It has already been discussed how Silchar gradually developed into a town where different parts had its own history of growth and development. However, these areas inspite of their diverse growth, involved in the growth of an urbanized population mainly along with social development and political consciousness. In this chapter emphasis is given to trace the significant agencies of this social dynamics.

Since their arrival, the British administration began to think in terms of establishing educational institution in Silchar. “There does not exist any provision either Public or private in any part of Cachar for the instruction of the people, nor does it appear that anything of the kind ever did, at least in a permanent way. It would be desirable to furnish a portion of the pupils with the means of prosecuting their studies under more advantageous circumstances either in Calcutta or Srerampore, where they might enlarge their minds, and prove on their return perhaps the means of effecting great improvements among their country men. The entire instruction in this district is to be conveyed in the Bengali language”.

The initiatives on the part of the British administration continued and after two years recommended beginning with one (educational institution) at the Sadar station as an experiment. As there will be many candidates for admission on the part of the families of the officers and traders here and also from Sylhet.

Before the advent of the Britishers there was, virtually no education worth mentioning. An insignificant number of Pandits used to ran the centres of Sanskrit education. The Muslims received purely religious education at Maktabs imparted by the Maulavis. It was only in 1853 A.D., a report on the General Administration was submitted by the then Superintendent of Cachar, to higher authorities, wherein proposal for establishing schools in the recently annexed areas were given. Then three schools were set up at Silchar, Katigorah and Hailakandi. Those schools were maintained upon public donations. But the system did not last long. Though the school at Silchar continued for about five years, but it also lost existence by the early sixties.

In 1862 A.D., however, the then Superintendent of Cachar, Steward submitted a proposal to the Government for establishing some Government schools in the locality. He advocated that the revenue and resource of this district were
sufficient to meet the necessary expenditure on education of the local people. He proposed for sanction of Rs. 1800/- for construction of a Kachcha Pacca school house at Silchar. He also proposed for granting the Silchar School the same allowances as per the Zilla Schools of Regulator provinces which meant the establishment and maintenance of a 7 class High School at Silchar at Government cost.

Just at this moment, a letter came from Reverend William Pyrse of the Presbyterian Church at Sylhet, to the superintendent of Cachar stating that he intended to set up an English School at Silchar. Superintendent of Cachar, Mr. Steward gladly allowed Reverend Pyres to commence his activities at Cachar in the old school building, in October 1863.

In December, 1863 Reverend William Pyrse started a school which came to be known as Silchar High Grammer School. But the suggestion made by the Superintendent of Cachar for establishment and maintenance of the school purely at Government cost was not accepted at first, and a grant-in-aid of Rs. 60/- per month was sanctioned by Government in the beginning. Reverend Pyrse brought Rai Saheb Naba Kishore Sen, who had the honour of passing the first Entrance Examination under the Calcutta University in 1859 out of his school at Sylhet, and instituted him as the Head master of this School in its very establishment. Thus Rai Saheb Naba Kishore was the founder Headmaster of the School and was in the post for about a year from 1st January, 1863. After him came Babu Abhoy Charan Bhattacharjee who held the post for 20 years. “The welok Presbyterian Mission have established a School in Cachar, which is supported by public subscriptions and a grant-in-aid made by the Government. This institution, commenced on 1st December last, is thriving and deserves every support. About 80 boys attended”². Reverend Pyrse can well be described as the father of English Education in Cachar, Truly speaking, he was the Father of English Education in the Surma Valley³.

From 21st August, 1866 A.D., under an order of the Government of India, the school was converted into a Zilla School. It became a Government institution but was controlled by the District School Committee and the School was renamed as Cachar Zilla School. From 1874 A.D., the School came directly under the control and supervision of the Inspector of Schools, Assam.
At the initial stage the school had seven classes beginning from IV-X. It is interesting to note that, as there was no ‘Pathsala’ in the town, class I and II were attached to the school. Children of the town attended these classes. There was also a class known as the Bengali class and those who were unwilling to learn English attended this class. The High Grammar School was accomodated in 1863 in a Kachcha house of thatched roof. Reverend Pyres made some improvements of the school house. The school was burnt twice from 1864-1874 A.D. The enrolment in the school during two year 1873-1887 as follows:

- 1st May 1873 A.D. - 125 + 21 in Bengali Class
- 31st March 1874 A.D. - 137 + 44 in Bengali Class
- 31st March 1875 A.D. - 150
- 31st March 1876 A.D. - 162
- 31st March 1877 A.D. - 148
- 31st March 1878 A.D. - 129
- 31st March 1879 A.D. - 121
- 31st March 1880 A.D. - 98

Report of the then Headmaster Abhoycharan Bhattacharjee was embodied in general report Public Instruction in Assam for the year 1877 A.D.

