As a result of her abundant natural resources, Assam, one of the industrially backward states in India, contains 2.4% of the country's area and 2.9% of its population. Only 1.7% of the registered factories and industrial workers of India are found in Assam. The number of large scale industries there can be counted on the tips of the fingers. The largest number of industries in Assam are found in the unorganised sector of small scale and cottage industries. While the role of the organised industries is evaluated by the Central Statistical Organisation in the form of Annual Survey of Industries and that of the registered small scale industries is evaluated by occasional surveys by the Small Industries Development Organisation, the unregistered small scale and cottage industries remain outside the purview of any departmental inquiry except occasional sample surveys by the National Sample Survey Organisation. Government authorities do not have statistical data even on the number of enterprises in the unorganised sector.

The small scale and cottage industries in Assam have their own problems as well as prospects which need thorough investigation in the context of industrial development of the state. Elsewhere in our country a vast literature based on field investigation by renowned economists, sociologists, individual researchers, universities and institutes as well as government and international agencies like the UNESCO, has
developed. In Assam no such attempt has been made by any quarter except a few official reports for limited circulation. Hence this researcher had undertaken the study of the role of small scale and cottage industries in Assam at the suggestion of the distinguished economist Dr. P. C. Goswami while he was Professor and Head, Department of Agricultural Economics in the Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat.

The work, however, is a modest attempt; for the field is so vast and so widely diverse and dispersed that it is simply beyond the capacity of an individual researcher to make a thorough investigation of all the industries in the unorganised sector. Even the Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, with all the paraphernalia under its command, could not do an estimating survey while conducting a Survey of Cottage Industries in Assam in 1934-35. In its own language: "It would be a much more costly and time-consuming job to carry out an estimating survey in respect of an extremely unorganised sector like that of cottage industries for which even the primary requisite for conducting a sample survey, viz., the sampling frame is not available." In the situation we also had to take the option of field investigation in purposively selected 5 centres of industrial concentration well known in the state for their specific industries and 5 sample villages in the Hafla Development Block, all in the Kamrup (old) district with the anticipation that the industries that might be found in the field investigation would be
sufficient to represent those in the district as well as in the state.

As a matter of fact field studies in the 5 centres of industrial concentration and 5 sample villages have brought to light as many as 26 industries in different product lines. Compared with the 72 industries found and evaluated by the Department of Economics and Statistics in the abovementioned survey in the whole of Assam, 26 industries found in the surveyed areas have been evaluated in the present work.

The work has been divided into two parts. The role of small scale and cottage industries in the context of the technological revolution, industrial policy of the Government of India vis-a-vis small scale and cottage industries and industrial development of Assam have been dealt with in a historical perspective in Part I while Part II has been devoted to the case studies.

Industry study covers a very broad field of economic and non-economic factors. Dr. Everet E. Hagen in his work Handbook for Industry Studies, a publication of the Center for International Studies, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has classified them into as many as 16 broad sets starting with the identification of an industry or a firm and ending with the economic and social significance of the industry. In this context the present study is not a comprehensive one, for it is simply beyond the capacity of an individual researcher
to make such an intensive study by covering the economic, historical, political and socio-cultural aspects of as many as 26 industries. The approach in our study is a diagnostic one of probing into the operational conditions of the industries, their problems as well as prospects and suggesting as far as possible an alternative for making the existing ones economically viable and for setting up new ones in the context of industrial development requirements of the state.

As stated earlier, the project was initially conceived by the distinguished economist Dr. P.C. Goswami, M.A., B.L., Ph.D. (London), formerly Professor and Head, Department of Agricultural Economics, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat and now Industrial Finance Corporation of India Chair Professor, Guwahati University. I find no language to express my profound admiration and unqualified gratitude to him without whose inspiring guidance, supervision, suggestions and insistence the work might not have been completed.

I remain indebted to Dr. Eugene Staley, formerly Director of Basic Research in the International Development Center of Stanford Research Institute, California, U.S.A., then Consultant on Occupational Education of the Ford Foundation in Delhi for suggesting me literature on small industry through a personal letter in kind response to my query and for whose reference I could obtain several valuable papers and documents on the topic from the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, Vienna, Austria, through Mr. I. Krestovsky,
Chief, Small Industry Section, UNIDO to whom I acknowledge my sincere gratitude. I also acknowledge my sincere gratitude to Mr. Wilson F. Harwood, Manager, International Development Center, Stanford Research Institute, California and his Secretary Mr. Paul Kunston for kindly sending me several of the Institute's most valuable publications on the topic. I am also grateful to the staff of the Embassies (in Delhi) of the U.S.A., U.K., Japan and the Federal Government of Germany for sending me reports and documents on small scale industries in their countries.

I am grateful to Dr. Miranjan Saha, now Professor and Head of Department, Agricultural Economics, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, for his suggestions in preparing the survey schedules, to the Research Officers of the Agro-Economic Research Centre for North East India, Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, for providing me with their publications on Rural Surveys and to the Officers of the Departments of Planning and Development and Evaluation and Monitoring, Government of Assam for the documents and reports I have made use of in the work.

My sincere thanks are due to the staff of the British Council Library, Calcutta for their invaluable postal service, staff of the Gauhati University Library, staff of the Department of Economics and Statistics, Assam, for according me access to the departmental Library as well as published and unpublished documents, staff of the Department of Industries,
Assam and Small Industries Service Institute, Guwahati and to Mr. A.K. Neog, Deputy Director (Economics Section), SISI, Guwahati, for their help in the form of several published documents as well as consultancy services, I am also grateful to the U.G.C. for a Book Grant.

Lastly I offer my thanks to the persons interviewed during my field investigation for their co-operation and to my wife Mrs. Hemalata Baishya for her insistence and inspiration. My thanks are also due to Mr. BhabenDas of the Guwahati University for careful typing of the thesis.

15th January, 1986
Manik Kutir,
P. Eahati Road,
Sualkuchi-781103, Assam

(Prabin Baishya)