CHAPTER -IV

CHANGES IN MACRO STRUCTURES
URBANISATION & POLITICISATION
OF GUWAHATI
4.1: Approaches to the Study of Change:

While dealing with the theories of social change, in Chapter-II, an attempt was made to examine the effectiveness of cultural and structural approaches of studying social change. Srinivas (1966) studied change through sanskritisation and westernisation process. For him, sanskritisation represents actual or aspired for cultural mobility within the framework of the established ‘great tradition’ and stratification system of caste. Westernisation on the other hand implies change resulting from cultural contact with the West. Sanskritisation “as the process by which ‘low caste or tribe or other group takes over customs rituals, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high and, in particular, a twice born (dwija) caste. (67-68). Srinivas’ study was mainly based on caste and within his scheme, the tribal society is not clearly fitted especially because of the lack of stratification as that of the castes. “It is primarily oriented towards explaining the pressure of cultural mobility and change among the caste groups in India. It deals with the structural problems of social change only by implication through the process
of ideological changes in the outlook and customs of the caste
groups.” (Singh: 1999: 24). However, on many occasions, in his
books [(1) Village, Caste, Gender and Method, 2) Caste in Modern
India and Other essays etc.)] Srinivas clarifies that the scheme is
equally valid for tribal society also.

Little and great traditions is another approach through which
Redfield (1955) studied the change in Mexican society. He
postulated that societies having deeper historical past and
civilisation maturity have traditions, one of elites or the reflective
few and the other of the folk or the unlettered peasants. The former
he called great and the latter, little traditions. There is however a
constant interaction between the two levels of traditions. Each
tradition has its own institutionalised roles, statuses, and personnel.
Each tradition develops first, in terms of its own internal creative
urge – an orthogenetic process. But gradually the traditions come
under external impact, of tradition outside their own civilisational
matrix, which may happen through historical contact, war and
political domination or migration or communication. Civilisations
and their social structure also change through these external
contacts or heterogenitic process (Singh 1999:147). The direction
of this change presumably is from folk or peasant to urban cultural
structure and social organisation.

The basic approach, to which this study is concerned with, is
the structural change approach. The structural analysis is focused
on the network of social relationship. Family, caste, kinship, class,
occupational groups, factory, administrative structures comprise the structural realities. Singh writes, "A structural analysis of change consist of demonstrating the qualitative nature of new adaptations in the patterned relationships, as when a joint family breaks and becomes nuclear, a caste group is transformed into a class group or when traditional charismatic leadership is replaced by leaders of popular choice, etc." (ibid : 17). But Singh’s attempt to divide the approaches to study social change into two watertight compartments viz. i) structural and ii) cultural is perhaps not in conformity with the definition of culture in Anthropology. The elements that Singh identified for studying the structural change are the elements of cultural study as well.

Another, two approaches that are also frequently mentioned while studying social change in Indian context are the dialectical Marxian approach and cognitive historical approach of Louis Dumont. But since our analysis will be partly an integrated approach of the structural and cultural approach already discussed, further discussion on these two approaches has not been done.

4.2: Approaches to the Present Study

The present study is a combination of partly the two cultural approaches and partly of the structural approach. In other words, the study adopted in principle the integrated approach as suggested by Singh (ibid) and attempts to study both orthogenetic and heterogenetic changes with reference to the process of sanskritisation, from traditionalisation to modernisation of little
tradition. Similarly, in the structural context both macro and micro structural changes have been analysed and attempted to gauge the spill over effect of the transformation of the macro structures. In the scheme of this study, due to the inherent absence of great tradition, analysis is being made as to the nature and type of the structural change or transformation in the macro structures of the society by way of urbanisation and politicization. The changes in the macro social structures have a tendency to spill over the micro social structures and thus this spread effect is one way to analyse the micro social changes (Singh, 1999: 161).

Sanskritisation approach shall be adopted here in a contextual specific sense. It is, as noted by Singh, a contemporaneous process of cultural imitation of upper castes by lower castes or sub castes, tribal or even the Islamic patterns in different parts of India. (Singh, Ibid, 7). Empirical studies show that (Shah, 1976; Singer, 1972) in many places lower castes imitate the customs of kshatriyas and not Brahmins while at other places tribes are reported to imitate the customs of caste Hindus (Srinivas, 1962: 42). Without going into the details of how some tribes are positioned with reference to the process of sankritisation, Srinivas confirms that “Sanskritisation is not confined to Hindu castes but also occurs among tribal and semi tribal groups such as Bhils of western India, the Gonds and Oraons of central India and Pahadis of Himalaya.” (Srinivas, 1990: 7). In his framework, sanskritisation usually follows a claim to be a caste in case of tribe or to be in a higher order of hierarchy in case of a caste.
The concept of westernisation, which according to Srinivas is more dominant in towns than in rural areas, also essentially needs to be examined in this case. The bigger the town, the greater is the chance of such exposure, while in the smaller villages such chances are even today, minimal, though greater than before independence. (Srinivas, 1990: 63). The concept of westernisation is relevant here as it enters into the society through the introduction of new items and ideas of western society such as through newspaper, radio, television, voting, election, etc., and brings about fundamental changes in the old institutions.

