CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Problem

The present study has two main but interrelated concepts – family structure and kinship network. Both family and kinship happen to be the important areas in anthropological research since the beginning of the discipline. Here, an attempt has been made to elucidate the concepts of family and family structure to be followed by kinship and kin-network. “The term nuclear family refers simply to a group of at least two adults of opposite sex, living in a socially approved sex relationship, with their own or adopted children” (Lesslie 1973, p.13). “Family is a co-residential group which consists of two or more individuals of opposite sex, with or without offsprings and which lives apart from other kins” (Encyclopedia of Social Science, Vol. V). Rosser and Harris conducted an extensive research on the nature of extended families in India and concluded that it is a persistent grouping of persons related by descent, marriage or adoption which is wider than the elementary family and represented by the members of three generations from grandparents to grand children (Rosser and Harris 1965, p.32). But it is difficult to provide a concrete definition of family as it is a subject to change under different social and cultural contexts. The structure of family changes from time to time both longitudinally and latitudinally. The Western scholars have developed four approaches to study family, they are, the institutional approach, the structural functional approach the interactional approach and the developmental approach (Ramakrishnan 1988, pp.3-6).
I. The institutional approach deals with the comparative study of marriage and family of different societies and traces the historical development of these institutions.

II. The functionalists are interested in the functions that are performed by the families depending upon the level of developments of environment or social system all around.

III. Interactionists are interested in finding out the behaviours of individuals in group developmental approach is concerned with the family cycle.

The family as a social institution has always been regarded as a core element for the development of the individual as well as for the society and the state. Therefore the changes of family values are given much attention all over the world. As mentioned the development of an individual, society, and state which are very much dependant on the family, hence the changes require the knowledge of this status quo condition and context of the change. The function of the family are changing and shifting in relation to social and economic developments. The family is the foundational institution in societies- an institution which is a site of identity, emotion, cultural expression, care, despair, reproductive labour, systemic, violence, repression, and domination in ways that other institutions are not. Thus the study on family structure also reflects the kinship system and its strength, the existing social norms values and the stages of the process of development at which the society stands. It is under this backdrop, that a study on the existing Asasamese family system is proposed under the title “Assamese Hindu Family Structure and Kinship Network in Rural Urban Contexts in Kamrup District, Assam”.

In Anthropological studies, family and kinship have been the major thrust areas since the beginning of the discipline. In the beginning, anthropologists like Maine (1822-1888), Mc Lennan (1827-1881) attempted to reconstruct the origin and development of human marriage and family. Bacchoffen, Morgan, Malinowski, Brown were also interested in finding out the origin and reconstructing the gradual evolutionary stages of human family. Similarly, kinship studies were part and parcel of any ethnographic monograph on traditional preliterate societies. Morgan (1871) conducted an outstanding work in the history of kinship studies. He investigated the pattern of
kinship system and he analyzed the pattern through kinship terminology. The kinship systems are: Crow, Iroquois, Omaha, Eskimo and Hawaiian system. This way of patterning the kinship system continued up to the early 20th century. Upto this period the system was viewed only as a set of behaviour and conduct in relation to kinship terminology. Brown (1922) was the first to make an ice breaking effort to challenge the universal assumptions and theories about kinship as was postulated before. He tried to stress on the concrete network of relationship that exist between individuals in a typical interpersonal roles.

The term "family" is viewed differently by different anthropologists. According to Wolf, family is a system which is the bearer of virtue and public reputation. A man’s reputation is based on the family to which he belongs and his own relations with the family (c.f, Mandelbaum 1989; p. 33). Amongst all other social arrangements in the society, the family can be regarded as the omnipresent unit (Lowie 1920, p.66). The elementary family is the basis of formation of domestic groups of persons who live together and maintain an intimate daily life. But such groups have numbers of varieties and one common variety is the ‘parental family’ where the ‘household’ consists of parents and their unmarried children. Such elementary family is the basis of kinship structure (Brown and Forde1950, p.5). Family is the smallest social unit of a society which is popularly referred to as a kin based group. “The word ‘family’ is used in various ways. Firstly, ‘household, which is a body of persons living in one house where the authority lies in the hand of one head? They may include parents, children servants etc’.Secondly, ‘a group that consists of parents and their children, who may either live or do not live together’. Thirdly, ‘all those who are related by blood or by affinity’.Fourthly, the members of a lineage who are descended from a common ancestor” (c.f, Shah 1998; p.15). Shah tried to make a distinction between household and family. The term household has been used much in cognate disciplines. Two economists Mukherjee and Krishnaji analyzed the household size and composition of rural India. After the publication of census in 1951, the demographers are also interested in analysis of household data. On the other hand the family can be conceived as a group having certain activities or functions. The structure of family can be a nuclear and extended family. But Shah in his analysis used the term ‘simple’ and ‘complex’ households instead of the terms ‘nuclear’ and ‘joint’ (ibid). Society is an ongoing
process, it is not a mechanical device which can be stopped and restarted and therefore it must be continually replenished. The process of replenishment is done by the family which is the smallest component of a society (Mandelbaum 1989, p.33). Besides the reproductive and socializing functions of family, it also enables its members to connect with the wider society. Amongst all the relations in a society the bond of kinship is regarded as the most durable, reliable, worthy and moral. (ibid)

