"The woman's cause is man's, they rise or sink together."¹

Alfred Tennyson

Observers of disinterested history can hardly deny that, since the dawn of civilization, women have played as vital a role as men in the evolution of humankind. But in spite of their contribution, women are associated with the domestic or private, rather than the "public" domain of social, political and economic life, which only men animate and transform.² Domestic refers to activities organized around mother-child groups, while public refers to institutions and activities of different organizations.

Society is a dynamic process. In a changing system, every man and woman has to play his or her distinguished role. With the changing times the society also changes and with the continuous changes in the society, the position of woman also undergoes certain changes. In the patriarchal society, on one hand woman had been idealized and looked upon with reverence and respect. On the other hand, they have been subjected to exploitation and ignominy. Gradually now the overall status
of women in society is improving through greater enlightenment and social consciousness as any kind of development needs equal footing by both the sexes.

The status of woman is one of the most important criteria for estimating with precision the degree of civilization attained by a particular society in various periods of history. So to have a vivid idea of women's role and position throughout the ages it is necessary to briefly survey the social situations and the changes that have occurred from time to time.

**Global context:**

The status and the role of women throughout the world as a whole are almost same. Even in developed countries with their "equal opportunities and affirmative action" legislation, the situation has not changed much. By and large they are still victims of suppression, stereotype traditional and rigid condition all over the world. The western woman, like most of her counterparts, has almost always lived as a subordinate member of the two sexes, who at best can either be protected or neglected. In England the equality of status of woman was recognized only after 1910 when the British suffragette movement became militant. Even in American household where old patriarchal tradition prevailed, woman had many duties but few rights. They had no separate legal existence apart from their husband. The American Declaration of Independence (4th July, 1776) also failed to provide true "liberty, equality and fraternity to woman as it referred to 'men' only in having equal rights." 'It is supposed all men are created equal' and they can enjoy life liberty and the pursuit of happiness. So the American woman protested against this attitude and had to wait till 1919 for their franchise. The epoch making French Revolution and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) defaulted in
making any reference to rights of women. In almost all patriarchal civilization such as China, Japan and in Islamic countries woman generally have a low status.

However, changes look place after World War II in the lives of women throughout the world, which helped millions of women to participate in the labour force.

**Women in Indian Society:**

The position and the role of women in any society have never been static. Ancient India was in the top of the world map because the fair sexes worked shoulder-to-shoulder with their counterpart and actively joined in all aspects of social and national life. But with the changes of the time the scenario changed and women started to be looked as the 'Second Sex' and society made them bound to confine within the four walls of family unit.

The Vedic period was one of the glorious chapters in Indian history. The early Aryan society was patriarchal but women were given full freedom for their development, physical, intellectual and moral. They enjoyed great respect and equal status with their husbands. In religious ceremonies and sacrifices, both men and women took part. Women were not regarded as an impediment in religious pursuits and were at par with men in the eye of religion. In matter of education no distinction was made between a son and a daughter. Both were entitled to go through the ceremony of ‘Upanayana’. In the post Vedic period the caste system and priestly oligarchy came to be firmly established and Manusmriti or the code of Manu became effective. In Manu’s code
woman ceased to be equal to man. He prohibited the practice of 'Upanayana' for a girl and denied almost all the power she enjoyed earlier. With the advent of Lord Buddha and the rise of Buddhism came the happy days for woman. But the glory of the Buddhist age proved short lived. By the advent of the Muslim regime in India (11th and 12th centuries) woman became more confined within the four walls and her position was degraded to an inferior status than ever. With the establishment of British rule in India, came the western ideas and culture. Some prominent intellectuals of India took initiative to uplift the status and position of woman in that period. Indian freedom struggle emancipated woman from several serious restrictions to some extent and time demanded their participation in every socio-economic sphere. The last decade of 20th century has been marked by the growth and development of woman's movement in India and new methods were used for bringing awareness among women to uplift their condition. After independence, the constitution of India also promises a number of clauses to improve the condition of women and to end the sex-discrimination from Indian society. To attain these national objectives the constitution guarantees certain fundamental rights to improve the condition of women and has empowered women both politically and economically. But all these are theoretical. It is mainly Indian society, which had restricted mobility of woman in the name of patriarchy, reducing them to weaker section of human species. Such unhealthy reflections are found in recent sex-ratio (females), literacy, nutrition and women status etc. as published by Human Development Reports.

Women in Assamese Society:

Regarding the position of woman in ancient Assam, there is a serious difficulty of locating authentic sources, which can help to
construct a profile of Assamese women of that time. But it can be assumed that as an integral part of the Indian society, the Assamese women folk were also guided by the same Indian beliefs and customs prevalent in other parts of the country. But due influence of non Aryan culture in certain respects, the Assamese women occupied a better position in comparison to her counterpart in other parts of the country.

**Women’s Economic Role:**

In primitive societies when food was procured by gathering or hunting, there was full equality between men and women. The societies were frequently characterized by a trend of matriarchy, in which the dominant chief was a woman. With the increasing development of the productive forces and the intensification of class exploitation male dominance was established and solidified. Main reason of this was that man monopolized plough, and males came to monopolize the means of violence and warfare. May be, it is the period of an early class society and subsequently patriarchy appeared and women became an oppressed class. Slowly and gradually, the oppressed class became aware of their rights and they struggled. In course of time they became indispensable part of economic growth of a nation. Industrial revolution and Second World War opened new avenues for women’s participation in labour market. For the developed countries women’s participation in economic activities are mostly concentrated in the non-agricultural sector whereas in case of developing countries agriculture is the dominant sector where women are engaged mostly. The status of any given section of population in a society is intimately connected with this economic position, which itself depends on right roles and opportunities in terms of economic activities and these may differ according to the stages of development.
Women in Indian Economy:

“Women are the poorest among the poor (no matter how poverty lines are drawn): The most economically vulnerable (no matter what the nature of crisis): and are almost always to be found lowest in the occupational ladder of the Indian economy and the last in line as the recipients of benefits derived from modernization and industrialization”\(^7\)

In order to have knowledge about economic participation of women and its evolution it is necessary that economic role should be studied throughout the ages in different forms in different fields. Because, considering the female workers as a homogeneous group, its gross analysis in pure quantitative reference, can’t explain the whole situation.

Therefore it has become important to discuss women’s role and their status in the Indian economy with their specific areas of work. But reference to women’s economic activities is extremely sparse in Indian history. Before British inroads into India, women’s roles find no mention and whatever information can be gathered has to be by inference. First records begin with the British. These were traveller’s accounts, various administrative documents, and finally the census. From the census records we get roughly about the range and degree of the economic involvement of women. The patterns and trends in women’s economic activities that became noticeable from the late nineteenth century till the beginning of the twentieth century excited the attention of many scholars like D.R. Gadgil and subsequently others.\(^8\)
The traditional village community of India consisted of the cultivators, artisans and those performing manual services. It was mostly agrarian society where the family formed the unit of production. Men, women and children, all participated in the production process. As a society moves from the traditional agriculture and household industry to organized industry and services, from rural to urban areas, the traditional division of labour ceases to operate, and the complimentary relationship of the family is substituted by the competitive one between individual units of labour. Technological changes in the process of production call for acquisition of new skills and specialization, which are very different from the traditional division of labour, push womenfolk to subordinate position due to the lack of the access to the new situation.

In the initial phase of industrial development, women were confined to certain unskilled and semi-skilled types of work and constituted an important segment of the labour forces in these industries. Technological changes have affected the employment of women in these industries adversely. Absence of training opportunities, illiteracy and lack of mobility refrained women from acquiring the new skills demanded by modern industry. This created a gap in the earning power of men and women and is responsible for the widespread belief that female labour associated with backward economies as less productive. Development has however opened some new avenues to women. Modernization, social change and education, have enabled some women to enter new professions, or occupations.

