film critique, cites that in an effort to protect the male viewer from these complexes and prolong his pleasure, the woman is either turned into a fetish or restored to her “due place in the patriarchal order by the end of the film by punishing her or by reintegrating her into a romantic relationship” (Mulvey, 1988; MacDonald, 1995, p. 27)<sup>80</sup>.

Specific to media, feminist theory argues that women in subordinate roles “encourage societal adherence to patriarchal notions of femininity” (Lowe: 2003, p. 123). Representations of women in the media, most specifically misrepresentations of women, have produced gender inequalities that transition into real life (Pech: 2006). Pech adds “these inequalities are manifested in stereotypes, which suggest that a female character, by virtue of being female, possesses all the qualities that are commonly associated

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<sup>79</sup> Adhikari Sharda (2014). Media and Gender Stereotyping: The need for Media Literacy. *ISCA International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(8), 2319-3565. Retrieved from <http://www.isca.in/IJSS/Archive/v3/i8/8.ISCA-IRJSS-2014-109.pdf> on 17.07.2016.

<sup>80</sup> Roussel Stephanie Ortego (2007). An Analysis of Femininity: How Popular Female Characters in the Media Portray in Contemporary Womanhood (Thesis, Master of Communication, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College). Retrieved from [http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-04092013-114158/unrestricted/StephanieRoussel\\_FinalThesis\\_041213.pdf](http://etd.lsu.edu/docs/available/etd-04092013-114158/unrestricted/StephanieRoussel_FinalThesis_041213.pdf) on 19.07.2016.

with women (2006, p. 4). These stereotypes tend to complement historically constructed ideas of gender roles and are perpetuated repeatedly in the media (Lorber & Farrell: 1991). These stereotypes can provide limiting representations of what it is like to be a woman to young adolescent girls, skewing her social construction of healthy gender identity. (ibid).

According to Catharine MacKinnon, domination is closely bound up with her understanding of gender difference. According to MacKinnon, gender difference is simply the reified effect of domination. As she puts it, “difference is the velvet glove on the iron fist of domination. The problem is not that differences are not valued; the problem is that they are defined by power” (MacKinnon 1989, 219). If gender difference is itself a function of domination, then the implication is that men are powerful and women are powerless by definition. As MacKinnon puts it, “women/men is a distinction not just of difference, but of power and powerlessness....Power/powerlessness is the sex difference”. (MacKinnon 1987, 123)<sup>81</sup>

Indeed, MacKinnon claims that it is a basic “fact of male supremacy” that “no woman escapes the meaning of being a woman within a gendered social system, and sex inequality is not only pervasive but may be universal (in the sense of never having not been in some form” (MacKinnon 1989, 104–05). For MacKinnon, heterosexual intercourse is the paradigm of male domination; as she puts it, “the social relation between the sexes is organized so that men may dominate and women must submit and this relation is sexual — in fact, is sex” (MacKinnon 1987, 3). As a result, she tends to presuppose a dyadic conception of domination, according to which individual women are subject to the will of individual men. If male domination is pervasive and women are powerless by definition, then it follows that female power is “a contradiction in terms, socially speaking”. (MacKinnon 1987, p.53)<sup>82</sup>

#### **5.4.4 Portrayal of Women as Objects of Sex and Entertainment**

The objectification of women as entertainment in Print Media has a long story. This exploits the women as they reduce to being nothing more than the objects to be own, playthings to be shown off and treasures to be touched. The importance of physical

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<sup>81</sup> *Feminist Perspectives on Power* (n.d). Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-power/> on 19.07.2016.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

attractiveness of a woman is shown in a magazine or in print media to the higher intensity which prompts many women to compare themselves with the images of physical perfection, thinness and beauty found in the contents of Magazines. Researches made on this specific study already have established that some women compare themselves to the idealized images as showed in the magazines and that some women who compare themselves with these highly attractive actresses or models or glamorised women may experience negative feelings. Such images created by the media reduce the status of women to mere objects of the men's world and the puppets of the patriarchal society. According to the Feminists, due to the consumption of women's body by the men, women as a group is reduced to the tools for men's purposes, women are judged on the basis of their appearance, their beauty. Due to the existing conception regarding sex and gender inequality in the society women have to be the "objects" and the men obviously the "objectifiers."

Objectification revolves around the concept of treating a person, someone with humanity, as an object of merely instrumental worth, and this kind of concept reduces the status of an individual to an object which becomes ready for use for the satisfaction of the other people.

Media, especially, the Print Media, which are being revered for the social responsibility they have shown, through the contents, should do justice to women portraying women as human beings having respect and self-identity and not as objects of entertainment or sex objects for the men.

In case of the Assamese Media also, through the analysis of data, the truth regarding the print media's role towards portrayal of women has come to the forefront that these are regenerating the inferior status of women, have been depicting women as objects of entertainment and, thus, opening the path for the sexual harassment or other sex related violence on women.

In the particular items "Bogi Hoboloi Mon Jai Jodi" (Plate 12) and "Goromor Dinot Saundrajya Rokhya" (Plate 13) relating to women, contents are resounded with the sound of depicting women as objects of entertainment for the satisfaction of the male gaze.



