PREFACE

The topic that I have chosen is a product of two major important incidents. One is personal –since I have come to Delhi for my studies I have faced lot of questions from my classmates, friends, from unknown people that is related to North East. The questions range from ethnicity (including the physical appearance), language, sense of dress, food habits to religion. Some of the questions really troubled and disturbed me, as I find that there is a lack of proper understanding amongst the people of India per se and thereby such skeptical ideas about India’s North East. I tried to convey to my friends that North East is a product of Political engineering to quote by Professor Sanjib Barua and people are the same as they are in other parts of India. I felt that as an Indian, the onus lies also on me to bridge the present gulf, a sense of alienation that has gripped the seven North Eastern sisters including Assam (of late Sikkim has also joined in this group). I then decided to work on a topic, which is presently burning, bleeding and reeling under the impact of unprecedented violence and closely related to North East.

The second reason is of academic nature. It was my teacher in Cotton College, Guwahati, Dr. Nani Gopal Mahanta, who has introduced this topic and later on I have decided to work on it. My teacher as well as guide, Dr. Amit Prakash of Jawaharlal Nehru University has also showed his interest into this topic and directed me with patience and shaped my present work into the present form.

My topic, Women in conflict situations: A study of Nalbari District is based on empirical work. It is an analysis of various data that I have gathered through various channels (be it from Indian Army, Police personnel, the women victims, both direct and indirect). I have not aligned my viewpoint with any group/ideology and have tried to take a neutral stand. During the course of this study, I have faced a number of practical limitations, such as non-availability of the sample, problems in traveling due to poor roadways and in fact no connecting road at all to the interior villages like Lakhipar coupled with security reasons of Nalbari district, difficulties of meeting the women militants, problem of staying in the interior places of Nalbari due to the lack of basic
facilities like availability of sanitary toilet, electricity, drinking water, with no facility of internet and photocopying and even a local phone booth nearby. Language was also a problem at times, as Nalbari comprises Assamese, Bodo and Nepali people. Besides, in some areas people did not respond fearing me to be a government spy.

The study was extremely difficult, given the very sensitive nature of the issue. Over and above this the study continued over an extended period of time and during that period the situation kept on changing, mostly political.