CHAPTER- II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Locale of the study:

Assam, a constituent state of India, is located in north eastern part of the country. It is a medium sized state of India and is often termed as the sentinel of north east India and gateway to the north eastern states. The state is situated between 89°.42´ and 96°.10´ East longitudes and 24°.8´and 28°.2´ North latitude. The tropic of cancer 23°.5´ North latitude passes just to the south of the state. So, it is natural that the state enjoys a tropical climate. The state is surrounded by hills and mountains on three sides. The state is bounded by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh on the North; Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur on the East, Mizoram and Meghalaya on the South and Bangladesh and West Bengal on the West. The physiographic of Assam comprises plains, dissected hills of the South Indian Plateau system and the Himalayas all around its North, North East and East .Assam is thus, characterized by diverse features such as flood plains, ox-bow lakes, river island (Majuli, the largest river island of the world on the Brahmaputra river) marshes and beels, (a type of wetland) scattered, hillocks, folded hill ranges and old plateaus.

The Brahmaputra, the life-line of Assam is an antecedent river, older than the Himalayas. The river with steep gorges and rapids in Arunachal Pradesh entering Assam becomes a braided river and with numerous tributaries, creates a vast flood plain both in Assam and the neighbouring country Bangladesh. In the south, the Barak originating in the Barail Range (called Angami Naga Hills, Assam- Nagaland border) flows through the Cachar district with its tributaries and enters Bangladesh with two separate branch courses in the name of Surma and Kushiara.

As per 2011 census, the total population of Assam was 3.12 crore. The literacy rate in the state was 72.19%, where male literacy rate was 77.85% and female literacy rate was 66.27%. Assam is at present the home of several population groups such as

the tribals, the indigenous non-tribals (Assamese), the Bengali Hindus, the Bengali Muslims, the Nepali immigrants and the tea laborers etc. each with distinct traditions and cultures. The growth rate of population in the state till 1971 had been relatively high compared to the average growth rate in India. The density of population in the state became 397 per sq.km.

The economy of Assam is agrarian in character. The practice of agriculture is, to a large extent, traditional and even today a primitive type of farming i.e. Jhum cultivation covers 1.51 per cent of the state's total cultivated area. Economy of Assam today represents a unique juxtaposition of backwardness amidst plenty. Despite its rich natural resources, and supplying of up to 25% of India's petroleum needs, growth rate of Assam economy has not kept pace with that of all India. In Assam among all the productive sectors, agriculture makes the highest contribution to its domestic sectors.. The biggest contribution of Assam to the world is tea. It produces some of the finest and expensive teas. Assam also accounts for fair share of India's production of rice, rapeseed, mustard seed, jute, potato, sweet potato, banana, papaya, areca nut, sugarcane and turmeric. It is also a home of large varieties of citrus fruits, leaf vegetables, vegetables, useful grasses, herbs, spices, etc. However, Assam's agriculture is yet to experience modernization in real sense.

Assam is a major producer of crude oil and it accounts for about 15% of India's crude output. Exploited by the Assam Oil Company Ltd. and natural gas in India, Assam is at the second place in the world. Most of the oilfields are located in the upper Assam region. Assam has four oil refineries located in Guwahati, Digboi, Golaghat and Bongaigaon with a total capacity of 7 million metric tons per annum. It is, worth mentioning here that Asia's first refinery was set up at Digboi. Despite its richness in natural recourses, the benefits have yet to improve the lives of the people of Assam. One of the reasons cited for this is various insurgencies that plagued the region as well as deficits in infrastructure.

The small scale industries or cottage industries of Assam also have a very important role to play in order to ensure proper industrialization in the state. Brass and bell metal industries are important cottage industries in Assam. Besides, this sericulture is considered as a very important traditional rural industry. This involves the culture of a large variety of silkworms in the state. Activities that are related to the

culture of Muga, Eri and Mulberry silkworms are expected to play a very significant role in the economic development of the state. The handloom industry in the state of Assam also has a remarkably long tradition. It involves a large section of rural population of the state. Although having a poor overall industrial performance, several other industries have nevertheless been started, including a chemical fertilizer plant at Namrup; petrol chemical industries at Namrup and Bongaigaon; paper mills at Jagiroad, Panchgram and Jogighopa; sugar mills at Barua Bamun Gaon, Chargola., Kampur; cement plant at Bokajan, Umrangso Badarpur, cosmetics plant of Hindustan Uni lever (HUL) at Doom Dooma etc. Moreover, there are other industries such as jute mill, textile and yarn mills, silk mill, cane industries etc. Unfortunately many of these industries are facing loss and closure to lack of infrastructure and improper management practices. If we want to divide Assam into geographical regions, we will have to divide it into i) the Brahamaputra Plain, ii) the Barak Plain, and iii) the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar upland.

The Barak plain is situated at the southern part of Assam. It is about 85 km. long from the East to the West and about 70 km. wide from the North to the South. It has an area of about 6,962 square km. It is surrounded to the North by the North Cachar hills, to the East by the hills of Manipur, to the south by Mizoram hills and to the West there is plain of Surma Valley of Bangaladesh and Tripura hills. There are three civil districts, viz. Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi on this plain. This study is conducted only in the Cachar district of Assam.

Cachar is located between 92°24' and 93°15' East longitude and 24°22' and 25°8' North latitude in the southernmost part of Assam and is one of the oldest districts of the state. The district was created in 1830 after annexation of Kachari Kingdom by British. In 1854, North Cachar was annexed and tagged to the district. In 1951, former North Cachar sub-division was made a separate district and taken out of Cachar. In 1983, earlier Karimganj sub-division and in 1989 Hailakandi sub-division were announced as separate districts. At present Cachar district occupies an area of 3,786 square km. According to census 2011, this district had population of 17, 36,617 and average literacy rate was 80.36. It comprises of two sub-divisions **Silchar and Lakhipur** and eight educational blocks. They are Katigorah, Salchapra, Udarbond, Sonai, Lakhipur, Narsingpur, Rajabazar and Silchar. District Cachar is bounded on the North by Barail and Jayantia hill ranges, on the South by the state Mizoram and

sister districts Hailakandi and Karimganj, on the East Manipur, and on the West Karimganj and a part of Bangladesh. The Barak is the main river of the district and apart from this there are numerous small rivers which flow from Dima Hasao district, Manipur and Mizoram. The district is mostly made up of plains, but there are number of hills spread over the district. The climate is tropical wet with hot and wet summers and cool winters. The climatic condition of this district is significant for humidity and it is extremely beyond the limit. Because of this reason, during summer, it is intolerable. Economy of Cachar district is not very encouraging. Due to geographical remoteness, poor communication and lack of proper infrastructural facilities economic development is not up to the mark. In spite of the miserable circumstances prospects of agriculture, horticulture and forestry forming are the main sectors of economy of this district. Agriculture contributes heavily to the economy of Cachar District. Livestock and poultry also occupy an important place in the rural economy. The major forest products consist of timber, cane, bamboo etc. In the organized sector, tea is the main industry of the district.

Bengali is recognized as official language in this district as majority of the people primarily speak in Bengali and Sylhette, a Bengali-dialect. Apart from Bengali, other minor languages spoken people are also found in the district which includes Meitei Manipuri, Bishnupriya Manipuri, Dimasa and Rongmei-Naga. There are also few Mizo, Kuki and Khasi people who form microscopic minority. As there are different communities which have been following their own culture, customs and tradition from long years back has accumulated with the people of this district. It has been found that Manipuri community is a larger community which is set up in different parts of Barak valley. In Cachar district too they reside in a large group of areas. Here, the researcher has chosen Manipuri community as her area of study. In the very study she tried to know the role of Manipuri women in their family as well as society, their educational and economic status, comparing their educational status and attitude towards education with other community, problems faced by Manipuri women in getting education. According to Manipuri Development Council, 2013 there are approximately two lakh Manipuris living in Cachar district. But majority of Manipuri people are living in four educational blocks i.e. Udharbond, Sonai, Lakhipur and Narsingpur of the district. The investigator has purposively selected only these four blocks which are thickly populated by Manipuri people.

2.2. Women education:

It is very difficult to understand why in this country so much difference is made between men and women, whereas the Vedanta declares that one and the same Self is present in all beings. Writing down Smritis etc., and binding them by hard rules, the men have turned the women into mere manufacturing machines. In the period of degradation, when the priests made the others incompetent to study the Vedas, they deprived the women also of all their rights. All nations have attained greatness by paying proper respect to women. That county and that nation which do not respect women have never become great. Women have many and grave problems, but none that cannot be solved by that magic word: education. Women must be put in a position to solve their own problems in their own way. Our Indian women are as capable of doing it as any in the world (Avinashilingam, 2002).

It is only through education of women that we can expect happier family life, better hygienic condition, greater reduction in fertility rate, increased production and economic prosperity. In order to achieve full development of our human resources, the improvement of homes and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of infancy, the education of women has been of greater importance than that of man. It is known that education of boy is the education of one person, but education of girls is the education of the entire family. If one wants to have an educated generation, one must take care of women and educate them properly.

