Rapid urbanisation and industrialisation of Guwahati have, without doubt, influenced the social life of the people living in this city. Consequently they are experiencing a new way of life which Wirth (1934 : 5) has termed urbanism. Guwahati is the oldest and the biggest town in the North East India. Guwahati has developed in such a fantastically fast rate particularly after early sixties that the city has outgrown beyond recognition. Because of big influx of people from the neighbouring states together with the incomings of rural and urban areas of the state its population has increased in such a rate that it is getting increasingly difficult to meet up with all the demands of basic needs of the modern living. No other city in the North East develops so rapidly as this city in respect of trade and commerce, labour and industry and communication. It has also emerged as an
administrative, political and socio-cultural centre of Assam. Twenty years ago, no anthropologists, no economists, no sociologists could forecast that the city of Guwahati could see such a great human influx to the city. Guwahati is totally disorganized, and has become a big mess. The city has expanded in an unplanned way. There is no planned growth. Besides commercial and administrative importance, Guwahati is the nerve centre of religious activities, linguistic diversities, educational and medical facilities and all round development of art and culture of the Assamese society that the state of Assam can provide.

Guwahati is unique from the point of view of Assamese culture, Assamese way of life and Assamese ethos. The city functions as a platform for a set of values, a system of priorities and a code of ethics that the Assamese people uphold. In other words, Guwahati is the focus of life and culture of Assam.

The rate/urbanization is slow in the early phase of development; it then becomes faster, until a point is reached and after that process it slackens to a steady pace (Turner, 1962: 218). Like other cities of India Guwahati is also passing through these processes of orientation and eventually reached this intermediate stage.
As we have mentioned in the Chapter I, the present study is concerned with the impact of urbanization on the cultural life of the Assamese people of Guwahati. In the preceding chapters (Chapter III to Chapter VII) details about economic status, change of family type, family size, composition of family, employment of domestic servants, inter-community relationship, occupation, patterns of savings and taking loans, utilization of urban amenities, migration, period of residence in the city, ownership of houses, contact with the original places, marriage and age group, educational levels of the married couples and so on and so forth are described, discussed and analysed. The discussion and analysis of the data based survey would surely give us a clear picture of the urban influence on the Assamese people of Guwahati.

The data show that the most dominant type of family among the sample families is the nuclear type. 75.10 per cent of the families are of nuclear type in the city (Chapter III, Table III:10). The influence of urbanization, modernization, westernization on the one hand, and lack of accommodation, spread of family planning, government's encouragement for a smaller family, concept of the quality
People coming from North Guwahati to the Kachari Bazar by a traditional boat

Kachari Bazar

A Hotel under construction near Bus Station
of life, levelling up the life style—all these have probably compelled the people in the city to adopt nuclear family. In the rural areas of Assam joint families with traditional life style are still found in large numbers. But the people who have migrated from rural areas to the city have mostly brought their spouses and unmarried children with them. Therefore it is found that in the newly developed peripheral area nuclear family is in higher frequency than that of the central area of the city. In the central area of the city joint families are found in sizable number. There are some old inhabitants, who, seem to have been retaining their jointness. Cantlie (1984: 37) observes that in Assam in every household there is one kitchen and one rice pounder. This description applies to rural folk only. In Guwahati for example, families with such traditional equipments are not common at all. It can, however, be said that a sizable number of families constituting 17.62 per cent of the total number of families are joint families. These families have maintained their jointness inspite of their long period of stay in urban situations. Our data from Guwahati confirm Rao's (1968: 111) conclusion from his study of Tadavpur in the environs of Delhi that joint household organization is not incompatible with cash incomes and diverse occupations.
It may also be noted that the nuclear families in the city maintain strong ties with the people of the original places. The urban Assamese nuclear families of Guwahati can be described as nuclear in form and joint in spirit. As far as living pattern is concerned, the Assamese family is nuclear. Both in earning and spending the urban Assamese family is nuclear as well. Nevertheless on the occasions of birth, marriage, death and religious ceremonies the family functions as a joint family because on such occasions relations who would have lived in a joint family come and live together for a short time and enjoy the fellowship of each other. It is interesting to note that the urban Assamese nuclear families always keep up the link with their original rural or urban corporates.

