PART I

CHAPTER I

Introduction:

The Eighth Assam Legislative Assembly (1985-1990) formed on the verdict of 1985 General election presented a unique picture as it came to consist of particularly young and educated youth of Assam after the signing of the historic Assam Accord on 15th of August 1985. Moreover its backdrop was the Assam movement that lasted for seven years on the most sensitive issues of foreigners. It was but natural on the part of consciousness people of Assam to look with utmost interest the role of the legislators who formed the Elite, rather the Legislative Elite.

The study of power occupies a central place in Political Sociology and has provided the main impetus to the growth of the discipline itself. The entire problems of the distribution of power in society has been attempted to be answered by a variety of social scientists. But its analysis has been dominated by two major theories developed by
opposing schools of thought among sociologists, historians, political scientists and philosophers. The first is essentially that of the elitist and pluralist, the second is that of the Marxists\(^1\). The most influential school in modern times in the fields of political sociology is that of the elitists who often, in Opposition to Marx, maintain that the modern society is ruled not by a ruling class but by a plurality of Elites arising independently within separate institutional spheres, achieving their status by merit. Thus, the consensus theories argue, the mystique of Eliteness is created and sustained by society as a whole for its own benefit.

Cohan argues that there are schools of thought, though opposed in many respects and still the source of the hot debate in sociology and political science, are in fact focusing on the two extremes of one continuum. In all societies, power groups assume mystique, i.e., ideologies and

technique of mystification that are both particularistic and universalistic.\footnote{Cohan, Abnor - The Politics of Elite Culture (London: University of California Press, 1981, pp 11.}

According to the Marxists or conflict theory, the power mystique is a subtle, particularistic ideology developed by a privileged class to validate and perpetuate their domination and thereby to support their own material interests.

1.2 **Historical Perspective of Elite:**

The commonsensical idea of leadership in the political arena has been conceptualized by social scientists as ‘Elite’, ‘Political Elite’, ‘Governing Elite’, ‘Power Elite’, ‘Governing Class’, ‘Ruling Class’, ‘influential’, ‘decision makers’ etc. Discussion of these conflicting views and terminological preferences has been severely hampered by a conceptual confusions and ambiguities. No field of sociology has been more subjected to vagaries of conflicting usage and to nebulous and shifting conceptualization. Terms are given ‘ruling class’, ‘governing class’, ‘political class’.

'Elite', 'power Elite', and 'leadership group'. They vie with each other for supremacy in the literature. Sometimes, they are applied as synonyms; sometimes they are deliberately opposed to one another. In some cases, varied terminological usages displays carelessness, in other instance terminological variations conceal ambiguities in conceptual formulations. No one, of course, can legislate upon the use of terminology.

**Political Elite:**

Studies on Political Elites have been on the increase since a few decades especially after the Second World War. This emphasis on Elite studies is due to democratic transitions, most notably in Latin America and Europe. It has also attracted the scholarly attention in Afro-Asian countries, specifically, after the emergence of a number of newly independent states. The new Elite come to the centre stage after colonial rulers left the scene. The unexpected wave of democratic transitions in the west facilitated the scholars to think about the centre of power. These new political class emerged as nation-builder of this new post colonial society;
obviously they had a crucial role in shaping such a society. Emergence of new Elites became a pre-dominant theme (S. N. Ambedkar)³.

The centre of power and control over the formulation of public policies which often affects the mass remains with the small group of persons is obvious at any given time, and in any type of political system. Every society has its Elite – from the vast developed jungle tribe with its hereditary warrior chiefs to the great modern civilization with their political, industrial and financial power – Pyramids⁴. As such the central importance of Elite in modern societies seems one more to be emerging as a major theme of social and political analysis⁵.

The western scholars took keen interest in studying the political behaviour and the influences therein of the political Elites after the Second World War. However the importance of the same has become more explicit recently.

⁴ G. Mosca, The Ruling Class Pg. no. 13.
The socio-political changes have doubly emphasized the role of political Elites (political Elite in tribal society) Elite studies have attracted the attention of political scientists as well as sociologists on such significant aspects as distribution of power, influence and decision making authorities in societies all over the world.

The present study intends to explore the various dimensions of political Elites in the state of Assam. The proposed study is a modest attempt to objectively analyze the emergence of new political class, particularly their role in the context of legislative behavior and representational role.

1.3 Political Elites: Theoretical Perspective – early idea of Elite:

As Elite is the most commonly used term, we would attempt a brief overview of the various denotations and connotations attached to the term by some renowned social scientists. Most of them have their origin in the class

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6 Political Elite in Tribal Society, P. K. Panigrahi, pp 32.
between ‘Elite Theory’, as first expressed in the writings of Pareto and Mosea and ‘class theory’. Particularly as formulated by Marxists writers.

Historically, the word Elite have been used in various connotations. During the 16\textsuperscript{th} century, the term Elite was used simply to mean a choice.

The term Elite had its usage in the seventeenth century which denoted commodities of particular excellence and subsequently was used to refer to specific social groups occupying certain superiors positions like crack military or top level mobility\textsuperscript{7}. However the genesis of the term dates back to second century B.C. The idea that the community should be ruled by a group of superior individuals is quite prominently expressed in Plato’s Thought\textsuperscript{8}.

The Italian Neo-Machiavellian, Vilfredopareto\textsuperscript{9} (1848-1923) is considered to be the pioneer in explaining the socio-political process through Elite behaviour. It is not wrong to

\textsuperscript{7} Bottomore, T. B
\textsuperscript{8} Bottomore, T. B
attribute Pareto as the father of Elite theory. To him, every society is ruled by a minority that possesses the qualities necessary for its coming to social and political power.

Pareto defined Elite as “class of the people who have the highest indices in their branch of activity". In his view, the Elite includes all those who score highest on scales measuring any social values or commodity, such as power, riches and knowledge. In his view, Elite consists of two classes – 1) the Governing Elite, comprising individuals who directly or indirectly play considerable part in government, and 2) the non-Governing Elite, comprising the rest. Pareto identified two strata in a population. “A lower stratum, the non-Elite 2) a higher stratum, the Elite which is also divided into two (a) governing Elite and (b) non-governing Elite”.

The study of historical changes according to Pareto is a study of Elites. He argued that a study of decisions among the Elites is more important for the history of a society than

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10 ibid (vol. III, pp 1433).
11 ibid (vol. III, pp 1428).
that of events decisions among its great masses. Masses i.e., non-Elites may have possible influences on the government.

In his monumental work "The Rise and Fall of the Elites" Pareto enunciated several laws of which the first two deserve special mention. According to him, the greatest parts of human actions have their origins not in logical reasoning but in sentiment. Aside from this "Man although impelled to act by non-logical motives, like to ties his actions logically to certain principles, he therefore invents these a posteriori in order to justify his actions" (Pareto Vilfredo). On this psychological basis Pareto says that human actions are combinations of 'residues' and 'derivations' that the former being the major motivations and the later is external elaborations of human actions. He specifies six residues, but emphasizes primarily on 'combination' and the persistence of aggregates. Individuals possessing these two attributes may correspondingly be called 'innovators' and 'consolidator'. Derivations are the ways by which actions are

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12 ibid (vol. III, pp 1429).
made to assume the appearance of logical actions. Through derivations, Elite try to protect their actions which will be made to assume the appearance of logical actions. The residues of ‘combinations’ imply cunning and the residues of persistence of aggregates force and there are correspondingly two types of Elites – those who ruled by cunning and those who rule by force.

The most noteworthy contribution, however, has been the concept of the “circulation of Elites” which he developed, expanded and propagated. He underlines the need of the circulation of Elite taking place from time to time if social equilibrium is to be continuously maintained. He emphasized that changes in Elite composition occurs irregularly but incessantly. The dominant residues in the Elite changes as consolidators replace innovators; and innovators in their turn replace consolidators. Therefore, persistent change from conservatism to radicalism and so forth. He captures this idea in a phrase which both resembles as well as modifies Karl Marx’s famous dictum of history.
To quote Pareto, “The history of man is the history of the continuous replacement of Elite as “one ascends, another declines13. With this idea, Pareto proposes a life cycle theory for “Rise and Fall of Elites”. Arguing by analogy with living organism, Pareto contends that “Elites decay over time, become softer, milder, more human and less apt to defend their own power”. While at the same time their “greed for goods of others” increases beyond traditional norms. Pareto has given a detailed picture of the process in his “less systems socialists” by enlisting among other things, the cause of war and differential fertility.