Family is an important social institution in a society. It is the first institution an individual has to encounter in one’s life. Family undoubtedly helps an individual to become a productive member of a society. But to define family is not an easy task and it has become a major issue in most of the family studies in Anthropology. This is because there are numbers of variant families throughout the world. Family is therefore regarded as the basis of society. Although various types of families are found in society yet it can be considered as an ideal form of living. The family is universal in nature. The institution has the significance both in the life of individual and society. However in the recent years many questions have been arouse on the traditional theories of family. They often take a divergent way and criticize the institution of family. In 1960 after the women’s liberation movement, the institution has been attacked by many feminists on the ground of the position of women inside the family. In the traditional joint family the men used to hold a superior position than the women. The division of labour is very clear cut in such a family. But in the urban context or where the women are educated or engage in some sort of occupation, it seems that the women enjoy more freedom than that of a traditional family. Some form of egalitarian family has emerged in the changing situation. It is evident from many studies conducted so far that though women become the equal partner in decision making still men have the exclusive say on the matters like expenses, family budget and the professional careers (Haralambos and Heald 1989, p.325).

In recent times, a vast body of sociological and social anthropological literature has been generated regarding the effect of various forces on the joint and nuclear families all over the world. Some of the studies are concerned with the effect of urbanisation or industrialisation on the type and size of the family in both rural and urban areas. While some writers are interested in finding out the relationship between
different variables like family structure and ownership of property, education, urbanisation caste, economic and social status, occupational types, industrialisation in contemporary Indian society. The Indian family has attracted the attention of many scholars. The reason behind this is that the structure of Indian family differs much from that of the western family. An Indian family is characterised by its large size comprising of grand parents, parents, uncles, aunts, cousins and grandchildren. This family system in India is known as joint or extended family system which is the traditional structure of family in India where the married sons with their families live together in a single roof, share a common hearth and hold a common property. The family in India is a patrilineal in nature where the descent, inheritance and succession are passed through the male line (Mandelbaum 1989, pp.34,35). The ideal of the joint family is its filial and fraternal solidarity. It implies that the brothers after getting married should remain in the parental household, sharing a common property, contributing equally in one purse and helping each other according to their capacities. Such solidarity is also reflected by the rule that the brothers should not separate in their life time and remain along with their parents. This ideology is strong only when the parents are alive but fades away with their death or when the brothers’ children get married. The concept of filial and fraternal solidarity is included in the textbook of Hindu Law, the Mitakshara. (ibid). In traditional Indian family the males have the power of authority in comparison to women. Age and sex are the important factors which play important roles in family hierarchy (Gore1965, p.216). The Indian joint family system withhold a long history. The joint family was in existence even during the time of Mahabharata. The Sanskrit books known as Brahmansas and Vedas also indicated the existence of patrilocal and patrilineal joint families in India. Even the Muslim rule and the British rule or the industrialisation and urbanisation could completely replace this traditional family structure in India (Karve 1953, p.10). Among the three important social institutions in India, the joint family is one, and the other two are the caste and the village. Thus the joint family is the familial norm of Indian society (Shah 1998, p.14).

Roy had noticed two basic trends in the family studies. According to one school of thought the nuclear families are best suited in urban industrial societies. The proffunder of the school were Parsons, Ogburn and Nimkoff, Burgess, Locke and Goode. According to these scholars joint or extended family does not fit in an industrial
Stuckert (1960) mentioned that the industrialisation can able to change even the mindsets of the people that they can choose to lead a life of their own without the interference of their kinsmen.

On the other hand the second school of thought which include Greenfield, Johnson and Litwak stated that urbanisation or industrialisation do not necessarily leads to the nuclearisation of family. Litwak (1969) had shown that industrialisation no doubt paves the way for geographical mobility but it does not break the traditional joint family, instead it gives rise to a new modified extended family.

### 1.2 Theoretical Significance of Family

One cannot deny the theoretical importance of family which makes it a more interesting subject of interest. Family is a universal institution which controls and directs our social behavior. It is the basic institution where a person learns his social behavior. In the other words enculturation of a child begins in the family. The duties of each person inside the family are his or her role within the family. The duties therefore define the role in the family. No one can escape from the family duties although other duties as religious, political and military can be transferred to others. Again if anyone does not follow his or her familial duties there is no kind of formal punishments but in general it is found that everyone performs the role responsibilities in the family more or less.

