3.1 Aspects of Assam

India’s Northeast consists of seven states, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura. These culturally akin states are generally referred to as seven sisters. Totally, the state of Sikkim has also been added to the list of Northeast states for the purpose of administration. Assam which serves as the gateway to the northeast is the most important state of this region. The state of Assam extends from Latitude North 22° 19' to 28° 16' and Longitude 84° 42' to 96° 30' E. Nestling between the foot-hills of the Himalayas and the Patkai ranges, it forms roughly a triangle of 17523 sq. km. It is connected to the rest of the country by a narrow strip of land between Bangladesh and the Eastern Himalayas. Figure: 2 shows the location of Assam in India.

As per Census of India, 2001, Assam has a population of 266.38 lakhs with a sex ratio of 932 female per 1000 male. Out of the total population 13,787,799 are males and 12,850,608 are females. The
percentage of male and female are 51.76 and 48.24 respectively. Some basic demographic indicators of the state are presented in table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Some basic demographic indicators of Assam, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>26,638,407</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Male</td>
<td>13,787,799</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Female</td>
<td>12,850,608</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population density (per sq. km.)</td>
<td>340</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex ratio ( number of male per 1000 female)</td>
<td>932</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of decadal population growth, 1991-2001</td>
<td>18.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy rate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of literate persons</td>
<td>64.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of literate male</td>
<td>71.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of literate female</td>
<td>56.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Census of India: Provisional Totals: Assam: Series 19, Paper 1 of 2001*

The history of Assam in general is the history of the Brahmaputra valley through which the river Brahmaputra (the only 'male' river of India) flows. It also relates to the hills that surround the valley. It was in 1826 that the Brahmaputra valley passed into the hands of the East India Company.
Fig 2: Map of India showing state of Assam
from the Ahom under the Yandabu Pact. The district of Cachar was incorporated into the states' administrative setup in 1832. In February, 1874, Assam was constituted into Chief Commission Province. In the same year, Sylhet district was separated from the Bengal Province and was added to this new province. The Lushai Hills, Naga Hills, Khasi and Jayantia Hills, Garo Hills and Sadiya and Balipara Frontier tracts were brought under the administrative control of the Chief Commissioner’s Province at different times (International Institute for Population Sciences: Assam 1992-93:2).

At present Assam have 23 districts which include two hills districts, namely Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. The alluvial plains of Assam consist of two parts, the valley of Brahmaputra and the valley of the river Barak flowing through the Cachar district. The two parts are separated from each other by the Barail ranges. From the point of view of variety and colorfulness of scenery, no other region of the Indian subcontinent, with the sole exception of Kashmir, is as beautiful and attractive as Assam. Mahatma Gandhi during his first visit to Assam, wrote, ‘I am writing these notes at Tezpur on the bank of mighty Brahmaputra. Assam is a land of magnificent vegetation. Some of the river scenery are hard to beat throughout the world. I have seen the gorgeous scenery of the Thames but I cannot recall anything superior to the lavishness with which nature has
Fig 3: Map of Assam showing different districts and location of Guwahati
decorated the great stream' (Barkataki, 1981:13). The locational position of different districts of Assam has been shown in figure: 3.

