CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION
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Literacy is the minimum necessity for an honourable existence in this world. It is the very basis of human capacity building for a meaningful living. In this age of knowledge information and communication literacy is the most viable means that enables one to communicate in own society as well as the global society. In fact, literacy is a skill that makes people functional in every aspect of life.

Needless to state that the development of a country to a great extent, depends upon the development of its people. There has been constant attempts world over to wipe out illiteracy and to achieve mass literacy through various literacy initiatives and programmes.

History of literacy efforts in India reveals initiatives from both the government as well as non-government organizations. Among the non-government actors, Gyan Vigyan Samities of different states in the country are some leading NGO's working in the literacy field. In Assam also Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Assam (GVSA), has been undertaking literacy and development activities through the years.
As illiteracy has been a major hindrance of development of our state, an evaluation of on-going literacy programmes of GVSA has been considered very much important for getting necessary feedback about its effects upon the growth and development of the people and the society.

1.1 The Concept of Literacy

The term literacy has been given a variety of interpretations from early period till today. Dictionaries describe literacy as the ability to read and write. In its traditional meaning, literacy is regarded as the knowledge of 3 R’s that is Reading, Writing and Arithmetic But on subsequent stages of its development, this concept of literacy has been widened for its meaningful application in human life.

The World Conference of Education Ministers of eradication of illiteracy organized by UNESCO, Tehran, 1965 concludes that ‘Literacy should be regarded as a way of preparing man for a social, civic and economic role that goes beyond the rudimentary knowledge of literacy’. The International Consultation Liaison Committee for Literacy (UNESCO, 1972) has explained it as, “Literacy is not the simple reading of a word, or a set of associated symbols and sound,
but an act of critical understanding of men’s situation in the world”. A group of International experts (Torsten Husen and T. Neville PostlethWaite, 1994) have stated that a person is called literate when he acquires the knowledge of reading and writing and of arithmetic to perform his daily activities of life smoothly and also to use these skills for his and for the development of the society.

According to the National Literacy Mission (NLM) 1988, the functions of literacy are-

i) to help in reading and writing and numeracy,

ii) to understand the injustice in the society and to suggest means to correct them,

iii) to participate in the development process of the society and the community,

iv) to acquire skills to improve economic status for the self and the country,

v) to understand the value of national integration,

vi) conservation of environment,

vii) to maintain small family norms,

viii) to persevere for equality of status of the women in the society
In this way, functional literacy has been emphasized to make literacy worthwhile in one’s life. Functional literacy involves not only the acquisition of sufficient mastery over the letters but also the acquisition of relevant knowledge to enable a person to pursue his own interest, improve his present state, imbibe skills and information and participate meaningfully in his personal, community and national development; thus makes him empowered and improves his quality of life.

It is also the continuation of one’s learning either on his own or through other available avenues. Thus, functional literacy points out three important things to be considered --

i) literacy should be work-based

ii) literacy should arouse interest in vital national problems

iii) literacy should enable the learner to continue his learning with the help of follow up programme.

In recent time, in the light of newly emerging literacy studies highlighting social nature of reading and writing practices in different times and different societies, two major literacy approaches have been developed. These are --
i) Autonomous model of literacy and

ii) Ideological model of literacy

**Autonomous Model of Literacy**

According to this view, literacy in itself is ‘good’ and no debate is necessary. It is simply a technical and neutral skill prevalent across the world. It teaches people how to decode letters; and like any other skill the possessor can do what they like with literacy skill. It advocates dominant educational and development discourse and thus provides centrally determined curriculum and teaching. According to this view, the acquisition of literacy helps in social progress, cognitive development and economic take off.

To Angela Hildyard and David Olson (1978) advocates of this model of literacy, compulsory schooling and acquisition of literacy are essential for developing logical and abstract abilities of a person; thus there is differences in intellectual performances of literate and illiterate society and there are differences between oral and written language.
Another supporter, Patricia Greenfield (1972) revealed that 'context-dependent speech is tied up with context dependent thought, which is the opposite of abstract thought'. Oral speech depends on context to communicate meaning in which an abstract generalization is absent; written language itself entails high levels of abstraction. School is isolated from life and 'the pupil must therefore acquire abstract habits of thought if he is to follow the teacher's oral lessons. She also stated that the unschooled children lack 'cognitive flexibility' or cannot distinguish between his own thought about something and the thing itself'.