- 31st March 1881 A.D. - 121
- 31st March 1882 A.D. - 162
- 31st March 1884 A.D. - 187
- 31st March 1885 A.D. - 164
- 31st March 1886 A.D. - 164
- 31st March 1887 A.D. - 178

The reason for decline in enrolment from 1877-1880 A.D.: “The people around Silchar are rural and illiterate, looking more to the cost than the quality of education. They esteem the education of Zilla School and yet send their children to middle and Primary School, simply for they are being less expensive. If the rate of fees were cut down for Cachar boys, an improved attendance might be expected”. The fall in enrolment in 1880 A.D., was partly due to the opening of two Middle Schools at Silchar in that year. One of which was the Government aided Narshing Middle English School at present Known as Narshing Higher Secondary
School in the town and the other was private school. But very soon the enrolment increased due to number of factors, viz.

1) In the year 1881-82 A.D., as many as seven pupils received double promotion while there were few such promotions in the previous years. This evidently became an incentive to the pupils and guardians.

2) A boarding house was constructed sometime in 1883-84 A.D. This arrangement facilitated lodging and became a stimulant to pupils and their guardians.

3) A separate Persian department was introduced in the school in 1880 which attracted a good number of Muslim students to receive education.

The following table gives an idea of the race or creed wise enrolment of students of the school at the later part of eighties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Hindus</th>
<th>Muhammadans</th>
<th>Christians</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1886 – 87</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887 – 88</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888 – 89</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The School bore the name of ‘Cachar Zilla School’ till 1880 A.D., and there after it assumed a new name as Cachar Government High School. With the gradual Provincialisation of other Schools of the Valley, this school began to be called as Silchar Government High School since 1888 A.D.

Within few years government took over the school of Reverend Pyres. But due to the high rate of fees the poor students were unable to take admission in this school. Therefore the Station Committee passed a resolution to establish a school for poor students free of cost. The budget of the Station Committee of 1882-83 A.D. Sanction for this purpose Budget of 1882-83 A.D.:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount (Rs.)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary school for poor student</td>
<td>120.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School building for poor student</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The School bore the name of ‘Cachar Zilla School’ till 1880 A.D., and there after it assumed a new name as Cachar Government High School. With the gradual Provincialisation of other Schools of the Valley, this school began to be called as Silchar Government High School since 1888 A.D.

Within few years government took over the school of Reverend Pyres. But due to the high rate of fees the poor students were unable to take admission in this school. Therefore the Station Committee passed a resolution to establish a school for poor students free of cost. The budget of the Station Committee of 1882-83 A.D. Sanction for this purpose Budget of 1882-83 A.D.:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary school for poor student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School building for poor student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School building for Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For students studying in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Sub committee was formed to select teacher for boys school and its member were Harkishore Gupta, Haricharan Bhattacharjee and Abhayacharan Bhattacharjee. All of them were members of the Station Committee. Harkishore Gupta was the sherestadar Dewan in Deputy Commissioner’s Office. Haricharan Babu was the first B.A., B.L. of Cachar. Abhayacharan was the second headmaster of the Silchar Government School.

People used to call the school as “Daridra School” because most of the students of the school belong to poor family. Many students from the surroundings of the town used to take admission in this school. When the number of students started to increase Deputy Inspector of Schools advised Municipality to collect
school as Christian School and Bharat Chandra’s School came to be known as Hindu Balika Vidyalaya. Later on the Hindu Balika Vidyalaya was handed over to the missionaries.

In 1907 A.D., both the schools were merged. In 1905 A.D., Municipality raised the amount of grant to Rs. 15/-. Miss Williams left India in 1905 A.D. Miss Loyed came from Sylhet to help Miss Evans. In 1911 A.D., classes were extended up to class VII. This girls school later on came to be known as Girls Higher Secondary and Multi purpose School. In 1912 A.D., the School was shifted to its present site.

