Primary education is the foundation on which the development of every citizen and the nation as a whole is built on. Virtually every World Development Report published annually by the World Bank has recognized, in one form or another, the importance of primary schooling as an input to the social and economic progress of poor countries (Handa, 1995). Widespread education not only helps growth through productivity effects, but also crucial to distribution of the gains from growth. The human knowledge, skill, attitude can contribute greatly towards the economic development of a region, state or country. The fact is true to the overpopulated countries like India. Within the country, economic development of some of the states, notwithstanding their abundant material resources, has been very slow while a few others with far less natural endowment have achieved remarkable progress. The difference is primarily due to the human factor.

Human Resource Development treats human as resource, instrumental to attain its concerned goal. Educational investments in children have been shown to have high private and social returns. The private returns are associated with increasing productivity and earnings in adulthood, and with further non-pecuniary gains arising from the greater efficiency with which educated individuals are able to acquire and process information (Rosenzweig, 1995). The social premium to education over and above the private value includes further increase in productivity arising from knowledge spillovers, gains in health of one generation that flow from gains in education from the previous, which improves the functioning of civic society and democracy. Growth in a society in which most people have a basic education is most likely more pro-poor than growth in a society in which the educated are the elite few (Becker and Tomes, 1986).

Education is now widely valued not only for its intrinsic value in enriching the lives of individuals but for its functional value also in the development of the human capital of a nation. Education has a great bearing on social structure, modes of living, thought and behavioural patterns and personality structure of the individual. (Athparia, 2004). The fundamental difference between a learned and an illiterate person, which can be found in their attitude towards life and work is that the former
always take a very positive, self-esteem and self-confident approach towards his action, whereas self-esteem, confidence or self-reliance are the rare characters in case of an illiterate one. Education not only increases knowledge, skill and positive work attitude, but it also helps to develop a rationale of higher social value among the people. (Chakrabarti and Bhattacharya, 2004). In summary, education is a powerful tool for reducing poverty, unemployment, and inequality, improving health and nutrition and promoting sustained human development led growth (World Bank-2004:69)

The idea of Education For All (EFA) was conceived in the UNESCO General Conference in November, 1989 and the four UNO agencies namely, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP and the World Bank took the leadership to sponsor a World Conference on Education for All from 5th to 9th March, 1990 in Jomtein, Thailand. The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 1990, as the International Literacy Year. From this conference, the World Declaration on Education For All was adopted, which stressed that education is a fundamental human right and pushed countries to strengthen their efforts to improve education. With the proclamation by the World Community of a renewed commitment to ensure that the basic learning needs of all children, youth and adults are met effectively in all countries.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

It is an inescapable fact that despite phenomenal expansion of education in countries around the globe during the past decades and notable efforts to universalization of primary education, millions of children continue to remain deprived of the benefits of education due to variety of causes. More than 100 million children including at least 60 million girls have no access to primary schooling. An equal number fail to complete basic education programme and millions more satisfy the attendance requirement but do not acquire essential knowledge and skills (Nanda, 2007). These millions comprise of the poor rural and remote populations, indigenous people, ethnic, racial and linguistic minorities, people under low occupation and girls. These are the world’s educationally disadvantaged population groups. As a result, there are vast inequalities in educational attainment in the world over.

Learning for life in the 21st century requires equipping children with a basic education in literacy and numeric, as well as the more advanced, complex skills for living that can serve as the foundation for life- enabling children to adapt and change
as do life circumstances. A lack of inadequacy of basic education can seriously jeopardize the possibility of lifelong learning and can widen the gap between those who can and profit from such opportunities. Going to school and coming out unprepared for life is a terrible waste. Yet, for many of the world children, this is exactly what happens. Educators around the world have recently begun to focus on the gap between ‘what is taught’ and ‘what is learnt’, and the large number of children caught in that abyss (UNICEF 1999).

Most of the countries seeking to increase the level and pace of economic growth, and to raise the productivity and earnings of their citizens, have focused on increasing the quantity and quality of their people’s educational attainment. Consequently, growth in school Enrolment has been phenomenal across the world in the last three to four decades. However, even as the quantity of education has increased over time, the quality of education, especially primary education, remains a cause for serious concern. The experience of many developing countries including India is that children do not master basic literacy and numeracy even after four and five years of schooling (Goyal, 2007). Access to school is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for ensuring the development of cognitive competencies.

In India primary education has historically been neglected by the state, with educational expenditure being concentrated on the tertiary sector (Dreze & Sen. 1995) where a remarkable degree of illiteracy coexisting with frontier research in science and technology. India made a Constitutional commitment to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 nearly sixty years ago. The goal, which was expected to be achieved by 1960, has remained elusive even now. India is also marked for being one of the groups of countries in South Asia and Northern Africa where educational outcomes tend systematically to be better for boys than for girls, suggesting gender discrimination or at least undesirable gender differentiation. Successive policy statements have pledged to initiate special measures to rectify the historically inherited inequalities in education that have hindered the progress of some social groups such as scheduled Castes, scheduled Tribes and minority communities. It calls for serious self-reflection not only by the State but also by professional groups and civil society organizations.

