Conclusion
In the preceding chapters an attempt is made to look into the different stages through which Silchar town gradually emerges as the major urban centre of the valley and concurrent growth of Silchar Municipality to meet the demands of the ever expanding urban population. Below a summary of the entire process is given to facilitate comprehension of our study.

In 1874, when British organised Assam as a Chief Commissioner’s province, they incorporated Sylhet (Now in modern Bangladesh) and Cachar in Assam. These two districts came to be known as Surma Valley division which has linguistic, cultural and social similarities due to the geographical location. The geographical factor demarcates the natural border between the riverine Bengal and the hilly North-East. Therefore it is evident that in early period the Indo-Aryan settlement extended from Bengal to the farthest limit of the plains land, i.e. at the foot of the hills which encircled the valley from three sides.

It is assumed that the earliest settlers in the valley were Austric-speaking people. After them people speaking different varieties of Tibeto-Burman speeches migrated quiet early and continued till the nineteenth century. However, the Nidhanpur Copper plate mentioned a part of the valley as Chandrapuri Vishaya in the late fifth or early sixth century A.D., under the rule of Bhauma Narka sulter. The Kalapur inscription issued in late 7th century mentioned that the other region of the valley were under Samatata rulers. In the tenth century Srichandra of the Chandra dynasty of Eastern Bengal incorporated major portion of the valley within his kingdom. From two Bhatera inscriptions of Govinda Keshauadeva and Ishandeva, it appeared that an independent Srihatta Rajya, within which the whole of modern Sylhet district, and a major part of Cachar-Karimganj was incorporate.

During the fourteenth century most of the Cachar plains was perhaps under the nominal control of the Tripuri royal house. After the conquest by the Koch, the region later on amalgamated with the Hairambha or Kachari kingdom and thus came to be known as Cachar. The kingdom became weak due to series of Ahom invasions. The period between the Cachari rule and annexation of Cachar by the British marked on the one hand by the successive issue and on the other hand this region was proceeding towards a new course. In 1832, the kingdom of Cachar was annexed by the British.
Socially and culturally, Cachar plains have similarities with Sylhet as because Hairamba royal court accepted Bengali as the language of administration and culture. They also encouraged the settlements of the Bengalees for economic advancements of the kingdom and the same policy was followed by the British.

The British after the annexation of Cachar for the convenience of administration conferred on Captain Fisher in 1833 all responsibility to administer the district at British Regime in Cachar had a gradual evolution during the period from 1832 to 1854 A.D. Soon after its annexation Silchar developed into a modern town. Measures were taken to bring under government control all fallow lands and lease them out along with Revenue, Judicial, Police and defence. Many people from the adjacent districts of Bengal settled down permanently in Cachar due to the abundance of land and increase of employment facilities under the new regime. The introduction of the tea industry had completely changed the very outlook of the district through rapid socio-economic transformation. To deal with rehabilitation problems deputy collector was appointed and steps were taken to improve the communication system and hospitals, post offices and jails were established. In the second chapter it is discussed how Silchar developed as an urban centre focussing a brief note on the process of development of urbanization in India. India witnessed the process of urbanization throughout the ancient, medieval and of course, the modern ages looked from the historical point of view. In the colonial period, in India different types of towns come into existence to serve their colonial interests. In the beginning, after the annexation British administered Cachar from Cherapunjee, but for the convenience of administration in 1833 shifted their Headquarter to Dudpatil at first and then to Silchar. Due to lack of proper evidence it is a matter of controversy whether Silchar town was the creation of British or it had earlier existence.

Under the British rule, Silchar emerged as a cantonment town but later on underwent a transformation from a cantonment town to an administrative headquarters. The strategic location of Silchar, its accessibility from Sylhet, availability of land and labour, approach routes to the neighbouring hills encouraged the British to establish Silchar as headquarter. Offices and residential quarters were constructed at Sadarghat and jail and police outposts were
constructed in Fatak Bazar. The office of the Superintendent remained in the Burmese fort till 1860s.