With the rise of number of female students in the Shillongpatty Patshala means that female education was gradually becoming popular. In 1905 A.D., the pandit (teacher) of the school proposed to the Municipality Board for the appointment of a second teacher but board refused. Later on another school for girls was established by the Municipality at Tarapur. But one thing is notable that most of the people wanted female teachers for female school.

When the British annexed Cachar, the rate of literate people were very few. And whatever was there confined to only upper caste Hindus. The first Superintendent wrote ‘In case of any information regarding Shariat, it had to be collect it from Sylhet’. A Maktab i.e. centre for Islamic education was established at the initiatives of Anjunamia Islamia Institute at Madhurband during the beginning of 20th country.7 When its secretary appealed to the Municipal board for financial aid in 1909 A.D., the Silchar Municipal board granted Rs.10/- monthly.

Municipality also used to render help to the poor and Native students of Narshing M.E. School and Government School. In 1883 A.D., when the Head master of Government School sent a list of students containing the name of native boys of Cachar but there was no fixed amount of grant. At the initial stage the amount of grant for Government School was higher than Narshing School6. In 1905 A.D., on account of the objection raised by Narshing School the grant was made equally by the board. In every month both the Head master and the School Inspector had to sent report about the performance of the students who were getting help from the Municipality.
In 1914 A.D., during the Chairmanships of Kamini Kumar Chanda the salary of the Abhaya charan Patshala was enhanced. The rate was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Scale of Salary</th>
<th>New Scale of Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head Master</td>
<td>20/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Asstt. Teacher</td>
<td>12/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Asstt. Teacher</td>
<td>12/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Asstt. Teacher</td>
<td>10/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Asstt. Teacher</td>
<td>10/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chowkidar</td>
<td>7/-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1919 A.D., D.P.I. gave a proposal to the Board to extend the classes of Abhayacharan upto Middle English level but Municipal board rejected the proposal on account of its inability. In 1917 A.D., Kalimohan Deb, a former member of station committee and a respectable citizen of the town established a school at Tarapur and named it as Nrityamoyee Balika Vidyalay in memory of his late wife. In 1922 A.D., the Municipality took over the responsibility of the school. When the Non-cooperation Movement started weaving became very popular and Silchar Municipality granted Rs. 50/- monthly for the training of weaving.

In 1921 A.D., Dinanath Navokishore Balika Vidyalaya was established. Many members of the board took leading part to establish the school as a protest against the reactionary activities of the missionaries. The land for the school was donated by Kamini Kumar. This school is better known as Swadeshi School, as the School was established by the Nationalist leaders. Social reformer and freedom fighter Shymacharan Deb was first headmaster of the school. Indian national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose, Acharjee Prafulla Chandra Roy, Bipin Chandra Pal, and Gopinath Bordoloi visited the school. There were two branches of the school. In the Navokishore Sen Vidyalaya education was imparted to the students and in the Dinanath Dutta weaving school training for weaving was given. From March 1922 A.D., the Municipal Board granted Rs. 35/- monthly to Dinanath Dutta weaving school. This training centre

234
was run completely with the grant of Municipality and without any help and assistance from the government. Thus the institution provides an ideal centre of women education in Silchar.

In 1925 A.D., Education minister Abdul Hamid came to Silchar and visited Abhayacharan Bhattacharjee Patshala. At that period the Education minister used to visit the Patshala whenever he came to Silchar. There were only 5 Schools in the town during that period. The schools were Government School, Narshing School, Mission Girls School, Dinanath Navokishore Sen Vidyalaya and Abhayacharan Bhattacharjee Patshala. The minister recommended to appoint a Muslim teacher in the School. And on the basis of this recommendation on 6th July, 1926 A.D., the Municipal Board appointed Basarat Ali, who was the first Muslim teacher in the town.

In the beginning of 1926 A.D., it was noticed by the members of the municipal board that it was very difficult to accommodate the growing number of students in the Abhayacharan Patshala. So on 23rd April, 1926 A.D., a resolution was passed to establish another school if anyone donate land. And at Ambicapatty a person named Durgashankar Dutta donated land for school. In the meeting of the Board held on 26th May, 1926 A.D., the Board granted Rs. 900/- for the construction of the school. On 1st March, 1927 A.D., officially the school was inaugurated and was named Durgashankar Patshala. The number of students increased rapidly. When Dhirendra Kumar Gupta was the Chairman of the board he granted Rs. 400/- for the extension of the school building.