Family is regarded as an emotional and expressive unit but its importance in larger society cannot be ignored at all. Though family is the smallest social unit, it the first social institution one immediately encounters soon after the birth which moulds the behavioral pattern of an individual. Thus the personality develops in a family becomes the modal personality of a larger segment of a society. Again the socialization process that takes place inside the family is based on the cultural tradition of that particular society.

Family can also be regarded as an economic unit of a society. It underlies the fact that it puts pressure on an individual to eke out his living because each and everyone are concerned about how an individual’s time and energy is spent within the
family. Therefore if everyone acts accordingly in the family it helps to reach out the goals of a larger society.

There are many traits which make family theoretically interesting. The family is only an institution other than religion that is formally developed in all societies and which is in charge of great variety of social behaviors and activities. Family duties are the role responsibilities of every person in a society with mere exceptions. Other duties such as religious political or military can be delegated to others but no one can escape from one’s familial duties (Goode 2007, pp. 5-8). Taking part in family activities has further interesting qualities that though it is not backed by any formal punishments supporting many other obligations almost everyone takes part in it nonetheless. Cooper (1972) argues that “the family is an ideological conditioning device in an exploitative society. He stated that the family staunts the self and hampers the development of individuality”. Cooper also stated that in family children learns to be submissive to the authority which serves as basis of workplace in a capitalistic society. Fealey (1972) also offered a similar statement. She argues that “the structure of family relationship socializes the young to accept their place in a class stratified society. She sees the family as an authoritative unit dominated by the husband in particular and adults in general. She claims that the family with its authoritative ideology teaches passivity not rebellion”.

(i) Family and Industrialisation

Family studies or family relationship studies is predominant in sociological studies. In pre-industrial societies family and kinship plays an important role in society. According to Parson nuclear family is a typical form of family of industrial society. The members of nuclear family maintain ties with the kin members but it is more a matter of choice than binding obligation. Parson opines that nuclear family is an evolutionary stage from a joint one. He sees the isolated nuclear family in terms of his theory of social evolution. Evolution always brings structural differentiation. More institutions develop that has taken many functions of family and as a result isolated nuclear families depend upon these institutions which loosens the dependency upon wide range of kins. The family no longer remains an unit of production. An isolated nuclear family therefore has less interaction with the kin members which help in strengthening the
husband wife relationship. At the absence of other kins husband and wife has to depend upon each other for smooth running of the family. According to Parson the basic function of a family in industrial society is to stabilize the adult personality. Goode (2007) conducted a survey on the relationship of family structure and industrialisation. Goode also stated that industrialisation tends to undermine the extended family and larger kinship groupings. He gave the following explanation for this process, the relative high level of social mobility tends to weaken kinship ties. Secondly, the high rate geographical mobility decreases the intimacy among the kin members. Regarding the social mobility if a member of a working class raises upward economically, it tends to cut off his relationship with his family members and he will adapt to a new style of living. He also used the term role bargain in maintaining family relationship. He says that people tries to obtain maximum gains in a relationship. An individual maintains his relationship with others if he thinks that it will give him a good return (c.f Haralambos and Heald 1989 ,p.342-344).

(ii) Functional Perspectives of Family

Three questions arise from the functional point of view. Firstly, what are the functions of the family in maintaining the social system? Secondly, is there any relation between family and the other parts of the social system? The assumption to the question is that the whole social order lies in the smooth functioning of the families. The third question centers round the role played by the family on individual’s life. The emphasis here is on the individual and family (ibid).

(iii) Murdock’s Universal Functions of Family

Murdock concluded that there are four basic functions of family and they are sexual, reproductive, economic and educational which he noticed after studying about 250 families. These functions are important for life as sexual and reproductive functions of a family leads to the creation of a society, the individual’s life will paralyze without the economic functions of the family. Murdock used the term socialization for education, without which there would be no human culture. However family serves to fulfill these functions which no other institution can perform or compete its efficiency (ibid).
(iv) The Basic and Irreducible Functions of Family of Parson’s

According to Parson (1959) there are two important functions of family that are common to all societies. His analysis is drawn from the study of the American society. These functions are the socialization of individuals and stabilization of adult personalities in society.

Socialization according to him takes occurs at two levels, primary socialization and secondary socialization. Primary socialization begins at an early childhood period by internalizing the cultural values and shaping child’s character. The second form of socialization begins at the later stage when an individual starts learning culture from the various agencies of social system. In America, child’s personality is guided by the motivation of independence and achievements. According to Parson, family can be regarded as factories of the creation of human personalities.

The second function of family puts stress upon the marital relationship which helps in building support and providing warmth to combat the strains of life and thus stabilizes one’s personality. This function has much importance in the western industrial societies where the importance is given upon the conjugal relationship without the interference of other kins.