To understand the economic contribution or role of women, it is important to understand the existing socio-economic condition. One of
the striking structural characteristics of labour in India is the regional
difference. The reasons are cultural and historical as well as economic.

When we consider the women of Assam in this regard it found
that contrary to conservative tradition, Assamese women enjoyed the
aroma of freedom as well as better social status in comparison to her
counterpart in other parts of India. Due to the absence of Major Aryan
influence in this land the society is free from the evil customs of Aryan
culture. But society being patriarchal in nature, equal importance to her
contribution was not counted nor given due recognition except
recounting her domestic responsibilities by sentiment. Her contribution
to economic development is also not counted.

But, in fact, Assamese women contributed in many ways to the
family wealth and income by engaging themselves in different economic
activities. They supplemented their economic share by doing many
household activities. Besides that they worked in the agricultural field,
crafts and industry, spinning, weaving in the form of Handloom
industry. After independence, with the increase in the facilities for
education women’s participation in Government and non-Government
services is increasing gradually. But still recently women’s participation
rate in the organised sector is not much encouraging.

According to National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) 55th
Round data, among principal status workers in Assam Rural Female
Work Participation rate (FWPR) was 87 and Urban Female Works
Participation Rate (FWPR) was 97 and were much below the all Indian
average rates 231 and 117 respectively and subsequently lower than the
male work participation rates of 506 and 507. According to the 58th
Round i.e. in 2002, the corresponding rates were: rural FWPR in the state 116 urban FWPR in the state 101. Both the rates are higher than the 55th Round figures but lower than both Rural and Urban FWPR in the state which were respectively 522 and 516.

In Assam, the proportion of women employed in the private sector is higher than the public sector. In 2000, in the private sector, the percentage of woman employees was 47.63 against 14.75 in the public sector.

By analyzing the census data of main workers, marginal workers and total workers, it appears that female work participation rate is much lower than the male work participation rate in the state. The percentage of total male workers in 2001 is 49.9 against 20.8. The percentage of main female workers is 9.7 against 42.3 male workers. But the percentage of marginal female workers is higher than the percentage of male marginal workers at 11.1 and 7.6 respectively. 2001census data reveals a large scale variation in the percentage of workers among male and female, the figures being 51.0 percent and 10.3 percent respectively. Notwithstanding the fact the size of female workers has grown up from 7.5 percent in 1991 to 10.3 from 7.5 percent in 2001.10 The percentage of female workers is higher in all the agricultural-based occupation in rural areas. Female work participation rate in agricultural and allied activities is lower. Female work participation Rate in Assam is lower than the all India average in the primary and secondary sectors but is much higher in the tertiary sector.
Table 1:1

Percentage of Total Worker, main worker and marginal workers to total worker by residence and sex: Assam by district: 1991 and 2001 (Selected area)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Percentage to total population</th>
<th>Workers</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhubri</td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>48.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongaigaon</td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: A Situational Analysis of Women and Girls in Assam- A. Sarma in National Commission for Women

Significantly it also shows the vast difference in the works participation rate between male and female workers, as main workers and marginal worker. In comparison to male workers the number of female workers is very low in all three districts of the study. If we consider the situation in case of Government Employees the picture is almost same. Very few women are employed in the Government sector in comparison to male
Statement of the problem:

"Each new occupational role taken over by women creates problems of adjustment of attitude and behavior. The opposition to the people playing new roles is caused by the uncertainty not only of the incumbent in the unfamiliar situation, but also of those who play related roles."  

In India the entry of the women in the occupational world of man, especially in the non-traditional profession, is a recent one. After independence, in Indian constitution women are given right to get equal opportunities in every field and in practice also doors of all types of opportunities were opened to them. Social changes in urban areas and increasing expenditure of maintenance, removed all those restrictions that had great impact on women and as a result they could enter those professions in tertiary field, which were forbidden for them earlier. Quite a few women became professionally occupied not due to the shortage of money but to establish their independent identity in the society and to increase their self-respect. Economic participation of these classes is increasing continuously during the last few decades. Not only in education and medicine but also in agriculture, engineering, technology, law, research, etc. they are employed in a large number in different offices in white collar Job. But the employment of women brings them not only additional earnings, a status, self-confidence, autonomy, a new perspective of self, but also generates numerous problems. She has to strike a balance between her household role and professional role.

The serious nature of the problem encountered by the professional women needs to be ascertained in order to arrive at
It is assumed that, these categories of professional women are different to some extent from other categories of working women. What sets the difference of career women from other working women is that their work is to them more than a livelihood, more than something to which they are dedicated. It is a means to an end, the end being achievement. To attain sense of achievement sometime they have to sacrifice leisure, family life, love and that comfortable social perspective, the convention.

**Significance of the study:**

The National Commission on labour (1969) observed the importance of women employment as “The right of woman to employment should in no way be considered subordinate or secondary to that of a man”.12

Level of human development depends on the position of women in the power structure of the society. It is because power inequality between the genders is the result of different access to the sources of power such as education, physical power, skill and Technology. In the underdeveloped society, position of the muscle power between the genders primarily leads to gender inequality but the growth of Knowledge, skill and new Technology replaces the physical power and difference between the genders, to the access, starts to be minimized.

Professional advancement of women indicates the access of women to these factors and is a very important phenomenon as to
whether a society is proceeding towards eliminating or at least reducing the gender equality.

As society moves away from its subsistence economic structure to a modern Industrial structure, the importance of traditional sector gradually declines and that of modern sector rises. Proper utilization of human resources, especially of the womenfolk who are much more sensitive to social problems and have a much more sensitive approach towards it, is absolutely necessary if our society is to march towards the path of development. Women should be given their due share and due respect and importance in every sphere of life, especially the working women, more specifically the professional women, which are of importance in the economic development of an area.

The professional women of the study area mostly belong to the middle class families. These families are tradition bound and male dominated. The process of urbanization also started quite late here. The traditional families of Assam are not uprooted from the rural mooring, and so a woman though professional has to give priority to her role as homemaker than a professional. Moreover, the winds of feudal culture, which still blow in the width and breadth of this particular area, preach to women seclusion at home and restriction from active participation in public and economic life. Moreover, social evils such as sexual harassment, women suppression, and drop out rate of girls are in a great number here. This existing pattern of social condition in such a society has to be studied as to how far it affects the economic right and career of professional women.
The present study is the first of its kind with women professionals from diverse fields, which try to understand, and analyse the different dimensions of professional life, an assessment of the career achievement and its related issues. Generally, highly educated female professionals are very few in number in our society. Due to their marginal position, they are neglected and fail to create any attention from the social researcher at large.

Different approaches and theoretical formulations are being adopted to understand the magnitude of the workingwomen’s problems. Yet the women’s participation in modern professions and the nature and extent of their problems have not been explored in greater details.

This work will examine the situation related to the professional career of women and pinpoint the factors related to the issue.

The study will also help for the future vision of professional women as it studies women professionals from diverse dynamics of professional’s life, which is mostly effected by the socialization experience, exposed to higher professional education and practice. The study will reveal more important indicators if we can extrapolate the findings of the study at the national level.

**Objectives of the Study:**

The present study is an endeavor to analyse the career of professional women in the context of medicine, law and engineering which are mainly male dominated and where Job requirements are considered unsuitable for women except medicine.
Modernity apparently has touched every aspect of our social life. Yet, the attitude towards them remains largely in line with patriarchal ideology. The women may gain self-sufficiency but it does not always bring the kind of freedom the male member enjoys under the patriarchal system.

