CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

A Historical background and
demographical perspectives of Assam

"By educating the women we can educate the whole nation, because a
country can never rise without the contribution of 50% of its population"

- Napoleon.

Tremendous increase in gender related studies has acquired
increasing importance in the fast changing modern world. It has once again
focused the attention on the profile of the changing status of the educated
housewives. In order to acknowledge the contribution of women in general and
the housewives in particular to the society, a wide ranging and proper research
in this field has been imperative.

Society and the changes in society are just like the two sides of the
same coin. The sociologists interpret changes as rather a permanent process
declaring, ..., "nothing is permanent except change....", social changes are
now looked upon as an intense subject1. "Social change is the outcome of
intellectual development and an intellectual progress accompanied by moral
development, particularly in the growth of altruism over egoism."2 Thus
"change" as a term in social studies that has been used as identical to
progress. Nowhere in the history of sociology, changes and theories of
progress had clashed, Although doubt relating to certain negative aspects of

1. Hawkings W Stephen, a well known scientist, in one of the speech-said "the idea
of the universe and its evolution is nothing but various stages of change.

2. Comte Auguste, A French thinker in (1798-1857) developed 3 modes of social
mode related in change of society and progress. e.g. (a) Theological b)
Metaphysical (c) Positive mode.
changes which clash with the ethics of progress cannot be denied. Our guiding light to the study is the factual belief that, ".....to study the society and its changes one has to study the individual...." According to Mahatma Gandhi—"personal growth is congenial with communal life, where each individual, is considered as a significant participant. Change is possible through development of autonomous self"....³ Thus, the equilibrium and interdependency between society and individual are the focal points of our study and such facts and figures are still latent in our social set up. On this basis, attempts have been made to conduct a micro level study covering the area of Kamrup district.

Assam is a land of red rivers and blue hills.⁴ The word 'Assam' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Asom' meaning peerless. According to a few other scholars the name Assam has been derived from the word 'Ahom', 'a mighty race that ruled this part for six centuries till the country came under the British rule. Due to its diverse nature, Assam has been described as mini-India.⁵ Indianness in the life and culture of the people of Assam had always been there and could not possibly be missed by discerning eyes.⁶ The population of Assam had been a striking factor, because it's population had always been a mixed one, comprising various racial elements. In that sense Assam had been a cosmos of races, being situated in one of the great migration routes of mankind.⁷ Despite its population being a composite one and its culture heterogeneous in content, the passage of time had shown the growth of the spirit of toleration reflecting the spirit of homogeneity and unity. The development and changes in Assam have demonstrated the gradual process of mingling of people and their fusion, assimilation and synthesis of thoughts, ideas and customs.

4. Barua Hem, Red river and Blue Hills, p. 1
7. Ibid - 6 - p. 207.
Assam covers an area of 78438.00 (sq. kms.), of which 77667.99 are rural areas and 770.01 urban areas. Its population is 22414322, with 11657989 males and 10756333 females. There are 23 districts namely—Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Goalpara, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Morigaon, Nagaon, Golaghat, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Karbi Anglong, North Cachar Hills, Karimganj, Hailakandi and Cachar.

The trends in population growth in Assam is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>3,289,680</td>
<td>16.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>3,848,617</td>
<td>16.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>4,636,980</td>
<td>22.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>5,560,372</td>
<td>20.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>6,694,790</td>
<td>20.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>8,028,856</td>
<td>19.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>10,837,329</td>
<td>34.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>14,625,152</td>
<td>34.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>22,294,562</td>
<td>52.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>22,414,322</td>
<td>18.85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source*


Out of 23 districts of Assam, the District of Kamrup is the largest and the most diverse in nature amongst all the districts of Assam. Kamrup is the gateway district to the whole of the North East.

Kamrup is the only district that reflects a variety of cosmo-cultural races, hills and plain tribes, urban and rural populace and formally and informally educated citizens. This district provides the backdrop of all sorts of political, social and cultural changes and it has been a model district to all other districts in Assam.