1.3 Kinship and Kinship Network

“The functional importance of the system kinship and marriage is that it enables people to live together and communicate with each other in an ordered manner” (Brown and Forde 1922, p.3). Morgan stated that “kinship is always understood in terms of consanguinity” (c.f, Malinowski 1913; p.171). “There are two major facts or functions of kinship. It organises social activities and regulates social relations, either in a limited sphere of social life or in terms of all social interests; and at the same time moulds individual’s psycho-social development” (Fortes 1949, p.339). “There are various approaches of collecting data on kinship, viz. the residential, the alimentary, the biographical, the linguistic and the material culture” (Firth 1936, pp.117) “Kinship is the concrete relationship between people that is guided by some customary principles” (Brown ,1922). The system kinship is based upon two principles, one is based on blood
ties and the other is based on the marital ties. The kins related through the tie of blood are known as the ‘consanguinal kins’ and the kins related through the marital ties recognised socially or legally are known as the “affinal kins” There are different types of kin categories defined in society on the basis of nearness and distance of relationship. They are primary kins, secondary kins and tertiary kins (Rao, 2001).

Kinship relationship can viewed from two angles, one is through blood ties and the other is through marriage. Relationship that can be traced through the former is the lineal generational bond (children, parents, grandparents and great grandparents) and the collateral bonds (siblings, cousins, nieces, nephews, aunts and uncles). The second type of kin relationship is the relationship that exists between the in-laws. Distinctions are often made between the primary kins and the secondary kins. Primary kins are those who belong to the family of orientation and procreation and the secondary kins are the other family members. Here the terms immediate family and extended family are used. Immediate family generally refers to the primary kins whereas the extended family denotes the secondary kins. Marriage as the basis of kinship is differentiated from kinship based on blood ties and sometimes blood is considered as more important basis of kinship other than marriage (Dykstra, 2009). An essential difference between kin relationship (other than marital ties) and the non kin relationship is that the former is given and the later is made. When a child is born, immediately a web of relationship is created but these relationships are not static and it changes as the child becomes parents and the parents become grandparents. Thus intergenerational changes of relationship are noticed among the family members. Endurance is the characteristic feature of kinship. It implies that the relationship continue to exist even though no interactions occur in between the members.

The direction of maintenance of kin relationship is a chosen one while one’s family of orientation is a given one. There is an element of choice regarding which ties are honoured. It is found in many research findings that the choice is based upon the particular norms of the society. In western societies it is found that providing support to the distant relatives is weaker among them. Kinship norms also suggest that the bond is weaker with the up- lineal line than the down lineal line. The parent –child relationship is regarded as the strongest bond and emphasis on lineal bond is more
typical among the Caucasians and the Asian families while the collateral bond is strong among the Black families. (ibid).

The inner meaning of kinship system is the social relationship, the relationship that is derived from birth and marriage. It is a cultural entity that brings the individual families into a network (Farber, 1971). Individual’s relationship with his kins is built up in the family which he is born and in which he grows up (Pritchard, 1929). “The research on kin relations and the ways it affects the individual and family is very needful. Globally the research on the extended family ties has made an u turn from descriptive to explanatory. According to him the kinship system is not a rigid one and continues to exist even in the changing societal context” (Berado 1970, pp.575-597). The study on kin relationship or kinship network is more associated with anthropology than with sociology or psychology. The researches on kinship network is often referred to as intergenerational relationship, sibling relationship and grandparenthood throughout the literatures. Researches on extended kins are very sparsely found but the parent child relationship research is mostly conducted type of research to be found (Dykstra, 2009). Studies on kinship network helps to find out the sources of inequalities that exist within the kinship relations. Intergenerational studies help to understand how advantages and disadvantages transmit to the next generation. The transmitted resources can be both material and non material. Material sources can be gifts, inheritance and financial support while the non material source can be cultural and social capital, norms and values etc. Studies using kin network characteristics as determinant of life chances form another example. Findings have shown that kin support has a positive impact on health status of an individual. Studies on kin relations also provide insight as how the cohesion exists between the family members. Kinship network helps in maintaining ties within the family members. The study on marriage pattern reflects whether the marriage network exists within one’s own social circle. Kin relationship can also be studied as a basis of social control. Sometimes strong kinship bond keeps a hawk eye to the behaviour of fellow family members (ibid).
1.4 Assamese Family: A Prologue

Assam is a multicultural- multi ethnic society and thus family structure in Assam covers a wide range of areas covering all those communities living in Assam. In this study we will confine ourselves to the study of only Assamese Hindu families. By the term Assamese family we will indicate only those families who follow Assamese way of life and speak Assamese language as their mother tongue. In the succeeding paragraphs a brief discussion about the existing structure of Assamese family is made.

(i) Rural Family Structure in Assam

78 per cent of the States total population lives in rural areas. In rural areas where agriculture and related activities are pre-dominating few individuals can hope to achieve economic security without being part of a cooperating group of kinsmen. As a result joint family system is common in rural areas. Families in rural areas are exposed to various forces, viz., land reforms, education, mass media, new technology, new development strategies, urbanisation, industrialisation, modernization, and so on. These forces are found to exercise tremendous influence on the contemporary family systems in rural Assam.