The most common size of household is medium in the urban area of Guwahati. Majority of the households belong to medium size, that is, between 4 and 6 persons. Large and small size households are rare. Cantlie (1984: 37) observes that the average size of household in Panbari village is 6.14 with a range of 2 to 20 persons. In the present study the average size of household found in Guwahati is 4.41 with a range of 1 to 13 persons. So the contrast in respect of family size between the rural
area of Panbari and the urban area of Guwahati is quite remarkable. The pressure of urbanisation on the family in Guwahati is simply undeniable.

Composition of family has also shown urban characteristics. The general type of composition of family found in the city is husband, wife and their children. Joint families with married brothers, unmarried brothers and sisters and parents are still found in the sample data though in small numbers. Such families are found among the old inhabitants of the city. Chhetry (1971 : 96) in his study of Guwahati finds lineal joint families as third major type. He also observes that after the breakup of the joint families, mostly after the death of the father, some of the widowed or separated relatives used to stay with either of the couples. Usually in old localities of the central area this type of families are seen. However, such families are few and far between.

Noble and Dutt (1978 : 7) comments that traditionally, the family in India has been oriented towards agricultural occupations which encourage the joint or extended family structure. Urban migration of rural people cuts the very basis of the joint family system. Nuclear family has become the ideal type of family all
over India. This is mainly because of population pressure and convenience of small size family. In the urban situations with the increase of industrialization and with increased mobility the traditional joint family is breaking down in smaller units. Growing individualism and clash in interest is responsible for breaking up the joint family system itself. Cooperative labour is no longer required. Every individual seeks out jobs in widely varying locations and it has become a question of open competition and individual effort and initiative. Noble and Dutt (1978 : 7) observes that frequently, parents living in urban households become not only an economic burden but also a continuing hindrance to the adoption of more modern social attitudes. However in the sample survey such attitudes are not found. This is because of the hold of traditional values of family life where respect for the elders and love for the younger are the basic code among the Assamese family.

The traditional occupations are no longer found in urban situations. A son need not follow his father’s occupation. Agriculture as an occupation is totally absent in the central area of Guwahati. It is, however, occasionally seen in the peripheral area where cultivable lands
are still available though under constant threat of urbanism. Among low and medium economic status males the percentage of traditional agricultural occupation is 1.33 and 0.46 respectively. Among the high economic status it is nil. Majority of the people in the city are engaged in government jobs. An appreciable number of people do service in other non-government sectors. In recent years business is also gaining popularity among the Assamese people. Some industrialists are appearing in the scene as well. It is our observation that the Assamese people lack business instinct and are afraid of taking risk. Consequently only a few people are self-employed. The challenges of urban life have not been taken up seriously.

It is interesting to note that certain works are never done by the Assamese people in the city. For example sweepers, cobblers, barbers (except in Kamakhya temple where still traditional rituals of cutting hair is done by some Assamese barbers), cloth washers, porters and most of the daily wage labours are people coming from other states. Only recently a few Assamese ladies have opened beauty parlours (hair dresser) in the city because hair cutting and beautification among the women has become a popular fashion. Introduction of exotic fashions to the
Non Assamese Barbers busy at work in the Central area (near Kachari Ghat)

A Beauty parlour run by an Assamese lady
womenfolk of the city seems to be of recent origin.