The circulation Elite or the shuffling of Elites is almost accompanied by rising religions – humanitarian sentiments. In such circumstances the new Elite in their lower stratum of society with elements of superior quality come up possessing residues suitable for exercising the functions of the government and willing enough to use

13 ibid (The Rise and Fall of Elites – An Application of Theoretical Study. The Badminton Press, New Jersey, 1968.)
In this process, the new Elite replace the old one. Once the Elite achieve success, it becomes not only more rigid but also more exclusive.

Lastly, Pareto suggests, that if the governing Elite is relatively open to superior individuals from the lower stratum, it has a better chances of enduring\(^\text{13}\) (Marie Kolabinka) and conversely that the replacement of one Elite by another may result from a failure in this circulation of individuals.

Another Neo-Machiavellian, Gaetano Mosca, like Pareto, made a systematic distinction between Elites and masses although using different terminologies. However, Mosca uses the term ‘Elite’ in a very restricted sense. By Elite he means ruling class. He is considered to be the pioneer developing a systematic theory of Political Elite. While refuting, Aristotelian classification of government, Mosca argued that there exists only one kind of government

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\(^{14}\) ibid (The Rise and Fall of Elites – An Application of Theoretical Study, The Badminton Press, New Jersey, 1968.)
that is oligarchy. In an oft quoted book 15 "The Ruling Class" he writes – "In all societies two classes of people appear- a class that rules and a class that is ruled". The first class always numerous, performs all political functions, monopolizes power and enjoys the advantage that power brings, whereas the second, the more numerous class is directed and controlled by the first, is a matter that is now more or less legal, now more or less arbitrary and violent".

Mosca, subsequently accounts that the public affairs in all countries is managed by a minority of influential persons, to whom willingly or unwillingly, the majority defer16. Every political community has one individual who is the leader/chief among the leaders of the ruling class. Further the pressure arising from the discontent of the masses that are governed, exert certain amount of influence on the policy formulations of the ruling class17. It seems for Mosca, the ruling class is not always apathetic towards the mass; rather

16 G. Mosca, The Ruling Class, pp 50.
17 G. Mosca, The Ruling Class, pp 17.
it remains aware of the aspirations and expectations of the governed.

Mosca argues that the minority rule because it is organized. The domination of the organized over an unorganized majority is inevitable. The organized society is always constituted of superior individuals. Further, the ruling class is distinguished due to the special characteristics that they possess. Both the material and intellectual or even moral superiority they are endowed with. Mosca believes that the Elite have advantages simply because it is a minority. Like Pareto, Mosca, uphold the theory of 'circulation of Elite'.

Keller argues that “the concept of ruling Elite presented by Mosca and Pareto, does not state clearly as to how the individuals of a ruling Elite come to occupy the position of power. Neither of them solved the problem of relationship between governing Elite and social classes.

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beyond the ruling class"\textsuperscript{19}. Strategic Elite in modern society further, though both of them mentioned that the governing Elite are an organized minority, they have neither spelled out the degree of cohesiveness of the members of the governing Elite.

**Political Elite:**

Ortega Y Gasset further emphasized the theory of political Elite through his “theory of the masses”\textsuperscript{20}. He argues that a nation’s greatness basically depends upon the capacity of the ‘people’, ‘public’, the ‘crowd’, the ‘masses’, to find their symbol in certain chosen people, on whom it pours out the vast store of its vital strength and its enthusiasm. The ‘masses’ is being led by the chosen few are not known by their individual capacities, rather due to the total social energy bestowed upon them.

The masses revolt, according to Ortega when the aristocracies become corrupt and inefficient. The motive

\textsuperscript{19} Keller, S., - Beyond the Ruling Class, Strategic Elite in Modern Society, New York, Random House, 1963, pp 12.

\textsuperscript{20} Ortega Y Gasset, 'Obras Completas' as referred in "The Modern Political Theory" by S P Verma
behind the revolt is not a preference to be ruled by an aristocracy, but it is a preference to be ruled by a more competent bureaucracy.

1.4 Recent Usages of Political Elite:

Mills holds that the power complex is made up of three related but fairly autonomous forces – the chieftains of the economic corporations, the political directorates and the military war lords. He observes that the power Elite has succeeded in subjugating the whole of American society and viewed the masses as passive in American politics. He maintains that Elite is men who have the most of what there is to have money, power and prestige, who are able to realize their will even if others resist it. They are in positions to make decisions having major consequences.

Without conflict between the power Elite and the people, this theory fails to account for the dynamics of a society. The tripartite classification of power offers no

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analysis of the relative importance of each, their origin and their consequent impact on the social structure.

Kornhouser explains that the term Elite is used in respect of those positions in a social structure which are super ordinate, such that the incumbents claim and are granted social superiority. The term is also used to refer to the functions attached to such positions, especially, the special responsibility to form and defend value standard in a certain social sphere.

Nadal has defined the Elite as a body of persons enjoying a position of pre-eminence over all others. He categorized the Elite as ‘the governing Elite’, ‘the social Elite’ and ‘the specialized Elite’. The last two are status groups and their influence on decision making is indirect on the other hand, the governing Elite composing of society’s political rulers have a deceive pre-eminence over the other

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Elites. This pre-eminence is derived from its legislative and coercive authority over the entire society\textsuperscript{23}.

Burnham’s first assumption is drawn from the elitist that politics is always a matter of struggle between groups of power and status, and a small group control the decision making process of the society. He argues that social change takes place in the shift of composition of the Elite. Supporting the idea of replacement of Elite he argues that the capitalist system will decline and will be replaced by a society controlled economically and politically by managerial Elite\textsuperscript{24}.

Miller studying the recruitment of Elites in 14 countries found that ‘there is no historical evidence in favour of the social mobility from the manual strata of the population into the upper levels\textsuperscript{25}.

Cole explains that the term Elite were used to indicate the superiority and exclusiveness pertaining to political


\textsuperscript{24} Burnham, J, Managerial Revolution, London: Putnam and Company Ltd, 1942.

\textsuperscript{25} Miller, S M, Comparative Social Mobility, current sociology, vol. IX, No. 1, 1960, p 89.
relationship. He refers to the Elite as "groups which emerged to positions of leadership and influence at every social level\textsuperscript{26}.

Catlin employs it as the social control groups referring to member of the cabinet and party chief, senior civil servants, industrial bosses, senior executives, and the influential people, who can sway those who take decisions\textsuperscript{27}.

Robert Michels, the Swiss political scientist developed a new principle "the iron law of oligarchy". He observes that election, changes in cabinet, expansions in suffrage and the things like that are only myths, the reality is that of the principle of minority rule. He argues that unless the fight between the Elite and masses is over, it is impossible to install a true democracy\textsuperscript{28}.

This view of elitism as the concentration of power, wealth status in one single group or a closely integrated

\textsuperscript{27} Catlin, GE, systematic politics, Canada, University of Toronto Press, 1962, p 229.  
group is criticized by the pluralists, who believe that there is not just one Elite but different Elites in a pluralistic society.

Mannheim defending modern democracy specifies various types of Elites and their functions in western democracy. He distinguishes the following types of Elites, the political, the organizing, the intellectuals, the artistic, the moral and the religions\(^{29}\). Others of the same line of thinking are Lasswell, Dahl, Lipset, Bell, Key, Truman et al. To share the similar argument that multiple political Elites in a democracy complete among themselves and thereby generate a basic ‘restraint’ against violation of democratic norms and rules by any one Elite. The universal validity of the cohesive Elite theory has also been questioned by such writers as Riesman, D., Hughes, S. and Meisel, J. H.

By Elite Aron means the minority which in each of the enumerated professions has succeeded best and occupied the high positions. He presents a pluralistic view of Elites. He makes distinction between the intellectual Elite and classes

and examines the relationship between the intellectual Elite and the structure  

Lasswell defines that the political Elite comprises the power holder of a body politic. The power holder include the leadership and the social formations from which leaders typically come and to which accountability is maintained during a given period. Introducing the concept of influentials, he assumes that the Elite are synonymous with ruling class.

Dahl in 'Who Governs' has argued that power does not reside in individuals. Instead, different groups were able to exert influence at different times depending on the particular issue.

Meisel comments that Elite was originally a middle class notion. The existence of Elite was distinguished by his three c’s group — consciousness, coherence and conspiracy. He argues that it is not clear, whether the class refers to a

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grouping from which those occupy Elites positions are drawn or recruited\textsuperscript{33}.