In this chapter we shall discuss the macro structural changes in respect of politicisation and urbanisation of Guwahati. It is necessary to gauge the extent of the changes that had been experienced by the city through the ages so as finally to examine their spill over effect in the microstructures, which have been discussed in the Chapter –V.

4.3: Politicization of Guwahati: Changes in Macro Structure

Politicisation of Guwahati began way back in 17th century when the city was under the attack of Mughals. The city saw the invaders in Ahoms through, Koches, Mughals and British. The city saw the rise and fall of all the above mentioned kingdoms and rules. Here as we are concerned with the changes in the village segments under study, we are to trace the political growth of the city through the ages. The available records suggest that, till the
late 20th century, the villages under study were outside the purview of the city and was not directly under any impact of the town life. After the adoption of the Constitution of India, it has become amply clear that the new federal republic has provided several political rights to its all citizen’s irrespective of caste, creeds, religion, etc. These political rights include right to vote for nominating one’s own candidate, right to be elected on satisfaction of certain conditions, etc. These rights however have remained almost unexercised by the tribal people under study. They are either unaware of such provisions or when known to them, not interested to exercise due to its unknown impact. The areas under study are the segment of the two Assembly constituencies namely Dispur and Guwahat (West) and one Lok Sabha Constituency namely Guwahati. Since 1951, elections have been conducted for all these constituencies but not even one percent of the ‘villagers’ have cast their votes not to speak of contesting a seat. The situation however has changed after the constitution of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. In the following paragraphs an attempt has been made to trace the political developments in Guwahati since long past till the present day.

Guwahati is an ancient city of India. Although a specific date of the city's origin is not known, considering the references in the epics, Puranas and from the pages of the explored history, it can be concluded that it is one among the ancient cities of the country. Epigraphic sources disclose Guwahati as the capitals of many ancient kingdoms. It was the capital of the mythological
kings Naraka and Bhagadatta. The kingdom of which Pragjyotishpura was the capital was known as Pragyotisha and the great river Brahmaputra which appears to be the main route of communication was known as Lauhitya. The Raghuvamsha of Kalidasa and Kalikapurana mentions about Pragjyotishpura. Choudhury writes, "There cannot be any manner of doubt regarding the location of this capital city of Pragjyotishpura. The Brihatsamhita of the 5th century AD refers to the Lauhitya along with Pragyotisha. This is confirmed by the Raghuvamsha (canto-iv) which places Pragjyotisha on the bank of Brahmaputra in the east. Purasuttama, the writer of Tikanda of about 7th century AD states that Pragjyotisha is in Kamrupa and this was Kamrupa of Allahabad Pillar inscription in Samudra Gupta of the 4th Century AD" (1978: 3).

Descriptions of Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang reveal that during the greatest Varman king Bhaskaravarma, 7th century AD, the city was stretched to 19 kms and probably was the principal base for his strong naval force (30,000 war-boats), with officers knowing details of the sea-routes in Indian Ocean to China. The city remained as the capital of Assam till 10-11th century AD under the rulers of the Pala dynasty. Excavations in Ambari and the brick walls and houses excavated during construction of the present auditorium of Cotton College, Guwahati suggest that it was a city of great size with economic and strategic importance till the 9th - 11th century AD.
During the medieval period, after weakening and destruction of the Kamata kingdom between the 12th-15th century AD, the city lost its earlier glory and became only a strategic outpost of the then Koch Hajo and Ahom Kingdoms of western and eastern Assam respectively. Later, the western part of the Koch Kingdom fell to the Mughals and the eastern half became an Ahom protectorate. Although the actual border between both the powers (Ahoms and Mughals) kept fluctuating between the Kartoya river (now in North Bengal) to Manas river and Barnadi river from time to time, Guwahati became the actual war-front (as the outpost of importance). The city was the seat of the Borphukan, the civil and military authority of the lower Assam region, appointed by the Ahom kings. Mughals attacked Assam for 17 times and many a times Guwahati temporarily fell to them. The Battle of Saraighat fought close to Guwahati in 1671AD is the most famous and known war, in which the Mughals faced severe defeat due to strong leadership of Lachit Borphukan and hard work of Assamese Army.

