CHAPTER - IV

SOCIAL LILE
Urbanization developed on the existing social system. Yet a distinct social pattern is a common phenomenon in the urban system. Distinctiveness of the urban society is being noticed in respect of formation of castes, classes, social groups and the way of life. Urbanization witnessed a typical social development. In there the social system is based on residence than on kinship. The urban and rural social system is characterized on the terms of differentiation, mobility, secularization and cultural freedom. The population of the cities was formed with the people belonging to different castes and classes coming to the cities in different steps of migration from different places especially from the rural areas for searching employment. With the interaction of the different classes of people a distinct type of social system had been developed in the cities, which differentiate the urban society from the rural society.
The social mobility is one of the important aspects of the urban society. The rural life is the earlier stage of human civilization. With the surplus production and arising of the political authority the urbanization started. The city population was formed with gradual migration of the people from the village to the cities. Thus the people of different professions and expertise settled in the cities that were originally belonged to different traditional castes and thereby formed a new social structure in the cities. This social mobility was formed in the cities and this differentiates the cities from villages. The strict observance of the caste system, and stages of life (varnāśrana dharma-pravīthāgāya)\textsuperscript{2} and existence of the different professional and artisan classes in the cities of ancient Assam indicate the social mobility in the cities of ancient Assam. Although there was the caste system in the society of the cities of ancient Assam it was flexible and there was no strictness in doing the duties by the people of different classes. Thus being a reputed scholar, Brahmin Himânga was a charioteer (Rathika) and expert in the art of war.

\begin{verse}
Nīlīshesasousthavapadaprabhitikriyāvānambhiyastachitra

\textit{harduskarakarunna märgah} |

Nārāchamokshāgatipātagunapratvinaha pr(ā)nādhikojani

\textit{tato rathika himāngali} | \textsuperscript{3}
\end{verse}

Urban population of ancient Assam had been grown to fulfill the required need of administration, business and economics necessities, defense and military activities, religious pursuits, public
entertainment and other activities of the cities. The city dwellers of ancient Assam belonged to all varnas (castes) and all ashramas (stages of life).

Samastavarnāshramadaparinita | 4

In the cities there were the virtuous and the learned men and soldiers 5. The kings of ancient Assam established the poet, the learned men and preceptors in the capital cities and lived there with his citizens, servants and his relatives.

Srimānapure sristhiravarmāmhāmā nītvā cha tasmin kātichihinānī |

Sapoura bhūteha(saha) va(unu)vishra punya nade sotha purimakārsit | 6

Besides in the cities of ancient Assam there lived by the people of artisans, sculptors, craftsmen, traders, different groups of entertainers like musicians, singers, dancers, prostitutes and the people of different tertiary groups. Therefore the urban population of ancient Assam was formed in cosmopolitan pattern.

The term used in the inscriptions that the kings of ancient Assam strictly maintained the caste division and stages of life (varnāśrama dharma) 7 indicates that there was existed the institution of caste system in the society in the cities of ancient Assam as like in the villages and that the people strictly followed the four stages of life which was defined for the rural people during the Vedic times. However in the urban society except Brāhmaṇa, nowhere any reference is available of the existence of the three other traditional castes viz. Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras in the cities of ancient Assam. Rather in cities of the society in Ancient Assam
there noticed the different castes that were locally formed on the basis of prevailing social groups and professions. Thus inscriptions inform the names of the different castes of ancient Assam like brāhanas (priest and scholarly class), kāyasthas (scribes), lekhanas (writers)\(^9\) ganakas (astrologers)\(^9\), kauvartas (people related to the fish trade)\(^10\), kumbhakāras\(^11\) or hirās (potters), tantavāyas\(^12\) (weavers) etc. Besides from the times of the pre-historic times there noticed the names of the traditional tribes like kirātas, cinas\(^13\) mlechas and the like. This signifies the distinct social formation both in the cities as well as the villages of the land since time immemorial.

Under such prevailing atmosphere the urban population of early Assam can be categorized under the following heads -

(a) Ruling elite and the higher administrative groups  
(b) Priest  
(c) Lower administrative and military personals  
(d) Independent professionals like physicians, scribes, teachers  
(e) Mercantile community  
(f) Artisans and craftsmen  
(g) Public entertainers consisting of singers, dancers musicians, etc.  
(h)Prostitutes and other public women.