(ii) Impact of Land Reforms

Joint family system was effective originally due to common ancestral property, which was vast in size. Implementation of Land reforms measures such as ceiling on land holdings reduced the sizes of the holdings of many families. In many cases, the heads of the family resorted to theoretical partition of the family by dividing the land among the sons in order to avoid the law of the land ceiling. During their lifetime the sons live under his tutelage, if he was powerful; otherwise, sons gradually began to live separately during their parent’s life-time. Thus the theoretical partition hastens formal partition, and sows the seeds for separate living (Lakshinarayana 1982,p. 44). Again, in many cases, real partition had taken place in the joint family, immediately after the implementation of the land ceiling laws.
(iii) Impact of Education

Education, industrialisation and urbanisation have opened up the horizon for gainful employment to the villagers outside the village. Initially, a few members of the joint family move to the city for education. After successful completion of education, most of them join service or opt for other avenues of employment in the urban areas. They get married and start living with their wives and children. Gradually, such separate units become the nuclear families. However, the members of these nuclear units keep on cooperating with the other members of their natal family on most occasions.

(iv) Economic Difficulties in Rural Areas

The rural development strategies in India, aimed to eradicate poverty and unemployment, enhance a higher standard of life and economic development with social justice to the rural people. However, in reality these have generated regional imbalances, sharpened class inequality, and have adversely affected the economic and social life of the lower strata of the rural people. In the backward areas, people face enormous hardship to earn a livelihood. Hence, people of these areas are pushed to migrate to the urban areas. This migration has affected the family structure. Initially men alone migrate. Then they bring their family and gradually become residentially separated from their natal home.

(v) Growing Individualism

The growth of sense of individualism among section of the villagers is another factor that has been influencing the family structure in Assam. Expansion of mass media (viz., the newspapers, the T.V., the radio), formal education, consumerist culture and market forces have helped individualism grow at a faster rate than ever. The rural people and the members of the rural joint family have started believing more in their individuality. In the past, the size of the family was relatively big. The kinship network was large and obligations were more. It was imperative that relatives were given shelter. Today, every individual strives to improve his/her standard of living and enhance his/her status in the community outside the purview of the family and the kin
group. This is possible if the individual has lesser commitments and fewer obligations (Lakshminarayan 1982, p. 46).

(vi) Urban Family Structure in Assam

Most of the studies concerning urban family structure in India concentrated on a common point, i.e. whether the joint family in India breaking down and undergoing a process of nuclearisation due to urbanisation while there are lot of other aspects of urban family. Family structures in urban areas of Assam is effected by various factors such as education, income, socio ecological factors such as settlement pattern, cultural environment of the migrants and associations to various occupational, political, ideological, cultural-recreational, economic groups influence and reorient the style and pattern of the urban familial life.

The structural-functional anthropologists of the 1950s referring to the process of differentiation (societal units becoming more specialised) in modernising societies – stated that as a society modernises, its units become increasingly more specialised. They saw the modern, nuclear family as better structured to accommodate this process of differentiation. The family they were referring to consisted of father, mother and their children with the mother not being in paid employment. Being smaller, this family form was seen as better equipped than other family forms to operate in the modern economy, which revolves around individual achievement, and social and geographic mobility (Parsons and Bales, 1955). It was predicted that as all world cultures moved towards industrialisation, their family systems would approach some variant of the nuclear type (Goode 1982, pp. 181-183).

Urbanisation or industrialisation although has not occurred in a much larger scale in Assam yet considerable impact of urbanisation is visible on the formation of families and its gradual progression to nuclearisation. Since the 1970s changes in population patterns and the economy have significantly effected Assamese families. Over the last four decades, economic development, modernization, and rural-urban migration together altered family ties and contributed to a more fragmented family structure. There was a corresponding steady and noticeable decline in the average size of the family over the same period.
Two studies are worth mentioning so far as Assamese family and kinship are concerned:

Goswami (1953) only touched upon briefly, the 'social structure' of an Assamese village by using the term to mean the web of relationships existing between persons and groups of persons in the same village and within a wider area. Bhattacharya (1990) focused with the relationship between structure and individual in Assamese society. His treatment is based mainly in rural area of Nagaon district. Thus Assamese Hindu society has remained virtually untouched so far as studies of family and kinship network are concerned.

The above discussion makes it amply clear that Assamese family structure faces different challenges depending on its urban and rural settings. Such challenges take part in shaping the family – and it is the endeavour to explore the type of impact and extent of changes that such challenges effect on the family pattern.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the present study are to make a comparison between rural and urban Assamese Hindu family structure and kinship network. The study however concentrates on the comparison of the following objectives in the study areas of Dobok and Guwahati.

1. To identify and compare the size, composition and types of the families.

2. To examine the modes of family recruitment.

3. To mark out the pattern of authority structure in the family in terms of decision making power of women inside the family.