The study will highlight in a modest way whether the higher educational qualification and higher rank of job, which bring economic independence, bring any change in their attitude, pattern of behavior, or decision-making status. The final objective is to trace the possible factors in the work and family situation, which interact with each other, creating some problems in the life of professional women and to find out whether economic independence empowers them in decision-making power or whether the demographic pattern is influenced by the urge for achievement of goal of professional women, as career oriented professionals marry late due to their time investment in the higher education.

The study has the following broad objectives.

1. To examine the working life of professional women through job related factors such as job involvement, career prospects, motivation and working environment of the organizations.
2. To analyse the relationship between demography and professional status of women.
3. To understand the family and the personal life of the professional woman such as her relation with in-laws, husband's cooperation and their interpersonal relationship as well as the socio-economic background from where they have originated.
4. And lastly to analyses the impact of profession if creating some challenging situations and to search some solution to the problems.

**Assumption and Hypothesis:**

Hypothesis is made in order to find out the correct explanation of a problem through investigation. On the basis of hypothesis, facts are observed and collected. The following hypotheses have been listed in the present study.

1. Economic need does not drive a woman to enter into the professional career.
2. Status in the service is the determinant of economic independence in the authority structure of the family and decision making power of the woman.
3. Demographic pattern is closely related with career orientation attitude of the professional woman.

**Delimitation of the study:**

The proposed study on professional career of woman of undivided Goalpara, is too complicated to be encapsulated in a limited or restricted area. The study area is a mixing ground of different cultures and ethnic groups. Though the study area has been mentioned as “undivided Goalpara”, the part consisting of the present Kokrajhar district, which is mainly inhabited by Boro Tribals and at present under B.T.C., has been excluded from the study rendering the study to be a non-tribal one.

Moreover over the studies on professional career of woman is so vast yet the investigator would like to use the world “Professional women” in its traditional sense of skill and specialization. The investigator has
restricted the study only within the three professions namely, Medicine, Law and Engineering.

**Selection of the area:**

In this study the erstwhile Goalpara district has been chosen more as a sample to indicate the national trend than as the universe for the sample survey. The analysis of the situation of the district and a deep penetration into the emerging role of women professionals in this district is by itself is important to focus on and can throw some valuable insight into the trend. Undivided Goalpara situated at the geographical periphery of the Indian state interestingly symbolizes a miniature India to a large excellence with its diverse ethnic group, religion, culture, language and origin.

But it has been observed that in spite of the rapid social and technical progress and increase in the levels of literacy and education; no significant change has taken place in the life of the women. Despite of their economic independence the, educated working women are also not free from stereotype traditional social norms. So to improve the present situation a correct diagnosis should be made. There has not been a single study made on professional women of undivided Goalpara district. It has been impossible to act even for making a census list for the workingwomen in the organized sector here. In the light of this situation, the present has the responsibility to plan for future. That is why the professional women of undivided Goalpara district (non-Tribal) have been selected as the Jurisdiction of the study.
Research Design:

A research design is the base on which the investigator proceed towards the study of the problem after formulating the Hypotheses. "It is the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data"\textsuperscript{13} so that logical conclusion can be drawn from it.

The present investigation, which is exploratory in nature, is proposed to make a systematic study with the help of the following methods.

1. Sampling
2. Study tools
3. Data collection
4. Classification, Analysis and Interpretation of Data.

The Universe and the Sampling:

Sampling is the process by which a relatively small number of individual is selected and analyzed to find out for which it is selected. A sample is a particular group selected as the representative of the entire population.

The subject of the study requires the choice of the sample to confirm to the criteria of professionals and to be representative. Women from Law, Medicine and Engineering professions are the sample of the present study. Since there are three different units in the population, the method of stratified sampling is used and the investigator divides the population into three different strata by some characteristics, and from each of the smaller homogeneous group falling in each stratum, predetermined units are drawn randomly.
Though the investigator wanted equal number of samples from each category of profession, the distribution of professional personals in the area follows an uneven pattern. Moreover, due to some sex-based preference, women's entrance into engineering profession have been a restricted phenomenon, and so required number of women engineers were not uniform in spite of the sincere attempts of the investigator.

To understand the fertility behavior of the professional women, a comparison has been made between professional and non-professional workingwomen. Non-professional respondents are taken from the same institutions of professional women in equal numbers from the three respective districts of undivided Goalpara. All of them are selected from both the public and private sectors. With this background the sample comprises of 116 working women, 86 are professionals of which 36 from medicine, 36 from law and 14 from engineering and 30 non-professional working women, ten from each three districts of undivided Goalpara.

For the District of Dhubri under the undivided Goalpara district, doctors were selected from organizations such as Anti epidemic and Anti Leprosy survey unit, 20 Bedded Maternity centers, State Health Department, Chest Hospital, all the State Dispensaries, Dhubri Civil Hospital and Srijangram P.H.C.

The law practitioners of the district were chosen from all the existing courts such as District and Session Judge Court, office of the Judicial Magistrate and Bar council and all other courts under the district.
The only lady engineer was selected from public sector organization i.e. P.C. institution Gauripur under Dhubri District.

From Bongaigaon District doctors were selected from Agarwala Hospital, BRPL (Bongaigaon Refinery and Petrochemical Ltd) ST. Augustine Hospital, Bongaigaon Civil Hospital, Lower Assam Hospital, Chilarai Hospital, Bongaigaon Rly Hospital, Abhayapuri Civil Hospital and other State Dispensaries. Lawyers were chosen from all the existing courts under Bongaigaon District including Abhayapuri and Bijni Sub-division.

All the lady engineers were chosen from public sector organization BRPL, PWD construction division Sarvasiksha, CIC, and Bongaigaon Polytechnique.

Lady Doctors of Goal Para district were from Al Salam Hospital, Goal Para civil Hospital Florence Hospital, Solace Hospital and Research Center, Life Care Seven Sister Hospital and Nirmala Hospital.

Legal professionals were selected from Goalpara District and Session Judge Court Bar Council and CJM’S Court.

In this district also only one lady mechanical engineer was found working in a private organization. Detailed information about the respondent and their work organization is contained in Table 1:2.

Criteria for selection of sample:
The following criteria were employed for their selection.
1. **Profession:** Three different categories of the professionals were chosen on the basis of the definition of the term professional. Three specific professions such as doctors, engineer and law practitioners were only selected as sample. The criteria is to choose women from high socio-economic, educational background with prestige and status oriented profession.

2. **Education:** The professional’s educational level chosen for the study is as the standard of education requirements namely,

   i) Doctors: MBBS/MD
   ii) Engineers: B.E/Above
   iii) Lawyers: LL.B/LL.M.

3. **Age:** Women professionals belonging to the age group of 25 to 55 years were selected as sample for this study. Professionals above the age group of 55 years have been excluded from this study as they have settled in their life style.

4. **Marital Status:** Regarding the marital status all the categories of women such as married, unmarried, separated, divorcee, with or without children have been selected as samples.

5. **Length of Service:** Professionals who are in the profession for more than three years are selected.