**CHART - 1**

**KAMRUP**

- Area - 4345 sq. km.
- Total population - 2,000,071
- Headquarter - Guwahati
- Sub division - Guwahati, Rangia, Chandrapur.
- Main towns in Kamrup - Guwahati (M. Corp.)
  - Palasbari (M. B)
  - North Guwahati (T. C.)
  - Amingaon (C.T.)
  - Niz-Hajo (C.T.)
  - Sualkuchi (C. T.)
  - Rangia (M. B.)

It is for the historical, geographical and literary factors combined with the highest population rate, pre-historic myths and legends and the density of population, that the district of Kamrup has figured prominently amongst all the districts of Assam.

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9 'Yoginitantra' quoted the area of "কবতোং সমরিতৎ বাংলবিবি উত্তবাস্যাং কাম্পিলি কবতোং পশ্চিমসে। তীর্থ পোতা বিজিয়ন পুৃত্যাং পিবিয়মাকো। দেবিণে দেবজন্মাং লাঙ্গারান্ত সরধারায়।। কাম্পিলি ইত্যাদি সবশ্রেষ্ঠ নিপীতি।। কাম্পুর রং দ্বারা নিঃশেষিত।।" Kamrup is surrounded by: like (East - Dilkkar Bahini, West - Kortowa river (now in Bangladesh), North - Kanjagiri (now in Nepal), South - mighty Brahmaputra and Lokha river).
The following tables give a clear picture of the whole of Kamrup.

**TABLE - 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Sub Divn.</th>
<th>Blocks</th>
<th>Revenue Circle</th>
<th>Mahkuma Parishad</th>
<th>Gaon Panchayat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sq. Km.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>408593 (R)*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25908 (U)**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LITERACY RATE**

**TABLE - 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>2001</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65.04</td>
<td>74.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source***

Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes in Kamrup (1991 Census)

**TABLE - 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub. Div</th>
<th>Total 2000071</th>
<th>S.C. Population</th>
<th>% of SC to total Population</th>
<th>ST Population</th>
<th>% of ST Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rangia</td>
<td>415138</td>
<td>19060</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>65495</td>
<td>15.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guwahati</td>
<td>1554557</td>
<td>125866</td>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>146654</td>
<td>9.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandrapur</td>
<td>303376</td>
<td>5817</td>
<td>19.15</td>
<td>2191</td>
<td>7.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Rural
** Urban
*** Statistical Hand Book Assam 2001
Religion-wise Population in Kamrup

TABLE - 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Muslims</th>
<th>Christian</th>
<th>Sikhs</th>
<th>Buddhists</th>
<th>Jains</th>
<th>Oriya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1486526</td>
<td>467544</td>
<td>31820</td>
<td>3331</td>
<td>1077</td>
<td>5622</td>
<td>1436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74.32</td>
<td>23.38</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Scheduled Languages

TABLE - 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marathi</th>
<th>Nepali</th>
<th>Oriya</th>
<th>Punjabi</th>
<th>Sanskrit</th>
<th>Sindhi</th>
<th>Tamil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>549</td>
<td>25,054</td>
<td>2,102</td>
<td>3,281</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source*

The modern city of Guwahati which houses the state's present capital had been the capital of many a past king. Located on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra, the town had also been known as the "Pancha Tirtha**" or the seat of five pilgrimages. The shrine of Devi Kamakhya atop the Nilachala hill is considered to be one of the famous pithasthasanas and during Ambubachi*** festival it draws devotees from all over the country. The Umananda island, fondly referred to as the peacock island, is the seat of a Siva temple. During the Sivaratri festival, hundreds of devotees ferry across the river to the midstream temple. The Navagraha, atop the Chitrasala hill is a temple of the nine planets, and since time immemorial, it had continued as

* Statistical Survey, 2001 Assam.

** Five Holy places

*** Holy day, people take bath in river, the Mother earth attends period, as the belief goes

s Religious festival worshipping Lord Shiva
the centre of astrological and astronomical studies. That is also one of the reasons why Guwahati was called 'Pragjyotishpura*'. The Vasisthashram, supposed to be the ancient hermitage of sage Vasistha, houses a temple in very idyllic environs. Three rippling streams and a bewildering variety of birds cast a sonorous spell all around and provide for the citizens an ideal picnic spot. The Ugratara temple is located in the heart of the city. Atop the Sukreswar hillock and also within the central part of the city, is the Janardana temple. On the north bank of the Brahmaputra is Aswaklanta, where Arjuna** and his weary horse, according to legends, rested during his Aswamedha journey. Besides these, being the religious and political nerve centre of ancient Assam, Guwahati had also been and still is the major centre of art, culture and learning for the entire region. It is also the gateway to the country's land locked north eastern region.