4. To investigate the nature of interpersonal relationship in the family by taking into consideration the relationship that exist between husband and wife, father and child, siblings relationship and the relationship between the in-laws.

5. To examine the composition of neighbourhood.
6. To examine the depth of kin knowledge and to list out the significant kins.

7. To find out how the geographical proximity plays the role in maintaining effective kinship network.

8. To evaluate the role of kinship network in different crisis rites of Assamese society.

9. To observe the pattern of maintaining relationship with the wife’s parental relatives or to examine the trend of matrilateral asymmetry.

10. To evaluate the pattern of interaction with the consanguinal kins.

11. To investigate the trend of establishing affinal relationship in terms of marriage distance.

1.6 Literature Review

Numerous studies have been conducted so far in the arena of family, all over the world which enriches the anthropological and sociological literature to a quite good extent. Some scholars are interested in finding out the effects of urbanisation and industrialisation on the family size and the structure, while the others are interested in finding out its relationship by taking the variables as education, ownership of property, social status, occupation etc.

However, in Anthropology, studies of family are always linked up with the study of kinship. Maine (1822), Mc Lenan (1827) were the pioneer in conducting the family studies. There studies were confined mainly to the origin and development of human family and marriage. Morgan (1871) inspired by Darwin’s evolutionary theory tried to reconstruct the gradual evolutionary stages of human family. Brown (1922) tried to study kinship on the basis of network of relationship. Gluckman (1955) in his of the judicial process among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia emphasized on the stability of the institution, family against all changes. Affiliated with Gluckman’s Manchester School of thought, John Barnes, Victor Turner and others stressed on the actual pattern of network in communities. Bott (1957); Young and Wilmott (1957) in their studies in Western societies suggested that the bilateral extended kins play a major role in
providing support and aid –material and advice, in day to day life and in especial occasions. Johnson (1960) from his research on family structure in Japan revealed that extended families did not give away under the impact of industrialisation. Goode (1964) mentioned that the families all over the world are gradually moving towards a conjugal type lessening the frequent linkages between the wider kin groups. Mitchelle (1965) emphasized on kinship system as the basis as the basis of stable functionalism. Roy (1984) studied the kinship system in Malaysia, with special reference to kinship interaction, kinship obligation, reciprocal help and extended kinship network in Malaysia.

**Indian Studies**

Kapadia (1951) asserted that the administration of the Hindu laws by the Britishers, left an impact upon the traditional joint family. It asserts the individual right over the property held by the head of the family.

Goswami (1953) analyzed the social structure of an Assamese village, where by applying the term structure; he tried to mean the social relationship between person and group of person in a village.

Karve (1953) made an outstanding contribution of Indian kinship system in Northern, Southern, Central and Eastern Zone. Karve stated that for an in depth study of any cultural phenomena, it is essential to have the first-hand knowledge of caste, language and the family.

Beals (1955) stated that the factors like the modern education system, a shift from the traditional occupation and industrialisation and the growth of market economy contributed together towards the growth of nuclear families in India.

Homans (1957) stated that the society is a web of social relationship between individuals. He referred to the individuals as the ‘social personalities’ who have specific roles and occupy specific ranks and status in the society.

Kapadia (1959) studied the families in Western India. He concentrated on the areas as the family size, attributes towards marriage and divorce. He came to the
conclusion that though family conflicts are there yet there is a tendency of living jointly among the coming generation.. He felt that in the changing situation the joint families have to make some sort of adjustments to combat the stress and strains. Kapadia found that though the majority of the families are nuclear in form, they maintain the jointness through mutual co-operation, rights and obligations. But the division is noticed regarding the matter of property.

Morrison (1959) found that the rise of the nuclear families in Badalpur was the result of the modern education, urbanisation, industrialisation and the acceptance of the modern values. He showed the correlation of education with the size of the family.

Orenstein (1960) in his research among the 59 villages of Poona examined the relationship between agricultural technology and the family type. He showed the predominance of nuclear families among those who access to the advance modes of agriculture equipments.

Ross (1961) in his study among the traditional middle and upper class urban Hindus also proved that factors like education, pressure on land, mass communication and employment opportunities in towns and cities played an important role in disintegration of the joint families and changes the roles within the family and also in the wider sphere of kinship network.

Desai (1964) also stated that the structure of family can be best understood in terms of one’s orientation to actions. He tried to label as nuclear if its actions are oriented only towards husband, wife and children. On the contrary if the actions are oriented towards the wider kin groups then a family can be labelled as a joint family. According to his findings the nuclear families are majority in number but it is not the prevailing pattern.

Shah (1968) tried to examine the assumption whether the joint family was really disintegrating from the Indian scenario. He carried out his field work in Gujarat to study the social structure and change in the village. He drove to a conclusion that the existence of nuclear families do not prove that the growth of the sense of individualism
among the people and that the process of transition of families from nuclear to joint still continues even among the professional class.