The ruling elite of early Assam was consisted of the king, his family members and relatives, his friends\(^14\), and high as well as low administrative and military officials and the Sāmunatas (feudatory
chiefs). This section occupied top position in the urban society of ancient Assam. The contemporary inscriptions and the literature indicate such persons and officials. Some of the important officials mentioned in contemporary literature and epigraphs are Mahāmātyas (ministers), Amātyas (junior ministers), Mahāsenyāpatis (commander in chief of the army), Mahādhvāradhipati (chief of the door keepers), Mahāparṇītāra (chief usherer), Brāhmaṇādhipati (officer in charge of the welfare of Brahmans)\(^{15}\), Mahāllakaṇḍrāhoka (head of the royal harem)\(^{16}\), the Brahmans, the scribes, the administrators and the nobles like the rājanyakas, rājaputras, rājāballabhas, rājā, rānti and rānakas\(^{17}\) etc.

Although this section of society was not directly related to the production of the country, their service and contributions to the society was enormous. It was they who protected the country from foreign attacks and enabled the people to perform their duties smoothly and diligently by maintaining administrative functions, internal security and law and order of the country. Without the contribution of the class no one section of society could attain their desired end. This section of the society enjoyed the maximum privileges and luxury and a major portion of country’s income was to be spent for the maintenance of this class.

The priests (Brāhmaṇa class) occupied an important place in the society of early Assam. This section of people was the highly educated and spiritual in the society of Assam in 9th century A.D. and was honoured by all. Even the kings of ancient Assam honoured this class and
established them in the country and donating land to them and other valuable property\textsuperscript{18}, and thereby tried to promote religion and learning in their kingdom because this class was proficient in these two duties. The expert and proficient scholars of this section were appointed as the royal priest by the kings of early Assam. One such was scholar Bhatta Srikantha who was appointed by king Hajjaravarman as \textit{brahmanādhikāra} (the chief of the Brahmins)\textsuperscript{19} and another was Sri Murāri who was appointed as \textit{rajaguru} (the royal preceptor) by king Vaidyadeva\textsuperscript{20}. The priest performed the consecration ceremony and anointed the king. The kings of ancient Assam took special care for the welfare of the priestly class and an officer namely the \textit{brahmanādhikāra} was appointed to look after their affairs\textsuperscript{21}.

The Brāhmaṇas of early Assam not only performed their allocated duties of teaching and spiritual activities but also served the kings by holding the high administrative jobs like ministers (\textit{auśtyas}), administrators etc. and adorned as the court poets. Thus one Janārdana Swāmi was a \textit{nyākarmika} (judge) during the time of king Bhāskaravarman (594-650 A.D.)\textsuperscript{22}; Brāhmaṇa Himāṅga was expert in warfare and archery\textsuperscript{23} and performed his duties as \textit{rathikas} (charioteers)\textsuperscript{24} and some were adept in the use of \textit{sāstras} (weapons) as well as the \textit{sāstras} (Hindu law books)\textsuperscript{25}. Brāhmaṇa Sri Monoratha was the composer of versions of Kamauli Grant that issued during the time of Vaidyadeva (Early part of 12\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.)\textsuperscript{26}. All of the donee Brahmins of Assam prior to 12\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.
were proficient in different areas of knowledge and displayed their scholarly qualities for generation after generations.

Although in other parts of India in ancient times there were the examples of conflict between the Brahmins and the ruling class and it is blamed that the Brahmins opposed to the urbanization but nowhere in any source there is any indication of such conflict in early Assam, rather the active involvement of this section is seen in the administration and other activities of the government by holding the dignified postings of the government like amātya, nyāyakaranika, rathika and the like.

The lower administrative and military personnel class of Ancient Assam included soldiers, watchman, messengers, spies, army men and the persons connected with the king and the court like royal potters, jewelers, barbers, cooks, gardeners, elephant trainers, gatekeepers, guards, slaves etc. Most of the persons of this section related to the protection and maintenance of law and order of the country, maintenance and security of the king, his family members and government officials, royal as well as public property of the country. Thus although this section of people was directly not related to production of the country their service to the country was not less important than any other sections of the society. There is the reference that in early Assam the soldiers of different types like elephants, horses, foot soldiers and ship kept always ready in different directions for protecting their city like Karnasuvarna.
The cities, whether capital or residential, require various types of professional groups to meet the different needs of the city dwellers. Such groups of people of ancient Assam were the physicians, (Bhisājas) scribes, (Lekhakas), clerks, ((Kāyastha) astrologers (Daivagnya or Ganaka), fisherman, (Knivarta), prostitutes(Vesya) etc.