According to the pluralist framework, almost every legitimate group in society has the opportunity for representation in the governmental process and that the authority is diffused and decentralized. Political power is equally shared in a society based on gross inequalities, is nothing but distortions of the social reality and a rejection of class approach to the study of politics.

With regard to the distributions of political power, Marxism holds that it is determined by the nature of social forces of production and distribution in use, at a given historical time\textsuperscript{34}. The state is an organ of class rule, an organ for the oppression of one class by another. As such, in all class societies, political authority is based on coercion\textsuperscript{35}. Moreover, neither Marx nor Engels ever considered social relations of productions as a sufficient condition for the

\textsuperscript{33} Meisel, JR, The Myth of the Ruling Class: Gaetano Mosca and The Elite, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1962, p 303
\textsuperscript{34} Marx, K and Engels, F, Selected Works, Moscow, Progress Publisher, 1970, p 181.
\textsuperscript{35} Tse- tung, Mao on New Democracy, Peking – Foreign Language Press 1967, p 17.
understanding of specific phenomenon of political power. Thus Marxism considered the state as primarily an organ of class rule, with a little autonomy of its own depending on the socio-historical process. Structuralists insist that the state is oppressive not because it supports the interests of the dominant class, but because it is responsible for the cohesion of an entire system within which the dominant classes dominate.\textsuperscript{36}

An appraisal of the literature of Elite reveals that every society is being dominated by a minority. The majority look forward to the Elite for leadership. The Elite initiate various social policies for the society. The concept of political decision making, while the concept of ruling class refer to the nature of social system and the internal socio-political forces, though differing in their basic orientation, both the theories examine the same phenomenon.

The elitist thinking is contrary to ‘Marxism’ position. ‘Elitist’ believes that the power structure of any society is

determined by the character and the ability of its political leader is the representative of the dominant economic class.

In recent years, there has been resurgence in the study of Elite by a dozen of scholars applying new Elite paradigm all over the world. They have tried to provide critical evaluation of previous Elite theories and advance proposals for its systematization and development. They further tried to analyze relationship between the natural Elites, Elite transformations and political stability\textsuperscript{37}.

In several scholarly research articles the new generation researchers have tried to apply the different Elite paradigm in understanding the society. John Higley and Michael G Barton have tried to develop the thesis of ‘Elite consensus model’ for exploration of democratic transitions\textsuperscript{38}.

\textsuperscript{37} Panigrahi, PK, - Political Elite in Tribal Society.........
Richard Lachmann advancing a historical perspective argued that Elite conflict model explains the form and extent of social structural change\textsuperscript{39}.

S E Finer, almost in the same line with Pareto represents a governing and counter-governing theory of Elite. His conception of the governing Elite corresponds to the similar conception of Pareto and the former’s counter Elite resembles non-Governing Elite\textsuperscript{40}.

Most recently, James Mac Gregor Burns rejected the contemporary obsession with power – wielding or power manipulation thesis of political leaders. He presents a theory of leadership as a dynamic reciprocity between the ordinary people and political leaders\textsuperscript{41}.

W. L. Guttsman provides much more evidence of the lack of mobility as far as entrance into political Elite is

\textsuperscript{40} Finer, SE, Comparative Government, Allen Lane, London, 1970, p 19.

Apart from these, there are quite number of research papers written by various authors which indicate the Elite study has now attracted sufficient attention.

1.5 \textbf{Approaches to Political Representation:}

Emergence of an effectively functioning political community requires more than the formal political institutions of universal suffrage, political parties and elected legislatures. It requires the essential elements of a political culture as well.\footnote{Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba, - The Civic Culture, Princeton University Press, 1963.}

The institutional arrangement of a political system should be based not only on the mechanical devices for policy deliberations and their implementation, but they also call for a structure of predispositions that turn these devices into efficient instrument of national purpose.\footnote{Jha, Dayadhar, State Legislature in India, Abhinab Publications, New Delhi, p 4.}
It is generally recognized that political leaders play a crucial role in the transformation and shaping of a society. They constitute that stratum of society which is most actively engaged in the performance of task, in the building of structure of support. It is this stratum which is most articulate and politically alive, playing a crucial role in policy formulations and policy implementations. Further, it mobilizes public support not only for the political regimes but also for those activities which political regime usually undertake.

In other words, political readers give or are expected to give – content and directions to a nation’s public activities. Occupying a central position and devising the channel of communications and decision making, the leaders forge a link between political institutions and the people and functions as centre of transmission for the propagation of proper incentives. Particularly in a developing nation, where the hiatus between society and the political stratum is great, the role of these leaders assumes a central importance.
This study concerns itself with the leadership at the legislative level in an Indian state. In a democratic system the legislators constitute the Elite of the society. Of all democratic political institutions, none is more vital to the process of linking the governors and the governed in relationship of authority, responsibility and legitimacy, than the modern legislature\textsuperscript{45}. Without some understanding of its character and functioning one can only have a partial understanding of the process of government and its place in society. Legal rules, procedure and environmental facts undoubtedly describe much of the activity of legislature by prescribing some actions and prescribing others for legislators. But, legislators are engaged in many actions not accounted for in simple formal or legal descriptions of the legislature as an institution. The students of politics must seek to understand the behaviour of legislator if he is to gain that kind of knowledge about the structure and functioning

of the legislature as an institution which is necessary for understanding the larger political system.\footnote{Jha, D., State Legislature in India, Abhinab Publications, New Delhi, 1977, p 5.}

The legislature as an institution exist physically only in the persons called ‘legislators’. As an institution, it is never more or less than, nor different from the patterns on uniformities in the actions of legislators. As such, modern legislatures are more sensitive barometers of public moods and feeling than either administrative or judicial institutions. The notion that a legislature has the objective of articulating expressions of popular sentiments either in favour of or in Opposition to governmental policies is widely held by legislator themselves.

1.6 **Operational Definition of Legislator:**

Sometimes conceptual clarity is required in order to understand any political phenomenon. Most often the terms ‘Elite’, ‘leadership’, ‘legislator’ is used in a synonymous manner. Narayan argues that leadership is essentially a sum total of the degree and extent of influence to which the rest
of the members of a group are amenable. A leader’s guidance and directions are supported to be accepted by the rest because they consist of various factors such as force, charismatic appeal, sense of common good influence, coercion and so on. Naypaul argues that leadership is a function exercise in relation to group followers.

Our operationable definition of legislative Elite comprises a group of people holding formal positions, performing political functions, exercising influence and enjoying all the advantages that political power brings. Legislator as political Elite refers to those persons involved with the process of making law as a member of govt. or parliament. Thus the group of people holding the positions of legislator by virtue of their victory in the assembly elections is known as legislative Elite. By holding this position they are assigned the role of representing their constituents in the Assembly as elected by them. The term

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legislative Elite is a relational attribute. Firstly, from the community and secondly, within the group itself.

Therefore, the population of Assam is divided into two strata – (1) Lower stratum, the masses or electorate and (2) Higher stratum, legislative Elite. Further, due to tripartite classification of power legislative Elite is divided into – (1) ‘General Elite’, (2) ‘Ranking Elite’ and (3) ‘Top ranking Elite’.
The diagram drawn portrays the objective nature of stratified society of Assam dominated by the legislative Elites.

General Elite are defined as the common and ordinary legislation of ruling as well as Opposition parties. Although the general Elite have an important say in the state politics but their influence in decision making, as compared to ‘ranking Elite’ and ‘top ranking Elite’ is less assertive.

There were ‘general Elite’ in the group studied for this research problem. The ‘ranking Elite’ comprises legislators who hold influential ranks namely Chief Minister cabinet, state and deputy ministers, ex-chief ministers, party presidents, Speaker and the leader of the main Opposition parties who play vital role in the legislature thereby in state politics.

The last category is of ‘Top Ranking Elite’ comprised exclusively cabinet ministers along with the chief ministers.
They are directly involved in the policy formulation and decision making process of the government. The accountability and responsibility is also held upon them as they hold the key positions.

1.7 Elite Studies in India:

Scientific studies of Elites in India are very few, though recently there have been certain scholarly exercises by social scientists, particularly belonging to Anthropology and Political Science. However, historians and sociologists also have shown their interest focusing their attention on structure, recruitment pattern, role, socialization, background etc. Social and cultural historians have tried to analyse the process of social mobility and circulation of Elite during phases of history.