Unemployment problem is acute in the city. Traditional occupation of agriculture is not possible as there is scarcity of such land. Only a very small section of people do agricultural work as their ancestors did. These urban agriculturists seem to be doing agricultural work more for protecting their land than for agricultural production. As soon as they sell their land for residential purposes, they go in for urban jobs. There are also a few fishermen, potters and blacksmiths who still continue to do their traditional occupations. Many unemployed youths are seen loitering in the streets. There is a tendency among the youths to turn into antisocial activities. The Assamese are by and large loyal and law-abiding, less aggressive and more accommodating. But rapid change in the social and economic patterns of life have changed many social habits of the people. There seems to be a sharp generation gap between the older and the new generations. This generation gap is always there in all societies at all times. But the changes undergone by the Assamese culture at Guwahati is of a different category. It is not usual slow process of culture change which is perceived by the older generation, when it looks at the descending
generation. The older people of the city, though they were born in the city itself, had the experience of the traditional Assamese culture only, and not the present urban version of Assamese culture, which has grown along with the growth of Guwahati city.

Consumption and expenditure patterns have shown the trends of modernization in respect of lifestyle. Consumption in urban centres depends more on imported commodities. Today in Guwahati there seems to be more than ever before the use of running water, electricity and its auxiliaries such as television and video, refrigerators, washing machines, electric irons, cooking gas, tin food, shoes, ready-made clothes etc. These urban articles have been abundantly used by the Assamese community of both the central and peripheral areas of the city. It is observed that the proportion of expenditure on food in Guwahati is very high. In our survey it has been found that expenditures on house rent, food, medical treatment, travelling, education for children, major expenditure such as marriage ceremonies, construction of houses, buying cars or scooters and repairing of houses are much higher than expenditures on religious activities, keeping servants, electricity and clothes.
Loans are taken from various sources like provident fund, bank, housing board, electricity board, Life Insurance Corporation and relatives. Among the high economic category households 6.59 per cent, among the medium economic category 21.50 per cent and among the low economic category 31.08 per cent of the households have taken loans. Loans are taken mainly for construction of houses. Other purposes of taking loans are for social commitments, medical treatment, investments on business and buying cars or scooters.

Almost all the households in the city save money. Saving of money is related to the economic status of the households. In the high economic category 100.00 per cent of the households, in the medium economic category 94.52 per cent of the households and in the low economic category 90.99 per cent of the households have savings in post office, bank, provident fund, Life Insurance Corporation or through various government or private agencies, such as National Saving Certificate, Unit Trust and so forth. The main purpose of saving money is future security. Other purposes of saving money are social causes, children's education, business and construction of houses. The Assamese are not spendthrifts. They are frugal but not miserly. They spend lots of money on family hospitality.
Utilization of urban amenities is closely connected with the economic status of the households. The high economic category households show a very high rate of utilizing telephone, television, electricity, municipality water supply, sanitary latrine, cooking gas and cars. Majority of the houses are constructed by the side of the main road by the high income group. Medium economic category households also show higher rate of utilizing electricity, television, cooking gas, sanitary latrine and scooters or motor-cycles. However, this economic category shows slightly lower rate of utilizing telephone, car and municipality tap water. Houses of majority people of this economic category are situated away from the main road.

In the low economic category majority of the households utilise kerosine as fuel, pit latrine, bicycle and lesser number of households utilise municipality tap water, electricity, sanitary latrine and scooters or motor-cycles. Certain items like telephone and car are totally absent in the low economic category. Majority of the houses of this economic category are situated in inconvenient places and away from the main roads. This is obviously due to poor economic condition of a small section of people. However it is revealed by the present study that the Assamese people show a very high rate of utilizing urban
amenities. If it is compared with other towns or cities of India, striking differences are found. In other parts of India, the urban amenities are utilized only by a small section of population, which forms the higher income group (Majumdar, 1984 : 89). But in Guwahati such amenities are utilized by the Assamese people of almost all economic categories. Probably the higher rate of utilization of urban amenities is due to the fact that our sample is selective of Assamese population only — and Guwahati is a city for the high and medium economic status Assamese people only. Even from the rural areas of Assam only the affluent section has migrated to the city to stay here permanently. It is found in the present study that 75.15 per cent of the households in the sample belong to middle income group, particularly in the case of peripheral area it is found that 77.72 per cent of the households are of middle income group where majority of the migrants have settled.