It is a known fact that from the very distant past, Assam was like a highway connecting the rest of India with South-East Asia, through which passed people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, who had different cultures and spoke various languages. Most of them left behind not only cultural remnants in this land, but also contributed towards the ethnic composition of the people. These have made Assam a place where people of different cultures, languages and ethnic backgrounds live, each contributing towards the growth and development of a composite Assamese culture. This racial harmony was largely been due to the gradual adaptation of Assamese which become the vehicle of expression of a composite people and also because of intimate contact among different ethnic groups throughout the centuries. The present day population of Assam may broadly be divided into tribal and non tribal or caste population. The non tribal group is occupying mainly the rich alluvial plains of the Brahmaputra valley. The members of this group came to Assam from the West following the route formed by the valleys of the Brahmaputra and the Ganges. Broadly speaking they are caucasic in origin having physical features comparable to those of the caucasic people of some parts of northern India. Along with the caucasic element, Dinaric and Mediterranean types are also found among the non tribal population, mainly the caste groups like the Brahmins, the
Kayasthas, the Kalitas and the Keots. Among them the kalitas are supposed to be the earliest immigrants and they form a numerically dominant caste. As far as the tribal people of Assam are concerned, they are predominantly Mongoloid and it is believed that they came in successive waves mainly from the north and northeast direction beyond the present international boarders of Northeast India (Das; 1967: 10-11). Some of the tribal communities of the state are the Barmans of Cachar, the Boro Kacharis, the Deoris, the Dimasa Kacharis, the Garos, the Hajongs, the Hmars, the Jaintia, the Karbis, the Khasis, the Kukis, the Mechs, the Mishings, the Rabhas, the Rangma Nagas, the Sonowal Kacharis, the Tiwas and the Zeme Nagas etc. Apart from these original settlers there is a large population of Bengali, Nepali and Hindi speaking people living in Assam and contributing towards the formation of the greater Assamese society. As per 2001 census, of the total population in the state, scheduled castes constituted 6.85 per cent, scheduled tribes 12.41 per cent and the remaining 80.74 per cent were non-scheduled populations. So far religion is concerned Assam is a Hindu majority state. However, people of all major religion live here. Hindus dominate the population of the state followed by Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs and other minor religious groups including tribal religions in descending order of numerical strength. According to 2001 census, the Hindus constitute 64.89% of the total population while Muslims 30.92%, Christians 3.70%, Sikhs 0.08%,
Buddhists 0.19%. Jains 0.09% and other religions including tribal religions 0.13%.

The mainstay for the majority of the people of Assam is agriculture with paddy being the chief crop. Besides agriculture there are few industries contributing a great deal in the economic development of the state. Till the discovery of tea bushes in Assam, there were practically no industries. It was the discovery of tea and the establishment of factories for manufacturing it, led to the extension of railway lines to this region. Tea is by far the most important industry in Assam and a million people depend on it directly or indirectly for their livelihood. In addition to the tea industry the other big sectors in Assam are coal, oil and natural gas. Another industry which is worth mentioning is Assam silk. Some say that silk in Assam is as old as its people and that it is of great antiquity is beyond question, because we find mention of Assam silk in the ancient Kalika Purana. Assam silk is famous all over the world for its three varieties, edi (Philosomia ricini), muga (Antheraea assamna) and pat (Bombyx mari). Some say that the silk worm was imported from China into Assam centuries ago from where it had traveled to Japan. Whether silk worm is indigenous or an immigrant from China, it is beyond doubt that edi, muga and pat silk are an integral part of Assamese life and culture.

The Brahmaputra and its tributaries by virtue of their exceptional utility of agriculture, trade and commerce are known to be very important
rivers of Assam. Large numbers of villages and towns have clung on to their banks since time immemorial. Riverine towns like Dibrugarh, Dhubri, Guwahati, Jorhat, Sibsagar, Tezpur etc. are the old established historical towns of Assam standing either by the Brahmaputra or its tributaries. After the advent of the British, some trading ports, military garrisons and cantonments were built in a number of places in Assam. Other British services such as administrative function, railway, medical, educational institutions, banks etc. were added to the gathering points and thus in due course were transformed into towns and potential urban centers. The introduction of railways during this period led to the growth of a number of townships throughout Assam. Similarly, places like Digboi was developed as an urban center due to the extraction of oil. After independence due to gradual extension of motorable roads and means of modern transport and industrialization, a number of market towns and few industrial towns like Duliajan, Margherita, Namrup etc have emerged. Most of these towns of Assam including the city of Guwahati had a natural evolution and are little affected by conscious developmental plans and programmes. It is observed that the urban population of Assam has increased with the emergence of new towns but the process of urbanization is rather slow in the state. Agriculture based economy and very poor level of industrialization are major causes for such slow urbanization. Table 3.2 shows the urban population in Assam between 1872 and 2001.
Table 3.2: Urban population in Assam during the period 1872-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>26,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>77,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>92,916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>127,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>162,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>2,08,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>3,51,781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>7,95,545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>12,89,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981*</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>24,80,608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>34,39,240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India