The study of Elite in the developing countries presents a new and growing interest in social science. The underpinning of the political process in the newly independent countries are varied in nature. The ethos and idioms of the micro and macro politics in such societies are remarkably
different⁴⁹. As modernization, reflects its impact on the socio-political life of the people, so also their leadership style. This requires scientific analysis of the emerging pattern of Elite formations in such societies. A few important studies are reviewed here –

Beteille in his study of class, caste and power tried to point out the characteristics of the Elite in different spheres of life. He pointed out the three tires of the Elites such as the Elite in the sphere of politics, bureaucracy and the business executives. He also relates them to old status groups like castes and the new status groups which are emerging as a result of westernization and urbanization, in Indian society⁵⁰.

A noted historian, Fry Kenberg described the Elite group in Guntur district in Andhra Pradesh during 1788-1858 on the basis of his study of historical documents⁵¹.

Sirsikar has studied the rural Elite in which he has selected the leaders of Zila Parishads in three districts of

Maharashtra and has tried to find out the motivations which made them participate in politics and their value orientations vis-à-vis their social and economic background. He has also analysed the relationship between support bases and power linkages which they establish with the state level and national level leaders\textsuperscript{52}.

Desai on a broader plan discussed about the nature of Elites. The major cause of the emergence of new Elite in India is the contact with the Britishers and the new system of education\textsuperscript{53}.

Yogesh Atal wrote about the emerging new Elites on a macro level. In his opinion the two types of political culture are emerging in India. One is mass political culture and the other is Elite political culture\textsuperscript{54}.

\textsuperscript{52} Sirsikar, V. M., 'The Rural Elite in A Developing Society – a study in political sociology', Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1970.


\textsuperscript{54} Atal Yogesh, Local Communities and National Politics, National Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971.
Joshi emphasized the role of the Elite specially the political Elite in the process of development. With special focus on their role in reshaping a society\(^5\).

L P Vidyarthi’s work, in the light of certain theoretical and methodological leads, is an attempt to analyse Elite and power structure in tribal and rural societies in India\(^6\). Park and Tinker, in their edited volume, tried to highlight the problem faced by the rural Elite\(^7\).

Navlakha has emphasized the increased gulf between the Elite and the masses and brought out some contradictions within the ranks of the Elites\(^8\). Moddie discusses the ‘Brahminical’ ethos of the political and administrative Elite of India and focused on the two characteristics style –

hesitation and evasion – in making hard choices with regard to country’s modernization\textsuperscript{59}.

Mitra’s contribution to Elite studies is noteworthy. Commenting on the nature of Elite structure at the broader society, Mitra drew the attention to the existence of a composite structure. The non-literate masses that form the majority are ruled by the composite Elite of the country. These are called ‘single Elite’ by Mitra\textsuperscript{60}.

The Elite mass relation has been examined by Seshadri from different perspectives. The Elite gives lead to society but there is a wide gap between these two is impossible\textsuperscript{61}.

Mehta in his empirical study of the new rural leadership includes Elite as a sub-category of leadership. He concluded that the leaders and the Elite are responsible for initiating changes in villages\textsuperscript{62}.

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A study on urban Elite in Rajasthan by Sheo Kumar Lal focused positional, reputational and issue-participation approaches to the identification of Elites. The reputational Elites exercise greater influence on the society\textsuperscript{63}.

Though there are some literatures on rural Elites at state level, in the domain of Urban Elite, literature is undeniably poor. Christine Dobbin has attempted an analysis of Elite in Bombay city, although the period under her study is some hundred years ago having little relevance to present day India.

Pantham’s focusing on the behaviour of political parties in Baroda city during the 1971 General Election is undoubtedly an important contribution. Analysing the social background, recruitment, ideological perspectives and political values of the leader of major political parties, he throws considerable light on the integration legitimacy problems of democratic institutionalization.

Vijaya Laxmi Pandit’s study with a sharp focus on the Delhi Metropolitan Council analysed the role of local political Elites in the life of the metropolis. With a special reference to the socio-economic background of local Elite, this pattern of recruitment, functioning and political affiliation. She also discusses the extent of their awareness of local problems and the solutions, their perception of national ideals and the mode of interaction with the masses.

Sanghi, concentrating his study on the bureaucratic Elite, finds that this class is responsible for bringing about innovations and creativity. The bureaucratic Elites are responsible for preservation, continuation and equilibrium of society. He also makes a classification of Elites on attributional basis. He observes that the emergence of new institutions in the society has gone in favour of the Elites.

Ram Ahuja discusses the Elite of Bihar quite like other scholars. He considers Elites as a dominant group which possesses distinctiveness and exclusiveness.

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According to him, the Elite character has always been changing. They move from micro structures to the macro ones. He concluded that Elites are by and large status quoits.

**Elite Studies of Weaker Sections:**

The work done on the Elites of the weaker sections refers to educational criteria; the patterns of changes occurring among the Elites have been due to the spread of education. It seems that the social role of the Elites among the harijans has transformed in the society. They act as the 'torch-bearers' of the community and are catalyst of change.

While identifying the Elites among the scheduled castes in Andhra Pradesh, Abbasayulu evolved some new criteria for defining Elites. According to him, Elites are those who use intellect and rational judgment while participating in the society.

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66 Ahuja, Ram, 'Political Elites Recruitment and Roles in Modernisation', in Sachidananda and A K Lal (eds) - Elite and Development, op. cit.
in decision making and occupy some position of trust and responsibility.\textsuperscript{68}

The study of Deshpande relating to the role of Elite among scheduled castes deserves mention here. He observes that the position of the weaker sections is precarious in the caste hierarchy. To prove this status they have to scale at least same heights in the caste hierarchy. The climb up is possible only when the Elites work for the betterment of scheduled caste\textsuperscript{69}.

Still another study by anthropologist Surjit Sinha who has contributed towards the understanding of tribal’s identity consciousness. He analysed the role of tribal Elites in the solidarity movements. He observes that the growing consciousness of the tribal Elites is responsible for bringing about changes in the tribal society\textsuperscript{70}.

A study in Gujarat by Bose focused on the stratification patterns of tribals. The tribal peasants who own

\textsuperscript{68} Abbasayulu, Y B, Scheduled Caste Elite, Osmania University Press, Hyderabad, 1978.
large chunks of land work as Elite. Thus emergence is due to the benefits taken by them from education and political influence. The Elite groups are self-centered and exploit the general masses for their own benefit.\textsuperscript{71}

Rajora’s study provides new insight into the changed nature of exploitation of the tribal masses. He argues that though the form of exploitation may have changed, yet the practice is still on. Previously the non-tribal was used to exploit and oppress the tribal. Now there appears to be assorting of marriage between the tribal Elites, the non-tribal Elites and the non-tribal masses to exploit the tribal masses.

1.8 \textbf{Statement of the Proposed Research}:

The legislators in a democratic system constitute the key Elite of all democratic political institutions. None is more vital than the modern legislature to the process of linking the governors with the governed. As such the elected legislators have been the focus of both normative and empirical enquiries into the nature of representation. The

\textsuperscript{71} Bose, P K, 'Stratification among Tribes in Gujarat', Economic and Political Weekly, vol. XVI, No. 6, Feb 7, 1981.
proposed study is an attempt to analyse the role perception, role performance, and legislative behaviour of political Elites in Assam within the democratic framework.

Legislators are usually treated as a special class of persons. As political Elite, they are expected to play an important role in shaping a society. The representatives or the legislative leaders make the most crucial decisions for the society.

As such the state legislature is an important part of country's political system. The legislature is the highest law making body at the state level. Since independence, the State Legislature had been playing a crucial role in the socio-economic transformation of the Assamese society. As such, the state legislature is supposed to reflect the will of the people of the state through their representatives. The legislators as Political Elites are politically articulate and active class of the society.

The post-colonial politics of Assam had witnessed the emergence of a new pattern of political leadership, although
various issues substantially played a major part behind this emergence. After independence the political leadership in Assam virtually went in favour of congress leadership. The Assamese middle class consisting of the high caste emerged as powerful political Ruling Elite. After consolidating their strength they exercised tremendous control and hegemony over the people of Assam. These political Elites worked tirelessly to democratize and secularize the society which was composite in culture and plural in structure. However the process of democratization and modernization left several groups untouched. The beginning of seventies witnessed the growth of non-caste dominance in political leadership. Moreover the Assam movement facilitated the emergence of entirely new political Elites as value setter in the society of Assam.