The city has several colleges and other institutions in various streams of learning including the State's first University, the first Law College, an IIT, the first general colleges and the like. It also has a Medical College, an Ayurvedic College, a Homeopathic college, a Veterinary College, an Administrative Staff College, a Forest Training College, a Music College, a Nursing College, an Agricultural College, an Engineering College and an Engineering Institute, an Oil Refinery, All India Radio Station, Doordarshan Kendra, the State Central Library, the State's only Zoo and the only Museum, The Guwahati Tea Auction Centre, located near Janata Bhawan at Dispur is the world's largest CTC tea auction centre and the world's second largest in terms of total tea export. The country's first state-owned film studio is located in Guwahati. The region's common High Court is located in the heart of the city on the north bank of the Dighali Pukhuri, a magnificent location in Guwahati. A large number of newspapers, weeklies and dailies are published from the city in English, Assamese, Bengali and Hindi. The headquarters of the N.F. Railway are also in Guwahati.

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* City of early lights.
** Son of Kunti of the epic Mahabharata.
The district's subdivision town Rangiya, serves as a gateway to Eastern Bhutan and is particularly known as a centre of Islamic education and culture. Hajo, 20 kilometres to the north of Guwahati, is a place of pilgrimage and of equal importance for the Hindus, the Muslims and the Buddhists. The Hindus visit its Hayagriba Madhava temple and the hill top temple of Kedar. The mosque at Hajo is believed to have one fourth sanctity of Mecca* and is called 'Poa-Mecca'**. The Buddhists cherish the belief that Lord Buddha had his nirvana in this town. Sualkuchi at a distance of 24 Kilometres from Guwahati is a renowned centre of silk production and is particularly known for its non-mulberry variety called "Muga". Besides the geographical and historical significance, one of the most striking features of this district is the "Matriarchal" set up of almost all the neighbouring Seven Sisters*** "The proportion of female headed households is greater than the national average in the North-East region, consisting of Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagaland."

In this backdrop mentioned above Assam as a state and Kamrup as a district, (the selected area of our study) provide immense scope for our study. Moreover, the study on social changes and its trends strengthen our hypothesis as follows:

Major changes in society owe to individuals.
Major changes normally take place in households.
Major determinants in changing norms, habits of a household lie in both male and female.

Major tools in shaping up the personality of men and women are knowledge and education.

* Holy place for the Muslims
** Hajo, a holy place in Kamrup
*** Seven Sisters - Seven hilly states of the North east of India.
11. Visaria Leela and Visaria Pravin, Indian household with female heads p 55., 1985
In our study on educated housewives, therefore a detailed discussion on the meaning and definition of education constitute an inevitable part.

Definition, meaning and significance of education:

Education is the power of knowledge. "The International Commission" on the development of education in its report "Learning to be"\textsuperscript{12} says – "Education from now on can no longer be defined in relation to a fixed content, which has to be assimilated but must be conceived of as a process in the human being, who thereby learn to express himself, to communicate and to question the world through various experiences and increasingly all the time to fulfil himself." Sri Madbhagavat Gita* in its sacred verses says that ... knowledge, the object of knowledge and the knower are the three factors that motivate action; the senses, the work and the doer are the three constituents of action.\textsuperscript{13} However, the importance and seriousness of study of education began with the Greeks in the year 469 B.C. Socrates** laid down his ideas about knowledge; followed by Plato*** in 386 B.C. in his masterpiece. "The Republic", which came to be regarded not as a work on politics but as the finest treatise on education that had ever been written.\textsuperscript{14} Plato was the first political thinker to formally and directly acknowledge the importance of education for both men and women.\textsuperscript{15} Aristotle had also defined education as...

