One of our country's most urgent socio-economic problems is the problem of absolute poverty, reflecting a condition of life so degrading as to be an insult to human dignity. While a significant part of the globe suffers from such a miserable economic condition a few nations or rather a few groups of people are leading a life of plenty in material resources. The irony of the situation is that the gap between the rich and poor nations is widening at an accelerated rate. According to World Bank's estimates the per capita income of the world's poorest one billion grew from $108 in 1980 while that in the developed world increased from $3100 to $4000 an increase of $3 in the entire span of a decade in the former as against $900 in the latter. Such a condition is certainly not healthy from the standpoint of a desirable international economic order.

When we speak of poverty there are two aspects of the phenomenon, i.e., rural poverty and urban poverty. Till late it was assumed that third world countries were composed of large rural populations with little access to the services which were heavily concentrated in the urban zones. So few governments and urban planners had paid sufficient attention to the problems of the urban poor. But now the extent and speed of urbanization in developing countries is measured accurately to a great extent. Another important feature attracting attention is that in many third world countries, slum dwellers and squatters already represent from 50% to 75% of the total urban population.
In a developing country like India, poverty is a great social, moral and intellectual challenge. It is generally observed that apparently greater emphasis is laid on rural poverty. But very often the need for an overall analytical study on the subject is required. In India, attempts have been made from time to time to conduct socio-economic surveys in selected cities in order to understand the problems created by rapid urbanization in these cities. Town planners have also conducted specific surveys in several cities to meet the requirements of urban planning. The issues involved in urban development are complicated. In India, like any developing country, the challenge of urbanization becomes very serious in the context of urban poverty which incidentally is largely an extension of rural poverty. Indian poverty is indeed a classic and all-pervading phenomenon and any programme designed to remove it has got to lay heavy emphasis on the inner problems of the poverty-stricken people. It is observed that poverty is the root-cause of many of the evils caused in urban, places of India.

Thus the vicious circle of poverty retards the growth of the urban society both economically and socially. Poverty has been appropriately taken as the starting point in any programme of economic and social growth path. Considering the stubborn nature of the problem it is necessary to go into the depth of it. That is why this problem has been selected for a sociological analysis of the issue with Greater Guwahati as the focus of our study.

The term poverty is a phenomenon which is complex both in its origin and manifestations. The concept of poverty is not very well defined. The term has been defined both in relative and subjective terms. For many people
starvation is the essential poverty line. While one may be richer than a beggar in the street another may be poorer than a millionaire. Poverty can be said to connote deficiency of acceptable minimum material needs. But the fact remains that there is no definitive universal index of poverty.

In India, several economists and organizations have constructed their own standards for determination of absolute poverty. All these studies assume the value of food for a calorie intake of 2250 as the basis. From sociological or economic viewpoint there may arise questions of confusion in this regard. In our study, the analysis is directed toward a specific sociological perspective.

The growth of urbanization has been marked by an increase in the number of the urban poor and their numerous problems. Thus the problem of urban poverty is related to multifaceted phenomena. In view of these basic considerations the hypothesis advanced is that urban poverty is the cause and effect of several other interrelated sociological problems.

In order to examine the hypothesis the following avenues have been followed:

Urban poverty is caused due to several factors. Among these, the factors that come frequently to the forefront are low income level, unemployment, rural urban migration, illiteracy, vices and like social practices.

Again there is enough scope of discussion regarding the problem of urban poverty in the context of some other interrelated social problems such as the beggar problem and problems of population growth, lack of adequate
accommodation, of child labour and problems of crime. Poor quality of human resources.

The material in this research problem is organized in four parts. An introduction of the research work is given in part one. It deals with a sociological analysis of the concept of urban poverty in India with special reference to Greater Guwahati.

Part two of the study is related to the factors causing urban poverty in India. This part consists of five chapters. The phenomena to be included in this part are: Chapter 2. Low income level, Chapter 3. Unemployment, Chapter 4. Rural urban migration, Chapter 5. Illiteracy and Ignorance, Chapter 6. Vices and some like social practices.

Part Three of the study deals with urban poverty in the context of some specific social problems. This part includes chapters on these problems, viz., beggar problem, problem of population growth, problem of accommodation, problem of child labour, problem of crime, problem of poor quality of human capital and problem of pollution.

Part Four of the study seeks to bring the study to an integrated conclusion. This chapter contains a synthesis of the study including observations and measures suggested to solve the problem and also makes an attempt to indicate further scope of studying the problem.