British annexation of Assam started in 1826 after the Burmese war. Guwahati was constituted as one of the administrative centres of the British Rulers and Assam was declared a protectorate. In the year 1824, on 28th March, Guwahati was brought under the authority of the British from the hands of the Burmese and in 1828, Guwahati was made the nerve centre of administration with the inclusion of Lower Assam. According to Holiram Dhekial Phukan (cf, Hazarika, 2002), a living witness to these changes, the British established the offices of administration
at the foot of the Nilachal hillock, the seat of Goddess Kamakhya. In fact the local governing institutions have seen a prolific growth in the town from time to time particularly during the British rule and for administrative convenience a number of combinations were tried in terms of these local administration.

In the year 1850 the Bengal Municipal Act 1850 was brought into force in the town of Guwahati. However, it was not given effect immediately. Under the Act, it was only on 1st January 1853 that the first and the only Municipal Board was established at Guwahati (Rao, 1963: 32) with Captain Rowlatt as the ex-officio president, James Herriot and C.K. Hudeon as members. But this set up did not continue for long. In the year 1866, the capital of Assam was shifted from Guwahati to Shillong and eight years later in 1874 Assam was made the Chief Commissioner’s Province (Hazarika, 2002: 9). The shifting had great impact on the town of Guwahati. It lost the importance as the administrative seat but found solace to develop as an independent town.

In the year 1978, Guwahati was constituted into a first class municipality. Between 1887 and 1923 several Municipal Acts of Bengal were in force in Assam under which Municipal Boards were functioning. But in the year 1923, for the first time the Assam Municipal Act was enacted. However, functioning of the Municipal Board under this Act was not much effective. The Act was repealed by the Assam Municipal Act 1956.
4,4: Political Power: The Guwahati Municipal Corporation Act, 1969:

In the year 1963 the Government of Assam thought it appropriate to elevate Guwahati into a city (Mahanagar) by converting the Municipal Board into a full-fledged Corporation and accordingly a Commission was set up under the Chairmanship of Debendra Nath Sharma (Notification no. LML. 307/51/30 dated 21\textsuperscript{st} June 1963) to study the possibility of such a proposition. The Commission put forward its statement to the Government and strongly suggesting the prospects of constituting a Municipal Corporation in Guwahati and switching over into a full-fledged Municipal Corporation. Along with the report, the Commission also presented the outline of a Bill for the constitution of the proposed Guwahati Municipal Corporation. Accordingly, the Guwahati Municipal Corporation Bill was drafted which received the assent of the President of India on the 1\textsuperscript{st} January 1973. The Corporation was finally constituted in the year 1974 with much enthusiasm enabling the each local area to elect their own representative.

The Guwahati Municipal Corporation Act, 1969 provides for one councillor for every population of 7,500. This limit has now been raised to 15,000, subject to a maximum of 60 (Singh, 1999), who shall be elected through universal adult franchise for a five-year term. The Government of Assam is empowered to determine the actual strength of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation from time to time keeping in view with the rise of population. For
electing the Councillors, the entire city of Guwahati is split into areas known as Wards. There should be as many wards as there are Councillors to be elected to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. There are at present 60 wards of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (Ref-Map-3 between pages 166 & 167). Provisions are made for the representation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. If such categories of people are not properly represented and if no Councillor has been elected to the Corporation from among them, then the Guwahati Municipal Corporation shall nominate one Councillor from each such community. This exclusive provision will continue so long as the system of representation of seats for these classes of people persists in the Constitution of India. The Government of Assam may nominate individuals having special knowledge or know-how in Municipal Administration, member of the Union Parliament/Lok Sabha and Members of the State Legislative Assembly representing the constituencies, which embrace fully or partly the Guwahati Municipal Corporation; and the Members of the Council of States/Rajya Sabha registered as electors within the Corporation area are Ex-Officio members. The nominated members have the right to attend the meetings of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation but they have no voting rights.

4.5: A Full fledged Political Institution for All:

The GMC has become the full-fledged local body and people are given abundant power to develop and administer their own
local areas. For this, the Corporation has been envisaged with power to:

(a) Take over land within the confines of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation with the intention of building markets, schools, playgrounds, parks, hospitals or for any other public purpose.

(b) Organize plans for the improvement of any area within the sphere of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation.

(c) Hand out building permissions.

(d) Issue trade licences for setting up of factories and business.

(e) Designate the roads and numbering the houses.

(f) Seal off for community use certain roads or bridges within its jurisdiction either provisionally or lastingly.

(g) Take measure to improve public health, safety and convenience, water supply, lighting and drainage, and sewerage disposal.

(h) Take measure for public safety and containment of nuisances.

(i) Prevention and extinction of fire.

