CHAPTER-VIII

THE SUMMING UP

In the forgoing chapters, we have discussed some of the aspects of urban life and its impact on Assamese literature in general and fiction in particular based on select works of some authors. We proposed in the beginning of the study that in Assam gradually an urban way of life with advantages and problems affected the modern life and civilization and hence the literature and that has been proved partially as the tension between traditional values and urban values in Assamese friction till the end of our study except a few. Let us sum up the chapters now.

Modern urbanization started in Assam with the beginning of the British rule in Assam. Modern urban centres in Assam grew up as a direct result of colonial rule, as administrative centre with residential quarters of officers, clerks, lawyers etc. A group of outside traders came with them to cater their needs. Some government servants as clerks also came from the neighbouring Bengal. It led to the growth of a heterogeneous population in the major towns of Assam like Guwahati or Shillong. After independence, the job opportunities attracted the educated people to these centres in large number. Gradually an urban middle class with an urban consciousness grew up in Assam. but the long colonial rule marked by exploitation and underdeveloped economy had a direct impact on the economy of the province and its people, as shown in Chapter 1 as the result of a "Prismatic State'. Before that we have discussed in details the definition of urbanisation and urbanism and short history of modern city in India. There are some similarities of other Indian cities with those of Assam due to the impact of the colonial rule. We have discussed Writh's theory of urbanism also in the Urbanism section. In the Second chapter we have seen that due to urbanisation the towns of Assam and their inhabitants acquired some new values or modified the old, traditional values
which help grow an urban culture. The modern higher education and Cotton College, the contact with Calcutta and its culture and many other forces shaped this culture. As to the modernisation of values, it is observed that some new values in the field of social reformation like widow's remarriage, women's liberty and education, the rise of individualism, lack of community feeling, the breakdown of joint families in favour of nuclear families, the rational outlook, the increase political awareness and the negative values like rampant corruption, juvenile delinquency, prostitution, alcoholism, extramarital relationship, disdain for physical labour etc. made inroad into our culture. These were reflected in the literature. But, unlike the Western literature, our life was not the result of an Industrial Revolution.

After the sociological and cultural discussion, we start discussing the main problem of the dissertation. The impact of new urban culture was felt in Assamese literature right from the publication of the Orunodoi, the first monthly journal in Assamese published under the aegis of the American Baptist missionaries. They published many poems and articles relating to the city life like the description of city life experience by two Assamese going to America, the city of Calcutta etc. They also emphasized on articles related to the social reformation like widow remarriage and women's education the Orunodoi gave birth to a group of serious indigenous writers like Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Gunabhiram Barua, Hem chandra Barua etc. who extended a Yeoman's service towards the growth of a modern Assamese language and literature. All of them were inspired by the Bengal’s renaissance of the 19th century. Gunabhiram went a step further by bringing out one journal himself called the Assam Bandhu in matters of the consolidation of language and many new aspects of a modern literature related to modern life. Hem Chandra did the pioneer works in the field like satirical writings. He criticised the morally degraded religious gurus of his time in Bahire Rang Chang bhitori
Kuwabhaturi. The 19th century witnessed the growth of Assamese nationalism through the language question which found expression in all the works of the leading writers of that period. This fight for the establishment of the language led to the consolidation of Assamese language as it was proved to the authority that the Assamese language was not a branch of Bengali. It is mentionworthy that the Assamese literature has a very rich literary background starting from the days of the Oral literature. Chapter IV is devoted to the background studies of traditional Assamese literature, which has a very strong rural base. It offers as a contrast to the urban type of literature. We have shown that though Assamese literature in general and friction in particular have been influenced by the growing urban consciousness in course of time, the root of the Assamese literature lies in the rural life and traditional literature. In different forms of the Oral literature like Bihu songs, Nursery songs, or ballads, the nature of Assam prominently comes out as a major background. All these are related with an agricultural life. The middle age literature of Sankardeva and other Vaisnavite poets also insist on this aspect more. Through their writings the rural life - cultural, social and economical, make appearances. Many modern works like Birinchi Kumar Barua's *Jibonor hatat* are example of this domination of rural life and culture in Assamese novel. After discussing the works of the select writers we can fairly say that the root of the Assamese literature lies in a very rich and traditional literature marked by rural life and culture, though there grows a tension between the two types of values in the novels of the later period. L.N. Bezbarua’s early stories, published through the Jonaki, his early novel *Padum Kunwari* and Gohain Barua’s *Lahori* also bring a different taste in the 90’s of the 19th century literature. A limited sense of individualism is marked in the character of Lahori for the first time in Assamese novel. It has developed further in the character of the boy in the story of *Dactarbabur Sadhu* by L.N. Bezbarua. It seems that the boy acquired a modern
personality marked by both self-esteem and passionate love for the beloved. Some of the items for a comfortable living of city life are also marked in the early stories of Bezbarua. Bezbarua and Gohain Barua pave the way for a modern literature in the age of the Jonaki and the Bijuli in late 19th century what we see, is flourished in the following ages.