An assessment on Educational Development Index (EDI) of 129 countries of the world shows that India is lagging far behind in the Educational Development
Index. Out of the 129 countries India’s position is 102\textsuperscript{nd} with an index value of 0.794 which is included in the low EDI group countries. On the contrary Kazakhstan, Japan, Germany are in the first, second and third position with an index value of 0.995, 0.994 and 0.994 respectively (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2007). It is surprising that in the year 2010 the EDI index of India came down to a value of 0.772 thereby occupying 107\textsuperscript{th} position (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2011). Looking at the dismal performances of all the former policies, special emphasis is given by the Ministry of Human Resource Development in the National Policy of Education (NPE), 1986 and revised NPE 1992 with the introduction of 93\textsuperscript{rd} Constitution Amendment Bill, 2001 for ensuring free and compulsory elementary education for children of the age group 6-14 years as a fundamental right. Several programmes have also been initiated for universalisation of elementary education and especially for disadvantaged section of population such as Non Formal Education (NFE), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), Mid-day Meal Scheme, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA) etc. On the whole, there has been a phenomenal growth in the number of schools in the country alongside a rapid increase in enrolment and number of teaching staff in primary level during recent years. In spite of giving special thrust and priority at the policy level by the government, the result show it all to be rhetoric because the goal of reaching primary education for all has still remain a distant cry(De, 2004).

Almost all official documents, in particular the successive Five Year Plan documents at national level, acknowledge that there are still large groups of children who are found excluded from schooling due to various reasons jeopardizing equity in accessing primary education. This inequity in provision is further accentuated as the quality of education provided remains quite unsatisfactory, particularly disfavoring the progress of children from disadvantaged groups. Uneven distribution of educational facilities is characterizing the post independence moves towards social reconstruction in India. Though the nation has launched multiple egalitarian schemes for expansion of education, in reality, the disparity in respect of education among states as well as among different social groups still persists. The consequence of such disparity is reflected in concentration of illiterates in the remote areas.

DPEP project implemented in 1994 in 9 districts of Assam identified Tea Tribe as the Special Focus Group for taking special intervention strategies (DPEP, 1996). Survey by SSA conducted as a part of pre project activity revealed that in all
districts where there are Tea gardens the number of non-enrolled children is highest (SSA, Assam, 2003). Therefore SSA also considers Tea Garden area as special focus area in implementing various interventions.

The primary school education scenario in the state continues to be in the doldrums, beset as it is with a number of problems. From declining Enrolment to infrastructure bottlenecks to poor quality of teaching, the primary education presents a dismal picture. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2010) has come up with some most disturbing data concerning the state’s primary education. As per ASER findings, the figure of out of school children in the age-group 6-14, which was 4.4% in 2006, increased to 6.9% in 2007. The quality of education imparted in our schools continues to be abysmal, with 75% of children in Grade II being unable to read a simple four-line paragraph, while 80% children in the same standard cannot work out a subtraction sum. Since this stage forms the foundation of education, any drawback here is bound to impact our human resource development. The situation indicates that we are nowhere near meeting the avowed goal of Universalisation of Primary Education (UPE)

In Assam some social groups viz. the Tea Labour Community, the Char Community, Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste have been recognized as major problem areas or the special focus groups, can widen the gap between those who can and cannot achieve the primary education. These population groups are by and large characterized by low social rank as per the constitution of India and they settle mostly as interstate migrant labourers in the tea gardens, as inter country migrants mostly in the riverine belt of the River Brahmaputra and in other socio-economically backward areas (DPEP reports 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002., Borah, 2002).

Assam, the most populous state in the North East India presents wide disparity in the literacy front. Any effort for fulfilment of constitutional obligation of Universalization of primary education in the State must pay utmost attention towards those educationally deprived areas. The char area in the state are mostly scattered in the midst of river Brahmaputra. In total, 2089 char villages are scattered over 14 districts in the Brahmaputra valley. The district Barpeta has 351 such villages where literacy rate is very low. Most of the villagers of these habitats are originally immigrants and they belong to a religious minority group. Surface communication of these areas is most hazardous because of recurring flood and heavy erosion. Education of the youngsters in these localities is highly prone to negligence under the
stresses of their socio-economic life (Bhagabati, 2004). Scholars also do not rule out the prevalence of a psychological negativism against alphabetic literacy that rooted in the minds of the majority of the char dwellers. Since the attainment in the economic front of life of the members of this class has come from their traditional occupation, they do not find education particularly relevant and are unwilling to send their children for education (Singh & Sharma, 1998)

1.2 Review of Literature
1.2.1 International status

Coleman stated that Literacy is both the cause and effect of development and education is the single most important determinant of long-term economic growth of a nation (Coleman Report, 1966). In 1990, the major aspects of World Conference on Education were analyzed at Jomtien, Thailand. More than 150 countries of the world became the signatories to the Declaration for achieving the Goal of ‘Education For All’ by the 2015 where India was one of the signatories. With research in education taking momentum, the literature on child schooling reveals the stylized facts uncovered by Grootaert and Patrinos (1999) in their four country study (Côte d’Ivoire, Colombia, Bolivia, Philippines). Parental Education, economic well being of the household has strong positive influence on schooling outcomes and in particular for the girl child. Research in Education during these days all over the world have been developed in diverse spheres to keep in pace with the changing demand scenario. Bangladesh Bureau of Education and Statistics (BANBEIS) paved light on using GIS in National Education Survey and Policy making (www.banbeis.com, 2001). Department for International Development (2001) brought into light some problems like Poverty, Gender inequality, Social exclusion and Social Conflict affecting the education achievement. According to Human Development Report (2002) of all the Education levels Categorized in accordance with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), Level 1 is the Elementary Education which provides the basic elements of education. Grover Singh & Stromquist found out several weaknesses in the system of educational administration and management threatening the quality of education (Grover, Singh & Stromquist, 2002). A study ‘Pedagogical Renewal and Teacher Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Thematic Synthesis’ by Association for the Development of Education in Africa (2003) confessed that even after ten years of Dakar summit in pursuing the goal of EFA by
2015, quality measured by achievement scores in reading, writing, arithmetic and problem-solving (i.e. the basic learning tools) and internal efficiency among others, was abysmally low, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. BANGLADESH-Primary Education Development Project II, Report No: AB162, 2003, indicates that out of total of 17.7 million students in Bangladesh, Enrolment rate from 76% in 1991 rose to 96% in 2000 where dropout rates fell by a third - from nearly 60% in 1991 to 30% in 2000 and gender parity in access to primary education has also been achieved. Again, while comparing the South Asia region and other countries at similar levels of per-capita income Bangladesh’s net Enrolment rate ranked eight among ten low-income countries (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, China, Indonesia, Kenya, Benin and the Republic of Congo) in 1980 which improved to the fourth by 2000. In the developed countries, Teacher incentive programs have enjoyed growing popularity e.g. a 1999 program in California offered a one-time award of $25,000 to teachers in under-performing schools whose students showed substantial gains (Education Commission of the States, Olsen, 2000). In the United States, a number of teacher incentive programs have been introduced in the past decade, generally offering annual merit pay on the order of 10% to 40% of an average teacher’s monthly salary (American Federation of Teachers, 2000). Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act poorly performing schools face sanctions across the United States. Opposite is the case in developing countries where incentives for teachers are weaker. Work in progress suggests that absence rates among primary-school teachers are 26% in Uganda, 23% in India, 16% in Ecuador and 13% in Peru. (Choudhury et al., 2003).