Jack Goody (1968) is arguing for the 'autonomy' of literacy and states it as the 'technology of the intellect'. To him, writing is closely connected to the development of logic, the distinction to myth from history, the elaboration of bureaucracy, the shift from little communities to complex cultures, the emergence of scientific thought and institutions and even the growth of democratic political process. Thus he gives the consequences of literacy. Goody states that primitive societies classify and organise their intellectual world simply in terms of their crude 'needs' but not according to more general intellectual interests and concerns. He attributes the
characteristics of ‘storage’, ‘indirectness’ and the construction of ‘successive layers of historically validated meaning’, employing the notion of logic, critical and rational powers to literate only.

Thus autonomous model of literacy considers literacy as a skill independent of values and context, thus separated from ideological heritage of complex societies.

**Ideological Model of Literacy**

The supporters of ‘Ideological’ model of literacy suggest that literacy is a social act, not simply a technological and neutral skill. It is always embedded in socially constructed epistemological principles; the ways in which the teachers or facilitators and their students interact is always a social practice that affects the nature of literacy being learned by the learner. As literacy practices are themselves social products, they cannot be isolated from the political and ideological context. According to Brian Street (1985), the consequences of the particular literacy practices depend upon the particular social conventions within which such practices became established. He also states that scientific endeavour takes place in a social context. ‘Technology is not a neutral thing’ that arises out of
disinterested scientific inquiry, but a social product; it must be accommodated, responded to and decided about in the society.

To Raymond William (1974), literacy, is more than just the 'technology' in which it is manifested. It is a social process in which particular socially constructed technologies are used within particular institutional framework for specific social purposes.

Parry (1982) opposes the distinction between oral and written literacy (as supported by autonomous model) and states that in traditional India oral tradition dominated the uses of written texts.

Another, Harvey J. Graff, a social historian (1979) states that forms and practice of literacy are based on ideology of different classes and groups. To him, the meaning of literacy is context dependent; it can not be established arbitrarily or abstractly for all members of the population.

Thus, the ideological model of literacy attempts to understand literacy in terms of concrete social practice and in terms of the ideologies in which different literacies are embedded.
It is to be mentioned that different thinkers in different times talked of different types of literacy on the basis of the roles they played in the development of society and culture. A few of them have been listed below—

**Aboriginal Literacy**:

It is common belief that aboriginals were not literate. But commenting on the book “They Write Their Dreams on the Rock Forever” David Olson (1994) talked about aboriginal literacy. To him, aboriginals had also some types of literature though not in the present form. They curved repeated symbols on rocks which appear to carry some meaning and serve to preserve and convey some information through symbols. Olson states that if writing is not merely to transmit speech but is a means for preserving and transmitting information, then these rock-writing culture is also kind of literacy. On these analogy aboriginals are also literate all along.

**Recognition Literacy**:

Hasan (1996) talks about recognition literacy. Recognition literacy enables a person to recognise letters and read and write words and
sentences. This is the popular ideas of literacy. This type of literate person does not have much educational knowledge about language and they are not expected to participate effectively in the higher social activities.

**Critical Literacy:**

Henry Giroux (1987) on the basis of the ideas of Italian Social theorist Antonio Gramsci put forward a view of literacy termed critical literacy. This literacy is something which gives high priority to political and cultural issues. Lack of this literacy shows political and intellectual immaturity in one form, and in another, it may give rise to resistance to reform the society to the expected level. As for instance members of working class and other backward groups may consciously or unconsciously refuse to learn the specific cultural code and other types of qualities of the dominant culture’s view. This refusal to be literate in such case provides a basis for a critical dialogue between the enlightened and the backward groups. By this dialogue attempts were made to remove the harmful knowledge and traditions of the backward groups. Thus critical literacy is
formed through critical discussions and arguments between the educator and the backward class.