Slowly the township was extended to cover Jhalupara, Tarapur and Malugram areas. With the formation of a station committee in 1882, Silchar was divided into four wards viz. Janiganj, Tarapur, Ambicapur and Malugram. With the growth and development of urbanisation, the Silchar town was upgraded to the status of a second class Municipality in 1893 A.D.

The district headquarter was connected by roads with interiors of the district. Ferry services were also introduced. Mail service and telegraph facility were also started. The Central Road, Nazirpatty, Premtola, Tulapatty and Narshingtola emerged as flourishing localities. The first English school in Silchar was established in 1863 A.D., and first girls’ school was established in 1865.

The roads built in the beginning were at Tarapur road and a road from Narshing School up to Rangirkhari. There were many open fields within the town. During the winter season the European used these grounds for horse race. Till the formation of the Municipality most of the houses in Silchar town were made of thatches and bamboo. There were also large number of tanks within the town which were the source of water supply. With the growing population though the sanitation became a major problem but Municipality tried to take appropriate steps to solve the problem.

Municipality also took initiative for the beautification of Goldighi site, which was used for meeting of the freedom Movement and also for theatres and dramas during winter season. With the passage of time a bus stand was established at the side of the Goldighi and the area was named Premtola by the bus drivers. Gradually some shops were opened on both sides of the road up to hospital. Up to Lochan Bairaghi Road there was nothing except few shops and this road separated Akhra from Bil. Near the bil was Mahutpara which was thickly populated. Though some people lived near Akhra but up to Rangirkhari, there were open paddy fields.

Malugram situated at the other corner of the town and it is said that the town was originated from this area. A road connected Malugram with Steamerghat, Aryapatty, Shibbari, Ganiala, Itkhola up to the Trunk Road. Another road was
constructed behind the house of Baikunta Chanda Gupta connected with a road by the side of Rahmanbari. After the establishment of Public Works department it constructed many roads within Silchar Municipality. Besides this Municipality took initiatives to build new footpaths, roads, maintain and repair the roads within its limit from time to time. In case of flood municipality not only helped the flood victims but also repaired the damaged roads. With the growth of population as well as number of vehicles also increased within the town and municipality made traffic rules for the safety of the people.

With the establishment of Silchar as Sadar Subdivision by the British, it became the seat of all district office. And in search of jobs and livelihood in these offices European Amlas and many people from Sylhet and other places started settling in Silchar. People from Ambikapur, Tarapur, Dudpatil and Madurband found jobs in Government establishment, and they were the first group of people in Cachar to find a job in a non-agricultural front, as altogether new concept in this land.

Gradually there emerged residential areas, houses built in the paddy fields of Ambikapur, Malugram, Tarapur and the process gained a momentum towards the end of the century. When as per the report of the Settlement officer, 'rice fields are being converted into house-sites, while the road side strips of the residential blocks are developing into trade-sites'.

Due to the geographical location Silchar is the meeting point of the five of the North-Eastern states. It also situated within 50km of Bangladesh. Therefore Silchar may be regarded as gateway to the neighbouring states and district for trade, commerce and communication. This is how Silchar developed into an urban centre.

Thus we find through the nucleus of the modern Silchar town was actually laid down during this period. It was just the beginning but initial steps taken were vibrant with future possibilities.

In the third chapter main emphasis is given on how the local self Government came into existence in India and how it developed in Silchar town. In India since the time of Harappan civilization an indigenous form of Local Self Government was there and which existed throughout the ancient and medieval
period. And in the modern period the credit goes to British who introduced the modern Self Government. This innovation on the part of the British was due to certain factors like financial stringencies and the unhygienic condition in different town due to epidemics. And above all Lord Ripon’s initiative to train the Indians for Self Government and democracy.

After the recognition of Silchar as Sadar Headquarters of the Cachar, British emphasised on making Silchar as cantonment to deal with the problems of the neighbouring hill tribes. At that period a municipal branch existed in the Superintendent’s office which used to maintain account of the police expenditure, street light of kerosene and construct small roads.

In May 1865, along with Gauhati though Municipality was introduced at Silchar by the Bengal District Town Improvement Act, but the experiment proved a failure and was withdrawn in 1868. After this till the formation of the Station Committee in 1882, Silchar was regulated as a Chowkidari Union. In 1893, with the growth of population the Station Committee was upgraded into a second class Municipality.