In the case of migration of Assamese people to Guwahati it is found that large number of people have come to the city from the Kamrup district. However, migrants from other districts and even from other states are also found in small numbers. Majority of the migrants are found settling in the peripheral area. Male migrants are higher
in number than the female migrants. In the case of migration from outside the state it is found that smaller number of migrants are found in the central area. On the other hand a sizable number of migrants coming from outside the state are found in the peripheral area. In the case of rural-urban migration it is revealed by the sample data that number of rural to urban migration is smaller in Guwahati. Majority of the migrants to the city have come from urban and semi-urban areas. It is found that urban born migrants travel from far off places but rural born people travel only from nearest places to the city.

Findings of Bulsara (1961: 63), Rao and Desai (1965: 91) that a large majority of the migrants hail from rural areas are not applicable at all in the case of Assamese migrants to Guwahati as majority of them come from urban areas. Both the push and pull factors are appealing the people to this city. By push factors persons are forced to leave their native place and by pull factors persons are attracted to the city. Economic life of the neighbouring areas has been deteriorated and offers no alternative occupations. Agricultural lands have become scarce. As a result of which many people are pushed away from their original places. People are attracted to Guwahati as this
...is the only city in Assam where these people can find some jobs and other opportunities.

The data also show that out of the total number of households in the sample 77.11 per cent of the households have migrated to the city within a period of 1 to 20 years. The rest 22.89 per cent of the households have been staying in the city for more than 20 years. It is found from the survey that majority of the old Assamese inhabitants live in the central area of the city who have been staying there for more than 100 years. 46.15 per cent of the households in the central area are old inhabitants and 53.85 per cent of the people are new migrants. On the other hand only 17.22 per cent of the households in the peripheral area are old inhabitants and 82.78 per cent (Chapter VI, Table VI:11) of the households are new migrants. The Assamese people in the central area inherit their parental houses as most of them own landed property in this area whereas the Assamese people buy land and construct houses of their own in the peripheral area. Out of the total number of households in our survey majority of the households are recent migrants who have stayed in the city for not more than 5 years. Among these new migrants majority 46.53 per cent of the households have constructed their own houses, 40.95 per cent of the...
households live in rented houses and 12.52 per cent of the households live in houses provided by the government or any other employing agencies. Scarcity of houses for accommodation is strongly felt by the new migrants. Hostel facilities for working women or girl students are not available in convenient places. Though a few working women are found staying in rented houses, they do not feel secured as the city is growing bigger day by day and anti-social activities are increasing.

In respect of marriage it is observed that marriages are held within the Assamese community. Usually marriages are arranged by the parents or relatives within the homogeneous groups. Among the Assamese marriage ceremony is simple and there is no dowry or system of bride-price. Majority of the marriages in Guwahati are held between the age of 26 and 30 years in the case of males and in the case of females between 15 and 20 years. However, certain differences are found between the central and the peripheral areas regarding the age at marriage. It is observed that the people in the central area do not marry at early age. In this area nobody is married at the age group 20 to 25 years. But in the peripheral area a few males and females are found who got married at the age
group 20 to 25 years. Among the females of the younger
generation (that is to say between 20 and 30 years) in the
central area none is married at the age of 10 to 14 years.
Only among the females of older generation such early
marriages are found, whereas in the peripheral area
marriages at the age of 10 to 14 years are found among
the females of younger as well as older generations
(Table VII:3).

The general trend of marriage is between urban-
urban and rural-rural. In the central area, however, urban-
urban marriages are found in higher number, percentage being
64.05. On the other hand, in the peripheral area marriages
between urban-urban partners are held in small numbers,
percentage being 25.91 (Table VII:5). As majority of the
people in the peripheral area are new migrants rural-rural
marriages are held in large number in this area.