(j) Maintenance of vital statistics like information of births and deaths.

(k) Control and monitor of markets and slaughterhouses.

(l) Regulation of places for the disposal of the dead.

(m) Measures for preventing and checking the spread of contagious diseases.
(n) Taking measures against food adulteration.

(o) Fulfilment of other obligations imposed by the Gauhati Municipal Act, 1969.

Elections to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation have drastically changed the political canvas of the city. People who otherwise were not aware of politics and political administration have tasted politics at their doorstep. People in large numbers took keen interest in selecting ward councillors for their Wards. So far, four general bodies have been voted to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation since its inception in 1974. The subsequent elections were held in 1979, 1995 and in 2003. The first election to the Guwahati Municipal Corporation was held on 27.01.1974 in 33 wards except in ward no. 20 where election was not held due to a High Court injunction. Altogether 132 candidates contested this election (The Assam Tribune January 24, 1974).

The total numbers of election booths were 127 (Tribune, January 26 1974) and exceptionally 55 percent voters have turn out to cast their votes in this election. The total number of voters in the city was around one lakh (The Assam Tribune January 28, 1974).

The level of politicization could be gauged from the fact that in the second general election to the Corporation held on 24th February 1979, out of the total of 183 candidates, as much as 102 were independent candidates and the highest numbers of seats (11)
in the election were won by them (The Assam Tribune Thursday, April 5, 1979).

The third general election held on May 16 1995. The fact that political awareness was gradually picking up could be observed from the gradual increase in the number of candidates taking part in the fray. In the third election this number abruptly rose to 405 contestants for 59 wards. Another notable instance of political awareness was the formation of “Guwahati Basir Aikya Mancha” (Unity Forum of the Guwahatians), a conglomerate of opposition parties, which had fielded 42 candidates. As the population of the town was increasing, the number of voters also increased. The total numbers of voters in 60 wards was 3,32,077.

The emergence of Guwahati Municipal Corporation as a common and an acceptable political institution to the city dwellers had changed the political canvas of the city. It had variable impact in the various local wards; the impact in the old town areas was not much of significance; but in the newly included areas of the city, the impact had penetrated into the social level. It posed a challenge to the traditional leadership in the tribal societies existed in the city since time immemorial. The local councillors’ political and financial power became obvious – especially when it came to the question of development of local areas. This overshadowed the prominence of the traditional leaders. Another visible change was the emergence of small political leaders in the local areas. Those who took part in the electioneering and other political activities
during elections formed a new focus of attraction in the villages. Due to their closeness to the political leaders, they also aroused interest among the villagers. Villagers started approaching them for small political favours. Thus, politicisation of the city by way of establishment of the GMC was complete in the sense that the notion about a local government, its constitution and functioning had reached the nook and corner of the city. The impact that it had imposed has visibly changed the traditional societies, which till that time remained outside those political activities. The importance that the village traditional leaders enjoyed till that time had to be shared between three other emergent groups – i) the ward councillors, ii) the local political leaders and iii) the new professionals like doctors, professors etc. in the village.

4.6: Urbanisation of Guwahati: Change in Macro Structure

Despite having all the major characteristics of a city, Guwahati’s urbanisation is not simply industry based. Industrialisation compared to many major towns of the country, has not picked up in Guwahati. In fact, it is not the industrial sector but service sector and tertiary sector that have contributed greatly towards the growth of Guwahati as an urban centre. It is because of this, that urbanisation of Guwahati bears some unique characteristics. It is a known fact that urbanisation is an integral part of economic development. As the economy develops, there is an increase in the percapita income and also in the demand for non farming goods in the economy. These goods are not heavily land
dependent and use more of other factors of production. They are cheaper if produced in the urban sector of the economy since urban settlements enjoy economies of agglomeration in manufacturing, services and provision of infrastructure. Economic growth influences the rate of urbanisation while urbanisation in turn affects the rate at which the economy grows. Both thus rely on each other to grow. In the succeeding paragraphs the nature and extent of urbanisation in Guwahati has been examined with reference to three crucial characteristics of urbanisation i.e. growth of population, urban infrastructure and employment pattern. This analysis is necessary as one of the basic objectives of this study is to examine the economic life of the community under the backdrop of urbanisation. How the factors responsible for urbanisation have by its spill over effect induced the community under study to change their population pattern, economic life and shift in the occupation.

4.6.1: Urban Population Growth

The present Guwahati Municipality originally was confined to the areas along the bank of the Brahmaputra River and included three famous bazaar areas namely 1) Fancy bazaar, 2) Panbazar and 3) Uzan bazaar. As days passed, the peripheral areas developed and later on new areas consisting of small villages such as Shantipur, Bharalumukh, Fatasil, Rehabari, Ulubari, Sarania, Chandmari and Kharghuli, etc. were added to form parts of the
Guwahati Municipality. After the end of 2nd world war, the town experienced rapid growth.

