The present study has been undertaken in the Railway campus of the Maligaon area of Guwahati city. Guwahati, the gateway of the North Eastern states of India, is in the Kamrup district of Assam.

THE STATE OF ASSAM

The state of Assam (area: 78,438 Sq.Kms.) has a population of 22,414,322 persons according to the 1991 census. It is overwhelmingly an agricultural state and so the proportion of urban population is extremely low. This is evident from the fact that only 11 per cent of the population of Assam live in urban areas (1991). Guwahati is the largest town of Assam with a population of 5,84,342 (1991). However, according to the
provisional population figures during the decade between 1991 and 2001, the population of the state of Assam is 26,638,407.

GUWAHATI

Guwahati has been known by various names in different phases of history. The present spelling is an anglicised form of Gua (an areca nut or betel-nut) and hati signifying a rookery or a crowded cluster of tenements. The place-name owed its origin to an abundance of areca nut tree and hence, Guwahati. In the hands of some European writers of the 19th century A.D., that which is now known and accepted at both official and non-official levels as Guwahati, however, found mention as Gwahati, Goahawtee, Gwahatty, Gohatti, Gohati, Gowhatti, etc. In Assamese, it has all throughout been known as Guahati and that is how it came to acquire the current spelling in English as well i.e., Guwahati.

If any person chanced to look down from the top of a hill (the Nilachala hill) on the west of a city, a panoramic view thereof emerges with numerous tenements and structures and countless lights by night beautifying a vast area as far as the eyes could see, that city is the city of Guwahati while the Nilachala hill has been traditionally the abode of 'Mother Goddess Kamakhya': Kamakhya has been there as the 'presiding deity' of Kamrupa which was why Kamakhya of history was usually referred to as Kamrupa-Kamakhya (Barooah, 1989). Our study area is located near this historic Kamakhya.
Guwahati is situated on the south bank of the mighty Brahmaputra. It has been known for long as the 'gate-way of Assam', and now of the country's north-east as well. It has been a capital city of great antiquity. It is surrounded by a semi-circle of thickly-wooded green hills on all sides excepting the immediate north where flows the mighty Brahmaputra, the 'Lauhitya' or the 'eastern sea' as mentioned in ancient Indian literary works. It has been widely acknowledged that the likeness of an amphithetrical hilly surroundings endowed with an enchanting landscape lend colour to the city beautiful making it one of the most natural settings of urban India. William Robinson (1841, 1975 reprint) wrote about the ancient glory of Guwahati, the former Pragjyotishpur, the chief town of Kamrup, with its numerous carved stones and beautifully finished slabs, the remains of once noble temples found constantly beneath the surface of the ground. He again wrote, its numerous spacious tanks, the works of tens of thousands, the pride of the princes, and the wonder of the present day, are now choked up with weeds and jungle, or altogether effaced by a false, though luxuriant soil, that floats on the stagnant waters concealed beneath. The Ambari excavations of 1969 once again confirmed Robinson's brilliant description of Guwahati that was.

Guwahati is Assam's biggest city and after the reorganisation of Assam in the early 1970s, it continued to enjoy the status of the premier city of the entire north-eastern region. It is through this city that the north-eastern region of the country is linked with the rest of the land by roads, railways, air-routs and inland waterways. It is interesting to note that from
Pragjyotisha through Kamrupa this part of the ancient land came to be known by its modern name Assam (Asom in Assamese). It is a tradition with the Ahoms, Assam's rulers for six countries before the British came, that the name Assam is derived from 'Asoma' in the sense of 'unequalled' or 'peerless'. Assam was one of the last regions to be annexed to Britain's Indian domains in 1826.

K.L. Barua (1933) in his book 'Early history of Kamrupa' wrote,

"The capital of the kingdom (Pragjyotisha) was named Pragjyotishpur. There is a village two miles south of modern Gauhati which is still called Dispur, indicating that the site of the city of Pragjyotishpur was in or in the immediate vicinity of Gauhati".