During the Civil Disobedience Movement, many students left the Government High School as a protest against the Cunningham Circular in 1930 A.D. To accommodate these Students Cachar High School was established at Malugram. In this regard, the Chairman of the Municipality had also taken initiatives. Though initially classes were started at Abhayacharan Patshala but due to the objection raised by the Deputy Commissioner, the school was shifted to the present site which was donated by Baikuntha Chandra Gupta and his sons. They also financed the construction of the building. The objection of the Deputy Commissioner focussed the attitude of the British bureaucrats towards the freedom movement.
During the chairmanship of Dhirendra Kumar Gupta Municipality granted Rs. 25/- in 1928 A.D., and Rs. 30/- in 1929-30 A.D., to India Club Library. In 1929 A.D., Municipality increased monthly rate grant to Dinanath Weaving School from Rs. 50/- to 100/-, Rs. 25/- for Ramkrishna Mission Library and Rs. 500/- for the expansion of Durga Shankar Library. Though in 1929 A.D., a proposal came from government to make primary education compulsory in Silchar but Municipality did not accept the proposal. On the contrary Municipality gave a proposal to establish two more Patshalas.

Ramkrishna Mission established a night school for poor students at Jhalupara. And Rukmini Kumar Das, the chairman of the Municipal Board granted Rs. 20/- monthly to this school and Rs. 150/- for the construction of school building. In a meeting of the Board held on 25th August, 1933 A.D., under the Chairmanship of Rukmini Kumar Das, Madhurband Patshala was renamed as Haji Keramatullah Patshala because Haji Keramatullah donated land to the Municipality for the school. At Malugram another Patshala was established in 1933 A.D., at the initiatives of Devi Prasad Babu and Haji Abdur Rahman Laskar. The land for the school was donated by Devi Prasad and Abdur Rahman donated all the materials to construct the school building. About 80 students took admission in this school immediately after the establishment of the school. Municipality in order to create interest among the people granted Rs. 35/- monthly to the school. Today this school came to be known as Devi Prasad Patshala. In the previous year Municipality granted Rs. 15/- monthly to the Tulapatty Hindi Patshala.

When Rukmini Kumar Das became Chairman for the second time he increased the rate of grant from Rs. 50/- to 150/-. In 1936 A.D., Upendra Shankar Dutta donated land for school in memory of his mother Kulada Sundari. Municipality built a school there and it was named Kulada Sundari Patshala. Municipality raised the amount of monthly grant of Chatuspati, Hindi Patshala, Debi Prasad Patshala and Shivananda Night School. Tarapur Harijon School was given Rs. 10/- monthly as help. There might have been also some Patshala maintained on private basis and some tols run by individual priests of which the official either failed to take note of or was beyond the preview of their correspondence. The existence of tols is confirmed by the mention of grant to these
tols in the proceedings of the Municipality. Further exemption of the Mission girls' school and the holding occupied for Tol and Boarding in the Silchar Municipality from the payment of municipal taxes were evident in the records “Municipal Commissioners in their meeting held on the 22nd May, 1920 A.D., remitted the Mission girls’ School, Silchar, from payment of Municipal taxes till the next general re-assessment under section 106 of the Bengal Municipal Act III (B.C.) of 1884 A.D. But, the Auditors raised objection to this in the last audit note dated the 13th September, 1920 A.D., under paragraph 14 of the Additional note. Further the Secretary, Silchar Tol also applied for exemption of Municipal taxes on the Tol on the 20th September, 1920 A.D. The Municipal Commissioners in their meeting held on the 16th December 1920 A.D., have resolved to exempt the Mission girls’ School, Silchar, and the holding occupied for Silchar Tol and Boarding from assessment of Municipal taxes under section 98 of the Bengal Municipal Act III (B.C.) of 1884 A.D., with the sanction of the Local Government. The resolution of Silchar Municipality was sanctioned by the Local Self Government “Government of Assam to acknowledge the receipt of your memo, No. 719. Dated 3-2-21 and to sanction, under sanction 98 of the Bengal Municipal Act, III of 1884 A.D., the exemption of the Mission girls’ school, and the holding occupied by the Tol and boarding house in the Silchar Municipality, from the payment of municipal taxes”. In a meeting held on 26th March, 1935 A.D., the board granted Rs. 380/- to these tols. Moreover in 1936 A.D., a question arose regarding the formation of managing committee of the tols at Silchar whether a Muhammedan could be a member of the tols. The next board granted the tols Rs. 200/- for construction of building.