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} UNESCO, 1972 p. 143
\item * Sri Madbhagavata Gita - Sacred book, depicts the spiritual instructions of Shrikrishna to Arjuna.
\item \textsuperscript{13} ज्ञान गैय परिसाता भिजिष्टा कर्म चोदना।
करण्यं कर्म कतीर्थि िजिष्टं; कर्मसंग्रह \textsuperscript{I} slokas, Gita.
\item ** Greek philosopher.
\item *** Disciple of Socrates.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Nanda N. History of political thought p. 56
\item \textsuperscript{15} Plato is the 1st political thinker to formally and directly acknowledge the importance of education to both men and women highlighting the facts like - (1) State controlled education (2) Education for men and women (3) Strict Censorship of Literature (4) Compulsory education (5) Mental and Moral Development (6) Relation with soul (7) Producing Philosopher-- Plato's theory of Education.
\end{itemize}
a window to the soul of the individual.\textsuperscript{16} The invention of printing press brought to humanity a sort of intellectual renaissance. Machiavelli* viewed education as the basis of development.\textsuperscript{17}

The political thinkers and the socialists of India had laid tremendous emphasis on the importance of education. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation, said—"Education means an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man and woman, body, mind and spirit. Literacy is not the end of education nor even the beginning. \textit{Literacy in itself is no education.}"\textsuperscript{18} In order to draw the line of difference between literacy and education and the literate and the educated, we have tried to exclude those who are merely literate, and include those who are already introduced to the new and scientific branches of modern day non-formal and formal education.\textsuperscript{19} as follows:

\textbf{Segments of education : 1}

\textbf{Formal / Non-formal Education}

- Primary Education
- Secondary Education
- Higher Education (Agricultural and Technical Education)

\textbf{Other developed concept of education in social studies :}

- Peace Education
- Computer Education
- Education for Management Skill
- Other Technical Education

\textsuperscript{16} Aristotle the 'father of Political Science and father of individualism and pragmatist. In his theory of Ideal State and the theory of Revolution defined Education as "Knowledge that provides stability to the citizen and enhances the spirit."

* A famous Political thinker

\textsuperscript{17} Penguin, Modern political thought p. 104, 1980.

\textsuperscript{18} Jain A.K., Studies on Mahatma Gandhi, p. 239, 1983

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid - p. 9
Education Commission has recommended that agricultural and technical education was a part of formal education.

Thus education seems to be a life long process of self development and those who take education as a means of self-improvement is to be called educated. Gandhiji's views on the significance on education had been undoubtedly the mostly acknowledged definition on education.20

It had been observed that the family and the household as a social unit underwent changes due to tremendous impact of education. Moreover, the growing importance of education in modern life, economy, pattern, values, and principles of the individual in a social set up also contributed to the process..... In almost all social set up around the globe, education has brought a sea change to the status of woman. In family circle, only education throws light on the individuality, sense of freedom and self worth of the housewives to muster courage to break their stereotype role in procreation as well as transform themselves to complete human beings. With the passage of time, studies on women and housewives had been gaining momentum and therefore a definition on the significance of housewives with its historical perspectives has been essential.

Meaning and Definition of Housewives

The simple meaning of housewife is a "Woman within the household". The term household includes a housewife, her pattern of activities and their significance. Since family and the household are not the same entity either conceptually or in relation to statistical theory and method, the household is usually defined in terms of residence or habitat and the family in terms of

20. Ibid p. 256
something more intimate in human terms of relationship. In the same way the word 'family' is used for representing the most primary form of social organisation by the sociologists. Whereas the term 'household' is used by economists and the statisticians with the same purpose as an ultimate or primary unit of organisation. Websters third international dictionary defines a household as a 'social unit comprised of those living together in the same dwelling place.' The identification of this social unit on a systematic basis in India as a whole is a relatively new phenomenon of the post independent period beginning with the 1951 census. Both the 1961 and 1971 census defined a household as the entire group of persons who commonly live together and take their meal from a common mess unless the exigencies of work prevent them from doing so. It defined the head as generally the person who bears the chief responsibility for the maintenance of the household. The head need not necessarily be the oldest male member but may even be a female or a younger member. However, the enumerators were asked not to make any elaborate enquiry to enter into any long argument. The National Sample Survey (NSS) defines it as a 'group of persons living together and taking food from a common kitchen.' In the light of these definitions of household, a housewife is a woman within a household and widows, divorced and separated women can also be called housewives. Therefore, the terminological explanation of a housewife gives a more systematic meaning to the word and widen the characteristics and importance of the housewives. While the word 'wives' in a family, gives a narrower concept of a woman, 'housewives in household', encompasses manifold patterns and characteristics. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and some parts of North Eastern Region have households headed by only