   Other social criteria such as language, religion, caste or community was not brought under the purview of the study.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Anti epidemic &amp; Leprosy Unit</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20 bedded maternity centre</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Health &amp; Family Welfare</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>State Health Department</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chest Hospital</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dhubri Civil Hospital</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>State Dispensary</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Lawyer</strong></td>
<td>District &amp; Session Court</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CJM Court</td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bar Council</td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Engineer</strong></td>
<td>Gouripur Computer Centre</td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Doctor</strong></td>
<td>Agarwala Hospital</td>
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<td>BRPL</td>
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<td>St. Augustine Hospital</td>
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<td>Bongaigaon Civil Hospital</td>
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<td>Lower Assam</td>
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<td>Bongaigaon Rly Hospital</td>
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<td>Srijongram P.H.</td>
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<td>Chilarai Hospital</td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Private Practice</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
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<td>Bar Council</td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Engineers</strong></td>
<td>Bongaigaon Refinery &amp; Petrochemical LTD.</td>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doctors</td>
<td>Lawyers</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Petrochemical LTD.</td>
<td>District and Session Court</td>
<td>Private Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PWD Construction Dept.</td>
<td>CJM Court</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sarvasiksha</td>
<td>Bar Council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CIC</td>
<td>Total:</td>
<td>Total:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bongaigaon Polytechnique</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total=</td>
<td></td>
<td>Total Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>86</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total= 12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source:</td>
<td>Field Study by this researcher.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Size of the Sample:

In view of the in-depth and exploratory nature of the study the size of the sample has been restricted to a total of 116. Though it was aimed to pick up equal number of samples in each category, keeping in view the necessity in statistical analysis, in actual situation in the field it was seen that it was not possible to stick to the equal numbers as they were not available. Hence disproportionate numbers were drawn from each stratum to ensure sufficient cases in each category.

The number of the sample remains as 86 professional and 30 non-professional, which make 116 as the total number of the sample.

The total number of lady doctors in the three district of undivided Goalpara was 13 in Dhubri 16 in Bongaigaon district and 15 in Goalpara. 12 lady doctors were selected from each district on the basis of criteria.

Lawyers were more abundant in all the three districts. There were 44 lady lawyers in Dhubri, 52 in Bongaigaon and 20 in Goalpara district. Numbers included the Judicial magistrates also. 12 Law professionals are selected from each three districts under the undivided Goalpara randomly.

14 Lady Engineers were found in Bongaigaon and 12 were selected from them while in the other two districts only one 1 in each district was found.
Tools for the collection of data:

For the purpose of the present study, data are collected from both the source primary and secondary.

(a) Collection of secondary data:

Although the study was based mainly on primary data yet the importance of secondary data could not be denied because at the beginning when there was not clear conception about the problem and limited knowledge about the present situation, secondary data gave the idea about the present situation. The study of relevant literature was carried out in the institutions to have some theoretical knowledge about the problem.

1) Central Library, J.N.U.
2) National Library, Kolkata
3) K.K. Handique library, G.U.
4) O.K.D. Institute of Social Science, Dispur, Guwahati.
5) SANLAP (NGO) Kolkata.
6) Reference section of District Library Guwahati.
7) Center of Woman Studies, G.U.
8) NEHRC (North East Hill, Research Centre) G.U.
9) ICHRE, Kolkata
10) NEHU, University Library Shillong.

and some other institutions.

Besides this library work I visited some Government institution also.

Namely-

1) Directorate of Census Operation Guwahati.
2) Department of District Gazetteers.
3) Department of economics and statistics, Guwahati-6
4) Directorate of Employment. And Training, Guwahati
5) Government Press, Guwahati

and all the district and sub-decisional offices of the study area to collect the related information about the particular profession.

Collection of primary data:

The multiple methods have been applied to supplement one with other to collect primary data for accurate result. The tools used in the study were mainly field survey by Questionnaire and Interview Schedule. Observation was adapted to supplement to Questionnaire. Two sets of Questionnaire had been prepared for the professional and husband of the professional categories for woman. Besides that husbands of the professional wife were also interviewed with observation. Another set of Questionnaire was made for the non-professional for a particular issue.

Another tool, case study was also considered as very helpful for carrying out an intensive study of the problem through which one can understand precisely the factors and causes of a particular phenomenon.

Description of data:

Questionnaires were used to elicit primary information about the professional woman and to analysis the career related issues, which required wide range information about the domestic and official life of woman.

The questionnaire for professional woman included mainly items on professional and personal life. It included reasons for entering the professional work situation, career prospects, level of motivation, husband’s supportiveness and other critical issues like role conflict authority structure, sexual harassment at work place and discriminating
attitude of the authority. In order to cross examine the questionnaire, after a gap of two months, professionals and their husbands were interviewed as the home address and phone numbers were collected through the questionnaire. Interview schedule is the name usually applied to a set of questions which are asked and filled by the interviewer in a face to face situation with others. The interview schedule included items on opinion related to particular profession their attitude, to the changing situation and their outlook towards their life and careers. The interview sessions provided insight into the personality of the professionals observed by the researcher.

Almost all the professionals were contacted at their workplace with few exceptions. The questionnaire was given to them to be filled up and a separate date was fixed for interview. The interview with the professionals and their husbands were very exciting experience for the investigator as it revealed many aspects which was mostly otherwise impossible to know.

Case study is an intensive study through which one can understand precisely the factors and causes of a particular phenomenon. So to investigate the professional career, 12 case study were selected, four from each profession, which reflected the different dimension of their career and family. The life history of the professional women with their socio-economic background were studied and enquired through this tool.

Problems and Limitations Encountered in Data Collection:

As the sample of the study were the high profile professional and busy with their professional activities, the major problem encountered
by, in the process of data collection, was scarcity of time to spare by them. Even sometimes the interview had to be conducted on different days to facilitate time schedules. Sometimes pre scheduled time and date was bound to be cancelled due to their emergency duty which became unavoidable on their part.

Another problem regarding the availability of the professionals was that although professionals from other categories such as lawyers and Doctors were available, it was very difficult to find women Engineers within the Jurisdiction of the investigation area. Moreover there is lack of published data on the status of the professional in the Government, Semi Government or Private Organizations. Even where some information was available it was not classified on the basis of gender. Though gender budgeting is a step towards it, but the aim has not been achieved yet. Therefore no updated information was available regarding the women professionals, from the record of the state census, NSO or any other published source. In the absence of these secondary sources of information, any micro-level study such as this investigation, though difficult, has to begin with little guidance in unexplored area.

**Data Analysis:**

After the collection of data, an analysis of the data and the interpretation of data are necessary to recount.

Keeping in view of the objective of the study, the primary data collected through the questionnaire and interview schedule are classified on the basis of similarities of information. Then it is taken for tabulation and classification. The answers of the question are mainly analyzed in terms of percentage.
A bibliography of the related literature also is attached to the research work as the source of secondary data.

**Distribution of Chapters:**

For the systematic study of the body of information, the investigator has divided the whole thesis into eight chapters.

Chapter one is the introductory part, which deals mainly with changing status of women, methodology and profile of the study with related literature on workingwomen in general and professional women in particular.

Chapter two will discuss the legal status of women, specially the legal safeguards for working women throughout the ages, which forms relevant National clause for social and professional security of working women.

Chapter three examines the background and social-economic and educational profile of the respondents.

Chapter four explores the working life and status of professional women and the reasons or factors behind their entry into the labour market.

Chapter five attempts to investigate into the family and personal life of professional woman. It also scrutinizes how much their status in service is related to their fertility behavior. It is concentrated mainly on social relationship and authority structure within the family.
Chapter six stretches the different dimension of professional and personal life through investigation and analysis of individual case studies of professional women.

Chapter seven discloses the challenges faced by professional women in their private life, as well as official life. How they try to solve the challenges and what are the achievements in their life will be highlighted in this chapter. Further sex-segregation, workplace harassment, different labour market theories and self-perception of professional women are also discussed here.