Majority of the marriages in Guwahati are held
between highly educated males and less educated females.
However, a different trend is observed in the central area
of the city. The people of this core area of the city enjoy
greater facilities and have been exposed to urban way of
life for a longer period of time and hence show much
progress in the field of education. The highest number of
The urban and rural migrants who have come to the city from different districts of Assam are mostly literate which help in raising the literacy rate in Guwahati. According to Census of India (Chhetry, 1971 : 133) the literacy rates for males and females in Guwahati are 68.71 per cent and 57.95 per cent respectively. But the present study shows that among the Assamese in the case of males 88.36 per cent of the males and among the females 82.36 per cent of the females in the city are literate. However, it is observed that the people of the central area are far advanced in respect of education, particularly higher education than the people of the peripheral area. In other cities of India a large number of illiterate migrants come as labourers — skilled and unskilled, who mostly come from neighbouring rural areas or even from neighbouring states.
In Guwahati, however, Assamese in-migrants come for white collar jobs or urban employment. They stay in the urban environment with their families. Consequently the rate of literacy among the Assamese people has gone up.

Among the Assamese people Guwahati is considered to be a posh city in the North East. There is a snob value in having a job or a house in Guwahati. As land is not available in the central area and even though available it is very expensive and beyond the reach of an average Assamese. That is why most of the migrants settle in the peripheral areas by buying agricultural lands converting them into residential areas. Even the hills and marshy lands are occupied by the migrants. The low income group have occupied the slum and inconvenient hilly areas. Rich or high income group are, however, found to have constructed their houses on the eastern and southern outskirts of the city. It is observed that the established old families of Guwahati are not found to have abandoned their original dwelling houses. Most of the households have recently constructed high rise buildings in the central area in place of their original traditional Assam Type houses. Only northern part of Guwahati has not been greatly affected by migration problem. Homogeneous residential pattern, Assam
Type houses and cognate religious places are the important characteristics of northern part. Only the National Highway extending from Sariighat bridge up to Chengchari is heavily industrialised on both sides. A prospective industrial belt is coming into existence alluring more and more migrants from neighbouring areas.

In the data it is found that male female ratio among the Assamese population is quite normal. It is simply because most of the migrants move with their families to the city. It is essential to maintain a healthy society with the balance of male and female sex. Chhetry (1971 : 46) observes that Guwahati covering all the communities shows a very low sex ratio in comparison to other cities of India. This is probably due to the migrants from outside the state move as the low earning male migrants without their families. Such imbalance among non-Assamese or even Assamese low earning male migrants could cause serious problems for the city administration. As Bhatnagar (1961 : 20) rightly remarks, imbalance of sex ratio could lead to a number of social and economic problems, such as white slave traffic, prostitution, promiscuity and sexual perversion and so forth. Hauser (1965 : 105) also observes that urbanisation, especially when accompanied by heterogeneity — differences
in the social background tends to break down traditional behaviour and produce many problems of personal disorganisation. It has precipitated such problems as juvenile delinquency, crime, prostitution, alcoholism, drug addiction, suicide, mental disease, social unrest and political instability. Many of these problems are especially manifest among in-migrant population who must make the adjustment from rural to urban patterns of living. As migrants occupy a large number of population in Guwahati the problems cited above are very likely to occur in course of time. After a gap of generation, these social problems will surely come to surface.