Among the professional groups the physicians or the doctors occupied a pre-eminent position. They were known as the Vaidya or the Bhisāja in early Assam. Inscription indicates that King Virabahu of the Sālastambha dynasty(8th century A.D.) was treated by his bhisāja (physician) but he could not be cured.

The physicians of ancient Assam also practiced surgery and attended to their patients to earn their livelihood.

Although the sources do not inform detail about the physicians and their activities in early Assam, the reference in the Doobi Copper plates inscription of Bhāskaravarman (594-650 A.D.) indicates that the section was proficient in rendering their service to the people of the cities like Prāggyotisapura where it is indicated that the city was free from any kind of epidemic (naraka).
In the Subhankarpātaka Grant of king Dharmapāla (8th century A.D.) it is mentioned that the record was composed by one Prasthānakalasa who was a vaidya.

The early Dharmasastras regard the vaidya as sikitsakas (doctors) but did not regard them as a castes group but as noble profession and was looked upon with contempt. The smiritikāras like Usānas (V.26) regards the Vaidyas or bhīsikas as the offspring of a Brahmana father and Khsatriya mother.

Lawyers were the important professional group of the society of early Assam. There is the reference of teaching of ethics and other laws of Smritis and Nitisāstras in early Assam. As the kings of ancient Assam followed the Hindu Nitisāstras and Dharmasāstras in administering their kingdoms, a section of people conversant with the Hindu laws and customs was required in the society especially in the cities. Thus the lawyer class came into being. In ancient times in northern India the lawyer class was referred as a separate professional class. However there is no reference of independent professional lawyers in early Assam. But the inscriptions of early Assam refer certain officials who were proficient in pursuits of law and helped the kings of ancient Assam in maintaining
judicial affairs. Some of such judicial officials were Nyāyakaranika, Vyāvalhārika etc.\(^3\)

The kāyasthas (Clerks) were another professional group in the society of early Assam. They were to maintain the official records and were to attend on the occasion like issuing of land grants made by the kings of ancient Assam\(^4\). They were also appointed in the court to maintain the proceedings of the court. At the time of issue of Nidhanpur grant (7\(^{th}\) century A. D.) the kāyastha was one Dundunāth\(^4\). Yājnavalkya ask the king to protect his subject from the Kāyasthas\(^4\). Most probably the kāyasthas used to manipulate royal grants or other endowments in someone’s favour or disfavour which prompted Yājnavalkya to caution the king to protect his subjects from the kāyasthas.

Lekhakas (Scribes or Writers) were another professional group of personals available in early Assam. The development of scripts with the introduction of Sanskrit and increasing necessity of issuing inscription required the importance of the scribes in early Assam. The availability of the inscriptions in different places of Assam issued by the kings of ancient Assam with superb workmaships indicates that there were skillful scribes in Ancient Assam. The availability of the inscription of different metals like stone, earth and copper indicates that there were the scribes of different categories. With the development of education in ancient Assam the importance of the class was increased in the society. The Brihaspati relates the lekhakas with maintenance of justice in a court\(^4\). But
in ancient Assam by the term *Lekhakas* was implied to professional class of writers or scribes\(^44\).

Teachers were also an important professional class of ancient Assam. Most of the teachers of ancient Assam were learned Brahmins who were patronized by the kings donating lands. They also adorned the court and took part in the discussion in the court. From the reference of acquiring the knowledge of different fields by the crown princes like Vrajadatta\(^45\) indicates that the teachers of ancient Assam were proficient in different branches of knowledge belonging to both mental and physical fields. The teachers imparted education through two types of processes \(\text{viz.} (i)\) imparting education through *gurukula* system and \(\text{viz.} (ii)\) imparting education through hereditary system. According to the *gurukula* system the pupils had to earn their education staying at the house of their *gurus* (teachers) and according to the hereditary system education was transmitted from one generation to the other that is from father to son.

The *Daivagnyas* or the *Ganakas* (astrologers) were another important professional group that lived in the cities as well as in the villages of ancient Assam. They were respected in the court and their prediction that made in different occasions created sensation among the people. Thus the prediction that was made by the *daivagnyas* after the birth of king Vaidyadeva (12\(^{th}\) century A.D.) created panic to the enemies.

*Daivagnyasu takkakesu cha januhistasya distishruterasnastvapnaghriti- phantitya ribhaterunnuchya sammurchchaitai\(^46\)*
Before going to perform an important work, it was the custom for the king of ancient Assam to consult the *daivajnyas*. This system was even continued during the rule of the Ahom kings in the later period.