The main aim of women's education today is therefore two fold. The first is that of making a woman capable of being a good wife, mother and citizen by not only teaching her to be literate but educated enough to fulfill these responsibilities with intelligence and knowledge. Secondly, a woman should be inculcated to possess an independent outlook on life with a slant on careers and economic independence if necessary. However there are still large numbers of women who are illiterate. One of the main reasons for this existence of mass ignorance is that the population of India is so large and villagers are so scattered that it is difficult to cover the whole country with mass literacy. In this respect much stress is now being laid on primary education where girls are given ample scope to attend schools, which are being set up in all parts of the country. Thus a number of progressive changes have been made and plans have

been initiated as rapidly as possible to further the education of women and girls. Indeed basic education at the primary and middle school level has attained an overall positive status to remove mass illiteracy from India. The Government of India has also established a National Institute of Basic Education, which will not only encourage research but train higher personnel. The Kasturba Memorial Trust Schools which have been opened from the memorial fund collected in memory of Mahatma Gandhi's wife, have concentrated on training girls to make them eligible to become Gram Sevikas and Mukhya Sevikas or village level teachers and social workers. A new feature in education will propose introduction of junior technical schools which will be a great boon to girls, as they will concentrate on craft courses. Neither will the physique nor the manners of future pupils be neglected.

2.3. Need and importance of women education:

Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources but improves the quality of life at home and outside of. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl children but also provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population. Female education is very important and all the impediments must be removed from the way of their education. Without educating the women of the country we can't hope for a developed nation. Women plays a vital role in the all-round progress of a country. Women have three major roles to perform in the course of their life. They have to discharge their duties as good daughters, good wives and good mothers. Apart from these important duties they have to prove themselves as good citizens of a free democracy. Women's education should be such as it may enable them to discharge their duties in a proper way. From education they become fully matured in all the fields of life. Educated women are well aware of their duties and rights. They can contribute in the development of the country in the same way as men do.

It is only through education of women that we can expect happier family life, better hygienic condition, increased production and economic prosperity. It is known that education of a boy is the education of one person, but education of a girl is the

education of the entire family. If one wants to have an educated generation, one must take care of women and educate them properly. Education is considered to be the key for job opportunities and social equality. It is a major instrument for raising the status of women. In a developed society women's education is as necessary as that of men; but in the developing and underdeveloped societies it has become more so for several socio-economic reasons. As far as refinement of generation is concerned women's education has been considered to be more necessary. If a woman is educated she can benefit the children with her enlightenment and learning experiences. Formal and functional education is needed for women because:-

1. It would empower them to know and ask for their rights to education, health, shelter, food, clothing etc.
2. It would empower them to fight against every form of discrimination against their folk, assert themselves about their right to equal treatment with their men counterpart as bonafied citizens of their nation
3. It would enable the women to take decisions and accept responsibilities for taking such decisions concerning themselves.
4. It would give economic power to the women and thereby enable them to contribute their quota to the economic growth of the nation.
5. It would help women to reduce maternal and infant mortality through improved nutrition, improved child rearing practice, health care and prevention against killer diseases.
6. It would avail women with the opportunity of participating keenly in the world of sophisticated politics and governance as enlightened citizens.

Asserting the significance of women's education, the University Education Commission, 1948-49 pointed out "There cannot be educated people without educated women. If general education had to be limited to man or to women, that opportunity should be given to women, for them, it would most surely be passed on to the next generation". The father of nation Mahatma Gandhi said "You educate a man, you educate an individual; educate a woman, you educate a family".

Taking about the importance of education among the women, Roy (2005) writes "An educated woman with a secure and dignified job can set an example for others in the community and motivate them to emulate her." An educated and enlightened mother not only enjoys a higher status in the family and neighborhood but also can assert herself in resisting many impositions by her husband and in-laws, she can work out a healthy conjugal relationship etc. So, education is a sole instrument that provides women with an access to economic and technological resources and enable them to reap the benefits of development. Economic independence would provide them with empowerment, which is the process of gaining control over her life, and help an attitudinal change to command a producer's role in the society. So, there is a direct relationship between education and gender equality.

The Kothari Commission, (1964-66) remarked, "For full development of human resources, the improvement of human beings and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of infancy, the education of women is of great importance than that of men".

Education should concern itself with the place that women are likely to occupy in public life. There is a belief that if we do not give respect to women in our homes, our homes will be destroyed. It is also thought that since we neglected our women folk, our country remained backward and it will continue to remain if we do not pay attention on this aspect. Accordingly we are to give due place to women in our society and as a logical consequence, they must be given exactly the same education as men so that they can equalize themselves with the men folk.

After independence social and economic justice has progressed in the country and so has the education of women. The social reform movements like Arya Samaj and Brahma Samaj and the Congress movement had created a situation in which education of women received a lot of attention even before independence. As a result of private and governmental efforts, education among women has registered distinct progress.

According to Anderson (1956), "General education is concerned with the development of a balanced individual who can take this place as a well-adjusted person in society and who can approach with intelligence the social and cultural problems of his day". The true future of education is to build an integrated

enlightened personality and ensure a simultaneous harmonious growth of body, mind senses and spirit.

The problems of education of girls and women have acquired a new significance since the attainment of independence. Education panels of the planning commission at its meeting held in July 1957 recommended that: "A suitable committee should be appointed to go into the various aspects of the questions relating to the nature of education for girls at the elementary, secondary and adults stages and to examine whether the present system was helping them to lead a happier and more useful life"

Gandhiji observed in 'True Education', "The question of the education of children cannot be solved unless efforts are made simultaneously to solve the women's education. And I have no hesitation in saying that as long as we do not have real mother teachers who can successfully impart true education to our children they will remain uneducated even though they may be going to schools". Dr. Radhakrishnan has very emphatically stated, "Women are human beings and have as much right to full development as men have. The position of women in any society is a true index of its cultural and spiritual level."

The Education Commission 1964-66 wrote, "In the modern world the role of the women goes much beyond the home and the bringing up of children. She is now adopting a career of her own and sharing equally with man, the responsibility for the development of society in all its aspects. This is the direction in which we shall have to move. In the struggle for freedom, Indian women fought side by side with men. This equal opportunity will have to continue in the fight against hunger, poverty, ignorance and ill health". The Resolution on the National Policy on Education (1968) stressed the importance of women education in these words, "The education of girls should receive emphasis not only on grounds of social justice but also because it accelerates social transformation".

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1967) took note of the great contribution made by women to social, political, economic and cultural life and the part they play in the family and particularly in the rearing of children and recommended the following in Article 9 of the Declaration:

All appropriate measures shall be taken to ensure to girls and women, married or unmarried, equal rights with men in education at all levels and in particular.

2.4. Objectives of women education:

The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) for women's education has formulated the following objectives of women's education (Ravi, 2015):

1. To promote the education and the development of girls.
2. To undertake and promote research in the area of girl's education and development.
3. To develop and apply concepts and methods of women's studies.
4. To suitably intervene in the area of policy planning, curriculum and teacher education for removing gender bias and disparities.
5. To act as a catalyst in promoting innovations and programmes of girls' education in the country.
6. To act as a national resource centre on girls' education and development.
7. To provide consultancy services in the areas of girls' education and development.

2.5. Women education in India –A historical background:

During the Vedic period, education was institutionalized and there were very few centers of proper education known as 'Gurukul' or ashram. Each Gurukul was centered and structured around the scholarship and specialization of a distinguished Rishi. These were mostly single teacher school which functions rather unofficially (Ram, 2004). In Buddhist period, learning was promoted by the numerous monasteries and the children learned their lessons from the monks and nuns. The Buddhist monasteries were known as Viharas. These Viharas turned into great educational centres. During the Medieval period, religion was a primary factor of a

society. Among the Muslims, education was instituted on large scale through 'Madrassas' and 'Maktabs' (Pawar, 2004). Maktabs were the elementary schools and Madrassas were the higher institutions of learning. In Hindu society, educational institutions like the Pathsalas, the Tols and the Parishads were developed. The Pathsalas were the elementary schools, Tols were the higher institutions of learning and the Parishads were assemblies of the erudite, mainly of the Brahmins. In olden days women education was encouraged in India. As girls were also eligible for the study of Vedas they had to undergo the Upanayana ceremony of Vedic initiation. There were many women scholars devoted to higher studies.

During the period of 200 B.C. - 1200 A.D. female education received a great setback due to the deterioration of the religious status of women and the lowering of the marriage age. The girls gradually lost the privilege of Upanayana and were considered unfit to recite Vedic mantras or perform Vedic sacrifices. Girls in rich, aristocratic and royal families, however, continued to be given fairly good education. Percentage of literacy among women went down very rapidly during the Muslim rule. Society as a whole became prejudiced against female education.

Strong discrimination against the education of women through schools prevailed among the people during the British rule. The East India Company repudiated to take any action for the education of women. The earliest modern school for girls was started under the auspices of missions, but such efforts were not effective. An impressive lead was given by liberal Englishmen like David Hare who established a school for girls in Calcutta in 1820 and conducted it at his own expense. J.E.D. Bethune also set a similar example. Touched by the pioneer work done by missionaries and philanthropic Englishmen, several great Indians lent their support to the opening of girl's schools and breaking down the traditional popular resistances against women education. Among them Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Pundit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar played an important role. Women's education was recognized as a branch of a state system of education for the first time by the Despatch of 1854. According to the recommendation of Education Commission of 1882, some schools for women were opened with Government Grants. By 1882, there were 2,600 primary schools, 81 secondary schools, 15 training institutions and one college for the education of girls. In 1891-92 more than 3 lakhs girls took admission

in primary school but out of them only 2 percent girls studied in the secondary level (Mishra, 2002).