Singer (1968) in his study in Chennai city observed that though the nuclear families were higher in numbers yet they maintain their ‘joint family obligations’ in different aspects.

Vidyarthi (1969:32) while in his research among the tribal population asserted that changes were noticed in their family organization and the the conventional disciplines which was basically due to the change in occupational sphere

Scholars like Owens (1971), Vatuk (1971); Ramu (1973, 74), Khatri (1975); Conklin, 1974, 1976, 1977), proved that even amidst all the social an economic changes in Indian context, the nuclear families were seemed to maintain their network with the wider kins.

Chekki (1974) provided evidence that the increase literacy rate did not weaken the kinship ties but in some cases helped in systematic keeping of records of their kins.

Vatuk (1979) studied the changing western Indian kinship system. She studied the system from a complete different angle with the hypothesis of matrilateral asymmetry. Her study brought to light the emergence of the link with the mastrilateral kins which is supported by the fact of providing help and aids by the matrilateral kins in everyday life.

Cantlie (1982) was the first to provide an Anthropological account of the Assamese society, where many important aspects of the society were described with much acumenship.

Ishwaran (1982) in his study in a village in South India found that the majority families are joint in nature and the people attach ‘wealth’ to the meaning of the term jointness. According to the villagers one must have to depend upon his kin members in one’s lifetime. Ishwaran stated that the rise of nuclear families is due to the
geographical or social mobility but it does not underscore the importance of the joint family in society.

Lakshminarayana (1982) while describing about the Indian joint family system, forwarded the explanation of the partition of the joint family.

Roy (1984) suggested the operation of kin networks and his study revealed the importance of joint family tie in economic development.

Bhagabati (1989) while analyzing the caste system of Assam stated that the strict hierarchy of caste system is not found in Assam. It is due to the fact that a synthesis has taken place due to the merger of many high caste groups with the local tribal groups.

Heralambos and Heald (1989) have tried to interpret family from a theoretical viewpoint.

Mandelbaum (1989) provided a picture of Indian family which is basically a joint and he mentioned about the ideals of joint family as laid down in the Hindu scriptures.

Medhi (1989) made a systematic study on the Assamese Sikhs of Nowgong District and analyzed their social relationship in the rural context.

Sarma (1989) was of the opinion of the existence of the Brahmins and the non Brahmins in the Assamese society and the non existence of the Ksatriyas and Vaishyas in its demographic scenario.

Bhattacharyya (1990) conducted a study in Nowgong District, Assam which projected the relationship between structure and individuals in an Assamese society.

Lal (1990) conducted a study of urban families in Patna city where he dealt with different aspects urban Hindu family structure.

Mukhopadhayay and Seymour (1994), investigated whether the relationship exist between women’s education and the structure of family.
Barua (1997) conducted a study on popular culture of Assam which covered myriad folklores of Assam. It also included the folk literatures of Assam.

Seymour (1999) in India analyzed how urbanisation affects the family structure of the city dwellers of Bhubaneswar of Orissa. Her study covered a longer duration of 30 years of investigation. Her work can be regarded as an outstanding work on changing family structure in India.

Read (2000) in UCCLA division of Social Science wrote much about the significance of kinship relations in maintaining social order.

Das (2003) provided a descriptive account of the people of Assam. He made two broad divisions viz, the tribals and the non tribals. He included the Assamese Hindus into two groups *bamun* (Brahmins) and the *sudras* (non Brahmins).

Roy (2003) made a comparative analysis of family structure in India. He also studied the Indian kinship system. His study covered the tribals and the adibasi families, Muslims and the Jain families in India.

Sarma Daloi (2003) made a systematic and critical study on different aspects of folk culture flourished in Assam since early day’s upto the modern period.

Niranjan (2005) analysed the structure of Indian families on the basis of the census data.

Goode (2007) stressed on the theoretical importance of family along with the factors responsible for the changing families and its consequences.

Dykstra (2009) covered the aspects of kin relationships. He puts emphasis on its perspectives and deals with its different angles from where a detail study of kinship relation is possible.

Munro (2011) described how the various forces and factors within the family influence the decision making capacity of women.
Rashid (2011) shows different aspects of family where the women take part in the decision making and he also tried to analyse them in terms of the range of participation.

Chadda (2013) tried to present a picture about the transformation of the families from a nuclear to a joint one.

Miller and Keane (2013) laid down the idea of the structure of family and its classification accordingly to roles, rules, power of authority, alliances and sub systems

Mondal (2015) stated that the organization of families can be observed at the two levels-structural and interactional. The structural process of a family is linked up with its composition, role and rules while the interactional process deals with the different sets of relationships in the family and the ways of net working among kins.