One of the important professional groups of the capital city of ancient Assam was the merchant class. For the origin, development and sustenance of urbanization the merchant class played the important role. For distribution of surplus products, export and import of essential products the contribution of the class enormous one. For encourage and development of craft and industries the community played the great role. Therefore this class was regarded as the important class of the society by the kings of early Assam in 9th century A.D. and was given the equal status along with the princes of noble birth and was allowed to take part in the auspicious occasion in the court like coronation ceremony as described so vividly in the Hayunthal Grant of 9th century A.D., issued by the crown prince Vanamālāvarman.

Among the professional groups of early Assam mention may be made of the *Kaivartas* (Fisherman) and the *Nauki* (Boatmen) classes. The *Kaivartas* were connected to the profession of fishing and fish trade and they also supervised the movement of the boats in the rivers. They were also entrusted to collect *Sulkas* (tolls) in the rivers. The
Naukis were also a professional class of ancient Assam. According to M.
M. Sarma, the *Nauki* (Boatmen) class was related to the fish trade.

Besides the above mentioned professional classes there were people of artisan class both in the cities and the villages in early Assam which also belong to another professional groups. This class can be categorized under different sections viz. *suvarnākāra* (goldsmith) and producers of ornaments, *Tantuvāyas* (weavers) sekyākara or *kamalākara* (coppersmith) lohkāra (ironsmith), *kumbhakāras*, (potters), *silpi* (sculptors and engravers), *karas*, carpenters etc. At present in Assam the *Kumbhakāras* are known as the *Kumār* and *Hirā*. Inscriptions of ancient Assam indicate a potter's village named *Dijarnādi*. While the *kumars* uses the potter's wheel, the *haris* does not.

Among the professional classes of the urban centres in early Assam the artisan class was the most important one. This class was mainly involved to the primary production of the cities. Yet they were regarded as the subordinate section in the society. They were the victims of both exploiters and intermediaries. Although both in the cities and villages this section was prevailing, the artisans and craftsmen of the cities were more skilled than the villages.

Among the artisans the goldsmith (*suvarnākara*) and the producers of ornaments occupied an important place in the society of early Assam. It is known that the members of royal family and the aristocratic class of Assam in 6th century A.D. skillfully used the gold and
other valuable ornaments\textsuperscript{56}. So this section of artisan had a special demand in early Assam. The goldsmiths of Assam in 11\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. skillfully produced the jewelleries by studding the valuable stones like the \textit{ga\text{\textj}an\text{\textu}k\text{\textt}}, \textit{pad\text{\textm}ara\text{\textg}} etc. which attracted the foreign traders.

\begin{verbatim}
Dürvāra berikarikumbhabhidābhavasnasnotovahati
cchalakārinotikablah | 
Yadyudhabhurbbipanivaddhritapādmarāgā showmista
viravanija(ī) nika prakirnāḥ | | 57.
\end{verbatim}

It is commendable in this respect that Kalidāsa refers to Kāmarupa for producing jewels in large quantities\textsuperscript{58}. This indicates that the class was greatly flourished in Assam prior to 4\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.

The \textit{Sekyākaras} (Coppersmith) or \textit{Kamālakāros} was an important artisan class in early Assam from 7\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. They not only produced the weapons and utensils for both the royal house and general public but also prepare the copper plates that were required to issue land grants. They were to present at the time of issue of a land grant along with the officials of the kings of ancient Assam\textsuperscript{59}.

Engravers (\textit{silpi}) were formed another important class of artisans in early Assam. Most of the kings of early Assam issued few rock inscriptions and large numbers of copper inscriptions, donating lands to the learned Brahmins and institutions. These grants were engraved by skilled and expert engravers (\textit{silpi}) who were patronized by the kings of early Assam. One such engraver was Karnabhadra who engraved the
scripts of the Kamauli grant issued by king Vaidyadeva (middle part of 12th century A.D.) who was skilled and expert in his works.

\[
\text{Karmuebhradrena } bhadrena silpinānalpabuddhiinā}
\]

\[
\text{Taurain vinayenaurena nirmmaitain sādhukarmanānā} \quad | 60.
\]

The inclusion of the ivory products among the present of Bhāskararvarman (594-650 A.D.) that sent to Harsa of Kanouj 61 indicates that there were skilled ivory producers in early Assam in 7th century A.D. and these producers formed an important section of artisan class in ancient Assam. Abundance of the sylvan products in Assam played the role for the development of the ivory industry in the land and increasing demand of the ivory producer class in Ancient Assam.

