PREFACE

In this research work attempt has been made to do an in-depth study of the aged population in Assam. It has been observed that nowadays the elderly populations have to face wide-ranging problems including health, economic, clash of lifestyles due to generation gap and so on. Due to urbanization, migration and breakdown of traditional social structures, many elderly people have been forced into extreme isolation and poverty. They need social support, security, healthcare and they need a suitable environment where they can live with self respect. This study attempted to study the problems of elderly in the context of different socio-demographic and other situations.

In India average longevity is yet to cross sixty-five years of age. India has the second largest number of old people in world and their numbers are growing. Older people in India are also fastest growing age group in the population. Today more than seven percent of the populations, 77 million people, in India are over sixty, which is bound to increase in coming years. It is expected that in 2021 India’s elderly population will reach 136 million which will be about 10 percent of the total population. However, in spite of these alarming figures, little or nothing has been done to tackle down the emerging problem- that the growth is bound to severely test the ability of families and societies to provide financial, medical, and social support. Millions of elderly population in the rural
area is poor, lacking food, water, electricity, medical care and security.

Modernization has influenced only selected aspects of the society. The study of the aged population has an importance in formulating possible intervention for their welfare.

This study is based on a survey entitled “A Statistical Study of Socio-Demographic Profile of Elderly Population in Assam” carried out during 1998 under the auspices of Gauhati University, Gauhati and Birjhora Mahavidyalaya, Bongaigaon, Assam. The objectives of this research work described in different chapters are given below.

The first chapter contains introduction, concept of ageing, importance of study, literature review, and major objectives of the study.

The next chapter lays the foundation of the analysis by describing the data used in this research work and the method of analysis applied to the data in chapter III to chapter VI. This chapter (chapter II) also delineates a brief socio-demographic picture of Assam in general and the survey area in particular.

In chapter III, attempts have been made to study the effect of different socio-demographic, ecological and psychosocial correlates on the reported health status of the elderly population. This analysis identifies the socio-demographic factors affecting the health of the elderly population as: age, sex, place of residence, caste, family type, relation with the head of the household and education. Ecological and psychosocial factors have been located in electricity, sanitation, source of water and sleeping arrangement of the spouse. Two logistic
regression models have been employed to study the effect of various co-variates on the reported health status.

Chapter IV portrays the study of health problems of the elderly. To depict a brief picture of the health scenario of the elderly population a few health problem are identified as mobility, vision, cough, joint pain, and hearing problems. Respondents have been also asked to compare their health with others of their same age and their health at age fifty. The gender differential of some health problem among the elderly also has been checked. The results have been presented in two ways, firstly, descriptive studies of health problems and secondly a logistic regression model considering the likelihood of good health as dependent variable and selected health problems as independent variable.

In chapter V, effort has been made to study the economic potentialities among the elderly in our survey area. As disease free and disability free life expectancy increases, their economic potentiality must also revalued, which is a function of actual age, disabilities, education and others. Logistic regression model has been employed to study the degree of influence of some selected socio-demographic covariates on the reported interest to earn income.

Chapter VI examines whether the elderly people recognize son more important than daughter. The analysis is presented in two ways. Firstly, on the basis of the answers, a description of the study has been presented and secondly, it measures the degree of influences of various socio-demographic factors influencing their answers on the basis of odds ratios obtained from logistic
regression. Majority of our survey population reported that son is not relatively important than daughter, this finding being examined through various independent variable.

Chapter VII focuses to develop some improved rate of change measure for the population aging. The general measures of population aging are proportion of aged sixty and above, proportion of aged below fifteen, aged child ratio, mean age and median age. While insights from comparing the values of an aging measure between populations may be helpful, results from such comparison may be misleading due to influence of fertility, mortality and migration. Here a rate of change measure for the above mentioned measure have been developed by considering birth, death and migration rates for males and females simultaneously. Modified aging indexes were applied to Registration and Census data.

As a result of demographic and social transitions in almost all countries of the world, the size and structure of families has been changing. Chapter VIII highlights the potential of a multi-dimensional model for projecting family households having elderly population. This model includes one generation, two generation and three generation families as well as other types of families available in the survey area. The model described here would be able to provide some policy relevant information about the future trends of households having elderly population.