**Emancipatory Literacy:**

Freire and Macedo (1987) talked about a type of literacy which they termed emancipatory literacy in the context of a discussion on literacy programmes designed for colonies in Africa and other countries. In this type of literacy learners are rather the subjects (oppressed groups) and not merely the objects. This literacy would enable the oppressed groups to know and be conscious about the socio-historical transformation of their society; to make them learn to value their own historical and cultural traditions. For this class, as Freire and Macedo stated that instruction should be given in student's language, because, if it is given in the language of the ruling class there is every chance to reproduce the existing social formations and thereby helps to maintain the authority and status of the ruling group over the dominant groups. In this way, emancipatory literacy helps to make them free from the dominant group's culture and to cultivate their own culture in a refined way.
Cultural Literacy: Hirsch, an American scholar, in 1987 coined one literacy term which he named as cultural literacy. He stated that the competent educated people possess some amount of informations and knowledge by reading newspapers and books etc. This is stored in their mind and through this storage of knowledge they evaluate matters regarding what they read and see in the day-to-day life. This type of knowledge and comprehension of educated people is called by him cultural literacy.

Of course, many critics objected to this classification of Hirsch stating that there cannot be cultural homogeneity among the people of a state, because, every one of them does not possess same type of educational qualities and skills in the society. Further, there is the influence of T.V., Computer etc. on literate people in an uneven way. So there cannot be a common cultural literacy among the educated people of a state.
Media Literacy

According to the educators who identify themselves with the 'media' literacy movement literacy is the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and communicate message in a variety of forms.

Media literacy incorporates the theoretical traditions of semiotics, literacy criticism, communication theory, research on arts education and language development. This vision of literacy not just aims at cultivating the relatively simple process of decoding messages, it is sophisticated analysis, evaluation and the active creation of messages that are the most significant, complex and vital skills needed for survival in an information age. It helps to reserve the important connection between the school and the culture, making education more relevant to the communities to which students belong. Media literacy helps in reshaping teaching methods and practices to become more inquiry based and student centred. It is centred around empowerment, defined as the "process through which students learn to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world and the possibilities for transforming the taken for-granted assumption about the way we live." (Hobbs, R. 1996)
Information Literacy:

Information literacy is the ability “to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information”.

Information literacy helps one—

i) To recognize accurate and complete information for intelligent decision making.

ii) To recognize the need for information.

iii) To formulate questions based on information needs.

iv) To identify potential sources of information.

v) To develop successful search strategies.

vi) To access sources of information including computer based and other technologies.

vii) To evaluate information.

viii) To organize information for practical application.

ix) To integrate new information into an existing body of knowledge.

x) To use information in critical thinking and problem solving.
**Computer Literacy**

Computer literacy is the knowledge and ability that a person has to acquire to use computers and information technology efficiently. It also provides one with knowledge about how computers work and operate. Modern standards of computer literacy include the ability to communicate with others using computers through electronic mail (E-mail); composing and editing documents and the ability to open and save files on a computer.

**Universal (Total) Literacy**

A country is declared to have achieved universal literacy when all its people have achieved the literacy level as per universal literacy norm. This norm is the ability to read, write and to do simple arithmetic work as decided in the fourth International Conference of Adult Education in Paris, UNESCO, March, 1985. The literacy rates of different countries of the world can be compared on the basis of this literacy standard. However, it has been seen that as technology advances, the definition of literacy is also changing, more particularly in case of developed countries. For instance, in 1975, the US census bureau used the criterion of six years of schooling for defining universal literacy in that country; but in subsequent time, due to a
huge growth of semiliterate, the attainment of twelfth grade literacy by all adults has been proposed as a meaningful national goal of literacy in that country. In Japan, this criterion is seventh grade. Therefore, the technologically advanced countries besides the universal norm, maintain another literacy standard for their own country.

From the above discussion it is found that the concept of literacy has not remained static over the years. It has developed and contributed in different stages of the human race right from the primitive age to the modern technological age. In coming years also we can expect further explanation and interpretation of the term literacy. However, the common understanding of literacy centres around the Universal (Total) literacy. The concern of this study is basically with this type of literacy.