The proposed study is a modest attempt to study the political Elites in Assam restricting the study to representational and legislative role of the legislators in the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly.
When the literature on Assam Legislative Elite is taken into consideration, the picture is really pitiable. A careful scrutiny of the existing literature shows that there have been only a few meaningful studies of the Political Elites in Assam. Except a few in-depth pioneering studies, there is hardly any serious research work done on the legislative behaviour, legislative and representational role on the political Elites of Assam.

However, the existing studies pertaining to various dimensions of political process in general, provide information on the profile of the Elites, which are important for understanding of the political culture of Assam.

At the state level, the state legislature is decisive in relation to power and dominance. It is a small minority who performs important role in socio-economic and political affairs of the state. It has also been observed that among the locally elected persons who face the task of linking the constituencies with the larger political system and facilitating the integration of the political system with the
society, the legislators enjoy relatively more power than any other elected representatives.

The Assam Legislative Assembly has appeared to be a very attractive political institution for those who aspired to occupy leadership position and to play an important role in the state politics. Furthermore, it becomes an attractive institution to those who aspire for rapid social and political mobility.

The present study is an attempt to understand the Assam Legislative Assembly sociologically, as to how the society of Assam is reflected and represented in the legislature. More specifically, we are interested in the social background of the legislature.

We know that the society of Assam is fundamentally plural in nature. It is a multi-ethnic, multi-caste, multi-religious and multi-racial state. It contains a large number of smaller nationalities with unevenness, though Assam in fact is a multi-lingual state. But the largest linguistic group in Assam is the Assamese. Besides this, other linguistics
groups are Bengali speaking, Nepali speaking and Hindi speaking people. Moreover, most of the ethnic groups have their respective languages/ dialects. Furthermore English is widely spoken and used in the state among the educated people. There are people practising various religious faiths such as, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, Christianity, and Jainism. Again in terms of wealth, education and position there are big and small capitalists, the middle class and the masses of toiling people. Thus we find that the society of Assam is not only plural, but also highly uneven in its content. Various social groups have been historically and significantly contributing to enrich the composite Assamese culture, language and nationality. The population structure of Assam is extremely complex and the assimilation of different social groups is yet to take place.

The Assam Legislative Assembly is the apex political body of the state. Therefore, the question of leadership, representatives and distribution of power in the society of Assam is of crucial significance. The present works is an
attempt to understand the legislative and representational role of the members in the 8th ALA.

It would be necessary in this context, to point out that the Assam Legislative Assembly is a Single Chambered legislature, i.e., consisting of an Legislative Assembly. It doesn’t have an Upper Chamber.

**The Present Study:**

The discussion of the numerous theories on Political Elite in general and Legislative Elite in Assam in particular highlights the various problems and limitations exist in the studies. The Elite studies in India are confined to their background, attitudes, value system, behavioral pattern and ideological orientations. Although there has been a considerable body of research in other states, but a systematic empirical work on this problem in Assam is grossly inadequate. In the present study, we have attempted to overcome these limitations by making the study more relevant, systematic and comparative based on empirical work. Our primary object has been to examine the formation
or structure of Legislative Elite (Legislator) in Assam. We have tried to project the structure of the Legislative Elite of eighth Assam Legislative Assembly by comparing them with earlier tenure of Assembly, while the enquiry primarily focuses on the functioning of Legislative Elite while attributing to their role and behavior.

Although the term Political Elite is largely used, in our study it is restricted to the Legislative Elites of the eighth Assam Legislative Assembly to make our study more specific.

We have selected it for an in depth study for certain important reasons. These are-

1. The Assembly was constituted by a govt. of hurriedly formed regional political party, the Assam Gana Parisad.

2. The Assembly was dominated by a relatively younger and highly educated group of leaders who once led the six year long Assam Movement. This was an important milestone in the history of Assam Legislative Assembly.
3. The Assam Gana Parisad had a public commitment to the historic Assam Accord signed on 15th August 1985.

On the whole, the composition of the Assembly was also qualitatively different from the earlier ones on several other counts. Therefore, it would be interesting to understand how this new political Elites represented the society at a crucial juncture in the political history of Assam.

Furthermore, a serious study seemed to be important particularly on the representational role and the legislative behaviour of the legislators in the Assam Legislative Assembly. The sociological and institutional study generally help in proper understanding of the very foundation of politics and society of Assam.

One important unexplored area has been the priority of the legislator in various sectors of their role relationship and interactional behaviour. The present study intends to attempt and explore the legislative and representational role
of the legislators most of whom were new Legislative Elites in the policy and decision making level.

1.9 **Review of Literature:**

Recent researches in legislative behaviour have exploded the general myth started by Bryce\(^72\) and supported by Wheare\(^73\) that there has been an actual 'decline of legislature' and that they had been reduced to 'mere social boards' or mere 'rubber stamps'. The myth of the decline of legislature is based on the traditional belief that the role function of the legislature is to make laws and control the executive. But the serious minded scholars in western Europe and North America by adopting different approaches to the study of legislative behaviour, expounded the view that modern legislatures were an integral part of the social system and they played a crucial role in the 'authoritative allocation of values for a society'. In this respect two aspects of the legislative studies deserve attention. They are –

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1. A study of the role of the legislative assemblies in the development of political system.

2. An analysis of the legislative role, functions and behaviour in comparative perspective.

**The Developmental Perspective:**

A group of Scholars set out the task of analyzing the role that legislature played, or could play, in the new nations and in the relationship of legislative institutions to economic and social development\(^{74}\). This main contention was that ‘western countries that have successfully achieved industrialization and economic growth while safeguarding other democratic institutions also have had energetic and influential legislature and that it is principally through the enactment of status that the modern legislature derived its saliency. It was however doubtful whether legislatures in new nation could play this role of facilitating economic and political development. Most of them did not allocate values or at least, did not have this as the principal function.

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The role of legislature in modern political system had been the gathering of intelligence, formulating and promoting alternatives, selecting the alternatives and implementing and executing the selected alternatives. Appraising the effectiveness of the policies adopted and terminating, reviewing or resisting past policies also had been some other important activities75.

**The Comparative Perspective:**

Another important aspect of the legislative studies which has drawn the attention of the western scholars consists of the concern with theory, since comparison could take place only within a common analytical framework. Patterson and Wahlke plead for the formulation of theory based on present findings but containing implications to be tested by the observation of legislatures in unfamiliar settings76.

Similarly, Kornberg’s second attempt for the study of legislature in comparative perspective comprising seventeen

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essays, even a wide range of topics. These essays attempt either to generate relatively broad-gauge theoretical framework for the study of legislatures or to provide the empirical data can be employed for theoretical construction. 

Jean Blondel has done pioneering work in the field of comparative politics and studied political phenomenon on a truly comparative basis. In his monograph ‘Comparative Legislatures’ he ridicules the growing concern over the alleged decline of legislature and offers some fresh insights into the varying roles that legislatures and their members can fill in politics. Blondel has analysed the constitutional characteristics of the legislature on a world-wide basis incorporating the measurement of the activities of the legislature in terms of setting, number of Bill passed, number of committees, time for member per bill, percentage of members participating on the floor and the analysis of the social background and turn over of legislature in terms of

average age, percentage of women, professionals, businessmen, farmers, manual workers and other socio-economic groups of the country. Blondel’s overall emphasis on a comparative study of legislature is concentrated on the decision making process.

The empirical research into the socialization and professionalization of those who make political decisions whether in traditional context, pluralist societies or totalitarian regimes had substantially increased in volume and quantity since World War II. The emphasis had been on those in formal authorities and on how their social origins and political mobility channels provide them with distinctive skills and resources, goals and interests, beliefs and styles of actions. American political scientists and sociologists in this period have made impressive contributions to the growing literature. There had been important work done on leadership in emergent nations, whether against the background of a folk society or an ancient civilization. The problem of socialization for specialized governmental and political roles
had been explored; inquiries into the dynamics of interest-group area and organizational alignment had been made.

Special attention had been given to the study of the legislators including their working, style, interaction pattern and tendencies towards professionalism.

**Legislative Research in India:**

In view of the foregoing development in the methods and conceptual framework of studying legislative behaviour in comparative perspective, the Indian example may be few but not lacking in quality. Hence the research work on the legislative Elites in India is almost untapped area of study both at the national and state levels, therefore, the studies conducted on this important area could be counted on finger-tips. Legislative behaviour studies had attracted the attention of the scholars in recent years. However, a large number of studies had been conducted in the west, during the recent past where more analysts had increasingly been attracted to the study of the legislature both as an important policy making body as well as a framework within which to
scrutinize specific theoretical propositions concerning important aspects of political behaviour.