In the old areas of the city of Guwahati there was a tendency of the people to make distinct settlement pattern both castewise and communitywise. In the peripheral area also new settlers have shown similar tendencies as Muslims are trying to settle in Islampur, Hatigaon, Santipur, Jalukbari area (most of them are old settlers in this area), Ahoms in Milanpur, Beltola, Hatigaon area, high caste Hindus in Zoo-Narengi area or widely scattered in Dispur, Mathura nagar, Rukmini gagar, Beltola and so on. However, due to high influx of people from outside the state, land is becoming more and more scarce and it has
become more difficult to get a plot according to one's own choice. Neighbourhood pattern has been changed and more heterogeneous type has come up to stay. The settlement pattern also reflects the emergence of a new economic class as some areas are mostly inhabited by wealthy families. Some old areas like Machkhowa, Lakhtakia, Tokobari, Uzan-Panbazar, Panbazar/Chenikuthi, Silpukhuri and new areas like Chandmari, Rajgarh, Narikal basti, Geetanagar and Zoo road areas are occupied by high economic status people. These areas are considered posh and classy. The social intercourse among the urbanites are minimal because of the fact that the city has expanded in a disorganized way. Communication has become difficult. People have to spend a lot of time for going from one place to another. As a result the cordial atmosphere of the traditional Assamese people cannot be enjoyed by the urbanites.

Status of women has changed to a great extent. Girls or married women in traditional Assamese society are not allowed to move freely. But these restrictions are not observed in urban situations. Married women, for example, do not use veil any more. In attending social functions a small section of people are seen using traditional dress. Wearing of Sari and other types of dress and ornaments by women have become a new trend. Menfolk do not use dhoti
which is still popular in rural areas. Baruah (1961: 147) observes that among the Assamese people girls do not use boy's dress or boys do not use girl's dress and such acts are considered as very much insulting. But in the present situation both the sexes use almost similar dress which may be called unisex dress or boy's dress is imitated by some girls. Such fashions, however, remain up to a stage among married women. It has been observed that after middle age most of the women come back to their traditional way of life. It is also observed that Baruah's (1961: 152) description of making bun with traditional hair style is rarely found in modern Assamese people in Guwahati.

