The principle of 'Rule of Law' which directs not only predominance of law but also equality before law. The concept equality before law with equal protection under Article - 14 and right to life under Article - 21 of the Constitution of India, visualise that to reach the coveted goal the people of all walks of life must reap that benefit even in the administration of justice particularly for these poor, downtrodden and indigent person.

The Constitution of India though included the above view under the above Articles which was confirmed by Supreme Court particularly in Khatri and others vs State of Bihar in the years 1981 in which right to legal aid was declared as fundamental rights under Article-21. In the meantime the inclusion of 'legal aid to poor' in the constitution of India in the year 1976 by incorporating Article-39A by the 42nd Amendment to the Directive Principle to State Policy, proves the increasing necessity of the legal aid to poor which can be otherwise term as 'legal services to poor' or 'equal access to justice'.

The history of legal aid which can be traced since the Vedic Age- that is Rig Veda, in our old DHARMASHASTRAS, SRUTIS and SMRITIS. The concept got its deep root even in our early centuries, during the reign of Gupta Dynasty, Harsha Dynasty, Kumar Bhaskar Barma Dynasty in Assam, Mughal Emperors and in the very critical reign of British also. Then the concept of settlement of disputes in the initial stage which is recongnised is a part of legal aid, was performed through Panchayati Justice with the help of PUNCHES, VILLAGE HEADMAN, MAULAVIS, KAZIS and FATHERS.
In Assam the settlement of disputes were performed through HEADMAN OF KEBANG (for tribal people) and for general people through PAIK SYATEM of Ahom dynasty, MEL (Committee), KHEL (unit of many families) and NAMGHAR (chanting place of religious rituals), RAIZAR MEL (committee of people) in different times over and above the administration of justice carried by Kings and his Ministers.

Having studied the legal aid to poor in international perspectives particularly in a few countries, particularly mention should be made the MAGNA CARTA of England in the year 1225.

The legal aid to poor which was implemented from March. 1980 to 8-11-1995 without having any legislative support under the banner of Committee for Implementation of legal Aid Scheme to implement the constitutional directive of Article 39A also studied. During this time no any remarkable progress was noticed except the initiation of the scheme.

The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, which was fully came in force since 9-11-1995 also studied upto 31-12-2003. Here also it is found that only 1% population of India living below poverty line have been benefitted out of the above legislation when more than 30% people of India are living below poverty line having no any financial position to take resort of procedure of the court.

So it is felt that the topic-equal access to justice to be acquired through providing legal aid services to the poor people. Otherwise the equal access to justice or rule of law of administration of justice will be farce, and the meaning of democracy will be in name and the poor people will lose faith in democracy as well as administration of justice. Hence it is felt that there needs a critical study of legal aid particularly to the poor, how they will be further benefitted from this constitutional and legislative
provision to get legal aid to poor in order to arrive at equal access to justice with riches and affluents. Selecting and finding out - the topic - 'A critical study of Legal Aid in Assam with particular reference to Nagaon District', and investigation and study are made upon the topic.

Finding out the following hypothesis - 'Though the various legal provisions as enumerated for legal aid (now services) are sufficient to provide our day to day necessity, but the implementation is beyond satisfaction in Assam in general and Nagaon District in particular'.

During the investigation various available statistical informations are studied and investigated and analysed. The all total 400 people interviewd by supplying the questionnarie and the whole topic of research is studied and investigated under eleven chapters.

In Chapter-I is 'Introduction' in which the definition, importance, concept, aims, objects and phylosophy of legal aid are discussed.

In Chapter-II - 'Legal Aid Movement in India with Historycal perspective' is also investigated since the Vedic Period to 31.12.2003 of Twenty First Century of India.

Chapter-III - entitled as 'Concept of Legal Aid Outside India' - a comparative study of previling legal aid in international perspectives has been studied to know about legal aid in several countries of world outside India.

In Chapter-IV- 'Existing Constitutinal and Statutory Provision of Legal Aid' here a detail study is made about the existing or present constitutional and legislative provision of legal aid, after the introduction of The Legal Services Authorities Act. 1987. including the days of Committee for Implementation of Legal Aid Scheme.

A new subject 'Para Legal Aid' is included in Chapter-V, where an attempt is
made to study and investigate how legal aid can be offered and implemented by other than the practising lawyers like members of voluntary organisations, students of law and any persons interested and experienced in law to provide legal aid.

Chapter- VI entitled as 'Implementation and Implication of Legal Aid in States and Union Territories', where all aspects of implication and implementation of legal aid are critically studied all over India. Attempt is made to study how more people and by whatway will be benefitted by legal aid implementation.

Chapter -VII is named as The Lok Adalat-'A Viable Alternative Dispute Resolution System being People's Court' - where an earnest attempt is made to cover all aspects of Lok Adalat now known as 'People's Court', or a 'Court of Brain Child of Necessity' including its increasing importance, necessity and popularity advancing new alternative dispute resolution system.

The 'Legal Aid in Assam' is included in Chapter -VIII. Here critical investigation is made about history of legal aid in Assam, its previous and present impact in the matter of implementation and implication of legal aid showing the various available statistics.

The Chapter IX - encompasses the 'Legal Aid in Nagaon District during Non Statutoy Period'- an investigation, analysis and study are made to know the history of legal aid in Nagaon District with its implementation and implication of legal aid during the period that is before the enforcement of The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. that is in the days of The Committee of Implementation of Legal Aid Scheme.

The next Chapter is X- 'Implementaion of Legal Aid in Nagaon District during Statutory Period'. Here implementation and implication of legal aid in Nagaon District is made critically on available statistics and random survey report of 400 people of
various categories of the district and hypothetically proves the researcher's accepted hypothesis.

The last but not least Chapter-XI is - 'Conclusions and Suggestions'. Here studying, analysing and investigating critically all the pros and cons of legal aid movement and study of ten chapters, an earnest attempt is made to advance some suggestions in order to provide legal aid to reach its own goal and zenith. Also a summary of the chapters in a nutshell is incorporated here.

(MUKUL GOSWAMI)