The section of people who neither participates in production nor in distribution is called the tertiary group. In the urban society of ancient Assam this group played the important role. This group was consisted of the people involved in the professions like garland maker, bardars, washer men, domestic servants, slaves etc. This section was not directly involved to the production of the state. But for the sustenance and flourishing of all other sections of the society the contribution of this class was earnestly required.

Public entertainers like musicians, dancers, singers etc. formed the important section of the urban population of early Assam. Using of musical instruments and practicing of dancing and singing was widely done in different occasions in ancient Assam. Inscriptions of 7th
century A.D. indicate the using of *dundubhi* dram and conch shell in the auspicious occasion of the court like coronation ceremony.

> Aprachyanta karma kritāntato dvijerdhuvabhipekam(vi)-
> dhīvachcha shantuikāṁ |

> Sashāṅkhanadaṁ saha dundubhi(h)svāṁṁi sureshavatsonn-
> vabhūba bhunīpaḥ | 62

It is mentioned in the inscriptions of Assam of 9th century A.D. that the sweet musical sound and songs of the temples created sensational atmosphere surrounding of the temples of early Assam.

> Devagāṁi vādyagitaapranādernāṁnāṁ satrīṇiṁ vyāhatesha |

> Gāyantadyāpyajāranyāṁ suvāpyo deshe deshe śāliniṁ yasya kirti | 63

Some other musical instruments that used in different occasion of ancient Assam were *damaru, mridanga, flute* etc. The sculptural images discovered different places of Assam depict the wide prevalence of dancing, singing and using of musical instruments in ancient Assam. These sculptural images witnessed the popularity of dancing, singing and practicing of musical instruments everywhere in early Assam. When Huen Tsang visited Kāmarupa in first half of 7th century A.D. he noticed the enjoying entertainment of singing and dancing in the court of Kāmarupa king Bhaskaravarman64. The *natis* (dancing girl) were also formed a section of public entertainer who employed in the temples during thr 9th century A.D.

> Nutilhiriṁa nartakapurushākramanasaṁvartadhītā-
> Kampābhīdurga... | 65.
Thus the section of people enjoyed patronization and regarded as essential and important section in the urban centres of early Assam.

Institution of Prostitution was a common feature of the urbanization in ancient times. It was flourished during the epic periods. It was greatly developed under the Mauryas in the northern India. Under the Mauryas there was a superintendent (adhyaksha) of prostitutes viz. yanikādhyaksha who looked after the institution of the prostitutes. Under the Guptas also the institution was properly flourished.

There is the information of availability of the institution of prostitutes in early Assam. In an inscription of king Indrapāla (11th century A.D.), one of the king of the Pāla dynasty of ancient Assam, refers thirty two virudhas out of which one is indicated as kalavilāsinī. King Vallabhadeva (12th century A.D.) was described as the lord of prostitutes.

Sri vallabhio vallabhadeva vairikumāravāranantā vikrāntililāpatih | 68.

There is some indirect information regarding the availability of the prostitutes of early Assam. Inscriptions of 9th century A.D. indicate that both the banks of the river Brahmaputra were full of the boats with the decorative bodies like the prostitutes, displaying their charming bodies adorned with attractive ornaments, holding chā纳税人 (fans) like varastris (prostitutes) and were as fast as the dancing natis (temple dancers).

Vesyingasābhūrīva nānābharanaśobhitaprabatāvayāvābhirvāla
kumārikābhūrīva kanatkinikinibhiḥ kārnāṭikībhūrīva kathinābhi.
These comparing of the bodies and movements of the boats with the bodies, natures and using ornaments and cloths of the prostitutes in the inscription witness the practicing of institution of prostitutes in ancient Assam. These descriptions also indicate the nature, behaviour, using of cloths and ornaments and other essential arts that were followed by the prostitutes of Assam in early times. Inscriptions also mention the loitering of the city damsels in the capital city of Prāgyotispura.

\[ Kāntāmukherbbahu vidhāviva viravindtejaswibhī ṛavagānānīva \]
\[ sandadāhīne | \]
\[ Prāgyotise vasādasou pravare purānāin dordarppa sansarana-\]
\[ chārutarājjitasri | \]

These loitering city damsels showing their attractive bodies were none but the public women of the cities of ancient Assam. It is also informed that the Prostitutes (Vesjī or Devdāsis) were endowed to the temples by the kings of ancient Assam as recorded in the king Vanamālā’s Grant.

\[ Prāleyāchulasrungantungamutulagramābhaveshyājaneryutkauṁ \]
\[ hetukasudineh kshitibluja bhaktyā navain chakrāsā | \]
All the terms like *vesyā, varastrī, kalāvīlasīni* or *vīlasīni* that are used in the inscriptions of ancient Assam are the Sanskrit variants of prostitutes\textsuperscript{72}. *Vīlasīni* is also referred as prostitutes in the literature\textsuperscript{73}. Thus the practising of prostitute in ancient Assam is an established fact.