In Assamese villages weaving is still widely used by women. Such practice is very old among the Assamese women and they were famous for the particular craft of weaving and making clothes with floral designs. In the city majority of the women do not like weaving or designing. Various factors are responsible for non-availability of looms both in the central and peripheral areas of Guwahati. For one thing, to use handloom for weaving enough space is needed; for another much time is to be spent for loom made clothes. In an urban situation such as in Guwahati use of handloom is almost universally abandoned. Almost all Assamese women in Guwahati have given up this craft and heavily lean on cheap machine
In the construction of houses modern equipments and designs are widely used. Traditional Assam Type houses are very rarely seen now-a-days. Baruah (1961: 129) observes that typical Assamese houses are constructed separately for various purposes such as sitting house, sleeping house, kitchen, granary, rice pounding house etc. They fit in a rural situation. In urban situation, however, such as in Guwahati, lack of space and sense of decoration are the main reason for not constructing Assam Type houses. People now make a flower garden, or a house to be rented out instead of making a granary in front of the house as is usually in a typical Assamese village. Granary is traditionally constructed in front of the house because it is said, a man should see his store of rice first thing on getting up in the morning (Cantlie, 1984: 182). In urban situations, with the change of occupation from cultivation to industry or job oriented occupation the whole life pattern, behaviour pattern, even house pattern have changed. Similarly kitchen is no longer constructed separately in an Assamese household in the city. Restrictions usually observed in the traditional kitchens are totally ignored. In Assamese society in rural areas if the rules of ritual purity are not
observed in the kitchen, it is said that Lakshmi (goddess of wealth) will go away. Nobody is allowed to enter into the kitchen without having a bath. Cooking is done in a hearth using fire wood. After each meal sweeping of floor with cow dung and mud is compulsory. Tea is usually prepared outside the kitchen. But with the use of modern amenities like electricity, kerosene stove, cooking gas etc. everything is prepared in the same cooking place. Majority of people have given up use of fire wood for cooking. Use of fire wood is completely stopped by the people in central area as this area is more urbanised than the peripheral area where we find some people still using fire wood as fuel (Chapter V, Table V:4). Not only the methods of cooking are changed but the items of food and drink are also changed to some extent. People in the city use things available in the market instead of producing traditional Assamese snacks at home. Use of tin and packet food, bakery products, hot and cold food, Chinese or South Indian food and various kinds of drinks is increasing in a very fast rate. Cooked food and curry eaten with boiled rice are considered as pollution (cuva) (Cantlie, 1984 : 198) in traditional Assamese village. Cooking pots cannot be brought outside the cooking room, and food is usually taken on the floor. After taking each meal the floor must be purified by sweeping the floor.
and mopping it with mud and cowdung. But in the city life introduction of dining table has changed all these traditional habits and question of pollution and purity are totally ignored. People are even seen taking rice and curry in hotels and restaurants without any restrictions whatsoever. Traditional type of Jal-pān namely pre-boiled soft rice, uncooked rice flour, cooked rice flour, flat rice, boiled flat rice, parched rice, circular rice cakes which are typical Assamese snacks are hardly seen in the list of food items in the city. Biscuits, cakes, Bhujia, Bundle, Lalmohan, Rosogolla, Zelepi, Chao etc. have replaced the traditional items of snacks. Superstitions or taboos observed in connection with food are rationally judged by the people in the city and are being abandoned slowly. The Assamese urbanites are fairly secular in their attitudes towards food and drink. Srinivas (1972: 119) has rightly observed that an essential element in secularisation is rationalism. Rationalism involves, among other things, the replacement of traditional beliefs and ideas by modern knowledge. He also finds that Hindus are more affected by the secularisation process than any other religious groups in India since, in his view, the concepts of pollution and purity which are central as well as pervasive in Hinduism were greatly weakened as a result of the operation of a
variety of factors. His findings are mostly based on elites of Mysore. In our view they are true to the Assamese elites of Guwahati as well. Urbanization has brought in the wind of change of liberalism, for example, people travel by city bus, public bus, taxi, train, or sit together in restaurants, canteens, hotels, or in theatre or cinema halls without considering the religion, caste or language of others. That is a very welcome change in the city. The concepts of birth and death pollution are also slackened as most of the birth or death cases occur in modern hospitals or nursing homes. The first menstruation (puberty) of a girl is traditionally observed as a small marriage after the confinement of the girl for a week but this has become less ceremonial in the city. To consider women as pollution during her monthly periods is impractical. Many women in the city are educated and career minded. They are engaged in some kind of jobs or other. Such restrictions and constraints are naturally not observed. Performance of elaborate rituals in day to day life is not possible, since life has become faster and more mechanical in urban situations. Absence of old persons in most of the households is one of the reasons of forgetting many traditional habits. Most parents are educated and rightly busy with the problems of conveyance, good education, good food and security of the children rather than
teaching them rituals. Traditional practice does not help in the highly competitive educational system and rigid framework of employment opportunities. Training and instructions in sports, music and art, in typing and stenography, in using photo-copier or even computer are much more needed in order to be employable in urban situations. Thus urbanization had brought the philosophy of tolerance and the art of being convenient. People go by rule of thumb rather than by inherent principles of life. The urbanites are never sticky but go-ahead people. The Assamese people in the city have adapted themselves to urban customs and manners, the urban way of life. For their jobs they need new knowledge and better skill, greater specialization of occupations and more expertise which build up the network of modern way of life.

Today the daily life of an urban person is so different from a rural person from any part of Assam as if they belong to distinct different cultures. At the surface level a partial breakdown in the traditional social life in the urban social life has occurred. But deep down in the surface we find a source of traditional cultural practice. In actual fact the urban people continue their support from their old traditions, although there are implications
A Computer Centre run by an Assamese youth

A Namghar in the peripheral area
of substantial changes. Take for example the existence of Hamghars in the city. In each Assamese locality of the city there is a Hamghar where all Assamese festivals are observed every year, although in an urban style. Birth and death anniversaries of Sri Sri Sankardeva, Madhabdeva, Sri Krishna and many other ceremonies and festivals are observed in these Hamghars. Durga Puja, Biswakarma Puja, Swaraswati Puja, Siva Ratri, Birth day of Guru Nanak, Id and such other religious ceremonies and rituals are also observed with much pomp in the city.

