PREFACE

Despite the all too important role of critical data in matters of research, the significance of empirical knowledge in similar contexts can hardly be overemphasized. Consequently, although much critical effort has gone into the making of the present thesis, the root of the project lies purely in an observation of a very private and intimate kind. It was in the early eighties when a mysterious aloofness of my little daughter — a tiny tot of three then — from the children of her age and a general recalcitrance towards people at large produced in me an uncanny feeling that shocked me out of complacency. Discussions with friends followed and ended with the decision to put her, into a nursery school — 'Apala's Nursery' at Guwahati. The move proved immensely fruitful as she began to play and interact with her schoolmates with such alacrity that her early inhibitions were now a thing of the past.

The change that came over her tender personality imbued me with so overwhelming a sense of satisfaction that I was at once inspired into undertaking a study of the beneficial aspects of pre-school education vis-a-vis the social development of children. It struck me thus, as imperative, the need to probe deep into the meaning and significance of the nature of social behaviour that emerged as a consequence of pre-school education. The thought also crossed my mind as to whether the benefits reaped by my daughter could lead to any significant discovery of behaviour patterns among the beneficiaries of such education.

The study begins with a brief sketch of the importance of the early childhood years and the significance of pre-school education in fostering the social development of children. It also deals with the objectives of the study, the hypotheses framed and the limitations involved.

Review of related literature and justification of the study form the subject of the second chapter. The third chapter gives a detailed account of the methods and approaches used for data collection, while in chapter four, the sampling procedure and the field study have been elaborately discussed. Chapter five is dedicated to analysis and results.

Finally, in chapter VI an attempt has been made at arriving at a conclusion outlining the discussions and the implications of the study.