Change is law of nature, and society, being a part of nature cannot be an exception to this law. Changes in a society may be sometimes endogenic in nature due to the internal stress and strains within the community or communities within the marked politico-geographical unit, while on other occasions such changes are exogenic due to influence and inspiration of outside agencies. Changes that occurred in Assamese society till the beginning of the 19th century were endogenic in nature, because being politically isolated from the rest of India, which on its trail brought about social isolation also, for a long period of about six hundred years during the Ahom rule, there was hardly any scope of social contact and mobility between the Assamese society on the one hand and the rest of India and for that effect with the rest of the world on the other. Consequently the society in Assam remained largely archaic in nature.

The British occupation of Assam in 1826 brought about a great change in the political sphere in the state, which consequently ushered in changes in the social life of the land. The importance of the changes in the social sphere were no
less significant than the changes in the political arena. The changes were sometimes slow, sometimes radical but although steady and vigorous in impact. And all these marked the beginning of a new era in the social history of Assam. The society resulting from these changes experienced a new turn in 1900 when the British Government introduced its new education policy and declared the decision of the Government to establish a college at Gauhati.

The present dissertation deals with the changes that took place in the Assamese society during the period 1826 to 1900. The dissertation embodying the studies in the changes that occurred in the Assamese society during the period of our study unfolds itself in five chapters. In CHAPTER I while underlining the importance of our study, attempt has been made to reconstruct a picture of the political condition of Assam before 1826. Knowledge of the past makes it easy to understand the present and hence CHAPTER II discusses the society in Assam before 1826. CHAPTER III deals with the factors that contributed towards changes that gradually occurred in the society during the period 1826-1900. CHAPTER IV attempts at finding out the pattern of changes, if any, and CHAPTER V modestly says some remarks and propositions that may be treated as conclusions from the present dissertation.
I shall be failing in my duty if I do not express my gratitude and indebtedness to those who have helped and encouraged me in the completion of my work. At the very outset I desire to express my deep sense of gratitude to my revered teacher Dr. J. N. Phukan, Head Department of History, Gauhati University, under whose kind guidance this work is carried out. No word is adequate to express my gratitude to him.

I wish to acknowledge my debt to other members of the Department of History, Gauhati University, especially to Dr. I. S. Mumtaza Khatun.

I also take the opportunity to acknowledge my indebtedness to D.H.A.S. Gauhati, Assam, National Library Calcutta, National Archives of India, New Delhi and others who help much in dealing with all the documents and books to complete my study.

It is a pleasure to renew my indebtedness to all the members of my family who not only encourage me but also extended their valuable help in every step of my work. Lastly, I remember, with deep pain, my late father at whose encouragement I started my work. But it is very painful that just before the completion of my work he left for his heavenly abode.

Aruna Nath