CHAPTER-II
A. THE IMPACT OF CITY LIFE ON ASSAMESE SOCIETY:

The previous chapter tells us about the development of urbanisation and cities in Assam in the period under review. In a remote state like Assam, which is very far from the centres of India, these towns, whether administrative or industrial, have been attracting people in large number. As said in previous chapter, with the arrival of the British, the first wave of modernisation was felt and after 1947, the second spell of urbanisation spread to all corners of the state. The Assamese society, otherwise a traditional society, experienced the impact of urban values over the years and it found expression in many ways. Moreover, it brought some changes to the scale of values and other aspects of the Assamese society. The following pages of this chapter, will attempt to cover these changes. The process of urbanisation was accompanied by modernization with many forces of social change. The coming of the British, the introduction of English system of education, the tea and other industries, the partition of the country in 1947, the World War-II, the national movement for freedom under the leadership of Gandhiji and the growth of a political consciousness, the India China war etc. are the forces that as a part of urbanisation and social evolution, brought a change in the life-style of the Assamese society right from the middle of the 19th century till today and in the towns an urban society has emerged towards end of the sixties. These forces helped in the process of urbanisation and modernization in Assam and the new towns became the centres of an urban culture with its roots in traditional culture and it was subsequently passed to the rural areas also. Thus, it is seen, the Assamese society of both urban and rural areas had been undergoing a change of life-style.
over the years due to the impact of the process of urbanisation and the radiation of urban values.

(a) Migration to towns and cities: Commenting on the causes of migration, Louis Mumford writes, "Human life swings between two poles: movement and settlement." Since the primitive days men have been in motion for many reasons. Migration is an old institution, as old as mankind itself. People from the beginning of creation move from one place to another in search of a better life. The quest for happiness, therefore, is the primary motif of migration. In the modern age, the city life with all its colours and facilities have been attracting people for a comfortable and secured life. So rural to urban migration is the most important component of urbanisation and it's a mechanism by which the world's great urbanisation has been accomplished. Movement of people from one place to another place within the country is known as internal migration. We have four types of migration in India, they are rural-urban, urban-rural, urban-urban and rural-rural migrations. Migration is caused by many factors like job opportunities, education, natural calamities etc. Every year thousands of young men come from a rural area to urban places in the hope of getting a job or any other work. The longing of youth for cities is deep, pervasive and real. It cannot be dismissed as a mere fancy of youth for glamour of urban living. In England, after the destruction of the agricultural field and subsequent opening of factories and mills made many peasants landless or jobless in the 18th century, which resulted in the huge rural-urban migration. In USA also, the case was the same, but with the gradual mechanisation of agriculture and improved communication the gap between the rural and urban life narrowed in those countries bringing a balance to the movement and settlement. But in India like all other developing countries of Asia, Africa or Latin America the picture is opposite. The metropolies and cities have come up as the centres of exploitation, yet, the endless migration is going on from rural to urban areas as
even after independence the general economic condition of rural India has not improved. The cities are like magnets in this respect. The uneven distribution of wealth and development have compelled people to migrate for economic reason. It is like a stream of water flowing from up to down.

Like all other states of India, Assam has also witnessed massive migration of people from the rural places throughout the 20th century. If we examine the demographic pattern of Guwahati as an example, we will see that huge migration is the main cause of the growth of population of Guwahati. In the early 19th colonial Assam, the demographic pattern of Guwahati shows that it was a living town for the tribal people, some high-caste Hindus around the different religious places and the fishing community and some artisans. There were many villages around where the scheduled caste people lived. The Muslims lived in Lakhtokia, Athgaon and Garigaon. Like all other places, a community-based locality grew up here and there. Daccapatty, Keyapatty, Barpetia para near Paltan Bazar, Hindu's Uzan Bazar etc. are some of the community-based pockets. In these areas, after the coming of the British and establishment of Guwahati as military-base and capital through 1947, the population pattern gradually started to change and to become heterogeneous with huge migration, Guwahati became an important place as administrative and education centre and business capital of the whole North Eastern region of India and for these reasons many people migrated to Guwahati. A heterogenous population lived peacefully and a sense of cooperation and toleration developed among the different people as they gathered there for livelihood and other purposes. Hitesh Deka, novelist and ex-president of Asom Sahitya Sabha and a resident of Muslim-dominated Garigaon of western Guwahati says that, he had to live in that Muslim locality because of his service at Jalukbari High School. They have been living together without any sense of constrain, living like brothers and sisters. The Marowari people came from far off Rajastan for business mainly
in grocery and clothes. The Biharis migrated to Guwahati and other towns of Assam as labourers, washerman, cobblers etc. The massive migration from the erstwhile Syhlet and East Pakistan panicked the local people so much that it became a subject of politics in the 1940s and subsequent years. All these migrated people came to the urban centres as they thought it wise to do something there and it made a heterogeneous population with inter-action among the people. Now let us see the population pattern of Guwahati from 1911 to 1971.

**TABLE NO - 3**  
Population of Guwahati: 1911-71

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>12,481</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>29,598</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1,23,783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>16,480</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>43,615</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>21,797</td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1,00,707</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census Report: Population table, Assam, 1971-72*

This table shows that the population of Guwahati has been increasing gradually. The variation of decade-wise percentage is as follows —

**Table no - 4**  
Variation of Population in every decade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Variation (%)</th>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Variation (%)</th>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>Variation (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911-21</td>
<td>32.04</td>
<td>1931-41</td>
<td>35.79</td>
<td>1951-61</td>
<td>130.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-31</td>
<td>32.26</td>
<td>1941-51</td>
<td>47.36</td>
<td>1961-71</td>
<td>22.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census Report: Population table, Assam, 1971-72*

The population has begun to increase from the decade 1911-21 significantly due to expansion of areas and increase of economic activities. Apart from natural growth, migration has been a major factor in the population. Now let us see the migration to Guwahati as example. After the annexation of Assam by British, only a few British officials and soldiers came to Assam. The American Missionaries followed them in 1840s and arrived in the state for social service. So the
heterogeneous nature of the population of Guwahati started as back as in the first half in 19th century. The Missionaries mixed freely with local people and many new things passed to the local culture. According to 1931 Census Report in 1921 the total no. of Europeans was 2,768 of whom 2,669 were British subjects and the rest were from other nations. It increased to 3,362 in 1931. There were many English teachers in college and schools. Moreover, the English tea planter brought thousands of tea-garden labourers from Orissa, Andhra and other places, who were allowed to settle in and around the tea gardens of the Upper Assam region, thereby introducing a new element in the population of the Upper Assam region. More and More labourers were brought to Assam with the expansion of the tea industries and in course of time these Tanti or Bhumij, Dhanowars, Tirki accepted Assam as their motherland and Assamese as their language. The Maimansinghias of erstwhile Syhlet or East Bengal came in lacs and a widespred resentment prevailed among the indigenous population against the Sadulla Govt. in the 1940s. Some Hindu Bengalee came and settled in Guwahati and other places after Partition in 1950 and as they were advanced in trades and commerce they took up different new business like in foot wears, bakeries or perfumes and clothes. The Panbazar area was once known as Daccapatty with there East Bengal people, both Muslim and Hindu. The Jamatullahs, the Lahiris, the Deys etc. are descendants of the migrant business families at Panbazar. — According to Dr. Bhuban Mohan Das, a retired professor and scholar at Panbazar.3 Panbazar became a cosmopolitan area because of these migrant families, both Muslim and Hindu. The census report on Guwahati speaks much about this. It is seen that the population of Guwahati increased tremendously at the rate of 130.90% from 1941 to 1961. The other group of migrants that entered the city along with the British and in the subsequent years with the help of the already established Bangalee and Muslim families are the people of other states. The Marawaries, who owned and controlled the grocery
business, the Bengalis as babu in the tea-gardens and offices, the Biharis as labourers and as cobblers, masons, washermen & riskshawpullers settled in the urban areas. The local people were not originally inclined towards such jobs monopolised by outside people. They also form the bulk of the migrant. According 1951 to 1961 census, the no. of Biharis are 23085 and the Rajastanis 11,752 and W.B. 12,074. Their percentage is like this in 1971, Bihar is again in the first position with 41.00% of the total migrants, Rajasthan is in the 2nd position with 10.47% & Meghalaya being the original home of 10.20%. The other states constitutes less 3.00% of the total. Migrants from Orissa and Central India form a good percentage. The last group of migrants adding heterogeneity to the city population are locals migrating from different districts of Assam for jobs and higher education. Many of them settled permanently in Guwahati and brought their kith and kin to join govt. services and for other types of employment. But, Assamese people in general did not pursue business, which proved fatal for the whole nationality in the subsequent years. Against this the other migrated groups were engaged in economic activities and their early and wise decision made them a formidable pressure group in the economic and political field and till the end of the sixties they were perceived as great threat by the indigenous people in the social and political field. The expansion of Guwahati happened with the increase in population. Towards the East, the Guwahati Refinery at Noonmati was also dominated by officers and technicians from outside. The local people with good services settled in the central area. After independence this process of settlement intensified. This progressive urbanisation coupled with phenomenal immigration from within and outside the state, particularly since 1940s, have pushed away the indigenous tribal and other poor people to the outskirts of the city. The demographic pattern of the population of Guwahati turned heterogeneous in matters of other cultural aspects like language and religion. According to 1971 census report, about 65 different languages and dialects were spoken by different language groups of the city. The main linguistic groups are as follows —
Assamese — 46.11%  
Hindi — 2095%  
Tamil — .1%

Bengali — 25.1%  
Punjabi — .92%


It is typical of the plural society of the colonial towns. The religion-wise back-up also speaks of a heterogeneous culture in Guwahati. According to 1971 census report it is like this —

Hindu — 86.96%  
Sikhs — 1.44%  
Buddhist — .1%

Muslim — 9.95  
Christian — 1.06%

Different religions groups with exemplary securalism and peaceful living has made Guwahati and other Assam's towns an unique heterogeneous place under the same place. All these languages and religious varieties have made Assam a mini India. Of course, the Assamese people came under pressure from various migrated groups, which will be discussed in the following points. As those people, who came at first as petty businessmen and workers, later on became masters of many jobs and business, the Assamese people correspondingly suffered a decline.

It must be mentioned at this point that economic exchange and collaboration did not lead to a cultural synthesis in these urban conditions as each group maintained its own cultural identity. This is a persistence of the colonial pattern of social and political life. Eventually it also led to periodic tension and conflict.

b. Occupation heterogeneity: In the definition of urbanisation, we have already mentioned in chapter-1 that 'occupation' of the residents of a city or town is important for declaring a town or a city as per 1961 census definition. As the urban places are the advanced stage of civilisation 'the pattern of occupation' plays a vital role indicating the demographic nature of a place apart from its necessity
as a criteria for the same. According to 1971 census in urban conditions at least seventy five percent of the total population should be engaged in other occupation than agriculture. It also indicates the economic activities of an urban place which must be self-sufficient for its growth and progress. The population of most Assam's towns including Guwahati were at one time dominated by indigenous tribal cultivators. Only a few people from S.C. community in Guwahati were involved in fishing and petty business. When Guwahati and other towns became important centres of administration, education and commerce, they became also the places for various jobs in govt. officer. The towns of Assam became the centres of this occupational change more after 1947. The establishment of radio centre, medical college and hospital, engineering College, other college, university, a survey school all happened in Guwahati together after 1947 and most of them in 1948. It also offered different job opportunities. The involvement in business however, still remained minimal for local people. Barua-Phukan brothers attempted business in late 19th century at Guwahati in railway slippers, but failed. Assamese enterpreneurs were moderately successful in only tea plantation. Apart from state offices, the railways, the High Court & lowers courts, the central banks and other financial bodies public sector industries like Guwahati refinery and other Central govt. offices in Shillong and Guwahati attracted educated local youths. But, central govt. services were monopolised by the Bengalis causing great resentment among the native youths. In the business area, small units of industries like printing, glass or aluminium, transport companies, commercial vehicles, service centres like motor and scooter garages, shops etc. also offered different jobs depending on education or training or experience and money. In the migration part, we have shown the migration of English, Rajastanis, Biharis to the city in connection with different business. From the census report of 1971, we see the workers and non-workers of Guwahati as follows —
TABLE : 5
Showing Occupational pattern of population in 1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Towns</th>
<th>Workers</th>
<th>Non-workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guwahati</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>6.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauhati outgrowth</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>10.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandu</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>1.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandu out growth</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>9.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamakhya</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>5.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source ; Census Report, 1971.

From the table we come to know that the number of workers have been increasing in course of time in different trades. But non workers are more, who are dependent on workers. Towards the end of the sixties the female workers also increased. Many local females got services in schools and colleges. It brings a different colour of the population.