Learning The Treasure Within, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education( Delors Commission) for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by French statesman and Jacques Delors opined that education throughout life is based upon four pillars : Learning to know, as preparation for learning throughout life; Learning to do,in order to face a variety of situation; Learning to live together by understanding others and their history; and Learning to be better by understanding one’s own personality and emphasizes the skills (EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005). This report is the result of three years of research and debate by an international panel of fifteen educational specialists belonging to China, France, Indi, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan Korea(Republic of), Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Senegal, Slovenia, United States, Venezuela and Zimbabwe.Among the report’s important recommendations are: strong encouragement for education of girls and women
(Aggarwal, 2008). One of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed in September, 2000 at a UN Summit of world leaders held at Dakar is the Universal Primary Education (UPE). This of course, implies a complete closing of gender gap in literacy with the achievement of universal primary school attendance for boys and girls. It also requires a hundred per cent primary school completion rate, that is, all students entering grade I are retained until grade 5. The movement was launched in 1990 at the World Conference on Education For All (EFA) in Jomtein, Thailand. From this conference, the World Declaration on Education For All (EFA) was adopted. This declaration stressed on the importance of education is a fundamental human right and urged the countries to strengthen their efforts to improve education. Furthermore, MDG reiterates and reflects the recognition of the importance of primary education (Bhalotra and Zamora, 2006).

1.2.2 National Status

The review of empirical research on learners’ assessment shows that there are two distinct phases. The period up to 1990 is characterized as the first phase and the researches / empirical studies undertaken after 1990 fall into the other category. A main characteristic of the empirical studies in the first phase was that these were mainly academic in nature and the administrators did not use their findings for policy reforms. It is only the last fifty years or so that are characterized by increasing readiness to apply methods of research to the solution of educational problems. Great Britain and United States of America can very safely be termed as pioneer countries in educational research. In India, till 1914, no organized efforts were made regarding research in education. Research and development in this field receives outstanding priority from 1948 onwards; the phase is rightly denoted as the Period of Maturity (Sidhu, 1985)

Education Commission described the role of education in social and economic transformation of India stating that the country’s destiny is now being shaped in her classrooms (Education Commission, 1964-66). A report of National Sample Survey Organisation depicts that the percentage of children dropping out is lower for households which have higher monthly per capita expenditure (MPCE) and higher for households with low MPCE. Again, the percentage of children attending school is higher for households with higher MPCE and lower for households with low MPCE (National Sample Survey Organisation, 1998). The Fourth Survey on Research in
Education in India (Buch, 1991) identified many studies, essentially at the M. Phil. and Ph.D. level, addressed to the achievement of primary school children. These researches are more of conceptual nature and their use in policy planning was practically nil. Shukla (1994) conducted another study on about 66,000 students to find out the level of attainment of primary school children in 25 states/UTs. Among other things, the study showed different patterns of educational attainment in different states. Pupil’s achievement was related to the education of the father and the facility for learning and educational environment at home. Jangira (1994), while synthesizing the results of Baseline Assessment Studies of then DPEP states found that student’s performance in reading, writing and arithmetic was low. There was a marked difference in achievement levels among states and between schools. In India, in 1997, 67 million children in the age group 6-10 were attending primary school, while 28 - 32 million primary-aged children were not (World Bank 1997). The District Primary Education Program (DPEP) tries to address this issue by reaching out to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe households, girls, working children, and disabled children (Shukla 1999). As per the UNICEF report (1999), in India, the percentage share of central government expenditure allocated to education is only 2%. What is wrong at the school infrastructure is that only 2% of the total infrastructure stock in India fulfils national norms of space and other facilities as opined by Bonner and Mukherjee (Bonner & Mukherjee, 2001). Dreze and Kingdon (2001) point out those children from scheduled caste households have an ‘intrinsic disadvantage’. The probability of these children going to school is relatively low. Dreze and Kingdon (2001) and Leclercq (2001a, 2001b) find similar results for north India. However, they stress school quality as the key determinant of Enrolment and grade attainment. Kochar (2001) emphasises for school quality by pupil teacher ratio and finds that this affects the probability of going to school. Chin (2002), addressing one aspect of Operation Blackboard in India (change from one-teacher to two teacher schools), finds that changes in school quality have a bigger impact on school completion and literacy among girls than boys. In India, analysis done by National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) data concludes that parental education, family income, and availability of middle schools within the village have a significant positive effect on child school Enrolment decisions in India (Duraisamy, 2002). In an analytical study, Benarjee (2004) emphasized that educational Enrolment at any time will depend upon supply and demand factors. In a competitive market framework,
education is an investment in human capital and the extent of this investment will depend only upon its relative rate of return. When credit markets are imperfect, or when parents’ value education of their children as a consumption or a status good then parental wealth also affects the level of education demanded. With the 93rd Constitution Amendment Bill being passed by the Parliament of India, primary education is declared as a Fundamental Right for the children between the age group of 6 – 14 years (Govinda, 2002). A comparative study by Sujatha on different social groups concluded that the tribes in India lag behind the others with a literacy rate of 29 percent as against 52.21 percent of the national average (Sujatha, 2002). The system of primary education in India claims to be one of the largest among the developing countries, but it can not make similar claims for efficiency, quality and achievement of learners. (Yash Aggarwal, NIEPA, 2003).