Immediately after independence the total area of Guwahati Municipality was 555.90 hect. In 1956 three more wards were created by extending the municipal boundary adding an area of 813.76 hect. Though the Guwahati Municipality was constituted sometime in 1853, the population figures are available only from 1891. The table below shows the population trend for hundred years i.e. since 1901.

**Table- 4.6.1: Population Growth of Guwahati**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Absolute Variation</th>
<th>Percentage Variation</th>
<th>Sex ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>7722</td>
<td>3889</td>
<td>11661</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>8138</td>
<td>4343</td>
<td>12481</td>
<td>+820</td>
<td>7.03</td>
<td>534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>10786</td>
<td>5684</td>
<td>16580</td>
<td>+3999</td>
<td>32.04</td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>14506</td>
<td>7291</td>
<td>21797</td>
<td>+5317</td>
<td>32.26</td>
<td>503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>18883</td>
<td>10715</td>
<td>29598</td>
<td>+7810</td>
<td>35.79</td>
<td>567</td>
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<tr>
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<td>15625</td>
<td>43615</td>
<td>+14-17</td>
<td>47.36</td>
<td>558</td>
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<td>33418</td>
<td>100707</td>
<td>+57097</td>
<td>130.90</td>
<td>497</td>
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<td>1971</td>
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<td>638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
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<td>*</td>
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<td>783</td>
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<td>38.60</td>
<td>839</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: No census held in 1981*

Source: Census of India

The table shows that population growth during the period from 1901 and 1911 was slow to the extent of 7.03 per cent. But the growth rate picked up between 1911 and 1921 and stabilised for three decades till 1941. But between 1941 and 1951, there was a quantum jump in the growth rate from 35.79 per cent to 47.36 per
cent. Rapid urbanisation started since the later part of 1950s. It was the time when heavy construction activities were undertaken for the installation of the Noonmati refinery and Saraighat Bridge over Brahmaputra. This attracted the labour force from the adjoining rural areas and also from outside the State. Migration of labourers and traders in large scale forced the restructuring of the demography of the city.

The period between 1961-66 was significant for urban growth. It was the Third Five-year Plan period. The planners have realised the fact of rapid growth of urbanisation and the necessity to have attention on the urban affairs. It identified the problems of urbanisation and noted in the Plan paper as, “Urbanisation is an important aspect of the process of economic and social development and is closely connected with many other problems such as migration from villages to towns, levels of living in rural and urban areas, relative costs of providing economic and social services in towns of varying size, provision of housing for different sections of the population, provision of facilities like water supply, sanitation, transport and power, pattern of economic development, location and dispersal of industries, civic administration, fiscal policies, and the planning of land use. These aspects are of special importance in urban areas, which are developing rapidly. The number of cities with a population of 100,000 or more has increased from 75 in 1951 to 115 in 1961, and their population now forms about 43 per cent of the total urban population.”(Third Plan Document: Ch-33: 26).
The 1971 Census declared Guwahati as the Class I town with an area of 14.24 sq km (Census, 1971). Thus, from a mere town it has risen to a height of capital city.

4.6.2: Urban Social overheads: Educational and Health Facilities

Guwahati is one of the best educational centres not only of Northeast, but also of the whole South East Asia. Its renowned educational centre of excellence Cotton College is 107 years old today. Gauhati University is one among the oldest Universities of the country established in 1948 providing facilities for studying all conventional and modern disciplines which attracts students from abroad too. The city provides centre for studying medicianes and surgery in Guwahati Medical College, Aurbedic medicine in Ayurbedic College, Engineering and technology in Guwahati Engineering College and Indian Indistitute of Technology. Among the city's many other institutions of higher learning, Gauhati Commerce College, College of Veterinary Science, Arya Vidyapeeth College, B. Borooah College, Handique Girls College (the latter two have both Arts and Science streams), Assam Engineering Institute (engineering diploma courses).Pandu College, LCB College, West Guwahati Commerce College, Netaji Vidyapith Rly. H.S. School (Maligaon), Vidya Niketan High School(Pandu) etc. are well known. There are hundreds lower primary schools, High schools and also junior colleges.
The Guwahati Medical College hospital is a famous healthcare centre in eastern India. It provides all modern amenities for treatment of various diseases. There is also the B Barua Cancer hospital, Chest hospital and a full-fledged civil hospital namely Mahendra Mohan Choudhury hospital. Apart from this, there is also host private hospitals like Neurological Research Centre (GNRC), Down Town Hospital, Sankardev Netralaya, etc. Medical education and research are also important activities.