In the beginning of the twentieth century, Lord Curzon also evinced a keen interest in women's education. During 1905-21 women's education received much momentum and it made considerable progress (Choudhury, 1996). By 1921-22, there were 19 colleges, 675 secondary schools and 21,956 primary schools for girls. A very significant development of this period was sizeable rise in the age of marriage. This logically increased the educational opportunities for girls and their persistence in schools and colleges. The demand of the educated men themselves to have educated wives gave further encouragement to women education (Biswas & Agarwal, 1986).

In 1946-47, there were 59 Arts and Science colleges in the country (India) for women, 2370 secondary schools, 21,479 primary schools and 4,288 institutions for professional, technical and special education for women. By 1947, a little more than half of the numbers of girls under instruction were studying in mixed school. And in 1947, the number of girls who took admission in primary schools (3,475,165) was 80 percent of the number of total admission. In secondary school 281,000 girls got admitted which was only 7 percent of the total admission. In higher education their admission (23,000) was less than half of 1 percent of the total admission (Mishra, 2002).

After independence, University Education Commission was established in 1948-49 which forwarded many suggestions concerning women education. The most important development in the field of women education was the setting up of a National Committee for Women's Education, which examined the problem of women education comprehensively. As a result of the recommendations of this committee, a National Council for the Education of Women was set up in 1959. State Councils have also been established in the states and Union Territories.

Regarding the enrolment of students in India, in 1901 only 12 girls were enrolled in primary schools for every 100 boys, in 1950-51 the enrolment went up to 39 and in 1965-66 it was around 57 girls for every 100 boys. For secondary levels, in 1901 only 4 girls were enrolled for every 100 boys, in 1950-51, it went upto 16 and in 1965-66, it went upto 30. For college level, it was only 11 girls for every 100 boys in 1950-51 and it went upto 25 girls in 1965-66. In spite of all the plans made for

promoting women's education, for every 100 boys there were 77 girls in primary schools, 68 girls in middle schools, 64 girls in secondary schools and 69 girls in different stages of higher education in 1999-2000. There is still a big gap even now between enrolment of girls and that of boys.

2.6. Different commissions and committees on women education:

A good advancement has been made in the sphere of women education but this progress is not very heartening keeping in view the high number of women in the country. However, during the last fifty years India has produced great women in different walks of life, science, literatures, and various disciplines of studies in the universities and in political life of the country. These great women are similar to any woman in any part of the world in their specific spheres concerned. Various Committees and Commissions on education appointed by the Government have emphasized in unique need and nature of women education. Evidently, the curriculum for girls should not be the same as that for boys. Happily the educationists in our country are conscious of this due necessity. So, suitable recommendations have been made by the various Commissions on education for reforms of women education. They are as follows:

Charter Act of 1813:

In Charter Act of 1813, a provision was made in the field of education for men, while female education suffered setbacks through a strict policy of social and religious neutrality (Sharma, 2004). The initiations taken by the Christian missionaries for setting up the first institution for women education in 1810 in Bengal region was followed by a large scale effort on the part of the social reformers who gave over-riding priority to women's education as the instrument of social regeneration and freedom from veil customs.

Wood's Dispatch (1854):

Wood's Dispatch (1854) approved educational development program (Pandey, 2007). It was the starting point of women education. It is revealed that non-official efforts

(Missionaries or Indians) had nursed the women education satisfactorily, but didn't get adequate support from the state. By the 18th century, the education of women suffered so much that in the beginning of 19th century hardly 2% women got education. In 19th century, some socio-religious bodies such as Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission and American, Danish, German and British Missionary Societies did beneficial job to improve the status of women and women education in Indian society. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was social luminary and dedicated themselves to improve the status of women with the cooperation of British Government (Pandey, 2007). Their efforts got success in terms of ban on child marriage and sati custom and promoting education and widow marriages.

In 1878, the University of Calcutta became one of the first of the universities to admit women graduates to its academic degree programmes (Wikipedia, 2014). It was the time of 1881, when Indian women got admission in college (Walia, 2007). It was the glorious moment in Indian history in 1883 when 2 (two) Indian women got their 1st graduate degree. Teaching was the first career to be opened for women and medicines was the next (Walia, 2007). The period of 1902-1992 showed a marked progress at all stages of women education. In 1916, the first Medical College for Women, Lady Hardinge College, in Delhi was established. By the efforts of D.K. Karve, first Women University was established in Bombay in the same year named Shrimati Nathibai Damodar Thackersay Women's University. In 1917, the organization of the Women's Indian Association with Ms Annie Basant as its president was established with the primary object of spreading education among women (Walia, 2007). The literacy rate for women was only 6% as against 22.6% for men in 1941 (Pandey, 2007).

The University Education Commission (1948-49):

The University Education Commission set up by the Government of India declared, "There cannot be an educated people without educated women. If general education had to be limited to men or to women, that opportunity should be given to women, for then, it would most surely be passed on to the next generation". However, the observations of the Commission given below reveal that an effort was made to emphasize the need for educating women for their roles in the family as well as

society. “The greatest profession of women is, and probably will continue to be, that of home maker. Yet her world should not be limited to that one relationship. There are varied conditions, which may properly lead a woman to seek for fulfillment of her life in other fields. Among the greater contributions to human welfare have been some men who determine to forego home and family in order to commit themselves wholly to the chosen work of their lives. Women should have the same opportunity. The place of wife and mother offers opportunity for exercise of the higher qualities and skills, yet for a woman to decide that she can best fulfill her aims by living a single life should not put her under a social disability. Sometimes also, there is a period before marriage during which a young woman can do useful work, such as teaching or nursing. Sometimes, the loss of a husband makes her the bread winner for the family. When children are grown, there often remain ten to twenty five years of vigorous life in which a woman may wish to have a useful career. Sometimes, husband and wife wish to share a common occupation through the years. Sometimes with women, as with men, the needs of home and family leave time for useful and interesting occupations. For all such circumstances educational opportunities should be available.”

The recommendations of the University Education Commission were in consonance with its view of what education for women should mean and aim at. These recommendations were:

1. There should be no curtailment in educational opportunities for women;
2. There should be intelligent educational guidance, by qualified men and women, to help women to get a clearer view of their real educational interest, to the end what they shall not try to imitate men, but shall desire as good education as men get. Women’s and men’s education should have many elements in common, but should not in general be identical in all respects, as is usually the case today.
3. Women students in general should be helped to see their normal places in normal society, both as citizens as well as women and to prepare for it. The college programme should be so designed according to the needs of the women.

4. Through educational counsel and by example the prevailing prejudices against study of home economics and home management should be overcome.
5. The college education may be co-educational. The women's college commonly has poorer buildings, poorer equipment, and less able teacher".

Durgabai Deshmukh Committee on Education of women (1959):

This Committee offered comprehensive suggestions and became a policy document guiding the subsequent five year plans formation on women education. The committee was of the view that the existing gap between boy and girl education should be closed. It also suggested that national and state level council for women education should be set up. The recommendations of this committee implemented immediately and formed councils for women education at national and state levels which are facilitating and evaluating the output of efforts done in this field.

Smt Hansa Mehta Committee (1962-64):

Smt Hansa Mehta Committee (1962-64) was appointed by the NCWE (National Council of Women's Education) Government of India (1964) suggested co-education be adopted as the general pattern at the elementary stage and vigorous propaganda was made in its favour. As a traditional measure separate primary and middle schools could be provided where necessary. At the secondary level, it was left to the choice of the management and parents to evolve separate institutions for girls. Women teachers, it was recommended, should be inducted in boys' schools to encourage girls to join these institutions. The Committee recommended common curricula for boys and girls at the elementary stage, with home science as a common core subject for boys and girls at the middle stage. This Committee made several recommendations concerning provision of educational facilities for girls and for curriculum at different levels for education. The NCWE appointed another Committee under the chairmanship of M. Bhaktavatsalam in 1963 to investigate the cause for lack of public supports for education of girls' particularly in rural areas and to suggest suitable measures to secure public cooperation. The Committee stated, "In our opinion the strategy for development of education of girls and women will have to take two forms, the first is to emphasize the special programmes recommended by the National Committee on

Women's Education. The second is to give attention to the education of girls at all stages and in all sectors as an integral part of the general programmes for the expansion and improvement of education".

Education Commission of 1964-66:

The Education Commission (1964-66) made the following recommendation on the subject of women's education. In our opinion, the strategy for the development of education of girls and women will have to take two forms. The first is to emphasize the special programme recommended by the National Committee of Women's Education and the second is to give attention to the education of girls in all stages and in all sections as an integral part of the general programmes for the development and improvement of education. As suggested by the National Committee on Women's Education (1958-59) under the Chairmanship of Smt. Durgabhai Desmukh, action should be taken on the following lines.

(1) The Education of women should be regarded as a major programme in education for some years to come and a bold and unwavering effort should be made to face the difficulty involved and to close the existing gaps between the education of men and women in as short a time as possible.

(2) Special schemes should be prepared for this purpose and the funds required for them should be provided on a priority basis.