*There was no census in Assam in 1981

While talking about industrialization and urbanization in Assam, it is important to mention about Guwahati, the only city of the state in true sense of the term, and it serves as the economic and commercial hub of the entire Northeast India in general and Assam in particular. This fast growing metropolis of the region has been occupying an important place in the history of Assam since ancient times. The city is situated on the southern bank of the mighty river Brahmaputra at an altitude of 55 meters above the sea level, the latitude being 26°10'45" N and 91°45'E respectively. Because of its convenient geographical location the city has become the cultural, commercial, educational and administrative centre of the state. The ancient name of Guwahati was Pragjyotishpura.
3.2 Guwahati in Early Literature

The modern town of Guwahati represents the old city of Pragjyotishpura is proved by both archeology and historical literature. On the origin and antiquity of Pragjyotisa, there is definite evidence from old literature. The Sankhyayana Grihya Samgraha, an old Brahmanical literature mentions this place as a sacred place of sunrise. The Adikanda of the Ramayana refers to the foundation of the city of Pragjyotisa by one Amurtaraja. The Kiskindhya Kanda makes important mention of Naraka’s city of Pragjyotisa in the Varaha Mountain on the sea, which is to be identified with a long chain of hillocks extending from Kamakhya to Pandu. The sea stands for the Brahmaputra which was then as vast as the sea, the Lauhitya Sagar of literature.

It may be mentioned that the name Pragjyotisa stood for both the capital city and the kingdom. Even though the name of the kingdom was kamrupa, the early rulers of Assam were known as Pragjyotisadhipati or lord of Pragjyotisa. In certain places the sources refer both Pragjyotisa and kamrupa commonly associated with the Lauhitya. The western limit of the kingdom, as known from the Puranas like the Kalika Purana and the Tantras like the Yogini Tantra and local epigraphs remained the karatoya till the dismemberment of the Pala dynasty in Kamrupa; and even during the Ahom rule this western boundary was kept in view and efforts were made to retain it when any opportunity presented itself. There cannot be
Fig 4: Map of Guwahati showing the field sites
any doubt regarding the location of this city of Pragjyotishpura. The *Brihatsamhita* of the 5th century A.D. refers to the *Lauhitya* along with Pragjyotisa. This is confirmed by the *Raghuvamsa* (Canto IV) which places Pragjyotisa on the bank of the Brahmaputra in the east. Purusottama, the writer of *Trikanda* of about the 7th century A.D states that Pragjyotisa is in Kamrupa and this was Kamrupa of the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta of the 4th century A.D. Rajasekhar in his *Kavya-mimamsa* of the 9th century A.D. places Pragjyotisa in Kamrupa in the east and mentions it as a mountain. Kakati (1948) writes that Pragjyotisa or Pragyotishpura was an extensive hill. This topographical feature of Pragjyotisa as described in the earlier texts corresponds to an Austric formation like pagarjuh (Jo) - tic (c’=ch) meaning an extensive hill. While the original association of the place name with topography may be possible, its astronomical affiliation seems to have been justified by a number of references to its connection with the solar cult and planetary worship. The *Kalika Puran’s* reference that the first calculation of the stars was made in Pragjyotisa substantiated by the fact that there are signs of astronomical observatory on the Sarania hill, which points perhaps to the early importance of the place in astronomy and astrology (Choudhury, 1967: 4-9). Gait (1963) writes, ‘prag means former or eastern and jyotisha, a star, astrology, shining. Pragjyotishpura may therefore, be taken to mean the city of Eastern Astrology. The name is interesting in connection with the
reputation which the country has always held as a land of magic and incantation and with the view that it was Assam that the tantrik form of Hinduism originated.

According to Bhattacharya (1955) whatever is the origin of the nomenclature of the city, ancient Pragjyotisa or Pragjyotishpura was the flourishing capital of several dynasties during the epic and classical periods. Narakasura and his illustrious son Bhagadatta of the Mahabharat fame ruled in eastern India with their capital at Pragjyotishpura. The fame of their capital city was such that sometimes the whole kingdom was known as Pragjyotisa. According to puranic traditions the name of the country was changed to kamrupa due to kamdeva’s resurrection after he was reduced to ashes by angry Siva to be pacified subsequently by an entreating Rati.

