INTRODUCTION

A majority of the advanced countries of the World are undergoing a phase of over urbanization, whereas India like other developing countries of the third world has started experiencing rapid urbanization only in the recent past. The most striking feature of India's urbanization is in its process of the accretion of rural population in a few large urban areas resulting into the disproportionate tertiary base and informal sector. The concentration of urban population, social amenities, industrial, commercial and administrative units in a few larger towns and cities has caused, concern for balanced urban development both in terms of size class categories and spatial pattern of distribution.

Among the Indian States, Gujarat ranks third in the degree of urbanization, next only to Maharashtra and Tamilnadu, with 31.08 percent of urban population, settled in its 255 towns. The distribution of urban population in terms of space and ranksize categories is highly accentuated. The concentration of urban population is observed in the Central and South Gujarat plain regions. Nearly 58 percent of the total urban population is accounted by 13 class-I towns (including two urban agglomeration) of which Ahmedabad agglomeration alone has nearly 24 percent of total urban population. During the decade 1971-81, the class - I towns alone registered an increase in the
proportionate share in the urban population, whereas all other size class towns showed lower share (Pichholiya, 1983). Thus the rapid growth of population in larger cities which show spatial clusters has left the State and the local governments without any consistent policies to deal with the various kinds of urban problems. Although, the governments at different level express grave concern about the growth of cities, the whole process of urbanization is so massive and intimately tied up with the economic development, that it becomes difficult to reverse the development process. However, the step to be taken at this stage of developmental process is that to divert the socio-economic and other developmental inputs to smaller and medium sized towns in order to minimise the imbalance in concentration of population and associated developmental aspects.

As a result of a rapid growth of cities and towns, the features of city size and the associated development especially in terms of social, economic and cultural aspects have become important. However, the studies on city size and levels of development are few and scattered (Wanmali S., 1970; Swanson J. and K. Smith, 1974; Ronald Moomaw, 1981; Lasuen J.R., 1967). By and large, such studies are based on the social facilities to test Christaller's and Losch's Central Place Concepts in terms of size, function and spacing of urban settlements. The striking disparities in the levels of development of the towns is discernible even to a common citizen. However, the present study on the basis of several indicators evaluates more precisely and
scientifically the degree of development and classifies the towns accordingly for the purposes of effective planning.

Overview of Literature:

The review of existing literature on urban aspects shows two distinct scales of studies.

(1) Studies of individual towns.

(2) Studies on settlement system.


(2) Studies on city region, metropolitan region, city system and settlement system include settlement size, structure, functions, demographic characteristics, intercity interaction, hierarchy of settlements on the basis of functions, growth centres etc. (Walter Christaller, 1933; Lösch, 1954; Berry B.J.L. and Garrison., 1958,
The present study covers all the 255 towns of Gujarat whose population ranges from 370 in Vatva industrial notified area (an industrial outgrowth of Ahmedabad urban agglomeration) to nearly 21 lakhs in Ahmedabad (Fig :1.0). Instead of using the Census defined size classes of towns, the study is based on the grouping of towns as per the rank size graph (Fig : 2.0) and considers various demographic, social and economic indicators of development as mentioned in detail in chapter II. The towns of Gujarat have historical significance as a large number of them were princely towns. Thus, the towns of Gujarat reveal the princely touch in the buildings of architectural importance, British administrative impact in the magnificent buildings, and modernity in the subsequent developments of commercial and industrial landscape. Therefore an attempt is made to understand the nature and the extent of association between the towns of different ranksize categories and the levels of development as reflected in demographic, social and economic characteristics.
Main Objectives of the Study:

Objectives of this study are:

(a) To analyse the demographic indicators as the reflective indicators of development.
(b) To evaluate the levels of socio-economic development.
(c) To compare the residents' perception of development by rank size categories.
(d) To identify the towns in each of the rank size categories on the basis of the levels of development, and classify them as very high, high, moderate and low level of development.
(e) To identify the towns which have low level of development in relation to their population size.
(f) To suggest a suitable measures for their development by disaggregating the indicators.

The study highlights the close association between the city size and the levels of development. The study identifies towns which are less developed but needs planners attention in order to divert the required socio-economic inputs.

The classification of towns on the basis of population size and the levels of development becomes useful in taking certain planning measures so as to minimise the disparities between the towns of different size class over space and time. The study brings out the differences in the levels of development among the
towns of Gujarat in terms of their population size, social and economic amenities and the associated urban problems which may help us in resolving some of the present planning problems of other Indian urban centres.

The present study is an original work on the following grounds:

(i) **Geographical Coverage**: The study is a first of its kind in Gujarat as it takes into consideration, all the 255 towns of Gujarat for purposes of identifying the levels of development.

(ii) **Selection of Indicators of Development**: Along with the usual sets of indicators related to human resource, social and economic aspects, the residents' perception of development is included.

(iii) **Rank Size Categories of Towns**: In order to make the study more meaningful and realistic, the towns have been regrouped on the basis of significant breaks in the rank size graph as the six classes of towns, defined by the Census Organisation, on mere population sizes may not reveal the true impact of size on developmental aspects.

(iv) **Composite Index of Development**: The average of individual indicators of each of the town is weighed against the average of the group of towns (rank size categories of towns) to enable us to identify the levels of development.