Democratic citizens can express their opinion on issues affecting them, engage in public debates and discussions or even stand up as a candidate in democratic elections. As a forum for realising these democratic aspirations of citizens, political parties play an important role in politics. The institution of political party is vested with the power to exercise various roles in a democracy. Political parties articulate and integrate different interests, visions and opinions of people. They help to bring the government closer to the people and society, aid in building a nation and provide stability to the governance of a country. The Indian National Congress occupies a distinct place from the point of view of its history. The totality of political activity of the party, initially build as a movement to overthrow the British colonial rule in India, helped to achieve a legacy with the help of which it achieved legitimacy in the post – colonial period. The role of a political party in the immediate post – independence scenario is especially crucial considering the newly attained independence from foreign rule. In this context, party behaviour is more understandable when its regional history is taken into account.

Against this backdrop, the study aims to highlight the role of the Indian National Congress in the politics of the state of Assam. The Congress party in this state was not formed in 1885, which is the year of establishment of the party at the national level. Social and political issues were brought to light by various associations in Assam during different periods of history. The Assam Association established in 1905 was working in close connection with the Indian National Congress. The members of the association wanted a broad – based platform which would help to concretise the demands of the masses into strategies aimed at achieving freedom from foreign rule. In a resolution adopted in the meeting of the Assam Association in 18 April, 1921, the Assam Provincial Congress Committee (APCC) was formed. Thus the foundation of the party was laid in Assam. It played a vital role in the freedom struggle of the country in the process gaining legitimacy of the masses. The Congress party formed under the leadership of Gopinath Bardoloi in 1946 was faced with a multitude of problems, both within and outside the party. Intra – party clashes marred the party’s development in the crucial years which affected the party’s ability to deal with the problems concerning the masses. The problems of immigration and food scarcity cast an adverse impact on the socio – economic development of the state. Funds for development had to be diverted to
address the issues. The situation was made more challenging for the government as financial aid from the centre necessary for post-war reconstruction programmes in the state was reduced. These unsolved problems were transferred to the Bishnuram Medhi’s government which came to power in 1950 after Bardoloi’s death.

In the first Chapter of the study, a theoretical framework has been put forward that would provide the dimensions of the work which has been undertaken. Chapter II’s coverage deals with the role of the Congress party in the national struggle for freedom. In Chapter III of the study, the organisational aspects of the party have been taken up with due focus on the challenges faced within the party’s organisation. Chapter IV deals with the major issues of the study period, which have been identified as immigration and food scarcity, highlighting the response of the Congress government towards addressing them. In Chapter V, the summary and conclusions which have been reached in the course of the study have been put together. A few recommendations have also been offered which are relevant even to the contemporary party system of the state.