Bobag Bihu, Magh Bihu and Kati Bihu festivals are traditional Assamese ceremonial cycle and are closely connected with cultivation. The urban Assamese in Guwahati celebrate these festivals with great enthusiasm. The traditional ceremonial cycle is hardly appropriate to the technological urban life in Guwahati and in the long run may be threatened. But, however, the urban culture gathers its nourishment from the roots of rural life. The contrast between the Assamese ruralites and the Assamese urbanites is more apparent than real.

The influence of urbanization on the neighbouring rural or semi-urban areas of Guwahati are increasing day by day. During certain months Husori or Mohoho singing groups
from neighbouring rural areas visit the houses of urban people and collect money. On the other hand many migrants who do not get accommodation in the city move to fringe areas for cheaper accommodation. There are some commuters also who bring with them not only money but new ideas and style of life. People from neighbouring rural areas consider the city as a place of earning money. Since cities are concentrations of people who do not grow their own food, they depend upon the former for sustenance and he depends on them for his market (Gibbs, 1961: 542). In the markets of Guwahati, it has been found that people from neighbouring rural areas sell their vegetable products, fishes, eggs etc. Specially in the Kacharighat, Uzambazar, Maligaon and Beltola markets. Other markets are mostly dominated by non-Assamese traders. People from neighbouring areas not only sell their goods but also buy various articles from the markets of Guwahati. They buy things like cloths, utensils, materials of decoration, modern building materials, radio, television, bicycle, automobile and various items of food. Moreover, many news papers and magazines published from this city have penetrated into interior villages which bring news and new ideas and innovations to the rural folk. Rural folk also depend on the city for better education, technical knowledge (training), higher educational
Preparation for Magh Bihu in the peripheral area of Guwahati

Hotel Brahmaputra Ashok in the central area of Guwahati
facilities and various administrative and judicial matters. Gibbs (1961: 544) also concludes that there is a general agreement that most social and economic innovations originate in cities. Thus, while city dwellers are dependent on the agriculturists for sustenance, the latter looks to the former for innovations, and it appears that socio-cultural change takes place in the same direction in the rural and urban division of a society.

In the preceding chapters we have tried to show the state of affairs as far as the patterns of culture and social interactions of the Assamese people are concerned. In the previous pages of this chapter we have summarised what we found in the arrangement and organisation of the data of the Assamese people in Guwahati. Occasionally we have moved from the data to generalisations. At no stages, however, have we shown how the Assamese culture and tradition are on the way to change because of the impact of urbanization. We have observed in detail that the city has developed tremendously extending from the central area to the peripheral area which in its turn extending farther and farther on till the fringe areas are reached. The city is under the process of urbanization, and the process is never having and resting, but growing and becoming. With
the concentration of large Assamese population into a relatively small area, the Assamese culture is bound to be influenced by political, administrative, historical and cultural factors. In the circumstances, the traditional Assamese culture, their way of life and patterns of behaviour has been threatened. Guwahati is on the way of being a cosmopolitan city with a great influx of people coming from outside the state of Assam. People coming from different states have by and large occupied the vacant places of the peripheral area. These people have come with distinctive culture of their own. Because of the large number of people from outside, the Assamese culture is not only influenced, but on the way of being diluted. The Assamese elite, who live in Guwahati, considered to be superior because of power and privileges, education and skill, wealth and affluence, are having the urban version of Assamese culture. It represents the great tradition of the urbanites vis-a-vis the little tradition of the Assamese ruralites. There has been an increasing emphasis on the elite of Guwahati as a distinct social category. They have acquired a distinctive social identity with their own taste in education and technology, art and literature, clothes and music, in their views and opinions.
It is a culture stressing on life style and quality of life based on modern science and technology. This type of culture leads to the life of leisure and comfort. The traditional Assamese culture will be guided by the urban version of Assamese culture that we find in Guwahati today.