22. Ibid - p. 71
females. Therefore, housewives in Assam have faced diverse transition and characteristics.\(^{23}\)

In India a housewife is a married partner to the husband in a family. Since the inception of civilization the concept of housewife is not alien to the Epics, Smrities and various Dharma Shastras, which have described housewives and their expected roles in different ways. In India housewives are also called "Annapurna\(^{*}\) and Lakshmidevi\(^{**}\). Housewives are also called 'Patni\(^{***}\), ardhangini or grihini. In Assamese they are called 'bowari', 'ghar jeuti', lakhimi, ghainy, gharini and the like. The word ardhangini\(^{ss}\) is related to the story of Adam and Eve, the original ancestor, of homosapiense, while God has created eve from the rib of Adam. The manifold ornamental roles of housewives in India and its various states prove the importance of housewives and their active presence in the household from time immemorial. Habitual pronouncement of the names of goddesses ahead of God like 'Sita-Ram' Radhe-Krishna, according to the Indian religious belief, denote the significance and importance of the wives as being above the husband and of their equal status. Even blessings like 'Hara-Gourir bosoti hawk\(^{sss}\) depicts the glorious place of housewives with their husband in Assamese culture.

**Significant characteristics of housewives in India as well as in Assam**

There are certain significant characteristics of housewives which are observed as follows:

> The line of demarcation between housewives and working women is very thin. Working women who work outside and contribute to the

\(^{23}\) Ibid 3 P. 39

\(^{*}\) Who gives food

\(^{**}\) Godess of wealth in the Hindu mythology

\(^{***}\) Wife

\(^{s}\) Ghar Jeuti - one, who enlightens the family.

\(^{ss}\) Better half

\(^{sss}\) May lord Shiva and Parvati reside in your home
maintenance of household along with their husband do not cease to be housewives.\(^{24}\)

➢ Lack of statistical accounts of the pattern of activities of housewives make it confusing while assessing the contribution of housewives to the productive sector of a household.\(^{25}\)

➢ Only housewives in India have mostly been the first hand target and the worst victim of all social maladies like insurgency, unemployment, economic crisis, according to the U.N.' Report 2000.

➢ Asian housewives have long been coping with the consequent household distress and bearing the anxiety of how to meet the needs of their family.

➢ Attitude of a housewife in a household to the other members of the family is a significant factor to determine the behaviour, value, morale and attitudual changes of other members like husband and children of the family.\(^{26}\)

### CHART - 2

Significance of housewives and the burden of work assigned to them can be divided as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description of Item of activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>i) Sweeping, cleaning of residential house and its surroundings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

25. Ibid 23, p. 99
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description of activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>ii) Washing-clothings and utensils of household.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii) Cooking (including grinding of grain, pulses, cutting of vegetables, fruits and the like) for household members and guests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv) Child care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>v) Attending to old, disabled and diseased members of household.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vi) Fetching of drinking water for household use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>vii) Collecting fuel and firewood for household use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>viii) Purchase of groceries, garments and household necessities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ix) Sewing and mending of clothing for household use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x) Helping the children in their homework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>xi) Observance of social and religious duties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description of Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Pseudo household chores: activities which belong to the primary or secondary production

i) Preparation of rice and flour from paddy, wheat and other cereals.

ii) Pounding of rice, pulses and spices

iii) Milking of cows for production of milk for household consumption

iv) Attending to household cattle.

v) Preparation of ghee, butter, curd, panir and the like exclusively for household consumption.

vi) Papad, achar, sauce, pickle making for household consumption.

vii) Attending to household poultry for production of eggs exclusively for household consumption.