During the 4th century A.D. and before the capital town of Pragjyotishpura was established on the southern outskirt of the present Guwahati, the city was comprised of present Beltola and Narakasur hill. The city was well protected by natural barriers like hills, rivers and man-made defences like earthen fortification and mounds with well guarded entrances on both the banks such as Latasil, Jaiduar, Dharamduar, Duar Garia, Patduar and Panichowki. Numerous temples and shrines of great monumental value dedicated to different gods and goddesses in and around the city, such as Kamakhya, Umananda, Sukreswara, Baneswar, Ugratara,
Navagraha, Chatrakara, Aswaklanta and Manikarneswara enhanced the beauty of the place. Huge tanks in the neighbourhood of Guwahati and bricks and mortar found in every direction beneath the soil suggest that it must once have been a place of very great importance. These were supposed to have been constructed by the Pala kings who ruled Lower and Central Assam in the 11\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. After the disappearance of the Palas, the Koch dynasty ruled this region of Assam. The Koch king Parikshit (1593-1614) mounted cannons at Pandunath to the west of Kamakhya hill and built a town at North Guwahati. In the last part of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century the Ahoms conquered Pragjyotishpura, the capital of the Koch king and used the name Guwahati in place of Pragjyotishpura. It was perhaps during the early part of the Ahom reign that the functional centre was shifted to the south bank, where the present Guwahati is located (Sharma, 1983).

3.3 Origin of the Name Guwahati

Bhattacharya (1955:23) mentions that there are two theories as to the origin of the name Guwahati. Some scholars say that Guwahati surrounded as it is with hills full of caves. The Assamese term for cave is \textit{guha}; the name of the city may had been derived as \textit{guha} (cave) \textit{hati} (a row), that is a city with a row of caves. This derivation may be equated with Kakati’s (1948:6) interpretation of ancient Pragjyotishpura as the ‘city on extensive
hill'. But others say that the name Guwahati came from the word guwa, a corrupt form of the Sanskrit term guvaka, which means areca nut, and hati being a row of houses that is a village or a town. Thus Guwahati means a town full of areca nut groves. In the Afsad inscription of Adityasena (6th century A.D) there is a reference of songs sung by pairs of Sadhus reclining under the shade of nagadruma on the banks of the Lauhitya (Fleet, III :303). The copper inscription of Balavarman of Kamrupa echoes Kalidasa’s Raghuvamsa to speak of areca nut trees wrapped with betel creepers. Bhattacharya (1981:24) remarks that Assam is a land of areca nut and one finds areca nut trees almost in any part of Assam. So to distinguish an important city like Guwahati from other places only by areca nut does not seem to be very much acceptable. Therefore the first derivation seems to be more logical and plausible.

3.4 Guwahati during Ahom Period (1625-1826 AD)

Ahom rulers could extend their reign up to Kamrup in the year 1625 A.D. They took over this place from the Koch rulers. It was during Ahom rule, the old name Pragjyotishpura was lost and the city, occupying the areas on both the banks of the Brahmaputra came to have a new name Guwahati. Ahom kings ruled over Kamrup by appointing a viceroy and Guwahati were made the regional headquarters. Thus, new geographies were created through the action of the Ahoms in the city of Guwahati. In
fact, for the Ahoms Guwahati was the most important place in the western part of their kingdom. As such the city was highly fortified with regularly fortified entrances (Robinson, 1841:286).

During the Ahom period Guwahati became the provincial capital of the western region and served as a bulwark against the Muslim invasions. Mir Jumla, the subedar of Bengal invaded Assam in 1662 A.D. Mohammedan faujdar was left as Governor of Guwahati and the army proceeded on its way up the valley to conquer Gargaon. Mir Jumla entered Gargaon, the capital of Assam in 1662 A.D, but they were badly defeated by the Ahom soldiers who compelled them to retreat down to the valley of the Brahmaputra in 1663 and after suffering considerable hardship reached Bengal. Four year after Mir Jumla’s retreat, Guwahati was recaptured by the Ahoms, but could hold on to it for only five years, and in 1672 the Mohammedans again found themselves able to reoccupy the town. In 1681 Ahom king Gadadhar Singha reoccupied Guwahati and as such the last vestige of Mohammedan rule disappeared forever from Kamrup. From 1681 onward Guwahati continued to be the provincial capital of the western region of the Ahom Kingdom till 1826 A.D.