The Station Committee established schools for poor students as well as female students. Slowly and gradually the girls’ schools was extended up to Higher Secondary. Silchar Municipality also took many steps for the development of the Silchar Civil Hospital established in 1864 and sanctioned financial grants. Whenever there were any kinds of epidemic in the country, Silchar Municipality took preventive measures.

After the formation of the Station Committee, one of the major problem was to maintain hygienic condition of the town, as there was no proper sanitation system. Public latrines were constructed and measures were adopted to dispose the waste. In this regard tax was also imposed. With the passage of time Municipality built pucca latrine and later on it was successful to built sanitary latrine at low cost with the financial aid of the Government. The greatest contribution of Silchar Municipality was that the municipal dwellers under below poverty line were provided low cost sanitary latrines in place of pit latrines. Silchar Municipality also tried to solve the problem of the water supply as ponds and tanks were the only source of drinking water. Municipality engraved many wells and later on
water works was founded. Taxes were imposed to meet the expenditure. In 1971, the Silchar Municipality with a grant of 60 lacs from national Supply and Sanitation programme gave the responsibility to PHE for water supply of 60,000 people. And this was continued till 1991. When more areas were inducted within Municipality in 1979 with financial grants from Government, it took measures to provide water supply in these areas. The Board of 1979 also took measures for the purification of four old ponds of the town namely fire brigade pond, Narshingtola pond, Thana pond and Daccaipatty pond. Improvement of roads and clearage were also undertaken by the Municipality under Integrated Urban development Programme.

In the meantime a feeling against the alien rule gradually developed within the Silchar Municipality influenced by the spirit of the Freedom Movement. The Municipality passed resolutions condemning the anti-people policies of the British govt. from time to time. Not only that some of the members of the Board actively participated in the Freedom Movement. Moreover the Silchar Municipality honoured many national leaders who visited Silchar during the Freedom Movement. The period between the two world wars created a general crisis in a global scale and Silchar was also felt the pinch of the situation. The Municipality in his bumble way tried its best to deal with the situation. Then came the period of unrest that preceded the partition of the country. On the question of partition, Silchar Municipality openly expressed its opinion in favour of Cachar's relation with India and not to be transferred to Pakistan. The influx of refugees after independence though created problems like rehabilitation, sanitation, drainage, education, roads, culverts, the Silchar Municipality left no stone unturned to negotiate the problems to the best of its ability.

During the post independence period the Municipality donated lands to many school and rendered financial assistance. With the rise of number of vehicles on the road Municipality imposed many rules and regulations to control the traffic. To tackle the problems of fire in the town Municipality persuaded the govt. to take over the fire brigade into its own hand. With the growth of population in Silchar town Fatak Bazar market was not sufficient. Therefore Municipality built four other markets taking grants from both the State and Central Government. These
markets were Itkhola market, Rangirkhari market, Satsang Ashram Road market and new market. Besides these markets the Super market complex at Central Road. Another problem related to the rise of population is the growth of slums in different parts of Silchar. Slums can be defined as “that area of the town or city which has inadequate physical standards like poor housing, overcrowding congestion, lack of education, insufficient facilities, low standard of living due to low level of income and a special character with its own norms and values”7. Due to the initiative of the Municipality government granted Rs. 1 lakh 95 thousands for the development of roads and drains in the slum areas during the tenure of the Board elected in 1979 after emergency8. To honour the martyrs who sacrificed their lives during the language movement Municipality built Sahid Bedi and named many roads after them. Municipality also built children Park. In 1983, Municipality celebrated its 100 years with different programmes for the welfare of its dwellers9. The programme included repair and maintenance of roads, lanes, bye-lanes and many roads in the towns were renamed after the name of freedom fighters and martyrs to language movement. Constructions of Public Halls and libraries and to keep the town waste free were also included in the programme.