4.6.3: Urban Infrastructure:

(a) Roads

There has been a rapid growth of infrastructure in the city especially after the shifting of capital. Road communication has developed tremendously. The roads, streets, lanes and bye-lanes of the city are looked after by various agencies like PWD, GMC, etc. The city's total road network covers approximately 725 kms, which includes 512 kms of roads maintained by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation and the remaining portions are maintained by Public Works Department of the Government of Assam and the Indian Railways. The total number of roads is 2270 and this number is increasing with the expansion of the city.

The report of the survey by the Public Works Department of the Government of Assam (City Roads Division: 2003) observes that heavy pressure of vehicular traffic has taken its toll on the major arteries of Guwahati and what is necessary is the immediate
widening of roads and lanes including the Gopinath Bordoloi Road at Chandmari, Radha Gobinda Barua Road, Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua Road, Ganeshguri Road and the Kahilipara road.

Very recently, since December 2003, the National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC) had taken up 250 road projects in the city worth Rs 22.00 crore under the first phase of the scheme of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. However, out of these, the National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC) could complete only 100 projects while 150 projects remained half done. The NBCC has also taken up the task of repairing some old roads. Nevertheless, the Guwahati Municipal Corporation is planning to allot the second phase of roads to the National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC). Each ward of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation would be allotted three roads. Besides this, the Corporation would also allot construction of as may as 3600 lanes and bye-lanes in a phased manner. Such projects are aimed at easing the burden on the existing network of roads in Guwahati.

b) Urban Infrastructure: Water supply system

Water and sanitation are two indivisible urban basic facilities. Despite the fact that the Brahmaputra is flowing across Guwahati, facilities of drinking water in the city are not adequate. The city needs 150 million litres of water everyday while only 55 million is available. Even then, so far as many as 22000 water supply connections have been provided (Source: Guwahati...
In addition to the three main plants at i) Panbazar, ii) Saatpukhuri and iii) Kamakhya, there are eight deep tube wells and 560 hand pumps supplying water to the various localities. Areas like Refinery Colonies, Railway Colonies and Capital Complex have separate arrangements for the supply of water. In Guwahati, the water supply scheme has been in execution since 1887. The Panbazar Paani Tanky was commissioned in the year 1960 and has a capacity to treat 10 million gallons of water daily. The Saatpukhuri Water Supply Project of 1985 possesses the capacity of another five million gallons per day, while the Kamakhya Water Supply Project of 2000 can treat one million gallons a day.

Another agency namely the Assam Urban Water Supply and Sewerage Board (AUWSSB) popularly known as the “Urban Water Supply” can generate 12.6 million litres per day (MLD) that is supplied to around 8,000 families. Its Zoo Road (Radha Gobinda Barua Road) Water Supply Scheme of 1988 cover areas like Hengrabari, Sarumotoria, Rukmini Gaon, Rupnagar and Jatia.

Apart from these, a number of minor projects had been undertaken in the recent past within Guwahati. These are:

1) Water supply to the B.T.College, Lachitnagar, Pension Para, Saniram Bora Road localities have been restored by modification of distribution pipelines.

2) Substitution of old pipes at Ulubari and Kachari basti areas.
3) Commissioning of new 350-millimetre daily ‘pumping main’ to housing reservoir from Santipur Treatment Installation etc.

The Government of Assam recently announced a fresh project costing rupees six crore to supplement the existing water supply arrangement. The scheme would be financed from the non-lapsable central pool of resources. The assignment is intended to alleviate the existing water supply arrangement by supplying superior water including the acquisition of new generators and conclusion of the process of repairing the pumps.

c) Urban Infrastructure: Transport & Communication Facilities:

The city is directly connected with the rest of the country through rail, road and air. The inland Water transport is also operating between Guwahati and Kolkata, which is mainly, confined to goods transport services. Within the city movement from one place to another through the main arteries is very easier as city bus, auto rickshaw; etc. plies regularly on almost all the streets. As per the Bus Service Associations, there are at least 1700 buses in Guwahati of which 1441 are operational. The GMC’s figure (2005) however is different which is presented below.

**Table: 4.6.3 (A) Urban Transport Facility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>No of Buses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>GGUMTA</td>
<td>0500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>GGMBOA</td>
<td>0130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>OMNI</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ASTC</td>
<td>0071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1701</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GMC
Apart from the buses, there are also trekker services covering the remote corners of the city run by both private owners and under the banner of ASTC.