1.2 Literacy and Development

Literacy plays a vital role in the life of individuals as well as society as a whole. It is the first step towards enlargement of people's choices. The UNDP's Human Development Reports delineated three ·
choices as essential without which many other opportunities remain inaccessible. These are — to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living. Besides, political, economic and social freedom, opportunities for being creative and productive and enjoying personal self-respect and guaranteed human rights are some aspects of life that indicate decent living.

Literacy is the starting point towards human development at least to certain extent. It is a means for acquiring knowledge and information. In this age of knowledge explosion, although literacy alone does not guarantee full exploitation of the knowledge and information system, it is the fundamental skill for operating the modern communicating media. With this tool a person gradually learns to adjust to environment more effectively and make best use of the physical conditions surrounding her/him. Through acquisition of knowledge, a literate person can take informed decisions that help him or her in real life situations.

Advocating the role of literacy in human existence, the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen (1999) has stated that literacy is essential
for adequate communication in a human society that has invented writing. It becomes a constitutive part of the capability of a person in such a society. It is one of the substantive freedoms a person enjoys, which enables her to process information, reflect and deal with other people more adequately. Literacy also has instrumental value. It makes a person more productive, it allows a mother to bring up her children better; it may, given favourable conditions, empower her to decide whether and when she wants to have another child. The aggregation of these functions in a society leads to lower rates of fertility, and allows it to bring up a smaller number of children with better nutrition and a better access to a basket of functions.

In fact, data from around the globe indicate close relationship between literacy and different development indicators. The comparative figures in the following table (Table -1.1) show that in most of the cases, countries having high literacy rates, other development factors are also satisfactory; similarly the countries where literacy rates are low, these factors are affected accordingly.
Table 1.1: Countries with High and Low Literacy rate and their other Development Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Country</th>
<th>Adult Literacy Rate (%) (age 15 yrs. and above)</th>
<th>GDP per capital (US $), 2003</th>
<th>Net Primary enrollment rate, (%) 2002-03</th>
<th>Life expectancy at birth (Yrs.) 2000-2005</th>
<th>Life expectancy Index</th>
<th>Educational Index</th>
<th>Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births), 2003</th>
<th>Maternal mortality ratio adjusted (per 100000 Live births)</th>
<th>Total Fertility rate (birth per woman), 2000-2005</th>
<th>Population under-nourished (malnutrition), (% total), 2000-2002</th>
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Source: Human Development Report, 2005
Needless to say that literacy gives ways to various modes of human capacity building like increase of knowledge, confidence and awareness, enhancing reasoning and decision-making abilities, knowledge about rights and duties of a social being, raising of income, healthful and decent living, longevity, maintenance of small family norms and so on. Illiteracy, on the other hand undermines the potential of an individual and hampering his fulfillment; it leads to oppressions and deprivations. Literacy is perceived as one important component of empowering individuals to achieve and improve their socio-economic and political conditions and thereby to lead a more meaningful life.

The development of a nation depends to a great extent upon the utilization of human capacities in different fields. Literacy can be regarded as an important way of enhancing human capabilities that can better be used for national development.

1.3 The Literacy Campaign

It is true that knowledge and information assumed unprecedented importance in today's world, literacy had been the precursor in the previous centuries. The countries which were more literate
in earlier centuries have gone far ahead in knowledge and development. Literacy has always occupied an important place in the history of mankind. In the centuries between 1500-1800 literacy played a central part in European cultural and social history. Literacy is typically a phenomenon of transition—these centuries saw in Europe the transition from a restricted medieval literacy to modern mass literacy. In the Middle age, only a selected few knew how to read and write and many of them made their living out of these skills as scribes and clerks. After the invention of the printing press in the mid-fifteen century, the quantity of written documents from books to newspapers and leaflets, grew very quickly and this encouraged more and more people to learn to read and to a lesser extend to write. By the late 18th century, in the most developed regions of Europe, about 50 per cent men were able to acquire information from reading the newspapers, and the number of people who could write was steadily rising. The skills of reading and writing and beyond that, the use of literacy were rapidly gaining ground to the detriment of oral communication. Instead of orally transmitted knowledge and the memory of the elderly, much emphasis was given on writings; as a result, increasing number of people were able
to decipher written documents. With the spread of calendars and printed maps, numerically articulated, measurable time came to replace an image of a past dawn with vague, uncertain outlines; more and more people were able to read the dates on printed works, knew how old they were and tried events to specific days, months and years. This inevitably affected people’s mentality and ways of thinking.