PLATE 12: If someone wants to be fair, December, 2000 (Bismoy)

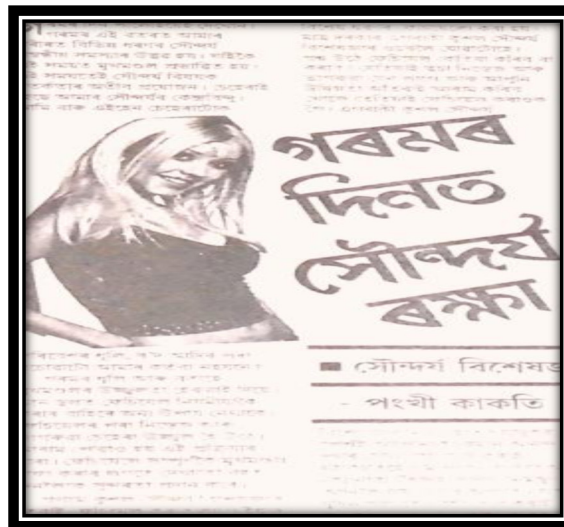


PLATE 13: Look after the beauty in the summer, October, 2000 (Asomiya Maya)

The dangerous consequence of objectifying women has been highlighted by Dr Jean Kilbourne who notes that, “turning a human being into a thing is almost always the first step in justifying violence against that person.” It has been criticised that media, being the part of the patriarchal society show women always as the puppets or in other words toys for men, when he is happy with her till then she has the identity, otherwise she is nothing. For this very reason, this thought cultivates in the minds of both men and women that women should look beautiful and slim, and smart. The media, it

seems, is loathed to project the image of a woman as a serious partner in decision-making, a successful professional or an erudite politician or leader. Neilson quoted like this:

According to the feminist philosopher Susan Bordo (2003) the idealisation of slimness in women is a very recent phenomenon, dating from the 1920s. It is often argued that the thin ideal is the outcome of successful marketing by the fashion industry, which has become the standard of cultural beauty in the industrialised affluent societies of the twentieth century. Clothes fashions were represented by hand-drawn illustrations until the 1920s, when they started to be photographed and widely distributed in mass-market fashion magazines. These magazines presented a fantasy image of how women should look. The fashions themselves demanded a moulding of the female body, because each 'look' suited a particular body shape (Grogan: 1999, as quoted in Neilson: 2008, p-9)<sup>83</sup>.

At some time or the other, the images of both men and women are determined by the traditional stereotyped qualities attributed by the society and the culture itself. Media through their portrayals reinforce the socially and culturally imposed stereotypical images of women. So, Julia T. Wood in her article "Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on Views of Gender" says:

In general, media continue to present both women and men in stereotyped ways that limit our perceptions of human possibilities. Typically men are portrayed as active, adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive and largely uninvolved in human relationships. Just as consistent with cultural views of gender are depictions of women as sex objects who are usually young, thin beautiful, passive, dependent, and often incompetent and dumb. (1994, p-31)<sup>84</sup>

All forms of media communicate images of the sexes, many of which perpetuate unrealistic, stereotypical, and limiting perceptions. Three themes describe how media represent gender. First, women are underrepresented which falsely implies that men

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<sup>83</sup> Nielsen C.T. (2008) Women's Magazines & Body Images :An empirical case study of the Danish fashion magazine Costume. Media and Cultural Studies. Hogskola. Retrieved from <http://dspace.mah.se/bitstream/handle/2043/6209/?sequence=1> on 14.07.2016.

<sup>84</sup> Wood J. (1994). The Gendered Media: The Influence of Media on views of Gender. Retrieved from <https://www1.udel.edu/comm245/readings/GenderedMedia.pdf> on 17.07.2016.

are the cultural standard and women are unimportant or invisible. Second, men and women are portrayed in stereotypical ways that reflect and sustain socially endorsed views of gender. Third, depictions of relationships between men and women emphasize traditional roles and normalize violence against women<sup>85</sup>.

Media has perpetuated an artificial concept of what being “beautiful” means by the propagation of images and representations of man’s constructed idea of beauty. As a result, women are now influenced to look in this way to be accepted by the society, regardless of its horrific consequences, such as anorexia, bulimia and depression. Media culture has contributed to the construction of the identity of the individual. Postmodern theories have demonstrated that identity is not fixed and that it becomes flexible, and it is able to change and innovate. Indeed, as media has evolved throughout time, where it mostly served political purposes, nowadays it serves other purposes<sup>86</sup>.