In the migration part it was discussed that the pace of internal migration increased only when the importance of Guwahati as the centre of higher education and recruitment was realised by the rural people and the other towns people of Assam. The economic condition of the general people was not good in the rural areas. Most of them was just living somehow. The 'Dangaria class' of the Ahom rule and the newly created 'Mauzadars', 'Mandals' etc. by the new British administration were well-off. The rich and medium-status cultivators could only send their wards to Guwahati or Calcutta for higher education. Later on they also settled in Guwahati or at other towns. The poor students got the patronage of the rich people. So the process of separating the educated and prosperous started in Assam with the beginning of employment in towns. Those who could not get jobs in govt. departments, tried their luck in the pvt. companies and the tea gardens. "The no of tea estates increased to as many as 755 in 1967 against 744 in 1961."
The no of private companies were 311 against the public companies 99 in 1966-67. All these companies generated many jobs, particularly lower-rank jobs for the local people. Educated or half educated youth moved from this place to that place for jobs. The owners of the companies were either British capitalist or Indian merchant of other states. Even Tata company has invested crores of rupees in tea plantation. Assam planters got a lesson through the capital punishment of Moniram Dewan, who defied the monopolistic control of British capital in tea. The experience of Krishna Sarma, who had two tea-gardens is also important. He recalls that the British planters never allowed them to use a road to their garden, which were in front of them. At last, they were forced to sell the garden to the Europeans. Their enterprise was killed in the bud so that Europeans can monopolise the whole business, which was gradually turning very profitable.

In spite of this with the passage of time, some tea planters came up in Upper Assam, who owned tea gardens. Radhakanta Handique, Bisturam Barua and many others came to the front of the business.

Some migrated people to Guwahati started also other business. Radha Govinda Barua started the newspaper business with 'The Assam Tribune' and the "Dainik Assam", the owners of Goswami Service and the Bora Service started oil distribution business. Bichitra narayan Dattabaruah, Ambikapada Choudhury etc. started book-publishing business through "Lawyers book stall" and "Bani Prakash" respectively. It also offered job opportunities to specialist workers in the painting and binding and marketing. This also helped in the formation of a modern urban culture. All these business activities led to the movement of people from rural to urban areas making the towns with different people of different occupation. The following table of inter-district migration will tell us about the formation of a service class in Assam. Shillong and Guwahati draw more people in Govt. services.
### TABLE NO : 6

Showing % of interdistrict immigration and emigration and net migration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>% of inter district immigration to population of the district</th>
<th>% of inter district emigration to population of district</th>
<th>No. of net migration to population of district immigration to emigration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1961</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>1921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>6.63</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhimpur</td>
<td>7.39</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>2.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgang</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibsagar</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cachar</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garo &amp; Khasi Hills</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>2.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Census Report, 1961 (Population part)

Most of the people migrated to other districts are service holders. Of course some of them are lawyers, petty businessmen or labourers. The lawyers and doctors were Bangalis, Mohendra Mohan Lahiri, Pabitra Kr. Gupta, Bijoy Sen etc. are noted Bengali lawyers in the early colonial rule in Assam. There were some LMS Bengali doctors who practised medical profession in Guwahati. This is the new middle class of Assam. The old genty like Maudars, mandals also joined them. This class welcomed some western values keeping one foot on the traditional values. But their second generation who completed their education in the late 1950s and early sixties changed their life-style more and more maintaining only few traditional values. So the beginning of an urban culture in the major towns of Assam started. Next, in all the administrative H.Q.s of Assam -- district, sub-divisional or circle, the service holders lived together in a ward for their service-nature like mindedness and solidarity. Their ward was known as
Amolapatty. We have many Amolapatties at different administrative places of Assam — Dibrugarh, Nagaon, Golaghat, Sibsagar all had one such locality. These localities maintained a separate identity. They never mixed freely with the local people like the British officers. This legacy was continued. This mentality has arisen due to upward mobility also, as many of them were from middle-peasants from villages. The sons and daughters of the privileged class availed the opportunities both in education and service. The sons of tribal leaders who were middle class leaders among the tribals, got the opportunities first and their next generation became urban. On the other hand, the sons and daughters of the poor people remained in the same scale in society with no mobility at all despite a new govt. was in power. Only a fortunate few got the patronage of local rich men, who in turn sometime gave their daughter in marriage to such persons after getting a job. The caste factor also worked in matters of getting a job in addition to qualification. M.S.A. Rao thinks that similar situation prevailed in South India as to the services. In the British days, the British loyalty and family background played a vital role in getting certain jobs. Dhekial Phukan or or Gunabhiram or Manik Chandra found a place in govt. service for this reason in addition to their educational qualification. This situation improved a little after independence, which helped otherwise in urbanisation, because rural and some poor but meritorious people also were recruited into services and settled in towns. It helped in the change of profession in family causing a upward mobility. A goldsmith’s son of Barpeta have become an engineer with the help of merit. Of course, the no of such cases is very few. But this way an urban middle class was formed in Guwahati. But the mentality of this class was very much like the British officers. This class was loyal to the British before 1947 and after 1947, they were very much concern about their own class and status. When Kaliram Medhi, a cultivator’s son of Ramdia, an unknown village near Hajo got the selection a provincial civil service the affluent
middle class people of Guwahati could not accept it easily. For the same reason, they could not tolerate the achievements of other boys belonging to lower middle class boys like Holiram Deka, a Sarthebari boy, who became the first Assamese Chief Justice of Guwahati High Court. It is explained by the mentality the middle class formed during British days. Dr. Hiren Gohain writes that the livelihood lifestyle and thinking of the Assamese middle class were determined by the Mauzadars and the govt. service holders. The Mauzadar were the executors of the British policies of maintaining feudalism and exploitation together in the rural areas. The opportunities for higher education were monopolised by a handful of high-caste people, who had been introduced to education from their earlier generation. They also captured the Govt. jobs. Only the poor sons of the Brahmins or Bhuyans of Kamrup district had to secure jobs undergoing a lot of hardships. The tea-planters were also blind immitators of their British counterparts as to their life style. This middle class never opposed the British rule in Assam, rather they were very much loyal to them. Moreover, they looked down the govt. service holders coming from poor poor family.  

Whatever may be the reasons, but it is true that the no of govt. service holders increased year by year. They formed a quite distinct service class in Shillong and Guwahati with a distinct urban culture. These people with the businessmen and workers make the population with heterogeneous occupational pattern, which in turn help in the spread of urbanisation.

c. The role of Higher education : Before the introduction of the of the English education, the 'tols' and 'Muktabs' served the purpose of education. These institutions were lacking in modern liberal and rational elements and had a largely religious basis. So the introduction of English education by the British authority was an epoch-making incident in Assam as a vehicle for spreading of western ideas and knowledge among a section of people who were deeply immersed in superstitious, age-old conservatism and religious dogmas. So, Anandaram Dhekial
Phukan, who received English education in Calcutta, urged the Govt. to open such schools in Assam following the example of Raja Ram mohan Roy of Bengal. But the colonial Govt. never paid any attention to such call. They were interested only in producing clerks, not highly educated or technical persons. Their policy of education was not different from colonial policy as a whole. Lord Macauley explains it 1835 in his famous minute that "we must at present do our best to form a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions, in morals and in intellect." It is known as 'Downward filtration'theory. They spent only one lac of rupees in all. Yet the English Seminary at Guwahati in 1835 and another at Nagaon in 1842 were started with European teachers. The govt. was more interested to grant scholarships than establishing colleges in Assam. Manik Ch. Barua and other Assamese middle class stalwarts fought for a college and it was in 1901 that Cotton College was opened. In 1930 at Jorhat J.B. College was bugan. This way we see that primary, secondary and collegiate education in a restricted way was provided to the local people. Of course, after independence the higher education was paid more importance. The following table will speak about the gradual increase in literacy rate in Assam from British days to sixties of 20th century. The English education and the higher education created a sensation among the common people and they responded positively.

**TABLE NO. 7**

**Literacy rate of Assam : 1911-1961**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>year</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>5.59</td>
<td>4.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>5.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td>6.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>13.14</td>
<td>8.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>21.73</td>
<td>12.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>32.98</td>
<td>13.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census report 1961*
The gradual increase in literacy implies that people responded gradually to the educational system. Even women's participation in education is going up, though it is half of the male's rate in 1961. It's a good sign that despite a long and unsympathetic colonial rule the English education inspired people, at least a section to go to schools. Modern type of colleges and universities were established more and more after 1947. The following table shows the picture of college education which produces graduates till 1960-61.

**TABLE NO : 8**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of colleges</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of colleges</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of colleges</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948-49</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6,796</td>
<td>1953-54</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10,214</td>
<td>1958-59</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>21,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949-50</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7,479</td>
<td>1954-55</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11,621</td>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>24,453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-52</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8,050</td>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13,773</td>
<td>1961-68</td>
<td>Not found</td>
<td>1968-69 0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not found</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Journal of ACTA, Golden Jubilee Volume.*

Needless to mention that the new provincial govt. have specially emphasised the expansion of colligate education to the every corner towns of the state. Among the college Guwahati & Shillong has 5 colleges each. In Shillong the Christian colleges brought many new values. It's very important. A law college has started in Guwahati in 1914 generating law graduates to serve the courts. Two women colleges Lady Kean college and Handique Girls' college were started in the 1930s. In 1948, the university of Guwahati was established. K.K. Handique, the scholar was the first V.C. of the university. It filled up a long standing demand of the people of Assam. The poor brilliant students, who could not afford to go to Calcutta for post graduation got the opportunity at doorstep. The want of college teachers was fulfilled with the beginning of G.U. This is how, the primary, secondary and
higher education together worked for a social change in Assam and through these institutions, the teachers, the vigorous body of students all helped in the expansion of an urban culture to the remote places.

d. The role of Cotton College: What was Hindu College to Calcutta in the 19th century, Cotton college was that to the people of Assam. The modern Assam owes much to the tremendous contribution made by Cotton college. "That this college, which came into being in 1901, succeeded in creating an intellectual atmosphere from the very beginning is evident from the fact that by the end of the quinquennium its library contained about 2,00000 books on different subjects. Among its earliest teachers were persons like F.W. Sudmersen, Narendra Nath Roy, Indubhusan Brahmachary, Lakshmi narayan Chatterjee, P.C. Roy, Padmanath Bidyabinod. Chunilal Dey and Maulabi Abu Naser Mohammad Obeed." Some celebrated Assamese teachers also blessed the college. They are Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, Dr. Banikanta Kakati, Rajani Chakravorty and many more. Prof. R.R. Thomas got a very prestigious scholarship called PRS valued more than a Ph.D. P.C. Roy. Harsha Sen, A.C. Dutta were Bengali teachers but they always inspired the local students. Apart from teaching learning, Cotton College is the alma mater of many celebrities in different field. Of Course, the college lost much of its glories after 1950s when most of the best teachers left the college. Regarding the role of Cotton College, that completed glorious one hundred years in 2001, Dr. Hiren Gohain, an ex-student of the college, writes in the centenary volume, "In earlier days some of the teachers like Padmanath Bidyabinode. Banikanta Kakati, and Surjya Kumar Bhuyan, did outstanding research his circumstances that were far from propitious and A.C. Dutta authored a text book in Botany that won International acclaim. But in the fifties and the early sixties many teachers lost interest in academic work and the famous Cotton College library became a ghost of its former self to be sure. many department continued to recruit brilliant youths, who later shone as teachers.
But academic inbreeding had become a disease, thanks to the perception of higher education as a passport of jobs.\textsuperscript{12} Instead of that, the college contributes a lot that helped grow a modern culture in Assam.