In the early modern period, England together with the Netherlands was the most literate country in the world. In the mid-seventeenth century, during the civil war Englishmen were required to sign oaths of allegiance several times. David Cressy has found that at the beginning of the 18th century, 55 per cent Englishmen and 75 per cent women could write their own names. Between 1850 and 1911, the proportion of illiterate men decreased 30 per cent to 1 per cent and that of women from 45 per cent less than 2 per cent.

In France from the age of Louis XIV, it was compulsory for brides, bridegrooms and witness to put their signature in the register at weddings. By 1900 only 5 per cent bridegrooms were unable to sign
the marriage register. By the end of the 19th century illiteracy had been wiped out in France.

In the late 19th century in Italy, illiteracy which earlier had reached high proportion was diminishing. Jeffrey Brook (a historian of Russian literacy, 1977) has stated that according to 1897 census in Russia only 21-29 per cent men and 13 per cent women could read. In the European part of Russia 28 per cent men and 10 per cent women could read. Development in the 50 years preceding World War I was rapid. In 1913 only 32 per cent of Young men just above school age were illiterate. For some parts of Europe like Bosnia, Moldevia and Wallachia, Siberia, the Balkan Peninsula Bulgaria, Greece, Romania, literacy remained a problem of the 20th century— the Bolshevik party launched huge literacy campaigns after coming to the power in Russia.

In North America male literacy rose from 70 per cent in 1710 to 90 per cent at the end of the 18th century. In 1840, the number of illiterates in the state of New York was 4 per cent. During that time in other parts of the world, however, the literacy situation was not a satisfactory one. African-American population
showed high levels of illiteracy even after slavery had been abolished. In 1870, 80 per cent and in 1900, 44 per cent adults blacks were illiterate. Around 1960, the time of dissolution of the colonial empires, 81 per cent of the population of Africa and 55 per cent of Asia’s population were illiterate. Massive immigration into the USA from Europe before the World War I imported mass illiteracy. In 1909, 99 per cent of Danish or Scottish workers in the United States were literate, but only 45 per cent of Portuguese and 43 per cent of Polish workers could read and write at this time (Neil J. Smelser and Paul B. Baltes, 2001).

The expansion of formal schooling is the single most important factor for the spread of literacy. Since the 19th century in Europe, countries like Scotland Prussia, Australia, Sweden, France, England and Italy and at the end of the 19th century, non-western countries like Japan, South Korea and Taiwan made education compulsory.

Many countries organized mass, multi-year campaigns to promote literacy. Socialists / Communists governments were particularly active; By the end of the 1919-39 Soviet Campaign, 85 per cent
of the population was literate, compared with 30 per cent before; 
with the introduction of universal, compulsory and free schooling, practically the entire population in the age group of 9-49 had become literate by 1980. China and Vietnam organized a series of campaigns from the 1940s to the 1980s that were relatively effective in reaching large segments of the illiterate adult population. In the United Republic of Tanzania, the adult literacy rate almost doubled from an estimated 33 per cent in 1967 to 61 per cent in 1975, alongside the rapid expansion of primary education. Ethiopia’s national literacy campaign from 1979 to 1983 established some 450,000 literacy centers and reached over 22 million people. Non-socialist countries also conducted mass campaigns; in Thailand several successful literacy campaigns ran from 1942 to 1945, Brazil conducted several large-scale campaigns in the 20th century alongside the sustained expansion of its public education system. Shorter campaigns were also conducted by various countries; As a result of Cuba’s 1961 campaign literacy rate increased from 76 per cent to 96 per cent within one year; In Vietnam they rose from 75 per cent to 86 per cent as a result of the 1976-77 campaign; in Nicaragua, from 50 per cent to 77 per cent in the country’s 1979-80 drive.
It is interesting how socio-political and functional needs of western countries shaped the literacy movement. Mass campaigns of 19th century saw a great boost in literacy around the world.