Guwahati had a good network of roads during Ahom period. Both the banks of the Brahmaputra were linked by regular boat services with ferry ghats at Pandu, Rajaduar and Aswaklanta. Big merchandise boats were anchored for service along the bank near these ferry ghats.
The total population of the then Guwahati was a little over ten thousand. During the Ahom period more particularly in the days of Badan Barphukan, the local people of Kamrup were not allowed by the Ahom nobles to stay within the city after dusk. The Kamrupiya people and Kamrupiya officers were looked down upon by the Ahoms as inferiors, therefore, had their residences near Pandu to the west of Duargarilar chokey. The Barphukan's office was located to a little west of the earlier wooden bridge on the Bharalu river. The Barphukan's residence and estate occupied a large area, spreading over from Phasi Bazar and the Bangalartol to its west. There were the residential structures of the people of the Athgaya khel in Bharalumukh. They were actually the body guards of the Barphukan. The Barphukan's hatisal (the place where domesticated elephants are kept) or pil khana was extending from Bharalumukh to Phasi Bazar. The west bank area of the Dighali tank was known as Ketekibari and this was a high class residential area. Some astrologers and the paiks of Ugratara and other temples lived in Latasil area. The other paiks lived in Pan Bazar area and on further east was the residence of Pahumariya Na Gossain. Residences of the Muslims were found in Lakhtakia and Machkhowa area. In Lakhtakia there were the workshops and residences of the blacksmiths, who were in majority in the area while Machkhowa was mostly occupied by tailors and shopkeepers. There were a number of concentrations of kaivarta dwelling, especially at Bharalumukh, near
Ugratara temple, near D.C. Court, and Uzan Bazar area. Kharghuli area of Uzan Bazar was the Royal arsenal under the Barphukan's charge (Bhattacharya, 1981:31).

3.5 Guwahati during the British Period (1826-1947 AD)

When the British took over the administration of Assam in 1826, the South Guwahati was given more importance because of administrative string from Calcutta via Cachar and Sylhet while North Guwahati though was only accessible by boat and an important place during the Ahom period, remained in shade. The British shifted the capital of Assam to Shillong as it suited them for its cooler climate. The sanitary condition was very bad at that time and the mortality rate among the troops under British control stationed at Guwahati was very high. For this reason the administration constituted a town improvement committee for the first time in 1836 in Guwahati. The successful working of the committee attracted attention of the government and eventually Guwahati was constituted into a first class municipality in the year 1878. The first task of the municipality was to construct a water supply plant. The area occupied by the municipality at that time was a small one and had 8 wards only with an area of 6.5 sq kms and with 11,492 inhabitants. Shillong was linked with Guwahati by a narrow earth road at that time. Gradually many developmental works were taken up by the government. In 1897 Assam
Bengal railway line was constructed and Guwahati was connected with Upper Assam and with Sylhet through Lumding. Several roads were also constructed by the Public Works Department to and from Guwahati joining various places. Educational and cultural functions of the town were geared up during the British period.

Guwahati falls within an active seismic belt and it has so far experienced several earth tremors with devastative consequences. The most destructive of earthquakes in its history was the tremors of 1897, which destroyed all government offices and wrecked almost all masonry and residential buildings which were mainly built by bricks, wood and bamboo. The town has since been rebuilt and hardly any traces are now to be seen of the great catastrophe (Bhattacharya, 1981:33). The first government college of Northeast India was the Cotton College which was established in 1901 in Guwahati, is still a benchmark as far as the quality of higher education in Assam is concerned. In 1940 the Assam State Museum was established in this town and in the same year Guwahati Municipality was extended and the area expanded to 7.5 sq kms. During the World War II the Britishers used Guwahati as their stronghold by establishing the civil lines and cantonments in heart of the town. The significant development during this period was the establishment of the cantonment at Paltan Bazar, expanding of new lines of transport and communication and improvement of old ones within the town which imported added centrality to the place. When India
regained independence in 1947, Guwahati had undergone a remarkable change with the effort of the people of Guwahati and the government.