d) Own schooling and attending to higher studies and training.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description of Item of activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Work in household cultivation or other enterprises for the production of goods or services solely for household consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>Work in household cultivation or other enterprises for the production of goods and services mainly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **viii)** Manufacture of chira, muri and similar other products from rice and other cereals and pulses.
- **ix)** Helping male members of household to mend house and cattlesheds, such as thatching of roof and construction of fencing.
- **i)** Substantive participation or other enterprises for the production of goods or services in terms of considerable time spent in the production process.
- **ii)** Casual or seasonal participation in the production process by extending a helping hand to the male members of the household.
- **i)** Substantive participation or seasonal participation in the production process.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description of Category</th>
<th>Item of activities</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>to be sold in the market but also partly consumed in household.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>i) Casual or seasonal participation in the production by extending a helping hand to the male members of the household or by working only part-time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>E. Work done for others in cultivation of any other enterprise for production of goods and services mainly to be sold in the market but also partly consumed in household.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>i) Only part-time work done.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>ii) Full-time work done.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>iii) Casual participation as exchange labour in other's enterprises.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>F. Work done essentially outside the household to pursue one's own independent profession.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td>i) Part or full-time participation in the work of the profession depending on its nature.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>G. Search for work</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>i) Efforts made in search of work.</td>
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Source *

Our study on "Educated housewives" and their changing profile hence has certain objectives as follows—

➢ To assess the general trend of modernization that has touched upon the core of our social organisation.
➢ To make objective assessment of the multidimensional problems confronted by the educated housewives.
➢ To find out appropriate corrective measures in order to ensure better utilisation of human power involving educated housewives.
➢ To gauge general social acceptability towards the changing trend of the status of educated housewives and examine the impact in the future generation.
➢ In the light of the above prime objectives our topic of research has some other allied objectives like—

➢ While assessing the trend of modernization the concept of globalization and westernization and their impact on the Indian society vis-a-vis the Assamese society and other core issues related to these concept in the new millennium are also to be discussed in details.

➢ The challenges confronted by the housewives in the past, present and coming future are to be discussed in certain sub headings like—

(a) Social (Transparent) and
(b) Psychological (latent) aspects.

➢ While dealing with the changing trend of educated housewives some of the up-to-date concept like peace education, health education, moral education and such varied concepts also form the corpus of our objectives.

➢ Our objectives also include a soul searching study of the mobility in the educated housewives and the attitude of the other family members towards the changing trend.
The study of the actual status of educated and non-educated housewives, the line of differences between the former and the later in the process of decision making in a household is also another objective.

A search on the level of awareness amongst the educated housewives on certain health related issue like family planning, AID awareness, social participation, recreational participation is also imperative.

The amount of influences and the far reaching consequences in the changing process of Assamese society and the role played by educated housewives widen the objective of the study.

The line of social acceptability towards changing trend of the status of housewives and the reason behind the acceptability in the light of certain concepts like feminism, humanism, women empowerment are also source of the other objectives.

The objectives of the study include certain social taboos not discussed and researched properly yet, like new-sexual-awareness, extra marital relation, unrest in families in addition to the new concept of beauty consciousness, fashion awareness and similar other changes. To have a total grasp on our study and to find out the reasons behind the backwardness of the housewives who are uneducated and less responsive to the changes and who are not influential in both family and social set up, we propose to make an indepth study of the topic.

Insecurity is the price of consciousness as said by Erich From. If the women of the 20th century were more liberated, socio-economically more emancipated and by and large much more at the helm of things compared to their 19th century counterpart, they have also been more punished, brutalised,
abused and stressed resulting in nervous-breakdowns, psychic disorders, addiction problems, suicides and melancholia in the 21st century. The main objective thus remains to touch all the factors which have influenced the changes of educated housewives, their changing pattern of life and maladies that stand as stumbling blocks to the overall progress of educated housewives.

Far reaching scope lies in the diverse nature of our nation-state, India. Assam, one of its states, besides the Kamrup district which has been a mini Assam, presents diversified scope for the study.

Every sixth person in the world is an Indian and it is official now.27 Studying Indian women in the global map, studying Assamese women in the Indian map and studying women, in their historical perspectives, similarities of various aspects touching only housewives of different states of India and different districts of the state of Assam, leave enormous sociological, psychological scope for the study. Ethnic diversity, varied cultural pattern of the inhabitants of Assam, which is surrounded by six other sister states provide enough rooms for our research.