(3) Both at the Centre and in the States there should be a special machinery to look after the education of girls and women.

The tenth meeting of the National Council for women's Education held in 1968 recommended that:

i) During the next plan period, there should be special programmes for training of girls for different vocations and occupations.

ii) Education at pre-primary and adult stage would guarantee that the intervening age groups are educated and this would provide full time and part time work to many educated unemployed women.

iii) Education at the secondary stage should be vocationalised with a view to divert the students into different walks of life. More Indian Institutes of

Technology with courses appropriate for girls should be established for post-secondary stage.

iv) The National Institute for Higher Education and Training should train women to positions of high level leadership and responsibility.

v) Industrial training centers should be established in adequate numbers to provide training for women in those fields where women personnel are looked-for.

The National Policy on Education 1968:

The 1968 Education policy aimed to promote national progress, a sense of common citizenship and culture, and to strengthen national integration. It emphasized on the need for a radical restoration of the education system, to improve its quality at stages and laid greater attention to science and technology, to cultivate moral values and a closer relation between education and the life of people.

The policy (1968) emphasized on the importance of women's education. It laid down that education of girls should receive emphasis, not only on grounds of social justice, but also because it accelerates social transformation. With the adoption of 1968 policy, educational facilities expanded to all over the country. The number of schools within the radius of one kilometer, for rural habitants also increased. A common structure of education was accepted all over the country. A common scheme of studies for boys and girls was included.

The National Council for Women's Education which was set up by the Ministry of Education, following one of the main recommendations of the National Committee on Women's Education, at its thirteenth meeting held in 1974 made important recommendations for the education of women, through formal and non-formal channels. Some of which are as follows:

1. Allocation of funds by the Centre for grants to voluntary organizations and institutions for special projects for the improvements of the education of girls and women;
2. Provision of facilities and incentives to increase the enrolment of girls;
3. Condensed courses for teacher training;

4. Encouraging local girls and women to work as teachers in the rural areas, if not trained, after going through the condensed course for teacher training;
5. Provision of part-time and non-formal education as well continuing education, especially for girl's dropping out of schools, and preparing a suitable, curriculum for it, those in need of such education;
6. Establishing women's polytechnics and ITI in rural areas by offering educational programmes related to trades and needs of that region;
7. Provision of teacher's quarters for women, with suitable security, not isolated from the heart of the village or township or provision of twin quarters for women teachers and other women functionaries of that area;
8. Requisition of Nehru Yuva Kendras to cater to the needs of girls and women through their network all over the country in addition to catering to the needs of boys and men.

New Education Policy of 1986:

The New Education policy of 1986 emphasized upon that education would be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. The policy of 1986 also emphasized that the elimination of women's illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their entrance to, and retention in elementary education would receive overriding priority, through provision of special support services, setting of time targets, and effective monitoring. Major emphasis would be laid on women's participation in vocational, technical and professional education at different levels. The policy of non-discrimination would be pursued vigorously to eliminate sex stereotyping in vocational and professional course to promote women's participation in nontraditional occupations, as well as in existing and emergent technologies.

In the context of women's education the New Education Policy (1986) and Programme of Action have made recommendations in connection with the following dimensions.

1. Access to education and quality of learning.
2. Content of education and gender bias.
3. Vocational education.

4. Training of teachers and other educational personnel.

5. Research and development of women's studies.

6. Representation of women in the Educational hierarchy.

7. Empowerment of women.

8 Adult education.

9. Resources and

10. Management.

The recommendations made by the Committee with regard to promote women's education are as follows:-

i) There is a vital link between the easy access to water, fuel and fodder and schooling of girls. These understandings need to be unambiguously reflected in the policy of Government and to be concretized in operational designs.

ii) 'Local Area planning', as envisaged in the Approach to the Eighth five year plan, document, must take into account the above relationship while planning for programmes relating to forestry, drinking water and greening of common lands.

iii) The Department of Education should co-ordinate with the other concerned departments and secures ample resource allocation for the above mentioned programmes based on parameters which point out the status of girl's education in a given habitation.

iv) To achieve the above purpose, planning for educational development of any given region would have to be necessarily conducted at the Block or sub block level.

v) Teachers, Anganwadi workers, village level functionaries of other departments, and representatives of women's groups and community level organizations should play an important role in making micro-level information available to the educational complex for prioritization of action in this regard.

The New Education Policy (1986) and POA (Programme of Action) took into account the gender biases in education and planned for promoting and facilitating women education on equal terms. A substantial effort has been made by the Government in this regard. As a result, the gender gaps in education have narrowed to some extent. Women have entered into non-traditional areas of education. A number of women have gone for technical and professional education. Women's studies have also been promoted in different institutions of higher learning. An analysis of the existing scenario with respect to education from a gender perspective may provide a picture of trends and patterns of women education in India.

Girls' education developed largely through private initiative in the pre independence period and state started taking interest only in the 1880s. Several education commissions and committees set up by the British rulers took cognizance of the need to educate girls and women in the larger interest of the society. After independence several committees and commissions have been set up from time to time on education, some exclusively for women's education, which as we shall notice later, has changed substantially over the last five decades. In every dimension of life, women contributions have been acceptable. They are considered as a strong pillar in every culture. Women play a significant role in the creation of family and making a nation better world (United Nations Report, 1980). Therefore, a nation's development is incomplete without the improvement in the status of women. Women are as valuable as the natural resources in the progress of the country. Though many efforts have been done by Indian Government and socio-reform bodies to improve the status of women at all levels, in spite of all these instances, women have not achieved the deserving status in the society. There is the only way available to empower the women is women education.

Ramamurty Review Committee (1991):

Ramamurty Review Committee (1991) highlighted the need for redistribution of educational opportunities in favour of girls belonging to rural and disadvantaged segments with adequate support services (water, fodder, fuel, child care) and also asked for 50% share for girls in educational resources. Thus, hallmark of the 1980s and 1990s is the growth of more and better information on women coming in through research cum-activist efforts and the rise of women's studies to analyse, generate and

support action (Nayar, 2002). The National Perspectives Plan for Women (1988-2000) recommended women education as the top priority so that women can attain a comparable level of education by 2000.

The Empowerment of Women and Children Committee (2001):

The Empowerment of Women and Children Committee (2001) also focused on equal access to women quality education at all levels and reducing the gender gap in secondary and higher education. Thus, the Indian government has expressed a strong commitment towards education for all, stated in its constitution with in article 21A promising "free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14". The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 has made elementary education a fundamental right for children in the age group of 6-14 whether it is a boy or girl. Now, it has become a legal right on 3rd Sept, 2009, Right to Education Act to get free and compulsory education (Kalita & Anita, 2011). But proper implementation is still in process. This provision will prove a milestone in women education and helpful in bringing up the transition in the women's position in the society.

2.7. Five Year Plan and women education:

In the First Five Year Plan (1951-55) the neglect of women's education was noted with concern as girls constituted only 28% and 18% of the total number of children enrolled in primary and middle stage in 1940-50. The Constitution adopted in 1950, directed the state to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of fourteen by 1960. All boys' institutions were now open to girls. Co-ordination was on the increase and 70% girls were studying in boys institution. Steps were advocated to increase girl's enrolment by motivating parents to send them to co-educational schools. Thus emphasis was laid on the expansion of educational facilities for girls and diversification of secondary education to give it a vocational basis. Rural women were subsumed under the community development programme. Women were considered a welfare category. Moreover, successful implementation and results from the schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan in primary and secondary education, RUSA (Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan) i.e., National Higher Education Mission has been framed on 3rd

October, 2013. It is the flagship scheme of the central government that focuses on State Universities and Institutions through a Central Plan.

However, so far education of women is concerned the First Five Year Plan (1951-1956) envisaged welfare measures for women. To spearhead welfare measures, the CSWB (Central Social Welfare Board) was established in 1953 which symbolizes the welfare approach to women's problems. The CSWB was also reflective of the community development approach, which envisaged for the first time the need for organizing women into Mahila Mandals or Women's Club.

The Second Five Year Plan (1956-1961) was closely related with the overall approach to women's issues. The plan recognized the need for the organization of women as workers. It also perceived the social prejudices/disabilities they suffered. The plan started that woman should be protected against injurious work, should receive maternity benefits and crèches for children. It also suggested speedy implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work and provision for training to enable women to complete for higher jobs. This Plan emphasized the need to provide greater education opportunities to girls.. Shortage of women teachers was seen as an impediment. The Plan recommended besides co-education, separate schools for girls and multiple shifts as an interim measure. The main features of the educational plan were to give more emphasis on basic education (Gandhian model), expand elementary education and diversify secondary education and above all reduce male female disparities in literacy. Special schemes for girls to take up different occupations such as nursing, health visitors, teachers and so on were recommended. In addition to the national extension and community development programmes, establishment of fundamental education centers for training social education organizers were recommended. In 1957-58, a Centrally Sponsored scheme was introduced to accelerate the enrolment of girls in primary schools. States were given assistance for one or more of the following schemes:

1. Free accommodation for women teachers in rural areas
2. Appointment of schools mothers
3. Condensed courses for adult women
4. Stipends for women for teachers training

5. Refresher courses

6. Stipends for high school students to take up teaching

7. Attendance scholarships

8. Exemption from tuition fees

9. Construction of hostels for secondary schools of girls

Third Five Year Plan (1961-1966) pin pointed female education as a major welfare strategy. In social welfare, the largest share was provided for expanding rural welfare services and condensed courses on education. The health programme concentrated mainly on the provision of services for maternal and child welfare, health education, nutrition and family planning. It launched important schemes like Bal Sevika training and child care programmes. Subsequent plans supported these measures and also continued incentives such a free text books and scholarships for girls. School enrolments continued to show wide male female disparities as also the gaps in male female literacy rates. This plan is to expand facilities for girls at various stages. Provision was also made to fund some special schemes to support the general programmes of girl's education. Keeping in view, the needs of the out of school girls and large number of women who had missed schooling the CSWB (Central Social Welfare Board) implemented the Scheme of Condensed Courses for Adult Women. More than 600 courses were sanctioned for adult women during the Third Plan.

The Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) emphasized on women's education and followed the basic policy to improve women's welfare within the unit of family.. During the Fourth Five Year Plan (69-74) sustained efforts were made to extend education of girls and improve their enrolments at stages. By the end of the Fourth Plan, there were 64.10 million children enrolled at the primary stage of whom 24.50 million were girls. At the upper primary level, girls accounted for 4.6 million of the total 15.30 million students on rolls. Girls' enrolment ratio of the relevant age group was 66 in Classes I-V and only 22 in Classes VI-VIII.

In the Fifth Five Year Plan very high priority was given to free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 year in pursuance of the Constitutional Directive. To that effect very state introduced free education for children in the age group 6-11 years. The progress was not uniform in all states. It was

realized that the target of UPE (Universal Primary Education) cannot be achieved without bringing back the drop-out especially in the case of girls. This Plan entrusted to offer equality of opportunities as a part of overall plan of ensuring social justice and improving the quality of education imparted. To promote enrollment and retention in schools in backward areas and among under privileged sections of the population, in addition to the incentives like distribution of text books, mid-day meals, etc., girls were to be given uniforms and attendance scholarships. In spite of these schemes, it was noticed that insufficient number of women teachers resulted in low enrollment of girls. To remove these bottlenecks, scholarships were given to local girls to complete their education and training leading to a teaching career. Besides, condensed and correspondence courses were organized for the less educated women. Emphasis was also laid on the need for orientation of the curriculum to meet the special needs of girls.

A landmark in ***the Sixth Five Year plan (1980-1985)*** was the inclusion of women's education as one of the major programmes under Women and Development which was an outcome of the publication of the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India. The programmes for universalisation of elementary education were specially directed towards higher enrolment and retention of girls in schools. Women teachers where necessary, were to be appointed in rural areas to encourage girl's education. Science teaching in girls' schools colleges had to be strengthened to achieve greater participation of women in science and technology. Stream limning the admission policies to promote greater enrolment of women in engineering, electronics agriculture and veterinary, fishery and forestry courses was stresses. For boosting the education of women belonging to backward classes, the number of girls' hostels was to be increased. Instead of adding more separate women's polytechnics, which were developed as multipurpose institutions for imparting training in arts, crafts, etc., co-educational institutions were encouraged as far as possible. The adult education programme too received a fillip. The Sixth Five Year Plans (1980-85) stressed upon women's role in development for the first time and started seeing women as special target groups for removal of poverty and unemployment. Special incentives were given to the states to promote female literacy and enrolments. The role of women in agriculture and development and village level organizations received attention. The major thrust of the Sixth Plan was on economic upliftment of women. The Sixth Five-

Year Plan stated that the programme of UEE (Universalization of Elementary Education) would be specially directed toward higher enrolment and retention of girls in schools. Seen as a related area of concern, expansion of functional literacy programme especially in low female literacy areas was envisaged. Special non formal education programmes for girls were started. Vigorous efforts were made to improve girls enrolment in the nine educationally backward states, through centrally sponsored schemes, such as 90% subsidy for non-formal education centers exclusively for girls, appointment of women teacher in primary schools and awards to states for excellent performance in primary education of girls and female literacy. During the Sixth Plan, a large number of measures were undertaken to alleviate the conditions of the poverty groups especially those residing in rural areas. Women were recognized as a special target group for removal of poverty and unemployment. Women's role in agriculture and the need for their participation in village level organization was focused upon. This was the time when the major national rural development programme was launched. IRDP (The Integrated Rural Development Programme), which was started in 1978-79, soon saw the need to treat women with special consideration as often the benefits of the various IRDP schemes were bended by males. In 1981, DWCRA (Development of Women and Child in Rural Areas) were launched as a sub scheme of the IRDP. DWCRA organizes women's groups called Mahila Mandals for collective action to know and demand their rights and dues from the society.

The Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-1990) envisages restructuring of the educational programmes and modifications of school curricula to eliminate gender bias. Enrolment of girls in elementary, secondary and higher education courses, formal as well as non-formal, has been accorded high priority. Efforts are to be made to enroll and retain girls in schools, especially in rural areas, and also to enroll children belonging to scheduled castes, schedule tribes, and other weaker sections. Teacher training programmes are to receive priority. This Plan operationalised the concern for equity and empowerment articulated by the International Decade for Women. The plan envisaged on integrated multi-disciplinary approach to women's development comprising education, health nutrition, child services, employment, legal awareness etc. Women specific programmes implemented by Department of Women and Child Development are geared towards-

1. Strengthening and improving women's work and employment in agriculture, animal husbandry, dairy farming, fisheries, handlooms, handicrafts, sericulture and Khadi and village industries,
2. Economic rehabilitation of women from the weaker sections of society through training and employment,
3. Better employment avenues for women to bring them into the mainstream of national development,
4. Provision of short stay homes for women in difficulties, together with support services of counseling medical care, guidance and treatment and development of skills.
5. Provision of prevention and rehabilitative services to women and children who are victims of atrocities and exploitation.

The Eight Five Year Plan (1990-95) emphasized the need for human development, of which human resource development is a necessary pre-requisite. Education is the catalytic factor, which leads to human resource development.UEE (Universalization of Elementary Education) eradication of illiteracy in the age group 15-35 years and strengthening of vocational education as to relate it to the emerging needs in the urban and rural settings were the major thrust areas of the Eighth Plan. The need for according the highest priority to UEE is, therefore well-established. Within the overall school- age population, the focus would be on girls, who account for two- thirds of the target, and among adults the focus would be on women's literacy which has a beneficial impact on children's literacy as well as other national objectives like population control and family welfare. However, special attention would be paid to increase retention, improvement of quality, specification of MLL (Minimum Levels of Learning) and their attainment by the learners. With regards to literacy, the emphasis would be on sustainability of literacy skills gained and on the achievement of goals of remediation, continuation and application of skills to actual living and working conditions.

The Ninth Five Year Plan started in the year (1997-2002) with the adoption of WCP (Women's Component Plan). Some of the special incentives were the launching of the Swa-Shakti to create an enabling environment for empowerment of

women through setting up of self-reliant or self-help groups. Shree Shakti Puraskars were introduced for the first time to honour 5% distinguish women annually for their outstanding contribution to the upliftment and empowerment of women in 1999, setting up of a task force on women under the chairmanship of Shri. K.C.Pant, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission to review the existing women specific and women related legislation and suggest enactment of new legislation or amendments, introduction of gender budgeting, celebration of the year 2001 as Women Empowerment Year, introduction of Bill on Domestic Violence against Women (Prevention) were some of the important incentives taken for the upliftment of women. In this plan education of girls and women's empowerment are seen as the drive of national development and an important yardstick of human development within the framework of human rights and human dignity. Special strategies have been listed under various heads in the Plan document such as in the sections on Education, Empowerment of Women and development of Children.

The Tenth Five Year Plan was formulated in the year (2002-2007). Its main objective was to consolidate the progress made under female education and carry forward for the set goal "Education for Women's Equality" as advocated by the NPE (1986) revised in (1992) by reducing the gaps at the secondary and higher educational levels. To encourage girl's education will be made free for girls up to the college level. In order to encourage women to participate in science and technology activities special measures were taken to train women in areas where they have special skills like Communication and Information Technology, and also to cover the gap in disseminating and reaching the technologies to rural women for their benefit were designed.

The Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) gave emphasis upon women education; some of its main objectives were to raise the sex ratio, MS (Mahila Samakhya), an externally aided project. The programme endeavors to create an environment for women to learn at their own pace, set their own priorities, and seek knowledge and information to make informed choices.

The Twelfth Five Year Plan began from the year 2012 and will end up in the year 2017. It is still going on processing and covers almost all the limitations that could not be fulfilled in the 11^{th} five year plan Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan

i.e. National Higher Education Mission is the most important step taken over in the field of higher education. Here, higher education of girls has achieved the highest importance. To promote gender equality, women component plans gender budgeting, enrolment of students in higher educational institutions i.e. additional enrolment capacity of 10 million students including 1 million in open and distance learning would be created by the end of twelfth plan. Much more emphasis is given upon research facilities including various policies and programmes for women and girls.

The condition of women education was not at all satisfactory at the time of Independence. Women had to face lots of difficulties and problems in facing education due to the existing social prejudices prevalent in the society, but as time moved there are improvements seen in the conditions of women due to the tireless efforts of the government and renowned scholars who wanted to bring change and progress in the society by making the womenfolk educated. Although there are lots of progresses seen at present still all the women are not fully efficient and skilled to compete others at various fields, there is a lot more to improve and advance in the coming years. For solving the problems of education of women much more research should be conducted in this area as there is dearth of researches in this field. The committees and commissions framed by the government should not only remain in paper but work effectively for the progress of women education.