In ancient times women were donated to the temples elsewhere in the country. They donated to the temples to serve the god, the presiding deity of the temple and were popularly known as *devadāsi*\textsuperscript{74}. In Assam there is also the information of serving women in the temple as *nāti* during the 9\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.\textsuperscript{75}. The association of the *nāti* in the temples of Assam was prevalence during the medieval time also\textsuperscript{76}. So the offering of women to the temple as *nāti* indicates the enrolment of women in the temple as *devadāsi*.

In the grants of Assam of 9\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. *varastrī* are also mentioned as *chānumaradhārīṇī*\textsuperscript{77} (bearer of *chānumā* fans or flywhisk). This indicates that prostitutes of early Assam were given proper weightage in the society and employed them as the *chānumaradhārīṇī* in the court by the kings of the land. Kautilya in his *Arthasastra* also indicates the same\textsuperscript{78}. The using of the term *kalāvīlāsīni* for the prostitutes in the inscription of ancient Assam indicates that the prostitutes should achieve perfection in dancing, singing and other branches of arts. In this respect it is mentionable that the prostitutes of the Mauryan times were taught singing, dancing, acting, writing, painting and playing of musical instruments\textsuperscript{79}. During the Gupta period prostitutes were thoroughly trained in the sixty four arts\textsuperscript{80}. 

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Some of the other practices of the prostitutes of Assam of 9th century A.D. were that they adorned themselves with many ornaments so as to attract the clients.

_Vesijñganābhiriva nānābharanashobhitapratāvatāvābhih_\(^8^1\)

They bathed in the open and occupied the best localities in the city like Sri Durjaya\(^8^2\). So this class must have occupied an important place in the society of ancient Assam.

However, the _Smṛiti_ writers denounced the prostitution\(^8^3\). But the religion like Buddhism treated the prostitutes humanely and allowed them to become nuns in the Buddhist monasteries\(^8^4\).

One of the important institutions of the social life is the marriage system. The Dharmāśāstra writers mention eight types of marriage prevailing in ancient times. These were _Brahmā_, _Prajāpatya_, _Daiva_, _Arsha_, _Asura_, _Gandharva_, _Rākṣasa_ and _Paisāca_. _Brahmā_ and _Prajāpatya_ marriage are those in which father made gift of his daughter. The _Daiva_, _Arsha_ and _Asura_ marriage are more or less resembled to the sale of girl. The _Gandharva_, _Rākṣasa_ and _Paisāca_ marriages are done without the consent of the father or guardian\(^8^5\).

There is the reference of practicing certain types of marriage in early Assam. The inscriptions 12th century A.D. refer to the _pañigrbhamna_ type of marriage among the Brahmin Class.

_Jivānādīhā ruchirarupadharātha kanyā dhanyā kritirbimbālava._
This reference indicates that the brahmā and prajāpatya forms of marriages in which father made gift of the hands of his daughter to the bridegroom were prevalence among the upper class people of early Assam.

Traditions and literature indicate the prevalence of Gandharva, Rākshasa and Paisāca types of marriages in ancient Assam among the members of the royal family. The example of the marriage of Aniruddha with Ushā was the Gandharva type of marriage. Here both Ushā and Aniruddha entered into marriage without the consent of their parents. The marriage of Krishna with Rukmini was an example of the Rākshasa types of marriage. Here Rukmini, the daughter of king Bhismak of Vidarbha, was stolen away by Krishna from the Syamvarga (An institution arranged to choose her partner by the crown princess). The Syamvarga system of marriage was another type of marriage prevalence among the members of royal family of ancient Assam. According to this system the crown princess could choose her partner among the princes and kings assembled for the occasion. Two of such marriages holding in ancient Assam were the marriage of Bhānumati, the daughter of Bhagadatta of Prāgiyotispura with Durjodhana of Hasthināpur and the marriage of Meghavāhana of Kashmir with Amritaprabhā, daughter of king Balavarman who belonged to the Varman dynasty of Kāmarupa.
In the lower classes of people Rākṣasa, Paisāca and Asura forms of marriage were in vogue in early Assam.