In the Segmented Schooling: Inequities in Primary Education (Desai, 2008) it is observed that the differences in educational attainment between people of different social strata are not simply due to difference in Enrolments rates nor are they solely due to parental lack of education and resources. Even when children from disadvantaged groups attend school they fail to learn as much as theirs peers. Qualitative research provides a variety of explanations for these findings. Teachers typically come from higher caste and have very low expectations for children from marginalized groups. They are also more predisposed to seeing the behavior of these children as being problematic than that of higher caste children. Over the last three and four decades, consensus has grown about the kinds of changes needed if learning is to occur. If access to quality learning is one guiding light of the ‘education revolution’ the other is ‘child right’. A vision of quality in education extends far beyond, in to question of gender equality, health and nutrition; into issues of parental and community involvement, into the management of education system itself. In addition, the benefits and impact of quality education make invaluable contributions to all areas of human development, improving the status of women and helping to eradicate poverty (Goyal, 2007). The question of how to improve the quality of educational attainment in schools has become one of utmost importance to policy makers. It is generating a large body of research, previously in developed, but now also in developing countries. Most empirical studies of determinants of learning achievement relate measurable school characteristics and students and family background characteristics to learning outcomes.
If the process of education is to be gauged by what and how children learn, better ways must be found out to measure the quality and relevance of education. The emphasis must be on assessing how well education systems are meeting their responsibility to provide for the educational rights of their youngest citizens in terms of what they learn. Such information can be used to adjust policy, introduce realistic standard, help direct teachers’ efforts, promote accountability and increase public awareness and support for education. Like most of the developing countries, in India too, a major share of children who had completed four to five years of primary schooling has failed to attain a minimum learning achievement level. The rights of these children are not being met (Thakur and Thakur, 1997).

The number of elementary schools has a positive effect on attendance but no effect on completion. The ratio of female to male teachers in primary schools encourages attendance though, unexpectedly, this effect is not larger for girls than boys. Also possibly unexpected is the result that the feminization of the teacher workforce adversely affects completion, this effect being greater for girls than for boys. These variables deserve further investigation (Bhalotra and Zamora, 2006).

1.2.3 Regional Status

In the local context, a number of Annual Reports published by District Primary Education Programme (1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002) in Assam highlight a gloomier situation in the state. Among those who have entered into the formal primary schooling could not complete the five years course, the dropout rate concerns the policy makers the most. Again, a major share of children has failed to attain a minimum learning achievement level. The rights of these children are not being met.

The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was launched in Assam in phase manner since 1994. The success of the Programme is handicapped by low enrolment and high dropout rates and poor achievement level in most of the DPEP districts. In 2001-02 the Central government in partnership with the state government has taken a significant step towards achieving universal primary education through launching a time bound integrated approach ‘Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan’ (SSA ). Out of the six main objectives of SSA four objectives concerned with primary education were all children in school, Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), Alternate School, ‘Back-to-School’ camp by 2003, all children complete five year schooling by 2007,
bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and universal retention by 2010.

In spite of decade long approach not a single objective was fulfilled. The success of the SSA heavily depends on the sincere initiative and monitoring by both the centre and state government (India Education Report: A profile of Basic Education, 2002,). A study on the Poor Girls Enrolment in the Primary Schools of Darrang District of Assam by Kalita.J and Saharia.K.K.(2000) under DPEP , Assam Revealed that out of the total fifteen situations which were found to effect the Enrolment of girl students in the school, only four of them were found to have enough force to keep the girl students away from their schools. In order of importance or priority, the reasons of poor girls’ enrolment were ‘extremely poor economic condition of the villagers’, ‘illiteracy among the parents’, ‘more responsibility of girls for household works’, and ‘necessity to keep company of their mother’.

L.Ganguly (2004) in a study of Planning Educational Development in North East India opined that to realize the goal of free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality up to the age of 14 years, the system of delivery of primary educational facilities to the students in rural and hill areas will need to be decentralized by involving the grassroots level people’s organizations, such as the gram panchayat, tribal village councils and the civil society. Unless these groups are engaged the target of universalization of primary education cannot be achieved. U.K. De (2004) in his highlighting the Status of Education in North East India revealed that in many cases we observed that the classes of primary schools in rural and backward areas held in the open field. In addition to that, there is lack of teachers, which also varies across the schools of different regions. The study further identified the reasons of drop out as economic and non economics. In case of teachers it observed that though enrolment has increased by several times over the years, number of teachers has not increased at the same pace in many cases and hence Pupil Teacher Ratio has increased and put adverse effect on students’ achievement level.