When Rukmini Kumar Das became Chairman of the Municipality for third time, the board recognized a gymnasium and gave Rs. 500/-. It was originally a private institute. After the recognition by the Municipality the institute became well established.

This board granted Rs. 250/- for construction of a girls’ school building at Malugram, the land for which was donated by Joy Kumar Deb. In July 1939 A.D., the board granted Rs. 100/- to the Principal of Surma Ayurved Vidyapith for the
library and cultivation of medical herbs. In February 1941 A.D., the board granted Rs. 250/- for a night school at Nagapatty.

Most of the Patshahas of the town were under the control of the Silchar Municipality. In March 1945 A.D., all these school were divided into two categories. The number of students of those schools were 150 or more under the category of ‘A’ and those which had less than 150 were under ‘B’ category. The salary of two Headmaster of the ‘A’ category schools were fixed Rs. 40-3-55 and Rs. 35-5-50 of the ‘B’ category schools headmaster. The salary of the teachers and the 4th grade staff were fixed Rs. 25-45 and Rs. 12-20 respectively16.

When Satindra Mohan Deb became the chairman of the Board, he established School for Harijon Students by an order on 4th May, 1946 A.D., and named it ‘Harijon School’17. On 26th May, 1946 A.D., the board sanctioned the order of the Chairman. In 1947 A.D., the board increased the amount of grant of Surma Ayurved Bidhypothish from Rs. 180.00 to Rs. 250.00. When India became Independent of the British empire on 15th August, 1947 A.D., along with the rest of the country in Silchar also people celebrated with pomp and glory. On that day Municipality office and the schools under Municipality were decorated with light.

In 1954 A.D., the Silchar Municipality donated Malugram Middle English Girls School, a portion of land of its present site and this is now a full fledged High School was established. During the tenure of Satindra Mohan as Chairman, Municipal board donated land to Joy Kumar Balika Vidyalaya, Netaji Vidyabhanwa and Arun Chanda Law College.

In the meeting of the board held on 18th March, 1959 A.D., a member of the Board, Shankar Prasad Singh gave a proposal that as Cachar got nothing in the First and Second plan so the board should demand for a Medical College at Silchar in the third plan. All the members of the board supported the proposal of Singh and passed a resolution18.

On 29th August, 1961 A.D., in a meeting of the Municipality Board when Mohitush Purkayastha was the chairman, the board donated land to Janiganj Lower Primary School. The land which was donated to Tarapur Vidyapith during Satindra Mohan’s period was confirmed during Mohitush Purkayastha’s period by passing a resolution. In the meeting held on 29th June, 1962 A.D., the Municipal Board
granted land for Itkhola primary School. Shyamsundar Akhra raised an objection regarding the land granted to Netaji Vidyabhawan during Satindra Mohan’s period. The matter was solved during Mohitush Purkayastha’s period.

On the question of establishment of a Regional Engineering College in Silchar, when Director of Technical Education opposed it, Municipality by passing a resolution on 9th July, 1965 A.D., criticized the Director and supported the proposal for the establishment of the College. In this regard Tarapada Bhattacharjee, a member of the board played a very active role. During the Chairmanship of Paresh Chandra Choudhury, Municipality again passed a resolution criticizing the initiative to shift the College on 31st March, 1969 A.D., from Silchar to Jorhat.

Paresh Chandra Choudhury, the Chairman of the Municipality informed the members of the board, in a meeting held on 25th June, 1968 A.D., that the Health Secretary informed him the Medical College will start from 1968 at Silchar. In this regard Satindra Mohan Deb as Health Minister had a great contribution.