The college trained generation after generation of students the corporate activities, which were directed later on towards the welfare of the state. Recalling the days in Cotton College Mr. Gautam Prasad Barua in a memoir writes, "Our contemporary brilliant students were Dhiren Barhagohain, M.P. Bezbarua, Parama Mahanta Harekrishna Deka, Pradip Bhattacharya etc. Everybody stood first or second in every exams. Today also they are maintaining their good name in different fields. Not because of the exam's results that they are distinguished personalities, it is because the Cotton College's intellectual atmosphere, a never-to-lose mentality and the faculty that could be inspired by the college teachers. Not to speak the family's role." and he adds, "Today sitting at coffee house in Calcutta, I think of the Cotton days, the gorgeous lecture of Basanta Barua sir. the explanation of Binada Barman sir's \textit{Raghubanshan}, the explanation of French Revolution by H.K. Borpujari sir, the education of Asraf Ali sir etc. Where shall I get such education, such companions and sympathies."\textsuperscript{13} Cotton College contributes towards the modernisation of Assam. At first in the field of literature, the first college magazine was brought out in 1922. Before that there was a handwritten wall-magazine called "Seuti". Most of the literary personalities of the Awahan and the Ramdhanu age had their probation period as a writer in Cotton college magazine. Stalwart Assamese literateurs like S.N. Sarma, Maheswar Neog, linguists G.C. Goswami, \textit{Ramayana} expert U.C. Lekharu, Atul Hazarika, Raihan Shah, Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, Banikanta Kakati, Mohendra Bora, Yogesh Das, Hiren Gohain, Homen Borgohain, Mamani Raisom Goswami and a host of writers were alumni of Cotton. Secondly Cotton College created history by introducing co-education in 1933. In a male-dominated society, it bears significance. Moreover, the college promoted co-acting,
co-singing and free-mixing of boys and girls. The third achievement of the college is the role in nation-building activities. Debating was introduced in 1916. The Cotton College students Union election ironed out future leaders of the state. Gopinath Bordoloi, Sadulla, Dinesh Goswami, Bishnuram Medhi, Umakanta Sarma, etc. got their inspiration for public service in Cotton College. Fourthly, many cultural celebrities like Bhupen Hazarika, Jayanta Hazarika, Bhabendra Nath Saikia, Subakshina Sarma, Lakshihira Das, Nip Barua etc. came out of Cotton College. Fifthly, in the field of sports also the Cotton's contribution is magnificent. Debeswar Sarma, ex-minister of Assam recalls this in his memoir "Herowa Dinar Diary" Hard court tennis, table tennis, Cricket etc. are the modern games that were played in Cotton college. Olympian T. Aao, national footballer Sarat Das, etc. were Cottonians. One of the significant and far-reaching contribution made by Cotton college is the making of efficient teachers. From 1901 to 1960s, the college got the distinction of producing so many efficient teachers with excellent knowledge in the subjects, high morale and sense of discipline. Those who established schools in the corners of the states were mostly Cotton College graduates. They were inspired by the luminaries of Cotton for which they set up new schools giving up other lucrative & secured jobs. So in the expansion of education, the college has the most important and significant contribution.

e. The magic city of Calcutta: Apart from Cotton College and G.U., Calcutta has always been a centre of attraction for higher education to the entire Eastern India. It was the capital of British India for many years. The Hindu College was established in 1817 and Calcutta University was the one of the first three universities established in 1857 following Wood's despatch. Not only that, Calcutta was also the intellectual, cultural & commercial capital of the modern India with the Tagore family at the cultural & literary front. Naturally it was a very influential city at that time. Regarding this influence on the rest of India, Jadunath Sarkar writes, "In this new
Bengal originated every good and great thing of the modern world that passed on to the other provinces of India. From Bengal went forth the English-educated teacher and the Europe-inspired thought that helped to modernise Bihar and Orissa, Hindustan and Deccan. Assam was very close to Bengal, so groups of Assamese students went there to study. The modern Assam movement the literature, in fact, started from Calcutta through the Jonaki. Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan and Jagnaram began this trend of Calcutta education in the early part of the 19th century. Before the establishment of Cotton College and G.U. in 1901 and 1948 respectively students from Assam went to Calcutta for higher education. Even after that some students went there in order to get introduced with an advanced intellectual activities. Even oratory, political activities, writing and social work etc. are the fields the Assamese students learnt from Calcutta which will be discussed in the modernisation of value section. L. N. Bezbarua, Rajanikanta Bordoloi, Benudhar Rajkhowa, S.K. Bhuyan, Banikanta Kakati, Birinchi Kr. Barua, Navakanta Barua, Mahendra Bora, Chandra Prasad Saikia, Prafulladatta Goswami and many leading personalities had their either college or university education in Calcutta. The city had a magical affect on those who went there for studies. Because, after spending few years there, they were inspired to do something significant in life. The Presidency college attracted students till late fifties. Of course in the 1960s this educational importance of Calcutta was replaced by the New Delhi Colleges. The city also provided a very free and liberal atmosphere to work what was absent in Assam. Gunabhiram Barua settled in Calcutta after his retirement in Assam. Lakshinath and Bholanath Barua spent their entire life in and around Calcutta. The radical political thought of Calcutta also influenced many people. The quality of education in Calcutta University and Presidency College was far better than that of Assam. Suniti Kr. Chatterjee, S.C. Sengupta, Triguna sen etc. of the 20th century Calcutta were best teachers of India at that time. Moreover, luminaries from the rest of India like K. Zakariah, Radhakrishnan, C.V. Raman etc. were in
C.U. as teachers and scientists. A sense of patriotism also influenced the students going to study there. The Jonaki group is a clear example. Padmanath Barua of the same age, who calls calcutta, "a model of the world", writes, "It is here that he acquired certain noble, divine ideals, qualities of patriotism and love of the motherland." It is that sense of patriotism which inspired everybody to do something for the motherland. At that time Calcutta was not only a centre of Indian Renaissance in Arts, but also a throbbing centre of newly awakened political life. Even cultural personalities like Bishnu Rabha, Jyotiprasad, Brajcn Barua, Bhupen Hazarika, Dilip Sarma etc. got the inspiration for cultural activities from Calcutta. Besides these benifits, the Assamese students had the scope of looking at the world around with a wide standpoint. It had increased their mental horizon, made them look beyond Assam and the Assamese. Navakanta Barua, Chandra Prasad Saikia, Mahendra Bora etc. began to speak in english among themselves after returning from Calcutta following their colleagues in Calcutta institutions. In those Golden days, Calcutta, instilled the feeling of higher ideals of life on everybody who visited it and it worked almost magically on the visitors.

**f. Impact on family, kinship:** Guwahati as a model for urban cultural values, under went tremendous changes only after 1972, when the capital was shifted from Shillong. The expansion area of the took place at a faster rate than never before. The periphery of the city went upto Khanapar towards South, upto Borjhar in western side and upto Chandrapur-Narengi in the Eastern side. This expansion accompanied by massive migration had an impact on the family life. In this respect we see a difference. The popularity of science and technology also had an impact on family life with the emergence of radio, gramophone, cinema etc. as a means of entertainment. Already mentioned in the heterogeneous occupation section that with the rise of the middle class an urban culture also began to form. The services, the education, the crisis of financial matters, the family planning, the housing
problem in Guwahati etc. all led to the disintegration of a joint family. Under city condition the control of the families gradually was on the wane and people formed secondary association as a part of urban society to replace it. According to a study made by Dr. Rani Hazarika on urbanisation and social change she found that the joint family system, which is a symbol of community life, was on the wane. In the study out of 1992 families surveyed belonging to various class of people and scattering in central and periphernal area, the no. of nuclear family was 1650, the horizontal joints 192, vertical joints 90 & horizontal come vertical joint 60. The survey of census report, 1971 also reveals the fact that nuclear type of families are the most common one in Guwahati. It is pertinent that in the urban situation most of the vertical joint families exist temporarily only, because the sons after marriage form nuclear families independently leaving their parents or others. So, the general trend is the nuclear family. Of course, by simultaneously people of Guwahati maintained a community life through the celebration of Durga Pujah, Bihu festival or other club's association. Though the condition has not touches like that of Western countires, the problem has arisen here also towards the late sixties. Among such a situation, a joint family like that of Brajen Barua, Nip Barua, Dwipen Barua, Raman Barua is still living together under the same roof in the third generation also at Latasil, Guwahati, but it is an exception. The family planning and the concept of a single-child or two children concept made the people more confined to their own family only, which is quite new in Assam.

Obligation to the relatives outside own family are not rigid. The concept of 'near kin' and 'far kin' outlined by eminent Sociologist Firth can be brought in this respect. The peripherial areas maintain their social relationships better than those of the central areas, which are more urbanised. Links with distant kinsfolk are limited to sending invitations on ceremonial occasions, such as wedding or family religious festivals like birth or death anniversaries of parents or grand father or
mother. But sometimes, as a result of the modern times, personal friendship and other interests intensify such relations. It is seen that the poorer people are more interested or compelled to maintain the relationship than the rich people. The rich and prosperous decide it depending on their interest and desire. The tea planters want that nobody should disturb them except those who have private cars. So, they constructed the approach roads to their bungalows with a grilled bridge with gaps in order to prevent entry of people who came on foot. Increased competitions and a very complex urban mentality made most of the urban people restrict their family and kinship relation against the traditional joint family system and community life right from sixties of the 20th century.

g. The growing Political Awareness: Assam Pradesh Congress party was formed in 1920, before that different organisations based in Guwahati, Calcutta and Jorhat led the people in different issues. The Bengali people coming from Calcutta also spread some political thoughts among the people. The Satra Sammelon and the Assam Association fought for the causes of Assamese people before 1920. But their leadership was from middle class, which they could not overcome. Yet regarding the need of a college and an university these organisations along with prominent personalities fought and made the common people aware of it. The university movement became so popular that common people also donated sums of money of among to it.

The spirit of nationalism came to the Assamese mind in response to the colonial rule in the 19th century. It was a language-based nationalism, a crusade by the English-educated Dhekial Phukan, Hem Chandra Barua, Gunabhiram etc. against the imposition of Bengali language in the schools and courts of Assam in 1836. The Missionaries, at first, sparked off a movement against this through the first Assamese journal 'Orunodoi'. They did the preliminary work that Assamese is
a full-fledged language, not a branch of Bengali. To establish this fact, Anandaram wrote some original text books in Assamese like *Asomiya Lorar Mitra*, *Few Remarks on Assamese language*, and grammar books etc. Hem Chandra Barua modified the letters and wrote a dictionary 'Hemkosh', published in 1900. The Jonaki group of writers under the able leadership of Bezbarua established the Assamese literature through the journal the 'Jonaki'. Dr. S.N. Sarma, noted writer of history of Assamese literature has remarked that Jonaki established a bridge between Western and Oriental ideas of Europe, particularly the content and forms of English literature inspired to write new literature. The language and literature were stabilized as a result of the patriotic upsurge by the said persons. But this language-based nationalism was misdirected in the 1960s, which resulted in linguistic communalism. Apart from this, the Assamese middle class also did not support the peasants' uprisings of the 60s of the 19th century. After that the political awareness that was shown by the Assamese middle class was through papers and petitions. Only one paper called the *Advocate of Assam* took some bold measures against the British though some writings. Fortunately a new group of students like Laskhidhar Sarma, Omep Kr. Das, Tyagbir Hem Ch. Barua — all coming from lower middle class family joined hands with the all India movement led by Gandhijee. The old leaders like Tarun Phukan, Nabin Bordoloi etc. were not willing to start non-cooperation movement in Assam. The formation of the Assam Pradesh Congress in 1920 which made the Assam Association and Satra Sammelan defunct, is a milestone in the national movement in Assam. It carried the movement successfully involving the peasants and workers, through the young leaders till 1947. Of course, Ambikagiri Roychoudhury, Kamalakanta Bhattacharya etc, had own line of political activities specially for Assam without disrupting the national movement for freedom. They tried their level best to make the people aware of patriotism through personal contact and public meetings Ambikagiri even
joined in his youth in the extremist activities. They were against the foreign influx, the monopoly of business by non-Assamese, but were not parochial. The communist line of political thought swept the minds of some Cotton College students. They were against the Germans in the world war-II. The Assam unit of CPI came into being in 1943. A host of young student leaders like Umakanta Sarma, Sankar Barua, Baneswar Saikia etc. joined the party. Another faction of the left ideology, the R.C.P.I. led a violent struggle under the leadership of Bishnuraba, Shankar Barua etc. It was even banned by the then provincial Govt. Let the revolutionary activities of the party brought a political tempest against a political complacency of the ruling party after the independence. Within the nationalism of the Congress there arose a sense of sub-nationalism for the welfare of the indigenous people. It was Gopinath Bordoloi, the leader of the Pradesh Congress fought tooth and nail against the proposal of the Cabinet Commission. The British wanted in include Assam in Pakistan at the time of independence. The congress President Subash Chandra Bose also could not realise the gravity of the proposal. For this act of heroism by Bordoloi against his own party's high command saved Assam. He also advised incorporation of the VIth schedule provision for the special protection of tribal groups. But with the sudden demise of Bordoloi this trend of political thought got lost. Bordoloi had a very close and ultimate relationship with the people. After his departure, the new congress Govt. was also dominated by upper caste Hindu Assamese. They forgot the agonies of the people, particularly of the different ethnic groups of the states. Dr. Gohain remarks that in stead of satisfying the tribal people, the chauvinistic Govt. named the different roads of Shillong as Bishnunagar, Motinagar etc. which expressed their chauvinistic attitude. So, in the sixties the separatist movements of the different ethnic groups started. The result was the creation of Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland etc. The centre's apathy towards the Assam people was also noticed right from the days of the cabinet
mission's visit. The AICC paid no attention to the demand of the Pradesh congress. The indifferent of the central leader on the Grouping Assam with Pakistan planted the seed of discontentment. It grew further. After independence, no MPs of Assam except socialist Hem Barua raised the burning issues of the in Parliament. The Assamese people expressed it through the refinery movement in 1957. Assam had to fight for a refinery with the central Govt. This sense of centre's apathy towards Assam compelled the Naga people to start an insurgency movement under Phizo. It spread to Mizoram Manipur also in late 60s. The colleges of Assam, particularly Cotton college were breeding ground for all political activities including Marxism-led radical activities. Similarly, the work-houses and the gardens were centres of trade union activities. Laskhidhar Sarma himself was a trade unionist in the tea gardens. The communist party's red workers' unions also helped in the creating political awareness among the workers. The Congress Party had its trade union bases in the tea-gardens. The left parties also fought for the rights and welfare of the workers. In Assam, there was a labour strike in the Halem tea estate in Darrang in 1921. In the Surama Valley also thousands of labourers protested against the low wage in the European gardens. The famous Digboi oil field's worker's strike rocked the nation in 1939. Referring to the waves of labour strikes in railways and tea plantation Dr. Amalendu Guha writes, "The phase of labour struggles during the year 1937-40 was a turning point in Assam's history in more than one respect. From the very beginning, these struggles, directed against British capital, had a clear anti-imperialist character as well as a board left-nationalist Orientation." So, the labour movement of Assam was more politically conscious than other groups. But those movements were politically weak as the Assamese middle class leaders never supported such moves as like as the peasants' uprising. But, the workers had a lesson in politics.
h. Transformation of the traditional institutions, beginning of new entertaining media and formation of a modern urban culture:

With the development of urbanisation in Assam many traditional institutions and art-forms like drama, music, festivals like the Durga Pujah, the Bihu, public meetings etc. were transformed to a different form in order to satisfy the taste of an urban population. Throughout Assam, all the towns including major towns like Guwahati, Shillong and Dibrugarh had some new institutions, directly influenced by the above-mentioned forces, which served as sources and entertainment and instruction. The rising middle class, inspired by a new economic stability and the outside persons established or modified some traditional institutions suitable for an urban society. Let's examine it in Guwahati and other towns of Assam.

Drama: Like Tezpur, Jorhat, Dibrugarh and other towns of Assam Bengali plays and song-dramas became popular during the early period of the British rule. The historical 'Ban-stage' (1905), Dibrugarh Amola Natya Mandir (1885), Sibsagar Natya Mandir, Jorhat theatre, Nagaon Natya Mandir (1920), Golaghat Natya Mandir (1885) etc. are the series of theatres set up throughout the state starting from the late 19th century showing a growing tendency of a refined taste. This started like a movement in all the administrative centres of Assam. The Bengali people who were in service assisted the local people in the beginning of this movement. "In Dibrugarh we have a host of Bengali artists of the group "Bhabikal". They are Sunilendu Banerjee, Bimal Dhar, Dr. Umesh Chandra Mukarjee, Santosh Banerjee, Samir Guha Majumdar etc. Dr. Majumdar (1865-1950) was an actor and a singer. He recorded the first Assamese song on IIMV."22 The Assamese people found both the inspiration and the model from these example for modern drama. At Guwahati also, the Bengali and Assamese people founded the "Arya
Natya Mandir Samaj' at Panbazar, which was a cosmopolitan locality. In 1912 there arose a conflict between the two communities regarding the fixation of date for an Assamese play to mark the grand arrival of king George-VI at Guwahati. The conflict led to the birth of the famous "Kamrup Natya Samiti" (renamed as Kumar Bhaskar Natya Mandir in 1931) by resentful Assamese. "It was a turning point in the history of Assamese drama that a separate hall was built and the staging of drama was separated from pujah. Satynath Bora, Radhanath Phukan, Bholanath Das, Durgeswar Sarma, Nabin ch. Bordoloi, Gopinath Bordoloi etc. of the Assam's social and cultural life extended all possible help to this effort and Gopinath Bordoloi was the first secretary."23 Another Bengali gentleman Gopal Krishna Dey along with other Assamese and non-Assamese people took initiative in the establishment of Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti. The Curzon Hall Library, which was renamed as the 'Nabin Bordoloi Hall' later on was a good public library at that time and Dey took pain to run it successfully. The establishment of Rabindra Bhawan, District Library auditorium, and many cultural clubs like New Arts players, Pragati Sangha etc. after independence further strengthened this move of the Assamese people. All these groups staged Assamese dramas. It spread to the common people also. Some families of Guwahati made drama and music a family hobby. Notable among them is Satya Prasad Barua's family, who established a dramatic club called "Sundar Sevi Sangha " in 1934. He staged a drama at the time of Durga Pujah in their family with all his family members including his sister; the first co-acts being done by Braja Sarma in 1931. The Natya Prabakar tells they were loved at by the people and passed comments saying that the brother and sister turned husband wife at night.24 Under such a hostile social situation, Pragati Sangha under Girish Choudhury ventured on stage publicly the play "Shahjahan" with educated male and female actress. He produced another, a social play "Pratibad" with elaborate preparation, which hammered the age-old restriction on
women's role on stage. Even Ambikagiri could not tolerate it and ridiculed in 'Chetana' as The abortion of art". But many people welcomed it. Tilak Hazarika in "Natun Asomiya" hailed it as "a good step as it broke a barrier." Thus a new epoch was created in the history of Assamese drama. This type of venture, gradually became part and parcel of the emerging urban society.

Cinema: Just after one year of the performance of Sudar Sebi Sangha's drama with co-acting, Rupkonwar Jyotiprasad Agarwal exploded the cultural bomb with the release of 'Joymati' in 1935, the fourth motion picture in the history of India. It rocked the entire state as female characters took part in it. As said by Lakshadhar Choudhury people called them "Sowali Chor" when Jyotiprasad and he searched the towns and villages for actress. So both the picture and the co-acting revolutionised the cultural world of Assam. At that time IPTA was also sponsoring good cinemas. So the cine makers had good links with people. Jyoti prasad was a man with a vision of a modern culture. He had cinematic training in Edinbora edinborough and VEFA studio of Berlin. Through a social picture "IndraMalati" he attempted to make up his huge loss in the production of Jaymoti. Not only that, he constructed two cinema halls one at Tezpur called "Janaki" in the 1950s and 1960s respectively. By that time Guwahati got six cinema hall in order to entertain a growing urban cinegoers, who developed this taste along with drama. Cinema was demanded by people in the towns. By 1960's a good no. of Assamese film were released. Jyotiprasad even brought the cinema to the rural areas with the help of a mobile machine. The background music of cinema and drama also developed. The film's song also enthralled the people. Another film personality Bhupen Hazarika failed as a film maker but earned laurels praise for excellent music. Both Jyotiprasad and Bhupen Hazarika and many others like Bishnu Rabha reached their highest popularity when they were actively associated with IPTA. So film, halls, music etc. came to Guwahati and other urban centres of Assam heralding a new
modern culture and society. Jyotiprasad was followed by many others, who stepped further in this direction. But, the quality deteriorated, particularly the standard set by Jyotiprasad could not be maintained. When IPTA's master piece "Do Bigha Jamin" was running sucessfully all over Bombay, Brajen Barua was making 'Dr. Bezbarua', very simple film.

The newly established Guwahati Radio station in 1948 enthralled the people with new songs and dramas. Radio is also, a carrier of modern culture. A group of artists enriched the urban culture in a new way. Actresses and female singers became an order of the day after independence. Radio is such a strong media that the new songs and dramas and other programmes aired to even to the remote villages, thereby spreading urban values. Of course, T.V. came to Assam only in the 1980s. But, gramophone became popular. Both radio and gramophone became a prestige symbol in the 1960s. The singers followed the way in music what was shown by Jyoti Prasad in his dramas by introducing indigeneous music in stead of Hindustani music. It also became an unavoidable part of the emerging urban culture.

Festival of Bihu and Durga Pujah: Guwahati has been a centre of Sakti Pujah since ancient days, but, the pujah with Durga idols was started by the Bengalees in Assam. Bengalee people celebrate this festival like their national festival and they introduced this form of modern Durga pujah with drama and mela in the eastern India. In Assam also, where there is Bengalee population, they celebrate it with all enthusiasm. The Bangalee elite introduced the Barowari or Sarbajanin Durga Pujah in the urban centres of Assam continuously for five days. During these days the place puts on a festive look with Bengalee Yatras, Dhulies, shops and gathering. In Panbazar, Chunnilal Dey and Kalipada Sen's pujah attracted people in huge groups, Dey decorated the idols like a bride with ornaments and clothes. It creates a free atmosphere of enjoyment in all the places. At Guwahati, at the
Arya Natya Mandir or in the residence of S.P. Barua dramas were staged to mark the occasion of Durga Pujah. This way pujah was modified by the urban Bengalees to make it a part of the modern urban society. In the Uzanbazar and Latasil area Parabatia Gohain, Barowari Puja mandap and S.P. Barua's family celebrated pujah.

The pomp and gaiety of the Durga pujah inspired many to do it in the other pujah. Barada Bisaya, the father khiroda Bisaya, organised Saraswati Pujah in the same time. He spent money with open hands for the pujah and decorated the idols with dresses and ornaments. It was heard that he brought the idols from Calcutta. The individual institutions that underwent changes is the birthday celebration with cakes and others.

Lastly, the urban Assamese middle class brought the rural festival Rangali Bihu (like Baisaki) from the fields of villages to the stage of town. It was a modern version of the traditional festivals and was given a national status with an anthem. It became a festival for the Bihu days. In 1952, for the first time of Assam, the Guwahati Bihu Sammelan at Latasil was celebrated under the leadership of Lokabandhu Bhubaneswar Barua, R.G. Barua etc. During the festival days, sports, music and Bihu dances enthralled the people. It worked as a good secondary association in the urban context expressing the community life of the Assamese people. Later on, Bihu dance competitions were also held in Guwahati. In 19th century some intellectual of the state laughed at the Bihu calling it a dance of the low people, within fifty years the Assamese middle class established it with hearty welcome in the cultural capital of the state. It is a sign of the growing urban culture in Guwahati.

Thus, we find that the Assamese people of the towns, more particularly the urban middle class of Guwahati was in the process of a transformation. The impact of the urbanisation is quite visible from the above discussion. It was a new society
with the traditional values attending some changes. The society was at crossroad. But towards the end of the sixties, many new values invaded the urban Assamese society. This society had to change its traditional values or modified it; totally new values hitherto unknown to Assamese society also won the heart of the urban society that was thriving for modernisation. Let us see these changes in the following section.

B. URBAN LIFE AND MODERNISATION OF VALUES.

In the previous section, it is seen that an urban society in the major towns of Assam was emerging due to the increasing urbanisation. The conflict between the traditional and urban values started in a society which was otherwise very deeply rooted in tradition. It is still going on. So, modernisation of values has taken place to a restricted degree, not pervasively. Even the casteist feeling prevailed in society. As to the sense of secularism, Assam was more or less a land of Sankardev and Ajanpeer. Due to the impact of the Vaisnavite philosophy, Assam has been free from the communal virus L.N. Bezbarua and others, who were torch bearers of the modern Assamese literature could not protest absolutely against casteism. As to the superstitions, not only rural masses but also the educated urban people are still under the spell of this evil. We can fairly say that it has not disappeared, but the modernisation of superstition has taken place, as we see in the use of Astrological measure like precious stones in rings. But they no longer believe in ghosts, that is true. So there is always a tension between the two sets of values, one buying to overcome the other. After this tension be taken the two sets of values, right from the Dhekialphukan's days to the late sixties, the emerging urban society of Assam as a result of the forces mentioned above, accepted some new values or modified some of the existing values, some others were discarded with a foot deep-rooted in the traditional values. After independence this conflict
became more and more resulting in the birth of a new set of values. M.N. Srinivas, the leading sociologist on Indian society observes, "Since independence, there has been a visible improvement in the living standard of large no. of people, who eat better, dress better, invest sizeable portions of their income in the education of their children, live in better housing and spend sizeable sums in buying such consumer durables as fridge, cars, etc., constructing good houses with modern facilities."28 These changes in living standard is a result of modernisation of external values. Assam is not an exception to it. But one point is important that there is difference in degrees among the different towns. The life style of Shillong and Guwahati compared to other places like Barpeta or Tezpur has a difference. Nalinidhar Bhattacharya says that the people of Shillong were influenced more by Europeans. So they used drink openly. But at Guwahati, it was done stealthily. At personal level, people accepted wine, but socially it was objectionable.29 Now let us discuss the new values in several heads as follows.

a. Social reformation and secularization: Under the impact of western society and Bengali society, the urban Assamese people changed their attitude towards some social evils. They wanted to get rid of some of the age old evils like suppression of women which resulted in child marriage, restriction on widow's remarriage, polygamy and others. The women's education, co-ed, co-acting etc. were denied by a male dominated society. People came out to end such a situation as to women. The problem of untouchability and casteism, opium-eating also came up in the agenda for reformation by the educated urban people. The feudal lords had the practice of polygamy. Till recently many rich people had kept women. In the 19th century it was a common practice. Benudhar Sarma has written that men of the higher position in society in those days was not only polygamous, but the no of wives they kept decided their social status.30 With the expansion of western education among the people in general and women in particular this practice was
diminishing gradually. The problem of widow remarriage was very tragic. Gunabhiram Barua, who fought the problem under the influence of Brahmo Samaj, has recorded in his drama the unending sorrow of the forced widowhood. As he was a follower of the Brahmo Samaj, he himself married the widow of his friend Parasuram Barua in 1872 in civil court. It was the first registry marriage of Assam and made a hue and cry in Assam. In the novel "Swarnalata" by Tilottama Mishra we have an account of this historical fact. The family of Gunabhiram was facing problem due to this window marriage, though not excommunicated for their high social position and close relationship with British officers. They at last left Assam bag and baggage for Calcutta. Hem Chandra Barua, the author of Hemkosh, also supported window remarriage. After the death of his first wife, he resolved to stay a widower showing a great moral support to the widow's sufferings despite heavy pressure from his relatives and friends for a second marriage. He was also a social rebel against casteism. He took meals prepared by non-Brahmin cook and was a conservative regarding food. But, surprisingly he never showed any sign of equality in matters of different ethnics groups while giving an account of those people in his Assamese dictionary. Yet, his act of remaining single and taking food from non-Brahmin are like rebellion against a conservative society.