Besides the individual countries’ literacy efforts at national level, the recent decades have seen increased interventions by world bodies like UNESCO and UNICEF. With its long-standing commitment to ‘Literacy for All’ UNESCO has continued to advocate concerted efforts to meet the challenge of literacy of people worldwide. In the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) sponsored by four UN agencies like UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO and the WORLD BANK in 1990, UNESCO adopted a more modest, theoretically achievable goal of cutting illiteracy rates in half by the year 2000 than its earlier one of complete elimination of illiteracy by 2000 adopted in the Udaipur Declaration two decades ago. Emphasis was put for people’s active participation in literate cultures; and in particular, female literacy to reduce the current disparity between male and female literacy rates. In the same year another international education initiative took place, i.e. the UN
declared the 'International Literacy Year' to universalize literacy education.

Though Jomtien literacy target is not met, there have been some real gains in the period. According to the EFA Global Assessment (Skilbeck 2000), "there have been real gains during the 90s, even though the number of illiterate people remains very high and in some parts of the world is increasing." There were an estimated 895 million illiterates in the world in 1990, 887 million in 1995 and 875 million in 2000. The large majority are women in developing countries. Moreover, it has been acknowledged that literacy is a product of educational, social and economic factors that cannot be changed radically. Consequently, in the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, 2000 (by the UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE), the International Literacy Institute (ILU), ISESCO, Action Aid and SIDA) the dead-line for the literacy target has been postponed from 2000 to 2015. It has been seen that despite considerable progress, universal literacy still remains a major qualitative and quantitative challenge due to social, gender and ethnic inequalities among the illiterates and an increasing number of so-called literates who know to read but do not make
meaningful use of their literacy skills. Therefore a discussion was held during a Strategy Session at the Dakar Conference, 2000, based on a preliminary draft ("Literacy Decade Framework and Elements for a Plan of Action", 15 pages) prepared by a group of specialists convened by UNESCO’s Basic Education Division in Sevres, France, on 27-29 March 2000 and developed a renewed vision of a ten-year global action plan for “Literacy for All”.

The “Literacy for All” framework proposed:

(i) a comprehensive and renewed understanding of literacy, including children, youth and adults in and out of school;

(ii) “a renewed vision and a renewed commitment from all: national governments, national and local societies, and international agencies; in the family, the community, the workplace, the school system, and the media;

(iii) renewed strategies and mechanisms at all levels, consistent with such renewed vision and with the magnitude and complexity of the challenge”.
The background to the Strategy Session was a resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly at its 54th session (20 January, 2000) to submit to the General Assembly in 2001 a proposal for a UN Literacy Decade, with a draft plan of action and possible time-frame for such a decade.

The General Assembly of the United Nations declared the United Nations Literacy Decade on 13th February, 2003 for the period 2003-2012 as a renewed, co-ordinated and sustained efforts to literacy for all. It is the collective will of the international community to extend literacy to those who do not currently have access to it, with priority being given to the most disadvantaged groups, especially women and girls, ethnic and linguistic minorities, indigenous populations, migrants and refugees, out-of school children and youth and persons with disabilities. The Decade aims to provide locally sustainable literate environments so that people can express their ideas and views, engage in effective learning, participate in the written communication and exchange knowledge with others. This would increase peoples mutual understanding and harmony in this interconnectedness of human societies.
According to the UN. General Assembly Resolution, there are three reasons which justify the Decade—

(i) In this present interconnected world literacy is a key to communication. But a large section of people still cannot participate in communication networks due to lack of their literacy skills and remained excluded. Such exclusion is not acceptable. According to the EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2002, there are about 861 million illiterates in the world; two thirds of these are women; one in five people over the age of 15 cannot communicate through literacy or take part in the surrounding literate environment. The Decade gives priority to make these people literate.

(ii) Literacy is a basic human right which was recognized over 50 years ago, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But it is a matter of great regret that a large portion of people have been still deprived of this right.

(iii) Though various literacy efforts have been undertaken in different times at national and international levels, these efforts are found inadequate in meeting the challenge. The
Decade takes the opportunity to make a renewed, coordinated and sustained efforts for the promotion of literacy.