The role models shown both in print and visual media, through contents or pictures, are becoming the “ideal” women for the viewers and even they try to compare the women of their lives with the role models shown in the films or advertisements in terms of body, beauty, style and so on. In recent times many scholars of gender studies fear the consequences of these portrayals of women as this will definitely create a situation of identity crisis for the women folk. The portrayals do nothing but reduce women into mere objects, a socially institutionalised concept about women which personify women as inferior to men. Regarding this R.M. Tong quotes like this:

What Wollstonecraft most wanted for women is personhood. She claimed that a woman should not be reduced to the “toy of man, his rattle,” which “must jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused.” In other words, a woman is not a “mere means,” or instrument, to one or more man’s pleasure or happiness. Rather, she is an “end-in-herself,” a rational

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Valeria Del Castilo (n.d) The Impact of Globalisation on Women’s Body. Retrieved from [http://www.academia.edu/6035716/The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Globalized\\_Media\\_on\\_Women\\_s\\_Body\\_Image](http://www.academia.edu/6035716/The_Impact_of_Globalized_Media_on_Women_s_Body_Image) on 12.07.2016.

agent whose dignity consists in having the capacity for self-determination.  
(2009, p-16)<sup>87</sup>

In fact this harmful “ideal” put forth by the media restricting women to show off their originality as women are human beings and having equal footing with men, put women in the cage of patriarchy, globalisation, capitalism and the other modern systems born out of the basis of patriarchy. The standard set forth by the media, with bringing aspiration, among women to become one, ultimately re-energises and generates patriarchy — all totally neglect the emotions and thinking of a woman in real. The following passage will clear it:

In the consumer and media societies that emerged after world war Two, identity has been increasingly linked to style, to producing an image, to how one looks” [...] the postmodern paradox is that while we aim for individuality, we “copy” and further create and perpetuate stereotypes that are created by consumer culture, so the individual is mediated and transformed by this consumer culture. Both men and women are constantly constructing their identities that is influenced by the images and representations disseminated in the media. However, as much as feminism (according to some perspectives) has made great progress by giving rights to women, and through their inclusion and empowerment in society, others argue that given the pervasiveness of these images, women have become more oppressed by being enslaved to makeup, surgery and other mechanism to be “beautiful”.

Being the receptor of the mediated stories the viewers start to act like the stories go and gradually the images of men and women get imprinted in the minds of the people. As viewers appreciate the way women are projected as beautiful, fare and slim in advertisements and magazines, the images, in turn, introduce an element of sexuality and desire. So, these images and representations create arousal and desire in men — sometimes women do not have to speak or act sexually, but their mere presence represents and activates sexuality. As a result, women end up being objectified in sex and entertainment portrayed as sex objects. It is well stated in the following:

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<sup>87</sup> Tong Rosemarie (2009) *Feminist Thought: A more comprehensive Introduction*. USA: Westview Press.



The globalisation of media images and representations of female beauty, besides constructing and reshaping our identities, have homogenised and normalised the female body and the concept of beauty itself. As Bordo (1995) states, “cultural, racial, ethnic and sexual differences are smoothed if they disturb 'Anglo-Saxon, heterosexual expectations and identifications’”. This means that media representations homogenize the concept of female beauty<sup>88</sup>.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

Lastly, it can be said that overall effect of the portrayals of women in Assamese Print Media will reinforce rather than reduce the prejudices and stereotypes against women. Even though it cannot be ignored that Media can play a useful role in disseminating information, educate the general public; it can be used for creating proper awareness, imparting education and preventing mal-practices against women. In today’s media governed society every individual construct their ideas according to the stories, narratives shown or written in media. So, media affects each and every individual to think what they are and what they could do — the current widespread access to media’s limited representations of gender can have undesirable effects. When people are repeatedly shown images of women as victims, sexualised, or in domestic roles, they are more likely to accept these images as normal. As a matter of fact, when women are portrayed as passive, dependent or weak, it can seem unusual for them to be active, independent or powerful in society. This can affect both men’s and women’s ideas about which careers women might be good at, how important it is for women to be sexually attractive, and whether women should be in positions of authority.

So, if the Assamese Print media continue to present women as sex objects or distressed or inferior it would normalise the cultural indictment of men’s superiority which had been solidified through the ages in the religious writings, rites and rituals, customs and so on. Women of Assam would become the victims of the harassment which might be in the shape of wife battering, rape, witch craft, death related to dowry and many more. But, it will accommodate to fulfill Manu’s dictum:

In childhood must a female be dependent on her father; in youth on her husband; her lord being dead, on her sons; if she have no sons, on the near kins-

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<sup>88</sup> Valeria Del Castillo (n.d) The Impact of Globalisation on Women’s Body. Retrieved from [http://www.academia.edu/6035716/The\\_Impact\\_of\\_Globalized\\_Media\\_on\\_Women\\_s\\_Body\\_Image](http://www.academia.edu/6035716/The_Impact_of_Globalized_Media_on_Women_s_Body_Image).

man of her husband; if he left no kinsman, on those of her father; if she have no paternal kinsman, on the sovereign. A woman must never seek independence<sup>89</sup>.

In a Third world country like India where a woman has to live under the guardianship of her father, her brother, her husband and, then, her son, it is a dream which is yet to be accomplished to think about freedom and empowerment of women.

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<sup>89</sup> *The Condition of Woman in Heathen Countries, North British*. Retrieved from <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/acg2248.1-16.002/97>