As per an estimate, more than ten lakhs of vehicles ply on the roads of Guwahati almost everyday. This also includes the vehicles coming from various points outside the State towards to different destinations of Northeast India. According to the Department of Finance, Government of Assam during 2003-2006 as many as 4,07,632 Guwahati bound vehicles entered Assam [Table- 4.6.2(b)]

Table: 4.6.3 (B) Comparative movement of vehicles (Both incoming and outgoing).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Incoming</th>
<th>Outgoing</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>159731</td>
<td>149089</td>
<td>308820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>128559</td>
<td>112092</td>
<td>240651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>119342</td>
<td>107539</td>
<td>226881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>407632</td>
<td>368720</td>
<td>776352</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d) Urban Infrastructure: Streetlights:

The streetlights represent an urban canvas. It is the symbol of beauty, richness and safety in the urban context. Almost all the major streets of Guwahati like the Guwahati Shillong Road, M.R.D road, Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua Road, and Gopinath Bordoloi Road, etc. have been lit up with streetlights. The system of putting up streetlights and also the pattern of streetlights has been changed from time to time. At present the electronic traffic lights have been
installed at Chandmari crossing and Dispur last Gate junction. The Guwahati Municipal Corporation has also started a new scheme namely, “Own your own street light”.

e) Open spaces, Parks and Children’s Parks:

The city has some historic open spaces such as Judges’ Field, Church field, New field, Sonaram, field, Latasil Field, Chandmari Engineering Institute field, Noonmati field, Khanapara Veterinary field, etc. Similarly, there are also few children parks in the city. The narrow strip of open space along the south bank of Brahmaputra from Kharguli to Uzan Bazar popularly known as “Pokh Ghat” has been transformed into a long garden and Park. The Ambikagiri Raichoudhuri Park at Chandmari is exclusively for children. The Nehru Park adjacent to the Church field has presently been given a massive face-lift by the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority and the park is frequented by the Guwahatians at a nominal fee. But the oldest park of Guwahati was the Jubilee Gardens wherein the Panbazar Water Supply Project (Paani Tanky) was commissioned in 1960. The Jubilee Gardens has a chequered history; it has been the ground for legendary public meetings. Swami Vivekananda in 1901, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi held orations in 1946 and later on by Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

The Sankaradeva Uddyjan was built at Jalukbari where in 1958 a meeting of the Indian National Congress was held. The Mahabir Park at Fancy Bazar along the Brahmaputra and the Ajan
Pir Park built by the Guwahati Municipal Corporation under the sponsorship of private organisations asks for an entry fee from visitors. Another beautiful park, the Lachit Barphukan Park has come up as a very popular park with the children at the South end of the Saraighat Bridge. The Forest Department has also come up with the idea of an Eco-Park.

Another rare beauty spot of Guwahati is the Dighalipuhkuri, which has frequently been figured in the beautification process of the city since the establishment of the Gauhati Municipality in 1853. However, the first serious endeavour to uplift the beauty of this legendary ancient pond was made after Independence and after the constitution of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation when Radha Gobinda Barua was the Mayor of Guwahati.

f) Markets:

The core area of the city is comprised of the old city with Pan Bazaar, Paltan Bazaar, Fancy Bazaar and Ujan Bazaar, each one facilitating unique urban activities. When Paltan Bazaar is the hub for transportation and hotels, Pan Bazaar and Uzan Bazar is for educational, administrative, cultural activities and for offices and restaurants, Fancy Bazaar is the hub for retail and wholesale-commercial. The core Guwahati with these areas is the busy and lively part of the city. Ulubari, Lachit Nagar and Chandmari with Zoo (R.G. Baruah) Road can be considered as added part of the core, which have a mix of retail, commercial and residential
activities. The southern Guwahati with the areas such as Ganeshguri, Beltola, Panjabari, etc. are forming a southern sub-centre surrounding the capital complex at Dispur and principally depending on the GS Road corridor. This also covers our study area.

There are also other bazaars run under the local administration such as:

1) The Old Sagoli Bazaar at Bhutnath.
2) The Machkhowa Bazaar.
3) The Fancy Bazaar Municipal Market.
4) The Kachari Ghat Bazaar.
5) The Uzanbazar Municipal Market.
6) The market under the Chandmari Flyover.
7) The Noonmati Bazaar.
8) The Dispur Municipal Market.
9) The Beltola Daily or Dainik Bazaar.
10) The Beltola Weekly or Saptahik Bazaar.
11) The Paltan Bazaar.
12) The Sarania Bazaar situated at Ulubari.

**g) Distribution of Workforce:**

With rapid urbanisation, since the later part of 1960s, the city has undergone a drastic change in its occupational pattern.