2.8. Policy initiatives taken by Government to promote women education:

Mahila Samakhya (April, 1989)

The scheme focuses on awareness of the need to educate the children, especially girls at village level, which has resulted of girls in schools. It was started with Dutch assistance in 1989 but government is funding since 2005-06 to get the NPE goals. The budgetary allocation for the scheme for 2007-08 was Rs.34.00 crores (Union Budget, 2007-08).

National Programme of Mid-Day Meal Scheme (Aug, 1995)

This scheme enhances enrolment, retention and participation of children in primary schools and take care of their nutritional status through providing mid day meal

during school timings. Rs. 8000 crore was provided for this scheme in the budget Sessions of 2009-10. Since April 1, 2008, it covers all children studying in governments, government-aided, local body, primary and upper primary schools across the country. 11.74 crore (2008-09) and 11.77 crore (2009-10) children were to be benefited under the scheme. During 2010-11, 11.36 crore children (7-97 crore children in primary and 3-39 crore children in upper primary level) had been covered in 12.63 lakhs institutions. During 2011-12, total coverage of children against enrollment was 10.52 crore (primary-7.71 crore and upper primary 3.36 crore children.). During 2012-13, 10.68 crore children (elementary level) had been covered in 12.12 lakh schools 10.45 crore children were covered in 11.58 lakh schools during 2013-14 (Mid Day Meal Scheme, 2014).

Balika Samridhi Yojana (Oct, 1997)

This scheme was started by Child and Women Development Ministry to provide education to girls. Girls get scholarship by going to school. Every year 12 lakh girls are benefited from the scheme. It is a centrally sponsored scheme. It aims at to change negative family and community attitudes towards the girl child at birth and towards her mother. This scheme is being executed through Zila Panchayats/ District Rural Development Agencies/ District Women Development Agencies or other District Level Nodal Agencies indicated by State Govt. and operated through Gram Panchayat/ Municipality. It improves enrolment and retention of girl children in schools. It covers both rural and urban areas in all districts in India. In 2004-05, amount released by Government of India was 63.29 lakh and 2337 beneficiaries were covered (Balika Samridhi Yojana, 2007).

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Nov, 2000)

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is implemented to address the needs of children in the age group of 6-14 years and has a special focus on girls' education and children with special needs with computer education. It includes provisions for providing basic facilities in schools to remove education barriers. The expenditure on the programme is shared by central government (85%) and the state governments (15%). It has been proved milestone in the history of Indian education system and girls' enrollment ratio is increased. Selected Educational Statistics (2007-08) revealed that gross enrollment ratio for girls up to upper primary level (I-VIII) for 2007-08 was 98.02.

National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (July, 2003)

NPEGEL (National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level) is an integral component of SSA and provides additional support to education for underprivileged/ disadvantaged girls at elementary level and gives stress upon the relevance and quality of girls' education for their empowerment. The scheme is being implemented in EBBs (Educationally Backwards Blocks) where the level of rural female literacy is less than the national average and the gender gap is above the national average; in blocks of districts which are not covered under EBBs but are having at least 5% SC/ST population and where SC/ST female literacy is below 10%; and also is some selected urban slums. About 3272 educationally backward blocks are covered under the scheme in the 24 states. In 2009, girls enrolled in NPEGEL blocks in primary schools and Madarsaa was 36,51,294 and in upper primary schools was 13,95,868 .Under NPEGEL around 35,254 model cluster schools have been opened, 25,537 remedial teaching provided to 9.67 lakh girls, bridge courses are covering 1.53 lakh girls including additional incentives like uniforms etc. to about 71.46 lakh girls (upto 31st December, 2007). An outlay of Rs.708.44 crore was approved under NPEGEL for 2007-08 (Eleventh Five Year Plan, 2007-12).

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (July, 2004)

KGBV (.Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya) scheme ensures easy access and quality education to the girls of disadvantaged groups of society by setting up residential schools with boarding facilities at elementary level. This programme provides for development of a model school in every cluster with more intense community mobilization and supervision of girls enrolment in schools. In KGBV, 75% enrolments are reserved for girls from the target group and 25% for below poverty line category. This scheme is in coordination with SSA, NPEGEL and MS. According to a report of KGBV Evaluation (2013), in KGBV, sanctioned units are 3609 and operational is 3573.99% units are targeted. Total enrolled was 349037 and targeted enrolment was 370412. It shares 94-2% of girls' enrollment.

KIshori Shakti Yojana (Jan, 2007)

KSY has two divisions- Girl to Girl approach and Balika Mandal Yojana. This scheme is started by government to provide vocational training to 15-18 age groups of

girls. This scheme is specially has been made below poverty line people whose annual income is less than Rs. 6700 and to take care of health, nutrition, education and training of the girls (Kishori Shakti Yojana, 2007). It aimed at required literacy and innumeracy skills through the non-formal stream of education and to train and equip the adolescent girls to improve/upgrade home-based and vocational skills.

2.9. Women in 21st century:

21st Century is the century of change.21st Century is the century where science and technology has greatly influenced each and every aspect of human life. Due to the changes in the field of science and technology there has been constant advancement in lifestyle, education, communication, medical, agriculture, nuclear power, etc. There have been very great changes in women's lives in the past few decades. With such change there has also been a great change in the mindset of the society. This change in the mindset and thinking brings a change in the role and function of women towards the society. Now women are no more restricted to cooking, washing clothes, doing household works and looking after their children and family. Today women is leading in every field and society whether it be sports, commerce and industry, education, health, politics, technology, navy, army, agriculture etc. Due to the advancement in the field of science and technology and the active involvement of women in it we have been able to overcome the evils of our society which were prevalent in our religion, caste and territory and that posed a threat to the world peace. India is a developing country in which women has become self-dependent, good in managing and making a balance between her family responsibilities and outside world and has become an earning member of the family and a responsible citizen of the society. Women are an integral part of human society. Despite holding such an important and unquestionable position, role of women has been defined by men over millennia. Our Vedas tell us that women held an important place in ancient culture. No ritual was ever complete without the presence of a woman by her man's side. Women today face many challenges and will face newer ones in future. The women will have to polish their existing skill of wealth creation and time management to deal with the challenges of 21st century. The Indian Constitution grants women equal rights with men, but strong patriarchal traditions that exists in India, manipulates their

shaped lives. In many places of the country, the birth of a girl child has never been treated as a joyous event where son is more preferred as he is considered as an asset to the financial security of the parents. In every society people as male and as female are expected to make some exclusive role performance. This role internalization is done through the process of gender socialization. Moreover women do not view themselves as autonomous being due to their cultural socialization. In most Indian families, a daughter is viewed as a liability, and she is conditioned to believe that she is inferior and subordinate to men. Sons are idolized and celebrated. Though the Indian Constitution prohibited any kind of discrimination on grounds of sex, no serious attempt has been made to promote gender justice. In this context in 1971, The Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) was set up to review the status of women and its report Towards Equality published in 1974, revealed that women of every category and social group face inequality in their respective positions. Women at home and society in general, is a different cup of tea. They are treated as second class citizens. Over a period of time the man started believing that his role was superior to that of the woman as without him there would be no food at the table. Woman's role was taken as for granted. The physically feeble woman was led to believe this lie for centuries.

Today in the 21st century the women across the world are placed at a position of advantage. They are literally on the move. They are paying heed to their inner voice. They are finding their individual and collective voice. Women today need not look anywhere for a perfect role model. They need to look within and listen to their intuition, to take the right action at the right time. All they need right now is to set the right intention, and all their intentions will bear fruits sooner than later. Such is the power of the New Age.

One side of history shows the faith among the Indians about "Shakti" or the "Women Power" to be the strongest energy. The other side of history is colored in black, grey shades of dowry, child marriage, sati and other related mal practices. Hinduism defines woman to be a man's half-batsman. It is clearly indicated and symbolized through "Shiv-Shakti" that a man is incomplete without a woman. Holy Books have preached equality of both sexes. But even in today's ultramodern India the situation remains the same as it was centuries ago. In earlier times, women were prohibited from pursuing education, but today, educated women are exploited at home

and at their workplaces. Physical exploitation of women has its prominence in the rural areas of the country while urban women face mental torture that sometimes even extends to physical torture. Modern educated women have become independent but their responsibilities have increased. A modern Indian woman has to provide income as well as perform household duties to support her family. During marriage a woman's family background and property still plays a major role for acquiring a good alliance. So, the question remains whether have women really acquired independence through education or have become scapegoats to new kinds of exploitation. The answers to these questions are difficult. Education surely makes us aware of our rights but social conditioning makes us believe the unacceptable norms of the society to be our duties. Parents of a girl child educate their daughter and accumulate wealth for finding a "better groom" for her. Still, her income generating capacities are tested by the boy's parents. If she qualifies in terms of property, education, income only then she has a chance to get a good husband. If she lacks in the first and the last category then her chances can be reduced to zero. Even her beauty cannot compensate for it. Beauty of a woman has the last of all priorities during match-making. However, it becomes a potential determinant if a man is highly-educated and earns extremely well. Then, no matter his own looks and age he is considered deserving to get a beautiful, well-earning, and highly educated girl belonging to a well-settled family.