The students of Silchar Medical College started indefinite strike from 26th July, 1972 A.D., and threatened to close the College from 28th July on account of the lukewarm attitude of the Government to construct the buildings of the College. Already realizing this attitude of the Government in 1970 A.D., Municipality sent a memorandum to the Medical Secretary. In 1971 A.D., Municipality sent a telegram to the Health Secretary. After this, the board informed the Government regarding the problems of the Medical College but the Government did not pay heed to the Problems. When the student strike took a serious turn in 1972 A.D., the board passed a resolution in a special meeting of the board held on 29th July, 1972 A.D. The board gave its full support to the students and proposed to the Government to take steps for the recognition of the Medical College by the All India Medical College. In spite of all these efforts when the government did not take any proper steps, the students of the college called an indefinite strike after one year. The Municipal board supporting the strike passed resolution on 31st July 1973 A.D., in this words. “The meeting notes with concern, the cool and calculated silence on the part of the government in the matter even after the strike. It appears that all the M.L.A.s of Cachar are in a stupor of complacency. The member therefore request
the Government to intervene immediately and to meet the legitimate demands of the aggrieved students by providing all the facilities considered essential for recognition by the Indian Medical Council. In another resolution it was decided to organize a procession in supporting the movement of the students of medical college on 3rd August, 1973 A.D., at 3 P.M. 19

From 1981 A.D., onwards the board started a new programme of rewarding the students those who performed very well in the examination from primary level up to graduation. The prizes were named after the ex-chairman. After the death of Rajendralal Das a freedom fighter, his well-wishers in his memory had given the Municipality Rs. 37001/-. The Municipality opened a fund and decided to award prizes to the meritorious students in the name of Rajendralal Das 20.

In 1938 A.D., and 1940 A.D., Cachar Kalamandal and Silchar Sangit Vidyaloy were established respectively. In 1952 A.D., Silchar Municipality granted Rs. 500/- to both the institutions. During the Chairmanship of Satindra Mohan Dev, Municipality donated Rs. 500/- at the conference of the Assam Sangit Natak Academy held at Silchar in 1957 A.D. Again in 1962 A.D., when Assam Sangit Natak Academy organize cultural function at Gandhi Bag, Municipality rendered all types of help including finance. Silchar Municipality gave many times financial aid to Rabindra Joyanti committee. With the development in the field of education there was a change of attitude among the people in the society. There was demand for female ward in the hospital. In the meeting of the board held on 29th October, 1927, it granted Rs. 2000/- for a female ward in the hospital. This decision indicate a change in the outlook of the people in the society because before this it was beyond imagination of anyone to sent any female to hospital for treatment.

When Bengal was partitioned, the West Bengal became a province of independent India in 1947 A.D., and Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh became the Chief Minister of the fragmented province. However, his tenure was short lived and in January 1948 A.D., Bidhan Chandra Roy became the chief Minister. In 1940 A.D., Prafulla Chandra Ghosh was a Congress leader of repute and nothing else.

In August 1940 A.D., Dr. Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, the congress leader who subsequently became the first Chief Minister of West Bengal after partition came
to Silchar and visited Nagapatty. After returning from Silchar, he wrote a letter to the Silchar Municipality for the development of Nagapatty and in consequence maternity leave was granted to Naga women, and water pipe and electricity was connected to Nagapatty by his suggestions.

In 1929–30 A.D., Shyamacharan Babu started the programme of training of midwife to some of the distressed girls. In the beginning the training was given by Dr. Prafulla Chandra Das and Dr. Brojendra Bhattacharjee. Shyamacharan Babu collected donations from the people for this purpose. In this way the modern Shiv Sundari Nari Shikhsasram started. In 1930 A.D., by the initiatives of civil surgeon of that time Mr. Haythamwaite, the Government allotted land to the Nari Sikhsasram. He also applied to the Municipality for this purpose. And realizing its usefulness, in the meeting held on 24th Feb, 1934 A.D., the Board of Municipality granted monthly allowance of 120/-.

On 21st Feb, 1949 A.D., the Municipal Board which was elected in which among the 25 member one of them was Mrs. Juthsna Chanda. Her election to the Board indicates the position of woman in the society improved to a great extent. Again the board which was formed on 15th March, 1957 A.D., among them 20 members were elected and 5 members were nominated. The remarkable thing was that among the nominated members Mrs. Monika Chakraborty was one of them. Similarly in the Board that was formed in June 1966 A.D., one of the nominated member was Srimati Meena Das. During the period from 1966 A.D. - 1990 A.D., no women members were elected or nominated member of the Silchar Municipal Board. But this small participation of the Women in the Municipal board also indicate that women in our society were also becoming political conscious.