Inscriptions of early Assam refer that among the upper castes youths of ancient Assam marriage was generally done after completion of their education (Samavartana).

_Sa Samavrito grihadharmādhititsurāgatassādhuh |_

_Kāle visuvatyarthi dharmaparāh panditah kathānisthuh |_|

The Chinese sources indicate Bāskaravarman's epithet as Kumāra, which means bachelorhood. This indicates that entering to marriage was not compulsory for a king in early Assam.

There are the references in the sources regarding the position and character of women of ancient Assam. Epigraphs indicate the fine qualities and position of women of the harem and upper caste people of early Assam. Thus the Brahmana wife Syāmayikā devoted to her husband and endowed with virtues, shone like the moon, pure in form and dispelled the darkness.

_Shyāmāyikā tasya vabhuva patni pativrata śilaguno (vi) panna |_

_Ugrendulekheva virājate ya viśuddhaharpā tamaśo nihantri | |

Chapayikā was charming, beautiful and was like Lakshmi. Durlabhā, the wife of Purandarapāla was devoted to her husband like Saci to Indra, Siva to Shambhu, Rati to Madana, Lakshmi to Hari and Rohini to Chandra.

_Janadagnyabhinavikramārjita-prajyāprajyāni-prāpavānaḥ saṁsambhavaiva_

_durlabhīti sat u lokadurlabhīṁ prápya saṁyogabhavat kalamanivam |_

_Saṃcita śakrasya Shi(ve)va śambhoḥ rati(h) saṁrāseva hareriva śriḥ |_
Hajjara’s mother Jivadevi was like Kunti and Subhadra, who was worshipped by many and was source of the spiritual fame. Thus the qualities of the queens and the Brahmins’ wives that mentioned in the epigraphs indicate that the women of upper caste people, noble families and the royal families were highly cultured and educated. The sculptural female figures of ancient Assam witness that women of the time were proficient in dancing and music and highly cultured in wearing clothes and using ornaments.

The dignity and culture of the women of general class in the cities of Ancient Assam was quite lower than the women of upper and noble class people. Epigraphs refer the loitering of women in the streets of the cities. They also took bath in open in the rivers. Some women also chose the professions like veshyā and varasti and employed in the temples. The social institution like child marriage and sati were prevalence in ancient Assam in a limited way.

There is the information of the prevailing of both joint and separate family systems in ancient Assam. King Bhāskaravarman donated land at Chandrapuri visaya to a numbers of Brahmins collectively. In this respect the view of A. M. Shah is acceptable that the higher and more sankritised castes place much greater emphasis on joint family households than the lower and less sankritized. This indicates the joint
family system that prevalence among the upper caste people of Assam in 7th century A.D.

This system was not followed in all the times. The view of B. P. Mazumdar is that members of a Brahmana family were not often given land in contiguous areas and these led to the splitting of the joint houseold and thereby break the age-old concept of the joint family system. This example can be seen in Assam in 12th century A.D. as mentioned in the Subhankarpātaka grant where it is stated the donation of land to four Brahmin sons separately. This indicates the prevalence of separate family system in early Assam during the 12th century A.D.

From literature, epigraphs and sculptural remains of ancient Assam there is the information of the dresses and ornaments used by the rich, wealthy and high class people of ancient Assam. The people of ancient Assam used both stitched and unstitched garments (Vastu or acchādana). From the cultural remains it is known that the male dress was called Paridhāna, which consisted of Dhoti worn around the waist held tightly by a parivesa hanging in the front with folds. Bāna also refers the parivesa made of both cotton and leather. The upper garment was known as Uttariya. In the sculptural images of Ancient Assam the using of unstitched garments is noticed. The high class male people used a distinct head dress called pāguri (Turban). It is known that in the religious ceremony organized by king Harsavadhan of Kanouj Bhāskaravarman, Kamarupa king attended wearing a tiara on his forehead. This wearing
of tiara on his forehead by Bhāskaravarman in the religious ceremony indicates that the kings of Assam in 7th century A.D. wore on the head dress like tiara on their foreheads in the ceremonial practices.

