SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

The main objective designing the present study was to investigate and analyze the nature of professional tale of three mostly male-dominated professions i.e. Engineering Medical and Law. This investigation allowed us to look at issues that directly reflect the professional culture within which career women function, including their perception of the opportunity structure, experience with equality, equality and discrimination, experience with supporting or indifferent relationship with superiors or subordinates and responses to the challenges of a changing professional culture signaled by industrial and technological changes. We also constructed a representation of the personal domain of participants' life by including perception of the challenges and limitations of single and dual career responses to the dilemmas presented by child care responsibilities, as well as two interesting issues related to the intersection between personal and professional life. It has also been highlighted in a modest way whether the higher educational qualification and professional rank, which bring
the economic independence, bring any change in their attitude, pattern of behaviour, decision-making power or fertility behaviour.

The findings in these issues give us a dynamic, provocative profile of career women's perspective of issues and challenges.

In the introductory chapter, the changing scenario of women's position in general, statement of the problem objective, significance, methodology, conceptual statements and organization of the study are clearly delineated. A review of the relevant literature is made to have a theoretical background of the problem. The review has been done covering Global, National and Regional level studies. A historical and geographical background of the study area along with other characteristics has been discussed. The locality of the study was undivided Goalpara (non-tribal) district of Assam. Samples were selected by stratified method from three different professions i.e. Law, Medicine and Engineering on the basis of particular selected criteria. Multiple methods were adopted in this investigation to collect primary data.

In this study, women's status and the changes of her role throughout the time was examined to have a general idea of Woman's position. In ancient times, "Purdah" system was not prevalent and women enjoyed high social status. During medieval period when Indian women witnessed a deterioration of their position, the position of Assamese women in family and society was much better then their counterparts in other parts. They assisted men in agriculture and used to do every possible work to run the household. On the advent of the British rule, came the western, ideas and culture and some prominent
intellectuals came forward to uplift the status and position of women. Indian freedom struggle, constitution of Independent India with legislative efforts, changed the role of women rapidly.

After Independence along with the increase in the facilities for education, women's participation in service sector is gradually increasing. Moreover, with the trend of modernization, urbanization and privatization, the Assamese society has also undergone rapid changes and a number of women have joined various professions today.

In chapter II, an attempt is made to examine the legal status of women in general and working women in particular from a historical perspective.

Under the British rule the process of enactment of laws for removing the disparity between man and woman had started. Independent India relied heavily on legislation. Apart from constitutional provisions in the interest of the women, separate laws have been enacted on various dimensions of women’s life. Some labour laws, especially for women were also enacted to give legal security to working women.

Law is an important source of social change and can play a significant role for the eradication of social evils, discrimination, and injustice. However, for this purpose, uniformity of law is needed, which is obstructed by the existence of different personal laws. Therefore, it must be admitted that the existing laws are not free from deficiencies and hence they have not been able to uplift the legal status of women at home and at work place. However, Law can act as a catalyst to improve
the status of women, but for the improvement of their legal status, change in social attitude towards women and self-awareness is needed among women themselves, by which they can win their own battle.

Chapter III presents an overview of socio economic and educational background of the professional women.

Socio economic changes that have taken place in our society, affect the entire population. The data on the socio-economic and educational background of the respondents have been collected with the purpose of understanding the social background. The information about the socio-economic and educational characteristics of the respondents suggests that the educated middle class women are a heterogeneous group of people. Their family background, economic status, educational background, etc. are widely varied. Service is the major occupation in their families and their socio-economic status can be regarded as that of upper middle class.

Their families are obviously small sized and mostly nuclear and there is an important and relevant index of their modernization. Most of the professional women came from nuclear families. The analysis of the data collected leads to the conclusion that women professionals come from considerably good socio-economic background. Women having this background are more likely to go for higher education and become professionals. Because educationally and economically well-off families provide an atmosphere where the women are not only motivated and socialized to undertake future occupational role, but also become
prepared to take equal place along with men in the highly competitive occupational fields.

Chapter IV contains a detailed study about the status and working life of professional women. Professions included in this study are regarded to be significant and individual’s income and level of educational attainment are co-related with status afforded in occupation.

Various dimensions of professional life such as reason for joining the job, location with official staff; motivating agent and other job related matters were investigated. Today’s professional women are conscious about their career and they face strongly all the job related matters with equal footing with their male counter part. Economic necessity is one of the cause but not the most important reason behind their selection and joining the profession.

Chapter V is devoted to an investigation of social characteristics and demographic pattern of women professionals. Family and workplace are two opposite directions in a professional woman’s life, which they have to balance properly. How they manage it, and what the problems they face, have been discussed here in this chapter. Their personal life, family life, demographic pattern and authority structure proved a unique characteristic which shows the positive attitude of the professional women balancing the two ends of their lives.

Chapters VI comprise an analysis of the challenges and achievements of professional women.
Traditionally in all societies, women are responsible for family rearing and linking of social relationship. The yardsticks of religion and social norms still operate in deciding about career progression. Women are identified with home, security stability and continually. These create some challenges when they enter into labour world and create their independent status.