Keatinge library, which now a days known as Arun Chandra Granthaghar may be the oldest public library in Silchar. It is assumed that when Assam become a separate Chief Commissioners Province in 1874 A.D., it was the library was established after the name of the first Chief Commissioner of Assam. After the formation of the Municipality, it made attempts to develop the library. The original building was very small in size and situated very close to the Municipality office. On behalf of the library appeals were made to the Municipality for grant but during the first few years all appeals were rejected. A resolution was passed after a long
debate by the board on 3rd December, 1897 A.D., to grant Rs. 8/- monthly. In the proceedings it was mentioned "Proposed by Babu Raj Kumar Das and second by the Vice Chairmen that Rupees five a month paid as grant to the Keatinge library. Babu Hari Kishore Gupta proposed an amendment and Babu Mohesh Chandra Dutta seconded that Rupees be a paid a month. That amendment was carried out". And the grant was made from the Municipality.

During the period of Satindra Mohan Deb as Chairman of the Municipality, a separate room for the collection of Rabindranath Tagores writings was opened. Though many books were collected for the purpose but today no trace of this room. From 1922 A.D., Municipality was providing financial help to the library through committee of the library. In 1936 A.D., Municipality took over directly the responsibility of the library and till now the library is under the control of the Silchar Municipality.

In 1910 A.D., a public hall as well library named Reading and Dramatic Institution was established. In originally Reading and Dramatic Institute was built with the money of lottery. Before the establishment of cinema halls in the town Reading and Dramatic Institute Hall was used for showing silent movies. In 1931 A.D., by the efforts of Anil Kumar Chanda and Silchar Municipal Board for the first time a cultural programme was organized at Reading and Dramatic Institute on the birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. In this Programme Malati Shyam had played a important role. The programme was very noticeable because for the first time girls of the town performed on the stage.

During the Second World War, British Government had occupied the Reading and Dramatic Institute Hall for army and handed over the hall in a very deplorable condition after the war to the Committee which was in charge of the Reading and Dramatic Institute hall. The Committee had not the capacity to repair the hall and therefore wanted to hand over the hall to the Municipality. In 1956 A.D., when Satindra Mohan Deb was the Chairman Municipality took over the charge of the hall. At the initiative of Satindra Mohan Deb the auditorium and stage of Reading and Dramatic Institute Hall was built.

When Santosh Mohan Deb became the Chairman of Silchar Municipal Board he took initiatives to retrieve the hall. On 30th April, 1979 A.D., due to his
initiatives, the cultural department of the government of India granted Rs. 84000/- for reconstruction of the hall. As the amount was not sufficient, Municipality built stalls for rent at the entrance of the hall. During the centenary celebration of the Silchar Municipality among its other programme reconstruction of Reading and Dramatic Institute Hall was one. The hall was reopened on 29th November, 1983. Gandhi Bhavan was also reconstructed and made arrangement for seat of 224. At present Reading and Dramatic Institute hall is one of the hall at Silchar along with District library, Sanskriti Bhawan, Gandhi Bhawan.

In 1910 A.D., at the initiatives of the employees of Railway Mail Service and Telegraph a club was formed at Tarapur called Coronation Club. Most of the employees belonged to Dacca. The club was mainly interested in the acting of Drama. The club was named coronation Club to co-memorate the accession of English King George V. At the request of the club Municipality donated a piece of land for building of the club near Tarapur Police outpost in 1928 A.D.

In 1924 A.D., in the proceedings of the Municipality for the first get reference of circus held at Kalibari char. Silchar Municipal Board did not lack behind in the field of sports also. In the 50's Silchar Municipality had a football team which used to play in the A Division. In 1954 A.D., Silchar Municipality football team became runners up in the Independence Cup football held at Nowgaon District of Assam. Silchar Municipality with its limited resources made attempt for the upliftment of District Sports Association ground by supplying roller and other equipments.

The idea of a mela is evident from a letter addressed by the Superintendent on 16th July 1860 A.D., to the editor of the Dacca News. The letter is “I request you will be so good as to strike off 100 impressions of the enclosed English advertisement and forward them to me …… as soon as possible.