This gender bias is prevalent in workplaces as well. A talented and intelligent woman faces mental abuse from her male seniors who considers her as to be a potential threat to their designation. Physical abuse and exploitation is present to some extent in glamour industries. But predominantly, women face the glass-ceiling effect. But sadly, even in the 21st century India, women struggle to find their right place. Dowry deaths have not become a talk of past nor has woman's secondary status elevated to equal.

2. 10. Status of women in Assam:

Status of women is determined to a great extent in terms of socio-economic indicators such as income, education and skills that opens up opportunities of employment, better health. These indices are also vitally interlinked with the concepts of power and position. At the same time, women must have their say in the decision making process

in the family and in the public sphere, and should access the rights and opportunities provided by the state and society at large. Thus the researcher tried to look into the different aspects that shape up the women status in Assam.

Social aspects:

According to Article 14, 15 and 16 of the Indian Constitution there should not be any discrimination on the basis of sex, race, etc. Women have got full rights of franchise like men, as per Directive Principles of State Policy. Parliament has enacted laws giving equal rights to women in marriage, divorce, inheritance, etc. In spite of the above constitutional provisions women are not getting out of the shackles. Women are still shackled to traditions, customs, age-old superstitions and beliefs, orthodoxy, dogmatism like witch hunting and conservatisms. Purdah system, dowry system, early marriage, widowhood are still a strong part of the life of women in Indian society in general and Assam in particular. They remain suppressed by their husbands, in-laws, and have to spend most of their time in our patriarchal society. In the joint families, they have no freedom, and privacy. A partial lift is visible in the status of women through Social Marriage Act 1954, Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and Succession Act, 1956. In spite of the Marriage Act, rural girls get married below 18 years and the age of marriage signifies the status of women. In India, discrimination against female children has been a matter of concern. In Indian Context, irrespective of the caste, creed, religion and social status, the overall status of women is lower than men and therefore a male child is preferred over a female child. According to 2001 census, in Assam, the ratio was 932 but it has increased tremendously in 2011 with 954 female per 1000 male. (Source: Provisional Population Totals India-Data sheets).

Economic aspects:

Women are generally economically dependent and backward. Economic independence, though very essential is not alone sufficient to give women the strength needed to face the battle. Even economically independent women have to depend on their parents or husbands or relatives for shelter. There are misconceptions that they are not economically contributors. Female work participation is another indicator of women's status in the society. Assam is not the worst among major states of the Indian Union in terms of human development and gender equality but it ranks quite low. Assam has a largely rural agrarian economy, which is characterized by high rate

of work participation of women. Though FWPR (Female Work Participation Rates) is high, women do not benefit economically, they contribute a disproportionate share of the work burden. The work participation rate of the women in Assam is considerably lower than that of men in general except in the primary sector where the rates are in favour of women. The participation of women in the secondary and tertiary sector is lower in Assam.

Educational aspects:

In the field of education, women in Assam are in a better position in comparison to the all-India average. The educational attainment of women in Assam can be analyzed through female literacy rate and female enrolment rate at different stages of education. As per 2001 census the literacy rate of women in Assam is 63.3 percent as against 64.8 per cent in India. While male literacy is 71.3 per cent (India- 75.3 per cent), female literacy stands at 54.61 per cent. According to Census 2011, an encouraging rise from 54.61 per cent in 2001 to 67.27 in 2011, showing a sharp rise of about 31 per cent in female literacy rate. The report has put the overall rate of the State is 73.18 percent. The male female group gap in the literacy rate is still perceptible although it is declining over time and is much below the all-India average. Attainment of a higher literacy rate alone does not make a community educationally advanced. Completion of primary stage of education and continuation of school up to 15 years of age, etc. are taken as indicators of educational attainment. Despite of increased educational attainment of women in Assam the drop-out rate is still increasing. The average drop-out rate for girls has increased from 5.0 percent in 2009-10 to 11.9 percent in 2011-12 at primary level and from 13.5 percent in 2009-10 to 14.3 percent at upper primary level. Some of the main reasons of the drop out or slow progress of the girls' education are as follows:

1. The social conditions such as conservations of the parents' prejudice against the girls' education, early marriages of the girls, utility of girls at home in order to help their mothers in their household chores and to look after their younger siblings when parents are away to work.
2. Economic backwardness of the rural community.
3. Lack of educational facilities.

4. Lack of women teachers in schools especially in rural areas.

Health aspects:

Health is one of the factors that determine the status of women in a society. Looking at the different health indicators of Assam, it can be argued that the status of women suffering from anemia. The causes are lack of nutritional food due to extreme poverty and lack of awareness. As per NHFS-III (National Family Health Survey) the incidence of anemia has been found among 72 Percent of pregnant women within the age group of 15-49 years in Assam. Anaemia is prevalent among women in general and NFHS-III records that 69.9 per cent of ever married (15-49 years) are anaemic. (Source NFHS-III, 2005-2006). In Assam, the institutional deliveries have gone up. In 2006, there were only 66,000 institutional deliveries in Assam while 420,000 institutional deliveries have been recorded in the state in 2013. In 2005-06, institutional deliveries in Assam increased by 39 per cent compared to the year 2001-02 and in 2011-12, institutional deliveries increased by 212 per cent compared to 2005-06 according to the NRHM (National Rural Health Mission) report.

Different Governmental schemes provided for women in Assam:

There are various schemes for the women in Assam which are centrally sponsored as well as state sponsored. These schemes are focused on issues of employment, education, health, etc.

Sawayamsidha: The Swayamsidha (under the ICDS scheme of The Social Welfare Department of Assam) is an integrated scheme for women's empowerment formally launched in 2001 replacing the erstwhile India Mahila Yojana and the Mahila Sambridhi Yojana. The programme is based on the formation of women self help groups and enable the SHGs (Self Help Groups) to take up schemes and programmes for the social and economic empowerment of women. The long term objective of the programme is to bring about all round empowerment of women by ensuring their direct access to and control over resources through a sustained process of mobilization and convergence of all the on-going sartorial programmes of Government and other agencies.

Under the Social Welfare, Department, there are many beneficiaries right from children to women and aged person. Under this scheme, in Assam there are 24

numbers of ICDS (Integrated Child Development Service) project blocks. The various schemes for women have helped women in many ways right from their health in the forms of different nutritional supplements; their economic conditions also improve with the scheme for formation of various SHGs. So far 2400 SHGs have been constituted covering only 58,500 women. About 1173 numbers of SHGs is in nursing stage under this Sawayamsidha scheme. Though the various schemes under Welfare Department have benefitted many, but there are many loopholes in the functioning of this programme. This is due to the irresponsibility of the different blocks that are supposed to look after the various implementation of the Social Welfare Scheme to the beneficiaries. (Devi, 2013).

Swadhar: The Ministry of Women and Child Development under Government of India set up a scheme for women in difficult circumstance known as Swadhar. The objectives of the scheme are the following:

1. To rehabilitate the women socially and economically through education, awareness, skill up gradation and personality development through behavioral training, etc.
2. To provide emotional support and counseling to such women.
3. To provide primary need of shelter, food, clothing and care to the marginalized women/girls living in difficult circumstances who are without any social and economic support. (Devi, 2013).

Janani Suraksha Yojana: This scheme provides safe motherhood intervention with the objective of reducing maternal and neo-natal by promoting institutional delivery among the poor pregnant women. A beneficiary under this scheme should have a JSY(Janani Suraksha Yojana) card along with MCH(Maternal/Child Health) card. Beneficiaries under this scheme are to receive cash assistance during their child delivery. This scheme has been successfully implemented in the state of Assam and therefore the MMR (Measles, Mumps, and Rubella) has remarkably improved. There has been almost 22 times increase in institutional deliveries, but improving safe motherhood still remains a challenge in the state, Assam and still has the highest MMR in the country. This scheme could not be accessed by women from rural areas when ASHA(Accredited Social Health Activist) worker failed to inform the women about the scheme. (Devi, 2013).

Majoni Scheme: In Majoni scheme , at the birth of a girl child in any of governmental hospitals, Rs. 5000 is deposited in the name of the girl child and the girls will get the maturity value of the fixed deposit when she attains the age of 18 years. This scheme is applicable only in two child norm family. Mamoni scheme is a scheme which encourages pregnant women to undergo three ante-natal check-ups that will help in identifying danger signs and offer proper treatment. Under this scheme, every pregnant woman will receive a booklet on tips of safe motherhood and for new born care. The same women will receive an amount of Rs. 1000 in the second and third ante-natal check-ups for expenses related to nutritional foods and supplements. (Devi, 2013).

National Bowari Scheme: The state government launched this scheme and it will be implemented by the State Social Welfare Department. This scheme is mainly to discourage marriage among girls before they turn 20 years of age. Under this scheme, BPL women who tied knot after attaining the age of 20 years will be paid 10,000 by the State government. The beneficiaries have to produce their marriage certificate or affidavit signed and attested by a magistrate to avail the benefit of the scheme. (Devi, 2013).