The district of Kamrup itself presents as mentioned elsewhere, a rich cultural cosmos and history to stand-by amongst all the places and towns of India in both pre-independent and post-independent era. Housewives have been playing a major role in almost all the changes taking place in Assam since time immemorial. The role of education in shaping up 'mental renaissance amongst housewives of all stratas, caste and creed, also is a pointer to it. Moreover, Kamrup as a district comprises almost all the religious groups, class, languages, caste, class and creed. Both urban and rural characteristics are prominent in the districts and towns of Kamrup. Among 23 (twenty three) districts of Assam, Kamrup stands as the largest from demographical point of view. It has been a model District with the flavour of

the only city (Guwahati). Kamrup reflects almost all the political, social and economic changes whereas the other districts of Assam try to follow the examples of Kamrup. Of late Assam is catching the spell of insurgent movements. Secessionist threat of various ethnic groups also have been hindering the accelerating economic progress as well as social growth of the region. All these problems affect the housewives to a great extent. The rising number of crimes against women, dowry death, in the last five years have raised the eyebrows of people as Assam never experienced such maladies in the past.

In this context educated modern housewives in both urban and rural Assam and its various towns have to face new problems which are alien to them. If the 21st. century liberated women, from the shackles of medieval orthodoxy, it has also plunged them into a tumultuous vortex of identity crisis, bringing in its trail psychological, socio-cultural, economic as well as emotional insecurity. Therefore the study seems to be a never ending process.

The methodology of the study has been historical, analytical as well as critical. It is based upon both primary and secondary sources. Primary technique includes questionnaire and interview. Questionnaire were distributed on a random basis in three subdivisions, towns and constituencies. Twenty five in each eleven main constituencies were taken up and seven towns with a total of 325 set of questionnaire were distributed among the inhabitants and their replies were collected later. Due to non-availability of major previous statistical record only educated housewives were taken for sample survey. The interviews were programmed as follows:

- All were semistructured, in-depth and personally administered except for a single telephonic one.
- Interviews with the ministers could not be tape recorded as permission to do so was not accorded.

Interviews were conducted in Assamese, in the rural areas because the respondents were conversant only with that language.

In the urban sector, in Guwahati city respondents were fluent in English or Hindi. For the women belonging to the communities from Marwar, the south or the north India, interviews were conducted in the above languages.

A wide profile of people from all walks of life was not necessary, as only the housewives were included to gauge the line of thinking. However to learn the study the normal attitude of the common people to the subject, opinion of people from different background, communities and demographies (age, education) were also taken.

Interviews taken for the write-ups of regular columns (Ajir Asom, Nandini and Priyo Sakhi) by the researcher herself, also became helpful to the study of the subject.

A total of not less than a hundred persons were interviewed from almost all areas of Kamrup district during the period between 1996-97 to 2001-2002.

Interviews encompassed various women organisations like New Meetali Sangha, Gyan Vigyan Samiti, which have acted as catalysts in educating woman as well as injecting a sense of worth to the issue of empowerment of women. Interviews were also taken of several NGOs working in Assam to procure a true picture of development of the educated housewives.

Utmost attention was paid to ensure, appropriate representation from various segments of people through the interviews, which could not be covered by our random samples survey.

(b) Secondary Data:

Secondary data includes important books, literature, paper reports, consultation of journals and periodicals.
(1) Legislation and various plans and programmes of the government have been incorporated in order to find out the position of the womenfolk in general and housewives in particular. Therefore attempts were made to personally collect almost all the hand books and projects published by the Department of Information & Public Relations (Janasanyog Assam) Deptt. of Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam.

(2) The Libraries that were visited during the period of research were the library of Jawaharhln Nehru University (JNU), Library of the Delhi University, Jain Library (Ahmedabad), Library of the University of Calcutta University, Central Library of Calcutta, District Library Cuttack and the library of the Gauhati University, Studies in these libraries were immensely helpful. A background knowledge of the women and their natural, cultural, similarities of problems in general presented an informative backdrop.

Regular visits also were made to the District Library Guwahati, Women's Studies Research Centre, Gauhati University and various libraries in Assam to get a real picture of this development, history and the nature of problems. To add to it computer surfing of various international libraries also was helpful in getting important informations about the problem. Besides these reading of various vernacular magazines and journals like Priyo Sakhi, Nandini and national magazines like India today & Femina were helpful to our study.