Chapter eight, the last one, draws findings and conclusions of the whole investigation with some suggestive remarks. This helps to find out the actual position of the professional women of the proposed area and this measure to smooth functioning of their activities of various levels of life.
Profile of the Study Area:

Undivided Goalpara District

Origin of the Name, Goalpara:

The name of Goalpara is associated with the term ‘Gowal’ or Goal, meaning milkman. There is also a belief that the name of Goalpara is derived from ‘Gwalitippika’ which literally means milkman’s village. It is believed that there was a big ‘char’ (alluvial land) which formed an ideal place for grazing cattle where many ‘Goals’ (milkman) settled with their herds of cattle. This inhabitation of milkman was popularly known as ‘Goaltulis’. It is therefore believed that the name Goalpara is a derivative from the term ‘Goaltulis’.14
History of the District:

The district of Goalpara (undivided) had never a separate political entity under its own king and its history has to be considered in connection with that of various kingdoms of which from time to time formed a part. It is originally included in the ancient kingdom of Kamrupa which finds mention in Mahabharata. Narakasura is said to be the earliest King of Kamarupa followed by his son Bhagadatta, who is mentioned in the Mahabharata as fighting on the side of the Kauravas at the battle of Kurukshetra. The dynasty of Naraka was displaced by some foreign invaders who left little sign of historical importance and practically nothing is known of the history of the district for the next two thousand years.

According to the Jogini Tantra, the kingdom of Kamarupa extended from the Koratoya River on the western boundaries of Rangpur, to the Dikkara, in the east of Darang district. It was divided into four portions. i.e., Kampith from the Karatoya to the Sonkosh, Ratnapith from the Sonkosh to the Rupahi, which included therefore the present district of Goalpara, Subornapith from Rupahi to the Bharali and Soumarpith from Bharali to Dikhow.

Thus the Ratnapith division of old Kamrupa included the present study area undivided Goalpara district.

It is in the tenth and eleventh century A.D. that a powerful dynasty known as Pala dynasty ruled the central Assam. But it is difficult to say for certain whether that Goalpara (old) was included in their territories or not.
After Pala dynasty, the Khen dynasty came to power and in 1498 A.D. Nilambar, the last powerful king of Khen dynasty, lost his kingdom to Hussain Shah of Gaud. After it a new caste known Koch rose to power in this area. Biswa Singha was the founder of Koch rule. Chikangram, a village in Goalpara, about 12 Kms north of Kokrajhar is said to be the first capital of the Koch king which was established by Haria Mandal, a chieftain in the 15th century. Bissau Singh declared himself as the king of Amateur in 151 A.D. and shifted his capital to Coochbihar, where he built a fine city, though afterwards it was shifted to North Guwahati in 1593 A.D. Afterwards the Koch kingdom was divided and disputes broke out between two families and ultimately it went to the hands of Mohammedans. Since then Mohammedans ruled Goalpara for 20 years through a Governor. Again in 1658 A.D. the Ahom seized Goalpara and remained in the hands of Ahom for three years. In 1661 A.D. under Mirjumla, Assam came under Mohammedan rule and Old Goalpara district continued to be so till 1765 A.D. when with the rest of Bengal it passed into the hands of East India Company.

Moguls, who had strong ground in Old Goalpara, had introduced Zamindari system which continued till the abolition in 1957.

Physical aspects:

Old Goalpara district lying in both sides of the river Brahmaputra is the westernmost district of the state of Assam. It covers an area of 10,301 sq kms and is the second largest among the districts of the state. On the north it is bounded by Bhutan, on the east by Kamrup district, on the south by Meghalaya state and on the west by west Bengal and Bangladesh.
Former Goalpara district has experienced changes in jurisdiction for many times since it came under the British rule and was added to Rangpur district of Bengal province. In 1822 it was formed into a separate district known as North East Kamrup with three thanas of Goalpara, Dhubri and Karaibari along with the large portion of Garo hills frontier and was placed under the charge of a special civil commissioner. Mr. David Scott was the first official to hold the charge. After the annexation of Assam to the British territory in 1826 through Yandaboo Treaty, David Scott the special Civil Commissioner of North East Rangpur was appointed as the commissioner of the new province. The district of North East Rangpur subsequently merged with the new province as a separate district under the name Goalpara. In 1827 it was again transferred to Coochbihar commissionership and it was finally incorporated into Assam in 1874.
In 1879, the head quarters of the district was transferred to Dhubri and Goalpara, the place of old headquarter was reduced to a sub divisional head quarter. Since then, the district had been functioning with two civil subdivisions viz, Dhubri and Goalpara till 1958. In 1958 another subdivision, Kokrajhar by name was curved out from Dhubri subdivision, and in the year of 1983 the district of Goalpara was split up into three subdivisions and each of the erstwhile sub-division made into a separate district of the same name viz, Kokrajhar, Dhubri and Goalpara district. Then in 1989 another independent district called Bongaigaon was curved out of the then Kokrajhar district. Presently three other new districts are also constituted viz, within the study area named Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri.

Among the four districts of undivided Goalpara, Kokorajar district is pre-dominantly inhabited by Bodo tribe of Assam. As per 1991 census total schedule tribal population of the district was 329461 or 41.15% of the total population. As the study is mainly concentrated on non-tribal samples, the former Kokrajhar, district which is under the Bodo Territorial Autonomous Council at present, has been excluded from the study area, as per 2001 census report.

The forests of the district have played a very significant role in shaping the economy of the entire district. A considerable section of the people depends on forest for their livelihood. No known minerals or mines have been found in the district. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of all three districts. The soil is fairly soft sandy and climate is characterised by highly humid atmosphere.
According to the census 2001, Dhubri and Bongaigaon district have 3 sub-divisions each whereas Goalpara has only 1 sub-division. Number of towns are 8, 5 and 3 respectively for Dhubri, Bongaigaon and Goalpara district. Total population of Dhuburi is 1634589, for Bongaigaon is 906315 and for Goalpara it is 822306 consisting 793916, 440345 and 401599 female population respectively. (Table 1; 4)

Table 1:4

District wise area, population,
Sub-Division and Towns in selected area (undivided Goalpara),
2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Area in K.M. Census 1991</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Sub-Division</th>
<th>No of Town</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dhubri</td>
<td>2797.78</td>
<td>P-1634589 M-840673 F-793916</td>
<td>3 Dhubri South Salmara Bilasipara</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongaigaon</td>
<td>2510.00</td>
<td>P-906315 M-465970 F-440345</td>
<td>3 Bongaigaon Bijni North Salmara</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>1824.00</td>
<td>P-822306 M-420707 F-401599</td>
<td>1 Goalpara</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Composition:

Total area of undivided Goalpara District is 10,350 sq. kms and it has 42,93,614 population according to 2001 Census, claiming 4.29 % of the area and 13.13 % of the total population of Assam. The average
density of population of undivided Goalpara district was 422 persons per sq.km while the average state density 340 persons per sq km.

Undivided Goalpara is the melting pot of different religion, culture, language and ethnic group. As per as 1991 census, there are 28.73% Hindus 70.45% Muslim 0.57% Christians, 0.01% Sikhs 0.01% Buddhists and 0.16% Jains. In the Bongaigaon district, there are 64 % Hindus, 32.74% Muslims, 2.21%Christians, 0.06% Sikhs, 0.03% Buddhists and 0.12% Jain. In Goalpara district, there are 39.89% Hindus, 50.18% Muslim, 7.89% Christians and a minimal number of Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains.

Social life:

Regarding the social pattern it is mostly patriarchal. The male member is the head of the family though law has given almost equal right to the female one.

Regarding the family life of all three newly created districts, joint family system was common in the past. But now a days, that families tend to break up into smaller units under new socio-economy influence and the joint family system is losing its hold except in certain cases. Marriage at early age by negotiation is common amongst all the communities of the districts. Of course, new-a-days the average age of marriage for males and females has been rising gradually owing largely to the spread of education and change in the social outlook.