The status of the physical and Teachers related phenomena can influence the Enrolment, retention and drop out of the pupils of primary schools (Sarma, 2011). It is observed in a study of the universalization of elementary education among the Tea Tribe of Jorhat district’s tea garden areas. Moreover, the impact of various schemes of the sarva Siksha abhiyan also analysed in that study. The study found satisfactory improvement particularly in the primary schools in respect of Enrolment scenario. It
observed that being the first generation learners the retention rate of the pupils is satisfactory.

In the study ‘Educational Policies in Assam’ Rahman (2012) highlighted the development of primary education of Assam in historical perspectives. The study observed that the emergence of modern education began since 1862 from the British arrival in Assam. But the actual progress and development of Primary education began in post independence period after the beginning of Five year plans. The study found the notable development of women education since 1950in Assam. It enquired about the teachers training status of Assam and found inadequacy in terms of numbers and training. Lack of competent teachers and underrepresentation are the main problem of primary education in Assam, it observed. The study highlighted the need of women education for the development of primary education. It further suggests that the insufficiency of teachers can be address through flexible approach such as contractual arrangement, partnership arrangement of professionals and support Institutions. A study on the Achievement level in primary education with reference to the special focus groups in Assam shows significant variation at micro level (Borah, 2002). Another study completed by Sahariah,S.and Sahariah,D in a study highlighted the influence of literacy in the universalization of Elementary Education. They observed primarily the impact of literacy rate in the success of primary education.Wide spread spatial variations in literacy affects the universalization of primary education in Assam. The study analyses the pattern of spatial variation of universalization of primary education on account of access, participation, gender and quality of education. It further analyses the spatio-temporal variation of Enrolment in relation to literacy. The study emphasized that the teacher is the most important element in the whole education system. So, Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR) should be improved for success of universalization of primary education. (Sahariah,S.and Sahariah,D.,2012)

1.3 The Present Study

The study attempts to make an analysis on enrolment and achievement level of Primary Education among the identified social groups in Assam, namely, Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste, Char community and Tea labour community. The rationale behind delimiting the study among specific social groups is due to the fact that a good number of studies have already identified the aforesaid social groups as problem areas
which have special implications with regard to Enrolment and achievement level in primary education.

Definitions of certain terms behind the problems to be addressed are discussed.

- **Scheduled Tribe** means the tribes which are recognized in the Indian constitution living both in hills and plains.
- **Scheduled Caste** is socio-economically backward community recognized in the Indian constitution living scattered in Assam.
- **Char community** are those inhabitant in few districts of Assam lives particularly in riverine sandbars and mostly includes immigrants from nearby countries.
- **Tea-garden labourers** are those who work in tea gardens, the large revenue generating industry in Assam.
- **Student** is a young person who is enrolled in an educational programme. As used here, ‘student’ refers to children enrolled in primary school.
- **Teachers** are persons who, in their professional capacity, guide and direct pupils’ learning experiences in gaining knowledge, attitudes and skills that are stipulated by a defined curriculum Programme.
- **Teacher’s status and Performance**: means his/her general and professional qualification, regularity/attendance in classes/school and level of effectiveness in teaching, his participation/presence in different programmes/trainings.
- **Student’s Background Profile** means the socio-economic status of his/her home environment and its immediate surroundings

### 1.4 Objectives of the study

The major objectives of the study are;

- to find out the inequalities in the status of Primary Education of Assam in general and the Social groups in particular in terms of Education For All Development Index (EDI) Components.
- to find out the variations in Enrolment among the Social Groups with regard to Grade and gender.
- to find out survival rate and trend in Enrolment among the Social Groups
• To find out the variations in the achievement level of students of Social Groups regarding Mathematics and Language Knowledge.
• to find out the factors of School environment, Teachers’ status and performance level and Students’ family background profile affecting enrolment, achievement level and survival rate.

1.5 Research questions
The research questions framed to reach the objectives are as follows:

1. Does inequality in the status of Primary Education exists in Assam in general and the identified Social Groups in particular?
2. Are there any variations in enrolment, achievement level and survival rate among the Social Groups?
3. What are the factors affecting the achievement level and survival rate?

1.6 Significance of the study
The study has both academic and practical significance. It seems to provide an impetus to the research arena of Educational Geography, an emerging branch of Human Geography in this part of the country.

Moreover the study focuses the elements of Welfare Geography by addressing inequalities in primary education with respect to disadvantaged groups in the society.

The findings of this study may be useful for the education planners, decision makers and social scientists. The methodology adopted in the study may be used for taking up further research in this line.

1.7 Organization of the study
The thesis is organized in seven chapters each of which is further subdivided in to several sections.

The first chapter deals with introductory materials including an exhaustive literature review on Primary education studies pertaining to the international, national and regional context and methodology.

The second chapter describes the environmental setting of the study areas.

The third chapter deals with the inequalities in primary education.

The fourth chapter deals with the Enrolment scenario of the study area.

The fifth chapter discusses the achievement level of primary education in the Study area.
The sixth chapter discusses the factors influencing enrolment and achievement level of primary education in the study area.
The seventh chapter carries a summary of the research and conclusions drawn from it. A list of bibliography and a set of appendices are also attached to the body of the thesis.

1.8 Methodology and Database

The study is based both on primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources pertain to various reports and data from District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Educational Management and Information System (EMIS) of Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA), Assam, the School Register and other relevant documents, National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), Census of India, Village Directory besides relevant books and journals. For primary source an intensive field work has to be undertaken. Data have to be collected through a sample survey where pupils, teachers and parents are the target groups or the respondents.

