PREFACE

In the hustle and bustle of the congested settlements in Golapati or the clustered houses of Tarahei and Kwakta amidst greeneries and open sky, dwell the married adolescent girls. Though young and sometimes child-like, they live as good wives and mothers embracing modesty in their appearance, words and behavior. Beneath this similarity, each one of them has a story to tell about their lives—about hopes, shattered dreams or unspoken reproductive health needs! Reproductive health issues are a central event in the life of any women whose lived experiences vary between individuals. This thesis endeavors to unravel this central issue of their lives with the intention to fill the much needed gap in the study of reproductive health of married Muslim adolescent girls.

The thesis is presented in ten chapters. The first chapter gives the introduction, purpose of this study, an understanding of this research work and the research methodology adopted. The second chapter is on the review of related literature. The third chapter depicts the research area and the people.

The fourth chapter deals with balik phaba and its cultural and biological implications. In this chapter, issues like regulation of female body after balik phaba, early marriage, menstrual beliefs, menstrual practices and menstrual disorders are discussed.

The fifth chapter on body image and reproductive health is an exploration of the married adolescent girls’ perception and expectations from their body. It results in uncovering their ideal body type, its relation with reproductive health, how they try to conform to their ideal body type and their reproductive health experience after conforming to it. This chapter necessitates unraveling their life after marriage.
The sixth chapter deals with *ee nunsghitki ayetpa* or health problems relating to reproductive organs and functions, except for menstrual disorders (*chakmang phimangi akaiba*). The types of *ee nunsghitki ayetpa* experienced by them, its causes, health seeking behavior and effects on their quality of life is uncovered. The seventh chapter is on *chabokpa* (childbearing), tracing their journey from pregnancy to childbirth along with the accompanying beliefs and practices. This chapter explores the significance of *chabokpa* to the married adolescent girls and the health effects experienced by them due to it. The eight chapter explores their knowledge about birth control, decisions and the adoption of contraception by the married adolescent girls.

The ninth chapter explores how the married adolescent girls take the middle path between tradition and modernity in reproductive health. This chapter discusses the two trends of middle paths that emerged in this study.

The final chapter is the summary and analytical conclusion of the previous chapters, and the implications of this study for policies and programs.