The women of early Assam generally used two numbers of garments, the upper and the lower hung above the waist and tightened by a nīvībandhā. The lower garment of women was called mekhalā (girdle) worn around the waist, the upper garment was consisted of two one was rihā worn around the waist and the breast and the other was cādara one end of which was coiled around the waist just over the rihā and the other end placed acossed the breast and shoulders behind. The garments were ornamented with embroidery. Married women wore veils and took special care in their dresses. The using of red and yellow garment was auspicious and using of red and blue was forbidden.

The women of early Assam used their combs (Kākoi) made of ivory, wood and bamboo. The grants of Assam of 11th century A.D. refer to the using of jeweled mirrors (māni darpan) in ancient Assam. Much attention was paid to be attractive by both men and women of ancient Assam. As an act of prasādhana (ornamentation) the people also coloured their teeth.

The people of ancient Assam were also lover of ornaments of different metals. The women of ancient Assam used the ornaments from head to face made of gold, silver and other metals and
Kalikā Purāṇa indicates the using of forty kinds of ornaments that used in ancient Assam.

\[
\begin{align*}
Kiritanchu shriratnaú kundalancha lañātikā | \\
Tālapatrancha hárasheca Graibeyakamathoomikā | \\
Prālambikāratuasutramuttangugotakshanārikā | \\
Pārsīvadyoto nakhadyoto hāngulichchadhikastathā | \\
Jutūlañkā nānauvako murtihartārākhalantikā | \\
Angadobāhubalayah shikhābhushana indikā | \\
Prāgadandabhadhamudbhāsanābhi purohatha malikā | \\
Saptaki Shrīnkhalanchaibha dantapatrancha karnakah | \\
Uru Sutrañcha nibinda mustibandhāin prakīrnakāin | \\
Pādānagadañ hānsakashcha nupurain kshudraghantikā | \\
Sukhapattamati proktā alamkarāḥ sushobhanāḥ | \\
Chatvārinshudani proktā loke vede tu soukhyadāḥ | \quad 112
\end{align*}
\]

There is the instruction for using the silver ornaments by the people in ancient Assam. According to the instruction, ornaments made from silver should not be used above the neck.

\[
\begin{align*}
Svapayoge narah kurijādevānāmapi Bhairava | \\
Grivordhase raupantu na kadācicca bhusanaḥ | \quad 113
\end{align*}
\]

Similarly the ornaments made from iron and bell metals were not to be used but other metals should be used in the lower part of the body.

\[
\begin{align*}
Ayonayamrite kāṃsyamrīteyādghusanaṁ bhābet | \\
Svarnaropaṣya chābhābe tvadhāh kāye niyojāyet | \quad 114
\end{align*}
\]

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The sculptural remains indicate that the ornaments that used in ancient Assam were consisted of necklace (hāra), plat necklace (golpatā) used in the neck, keyura and angadā that wore on the upper arms, kankana (braclet), kundala (ear ring) in the ears, mupura (anklet) in the feet, kinkini attach with small bells, that used by the unmarried girls, lalatikā that used on the forehead just bellow the hair by the married women.

People of ancient Assam had various favourite pastimes. Kālikā Purāṇa indicates the playing with dolls, pancalikā, vihardhyā sisunām, kautukuisthā. Among the general indoor games disc seemed to have very popular. Hunting was also a favourite pastime for the valorous class and crown princes in ancient Assam. Vallabhadeva’s plate indicates the buffalo hunting. The Doobi Grant refers to snaring of deer. The Grants of Indrapāla indicate the catching of tiger with net. Another favourite hunting in ancient Assam was the catching of wild elephant. Kalidāsa refers to the catching of elephants in the forest of Assam. Fishing was another favourite hunting of ancient Assam.

Besides the games and hunting, dancing, singing and playing music were popular amusements of the times that witnessed by the sculptural images discovered from different places of Assam.

Thus society in the cities of ancient Assam was developed in the existing traditional rural platform. However with the required need of the situation like administration, trade and commerce and other economic factors such as production and distribution,
industrialization etc. played the role for emerging a new social set up in the
urban settlements of ancient Assam. New castes, classes and culture
developed in the cities of ancient Assam to coup with the changing
situation. Thus the social mobility, differentiation and cultural freedom
became the important features of the society of ancient Assam.

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   (Plate-58)


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*Tasyā(m) prathayamiva dharmaputrah sutahsubhadrāta*

ivābhimanyat(h)|

Jāto dharitryamadhipo bhasyan srihat(jjaro) (haryyvadanahadyah) | |

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Balujanavanandī mahātā prabhātasandhyevā tajasvo janani | |

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