In this chapter it has been shown that they have to face challenges like role conflict, discrimination, sex-segregation, glass ceiling, sexual harassment and so on. But these challenges cannot hinder their achievement. These professional women are exceptional women exhibiting a new pattern, a new image, which has shattered the established stereotype. Though the new image is strong enough to shatter the old, it encompasses some confusion. Every woman still longs to attain motherhood. Now she has to satisfy her needs by being independent, by engaging in challenging work, expanding skills and getting rewards and recognitions for her own ability.

Chapter VII comprises an analysis of the profile of professional career of women with the different dimensions of professional life. This investigator had tried to analyze family life and career of the different professional’s. Here an attempt has been made to include the entire chain of events of the informants right from childhood onwards.

All the case studies present different types of problems, which prove that lives of the professional women are not easy going. They are fighting for their goals and at any cost, they are not ready to give up their jobs.
The findings of the individual case studies throw light on different dimensions of the lives of the professional women.

**Findings**

Summarily the main findings of the study and conclusion thereof may be put as follows:

1. Among the three categories of profession i.e. Medicine, Law and Engineering, the number of women engineers are very limited.
2. Among the three districts taken up in this study, women engineers are found mostly in Bongaigaon district.
3. Most of the professionals are from urban origin. (72%)
4. The traditional family structure like the joint family system is disappearing mostly and findings also approve as only 19% are from joint families and 81% are from nuclear families.
5. Another interesting finding has come out which shows most of the respondents (58%) have love marriage and they have married the person of the same profession whom they meet in the course of their study or afterwards.
6. The findings show that highest number of women professional get married after 25 years of age (51%). More significantly, 5% women professional have got married after the age of 35 years.
7. Highest number (39%) of women professionals have 2 children and only (4%) a few have 4 children at the highest.
8. Women professionals have no discriminatory attitude regarding the gender of the child. Some of them have only
one girl child and even then, they adopted the family planning devices to restrict their family size.

9. Regarding the reason for joining the profession, findings clearly indicate that 'Career' is the most important cause (45%) and not for economic cause. Professionals derive satisfaction and economic security, affiliation needs, feeling of self-respect and prestige, opportunity for independent action and decision making sense of recognition and achievement from their work. These non-economic benefits derived out of the working role of the professionals were also incentives to their advancement of their 'Career'. Thus, the findings prove that because of the socio-economic background of women professional with higher educational qualification, sound economic background, they are more concerned about their career and status and thus the hypothesis that economic need does not drive a woman to enter into the professional career, is found to be correct.

10. The finding indicates that the relationship of women professional with their co-workers is good and cordial (41%). Most of the colleagues of the respondents are not prejudiced against the women employees and get cooperation and help when they felt it necessary with few exceptions.

11. Findings also indicate that with the higher level of occupation and increase in the income level, job satisfaction also increases.

12. Professional women are mostly (74%) dissatisfied with infrastructural facilities at the work place. Their
dissatisfactions are regarding sitting accommodations, lack of crèches, toilets etc.

13. The job involvement of the professionals were assessed and found that they are highly involved. Most of them (54%) indicated ‘very much’ involvement. But though professionals exhibit high job involvement and identity with their work, they also experience their job to be highly demanding of their time energy & skill which have both positive and negative effect on their life.

14. Today’s professional women have great faith on themselves and almost (78%) all women professionals think them as absolutely equal with their colleagues.

15. Professional women denied mostly (65%) having any negative impact of domestic responsibilities over their professional performance. But they accept the view that domestic responsibility affects career negatively, mostly in case of promotional transfer or illness of any family member.

16. The findings regarding the husband’s cooperation in domestic sphere is not much clear. Only a few (23%) said that they get full support and co-operation from husbands. The household duties are not her exclusive obligation and the male is gradually shouldering the burden, yet she is still the key person performing several household chores. Interestingly it was also found that women professional do not have much complaint against their husbands non-supporting attitude in the domestic responsibilities which proves existence of the shadow of patriarchy to some extent in the mind set of the professional women also.
17. With regard to husband-wife relationship, the traditional norms persist to a very large extent. The norms of obedience, fidelity and dedication are still there to guide the mental structure of professional women. But the feeling of subordination and the total subjugation of the wife to the husband are changing. The women in her attitude towards her husband may be broadly termed as tradition oriented rather than modern.

18. Regarding the control over own salary, the findings give a clear picture of economic independence of women professional. Most of them (66%) assert their right in controlling their earnings.

19. The findings indicate that the contribution of professional women is not secondary or supplementary, because most of their income are spent or children’s education and secondly on Bills, food, rent etc. Moreover they are not accountable to anybody for their personal expense which proves that employment status and income has given them some independence relating to financial matter.

20. The findings relating to decision-making power within the family show a definite positive trend for women professionals. Highest number (49%) of women professionals perceives themselves as equal to the male member of the family. So the hypothesis that status in the service is the determinant of economic independence, authority structure and decision-making, is proved to be true here.

21. By comparing the occupational prestige of husband and wife, it has been found that, wives are working in
occupations which are consistent or only slightly lower in prestige than that of their husband’s occupational prestige. In a good majority of cases, husband and wife are working in same kind & rank of profession. Only in few cases, wife’s occupational prestige is a bit higher than that of her husband.