One pioneering study that served as trend setter had been Morris Jone's 'Parliament in India' wherein he examined the social fabric of the members of the first parliament, i.e., Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha\(^79\). Bhavani Singh took the same line in studying the background of the members of the Rajya Sabha till 1972\(^80\). Satish K. Arora’s ‘The Social Background of the 5\(^{th}\) Lok Sabha’ – provides meaningful insights into the structure of the legislative Elites at the national level in India\(^81\). Nandini Upreti in her work has delineated into the socio-economic background of the members of provisional parliament.

The study of S. P. Verma provides significant insights of the social profile of the members of parliament covering from 1952-62. Surendra Puri, Arora and Ratan Dutta

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provided meaningful insights into the socio-economic background and legislative Elite structure in India.

In an excellent and well-written essay ‘Political Leadership in West Bengal’ Myron Weiner has attempted a scholarly enquiry into the various aspects of political Elite in West Bengal. His subsequent work ‘changing pattern of political leadership’ is another detailed analysis of emerging pattern of leadership. He has tried to throw some light on the socio-economic background of the political leaders in the first decade after independence (1952-58).

On the analysis of a single house, particularly the Rajya Sabha, there is a number of research works with almost the same approach. Mention may be made of P. N. Mehrotra’s “Provisional Parliament of India”82, L. P. Choudhury’s “Second Chamber in Federal Legislatures with Special Reference to India”83, D. N. Dixit’s ‘Council of States’ its organization, powers and functions and its role as


Some studies have in recent times focused their attention to study the social composition of the legislators. Though these writings related to the national level, we did benefit from these studies as they were useful in enriching our perspective from both theoretical and comparative angles. However, one of the serious limitations of this analysis is that they are either based on who’s who compendium or very selective and limited extrapolation.

We now turn our attention to for a while to have a bird’s eye view of the research work done pertaining to the state level legislative Elites. More importantly, a plethora of

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studies are available on state legislatures with relevant information on the profiles of the members or comprehensive studies on political Elites which too subsumed legislative leadership or direct analysis on the legislators:

Saraswati Srivastava’s\textsuperscript{89} doctoral thesis subsumes an exhaustive and critical analysis of the recruitment, circulation of Elites and behavioural dimensions of state legislators and their respective role and interactions with the political system as part and parcel of a study of Political Elites in Uttar Pradesh. Employment of sociological concepts, structure and in-depth interviews has deepened the empirical content of the study. Some significant findings of this study are:--

(i) Legislators tend to be heavily drawn from higher socio-economic groupings in society in terms of caste, occupation and education;

(ii) As political actors, legislator mediate between the citizen and the government and at times among and between citizens;

(iii) Expertise in the act of ruling is hardly a basis for backing the candidature of legislators;

(iv) Presence of a generation gap between legislators who actively participated in the national movement and those who succeeded them;

(v) The hiatus between the promise and performance of the legislators dilutes the legitimacy of the polity.

Dayadhar Jha⁹⁰ in his study of the Fourth Bihar Legislative Assembly scrutinized the political, social and cultural milieu of the legislative Elites, their motivations and the situations which led them to enter political arena and the apprenticeship that they underwent. The attitude of the members toward social and economic problems

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and the extent to which legislators had internalized the rules of the game in the specific context of political defection was also covered. The most important findings of the study shed light on the fact that the upper crust has a major share of representation in the house. Economically, the legislators belong to upper and upper-middle classes. Educationally, the legislature was over represented by matriculates and undergraduates. Occupationally, the House had an admixture of representation from cultivators, lawyers and businessmen. Another important feature was that the number of professional politicians registered a marked increase in the Assembly. The legislator has had several different kinds of experiences in rural, urban and party politics before being elevated to the legislative positions.

Another serious work of Richard Scisson and Shrader’s study of the Third Legislative Assembly in Rajasthan is thematically relevant. The authors covered in

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91 Sisson, Richard and Lawrence, L. Shrader, Legislative Recruitment and Political Linkages in an Indian State, California University Press, 1972
their credit-worthy empirical work the socio-economic, educational and political background of the legislators, the legislative Elite mass gap, the pattern of constituency linkages, the linkages within and between the political parties, the factious within Congress against the overall backdrop of political recruitment and integration. The study empirically bears out the reality of linkages and their integrative systematic role. The authors thus concluded – “The existence of linkages in a structural sense does not constitute institutionalization; it does not assure political stability or ordered change”.

Shashishekhar Jha’s\textsuperscript{92} study on ‘Political Elite in Bihar’ focuses both on the composition of the state legislature and the role of the Legislature by linking it to the structures of government and politics in Bihar. Some significant findings of the study include –

(i) The majority of the Legislators belonged to intermediate age groups;

\textsuperscript{92} Jha, Sashishekhar, Political Elite in Bihar, Vora & Co., Bombay, 1972
(ii) The representation of women in the state Legislature was negligible;
(iii) The majority of them were born in villages;
(iv) The backward classes were the largest number inside the Assembly;
(v) A majority of them belong to the most educated sections of the population;
(vi) A good number of Legislators have had proficiency in language;
(vii) A majority of them spent considerable number of years in various kinds of political activities prior to their entry in state legislature;

On the predominance of caste and factional pulls in Legislature it observed: "It is not the castes that fight but personalities in politics whose prestige, power, status and other forms of personal gains give rise to factions instead of strengthening the base of their castes, they on the contrary, tend to weaken it".
K. R. Sastry’s\textsuperscript{93} work on DMK Legislative Elite has empirically validated the following:

(i) The DMK’s legislators are drawn heavily from the ‘young’ and ‘middle’ aged;
(ii) They have had some formal education;
(iii) A majority of them lack previous legislative experience; and
(iv) Those who have ties with ‘agriculture’ predominate among its legislators.

Sashilata Puri’s\textsuperscript{94} work on Legislative Elite in an Indian State is of relevance for the study in question. The important foci of study relates to the socio-economic and political profile of the Legislative Elite, their socio-economic outlook, their political orientation and values, their role perception and, above all, the pattern of constituency linkage that they develop in their own enlightened self-interest.

Some relevant findings of the study are:

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{94} Puri, Sashilata, Legislative Elite in an Indian State, A Case Study of Rajasthan, Abhinav Publication, New Delhi, 1978
\end{footnotesize}
(i) The process of democratic politics had opened up new vistas for upward mobility;

(ii) The upper castes continue to have a major share of the seats in the Legislative structures;

(iii) Educationally the legislature is dominated by matriculates and under-graduates;

(iv) Majority of the legislators falls in the age group between 36-55 years;

(v) The majority of the Legislators belonged mostly to middle and lower income groups;

(vi) Occupationally farmers, lawyers, and businessmen dominated the Legislature, while labour, trade union and Industrial workers were not represented at all;

(vii) The representation of women in the state Legislature is almost nil; and

(viii) All the members have had some sort of political experience before entering the portals of Legislature.
A study by Swarnakar\textsuperscript{95} entitled: ‘Political Elite: A Socio-logical Study of Legislators in Rajasthan’ sheds light on the interface between political phenomenon in Rajasthan and the on going Soci-cultural reality. An interesting classification of the Legislators into:

(i) General Elite, ordinary or Common Legislators of ruling as well as Opposition parties;

(ii) Ranking Elite, occupying different ranks like Deputy Ministers, State Ministers, ex-Chief Ministers, party presidents, leader of the main Opposition party and the Speaker of Rajasthan Vidhan Sabha; and

(iii) Top Ranking Elite, holding key positions like Chief Minister and Cabinet Ministers, was attempted.

Ambedkar’s\textsuperscript{96} study on Political Elite: ‘A Study of Legislators in Andhra

\textsuperscript{95} Swarnakar, R. C., Political Elite – A Sociological Study of Legislators in Rajasthan, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 1988.

Pradesh' focuses on the 8th Legislative Assembly of Andhra Pradesh. Some significant findings of the study include:

(i) Majority of the Elites are males and female representation is very low;

(ii) A majority of legislative Elites belong to middle age group and also to upper castes and higher educational groups. It is also to be noted that a large chunk of backward classes are recruited to the legislative Elite status mainly because of policy of protective discrimination.

(iii) The bulk of the legislative Elites are drawn from agriculturist and professional groups.

(iv) Very few legislators made use of the local bodies like Panchayati Raj institutions and Municipalities in the Process of building up their legislative Career.