Educational facilities:

The female education scenario in the area is not satisfactory. According to 2001 Census there are 34 Higher Secondary Schools 4 Junior Colleges, 12 Degree Colleges 1 Teacher Training College and 1
Law College in Dhubri District. There are 17 Higher Secondary Schools 1 Junior Colleges, 6 Degree Colleges 1 Teacher Training College and 1 Law College in Bongaigaon District. There are 13 Higher Secondary Schools 8 Degree Colleges 1 Teacher Training College and 1 Law College in Goalpara District. There are no professional and Technical colleges in the area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Sex-ratio Female per 1000 male</th>
<th>Literacy rate Persons</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dhubri</td>
<td>944</td>
<td>49.86</td>
<td>56.61</td>
<td>42.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongaigaon</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>60.27</td>
<td>68.81</td>
<td>51.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>58.56</td>
<td>65.36</td>
<td>51.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B.- Literacy rate is the percentage of literates to population aged 7 years and above. Source-; Statistical Hand Book Assam2003.

Both the male and female literacy rate of the district rose sharply from 1991 to 2001 census. While for males the increase in the literacy was 10 to 11 percent, for female population, it was 12 to 13 percent.

**Employment Scenario:**

As the economy is mainly agriculture based and society is strongly patriarchal, Woman-folk's education, specially for higher professional and technical course does not receive impetus. Moreover lack of higher educational institutions and unfavorable economic and social conditions also stand against them. If one looks at the main workers or marginal worker's work participation rate of both the gender, it appears that in all three district the number of male worker is much more then the number of female workers.
Table – 1 : 6
District and sub-division wise Distribution of Government Employees by Gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Sub Division</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dhubri</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhubri</td>
<td>South Salmara</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>2,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilasipara</td>
<td></td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>2,238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>12,334</td>
<td>1,778</td>
<td>14,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongaigaon</td>
<td></td>
<td>3861</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>4,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongaigaon</td>
<td>Bijni</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>2,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Salmara</td>
<td></td>
<td>4514</td>
<td>1018</td>
<td>5,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>10,381</td>
<td>2091</td>
<td>12,472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>9304</td>
<td>1588</td>
<td>10,892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>9304</td>
<td>1588</td>
<td>10,892</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The number of Government employees in Dhubri district for male it is 12,334 for Bongaigaon it is 10,381 and for Goalpara it is 9,304. But for female it is only 1778 for Dhubri 2018 for Bongaigaon and 1588 for Goalpara. Very few women are employed in Government sectors in all three districts. (Table- 1 : 6 )

Regarding the government service the scenario is almost the same. Table 1:7 shows the differences between male and female employees in government service.
Table - 1 : 7

Distribution of Government Employees according to place of Birth, sex and status of Undivided Goalpara.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Class - I</th>
<th>Class- II</th>
<th>Class- III</th>
<th>Class-IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhubri</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongaigaon</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In Dhubri district there are 228 male class-I officers whereas for female it is only 10. In case of Bongaigaon and Goalpara the picture is same. Out of 104 class-I officers in Bongaigaon only 3 are female officers. In Goalpara it is 148 for male and only 8 females.

With this employment scenario it is very natural that among the professionals in these districts there will be very few females. Especially in nontraditional profession like law, medicine and engineering.
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:

Studies on women's participation in economic activities seems to gain Global importance, but the study on the professional women is very recent one and the topic is fragmented and is not enough or up to date. Before proceeding to the work it is necessary to review some of the existing literature relevant to the present problem. So an attempt has been made here to review such studies already done in India and abroad.

To start with International reports, a good number of report and studies done by several international organizations and the World Bank. International Labour Organization (ILO) conducted many studies related to women's estimated share in work and service sector, gender diversion labour, etc. in different countries of the world and regularly publishes its series of reports on current labour and employment issues.

During 2001-02 ILO have published two resourceful books on gender issues and women at work. One is written by Wirth (2001) about the women in management, which reviews the changing position of women in the labour market and in professional and managerial work. It expresses the obstacles to women's career development and the action to improve their opportunities and promote gender equality. The second one is "Women Gender and Work". What is equality and how do we get there. (Loutfi 2002). Here some selected articles from International Labour Review has been assembled for the first time to illuminate questions such as how we should define equality, what equal opportunity means and what statistics tell us about differences between men and women at work.
All Women’s World conference\textsuperscript{17} have reinforced the concerns about the ever-increasing marginalization of women from the benefit of development and have sought active support from the government to rectify the imbalance caused by the structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). But before the Beijing Conference no stress on gender equality in economic resources was laid.

The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP). Human Development Report in the year 1995, for the first time drew attention to the persistent gender inequalities in human development and the core premise of the report was that “Human development, if not engendered would be endangered.” Pointing out the unequal opportunities between men and women the report highlighted that women constitute 70% of the world’s poor and 66% of the world’s illiterate.\textsuperscript{18}

The early literature of western world were mainly concerning the desperate roles of women, comprising of wife, mother and working woman. The emphasis being on different roles played by her and double burden shared by wife in combining the two roles of wife and mother at one end and working lady on the other. Generally husbands are free from most household duties and responsibilities. No matter whatever the employment status of the wife concerned, the findings suggested that women retained full responsibility for their household and children. They also cut on their occupational investment placidly and happily\textsuperscript{19}. The implication of these research evidences indicated that though men and women derived benefits from marriage and family life but only women paid a steep price. This brings the argument towards the implicit question of incompatibility of marriage and profession for women.
Among the American studies the findings of Blood and Wolfe (1960)\textsuperscript{20} is an important one. The author studied about the husband wife relationship in America and the causes of women's entry into the gainful activities and its impact upon their marital satisfaction. Their confrontation between the desire for higher standard of living through employment and desire for children were depicted in the study. Sullerot (1971)\textsuperscript{21} pointed out that economic necessity was not only the motivation for women to join in the gainful economic activities or employment but it is because they became aware of the fact that the only way of raising their status and position both within the family and in the society was to become an earner.

According to Coser and Rokoff\textsuperscript{22} the real reason that professional work and family can't mix for women, is mostly the product of cultural convention than the inevitable consequences of biology. Married woman is supposed to derive her status from her husband. By engaging in a career of her own, the woman automatically tends to develop an independent status and thereby threaten the social order. Thus the problem is embedded largely in the fabric of socio-cultural norms, beliefs and heavily institutionalized value system than at the level of objective reality.

In the United States one of the earlier attempts to understand the position of women in science was made by Alice Rossi(1965).\textsuperscript{23} In the article "Barriers to the career choice of engineering medicine or science among American women" utilizing 1960 census data she tried to show that like other occupations there has been no automatic change or improvement in the rate of participation among professional and
technical occupation during that period though women accounted for 65% of the increase in the labour market.

In their work on “Social Stratification in Science” 24 Cole and Cole have tried to show that some differential treatment of women does occur in the social system of science but not as much as many critics would like to project as regards the discrimination. They concluded that the amount of discrimination against the women is rare.

In the work Profile of the Mechanical Engineer 25 R. Harrison (1975) explored the reasons of woman’s insignificant participation in engineering profession. He finds that many women select engineering as an occupation because their socialization has produced traditional or domestic woman for whom such career is not a viable alternative.

Sara Yogevs in her article 26 “Judging the Professional Women- Changing Research-Changing Values” provides a good summing up of the changes in the perspective of the women professional by research on professional women. She states. “Till 1960, the career woman was regarded as deviant and was therefore presumed to suffer from psychological conflicts. The career woman was seen as competitive, aggressive, and intellectual in a masculine way; therefore she was socially not well adjusted. On the contrary, the working women in the traditional occupation were accepted by the society easily.