After the British rule the position of women in society improved. The new govt. after indepedence took special steps to facilities for women's education. Pandit Nehru also said that the education of boy was education of one person, but education of girl is the education of the entire family. But the follower of Nehru, in Assam never realised his message fully. The total no. high schools for girls increased from 27 in 1947-48 to 163 in 1967-68. Simultaneously the no. of female students also increased in high schools from a total of 10,312 in 1947-48 to 1,09,062 in 1967-68. At the college level, the no of female students was 698 in 1947-48, it increased to 9908 in 1967-68. The
participation in university classes also increased. Enrolment at the university level shows that the no was only 45 in 1949-50 which increased to 699 increasing 15% in eight years. Though the figure is much less than that of males, the growth is a sign of growing tendency towards women education. Puspalata Das, Rajobala Das Chandraprava etc. fought for the expansion of women's education. At Guwahati, the T.C. girls school, the Panbazar Girls School the St. Mary's English Medium School, the Bengali Girls School etc. have contributed a lot towards the expansion of secondary level education. The Lady Kean College in Shillong the Handique Girls College, the University of Guwahati etc. have played the lead role in the field of higher education for women. We have female engineers and doctors also in the late sixties, though in small no.

As to the social equality in society, the establishment of Assam Pradesh Mahila Samiti in 1926 is an important event in the history of women's right. Chandraprava Saikiani led the women from the front. She broke the social restriction on women by riding a bicycle while she was a school girl in Bajalee and established school for women's primary education. So, the male society called her a "Dangkati Sowali", that is the naughty girl. She never got the recognition of her married life from society, but without nodding to social restrictions, she brought up her child. She protested against the separate arrangement of sitting for male and female delegations in the Nagaon session of Asom Sahitya Sabha in 1925. 

"She (Chandraprabha) sat with the males, who went there as delegates. When people were asked to speak she rose and expressed emotionally that only one analogy of an imprisoned lioness in a cage came to her mind while seeing the segregation of women delegates in a male-dominated society."

Chandraprava hammered the social values restricting women from taking part equally with the males in public meeting on that day. She along with Puspalata Das, Amalprava Das and many others organised the women of the state for their rights. The
independence movement, the new laws of the independent govt. like special marriage act, 1954, Hindu marriage act, 1955, and the succession act, 1956 etc. have guaranteed a little for the preservation of women’s right in marriage, divorce and property. Some forces have directed the women towards anti-male agitation also following the western capitalist nations. The communist parties of Assam after independence had opened their women’s organisations of the for the uplift of women. The no. of political activists have increased after independence. Of course, the Congress party gave nominations to ladies and in 1962 there were two elected members of house. The new women leaders raised the issues of rape and dowry through the organisation, we have already discussed in the previous section of the co-acting.

The struggle for independence united all sections of people irrespective of caste and religion on a single platform. It brought closer all people. Both Muslim and Hindu workers fought together. Guwahati also became a communal harmony. Untouchability also got a blow at the hands of the young Congress leaders like Lakshidhar Sarma, Krishna Sarma and Omeo Kr. Das. Lakshidhar Sarma took refuge in a Muslim friend’s house called Ismail in Calcutta when the city was witnessing communal riots. Krishna Sarma went to the extent that he opened his own namghar (Prayer house) for Harijan people of Jorhat. The great personality of Gandhiji influenced those people. But most of the upper caste leaders were still practising casteism. In the 50s when Barada Bisaya arranged Saraswati pujah at his Uzanbazar residence with great pomp people of all castes went to see it, though the high-caste people never accepted prasada. All people were invited to the marriage from all castes, but they were served separately as disclosed by Bhuban Mohan Das and S.P. Barua in interview. The G.U. authority took a revolutionary step by opening cosmopolitan hostels. Even Cotton College, till today has separate Hindu and Muslim hostels, but the G.U. authority has taken a significant step
toward secularism as back as in 1948. This has helped in secularization of religions minded students. Already, the impact of sanskritisation was seen in the lower castes or some tribal people who showed their changed attitude towards food and dress and some habits. As the British added water and fertilizer to the plant of casteism and communalism for a long period as a policy of divide and rule, the state of Assam could not expect to eradicate such problems, which is deep rooted in tradition, within a fixed period. But in the urban areas, due to competitions and complexity of life these problems are on the diminishing trend.

b. Rational and Scientific Outlook: With the growing urbanisation, Guwahati and other urban centres became the centres for science and technological development. The new scientific inventions and discoveries and the growing knowledge of health and hygiene made the city people to develop scientific outlook in matters of food habits, dressing materials and superstitions. As the state has not witnessed a tremendous growth in industrialisation, the urban society has also been lagging behind in discarding, many superstitions and developing a scientific outlook based on the idea "Truthfulness" and "Inpartiality" as said by J.B.S. Haldane. But with the growing activities of the voluntary organisations like Assam Science society for popular science, the publication of a science magazine called the "Bigyan Jenti" and many science articles in different journals, the popularity of science stream in colleges etc. have created an atmosphere conducive to the health and hygiene question relating to food and dress. Though a Physicist still visits Kamakhya temple first or puts on astrological stones, the city people are more aware of the truth of superstitions and taboos than before.

Food: The Assamese used to call themselves khar-khowa Asamiya, alkali consuming-Assamese as they used alkaline curry and also alkali as a substitute for common salt, made from the ashes of burnt plaintain trees. But this traditional
habit of fooding lost some of its vigour as soon as common salt was available to them through the Marowari groceries or British agencies. The menu also changed with the growing contact with British and Bengalee people. The use of spicy and hot food are examples. Even the educated youth of Guwahati or other places consumed hard drinks and beef following the young Bengal members in the 19th century. It was a very courageous act in a very strict traditional society. Jagnaram Phukan, who went to Calcutta for English education was supposed to take both wines and beef! Wines entered the Assamese society through tea garden and European clubs. It became a measure of standard to the urban middle class to drink in party or in club. Some people of Shillong became alcoholic due to free atmosphere there as revealed by Nalinidhar Bhattacharya to this researcher. It was the British officers who inspired the urban Assamese middle class people to take wine. Anandaram Barua started to drink when he was a school student. He learnt it from his elder brother Parsuram Barua. "Parsuram Barua was a liberal man and he offer young Anandaram also saying ho Ananda lo (Take Ananda take.)". To take Chicken was also an offence. Benudhar Sarma took Chicken in the early 20th century. Kamala Kanta Bhattacharya also consumed chicken in his life. These people received English education and became rational in matters of food. Kamala Kanta Bhattacharya has written a series of articles like 'Kaa Pantha' etc. where he has exhibited his rational out look. He never tolerated the religious dogmas of the Hindus. So, he went against the rituals of the Hinduism. A true patriot, Kamalakanta attacked the bad rituals of Hinduism whenever he got an opportunity. In these days, his article "Asamor Unnati" published in the Jonaki in 1890, commented that except the conservative rituals, Assam had no religion, which created a hue and cry. In those days, it helped grow a rational attitude towards religion and food. Dr. P. D. Goswami in his preface of the collected works of Kamalakanta Bhattacharya writes that he threw away his sacred thread, ploughed
land himself, the paper weight was made 'Salagram' of his pujah and above all diverted to Brahmo dharma. During the world war II, Guwahati witnessed the coming of the allied forces' soldiers. They camped in Cotton College also. A new hotel-cum-restaurant called 'Delight' was opened to cater the foreign soldiers. Another modern restaurant called 'Madhu Kunj' was inaugurated by justice Holiram Deka in late 1950s. Common customers also visited these restaurants and took new items — continental and European were served. Cutlets, Chop items, pudding, chicken roast, pizza etc. were the new items in the menu, Dr. Bhubanmohan Das, an Anthropologist and a resident of Panbazar remarks, "Our food habit changed when the kitchen was attached to the residence. Earlier Assamese people used to have separate kitchen, separate store house etc. In the 1950s people started to have an attached kitchen which brought a lot of changes in the food habits along with the introduction of LPGs in the 1960s." He said about a new restaurant at Panbazar called "Cafe Deluxe" in around 1943 to cater the new items. Another called "City Grille" also joined the tally of the new restaurants. These hotels also became popular addas for literary and cultural people. The cotton College students also visited these restaurants. Butter and other tin food items were available in the 'Assam Valley stores', situated at the present site of Kalpataru". Chocolates were also available in the market. At Chabua, Mahendra Borthakur says, milk and chocolate in tins were given to the students by the foreign soldiers based at Chabua. From the hotel and restaurants these foods entered the urban families in Guwahati or Dibrugarh. The new shops had to supply these to the outside officers in the different central govt. offices. But low-income groups of people of Guwahati usually avoided these foods.

The twin culture of tradition and modernity is remarkably visible in the rational use of dresses cutting across the tradition Guwahati and other towns of Assam were filled with different kinds of cloths. People now chose cloths depending
on the seasons. The Daccapatties of the different towns of Assam were crowded by cloth merchants from Dacca. The new designs required tailors and it was, Maheswar Neog writes, done by the new Muslim tailors. The New tailors changed the appearance of the Assamese people with new designs of coats and pants. At Shillong, some tailors also did it. The "Mohini Store" both in Guwahati and Shillong provided newly designed coats and pants right from the 1940s. Women's dresses also witnessed new additions. Lakshinath Bezberua writes that the new Assamese gentle society has been affected by the Bengal wave or any internal change. Like the dowry system coming from Bengal, the Bengali sarees have invaded the Assamese houses like the dowry system. That is, saree started to replace the mekhela chadar. But females had to face criticism in case of hair styles also. Recalls S.P. Barua, "His elder sister who had a bob-cut hair style came to sing in the Pandu session of AICC in 1926. She was criticised by her grand father severely, who even did not like to see her." Though there was criticism, the change is evident. In the 19th century and early 20th century, Gunabhiram, Jagnaram, M.C. Barua, Jagannath Barua, Gangagovinda Phukan etc. all put on western dresses like coat, pant and tie, shoe like English people. Lakshinath used both type of dresses. Padmanath put on this dress on his way to Guwahati as said in his autobiography. The tea planters were ahead of others in this respect. Some of them purchased clothes only at Chowringee, Calcutta. The Assam Valley stores in Guwahati also provided many luxurious items like tie, cosmetics etc. to the families. Benudhar Sarma writes about their western life style in his autobiography that how Gangagovinda Phukan dressed like a Sahib." He was always known as Mr. G.G. Phukan or Mr. Phukan Sahib. He always put on hat and coat. I never saw him to put on Assamese Churia even at his home." He was one of the pioneers in modern dresses among the natives. About M.C. Barua, he comments, "His external dresses were like Sahibs, but the internals one, were pure
Assamese.” He also writes about the dresses of Bhalakanta Barua, a head clerk under Godfray Sahib and relatives of Maniram Dewan, of Govinda Bezbarua, J. Barua etc. who put on these dresses from foot to head. They were totally imitating the English gentlemen in this matter. But this type of western dresses were not popular among the commoners at that time in the small towns. Anil Roy Choudhury, the left intellectual recalls that at Barpeta in 1940s, he put off his pant and dressed in dhoti while going home from the duty in the Excise department. The Barpeta people laughed at those dresses calling it "Driver's dress". But after independence, the new dress style invaded everybody, particularly the students going to study in Guwahati or Shillong or Calcutta and the affluent businessmen. The spread of cinema also had an impact on the mind in changing traditional dresses. Nalinidhar Bhattacharyya tells that while he had been in Shillong in 1960-63, the urban society of Shillong was modernised in matters of dresses and food like wines. The Christian influence is very much felt there.