(v) A majority of the legislators were new to the Legislative Assembly.
When the literature on Assam Legislative Elite is taken into consideration, the picture is pitiable. A careful scrutiny of the existing literature shows that while there have been some meaningful studies of political Elites in Assam, not much serious works have been done on legislative Elites, particularly their legislative behaviour and representational role. In fact, literature on Assam legislative Elites can be counted on finger-tips. Except little in-depth pioneering study, there is hardly any serious research works directly on the political Elites of Assam.

Most importantly, there is a plethora of studies available pertaining to the different dimensions of political process in general. Those studies provide relevant information on the profile of the Elites indirectly nevertheless important for the proper understanding of the political culture of Assam.

The doctoral thesis ‘The Role of the Opposition Parties in Assam Legislative Assembly since independence
to 1967', by Dutta, G. N.\textsuperscript{97} is a pioneering work in the direction of legislative research. He has thrown sufficient light on the nature, role of the Opposition parties focusing on their representational role from legislative behaviour perspective.

Another study ‘State Politics in India’ by Kunja Medhi\textsuperscript{98} is a noteworthy contribution in proper understanding of the Assam Legislative Assembly. This is an analytical study of the state politics of Assam, presented in an appropriate historical perspective. This study based on original documents has attained a distinctive form due to interaction between politics and social pressures. This is an in depth analysis of the Assam State Assembly (State Politics in India- a study of the Assam Legislative Assembly – Medhi, Kunja, Om Sons Publications, 1988).

\textsuperscript{97} Dutta, G. N., The Role of the Opposition Parties in Assam Legislative Assembly since Independence, Thesis submitted to Gauhati University.

\textsuperscript{98} State Politics in India- a study of the Assam Legislative Assembly – Medhi, Kunja, Om Sons Publications, 1988.
B. J. Deb’s study99 ‘Congress Leadership and Parliamentary Politics of Assam’, 1937-47, is another important contribution relevant to our enquiry. Here he has focused on the pattern of politics, political culture that emerged in the politics of Assam. He argues that parliamentary culture as a new political value has been reinforced by the congress leadership.

Borgohain’s100 ‘The Assam Legislative Assembly’ (1937-62) is another serious on the legislative Elites. He has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the study of the Assam Legislative Assembly, focusing on the working of the legislature. He has analysed and thrown sufficient light on the role of the legislators, role of the opposition, particularly the sociology of the assembly.

The empirical work on the social background of the legislators of the 8th Assam Legislative assembly by Das101 is

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a noteworthy study that is of immense helpful in understanding the society and politics of Assam at a crucial period. The researcher has argued that the sociological understanding of the assembly is necessary for understanding politics. It helps in understanding the very foundation of politics in a state.

Most of such studies were undertaken during the twilight days of independence. Obviously, this study does not specifically focus on the legislative behaviour, legislative role and the representational role of the legislators as decision making group in the society. As such this study so far undertaken has shown same research gap which has not been covered under this exploration. The important unexplored area is the priority of the legislator’s role perception and interactional behaviour. The present study is a modest attempt to explore some unexplored area in the study of the legislative Elites, the legislative behaviour and representational role.
1.10 Theoretical Perspectives:

Good research begins and ends with theory. Theory is an inseparable part of any serious research. Theory enables the researchers to conduct empirical research in an organized and logical fashion. An attempt is being made to enlist the main theoretical approach pertaining to study of political Elites.

Theory plays an important role in any research process. It is important to note that a given fact might have as many as interpretations as possible. In such a situation the researcher would have to design his research to determine which of the possible explanation for them congruent\textsuperscript{102}. Therefore we are adopting a theoretical perspective for a logically consistent understanding of the role perception of the legislators of the 8\textsuperscript{th} Assam Legislative Assembly.

Political Power has been the major focus of attention in Political Sociology and it has propelled the growth of the discipline itself, since, it is wielded by the state that

\textsuperscript{102} Das, p 23) is. It is rightly observed that good research begins and ends with theory (Kenkel, 1980.
monopolizes the use of severest sanctions. The whole problem of the distribution of power in society is attempted to be answered by several social scientists. But the analysis has been dominated mainly by three major theories such as Elite theory, the pluralist theory and Marxist school and structural functional theory.

Contending Theories:

(A) Elite School:

The Elite theory developed as a reaction to the Marxist school. Although some elements of the Elite theory can be traced in the writings of Plato and Aristotle, yet the leading theories containing elitism have been distinctly formulated by Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Robert Michels, C. Wright Mills.

The Elite theorists not only point out the inevitability of existence of the influential Elites in democracy, but also emphasize the need of Elite rule for the success of democracy. The society is ruled not by a ruling class, but by a plurality of Elites arising independently within the society.
achieving this status by merit and personal qualities. They view that personal quality of individuals separate rulers from the ruled. This theory predominantly believes in that exceptional personal quality as the basis of Elite rule in society. Furthermore the elitists argued that the society consists of two categories of people, the selected few having right to supreme leadership and the masses of people who are destined to be ruled.

(B) The Pluralist School: -

Challenging the main contention of the Elite theories, the pluralists argued that there are multiple centers of power none of which is sovereign. They view that society is essentially pluralist and therefore power is dispersed among various social groups in society. They see no inconsistencies between democracy and the existence of Elite and therefore there is no contradiction between democratic govt. and the Elite. From this perspective democracy is seen in the form of representative govt. The masses are not viewed as passive. Robert A. Dahl, adopting the pluralist approach, had
undertaken empirical investigation of the process of decision
making in New Haven, which empirically demonstrate that
power is unevenly and pluralistically distributed in society.

Both the Elite and pluralist theory agree on certain
points—summarized by A. K. Meher—

(i) Political power is concentrated in the hands of few
or a small minority. And because of its minority
entity, Elite has organizing capabilities.

(ii) The Elite rules as a cohesive group.

(iii) The Elite power is perpetuative.

Simply, while the Elite theories assert that there is
only one minority in the society; the pluralists believe
that there are several minorities each of which cannot
dominate the decision-making process.

(C) The Structural-Functionalist School:
Most of the Elite studies concerning to the distribution of
political power in societies are basically conducted on
Structural-Functionalist approach. As such, the elitists may
be viewed as structural-functionalists. This approach has
serious limitations. This study fails to comprehend the class dimension as the reflector of contradiction and conflict in the society as an inevitable historical process.

(D) The Marxist School:

The Marxian view on the distribution of power in society posits at the other poles of the elitist. Marxism holds that distribution of political power in society is determined by the nature of socio-economic forces of production and distribution at a given stage of historical development. In all stratified societies, the means of production are owned and controlled by a minority, the ruling class. These relationships to the means of production provide the basis of its dominance. Therefore, the ruling class monopolizes the possession and exercises political power over the subject classes the ruling class are politically dominant, besides being economically dominant group in the society. The ruling class successfully dominates all aspects of the super structure. Thus Marx view socio-economic factor as major determinant of the distribution of political power, although
Marx argues that society is in perpetual conflict between the ruling class and the subject classes.

Both the Elite theory and Marxist school agree on one point that political power in a society always rests at the hands of a few, but they differ in basic perspective.

(i) While the elitist view that power of political Elite is basically determined by personal qualities, attributes, the Marxist view power is determined by socio-economic forces.

(ii) While the elitists believe in continuous circulation of Elites the Marxist view that the classes are rapidly polarized.

(iii) While the elitists believe in hierarchical structure of society, inequality, status quo, Marxism stands for an egalitarian order and a classless society.

Elitist theoretical position is not suitable for a proper understanding of the study of political Elites in Assam. Here we have adopted class approach traditional Elite theoretical standing is not adequate enough for proper
understanding of the nature and distribution of power in Indian society in general and Assam in particular. We have also analysed the concept of Assamese middle class, Assamese ruling class, in this connection.

1.1 **Hypothesis:** In reaching the above objectives, the following hypothesis will be tested:-

(i) The majority of the Legislators belonged to the age group of 25-45 years. The Legislators belonging the ruling Assam Gana Parisad were drawn heavily from the young and middle aged. As such the Assembly was dominated by young Legislative Elites.

(ii) A majority of them lacked previous legislative experience. Very few legislators made use of the local bodies like Panchayatiraj institutions and Municipalities in the process of building up their legislative career.

(iii) A majority of the legislators were new to the Legislative Assembly. A small minority seemed to
be adequately trained for the role of law-maker with appropriate legal and professional experience.

(iv) The representation of women in the state legislature was negligible. Majority of the Elites are male and female representation is very low.