Exploring the earlier rise and fall of women professionals in the medical profession in the U.S.A. Mary Roth Walsh 27 (1970) focused on the problems of women in Medical profession. In her article ‘Doctors Wanted: No Women Need Apply:’ Sexual Barriers in the Medical
she argued that the decline of women physician in the early 20th century was not a by product of the professionalising of medicine but the result of deliberate sex-discrimination by those who controlled medicine school, hospitals and societies. Medical schools were willing to admit women only when they lacked competent male applicants.

Reviewing the literature of the Western world, it seems that women professionals, in whatever profession they may belong have to face some specific problems as focused by the literature.

Indian Context:

Among the Indian scholars Gadgil was the first one in 1920s to draw attention to a spectacular declining trend in the participation of Indian women in economic activities. Gadgil, in an article entitled "Women in the working force in India (1965)" devotes much space to the rural scene and correctly states that census data on female employment can lead to the formulation of the proper questions but the answers to such questions can be find only through intensive local studies.

Pramila Kapoor's 'The changing status of working women in India.' (1974) is a pioneering one. She has tried to study the problems faced by the working women due to dual commitment and concern. Here she has pointed out that economic necessity is not only the reason behind women’s employment but other factors like economic independence, individual status and position etc. also induce women to became engaged in gainful activities or employment. While considering the problems of working women, it was observed that problems were mainly two fold, one being the inner conflict due to dual commitment,
and the other being the practical difficulties in carrying out the dual roles.

In the national level the first status report "Towards Equality" covering the country as a whole, was issued in 1974. The study appraised of the serious implications of the negative socio-economic discrimination which women have been exposed and indicated that "the detailed statistical data needed to assess the major occupational trends, namely the extent of women’s entry into various profession and services and the level of their employment in various white-collar jobs is not available over a period. It is therefore, difficult to give a correct statistical profile of the educated women workers." But according to an ILO study made in 1970, only 171 of the professionals and Technical workers were women in place of which three fourth were teacher. The condition of professional women and their ratio in labour market is almost same even today as depicted by the committee on women as "Towards equality."

Rajendra Prasad Jaiswal’s (1993) work on 'Professional Status of women' is a classical work on professional women in India. He made a comparative study between men and women professionals in the specific profession, i.e. science and engineering. He finds that married women in science and engineering profession possess better status then their colleague in the same profession because of their marital background. But occupational mobility found lesser among the women then the men. L.W. Hoffman (1975), in his ‘Our investigation’ tried to find out women’s relationship between employment, their education and fertility in U.S.A. The data obtained in the study indicated that although educational levels of the country as a whole had been increasing since
1945, but the picture did not envisage the promotional increase of women employment. It was also observed that education operated as a deterrent to fertility not only because it had enabled women to obtain more satisfying jobs but also because it operated to delay the time of marriage and the birth of the first child. It was suggested that though there has been considerable erosion of sex based prejudices and stereotypes among the members of scientific community, yet these have not vanished altogether. And whatever remnants are found they are more pronounced among men then women members of the scientific community."

Karuna Ahmed (1979)\(^3\)\(^4\) states that low professional commitment and discrimination flow from role perceptions and self-images imbibed through the process of socialization. He comments, "The problem of professional woman is basically that of urban, educated woman, who looks upon work as only an addition to her traditional role. She 'does not' perceive any discrimination and does not set any high career targets."-

Krishanaraj Maitreyi (1986)\(^3\)\(^5\) through an empirical investigation on women scientist in her study, gives an explanation for sexist bias in a clanging society.

A. Mahajan, (1966)\(^3\)\(^6\) in his article "Women's two roles- A study of role conflict' analyses the contradictory roles which modern educated women in 'India have to face to pursue a career and a family life. The author also wrights break through into the typical position of this category of educated working women who themselves are not sure of
their capabilities to handle contradictory roles at various stages of their life.

Rekha Subbaiah in her Ph.D. thesis (1975)\textsuperscript{37} made an attempt to study some of the problems of the gainfully employed women with respect to factors like education, type of work, marital status caste and such variables that might aggravate their existing problems, while relating career women and problem of marriage. She found that in marriage market, a girl’s status as bread winner might have affected negatively and career might be abstract against marriage for such working women. Gumani and Sheth (1984)\textsuperscript{38} reviewed the position and role of women scientist in India through available statistics. They observed that because of certain historical and cultural factors, Indian women are late starters in scientific profession. Being late entrants, the proportion of women in science is relatively small and is found very few in decision making levels. It is also drawn that although Indian women scientists do not face any apparent discrimination in education and employment, but they quite strongly argue the fact that their male colleagues and superiors do not accept them professionally.

Though many married women work and their number are increasing, the tendency continues for women to subordinate their own career aspiration to those of their husband and defer their own involvement in the world of work until they have attended to the conventional requirements of child bearing and child rearing. It was the findings of Veena Rani and Pratam Kahndewal, which was depicted in their article, ‘Family environment and interpersonal behaviour’ (1992).\textsuperscript{39} According to the findings of Parikh & Sukhalime, (2004).\textsuperscript{40} Engineering has traditionally been looked as profession only for men. But presently
situation has changed slightly. From a very low percent of 1 or so in 1970, the enrolment of women for the entry as a whole is now more than 15 percent. Their investigation and analysis shows that general attitude towards this profession has geared up. But some employees have some reservation about the concept of women in engineering profession.

A very recent study on professional women has been done by Poonam Arora (2003). The study is first with women professionals from diverse fields. The varying nature of the professions such as doctors, engineers, lawyers and executives are included to highlight the uniformity of the problems irrespective of the type of occupation. The study examines how the differential perception of the work roles affects the role conflicts experience in their work place. Her study mainly highlighted the problems of family conflicts and stress suffered by professional women. Findings indicated that majority of professional women were highly motivated to work. 'For a majority' of 95.5 percent professionals, economic consideration is not the sole or major reason for choosing to work. Work provides satisfaction of all the needs of the professional women. The findings points out the significant conclusion that ‘employment enhances self-esteem of those professional women who accord significance to their work role equal to or higher than the role of wife and mother.” Out to balance the both, she suffers from ‘work overload & time pressure.’

These are some of the books reviewed by the researcher on specific profession and higher employment category. But except these, lots of literature had focused on various dimensions on the life and role conflict of the working women in general. Some of them are mentioned below.

But no systematic attempt has been undertaken up till now in Assam to study about the career and family life of professional women, analyzing their situation and problems. Only few studies have been made on working women of the area in general with few exceptions.

Deepali Barua in her study (1992)\textsuperscript{57} finds that number of women workers have increased large in recent years. She pointed out “There are not single professions where women are not taking part. Womenfolk have proved their efficiency in various administrative as well as other professions of higher ranks” but the proper assessment of their ability has not yet been made.

Some unpublished theses also worked on the problem of working women in general. For instance Jeuti Barua study (1993)\textsuperscript{58} tried to find out the changes that has come in the life of a single woman in the new social context their role and performance as a working woman, their economic problems and the pattern of acceptance by the society.

Kusumlata Goswami (1987)\textsuperscript{59}, studied the problem of the working mother and their impact on their children. Her findings show varieties problems and the significant role conflict which the working
mother suffers during this period, when the child is very young on in infant stage.

Kunja Kusum Kakati’s (1990) analytic study presents status of educated working women and finds that employment does not improve the status of women in the family due to conservatism and traditionalism of the people.

*Status of women in Assam* (1992) edited by S.L.Baruah is a compendium of paper related specially with the economic role played by women of Assam. Here the various dimension of working life of women has been depicted nicely.

Thus a lot of literature has been published in Indian and abroad on working women. Western literature mostly highlighted the problems of working women, specially the professional women, on some issues such role conflict, dual career relationship, promotional barriers, child care problems, sufficient representation in the workforce and also on marital adjustment.