The study of Assamese fiction from 1901 to 1947 includes the stories published by the epoch-making magazine in Assamese literature, The Awahan. This period upto the Second World war witnessed a lot of changes in the society including the different phases of India's struggle for freedom. In this age, the subject matters techniques and language- all aspects of short story developed more than those of the Jonaki age. Some new ideas entered the Assamese stories like the woman's emancipation and new political consciousness. Lakshidhar Sarma was the prominent story writer of this age, who emphasized more on women's liberty and education. Rama Das has created a group of a new women, educated and modern in outlook based in Shillong and Guwahati. They were brought up in an urban atmosphere of Calcutta or Shillong and so they are quite different from the rural girls showing no respect to the traditional values. Moreover, they were adjusted with the new practices and values like horse-racing, motor driving, travelling alone, dating, pre and extramarital love and many more. The romantic love in an urban context got its highest expression in Das's Barsha Jetiya Name. Gauri Shankar Bhattacharyya and Sarat Chandra Goswami has exhibited a new sense of toleration of peaceful living with their unhappy and almost broken married life. Munin Borkotaki came out successfully as a story writer to write on the sufferings of love and prostitution in this age. As this period is rocked by the non-co-operation and civil disobidience moveenmnt under Gandhiji, many writers expressed their sense of nationalistic and sub-nationalistic feelings through their works. Daiba Chandra Talukdar is the representative novelist in this respect. He
raises the issue of sub-nationalistic feelings for Assam in his much acclaimed novel *Apurna*. This is a significant political awareness marked in the characters of Assamese novel. Chandra Prabha Saikiani, the iron lady hammered on the traditional male-dominated society's customs and practices by creating a rebel woman character in her novel, *Pitribhitha*. Birinchi Kumar Barua's novel *Jihonor Batat* shows the selfishness of the rising middle class in addition to the freedom struggle movement. The negative values of the middle class like securing a civil service job by hook or crook or showing no respect to marriage promise etc. find expression through the character of Kamala Kanta. Next chapter i.e. from 1948 to 1967 witnesses the impact of the Second World War on the Assamese society. Moreover, the friction writers of this age approached towards realism more and more after the war. The impact of urbanisation was experienced more and more. The ultimate consequence was a change in consciousness with corresponding artistic and aesthetic changes. With the establishment of some small industrial units and development in transport business, lots of poor workers migrated to towns as workers. They were all below the poverty line. Their life and struggle have been artistically delineated by Umakanta Sarma in *Uranta Meghar Sa*. The failure of the successive native govt. frustrated the educated and sensitive youths of the province. It is seen in some of the stories of Saurabh Kumar Chaliha and in the novels of Prafulladutta Goswami. The complex city life with all its problems capture the imagination of Chaliha. The urban middle class of Shillong, Guwahati and the life of tea planters have been critically delineated by Padma Borkotoki in his three novels as described in chapter six. They were running after the materialistic happiness only, which became a fashion for them. All of their sons and daughters were totally urban in outlook discarding the traditional values. Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya draws the picture of a Marxist leader and his trade union activities in the novel *Rajpathe Ringiai*. It is a significant development in Assamese novel that the question of
woman liberty has been examined by the author in the novel following the theory of Marxism. The impact of the Second World War on the Assamese society has authentically been drawn in the novel, *Adharshila* by Syed Abdul Malik. The earning of easy money by corruption in construction work during the Second World War and the introduction of professional prostitution, both negative values, make the plot of the novel interesting and novel. One of the important woman novelists of Assamese literature, Nirupama Borgohain has dealt with a new problem of the urban Assamese society, that is, the problem of old age in her novel, *Ejan Burha Manuh*. The conflict between the age-old values and the modern urban values leads to the suffering of the old man in the novel. Indirectly, the author Nirupama Borgohain presents the dilemmas of modernity—how the struggle for individual rights also tends to dehumanise urban people. We have seen in the forgoing discussion that the twin process of urbanisation and modernisation has influenced the life style and culture of people, mostly living in the urban centres paving the way for a modern urban consciousness among a section of people. The Assamese fiction as a part of that culture also underwent changes as to the techniques and forms. The traditional techniques continued to influence some of the Assamese fiction writers even upto modern times. After the great Second World War and independence, the realistic method in Assamese fiction reinforced the realistic tendency as the writers are comparatively more liberated from constraining powers of tradition. New symbols with multiple meanings were also used by some authors like Mohim Bora in his famous story *Kathanibarir Ghat* and in many stories by Saurabh Kumar Chaliha. Chaliha's characters and techniques are modern in tune with urban life and culture. An urban language is also emerging gradually in the hands of Chaliha showing little respect to general grammatical rules in most cases. He is the only author in Assamese fiction, in whom, nostalgia, a typical tendency of modern urban consciousness disoriented by contemporary development find
expression. Prafulladutta Goswami and Cheliha also used the technique of 'stream of consciousness' in their works.

In conclusion, we can fairly say that the Assamese fiction has gradually advanced towards modernity with the urban development as to the formal content. Not a wholly urban literature like the Western nations, the conflict between the traditional and urban values dominate more the Assamese fictions till 1967 baring a few writers.