(v) The role of the legislators in the House tended to be constituency oriented. As legislative Elites they could not reflect the basic issues and problems in the Assembly.

(vi) Legislative role has declined reducing it to mere formality and less accountable. There is a paradoxical change in the legislative behaviour of the legislators. Majority of the elected representatives through their behaviour and attitude could not become successful in fulfilling mandate they received from the electorate.

1.12 **Significance:**

The proposed study concerns itself with the leadership at the legislative level in an Indian State. The present study
is an attempt to analyse the role perception and role performance of the legislative Elites in the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly. It seeks to explore how an entirely new group of legislative Elites behaved in the legislature. Thus the study intends to explore the role perception and legislative behaviour and performance of legislative Elites as a value-setter class in the society and politics of Assam. Conceptually, the study largely makes uses of the model that underlines that legislative representation and behaviour are products of interactions between the individual legislators and the influence of his society and the legislative and political institutions. The behaviour of the legislators has been conceptualize as a series of roles determined by the values and attitudes the legislators bring to his legislative position and by the perspective he develops as an incumbent.

Legislators are usually treated as a special class of persons, set apart by their holding legislative office. Despite their official distinction, legislators remain human beings, subject to whatever laws and principles apply to human
being as such. Obviously, much of the legislator's behaviour will be guided by his own qualities and characteristic as a person. These qualities he possesses before becoming a legislator. Qualities which shape his actions in his legislative role along with his actions in all his other social roles. In others, they are the qualities and characteristics personal enough to him, but acquired as a result of their own particular legislative experience. In any case, an analysis of legislative behaviour must reckon with behavioral characteristics which are variable from one legislator to another according to the individual and social background as well as their psychological make-up. Such studies help in understanding the caliber of Legislative Elites a decision maker in the society. One can test the hypothesis put forward by the Elite theorists that a society's electorate does not elect representatives that reflect it, that elective leadership is drawn from the top of the social structure. Thus by exploring individual characteristics of political leadership we will be in
a position to determine some of the characteristics of the political community.

1.13 **Methodology of the Proposed Research:**

The empirical work on the problem of Legislative Elites in Assam come to any definite conclusion would demand for greater deal of investigation. The present body of research covers field data on Legislative Elites of the Eighth Assam Legislative Assembly (1985-1990) in Assam where unicameral system prevails.

It was essential to consult the published and unpublished literature available on this problem to have a throw understanding of political system especially in Assam. For these Books, Periodicals, Journals, Magazines, Leaflets, Newspapers, Starred and Un Starred Questions, Ordinances, Bills and other documents prepared during the proceedings of Assam Legislative Assembly were read at various Universities, Libraries, Research Institutions and Political Institutions.
Methodologically this study is based mainly on primary data generated by us supplemented by secondary data relevant to this proposed research. The topic requires both historical and empirical data in objective analysis of the issues and trends. The study is mostly relied on primary data collected by us making use of the technology of survey research. As such the study is based on the legislative proceedings of the Assam Legislative Assembly along with official data relating to our enquiry. The bibliography indicates the nature of source materials used for the preparation of the study. Therefore, although the study relies mostly on primary data, it has been supplemented with secondary materials from relevant books, govt. records, statistical accounts, published and unpublished thesis, Gazetteers, Journals, and Periodicals and in certain cases newspaper reports.

In this study, 8th Assam Legislative Assembly is the universe of analysis. Since the proposed study is largely confined to the legislative behaviour and representational
role of the legislators inside the Assembly, we had no other option but to rely mostly on primary data generated through extensive survey of the working of the Eight Assam Legislative Assembly. As such the primary thrust of this study is to focus on the institutional behaviour and role of the legislators, random sampling was considered necessary. Besides, there were certain other constrains for which it was not possible to collect data through interview schedule. Therefore, selectively few legislators of all the political parties that dominated the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly were interviewed for certain clarifications. For this purpose the researcher had to visit various parts of Assam as most of the respondents were residing scattered throughout the state, although majority of them settled permanently at Guwahati. Furthermore, few legislators changed political forum and defected to other political parties. While some of them were defeated in the next elections or few did not contest the election. Some of the legislators did not show interest to continue in politics. As such, finalizing the sample size was
very difficult. As such attempt has been made in this study to survey critically the composition and functions of the Eight Assam Legislative Assembly presented in historical and sociological perspective.

As regard sampling, we decided to cover the proceedings of 180 working days of Assam Legislative Assembly as a primary data of our study. The eighth Assam Legislative Assembly had 212 working days commencing from 9th January 1986 to 10th October 1990. Despite it was not possible to collect proceedings of all working days as some of such proceedings remain unpublished and unavailable. Despite randomly selected the sampling of our study is representative as shown under.
Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Working days</th>
<th>No. of proceedings of the day used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>1986</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Assam Legislative Assembly Debates as available in Assembly Library.

1.14 **Scheme of the Chapter:**

The study is consisting of broadly three parts with six chapters including the introductory one, in part I. The introductory chapter contains introduction, Theoretical perspective of political Elites, approaches to political representation, operational definitions of legislature, Elite studies in India, statement of the proposed research, Review of literature, Theoretical approach, Hypothesis, Significance of the study and Methodology of the proposed research. Certain conceptual clarity is also analysed in this chapter.

In the Chapter II an analysis has been outlined regarding the growth of legislature in Assam. It focuses on the historical legacies that contributed the growth of Assam.
Legislative Assembly. Paradoxically, this chapter deals with the composition of the 8th ALA, which focuses on Caste, Age, Educational attainments, Pre-recruitment roles of the legislative Elites. The legislative and political experience of the legislators has been analysed. The nature of legislative experience and political experience in different capacities is crucial in understanding their legislative role particularly legislative behaviour.

In the Chapter III entitled “Legislative Role of the Legislators in the Assembly” is an extensive and intensive explanation. It focuses on the vision of the legislators. Attempt is made to show how far the legislators consider the legislature as the proper forum for the redress of grievances or do they resort to agitation. It outlines extensive analysis on the responses of legislators to social, economic, educational and political issues. It further highlights on the functioning of legislative Elites in the House, particularly the participation of legislative Elites in the debates of the Assembly.
In the Chapter IV, legislative behaviour of the legislators in the Assembly has been extensively discussed. Legislative behaviour inseparably related to the legislative role, played by the legislators both inside and outside of the House. Legislative behaviour is crucial towards evaluating the standard of the legislature. Furthermore, in most cases such behaviour helps in analyzing the transparency of role as well as the nature of political class. The behaviour of the ruling party in the House, particularly its responsiveness to the members, attitude to opposition, and the intra-party relationship has been subject matter of discussion. In this chapter attempts have been made to show whether the elected representatives in their behaviour and attitudes fulfilled the mandate they had from the electorate.

A strong Opposition is necessary for the effective functioning of democracy. The role of the Opposition is particularly important in a country like India where the mass of is ignorant and illiterate. The Opposition not merely criticizes the govt. but put forward alternative proposals. The
Opposition checks the ruling party by two means, by an appeal to the electorate and by parliamentary debates. As such the study of a legislature can not be completed without a study of the role of the opposition. The part played by the Opposition in the assembly is crucial towards assessing how far the grievances of the people, are ventilated by focusing on basic problems faced by the people commonly. It helps in understanding the role of Opposition parties, particularly their attitudes and commitment to the day-to-day problems of the people. Thus the role of the Opposition has been discussed in Chapter V. To show how much the Opposition parties effectively used the Assembly as a forum for ventilating the grievances of the people.

Chapter VI covers the representational role of the legislators. Chief of these are questions, calling attention notice, adjournment motion through which grievances are ventilated. We have tried to determine whether, certain types of member are interested in certain types of problems. To what extent have the legislative Elites used the forum of the
House to represent either their constituents or the people at large. However, we have left ‘legislation’ of our preview, because the legislators are not formulators of policies. They generally support the party line.

The last Chapter VII contains conclusion. In this part contains the brief summary, important analysis, major inferences and evaluation of the present study have been discussed.

1.15 Limitation:

The present study relies upon primary as well as secondary material available and the data collected through the field work. We have relied mostly on published official documents for relevant data of this proposed study. Still, to paint a real picture of state politics is difficult as perfection has no end and the authenticity of source material is also often questioned. We have tried our level best with all constraints of time, money and energy to give an objective account of the events. Still, this study suffers from the limitations posed by these and many other difficulties. We
have no other way but to accept the official data available relating to our enquiry.