In the Indian since most of the literature on working women in general, confined to rural and unorganized sector, where their problems are to some extent different from qualified career women of urban sector in these study. Only recently few studies have been made on specifics and non-traditional profession.

The foregoing review of literature leads to the conclusion that study on non-traditional higher professions like engineering, medicine
and law are the least explored areas of study, though participation of women in these professions is a gradually developing phenomenon.

Therefore it is needed for an in-depth and micro level study into the profession of women in engineering, medicine and law in underdeveloped areas like undivided Goalpara District, which is closely related with the economic condition of the area. It should provide enough insight into the basic issues and problems attached to the emergence of women’s rightful position in the contemporary Indian occupational structure and also research an understanding of the nature and characteristics of the on-going change in the status of women in Indian society.

**Terms and Terminology:**

**Profession:**

In recent years, the professions have been the fastest growing section of the occupational structure and the onslaught of forces of rapid modernization and urbanization of social system invites women to come forward to acquire specialized knowledge. As a result, during the past half century women have entered into almost all the professions from which they were once excluded. To understand the nature of the work, it is important to discuss the theoretical dimensions of the related terms.

It is a difficult task to offer a comprehensive definition of a profession. Not only has the concept of profession a variety of meaning
attached to it but also concept of the group of occupations called profession has been assigned contradictory notions and cultural outlook.

Review of the available literature on the conceptualization of profession provides some definitions which have been treated differently by different scholars as under.

(a) According to Carr Saunders and Wilson (1933)62 "A profession emerges when a number of persons are found to be practicing a definite technique founded upon a specialized training. A profession may perhaps be defined as an occupation based upon specialized intellectual study and training the purpose of which is to supply skilled service or advice to others for a definite fee or salary."

(b) According to Parsons (1939)63 "I conceive a profession to be a category of occupational role which is organized about the mastery of and fiduciary responsibility for any important segment of a society's cultural traditions including responsibility, for its perpetuation and for its future development. In addition a profession may have responsibility for the application of its knowledge in practical situations."

(c) According to the Oxford English dictionary (1970)64 "A profession is a vocation in which proffered knowledge of some department of learning or science is used in its application to affairs of others or in the practice of art founded in it."

(d) According to Greenwood (1962)65 "Professionalism is one that views a profession as an organized group which is constantly interacting with society that forms its matrix, which perform its social
functions through a network of formal and informal relationship and which creates its own sub-culture requiring adjustment to it as a pre-requisite for career success."

Although there have been efforts in reformulating the criteria of 'professions' it have been unanimously accepted as involving specialized knowledge and skills. Generally, 'profession' means those occupations which are based on practice and ideology of people who call their occupations a profession and claim certain prerogatives and in exchange, they offer or claim to offer certain services due to the expertise they possess by way of specialized training.

As the subject of the present study centers specifically on professional women, it assumes pertinence to understand how a profession differs from other occupations. Abraham Flexner's on his discussion 'Is social work a profession' he set forth six criteria to distinguish professions from other kind of work. He viewed professional activity as intellectual carrying with it great responsibility, as learned being based on great knowledge and skills and not merely routine, as practical rather than academic on theoretical and as internally strongly organized. Moreover, its technique could be taught, this being the basis of professional education. Professionals view themselves as working for some good aspects of society. Flexner used these criteria to classify various occupations and found that medicine, law, engineering were definitely professions.

There are two major approaches - Functionalist and Marxist who have evolved in the study of profession.
The basic assumptions of the Functionalists are (i) the professionals make important contributions to the well-being of the society as a whole; and (ii) they are concerned with service to the community rather than with self-interest. Mills: 1951; Illich 1975; Parry and Parry 1976.

But these assumptions have been questioned in recent times.

Marxists have taken a different view of profession. They see professionalism as a self-interested strategy to improve the market situation of an occupational group. A profession obtains a monopoly over a particular service which it jealously guarded. As such members of these professions can be seen as the servants of the capitalist class.

There may be differences of opinion regarding the theory of ‘Profession’ but no body deny the fact that ‘professional’ are a set of individuals distinct from others in having access to specialized education and pursuing an independent career by virtue of their specialized knowledge, competence and values conforming to their professional ethics and standards. Self identity, sense of belonging to their job, career commitment and an individualistic orientation they possess which evolve a unique set of beliefs, attitudes good norms which help them to develop a lifestyle of their own reflecting their expectation from life.

**Career:**

A career as a sociological concept has a strict meaning which distinguishes it from other evaluative meaning. As a structural concept ‘career’ include a related series of job which is to a huge extent predictable and this predictable series is arranged in a hierarchy of status. So career of an individual means, as he passes through the related
jobs and the career of a particular occupation, it comprises a related series of jobs arranged in status hierarchy.

The authors like Salcum (1966)\textsuperscript{70} Delton (1951) \textsuperscript{71}; Form and Miller (1949) \textsuperscript{72} have discussed about the nature and definition of 'career' though they are not agreed always in the same viewpoint related the term 'career'.

The notion of a career embraces a number of factors which are not associated merely with the ideas of work. Work lends only tends only to symbolize individual's activity at the present; career suggests a pattern sequence of future activities which in most cases in composes the whole of an individual's working life. It is normally functional for an occupation to have a structured career system, because if it is known that there can be a progression through several stages, then this certainly provides a strong intensive to remain in that profession.

The important function of the career is to bring security to the individual, which brings the personal satisfaction to the individual also. By the way it enhances the stability of the occupation itself.

But sometimes the term 'Career' is not used properly with its specific meanings. For example the term 'Career Woman' is a common enough expression implying that a woman who devotes herself to her work automatically denies certain commitments, which it is felt should be directed towards her family and domestic situation.

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's dictionary of current English (2002) \textsuperscript{73} 'Career' means the series of jobs that a person
has in a particular area of work, usually involving more responsibilities as time passes. The same source when dealing with the term ‘Career woman’ means a woman whose career is more important to her than getting married and having children.

**Woman:**

The social definition of ‘woman’ is closely related the social institutional ideology and cultures. ‘In reality’ a society’s particular definition of woman creates certain expectations for their behaviour as females, as opposed to man.

Women are constantly defined in relation to men whether they are similar to men, different from or contemporary to them. As Black and Coward (1981) put it: “Men’s specific gender is thus ignored; they represent the universal and the human to which women are ‘Other’. This perception of woman as ‘the other’ has been taken for granted in most social and political thought.

Theoretically the term woman seems to originate from the old English “Wifmann” etymologically, meaning a wife or the wife division of human race; the female of the species Homo etc. But viewing woman as ‘Other’ is the creation of society which was also supported by famous Greek Philosopher, Aristotle who described woman as ‘a defective , man in 4th century B.C. and still continue which constructed artificial barriers and deprived the womenfolk to acquire knowledge and lead the life of humiliation with supposed feeling of inferiority complex.
Chapter-I
Foot Notes

17. The first Women conference 'Women's world conference held in Mexico(1975), the mid term evaluation conference organized at Copenhagen (1980), the Second World conference held at Nairobi(1985) and the Beijing conference (1995)
31. I.L.O Report
48. Gopalan, Sarala 'Women and Employment in India' Har Chand Publications.
56. Sinha, Puspa(1987)’Role Conflict Among the Working Women.’
63. Parsons, Talcott(1939) ‘The Profession and Social Structure, Social Forces, Vol-17
Croom Helm, London.

70. Slocum (1966) *Occupational Careers*. Aldine Chicago


72. Form W.H and Miller, D.C. (1951) *Industrial Sociology*.
Harper and Row. New York