**Table: 4.6.3 (C) Employment Pattern in Guwahati : Distribution of Workforce**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Occupation</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>194079</td>
<td>188174</td>
<td>1260</td>
<td>2044</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>2601</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivators</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Labour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing/Household industry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1260</td>
<td>4459</td>
<td>2394</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other workers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>194079</td>
<td>188174</td>
<td>1260</td>
<td>2044</td>
<td>558</td>
<td>2601</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1902</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compiled from Census of India
In the year 1961, total persons engaged in the work force were 7,85,86 out of which 21,216 (26.99%) were engaged in agriculture and the remaining were in non-farm sector. But 30 years later the scenario has changed drastically. Out of the total of 1,94,079 workers, total persons engaged in agriculture came down to 4645 (02.39%) while numbers of persons engaged in non-agricultural sector shot up to 1,89,434 (97.60%). It may be observed from the above table that there has been a sharp fall in the number of male cultivators and male agricultural laborers. In case of cultivators there was a fall of 43.86 per cent while in case of agricultural labourers the fall was to the tune of 69.09 per cent. These are quite a big fall indeed within a period of 10 years. It is obvious from the table that number of women cultivators had increased during this intercensel period. It is possible that some of the women took additional burden of the agricultural fields left by men. However, this replacement rate could not neutralise the extent of fall left behind by the males and therefore in absolute term also, the total fall is reflected from 2601 to 1902, a fall of about 27 percent.

Other workers are those who are engaged in any economic activities other than cultivation, agricultural labourers or household industry. They may be working in manufacturing, processing, other than household industry, construction sector, trade and commerce, transport, public utility services, like electricity, gas or water supply, central, State or municipal services, professional services, etc.
A comparative analysis shows that out of the total labour force, only 0.133 per cent were engaged in cultivation as per 1991, while in the 2001 their strength gone down to 0.71 per cent — i.e. not even one percent of the total labour force. This is the direct outcome of the expansion of manufacturing industries (other than the household) and trade and commerce due to rapid urbanisation as a result of which many farmers left the farm sector to join in the cash yielding non-farm sector.

One basic ingredient of urbanisation is the existence of unemployed labour force. Guwahati is flooded with unemployed persons. Being the only city in the Northeast, labourers, seeking jobs flow from all directions. In 1961, the strength of total non-workers was 95,299 (54.80%), which rose to 388642 (66.51%) in 1991 and fell marginally in the year 2001 to 5,29,784 (64.70%). Although this includes the population in 0-6 and also population in the beyond productive age group yet, the volume could speak lot about the existence of unemployed population in the city. Majority of the workers are engaged in the informal sector.

The city therefore presents almost all the characteristics of an urban centre. It is under this backdrop that the present community will be examined to assess the changes that have occurred in their traditional living pattern, the effect of urbanisation on their social system and how the organisation of tradition occupational pattern has been totally abandoned.
4.7: Response to Urbanisation

The present study is typical and different from many other studies on change in the sense that this study is on a community which is not migrant from the rural areas rather original inhabitant of the urban locality under study. Initially their settlements were in the urban fringe and gradually these have been included within the proper urban localities. Although, usually the growth of urban centre is the result of accelerated industrial and service functions, yet it is not always so. In certain cases, urbanisation also takes place even without industrialisation. Industrialisation is always connected with economic growth, which is not always true about urbanisation. Urban environment produces a particular kind of social life which Louis Wirth, a core member of the Chicago School, calls urbanism. Social life in cities is more formal and impersonal. The relationship is based on a complex division of labour and is contractual in nature.

Occupational diversification as a result of urbanization is one of the reasons of alteration of the family structure – both by size and type. Reduction of the joint families to nuclear family has relaxed the kinship tie among the families and so also the traditional family norms and interpersonal relationship has become more formal. It is a situation where mother and children receive more attention while sentiments and attachments towards other kin weaken.
Urbanisation also exerted tremendous impact on the division of work in the family. As there is no other adult member besides the couple within the nuclear family domestic division of duties between husband and wife get changed – and they both have to share the domestic duties. Thus, social life in urban areas faces isolation due to diminishing kinship obligations. Several ties that formerly bound members of the family to group and community life are now broken. Consequently, the quality of human relationships tends to become more formal and impersonal.

The urbanization has also broken down the compactness of their society. Due to the occupational diversification, they had to go out of the village and work in an environment where persons of various identities- tribe, caste and religion work. It is an environment, which demands individual achievement, which in turn generates status both in the place of occupation and in society. Thus, the importance of ascription as the basis of social status declines and significance of achievement has taken place. It is because of this, the level of education, nature of occupation and the level of income becomes major indicators of one’s achievement in an urban setup. That is why, people recognise education, occupation and income as prerequisites for higher social status. This however not to indicate that achieved status has completely denounced the traditional values in their society. Their social control mechanism is progressive and adoptive -they know it very well what to accommodate and when to accommodate.