The famous Chinese traveller, Yuan Chwang (Hiuen T'san) came to Assam in 642-43 A.D. and wrote about the glories of Kamarupa in the accounts of his travels the SI-YU-KI (the Records of the Western Countries). Assam's present capital is located at Dispur, about 5 Km. away from the centre of the city of Guwahati.

Assam's ancient capital city was given a municipality by the foreign rulers in 1878. It took a little over a quarter of a century after independence to launch a Municipal Corporation, the first and the only one till date in the whole state, in 1973, embracing initially 34 wards, since
increased to 60. Our study area embraces parts of Guwahati Municipal Corporation Ward Nos. 3-6, 8-9 and 12.

Rich as it is with old temples and shrines, Guwahati appears to be becoming richer with new secular 'temples' in the era of independence in the forms of the Gauhati University and a number of schools and colleges, the High Court, the Medical and Engineering Colleges, the College of Veterinary Science (being a part of Assam Agricultural University of Jorhat), the North-East Frontier Railway Headquarters, the Industrial Estates, the Oil Refinery at Noonmati, IIT (following addendum to the Assam Accord of 15 August 1985), etc. Further, popular desires found fulfillment when in the early 1960's the railway-cum-road bridge came up across the Brahmaputra improving the network of communications. The bridge has been known as the Saraighat Bridge, commemorating Ahom Viceroy Lachit Barphukan's brilliant victory at Saraighat, Guwahati, over the Ramsingh-led Moghul forces in 1671 A.D. Guwahati represents a lucid blending of tradition and modernity.

The city extends from east to west for about 35 Kms., from Chandrapur to Daharapur. Its north-south extension from the riverbank to Khanapara is about 15 Kms. in the middle and about 6 Kms., in its western margin.

Guwahati has a mild sub-tropical climate with moderate rainfall (average annual 1600 mm.). The temperature goes up from a
minimum of $6^\circ C$ during the winter season to a maximum of $38^\circ C$ during the summer season (SRDC, 2000).

The total population of the town before 1872 is not known. The actual census was carried out for the first time in 1872. The population of Guwahati town rose from 11,492 in 1872 to 5,84,342 in 1991. The rise in population figures is ascribed to natural increase, migration from rural to urban areas, movement of population from outside the state for Government services and also immigrants' influx from erstwhile East Bengal and present Bangladesh.

Moreover, the town has begun to assume the position of commercial, industrial, educational and to some extent administrative focus of Assam. So, it attracts population from other parts of Assam and outside Assam.

The population of Guwahati is heterogeneous in composition. It constitutes persons speaking various languages such as Assamese, Bengali, Hindi and others. They also profess different religions. Besides these, there are other tribal groups such as Boro-Kacharis, Rabhas, Karbis, Mishings, Deuris, Dimasas, Hmars and Tiwas. They have their own social institutions and cultures.
STUDY AREA

Our study area, Maligaon, has stories to tell from the past to the present. The past is traced to Mali Bagan (Mali means a florist, also a kind of flower known as Malati; Bagan means a garden). Oral history and tradition have it that florists taking care of flowers needed for offerings to Kamakhya of Mother-Goddess fame at Nilachala Parvat (hill) used to reside in the Maligaon area previously known as Mali Bagan.

Insofar as the present is concerned, Maligaon shot into fame with the establishment of Northeast Frontier (NF) Railway on 15 January 1958 with headquarters at Maligaon, Guwahati, at the foothills of the Nilachala hill, home for Goddess Kamakhya.

The NF Railway has its own history. After the partition of India on 15 August 1947, the Bengal Assam Railway was bifurcated in conformity with the political boundaries with the result that the Assam Railway was formed with its H.Q. at Pandu. In 1948, the Darjeeling-Himalayan Railway was taken over by the Government of India and merged with the Assam Railway. The division of the country, in the wake of independence led to complete severance of communication, both by rail and road, of Assam from the rest of India. Attempts at restoration were undertaken with the completion of the Assam Rail Link Project in January 1950. Reorganisation of Railway zones took place in 1953 and thereupon, Assam Railway was merged with Avadh-Tirhut Railway to form the North-Eastern Railway with
H.Q. at Gorakhpur. The present N.F. railway system was carved out of the North-Eastern Railway. Since Maligaon was chosen as the headquarters of NF Railway, the area bid fair to grow into a township of people with many institutions to cater to many needs of community life.

