INTRODUCTION
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This study proposes to examine the impact of urbanisation on Assamese Literature, particularly in the field of fiction. Since realism has until recently been the dominant trend in fiction, the impact of changes both in the material environment and the consciousness of characters are prominently reflected in works of fiction. While urbanisation is a part of a general social trend, which has other features like a market economy, growth and spread of business and industrialism and the rise of the middle class and the likes we are concentrating on urbanisation in order to study in clearer detail and aspect of the entire phenomenon. It will be however, difficult to keep it always apart from the other features of the general trend, such as the expansion of the middle class and growth of individualism. But our focus will be mainly on aspects of urbanisation. We have tried to show that modern urban centres grew up in Assam as a direct result of colonial rule, as administrative centres with residential quarters of officers, clerks, lawyers etc. Their needs are supplied by shopkeepers, usually from outside the province. It helped, on the other hand, in the growth of a heterogeneous population, very much important factor for an urban culture. The towns were marked by a more intensive concern for education, and by the presence of several educational institutions. It attracted local people residing in different places of the province. The way of life and the culture of the town's people also underwent major changes. Social and political movements had their H.Q.s in towns. Though Calcutta geographically does not belong to Assam, leading Assamese writes came in touch with the urban environment of Calcutta during their education and professional life. Therefore, while talking about urbanisation and Assamese fiction we cannot keep Calcutta out. Thus urbanisation brought about major changes both in the living environment and in the way people interacted with one another. The ultimate consequence was
a change in consciousness with corresponding artistic and aesthetic changes. There was not only a more realistic and alert pre-occupation with the material and the social environment, in stories and novels also a change was gradually observed in narrative methods and language of friction, taking the latter away from the world of epics and legends on which people in the rural areas have been nurtured for centuries. It will be our endeavour to explore all such changes and trace historically the rise and growth of urban consciousness. However, for reasons of space we have not made the study up to date. Unlike the rural people, the urban population which was involved in social and political movements had a tendency to greater self-doubt as well as questioning of the goals of such movements. Hence, while such stories were marked by a greater complexities of the portrayed reality, they also led to the discovery and practice of more interesting artistic form.

Since rural society was the strongholds of traditional customs and beliefs, urban society was the field where new and radical ideas about psyche, family, individual and the world found expression and manifestation. We see the urban consciousness emerging from traditional attitudes and values and moving towards a more modern, restless and alienated consciousness. The significant stages of this development of modern Assamese literature are marked by in three distinctive stages of Assamese literature. The first one is the Jonaki age under the leadership of L.N. Bezbarua, the doyen of Assamese literature. It was followed by the magazine the 'Awahan' published from Calcutta under a collective enterprise with Dinanath Sarma as the editor and 'the Jayanti', the progressive journal of the early 1940s. In the next age, that is, the post-independence period under greater domination of modernisation and aesthetic idealism more fictional works were produced related to city-life, again through an epoch-making magazine, the 'Ramdhenu' edited efficiently by Dr. Birendra Kr. Bhattacharya. These stages of development have been included in three different chapters. We deal chronologically
with these three different stages of Assamese literature with intensive analysis of certain literary works. As to the selection of literary works and authors, we have paid attention to the aspects of the references of urban values or city life and background of the author more than other things. Some times, a fictional work of lesser literary value has been included or an important work of a particular author has been kept out of discussion for this reason.

As to the different chapters, this study is divided into eight chapters. Before proceeding to a study of literary works of select authors, in the very first chapter we discuss the phenomenon of urbanisation and the social history associated with it in general. The definitions of urbanisation and urbanism have been discussed in detail in the first section, followed by the history of modern city. In the next section we discuss the history of urbanisation in India along with that of Assam. In this section the colonical character of the Indian cities in general and Assam in particular has been emphasised. What we have discussed in this respect is that most towns of Assam grew up as a result of colonial administrative necessities, supplemented by colonial trade and commerce. The 'Prismatic state' of condition as said by eminent Sociologist Richard Fox, seems to prevail over the state of Assam as a whole. So, in many of the urban centres of Assam, the rural traditions survive, even upto modern times. The second chapter, 'The city in literature' begins with a description of the different urbanising and modernising factors and their impact on Assamese society. In the second section, we discuss how the city life affects the traditional values and gives birth to a new set of values. The modernisation of values is the result of this impact. The third segment is the description of some literary representations of city life. How the 'Industrial revolution' brought a significant change in the Western literature and the grounding of modern Assamese literature with urban consciousness have been discussed in a nutshell. This chapter is the basis of our discussion of the select literary works. The third chapter, named,
"The rural base of traditional Assamese literature" is set as a background. The root of the Assamese society lies in the villages. The oral literature like the Bihu songs, Nursery songs or Ballads, the works of the Vaisnavite poets like Sankardev and even some modern works of L.N. Bezbarua or Birichi Kr. Barua are rich with rural life and values. This chapter offers a contrast to the growing urban values. Chapter four, "The impact of urbanisation on 19th century literature" is devoted to the study of the 'Ornodoi age' and later works of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Gunabhiram Barua and Hem Chandra Barua. In the late 19th century section, the early fictional works of L.N. Bezbarua, Padmanath Gohainbarua have been discussed. "The impact of urbanisation on Assamese fiction, 1901-1947", which is chapter five of the dissertation highlights the fictional works, who were mostly produced by the 'Awahan' and the 'Jayanti'. The later stories of L.N. Bezbarua, the stories of Sarat Ch. Goswami, Lakshidhar Sarma, Gauri Sankar Bhattacharya, Munin Borkataki, Rama Das brought new insights to Assamese stories and the novels of Daiba Chandra Talukdar and Chandraprabha Saikiani, Birinchi Kr. Barua have also been examined in this chapter. We have examined also the select novels of Umakanta Sarma, Prafulladatta Goswami, Radhika Mohan Goswami, Syed Abdul Malik, Padma Borkataki etc. and stories of Saurabh Kr. Chaliha in chapter six, named, 'Urbanisation and its impact on Assamese fiction, 1948-1967'. Most of the fiction writers of this period have brought new ideas and novels in the form of realism with new insight. The formal characteristics including innovations of new techniques are summerised in the last but one chapter. The final chapter, that is chapter eight, is the summing up of the whole discussion. It is also found in the discussion that there is a continuous tension between the traditional and modern values in the Assamese fiction and life of Assam even upto the late 1960s.