The health and hygiene question also received priority among the govt. officials in particular and the common citizen in general. According to Kumudeswar Hazarika, the retired Head Master of Sonaram High School, the family of M.C. Barua first used sanitary latrine in the 1920s among the natives. The family of Phukan at Bharalumukh followed them. In the tea garden and in the govt. quarters, the British officials were extremely concerned about health and hygiene. The gradual expansion of medical treatment after independence made the commoners concern for cleanliness.

c. The rise of individualism: Before Industrial revolution the western society of different nations was not so much affected by a sense of individualism. In a country, having class difference and other illnesses like casteism, religious dogmas, individualism is practised. The break down of community life or joint families is
the root cause behind it. Writes Yogendra Sing, "In England the process of breakdown in the traditional joint family system almost coincided with the emergence of modern factories". In Assam it happened simultaneously with the rise of the middle class. Of course, individualism raised its ugly head during the Ahom rule also when Maniram Dewan, Kashinath Phukan, Lathou, Jagnaran Phukan etc. were charged with corruption as shown by Dr. Hiren Gohain. Involvement in corruption, that too in public money is the expression of individualism. Dr. Gohain writes, "Jagnaram Phukan collected Rs. 2000/- from public for watching Purandar Sinha, but he pocketed Rs. 1000 from that amount." But it was not a general practice. During British Period, the modern Assamese middle class exhibited it in many occasions. At first, they did not join or guided the peasants uprisings of the 60s in 19th century, an act which antagonize their British masters, thereby showing extreme selfish nature. The anti-opium eating movement was also betrayed by many leading tea planters. The young Congress leaders like Lakshidhar or Krishna Sarma were very serious but planters like Kuladhar Chaliha opposed it from the planter's point of view. The educated middle class displeased the British authority. The Kanalakanta's character has evolved out of this individualism. The business communities, particularly the tea planters always led an individual life. It is true, some of them like Radhakanta Handique or J. Barua's family donated liberally for the cause of education and culture. But, almost all of them lived in the big bungalows far from the crowd. They thought only of their families. The world of the 'Manar Dapon' and 'Khabar Bichari' by Padma Borkataki explains it in fiction. They were very much indifferent to the sufferings of the tea-garden labourers. They exploited them with low-wages and poor housing. With the general people also they never mixed. The Gymkhana club, the Gauhati club etc. are the places they visited for company. Already mentioned, they restricted the entry of the people with a fabricated bridge on the approach road to their bungalows. One can enter
only with cars, not convenient for walking. This type of secluded life affected their wives also, who remain all alone in the house till midnight as their husbands are busy. The film 'Aparupa' by Jahnu Barua is a social document on this problem of secluded life resulting in alienation. But like western industrialised societies, the Assamese urban society is not blighted by a sense of total alienation or not all the four types of alienations described by Marx. In Assam it is at the mental level only. Regarding the rise of this problem, Dr. Kishore Kr. Bhattacharya, poet and writer observes, "The relationship in Assamese society has contracted. They have been compartmentalised in their own families. This is rather social contraction than alienation, because, the people have become more selfish than losing in a state of no direction of alienation." The ruthless competitions for jobs and business in city have made the educated urban society more individualistic. But, they maintain social relationship also in attending marriages of the relatives. So, the gradual growing of hypocrisy is observed among them. Due to lack of industrialisation, the western form of all pervading alienation still has not affected the society. The concept of nuclear family also accelerates the selfish individualism. The Assamese urban society is yet to enter the western type of individualism. The Assamese society, as a whole, still, is enriched with a sense of collectivism coupled with individualism.

**d. Civil society and social values**: The new values adopted by the city and towns and the educated rural people made them conscious for a civil society with peaceful co-existence with all communities and progress for all. Though the civic senses of our people is far from expectation than other cities of the country. Gradually, a sense of this was emerging out. The society failed to make a homogeneous relationship with the western values, so it turned into a bane also sometimes. Through education in Calcutta or by contact with outside people, a section of people of the different places of Assam developed a reading habit. Before
independence, in the 19th century, we see that the 'Orunodoi' and 'Samachar Darpan' of Calcutta had a very good readership in Assam. The list attached proves it.

TABLE NO : 9
Showing subscribers of Orunodoi, both foreigner and natives from 1846 to 47

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Sibsagar</th>
<th>Lakhimpur</th>
<th>Dibrugarh</th>
<th>Jaipur</th>
<th>Chinkhowa</th>
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<td>1847</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
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<th>Tezpur</th>
<th>Mangaldoi</th>
<th>Nagaon</th>
<th>Guwahati</th>
<th>Goalpara</th>
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<td>1846</td>
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<td>42</td>
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</table>

F - Foreigner  
N - Native reader

Source : Orunodoir Dhalpat, Compiler - Dr. Birinchi Kr. Barua, 1965

Samachar Darpan was read by every educated person. 'Samachar Chandrika' and 'Masik Patrika' are the two popular Bengali journals in Assam. Dhekial Phukan returned to Assam not with English education only, he brought books and Journals also. "In the last part of 1844, he (Dhekial Phukan) returned home in a 600 money boat. When he came back from Calcutta, he brought with him different chairs, tables, almirahs and many articles and a good no. of English and Sanskrit books."49 So like Dhekial Phukan, a group of people developed the habit of reading other books also. Needless to mention that the 'Jonaki' and 'Bijulee' became a household name in Assam. The expansion of higher education also promoted reading habit. People began to collect books also following the examples of Dhekial Phukan. Rebati Mohan Datta Choudhury, the eminent story writer and novelist
tells that the Zamidars of Gauripur, who had a very close relation with Calcutta, had one big personal library. They allowed the local readers to borrow books from the library. The fictions of R.L. Stevenson, which Sri Dattachoudhury read himself, was also available in the library. After independence, in the 1950s and 60s, the different schools and public libraries came up and it catered the intellectual hunger of the readers. One interview recalls that in the 1950s, there was great competitions among the students in reading library books. After independence, the service holders, usually, married educated girls. They also read at home when their husbands and children were cut in schools and offices respectively. The all India news papers also arrived. So, keeping one news paper, either national or local becomes fashions in the city people's house. The district H.Q. at Barpeta also got papers from Calcutta, expresses Bireswar Barua, noted poet and writers. The *Hindustan standard, Yugantar* etc. were available at Barpeta before World War-II. Yogesh Das says that the popular Assamese magazine *'The Awahan'* and *'Ramdhenu'* had a considerable no. of readers in the tea gardens alone. The progressive group of Bhabananda Dutta and Chakreswar Bhattacharya also created a progressive reader's 'group through the magazine, *'Jayanti'*. Anyway, the growing popularity of journals, newspapers and books indicate that in the urban areas, where these were available, a reading habit spread gradually among the people.

The other value for a civil society is discipline and order in the public place. During colonial rule the maintainance of office time was strictly executed. All the school going students got this training from the serious Bengali and Assamese teachers. The office people learnt the skill of time management, particularly in the tea- gardens. Strict discipline was a part in the office. But after independence, it seems to be on the wane. Lakshinath Bezbarua, Anandaram Barua served their native literature despite heavy work schedule. They were able to do it because of good time- management, an urban value. The siren of the offices and factories
During the colonial rule was a great lesson to the emerging middle class for discipline and time management.

Already we have discussed some social values in family and Kinship, political awareness in the previous section. The coming of the public meeting and oration were also seen in the city of Guwahati. The Calcutta going students saw it there. The Julilee field of Guwahati witnessed all the leaders of the Indian National Congress including J.N. Nehru. The Guwahatians arranged public meeting there to express their concern for a particular issue. M.C. Barua and other leading Assamese constructed the "Carzon Hall" in Guwahati in 1901 to mark the grand visit of Lord Carzon, from the fund that was collected for the felicitation to him. Though the Assamese middle class showed extreme loyalty to British by honouring a Governor-general publicly, the hall was utilised as a place for public meetings in order to create awareness. Later on, similar public halls were constructed at several towns like Bisturam hall at Jorhat, T.R. Phookan hall at Barpeta etc. which served the same purpose.

Following the British clubs, some new clubs like the Gauhati Club (1903), the India Club exclusively for the upper middle class people were established in Guwahati as a means for secondary association. The restaurants also offered as places of gathering for select people like the coffee house of Calcutta. By 1960s Gauhati had as many as 9 such addas for literary, cultural and sports men. These institutions worked as the centres for spreading modern ideas and bad things as well like alcoholism. But they are part of an urban society. At Shillong also similar clubs came up like Assam Club, Mukul Sangha etc.

**e. Craving for comfortable living:** With gradual changes in professions and growth in economy due to urbanisation the urban people right from the 19th century onwards, developed an aesthetic sense, which makes them different from rural
people, in every sphere of life, from living houses to the collection of books and other things of modern civilisation for a comfortable and decent living. The Pax Britanica along with the people of other countries and provinces flagged off this journey of the Assamese urban society towards modernisation in matters of housing, internal decoration, gardening etc. They also preferred to travel for comfort by mechanised two wheelers, cars and jeeps privately. It became a standard of life to own a private car or a good house. They also gradually preferred white collar jobs and kept away from physical labour, rather depended on servants for such labour.