1.8.1 Sample Survey

The sample survey method has a number of distinct advantages over the complete enumeration method. Prof. R. A. Fisher sums up the advantages of sampling techniques over complete census in just four words: Speed, Economy, Adaptability and Scientific approach (Gupta, 2007). Sampling is a tool which enables us to draw conclusion about the characteristics of the population after studying only those objects or items that are included in the sample. The main objectives of the sample survey are to collecting information about social problem under investigation, finding out of the problem of social disorganization and social stratification and the finding out explanation for a social problem. The main objectives of the sampling theory are: (i) to obtain the optimum results, i.e. the maximum information about the characteristics of the population (ii) to obtain the best possible estimates of the population parameters.

1.8.1.2 Sample Units

A finite subset of the population, selected from it with the objective of investigating its properties is called the sample and the number of units in the sample is known as the sample size. In this study a five stage stratified random sampling design has been adopted where the Community Development Blocks are the first stage unit, the village groups and sample villages are the second stage unit, schools are the third
stage unit (Fig. 1.1), pupils and teachers are the fourth stage unit and households are the fifth stage unit.

1.8.1.3 First stage of Sample Selection

The first stage of sampling pertains to selection of four Community Development Blocks, one from each district namely Sonitpur, Barpeta, Kokrajhar and Morigaon. The selection is based on the district’s highest concentration of identified social groups i.e. Tea Garden Labourer Community, Char Community, Scheduled Tribe (Bodo) Community and Scheduled Caste Community. For this purpose the census report of 2001 has been consulted. Thus, Behali C.D.Block has been selected from Sonitpur district to represent Tea Garden Labourer Community. Likewise Chenga C.D.Block from Barpeta district to represent Char Community, Kachugaon C.D.Block from Kokrajhar district to represent Scheduled Tribe Community and Mayong C.D.Block from Morigaon district to represent Scheduled Caste Community have been selected (Fig. 1.1).

1.8.1.4 Second Stage of Sample Selection

The second stage of sampling takes into account the selection of sample villages. At the beginning villages are grouped according to their ranks like low, below average, average, above average and high. These groupings have been done separately for general literacy and female literacy which is shown in the table Table-1.1.

In order to draw the sample villages, the two sets of village groupings of general literacy and female literacy have been clubbed so as to find out over all ranking of the villages in to three classes e.g. High literacy, Medium literacy and low literacy as detailed below:

The villages of high literacy level are marked by:

- Villages with Above Average Literacy and Above Average Female Literacy.
- Villages with High Literacy and High Female Literacy.

The villages of medium literacy level are marked by:

- Villages with Average Literacy and Average Female Literacy.

The villages of low literacy level are marked by:

- Villages with low literacy and low female literacy.
- Villages with below average literacy and below average female literacy.
Figure 1.1: Four Selected Community Development Blocks
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C.D. Block</th>
<th>Village Ranking</th>
<th>Literacy (%)</th>
<th>No.of Village</th>
<th>Female Literacy (%)</th>
<th>No.of Village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behali</td>
<td>Low &gt;15 (&gt;5)</td>
<td>8 (2)</td>
<td>&gt;15 (&gt;5)</td>
<td>22 (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Below Average 15-30 (5-15)</td>
<td>29 (3)</td>
<td>15-30 (5-10)</td>
<td>37 (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average 30-45 (15-25)</td>
<td>35 (18)</td>
<td>30-45 (10-15)</td>
<td>22 (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above Average 45-60 (25-35)</td>
<td>23 (5)</td>
<td>45-60 (15-25)</td>
<td>20 (8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High &lt;60 (35-45)</td>
<td>14 (0)</td>
<td>&lt;60 (25-35)</td>
<td>8 (0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chenga</td>
<td>Low &gt;15 (&gt;5)</td>
<td>7 (0)</td>
<td>&gt;15 (&gt;5)</td>
<td>19 (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Below Average 15-30 (5-15)</td>
<td>17 (7)</td>
<td>15-30 (5-10)</td>
<td>11 (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average 30-45 (15-25)</td>
<td>13 (15)</td>
<td>30-45 (10-15)</td>
<td>17 (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above Average 45-60 (25-35)</td>
<td>16 (8)</td>
<td>45-60 (15-25)</td>
<td>5 (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High &lt;60 (35-45)</td>
<td>3 (0)</td>
<td>&lt;60 (25-35)</td>
<td>1 (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kachugaon</td>
<td>Low &gt;15 (&gt;5)</td>
<td>5 (2)</td>
<td>&gt;15 (&gt;5)</td>
<td>20 (14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Below Average 15-30 (5-15)</td>
<td>33 (26)</td>
<td>15-30 (5-10)</td>
<td>65 (41)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average 30-45 (15-25)</td>
<td>85 (61)</td>
<td>30-45 (10-15)</td>
<td>86 (60)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above Average 45-60 (25-35)</td>
<td>69 (35)</td>
<td>45-60 (15-25)</td>
<td>38 (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High &lt;60 (35-45)</td>
<td>29 (9)</td>
<td>&lt;60 (25-35)</td>
<td>12 (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayong</td>
<td>Low &gt;15 (&gt;5)</td>
<td>6 (2)</td>
<td>&gt;15 (&gt;5)</td>
<td>18 (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Below Average 15-30 (5-15)</td>
<td>40 (8)</td>
<td>15-30 (5-10)</td>
<td>61 (16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average 30-45 (15-25)</td>
<td>66 (12)</td>
<td>30-45 (10-15)</td>
<td>65 (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Above Average 45-60 (25-35)</td>
<td>57 (12)</td>
<td>45-60 (15-25)</td>
<td>55 (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High &lt;60 (35-45)</td>
<td>63 (6)</td>
<td>&lt;60 (25-35)</td>
<td>33 (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data source:** Census Report of India, 2001. Figures in the parentheses indicate Tea Garden villages in Behali C.D Block, Char Community villages in Chenga C.D.Block, Scheduled Tribes dominated villages in Kachugaon C.D. Block and Scheduled caste dominated villages in Mayong C.D.Block.
Considering the lowest and highest value of literacy rates and female literacy rates for all the C.D. Blocks the range have been prepared to represent various levels of representation. In order to find out the exact status of the villages predominantly occupied by the identified social groups, the villages with dominance of Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste population with more than 50% concentration have been listed out. The literacy rates and the female literacy rates of these aforesaid villages have been recorded. It gives us a clear understanding for drawing the sample villages. However, the Char Community and the Tea Garden labourer Community dominated villages are cannot be found out separately from Census Report as these social groups are not scheduled social groups in the state of Assam. Again number of villages with high literacy and high female literacy rate of the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribe dominated villages are found, but numbers of such villages are less.