Thus there are host of literatures on the issues of family and kinship pattern in different regions of India covering diverse settings like rural, urban, industrial-urban. But there is dearth of literature on the Assamese kinship and family structure. Anthropologists like Karve while dealing with Hindu kinship system across different regions of Indian did not cover Assamese kinship system. Her analysis covered Bengali kinship as the eastern most point and not beyond. So far as North eastern region is concerned, she has mentioned briefly some of the tribal societies like the Khasis.

Thus the Assamese Hindu society has remained virtually untouched so far as kinship and family studies are concerned.

1.7 Selection of the Topic

With this backdrop in mind, it was proposed to carry out a study on the rural-urban differences on family structure and kinship network with special reference to rural urban variation. The proposed study is entitled ‘Assamese Hindu Family Structure and Kinship Network in Rural Urban Contexts Kamrup District Assam’.
The Assamese Hindu community was selected mainly for the study because there is dearth of literature on the Assamese kinship and family structure.

1.8 Methodology

In consonance with the objectives of the present study, field work was so designed to get a comparative view of Assamese Hindu family structure and kinship networks in the rural and urban contexts. The urban sample was collected from Guwahai city and the rural sample was collected from the village Dobok1, of Rangia town. The village Dobok 1 will be referred to as Dobok in the present study. These areas were selected mainly because in these areas, Guwahati has been the centre of urban living since long past. So the traditions of rural and urban family and kinship networks can be clearly defined and compared between these areas. The present study is an empirical study and primary data for the study is being collected from selected urban and rural localities. For selection of the village the senior and knowledgeable members of the village were consulted. The village headman was also consulted for the purpose. The purpose of the study was properly unfolded before them. The village is a multicastrate one and situated 13km away from the Rangia town and 40km away from the District headquarter Amingaon. The total geographical area of the village is 3.2 Sq.km. It is one of the 90 villages under the Rangia Police station.

In case of Guwahati for the purpose of introduction and fixing date for interviews, telephonic conversations proved quite useful. A notional map was very handy in conducting the field work. During the period of October –December 2010, the preliminary study for the fixation of the urban sample was conducted. Considering the comparative nature of the study, the urban families were selected carefully so that the sample represents the true urban characteristics. Therefore only those Assamese Hindu families were considered who have been living in Guwahati for at least two to three generations. The families were so selected because it is believed that two to three generations in urban living is needed in order to get the family and kinship relations to acquire an urban impact to get the urban characters to be stabilized. New migrant families were excluded from the purview of the study. As these families are yet to
acquire the urban characters. For all purposes, only Assamese Hindu families are considered for this study. The assumption here was that, the families with rural background require a minimum of two generations to adjust to the urban settings. So the new migrant families were excluded from the purview of the urban sample of the present study. For this purpose, data was collected from areas like Uzan Bazar, Silpukhuri, Chandmari, Zoo Road, Rehabari, Ulubari, Dispur and Panjabari. For selection of this urban sample, a list of 200 families was prepared during October – Dec 2011 with the data from school children and fair price shops.

Generation depths of 2-3 generations have been selected for the present study.

Both the qualitative and quantitative data are gathered from both the study areas. The primary data are collected by applying the methods of schedule, observation, interview and case study and genealogical methods. The primary sources of data are generated mainly from the head of the household and the senior most women of the families. Secondary data have been collected from the different sources such as books, journals, census reports and websites.

1.9 Sample Size

The village Dobok is a multi caste and multi community village consisting of both the Assamese Hindu and the Assamese Muslim population. For the present study the data have been collected from 200 Assamese Hindu families excluding the Assamese Muslim families. Similarly in case of Guwahati too, the data have been collected from the 200 Assamese Hindu families those living in Guwahati at least for two generations.

1.10 Definitions

(i) **Nuclear family**: This type of family includes nuclear pair i.e., Head and Spouse with or without unmarried children

(ii) **Joint family**: Head and spouse with married son(s)/daughter(s) and their spouses and parents with or without other not currently married relation(s) (OR) Head without
spouse but with at least two married son(s)/daughter(s) and their spouses and/or parents with or without other not currently married relations.

(iii) **Extended family**: Head and spouse with married brother(s)/sister(s) and their spouses with or without other relation(s) [including Married relation(s)] (Or) Head without spouse but with at least two married brothers/sisters and their spouses with or without other relations.

(iv) **Primary kins**: One’s primary kins are located in a nuclear family. Eight types of primary kins are found in a nuclear family, husband-wife, father-son, mother-son, father – daughter, mother-daughter, younger brother-elder brother, younger sister-elder sister, and brother sister.

(v) **Secondary Kins**: Outside the purview of nuclear family there are 33 pairs of relationship recognized in a society for example, mother’s brother, brother’s wife, sisters’ husband, father’ brother etc.

(vi) **Tertiary Kins**: The tertiary kins are those who are the primary kins of the secondary kins. For example, sister’s husband’s brother, and wife’s brother’s son etc. Anthropologists have spoken about 151 tertiary kins.