Baidou and Nabon Scheme: These schemes are made to provide empowerment of unemployed single women and widows. Under the Baidu scheme, one time financial relief of Rs. 10,000 will be given to each unmarried unemployed women of 45 years and above from BPL families. Under Nabou scheme, a onetime financial assistance is provided to unemployed widows. But these schemes are launched in the state by state government in order to provide assistance in the form of cash, there are no data for the beneficiaries of the scheme. (Devi, 2013).

Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana: This scheme is centrally sponsored to provide sustainable income to the rural poor. The programme aims at establishing a large number of micro-enterprises in the rural areas, based upon the potential of the rural poor. This scheme is not meant for women only but 49% is reserved for them. Therefore in a society where male are dominant, women do not get access to it fully. This is due to the lack of awareness of information and proper understanding of the scheme. (Devi, 2013).

Janani Sishu Suraksha Karyakram: This scheme is also a centrally sponsored scheme which was launched on 1st June 2011 to provide completely free and cashless services to pregnant women including both normal deliveries and caesarean operations and sick new born up-to 30 days after birth in governmental health institutions of rural and urban areas.

Though different steps are taken by government but many lacunas are still very strong. It is necessary to develop a positive attitude towards women. While government actions and steps are necessary for removing gender inequalities and injustices and for empowering women, these can become effective only if society's attitudes and outlook towards women changed. Women's empowerment would be achieved only when the attitudes- ways of thinking, feeling and willing- as also ways of behaving of man, women and society towards women become congenial and positive, so as to respect her as a person with an identity of her own, to be treated, as an equally worthy human being. (Devi, 2013).

2.11. About the Manipuris:

Majority of the Manipuris who are living in Cachar are mostly Hindus. A section of the Hindu Manipuri who has retained their regional characteristic intact is known as Meithei. The Manipuris according to tradition were formally animist. But they took up Vaisnavism at the advent of Vaisnavite Movement. So now all the Manipuri Hindus are Vaisnavas. Most of the Manipuri's are cultivators and small traders. Landlords and industrialist amongst them are rare. In schools and colleges and in the Government offices they work as teachers and clerks, sometimes as administrators. Manipuri doctor, lawyers or engineers are not many. The family system amongst the Manipuris is joint family system. Gradually they are adopting individual family system where the parent lives with the younger son and the original house belonging to the parents is allotted to the youngest together with the land.

Language:- The Manipuri speak Manipuri (also called Meiteilon), which falls within the Tibeto-Burman family. They have their own script, language and culture although at present Manipuris can speak Hindi, English etc.

Costume:- Manipuri women can be distinguished by their attire which consists of a piece of striped cloth (phanek) made in cotton and silk and another piece of cloth called innaphi which is worn over the phanek. Manipuri men wear the dhoti or shirt (kurta) and occasionally a sheet (chuddar). Head gear (luhup) used by them is tied in the same manner as that used by the people of the plains of Bengal although it is slightly shorter in length.

Occupation:- The Manipuris are primarily agriculturist; their agricultural produce consists principally of rice, which is their staple food. Weaving is a part of domestic duties of the women folk of the Manipuri.

Festival:- The festivals among the Manipuris can be broadly classified into three categories: those of Hindu origin but incorporated the Meitei traditional customs; those traditionally Meitei; those of Meiteis but influenced by the Hindus. And popular Meitei festivals include: Cheiraoba (New Year), Ningol Chakouba, Lai Haraoba. Among all of them the most fully preserved traditionally Meitei festivals is the Lai Haroaba Festival.

Cheiraoba:- Cheiraoba is the New Year festival, which takes place on the first day of the month Sajibu (March/April) in order to herald a New Year. The Cheiraoba festival was at first known as *Kumgi Lakyen Taiba or Sajibu Lakyen* (Koijam 1991-Sanajaiba edt Past and Present).

Lai Haraoba:- The Lai Haraoba of the Meiteis may be said to represent the epitome of the cultural ethos of the Meitei society. It is also known as *Umang Lai,* the festival represents the worship of traditional deities and ancestors.

Ningol Chakouba**:-** *Ningol Chakouba* is one among the most important traditional/indigenous festival of Meitei community. Ningol are the daughter of a family who is married to another family. It is an outstanding social festival of the Meiteis, when the married women of the family, who were married off to distant places, come to their parental house along with their children and is served with a lavish and extensive meal to enjoy. It is celebrated only once in a year in the month of "*Hiyangei" neenipanba* (November).

Religion:- Sanamahism is the original religion of the Manipuris, which was introduced by king Kiangba. The Manipuris worshipped God Sanamahi and Goddess

Leimaren in their house. They have also many other pantheon-Imoinu, Panthoibi, Hireima, Thangjing, Koubru, Soraren etc. The practice of Hinduism in Manipuri society is of comparatively recent origin though the records of the Brahmin families in Manipur claim in some cases that the founder of the family settled in the valley at so remote a date as the middle of the fifteenth century. They worship Snake God and traditionally in their village most of them hang in front of their houses a small basket which is supposed to contain their household deity.

Food:- Rice is the staple food of the Manipuri. They eat dal, fish, vegetables, and milk and butter.

Culture:- They call themselves "Khatriya" and wear the sacred thread across their chest. They have long been adopting various Hindu customs and becoming Hindu. It is observed that they are orthodox Hindus of the Vaishnava a sect. They are very much particular in observing their social and religious rites. They beautify their forehead with white coloured Chandan Tilak (sandal paste mark).

2.12. Settlement of Manipuris in Cachar district:

The Meeteis have settled in Barak Valley since the time immemorial. The question is arisen when did they first settle down in this valley. The appropriate answer to this question is still in glimpses. An early historical evidence of Manipur recorded that the first settlement took place during the reign of Kaokhomba, a king of Manipur when one Chengel Naral Pangamba migrated to the Barak Valley. (Approx in the 5^{th} century A.D.). (Singh. 1985).

The Meetei settlement in the Cachar Kingdom through royal matrimonial alliance was recorded in about 1720. It was established when Projabati Devi, princess of Garibnivas, king of Manipur (1709-48) got married to Raja Ram Chandra (1760-71) of Cachar Kingdom. (Singh.1985). Then centuries after a limited member of the Meetei families also settled in Khaspur. They were the retinas of the Princess Induprabha, who was married to King Krishna Chandra, a Kachari King of 1806 A.D. (Singh. 1984).

The inter-marriage relation between two royal families of Manipur and Cachar took place which created conditions for improving the good relations between Manipur and Cachar. This royal matrimonial alliance was a distinctive factor to open the gate of Meetei settlement in the Barak Valley.

The historical records reveal that the Manipuri Princess occupied the whole of the plain portion of Cachar by over throwing Govinda Chandra, the then ruler of Cachar in 1818. That was the beginning of Meetei settlement in Cachar. The migration got further impetus during the Burmese aggression of Manipur, which formed the tragic chapter in the history of Manipur as Chahi Taret khunlakpa (seven years devastation, 1819-1826 A.D.). This was the most unfortunate state affairs in the history of Manipur which compelled a good number of Meetei to flee away from Manipur to Cachar.

In this Burmese aggression, about one third of original population either took refugee to jungles and later on fled to Cachar and elsewhere. Among those who settled in Cachar and Sylhet, settled permanently without losing their identity.

In this connection J. B. Bhattacharjee observes, many of the Manipuri refugees who had escaped from their country during the Burmese occupation of Manipur, had permanently settled in Cachar. According to an official report in 1832, a large proportion of the new settlers consists of Manipuris, who aversed to the system of government in their own country have determined not to return to it, and have in consequence, obtained grants of land in Cachar- one of the largest and most flourishing villages, founded on the banks of the Madura Nullah and its inhabitants consisted principally of Manipuris from the Sylhet light infantry who resigned their service and invested their little capital in the soil. A large number of Manipuri villages were established in the eastern part of Cachar. The large colonies of Meeteis were established in the Barak Valley during the fanatical war in Manipur. They escaped several times from their country to Barak Valley through Tongjei Maril, Kangshoop Lambi and Akhui Lambi route. (Singh. 1978).

The Meeteis are the early settlers in Barak Valley during the time of British administration in Cachar. In this context W.W. Hunter mentioned, “The Manipuri’s are, after the Bengali the most numerous and important race inhabiting Cachar, numbering in 1872, in the settled portion of this District. Further he said, “The

Manipuris of Cachar are purely agricultural people and have for many years acted as the pioneers of cultivation in the District. The early settlers obtained grants of jungle land to be held on the basis revenue fee for a thousand days and afterwards liable to assessment".(Hunter,1975).

They used to clear the jungle and cultivate the land until the first demand for revenue was made. When they threw up the holding and took up a fresh place of jungle, the land which they had abandoned after having made it valuable was of course, immediately occupied by Bengalis. The Manipuris however after some time discovered that this practice was not profitable. They now settled permanently on their grants and have founded some of the most flourishing villages in Cachar.

2.13. Records of Manipuri population in Cachar district:

Year of census	Total population	Manipuri population
1851	85,522	10,723
1872	2,05,027	6,039
1881	---------	19,484
1904	---------	42,077
1931	5,70,531	55,550
1961	---------	75,116
1971	17,13,318	72,270
2001	16,95,350	1,00,635

Source: Manipuris in Barak Valley. Historical Exploration of Migration, Settlement and Society, 1817-1891. By- S. Bebita Devi (2011).