In case of Behali C.D. Block the settlements of Tea Labour Community are confined only within the territory of tea gardens. The total no. of village under this community has been found at 28 out of the total village of 109 (Census, 2001). The range between the highest and the lowest with respect to literacy and female literacy among the Tea Labour Community is found to be far below than that of the overall values of the block. As such, a new range has to be prepared for Tea Garden Community represented Behali C.D. Block which is shown in Table1.1 against parentheses. Likewise, the settlements of Char Community are also concentrated in the riverine silt islands of the river Brahmaputra as revealed from the villages located along the channels of the river (Fig.2.4). The literacy level of the Char Community settlement area in terms of general literacy rates and female literacy rates are found to be far below than that of the general status of the Block. In this case also, a separate range has been prepared to represent the literacy status of the Char Community under low, below average, average, above average and high which is shown in the parentheses (Table1.1)

This exercise is followed by selection of sample villages one from each group of villages following the random sampling method. Three villages are thus selected for each C.D. Block leading to a total of 12 villages to carry out the sample survey. Care has been taken so that the sample villages under Kachugaon Block and Mayong Block would be representative for Schedule Tribe community and Scheduled Caste community respectively. It is worth mentioning that the Scheduled Tribe population is a predominant
social group with a total concentration of 100% in both Mukuldang II and Raikhumbari and 50.49% in the Gorjan II village of Kachugaon Block (Table 2.17) Likewise in the Mayong C.D Block, Schedule Caste Population occupies a major share of total population that is 63.725 in the Thakurduba village, 75.96% in the Kholonibil village and 96.32% in the Thengbhanga village (Table 2.17). The sample villages thus found are Bargang Tea Estate., Barbil Tea Estate and Nilbari Tea Estate (Ketela) of Behali C.D.Block (Fig.2.1); Chenglidia village, Majorchar village and Damdama village of Chenga C.D.Block (Fig.2.4); Mukuldang II village, Raikhumbari village and Gorjan II village of Kachugaon C.D.Block (Fig.2.7); and Thakurduba village, Kholonibil village and Thengbhanga village of Mayong C.D.Block (Fig. 2.10).

1.8.1.5 Third Stage of Sample Selection

At the third stage, sample schools are selected based on simple random sampling method. Thus a total of 12 schools one from each village, are selected. These are all Govt. Schools. However, in tea garden areas Tea Garden Authority run schools are considered. Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) centers are not considered because these are not permanent schools. Likewise other private schools are also not considered.

1.8.1.6 Fourth Stage of Sample Selection

The fourth stage of sampling takes into account the selection of sample units for the study of Enrolment and achievement level. A maximum of 20 students from Class II and Class IV have been considered as sample unit. In case the total no. of students in a class remains at less than 20, all the students are considered as the sampling units. The sample unit is applicable for assessing the test score and difficulty level of student in Mathematics and Language Knowledge. For collecting information to assess the influential factors for Enrolment and achievement level 50 per cent of the sample is considered for choosing the respondent, as full attendance in a class cannot be expected in a particular day

In case of the sample units for teacher, maximum 4 teachers have been selected. These sample units comprises of one teacher from Class II, one from Class IV, Head teacher and any one.
1.8.1.7 Fifth Stage of Sample Selection

Fifth stage of sample selection pertains to finding out sample households. As the main purpose of the study is to understand student’s family background, household belonging to sample students have been considered. A total of 50% households of this category are the sample unit for carrying out the household survey.

1.8.2 Statistical Tools

Three questionnaires and two schedules have been prepared to collect necessary data. They are (i) Questionnaire on school scenario (ii) Schedule for Enrolment assessment from school records (iii) Questionnaire on teachers’ status and performance (iv) Questionnaire on household survey with student’s household profile (v) Schedule for students’ performance level.

1.8.3 Design of Questionnaire and Schedule

A questionnaire is a survey instrument used to collect data from individuals about themselves, or about a social unit such as a household or a school. The aim here is to try to ensure that differences in responses to questions can be interpreted as reflecting differences among respondents, rather than differences in the processes that produced the answers. For the study of the educational planning and development the information that is collected through questionnaire and schedule can be classified broadly into: (a) inputs to education (such as school resources or various background characteristics of schools, teachers or students), (b) learning and teaching processes, and (c) the outcomes of education (such as pupil achievement, attitudes towards school, and measures of school efficiency such as survival rates etc.). For this the questionnaires that are to be administered in school systems on the target population such as students, teachers, and school heads should be standardized. A standardized questionnaire includes the variables and indicators that will address the research issues and hypotheses on which data are to be collected (Raj, 2002).