The British introduced new type of houses in Assam for comfortable living keeping in view of the special climate of the region. As the North-Eastern region belongs to a high seismic zone at the foothill of the Himalayas, they preferred Assam-type house with concrete walls. The first house they built after their arrival at Guwahati was the commissioner's office with thatched roof. Assamese people had separate kitchen, granary, Drawing room or cow's shed. But the rich people constructed new Assam-type houses with kitchen and drawing room attached to the main house. Even latrines and bathrooms were attached. The Baruah's house, the Fakharuddin's building, the Cotton College's Assam-type buildings, the present judge's quarters the D.C's quarter, — all these are constructed as per British architecture. The tea planters constructed their bungalows with big chimney in a sprawling area and there must be a lawn in front of the house. Jorhat and Dibrugarh have such buildings till today. The local carpenter's mainly from North Guwahati were experts in construction. The internal decorations also changed with building. In this respect both English and Bengalee people influenced the Assamese people. In the second half of the 19th century, Dhekial Phukan was influenced by this. He arranged two types of sittings in his drawing room. To talk with the native people, he (Dhekial Phukan) made a sitting arrangement on ground with mattress and pillow. In the room, where he talked with the English people, he arranged chairs,
tables, book's almirah, and a long cloth-bag to keep letters."56 He maintained both tradition and modernity in this respect. In the late 1930s, the family of Guruprasad Barua, father of S.P. Barua and a high police officer used western type of furniture. S.P. Barua says that their house was built in 1935 and they had to use good furniture as many officers both English and others used to visit their residence."57 This spread to small towns also. Disclosing the use of furniture in Bajali, Sri Deven Goswami, an octogenarian and ex student of City College, Calcutta, says, only a few families of Bajali area were well-furnished in the 1950s. But furniture was simple.58 Other new internal decorations include the replacement of the hanging picture of God's picture with embroidered picture or paintings after independence. Some people hanged the head's skull of the deers with horns, some others binding photographs of family members. The embroidered table cloths were also in use as it was learnt from Bengalee ladies by the Assamese ladies. Some ladies purchased photographs and good embroidered table cloth from Calcutta as said by some ladies of the city. Most of the interviewed persons agreed that the dining table was introduced in the sixties in general, though the tea planters used in their bungalows in the early part of the 20th centuries. The dining table, which can accommodate only four or five persons, heralds the beginning of nuclear family. Similarly the beautiful cup-plates, tray, dishes etc. came around the same time. Those people who went to Calcutta frequently they brought these before independence. Some Muslim families of the rural areas also used cup-plates. Assamese people liked white-collar jobs than jobs of hard labour. So, they hankered after services. Most people donot like physical labour. During the Ahom rule also the 'Dangaria class' or any feudal Chief never did hard physical labour. The 'Paiks', were provided from the king to do the household works of the dangarias. They were heavily dependent on the paiks for any kind of physical labour including cultivation. So this trend passed more or less to the middle class people also of
the colonial times. In 1950s the rich people of Guwahati went for marketing with a servant. He would carry the bag. It was also a symbol of social status. This type of showing nature also developed in course of time. The survey made by Rani Hazarika, mentioned already found that the middle class people developed the tendency of keeping servant even then there is a house-wife. Out of 1952 she surveyed, she found that 95% of the family of both husband and wife working had kept servant for domestic work like washing utensils and clothes, marketing and baby caring etc. In the single earning family this tendency is less than 50%. Of course, only a few families had private cars. In the 40s only a few people like Tarun Phukan, Dr. Jyotish Das, Mr. Kamakhya Ram Barua and Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua etc. had private cars. In 1956, in Assam except Manipur and Tripura, the registered no of Motor cycles were 664, Taxi cabs no-223, cars and jeeps were 6132. govt. vehicle 951. The motor cycles, cars and jeeps belonged to individuals. It increased to in 1975-76 that the no. of Motor cycles were 2293, cars and Jeeps were 18889, others ware 533. The jeeps were used in the hill districts of Assam. But the no of two wheelers and cars have increased much indicating the urban people's attitude towards comfortable travel. The urban, who could afford, purchased two wheelers and cars to lessen the physical labour in travel and to save time. For the leisure and comforts, in the west people had so many gardens and children parks. Of course, it was started in Guwahati late. But in Shillong we had the beautiful full lake parks. The music and cinema as mentioned earlier were also used for leisure and delight. Subha Barua, who had one radio and gramophone records shop sold three sets of radios to three persons. The first one was sold to Dr. Brooke of Paneri Tea Estate, the second one to the princess of Beltola and the last one being sold to S.C Roy, the Principal of Cotton College in 1939. This is also an indicator of modern taste in the towns of Assam.
**f: some negative values:** The positive aspects of urbanisation was accompanied by some corresponding evils also. In a previous section, we have seen that the emerging middle class in the urban areas was ruthless. They were motivated by their own interest and they tried to fulfill it by hook or crook. In order to pass a comfortable and luxurious life, the urban middle class in service required a lot of money. They could not afford such a life for their wives and children with their legitimate salary. It led them to take resort in unfair means for money resulting in rampant corruption. They threw away the sense of patriotism for nation's development and ran endlessly after money. It is a common aspect in any colonial nation, as said by Riggs that the newly liberated people were caught in a continuous fight among themselves for money and power. Like China, India could not inspire its people to be patriotic for nation building. Though some officers in the Ahom rule was corrupt, but it was not a general practice. But after independence, many bureaucrats became corrupt in great numbers following the politicians. The world war II enhanced the process. The imperialist forces following caused further damages in the erosion of traditional values of honesty and sincerity by providing easy money and they succeeded in the political battle by mesmerising the people by pounds and dollars. Even the common men joined the long procession for the burial of some precious traditional values. We find a very excellent picture of that impact on the Assamese society in Yogesh Das's *Dawar aru Nai* & Abdul Maliks *"Adarshila"*. The other things, the great war instigated in Assam was the introduction commercial prostitution. Prostitution in Assam was in some of temples like the Devadasis since ancient days. The kept women of the influential persons were also one kind of prostitution. But the foreign armies in Assam during war time accelerated the system. The American militaries secured innocent girls from the middlemen, who got commissions. As they remained away from their wives, they were usually suffering from sex-hunger. So, sometimes, they lifted the innocent
girls also to the camp. Mahendra Borthakur, the eminent playwright heard and saw some such tragic cases during his childhood in and around Makum where there was a military base. He recalls, "Such girls and women, after they were exploited physically by the militaries, could not return to their normal village life as they were neglected or driven away by the villagers in the name of morality. What remains to them is the unwilling pursuit of a hateful life of a sex worker. During the war time such things really happened." 63 Kumud Hazarika points out other reasons for this urban problem. "The river ports and the crowded stations were the red-light areas before and after the independence. The crew members of a ship keep away from their families for a couple of months together, which prompted them to seek prostitutes through the middlemen. Sometimes, they spent the night at the nearby villages." 64 At Barpeta, the Muslim women became sex workers. Bireswar Barua narrates about the existence of such a place at Barpeta. One Jagabandhu, who was a small tea-shop owner prospered within few days when he allowed the beautiful Muslim prostitutes to run their business from his shop. It was the meeting place of the customers and the prostitutes, who took tea and sweets there. 65 So here and there in the towns of Assam this profession grew up. Some rich Assamese people had the experience in Calcutta also, where the red light areas are open secret. The growth of slum areas also led to the growth of prostitution.

As the moral standard started to decay, other evils also invaded the society. After independence, the control of the family also loosened as a result of the general degradation. The corrupt fathers were always laks in family administration. The luxurious life led to the endless hedonism. The moneyed-class became adulterous, there was only few among the rich people to throw stones to the sinner. In fact the repression of sexual feelings among the middle class following so-called morality led to the manifestation deformed sexual activities. People dered not to do such
things openly at that time, but at night or under the cover of darkness, they expressed their heart's feelings, in many cases, in adultery. Similarly, in the field of romantic ideals also, what people, particularly middle class people apparently followed in words, in many cases did not act that way in reality showing a double standard in romantic ideals. The incestuous relationship within the known circle began to happen. But this was limited to the rising middle class people and the businessmen. The common people were not so spoiled. But in a society of high morality, few cases were enough to spoil the social atmosphere. Pre and post marital relationship accompanied by alcoholism became familiar incidents among the service holders based at Shillong in particular. Many rising middle class people wanted to be modern by drinking English wines and adultery. Nalinidhar Bhattacharya tells that some young lecturers of Shillong-based colleges took wines during class hour also.

In village society, adulterous men or women were punished publicly till recently, but it was an open secret in the urban society of Shillong or the tea-planters' society of the Upper Assam. The lack of family control led to the problem of juvenile delinquency resulting in crimes. Most of the antisocials were from the filthy atmosphere of the slums. Dacoity, stealing and murder happened in the urban society in the sixties, but in small nos. Some people suffered from mental diseases due to the increasing pressures of economic hardships and unemployment and moral laxities. Sometimes cases of suicide also occurred. Other important negative urban values marked in those days are hypocrisy and double standard with Enlightened modern ideals, lack of generosity and meanness and decay and absence of larger collective ideals.

C. THE LITERARY REPRESENTATION OF CITY LIFE

Behind the growth and development of any form of literature, the social condition of a society at a given period and the ideas current at time, have their
roles to play in the most significant way. Thus the social life of a particular periods cannot or does not escaped an author of the period. "It is true that literature may not carry a full picture of a society of its time, yet it carries the essence which may be called the summary of all history of a society of a particular time." The values of a society of a particular time will shape the mentality of the author, who selects the facts. Under such situation, the above-mentioned values of the Assamese society found expression in different ways in the hands of different writers. But literature in general and fiction in particular of Assamese people could not direct the same of other nations, rather it had taken models from the Western and Bengali literature. As to the city life, it was experienced by the Assamese authors only in 19th century while English or continental literature was flooded with such type of literature at that time. As to English literature and others, the industrial revolution played a revolutionary role in stimulating the portrayal of city life, particularly industrial life-based novels. It started all in the late 18th century. Raymond Williams, the famous critic and thinker, has narrated his experience of this new life in 'The city and the country'; of how he realised the change in the life style of English country life after the coming of the industrial revolution. He belonged to a border village between Wales and England. But gradually, he saw the difference. He remembers, "The country life had its meanings, but these changed in themselves and changed in relation to others. In the South-West, at nights, we used to watch the flare, over the black ridge of Brynarw, of the iron furnaces of industrial Wales. In the East now at nights, over all field with the elms and the white horse, I watch the glow of Cambridge: a white tinged orange; and in the autumn, here the stable fields are burned, sometimes catching the thorn hedges, and when I saw this first at night I took it as strange accidental fire. My own network, from where I sit writing at the window, is to Cambridge and London, and beyond them to the postmark places, the unfamiliar stamps and the distant cities; Rome, Moscow, New
York. The author of a book based on such experience of city life describes the coming of the iron industries with a total new look hitherto unknown to him. After coming to Cambridge University, his experience widened. Outside the university campus, the hue and cry of the city life was confronted by him. This way many creative writers of his age felt it and recorded in their works. Critics of the world are agreed on one point that the industrial revolution brought a lasting change in England and other Western nations. It brought hopes and future to many, but many more evils inter the society. The birth of the working class and their suffering due to low wages and bad housing could not move their masters. The people became different, their behaviour different. The peaceful and tranquil life of the rural England disappeared in the smokes of the factories. Above all, as marked by William Worthsworth, the famous poet of English Romantic age, the people in general were motivated by greed for money and for comfortable living. The rich was more in this race. In a poem called London, sonnet, 1870, he has expressed with the changing mentality of the city people of London.

......now our life is only drest
for show; mean handy-work of craftsmen, cook
    or groom !....
The wealthiest among us is the best
No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
      that is idolatry; and these we adore,
Plain living and high thinking are no more
The homely beauty of the good old cause
   Is gone .....
It is true that the development is necessary, but not at the cost of humanity or human values. The English society, after the coming of the industries was driven mad by rapine, avarice and passion for acquisition. On the opposite side the condition of the poor became miserable. Thomas Hardy's Wessex novels describe the condition of the people, who were evicted from the fields for setting up industries. Again, Raymond Williams make a pertinent comment in this respect. "The Industrial revolution not only transformed both city and country, it was based on a highly developed agrarian capitalism with a very early disappearance of traditional peasantry." Hardy has drawn a fine picture of the breakdown of this rural society in Jess of the *Tess of the Durbervilles*. Tess was the member of the ancient, Ville family now reduced to a cart-driver. One day the horse of the cart met with an accident and the source of income of the family, the horse died on spot. The death of the horse has symbolically been presented in the novel and it brought doom to her life. She had to lose her virginity at the hands of middle class rake and lead a very difficult life full of struggles. The impact of the industrial revolution could be best found in a master novelist of the Victorian age. Charles Dicken, who has very artistically recorded in words the English life of that period. He has sympathetically drawn the poor people's life of London in his novels also. *David Copperfield*, *Hard times*, *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations* etc. are important social novels by Dickens, which include the city experience in a lucid manner. The "Coketown" of *Hard times* is the symbol of the industrial world. Coketown with all its brick buildings and its conformity and sterility and the Educational system, is the setting for the novel. It is a symbol, which means the brick jungle, the factories, the mad elephants and the death bringing smoke is the serpent and the machinery is the master. All these symbols create an atmosphere of horror. For whom is it a picture of horror? "Undoubtedly the industrial workers had to suffer a lot due to hard work and low wage. It was a very difficult period for the working
class and the other poor people. Dickens has given a photographic description of the struggles, the desperation and the momentary joys of the working class in the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th chapter of the first book. The hero Stephen Blackwool, a powerloom weaver in the mill of Bouderby. He is forty years old and a man of integrity. His wife left him many years ago, their life is like that. He loves another called Rachael, but frequently disturbed by his former wife, who is a known alcoholic. He cannot obtain a divorce from the court as he will have to pay huge sum of money as compensation. The British laws are not favourable for the poor people. On the other hand, the struggle he had led seemed to be futile. In the above description of Coke town, it was Shephen who had condemned the industry. Dickens expresses the hard reality through the character of Stephen that there was no equality among the men except at birth and death. Raymond Williams is apt to summarise it this way. "Indeed it is tacitly dropped and every other point in Hard times, where the people, quite clearly, are not 'equally like one another'. where indeed their emphatic differences and contrasts are in the end the decisive organisation of the novel." The feeling of class difference is very much active in the Stephen's mind, which was a social consequence of the industrial revolution. His other masterpiece, "Great expectations" also exposes the urban values of the middle class people, who were obsessed with mere respectability. The greed for money swept over the organic society of England so much that even the commoners could not escape the all pervading influence of this money culture. The great expectations of the people, were not wished by hard labour and simplicity, but by easy money and snobbery. One such example is the character Compeyson, who courted Miss Havisham only for her riches. He was not attracted towards her by any other values. At last, on the day of the marriage he betrayed her after plundering as much money as he wanted and threw her into all sorts of criminal conspiracies only ending with her deaths. Another character, Pip, who was brought up by a
couple called Joe and Mrs. Joe, who were poor. The individualism that grew in Pip made him selfish. He was even ready to leave his caretaker parents. The heartless Estella is also a product of industrial society. This urban society has people who can work restlessly, but they are blighted by negative values like empty show and misleading passions. It lacks sympathy for others and kills all basic simple nature.