Information from direct talk shows, telecast in Doordarshan and debates also proved significant to the Data analysis and Formulation of hypothesis.

Based on the above format, the following hypotheses were formulated.

(1) The educated housewives of Kamrup district have demonstrated a growing tendency of resisting household violence.

(2) The educated housewives in the District of Kamrup have demonstrated a tendency of wider participation in various socio-political activities.
(3) Educated housewives of Kamrup have asserted their individual identities.

(4) Educated housewives of Kamrup have shown preference for adopting family planning measures.

Thus while preparing the paper work on the problems of educated housewives, the nature of the changes brought in by education, and how far the problems have influenced in determining and co-relating the overall status of a women have been taken care of. Moreover, an approach has been made to the eradication of some of the problems. Therefore the methods taken up for the study were those that were viable in earlier times as well as in the contemporary times.

**Limitation of the study**

Inadequacy of the conceptual framework and procedure adopted by data collecting information about the extent of economic activities especially of the female population has always been a matter of academic concern.\(^{30}\) This concern and debate have gained special momentum, in the last decade not only in the developed countries but also in the third world countries, especially India. However, only a few feminists have criticised the concept, measures and techniques used in India for the collection of data on women.

Another factor that put a limitation to the study on housewives is the basic difference observed in the work style as practised by women in households. The domain of work of women inside the household is primarily the result of relegation by tradition. Sometimes even educated housewives in rural areas are not responsive to changes. Besides this, invisibility of women's work is another stumbling block both in the rural and urban set up. Therefore the major changes have remained unnoticed. As a whole "the perception problem confronted by the Indian data collection system adds another

\(^{30}\) Bhattacharyya Sudhir, Women in poverty, p. 75., 1985
limitation due to loss of good data and details on women in family. Empirical enquiry produces less information and basic guidelines. In Macro studies, only alternative to the census is NSS (National Sample Survey) which collect lot of information on women on the basis on probing questions and schedule obtained. Responses from women are biased or influenced by male many a time. TAS (Time Allocation Study for India) has also certain inherent limitations which are as follows:

(a) One investigation covers only 25 households in a year while NSS covered four households a day which makes transparency in data collection.

(b) Many households with hostile members regard investigation as "Unwarranted intrude to privacy."

(c) Observation alone can not be an authentic tool to investigation because the behaviour pattern of a household may be affected by the presence of an investigator.

(d) Due to illiteracy women may not be able to recall memories of important events. Some even cannot remember their age as written records are seldom kept.

Apart from these, limitation arise out of the psychological state of the individual, impact of the society and social norms. The nature of duality stands as a stumbling block to the in-depth study of women. It is relevant in almost all the states in India. Household members are seldom willing to express views on certain questions like extra marital relation, pre-marital relation and other social taboos. Again frequent changing of moods of people interviewed, add limitation to any research based study on women.

Since observation alone cannot be a Barometer in studying women-related problems, study of women in micro level face similar problems as mentioned above. Studying women and their changing profile especially that of educated housewives are beset with other limitations, in addition to the limitations mentioned above.
Frequent changes in the socio-political scenario and the related uncertainty in the social set up in the last 5 years, have directly affected the housewives in Assam to a great extent. With the advent of terrorism, growing globalization and similar other factors the line of demarcation between urban and rural women in Assam has almost withered away. Moreover frequent changes create difficulties in arriving at any definite conclusion in studies. Growing number of issues faced by Assam alone, like the problem of infiltration has raised the question of citizenship for many inhabitants residing in Assam. Natural calamities like food, health hazards diseases, growing number of crime rates, corruption in all levels also put a limitation to the study of housewives. Lack of authentic published works on the housewives has been another limitation.

Catching up women in general and housewives in particular, in their right mood, right situation and right environment makes, the study more challenging and interesting. There is a view which favours "surveys of women for women by women." Employment of very few female investigators may thus be considered as another major limitation to the study of women. Therefore the need for more women investigators in women-oriented studies cannot be denied. A comprehensive set of questionnaires, open minded questioning process, non-biased observation, methodical in-depth study of both general as well as particular aspects, a balanced comparative study of women are surely the solid principles and guidelines based on which this study on "the Educated Housewives of the District of Kamrup" would try to reflect the true facts and dimension, despite limitations.