The Literacy Decade proposes six lines of action to implement literacy for all—

(i) **Policy Change:**

Policies must provide a framework for local participation in literacy including multilingual approaches and freedom of expression. It must link literacy with poverty reduction, programmes in agriculture, health and other social concerns.

(ii) **Flexible:**

Programmes—should be flexible to enable learners to move on to more formal learning opportunities.

(iii) **Capacity Building:**

Capacity building will focus on areas which need Strengthening in particular countries.
(iv) Research:

Research on literacy should be undertaken to formulate effective literacy policies.

(v) Community Participation:

Literacy programmes should be relevant and useful to needs and aspirations to community.

(vi) Monitoring and Evaluation:

Monitoring and evaluation is necessary to see the progress made during the Decade in terms of literacy. UNESCO will work with its institutes and its partners to find improved ways of measuring literacy.

The Literacy Decade is also part of broader international work in education and development. The Education for All (EFA) goal of increasing literacy rates by 50 per cent by 2015 provides the overcall target for the Decade, and the Millennium Development Goals set the Decade in the context of poverty reduction.
The Literacy Decade is a great challenge for promoting common literacy goals. In India also literacy efforts have been made through various literacy programmes since independence to tackle the problem of illiteracy in the country. During the first five year plan, the programme of social education inclusive of literacy was introduced as a part of community development programme in 1952. Model community centers, rural libraries, Janata College, youth clubs, mahila mandals and folk schools were encouraged. The Gram Shikshan Mohim (Village Literacy Movement) of Maharashtra (1959), the launching of the Farmer’s Functional Literacy Project (FFLP) in 1967-68, the National Adult Education Programme (NAEP) in 1978, the Rural Functional Literacy Project (RFLP), the State Adult Education Programme (SAEP), the Mass Programme for Functional Literacy (MPFL), a new National Programme of adult Education (NPAE) announced by the new education policy (1986) were some initiatives taken to spread literacy among the illiterates. But despite all these efforts since independence, there are 302.44 million illiterates (age group 7 and above) in the country as per census 2001.
The main factor of the failure of these programmes has been found as their essentially center-based character without considering the demands of the grass-root people. On 5 May, 1988 the National Literacy Mission was launched with the objective of revising and strengthening the existing adult education programmes in the country and making them mass programmes. In 1990, Ernakulam district of Kerala became the first fully literate district as a result of the Total Literacy Campaign (TLC) initiated by Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), the most experienced and leading contingent of India's growing people's science movement. This inspired all the science societies (that formed AIPSN) in the country to form a Gyan Vigyan Samiti in their respective states to undertake literacy programmes.

The literacy wave in Assam came in the year 1990 when the Assam Science Society formed the Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Assam(GVSA) to start literacy activities. In 1992-93 GVSA undertook many awareness programmes through 'Kalajatra' and trying to bring mass awareness in remote villages in the state about the importance of literacy. Thus NLM sponsored literacy activities of GVSA has been operating since 1993 in seven
development blocks (viz. Dhemaji, Lahoal, Sipajhar, Raha, Laharighat, Moirabari, Chandrapur) of six districts (viz. Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Darrang, Nagaon, Morigaon and Kamrup) in Assam. The post literacy programme (PLP) and continuing Education (CE) have also been launched in the areas where TLC has been completed in order to retain the learning experiences of the learner.

The literacy campaign of GVSA started with the mission to spread literacy and to help in the development of individual and of community. Over the years this organization has been able to establish itself as a committed organization devoted to the spread of literacy and development activities in the state. Assam with its backwardness and innate problems of illiteracy where 35.72 per cent (as per 2001 census) are illiterates, offer unique space for GVSA's functioning. So far no extensive study has been done on the impacts of the literacy campaign by GVSA upon individuals and the society at large. Therefore, it is considered worthwhile to undertake a study on the same.
1.4 Statement of the Problem

In the present work an attempt is being made to study and analyze the impacts of the literacy campaign by GVSA upon different aspects of individual and community development. In this knowledge driven world, certain basic skills are prerequisite for women and men for honourable living. The basic idea here is to see how GVSA’s literacy efforts have got reflected in capacity building both at individual and community levels. As such the title of the study has been fixed as “Literacy Campaign of Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Assam (GVSA) : A Case Study of its Effects on the Individual Learner and the Community.”