3.6 Post – Independent Period

Immediately after independence of the country, higher educational institutions like Gauhati University, Assam Engineering College, Guwahati Medical College, Veterinary College etc were established. The High Court of Assam was setup here, which was later saturated upon responsibility of serving other Northeast states as well. In 1961 the municipality area was increased to 14.24 sq kms. Since then multiple nuclei have been growing up from the core of the town and expanded it towards the periphery. The headquarter of the North Frontier Railway at Maligaon, railway station at New Guwahati, the Industrial state at Bamunimaidan, the refinery at Noonmati, Military cantonment at Satgaon, the airport, all these have abruptly expanded the spatial dimension of the Guwahati town. The construction of the Saraighat bridge across the Brahmaputra in the year 1962 is another landmark in the growth of Guwahati. It has also become a tea auction center and second of its kind in India next to Calcutta.

The growth of Guwahati further expedited when the capital of Assam was shifted from Shillong to Dispur in 1972. Shifting of the entire Assam Government offices along with a considerable number of populations to Guwahati brought many problems like shortage of living accommodation,
traffic congestion, lack of sanitation and other civic amenities. Dispur had lost its rural character overnight. Guwahati had to accommodate nearly 20,000 people coming from Shillong.

3.7 Area under Guwahati Municipal Corporation

Guwahati Municipality had a very small area at the beginning and it had to increase its boundary several times. First it had an area of 7.68 sq kms and it increased to 14 sq kms in 1961. Guwahati Municipal Corporation was established in 1974 and it became the first city in the Northeast region of India. Guwahati city now covers an area of 216.19 sq kms. However, for planning purposes the master plan for Greater Guwahati covers an area of 216.77 sq kms. As per the 2001 census, the population of Guwahati Municipal Corporation area is 8,09,895 of which 4,40,288 are male and 3,69,607 are female.

Guwahati is a heterogeneous city. Its residents are predominantly Indian nationals except for a few British and American missionaries and some Afghan nationals. Assamese and Bengalees form the largest linguistic groups. There other linguistic groups, namely Manipuris, Biharis and Marwaris are also found in clusters in different localities. People of linguistic groups such as Punjabi, Oriya, Sindhi, Nepali, Gujarati, Tamil, Malayalee are scattered throughout the city. As far as religion is concerned, there are six major religious group are found in Guwahati. The Hindus
form the numerically dominant community followed by the Muslims. The other religious groups which are relatively less in numerical strength are Sikhs, Christians, Jains and Buddhists.

The geographical setting of the city has a direct relation with the population distribution and settlement pattern. It is observed that because of the uneven relief, population growth, settlement and land-use pattern, show different characters in different parts of the city. Rapid growth of population of the city is making settlement and land-use pattern quite complex and houses are coming up even in the hill tops and slopes and also in the area occupied by drainage outlets. The problems of landslides, occurrence of flash flood during the rainy season, blockade of drainage system and overflow of drainage water there from are the regular feature in the city. As per 2001 census, the municipal area of Guwahati has 1, 86,006 housing units sheltering 809895 individuals who are distributed either in their own houses or in rented houses.

Inspite of all the obvious problems of a growing city, Guwahati has developed in to a educational and business hub of Northeast India. It is worth mentioning that till 1951 census, Guwahati was regarded as a class III town but only after a decade in 1961, it was declared as a class I town and during later part of the seventies, Guwahati was shown as a ‘B’ class city in the map of India. Factors like coming down of the capital of Assam from Shillong and broad-gauge railway link along with better air
connectivity with the rest of the country in recent years stimulated the all-round growth of the city. With the emergence of various educational and other institutions, the city is being able to provide everyone a healthy and competitive educational and working atmosphere. While talking about educational institutions, it is important to mention that, there are a number of institutions in the city dedicated for the education of the disabled population of our society. Some of these institutions which are actively working towards making the disabled persons self-reliant are, Sishu Sarothi and Ashadeep for the mentally disabled children, Guwahati Blind High School, Basistha and Jyoti Niketan for the blind and Government B.D.S Deaf and Dumb School, Kahilipara, for the deaf students. These institutions in Guwahati city are wholeheartedly providing their services not only to the disabled children of Guwahati and the state but the entire Northeast region.