For collection of data and information in the present study survey parameters are determined based on the objectives, research questions and scope of the study. The questionnaires and schedules are prepared based on empirical observations from secondary sources like relevant books, journals, project reports etc. Here, five types of questionnaires and schedules have been designed, viz. (i) Questionnaire on school scenario (ii) Schedule for Enrolment assessment from school records (iii) Questionnaire
on teachers status and performance (iv) Questionnaire on household survey with student’s household profile (v) Schedule for students performance level.

1.8.3.1 Questionnaire on School Scenario

This phase of the questionnaire is made to collect detail information of the school encompassing academic and other infrastructural facilities. (Appendix I)

Basic information

Basic information of the sampled schools are related to name, year of establishment, Status of the school and School building.

Academic affairs

This phase of questionnaire is made to collect information of medium of instruction, pupil teacher ratio and presence of pre primary class, number of periods per day and no. of working days.

Facilities available in the school

The objectives of this part of questionnaire is to collect information of facilities available in the school in terms of Teaching Learning Materials (TLM), co-curricular activities, health and hygiene and other required infrastructural facilities.

1.8.3.2 Schedule for Enrolment Assessment

This phase of the schedule is made to collect basic information of the school and Enrolment of last four years. The schedule is so designed that enrolment in each class may be collected from school records and student’s attendance registers (Appendix II)

1.8.3.3 Questionnaire on Teachers Status and Performance

The objectives of this part of questionnaire is to collect teachers related information in respect of gender, qualifications, appointment, qualification in mathematics, level of professional training, organization of holding professional training, co operation availed by the teacher from concerned quarters, teachers performance in the class room, home work assignments and examination. (Appendix III)

Basic Information

The first part comprising four questions of this questionnaire is related to basic information of the school, no. of male and female teachers in the school.
Teachers Qualifications and appointment

This phase of questionnaire is made to collect information regarding teacher’s qualifications and training, nature of appointment and the teacher’s qualifications in mathematics.

Teachers Professional Training

The objectives of this part of questionnaire are to collect data relating to teachers professional training, information of organizations holding teachers professional training and no. of teachers availed the professional training.

Co-operation of concerned authorities

In addition to the above the questionnaire attempts to assess the co-operation availed by the teachers from concerned authorities such as Block Resource Centre, Cluster Resource Centre, Block Elementary Office, DIET and Village Education Committee for smooth running of the academic environment of the school.

Teachers Performance

This phase of the questionnaire is made to collect information of the teachers’ performance in the class room, home work assignment with the respondent of both Teachers and students. Examination related information and teachers appreciation towards students also enquired in this part.

1.8.3.4 Questionnaire on Household survey with Student’s Background Profile

This phase of the questionnaire is made to collect detail household information of the students belonged to class II and class IV of the sample schools. (Appendix IV)

Basic Information

The basic information part of the questionnaire is related to name and class of the student, parents’ occupations, income and parental education.

Household Information

This phase of questionnaire is made for collection of detail household information of the sample household. It enquires about caste, religion, language, family status, family income, occupation, details of family members and household assets.

Academic Affairs

The objectives of this part of questionnaire are to collect data relating to academic affairs of the student. It enquires about medium of instruction, whether availing pre
primary education, help in study from home, lighting facilities and availability of study materials at home.

**Reasons for irregular attendance in study**

This phase of the questionnaire is made to collect information of the student’s irregularity and not being interested in study. It enquires the various social and economic causes of not being interested in study and irregular in school.

**Subject oriented help**

The objectives of this part of questionnaire are to collect data relating to the students availing subject oriented help from the family members such as father, mother, brother and sister. Here particularly helps getting in mathematics and language are enquired.

**Health and Amenities at home**

This phase of the questionnaire is made to collect information of the student’s health status and the amenities available at home for the academic and health well-being of the students.

**Parental occupation**

The objectives of this part of questionnaire are to collect data relating to the type of parental occupations, condition of dwelling house, condition of study room and other amenities related to study.

**Information of brothers and sisters**

The last part of the questionnaire is made to collect information of brothers and sisters of the respondent. It enquires about the age, enrolled and non enrolled brothers and sisters and their present status which are also treated as influencing factors of children’s academic advancement.

**1.8.3.5 Schedule for Achievement Level Assessment**

This phase of the schedule is made to collect detail information of the Students achievement level in respect to class and subjects. (Appendix V)

**Basic Information**

This phase of the schedule is made to collect name and location of the school.
Mark scoring in mathematics & Language

The objectives of this part of the schedule are to collect marks scoring in mathematics and language of the class II and class IV students. The schedule is so designed that marks may be recorded against the name of the student of the selected class.

Question wise performance in Mathematics and Language

The next part of the schedule is meant for collecting data on no. of students doing the correct answer to a particular question. Provision is made for 8 questions for class II Numerical Knowledge and 10 questions for class IV Mathematics. Likewise 8 questions for class II Language Knowledge and 10 questions for class IV Language Knowledge have been incorporated in the schedule.

1.8.4 Data Analysis and Interpretation

At the beginning, the qualitative queries are transformed into quantitative terms applying weighted score method. In the study of inequalities in primary education Apparent Survival Rate (ASR) and Gender Parity Index (GPI) have been used. For understanding of Enrolment, Gender Gap and actual Survival Rate have been calculated. For examining achievement level test performance and difficulty level have been analyzed with the help of P-value. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Coefficient of Variation (CV) has been used to study the variations. The results have been interpreted and inferences are drawn based on them.