1.5 Significance of the problem

The present study is significant for the following reasons:

(i) No study of the present nature has been done with the neo-literate of the literacy campaign by G.V.S.A, a leading NGO in spreading mass literacy in the state. It is expected that the understanding accrued would help the programme implementers to make it more relevant.

(ii) The gender issues which are closely linked with literacy-illiteracy dimensions are expected to be brought out for better understanding.
(iii) Through this work a better insight is expected regarding the relationship between literacy and development issues of society.

1.6 Objective of the Study:

i) To study the literacy (reading, writing, arithmetic) achievements of the neo-literate in terms of NLM literacy norms.

ii) To study and analyse the effect of the campaign on the development of individual learners as well as of the community.

iii) To study the response of both the men and women towards this campaign as well as campaign’s effects on them and

iv) To study the extent of realization of the linkage between literacy and development through the programmes of GVSA.

1.7 Hypothesis

(a) The neo-literate of the campaign have attained the literacy norms set by the NLM.

(b) The participants of the campaign are more aware of the utility of increasing the family income and thereby living a better life than the non-participant ones.
(c) Participation in the literacy campaign causes a woman learner to be more aware of her rights and obligations, status and position in the family and society and also to be more able to take household decisions than the illiterate women who have not participated in the campaign.

d) Women participants of the campaign have better saving habits than non-participant female counterparts of the locality, as well as the male participants of the programme.

e) The participants of the campaign are more aware of concept of healthful living (safe drinking water, sanitation, and a cleaner, germ free household environment) than the non-participant individuals of the locality.

f) The participants of the literacy campaign are more aware of the panchayat system and are involved in planning and evaluation of panchayat activities than the non-participant individuals (adult men and women) of the locality.

g) Women's participation in the campaign has been more active compared to the men.
1.8 Operational Definitions of the Key Terms

i) Neo-Literates: As per NLM norms, neo-literates refer to those individuals who have completed Primer (IPCL) III or those who have completed Primer-II and started Primer-III under the literacy campaign of GVSA.

ii) Individual Learner: Individual learner here refers to every individual who has undergone literacy training under the literacy campaign of GVSA and has become neo-literate.

iii) Community: Community here refers to ‘rural community’ i.e. a collection of people with certain amount of interdependency and who are residing within a common geographical boundary falling under the literacy block of GVSA.

iv) Literacy: The word ‘literacy’ here is used to mean not only the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills; but also the acquisition of better knowledge and development of certain capabilities which enable one to become an active, productive and creating member of the community, participating in the process of social reconstruction and national development and thereby leading a better, happier and more meaningful life.
v) Effect of the Campaign: Effect of the campaign in this study implies effect in terms of individual development and consequently community development. The concept of 'individual development' here is based upon the concept of 'human development' given by Human Development Reports, UNDP. According to Human Development Reports, UNDP human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. Of those choices, three choices are essential without which many other opportunities remain inaccessible. These are – (1) to lead a long and healthy life, (2) to acquire knowledge and (3) to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living. It also includes political, economic and social freedom, opportunities for being creative and productive and enjoying personal self-respect and guaranteed human rights.

Considering this concept of human development the present study is taking the following indicators of individual development –

i) Individual awareness towards literacy

ii) Increase in household income

iii) Knowledge about new improved vocational or work skills
iv) Family savings

v) Increased level of awareness about health and hygiene (safe drinking water, sanitation, a cleaner, germ-free household environment, knowledge about preventive measures for diseases like AIDS).

vi) Increased level of awareness about child immunization, mother's health.

vii) Small family norm.

viii) Improvement in self-esteem and self-confidence.

ix) Increased level of awareness about socio-cultural issues.

x) Awareness about right to vote.

So far as the community development is concerned, the same may be indicated in –

i) Increased awareness among the people regarding the need and means for community development.

ii) Increased in group solidarity and co-operative action.

iii) Demonstration effect in terms of increased social recognition of the persons involved as well as improvement of their quality of life (within their own limitations) leading to increase in people's involvement in the campaign.