22. The findings indicate that majority (47%) of women have two children. Next position occupied by one child category irrespective of the sex of the child. The findings surely indicate that professional women are more concerned of their fertility behaviour and they are free from son preference dilemma of traditional culture.

23. Though patriarchal ideology is still continuing but discrimination on the basis of sex is disappearing slowly from the social structure. Findings indicate the same trend as most of the women professional (77) said that they have never faced any discrimination from the parents in their upbringing. But regarding recruitment and promotion process, it is not clear as 51% think that they are discriminated on the ground of gender whereas 49% think that they are not discriminated in official matters like promotion or recruitment.

24. Regarding sexual harassment at the workplace, the findings clearly indicate ‘No’. But interestingly none of them wanted to comment on the matter openly arguing it may hamper their private and professional life at large.

25. Membership in the voluntary associations do not constitute an important part of the leisure activities of professional women. They are interested in joining associations which
are connected either with their work or are organized around some formal purpose like social welfare activity. They prefer to read serious type of material though women's magazines also are preferred. As they get very little time as leisure, like to spend the time mostly with the children.

26. Findings indicate a positive outlook of the husband towards the profession of the wife. Most of the husbands (68%) have very high impression about their wife and professional life, which certainly help their mutual adjustment, and both may have respect and co-operation with each other.

27. In an overall majority of the cases women have entered labour force prior to their marriage and out of these a very sizable proportion of them are working continuously without any break even when they have started bearing children

What finally emerges out from the study,-

In spite of the backwardness of the locality during the last decade a vertical (upward) occupational mobility is noticed among the women professionals.

Among the three professions, selected for the study the number of law professionals is highest, whereas number of woman engineers is the lowest. Doctor and Law personnels have open market for their job but regarding engineering, the scope for the job is still very limited and some discrimination exist regarding the selection & recruitment of the women in engineering profession.
And thus on the threshold of transition from tradition to modernity, though a proper climate for a change is still waiting, yet there have been many structural and statutory innovations for the improvement of status and all round improvement as special group of working women. As a result, the traditional set up and role-set are breaking up and new role-set, based on achievement, independence and equality are gradually emerging.

**Suggestion/Recommendation:**

Though some positive changes have taken place, there are a lot to be done for over all improvement of existing conditions, such as the adoption of a well defined policy to fulfil the constitutional directives and Government’s long-term objective of total involvement of women in national development.

There is need for a persistent drive against those social customs, beliefs and traditions, which undermine the value of women. Efforts should be made to do away with the belief that women are subservient to men and that motherhood and domestic activity is the only desirable role for them.

Recasting the employment policies for women requires re-examination of existing theories regarding their suitably for different types of work on scientific line and a deliberate effort to promote equality of opportunity by special attention to women’s limitations. It is also recommended that there should be reservation of a definite quota for women professional in all organizations and institutions.
To deal with the problems of women professionals a cell should be created under Ministry of labour and employment at Central and State Governments and all private and public organizations. It will also provide employment information and needed assistance to women professionals.

Provisions for the crèches should be strictly followed. The present limit should be reduced. Moreover, when there is a demand, a day centre should be provided for keeping infants by which, the mother can breastfeed the child in limited intervals.

In exceptional cases, for example, when the mother gives birth to a spastic child, the provision for special leave subject to a maximum of 5 years during service should be made in order to devote full time for the care of the child. Her lien should be protected. As bringing up a child is not only the responsibility of mother, but also family, society and Nation at general.

Priority should be given to women's technical education which will provide them opportunity for the Profession, Counselling and proper guidance is needed to encourage the girls to join technical education.

It is necessary to change the gender-defined roles of males and females. The area of home management should be projected as joint responsibility of both husband and wife.
Women should not hesitate to disclose any type of sexual harassment at the work place and legal awareness should be increased through various legal awareness programmes.

More over the existing legal provisions are not enough to safeguard the rights of women. Some new-laws are also required to be enacted. All the defects and loopholes in the laws should be removed by updating the labour laws.

The participation of women in policy formation and decision making process is very low. Increased employment opportunities are essential to ensure their visibility and legitimate role in technical education. For this purpose, the cost and benefit of technical education, especially to women, should be published through community based seminars, publicity, campaigns and mass media.

Generally, it is found that the placement of women in the higher level, i.e. decision-making structure, or administrative level is negligible in comparison to total number of males. Therefore, in near future this deficiency should be treated with proper initiative. Increased opportunities are essential to ensure their visibility and legitimate role.

Accommodation of women professionals is not satisfactory. Provision of residential quarter for women should be allotted on priority basis to ensure the feeling of insecurity among them. Moreover, preferential allotment of accommodation to
single women employees would help in providing security and reduce problems arising out of family displacement.

**New Area for Research**

A comparative study of Professional women can be carried out at the district level, state level, or even National level. Professional women's career may be compared within public and private organizations. A micro-level study can be conducted on women Engineers, regarding their problems opportunity and capacity of performance related to the profession as their number is comparatively lower than the other professions.