In the 20th century we get the best examples of a disorganised society in the novels of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. D.H. Lawrence had a series of novels like "Sons and Lovers", "Women in Love" or "Lady Chatterley's lover" etc. against the setting of industrial society. The man-woman relationship was discussed by him in the context of such a background. Regarding the modernist kind of literature in the western countries its origin too may be found in the social condition of those countries. The modern fiction with a new style and without any traditional plot are not born all of a sudden. "without any doubt there is a serious attitude towards life behind such fiction coming out of a special socio-cultural context. The tragic experience of disillusionment results, in those countries, in a deep sense of uncertainty and void. The Western societies had passed three centuries with rationalism and related values. Now the dynamic motion of history has made those rationalism and values uncertain and void plunging the people in to a dangerous and unacknowledgable experience."70 It was the result of the political and social developments of those countries involved off and on in the destruction of humanity through wars and catastrophes, Bertrand Russel, the eminent philosopher of modern times, has termed this experience of the western nations as spiritual vaccuum after the horrible experience of the world war-II.71 From Virginia Woolf to Milan Kundera, we get the fragmented city society in their fiction. Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway is a victim of alienation in such a society. Her husband, Richard Dalloway is a busy politician, who gets little time to attend to his family. On the
day of her birthday many images of loneliness dominate her mind while she was going around shopping. She remembers she married Richard, a rich man's son neglecting her beloved Peter, who was a poor boy. Now Richard has no time for her. At the Bend street, there is a park called Regent Park, where Lucivia is sitting with her husband Serinas. Lucivia is a Jew and Serinas is a Chistian. Both fell in love while Serinas was in Italy in connection with war. The horrifying war experience made him a psychological wreck. His wife also became mad. The author has shown the impact of war on individualism when Mrs. Dalloway returns home when the guests have already started to arrive. It was a distinguished gathering, where the Prime minsiter was also expected to come. The gathering itself is an example of the city people of London. Her husband Richard arrives only at 3.O'clock spending the lunch time with a lady called Bruton. In the midst of such a large crowd. Mrs. Dalloway feels quite lonely and almost feel like killing herself. So, Woolf has shown the impact of the modern society on the individual — how it has made them egocentric. It is a world where natural husband wife relationship is broken and perhaps not possible due to mechanisation of human relations. The Again, Raymond Williams has wonderfully summerised the world of V. Woolf. "In V. Woolf the discontinuity, the atomism, of the city were aesthetically experienced, as a problem of perception which raised problem of identity — and which was charactersitically resoloved on arrival in the country."72 That is, the problem of identity crisis is exclusively a city's problem, not of the country. Of course, in course of time, the rural soeity was also developing the same trend in the highly industrialised society. This type of city life also we get in James Joyce, the author of epic novel 'Ulysses,' which is the modern varison of the Ulysses myth. It is also set in the city of Dublin. By this, most of the authros have become obsessed with city life experience. So is the case of Joyce also. The fragmentary experience of city life, now accelerated by fast pace of life could be seen in Joyce. The modern
images of painting and film have been exploited in the modernist novel like *Ulysses*. The hero explains his day's experience in the city in a new language and in a new form with no traditional plot. The western society was at its highest peak of natural achievement in the 20th century. But the two great wars brought many changes in this society. The world war alone killed crores of people with the destruction of two cities of Japan, — Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The first world war also brought a similar experience to T.S. Eliot. The excessive greed for property and territory and the craze for ideological expansion as said by Russell have made Eliot very cynical about the future of civilisation. In his *Wasteland*, the world itself is a wasteland. The city of London after world war I has been portrayed here. There is contrast lovers of Elizabethan times on the banks of Thames and the typist girl and her clerk lover. people of . One image of a typist girl who is doing meaningless work also symbolises the sense of void of this civilisation. One lady sitting in her big house feels all alone and thinks of ancient and modern commerce. She also thinks of Dante's inferno and of Limmbo. These photographic images together create a situation of meaninglessness and void. The unfertile land is created through images. In this state of affairs, the people of the city of London are also affected by a sense of void.

**Unreal city,**

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, So many.
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Followed up the hill and down king William Street.
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a death sound on the final stroke of nine.

*(The Waste Land, T.S. Eliot)*
This is the city of death in the modern civilisation. The isolated images of city life bring a dejected mood. The life-less and meaningless life of the city of London is an analogy for the whole modern European civilisation, at the zenith of its material achievement, but at the bottom of its spiritual happiness.

In the neighbouring Bengali Languages and literature, the creative writings underwent a change with the arrival of the British. Calcutta was the cultural capital of the East India Company. Moreover, the socio-economic condition was better than Assam or other eastern states of India. With the advent of Bankim Chandra, Kabiguru Rabindranath Tagore etc. Kabiguru Rabindra Nath Tagore, the Bengali literature started on his glorious career. It went far ahead than the other regional literature. The mercantile economy brought many colours to the Bengali society, so the Calcutta-based writers began a different style of writing. We see that Bankim Chandra, Rabindranath and Sarat Chandra introduced modern urban life to Bengali literature. They expressed the New humanism with enthusiasm. Sarat Chandra was a model writer for our Lakshidhar sarma or Dandinath kalita, more particularly as to the female characters. Bankim Chandra wrote social novels like Bishabriksha, Krishnakantar will with a view to reforming the social evils of his time. Sarat Chandra paid special emphasis on women's question. His novel, Srikanta is a social document of that time regarding women's right. The heroine Abheya is protesting against her husband, who has married another woman in Burma. In Burma he is working. She does not want to be a Sati, protecting her husband’s licentiousness act. It shows her awareness for her rights. This is a strong protest against a male-dominated society at that time. Rabindra Nath also wrote novels like Gora. The spirit of Rabindra Nath continued to rule the domain of Bengali literature till the arrival of a group of new poets like Jibananda Das, Bishnu Dey and novelist like Tara Shankar and Manik Bandyopadhyaoor. The field of poetry was challenged by Jibananda Das, a bold and sensitive poet, who was inspired by the new English
poets after the World War-I. The magazines **Kollol** and **Parichoy** were the experiment ground for these poets, Jibananda's Banalata Sen" became household name in Bengali. New images of the city life instilled a new mood in his poems posing a threat to the unrivalled popularity of Rabindra Nath. Samar Sen gave readers taste of the squalor of modern urban life. During the 40s of 20th century Bishnu Dey and others also joined this new trend-setting literary movement. The city of Calcutta has always been a city of mystery for the western authors. Its vigorous life with millions of human souls, the life style of different categories, from rickshawpullers to the big bosses in industry, the people with different religion, castes and cultures had been the fields of attraction for many Western writers. Even writers like Kipling, Forster were attracted by it. The Bengali fiction writers have done it with double effort. Dr. Arun Kr. Mukhopadhyay, noted Bengali critic has said that a group of fiction writers came up in the 1941-50 period with new subjects and forms. The important writers among them are Syed Mustafa Siraj, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Sirkhendu Mukhopadhyay, Ananda Bagchi. Samaresh Basu etc. They wrote many new stories and novels with no trace of the spirit of Rabindra Nath or Saratchandra. This group of writers were quite independent and based in Calcutta around some journals. The Calcutta based newspapers like **Ananda Bazar Patrika's** literary supplement, **Yugantar**, **Nabakolol** etc. were their experimenting ground. They seemed to have no relationship with the past writers. Why they became so.? Dr. A. Mukhopadhyay explains, "They were born in times of black out, famine, riots, through bloody independence or around the colonial rule. The old writers considers that they are new blood group. While they were growing up, the feeling of communal life was gone.... They were isolated, solitary and very angry. They are ready to live in a hostile world, sometime collectively and sometime thinking to be so. In fact, they are very isolated, solitary and disgusted. They want to get rid of it, but it is expressed in endless deformities or in nerve-fever."
fact, they were frustrated with the hopeless independence also. Later on Shankar also wrote a number novels on city life. Shankar has recorded artistically the pangs and sufferings of an unemployed urban youth of a respectable Bengali middle class family in 'Jana aranya'. The grim reality of urban unemployment weaves a pathetic story. After running after several jobs, Somnath, the hero of 'Jana Aranya' had to opt for small independent business under a big Marowari businessman. He supplies women to satisfy his mentor in business. He finds to his horror that the first woman, that he brought to Goenka, the businessman was his friend, Sukumar's sister. His friend Sukumar became mad after failing to manage an employment in the people's forest of Calcutta. So, his sister was forced to run this flesh-trade. Somnath also became mentally upset losing his balance under such a pathetic condition of struggle for self-employment, the sense of imagination, honesty or love deserted him for ever. The hard reality of life make them corrupt devoid of finer senses. Samaresh Bose's 'Bibar' is a novel based on a restless youth. The hero of the novel has developed a hatred for social relation, respect, love, modesty and the other social values in force — he is a total cynic. That is a product of the ruthlessly competitive society of the urban centres. He likes to pass time in a disorganised manner. On the other hand, his middle class background never taught him to liberate himself of middle class values or to get adjusted with the environment. So, he is passing time in desolation and despair — an alienated person. He is trying to overcome that in vain. Some youths of the Bengali middle class in early sixties were like him, leading a very compartmentalised" life. Bibor, that is, the cave is the symbol of that unhealthy time and situation. Ashapurna Devi also wrote some novels with new themes based on city life particularly the wretched suffering and struggle of women imprisoned in age old customs and seeking liberation. Mahasweta Devi wrote on the tribal life, a new Bengali consciousness and "Hazar Chourasir Ma", a novel of the Naxalite movement, born in Presidency College or other Calcutta
centres. It created a different age in Bengal's politics with a new political thought. There are hundreds novels, thousands of short stories based on city life in Bengali literature, which influenced the authors of the neighbouring states like Assam.

In Assamese literature such experience of city life was rare as seen in chapter one and two. Not only in fiction, but also a response to the perceived city life through Calcutta life found expression in poems and dramas also. The Awahana, a literary magazine brought out from Calcutta, expressed new urban middle class values of non-conformity, personal love between educated man and woman and a new subjectivity. Story of Rama Das, poems of Devakanta Barua's are examples in this respect.

The 1940s with their deepening social crises so the rise of a new poetry of disillusionments and stark realism. Amulya Barua, Hem Barua, Bhabananda Dutta also brought a new intellectual awakening.

But modern Assamese literature came into its own with the Ramdhenu edited by Birendra Kr. Bhattacharjee and Nava Kanta Barua's collection poems, 'He Aranya He Mahanagar' written against the background of an urban landscape, on broken city life lives in search for meaning.

**REFERENCE AND NOTES**


2. hitting Deka, Ex-President, Asom Sahitya Sabha told this in a personal interview with this researcher.

3. Dr. Bhuban Mohan Das, noted Anthropologist and an resident of Panbazar since his birth told this in a personal interview with this researcher.

4. 'Dangaria' was the officer class of the Ahom kings of Asom. They were divided into several classes like Phukan, Borphukan, Borgohain etc.
6. 'Amolapatty' in Assamese means the residential area of the Govt. Officers during the British rule in Assam. There are some 'Amolapatty's still in Nagaon, Golaghat of Assam.
8. Rao, M.S.A, Urban Sociology in India, P-117
15. Gohainbarua, Padmanath, Mor Sowarani, P-27.
18. Mahanta, Prafulla : Asomiya Madhyabittar Itihas, P-142.
24. Statement made in a personal interview by S.P. Barua to this researcher.
26. 'Sowali Chor' means the 'thief of Girls'. Lakshadhar Choudhury and Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla searched for actresses to act in 'Jyomati', the first Assamese cinema from place to place. In those days, co-acting was not allowed. So, they were called so as they searched for actress the Assam.
27. Yastras—Mobile theatre group performing drama on open stage.
29. Statement made in a personal interview.
30. Rajkhowa, Benudhar: Mor Jivan Sowaran, P-3.
32. Das, Manorama, Nari Manar Pam khedi, P-14.
35. Rajkhowa, Benudhar: Mor Jivan Dapon, P-84.
36. Statement made in personal interview by Bhuban mohan Das.
39. Statement made in personal interview with this researcher.
40. Statement of Kumudswar Hazarika in an interview with this researcher.
41. Rajkhowa, Benudhar, Mor Jivan Dapon, P-118.
42. ibid, P-109
43. Statement of Anil Roy Choudhury, distinguished writer in a personal interview with this researcher.
44. Statement of personal interview.
45. Sing, Yogendra, The Modernisation of Indian Tradition, introduction.
46. Gohain, Hiren, Sahitya aru Chetana, P-21.
47. Alienation - It is a state of feeling of non-involvement and estrangement from one's society and culture. The values and social norms shared by others seem meaningless to the alienated individuals. Marx said, not only from society and family, from one's work and self also an individual may be alienated.
50. In a Personal interview with this researcher, Rebatimohan Datta Choudhury. (Shilabhadra), made this statement.
52. Statement of Yogesh Das made to this researcher in an interview.
57. Statement made in interview, with this researcher.
58. Statement of Deven Goswami, in an interview with this researcher at Jalal.
59. Personal Interview's statement of Dr. Bhuban Mohan Das.
60. Regional Transport Survey for 1978, Part-1 P-130.
63. Personal interviews's statement, made by Mahendra Borthakur to this researcher.
64. Personal interview with Kumudeswar Hazarika.
66. Personal interview with the researcher.
67. Williams, Raymond : *The Countryard the City*, P-4/5.
68. Ibid, P-2.
69. Ibid, P-153.
70. Gohain, Hiren : *Adhunikottar merichikar sandhanot* , Deuka Vol-11 No-5.
72. Williams, Raymond : *ibid*, P-241.