I also request you that you will be good as to insert the advertisement in the Dacca News to be published once a week from the 1st of August until the 15th December next when the advertisement is to cease.

Notice in hereby given that the Cachar Mela or Annual Fair will be held at Silchar in Cachar on the 30th and 31st December, 1860 A.D., and the 1st, 2nd and 3rd January, 1861 A.D. Prizes will be given for the best specimens of cattle, raw
products and manufacture brought for sale, a competent Committee being selected to determine the above. Shops are being erected as heretofore for the convenience of traders who may feel disposed to attend. Races, games etc. open to all will be held as usual, and a display of fire works will take place.

The last mela was attended by a great concourse of people and the results were so gratifying, as to encourage its continuance annually. "Many buffaloes, cows, pigs, ponies and goods of all sorts and kinds were brought for sale".

In the middle part of the 19th century a mela (exhibition) used to held at Itkhola, Silchar. In 1882 A.D., after the formation of the station committee it took certain steps to popularize the mela. The steps were to hire dancing groups from Dacca, as well as Manipuri and Naga dance groups, to organize music competitions, handicraft exhibition and to make arrangement for the lodging of the outsiders. These initiatives to organize the mela indicate interest of the people in different field in that period. During that period, how much expenditures were required to organize a mela can be assumed from the budget of the mela dated 6th December 1884.

The budget of the mela:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost (Rs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For shops</td>
<td>290/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancer hall</td>
<td>60/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre group</td>
<td>500/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watering of roads</td>
<td>150/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handicraft</td>
<td>50/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For crackers</td>
<td>50/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting of the mela</td>
<td>25/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naga dance group</td>
<td>15/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipuri dance group</td>
<td>60/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>40/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1265/-</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People who used to gather in the mela were mostly from neighbouring villages, tea gardens and also Europeans from the tea gardens. But women belong
to the conservative family within the town rarely visited the mela. One of the interesting things is that during the period of Mela, the shops inside the town used to remain close. It is assumed that during the mela authority gave importance more on exhibition as most of the shops of town used to participate in the mela.

During the chairmanship of Brindavan Chandra Dey Shilpamela was held in the towns at the initiates of India Club in 1927 A.D., and 1928 A.D. For this purpose Municipality granted Rs. 50/- to India Club in the first year and Rs. 100/- in the second year. In the proceedings of the board it was also decided, to supply water the whole day for the convenience of the people who will come to Mela from outside.

In 1949 A.D., during the chairmanship of Satindra Mohan Deb Gandhi mela & Exhibition was started at Silchar and the same was conducting by a committee. Representatives of the Municipality were also the member of the committee and Municipality used to help the committee in many ways. This committee conducted the mela for twelve years. On 5th December, 1970 A.D., the board decided to conduct the mela it self by forming a committee in which some members to be included from outside the Board. It was decided that the Committee should be formed by the Chairman of the Board. In this way the board tried and failed many times to brought the mela under its full control by passing resolutions. In 1972 A.D., the mela was not organized due to language movement. In 1979 A.D., during emergency when board was under Government control, an attempt was made to frame constitution for conducting mela which was not formally implemented.

The new Board that was formed after emergency framed a new constitution. According to the new constitution the mela and exhibition went completely under the control of the Board and in the mela committee some members were to be included from the citizens within the town. It was also mentioned that the purpose for which mela was started to be implemented by conducting the mela smoothly. A new era of the Gandhi mela and exhibition beings in 1981 A.D., when it started conducting according to new constitution. The total income of the mela goes to Board and the income of the mela also spent for the completion of the construction of Gandhi Bhawan in 1983 A.D. Besides this, to
help all those cultural organization which worked according to the ideology of Gandhiji and roads and other works related to public interest till today.

Notes and references:-

1. File No. 50/55, Letter to the Commissioner of Dacca Division, June, 1834, compiled in the Cachar District Records, op. cit., P-17.
5. General report on public instruction in Assam for the year 1877-78.
13. Proceeding of Silchar Municipality, dated 23rd April, 1926, P-5.
15. File No. 61/70, Letter No. 876, dated the 15th January 1921, from the Vice-Chairman, Silchar Municipality, to the Deputy Commissioner, Cachar.