The Maligaon area of the railway campus is inhabited by a number of population groups coming from different places of India, besides the local Assamese. Those drawn from outside the State are Bengalis, Biharis, Punjabis, Gujratis, Tamils, Telegus, etc. But the Assamese and the Bengali constitute the two largest linguistic groups.

The NF Railway runs two Higher Secondary Schools (Maligaon Railway Higher Secondary School and the Netaji Vidyapith Railway Higher Secondary School). Then, there is one Hindi-medium single-teacher primary school, one Hindi-medium double-teacher primary school, one Assamese-medium double-teacher primary school and one Telegu-medium double-teacher primary school. There are two Bengali-medium High and Higher Secondary Schools aided by the State Government, one Hindi High School (Tarun Ram Phookan Hindi High School) aided by the state Government. Also Government-aided are the Assamese-medium, Ambika Giri (Assamese-medium) High School, Sishu-Niketan Primary School and Gopinath Bardoloi High School. Apart from these, there is one Kendriya Vidyalaya H.S. School sponsored by the NF Railway. The school system is an indicator of the desirable educational profile of community life on the campus of the NF Railway H.Q. Some private schools like St. Mary's High School also function in the area.
There are three cooperative societies for selling commodities to people of Maligaon area at subsidised rates: the NF Railway Consumers Cooperative Society, Gotanagar Railway Cooperative Society, and Rest Camp Railway Cooperative Society. Recreational facilities are also there: there are the Rang Bhavan, Railway Institutes, the Railway Stadium: the Stadium is run by NF Railway Sports Association and is wholly sponsored by the NF Railway authorities. It appears that community life in Maligaon area is reasonably rich in variety and pursuit of cultured patterns of behaviour.

The Railway Hospital in the heart of the railway campus is a very serviceable health care centre. It is principally run for the benefit of the employees and members of their families. Its humanitarian consideration is also extended to people in the neighbouring area. Further, there is a functioning Mahila Samity and a branch of the Bharat Scouts and Guides organisation. There is a swimming pool as well for the children of the railway employees.

CLASSIFICATION OF SERVICES

The railway services are classified into different classes in order to describe the various tires of employments. The classification also denotes the status and functions of various employees. It is broadly based on scales of pay and status and it consists of four classes, viz: Class I, Class II, Class III and Class IV. Class I and Class II denote officers; Class
III consists of non-gazetted employees; Class IV employees consist of peons, khalasis, pointsmen, and similar other staff and some specialised technical workers. Top-ranking Class I officers are further divided into 3 categories, namely, Senior Administrative Heads of departments, such as, Chief Operating Superintendents; or Inter-Administrative grade officers, such as, Divisional Railway Managers or Divisional Superintendents; and the Junior Administrative Officers, such as, Deputy Heads of departments.

HOUSE TYPE

The usual Assam type of house is prevalent in the Maligaon railway campus. This type of house has cement plastered floor and walls, and roof is made of corrugated iron sheets. Two-storeyed R.C.C. (Reinforcement Cement Concrete) buildings are also seen. The number of rooms in a house on an average varies from two or five; and the sizes of rooms are small to moderate.

In Maligaon railway campus, houses are generally of six types, namely, Type I, Type II, Type III, Type IV, Type V and Type VI. Type I is a one bedroom house with kitchen and bathroom; Type II consists of two bedrooms, one kitchen and one bathroom; Type III consists of three bedrooms, one kitchen and one bathroom, Type IV consists of four bedrooms, kitchen, bathrooms, and a servant room; Type V and Type VI are bungalows with five bedrooms and servant quarters in the compounds. Houses are allotted to the employees according to their occupational status.
Thus, Type I is allotted to the employees of Class IV category; Type II for Class III category and Type III for seniors of Class III category. Type IV is allotted to the Class II category; and Type V is for Deputy Heads of Class I category and Type VI is for high officers of Class I category.