In chapter IV, the legal frame work within which the Municipality had to work during the British period has been discussed. For the smooth administration of the Municipality different acts were passed time to time. In 1842 Bengal Act was passed to improve the sanitary condition. In 1850 another act was passed which was in force for 14 years. In order to remove the defects of this act in 1864 the Bengal District Town Improvement Act was passed which laid down certain principles10. These were how to maintain police and how to raise funds by the people for municipal purposes.

For the first time in May 1865, Silchar was constituted into a municipality under the District Town Improvement Act. The Municipality could levy duty on houses and landed property for the maintenance of police force and improvement of sanitation.

In 1868, the Municipality was withdrawn and Silchar was constituted a Chowkidari Union under Act, XX of 1856 till the formation of the Station Committee. In 1876, Bengal Municipal Act was passed which provided for First
and Second class Municipalities, Stations and Unions. Under this Act Silchar was constituted into a Station Committee in 1882 which had fifteen members of whom 10 members were elected and five nominated.

In April 1883, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar J. Knox took the initiative with the consent of the Chief Commissioner to introduce election. And the requisite qualification of the voters was also fixed. The introduction of the system led to the formation of Rate-payers Association Members to be elected was also required to be in possession of certain qualifications.

In 1882, Lord Ripon, the father of Local Self Govt. in India passed a resolution and suggested non-interference of District Officer and introduced of elective system. The Act of 1884 framed the rules for the election. But as the act did not provide for stations and unions, therefore the Act of 1876 was also remained in force. Due to the growth of population on 1st April 1893, the Station Committee of Silchar was upgraded to the status of Second class Municipality under Act V (B.C.) 1876.

In December 1904, several important decision regarding the functioning and procedures of the Board activities were elaborated through the formation of certain bye-laws. To remove the inconveniences for the existence of two acts simultaneously certain suggestions were made through the resolution of 1914, like elections of Chairman and Vice-Chairman and formation of town committee.

The Act of 1923, was passed to further democratize the Board and it remained in force till 1956. The strength of the board was increased by elimination official control. The Act empowered the board to as regards levy taxes, sanitations, water supply, lighting and drainage.

The bye Laws of 1923 stipulated regulation on traffic on roads, footpaths, sanitation, disposal of garbage and carcasses cremation and burials. It empowered the board to inspect and regulate the overall functioning of the Municipal area. The Act of 1923 was amended in 1931 which emphasised on tax pattern and election of office bearer of the board and terms and conditions. After Independence of India the Act of 1956 was passed which is still in force. In this act the regulations contain the constitution of municipalities municipal financial taxation, power of municipal board, regarding maintenance of sanitation, public health, disease
control, water supply, drainage system. It also covers the rules and bye laws as well as legal provisions, appeals, prosecutions and suits, constitution of Town Committee and imposition of taxes\textsuperscript{13}.

These facts make it clear that though the governance of the land was controlled by the alien rulers, partially because of the goodwill of some of the influential member of the ruling coteries and partially under public pressure, municipalities was allowed to expand its sphere of activities and their empowerment was also effected to by making the elaborate move broad based.

A municipal board is a social institution and it is obvious that its evolution will be linked with the social evolution of the locality. Silchar Municipal Board is also no exception. Though change in the arena of education and culture took place with the inevitable emergence of social forces. Silchar Board showed its ability to adjust with the new developments. Before the advent of the Britishers, there was, virtually no education in this valley. In 1834 June, Captain Fisher wrote “there does not exists any provision either public or private in amy 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”. Two years after “I would recommend beginning with one (educational institution) at the Sadar station as an experiment ..........”\textsuperscript{14}.

Although the British rulers were eager to establish school, but it was not possible due to lack of response from the local people. It may be said that the establishment of High Grammar School by Prize William was the beginning of English education in Cachar. After the formation of the Station Committee it established a school for poor students and sanctioned grants for poor students as well as girl students in its budget. Though the first initiatives for female education was taken up by two English missionary women but Municipality had great contribution in this respect. Therefore, a grammar school and a primary school established in the sixties, the ground prepared for the emergence of middle class in Silchar in the following years\textsuperscript{15}.

Silchar Municipality, along with the initiatives to develop other communities took initiatives also for the upliftment of Mohammadans in the field of education. In the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, a Maktab was established at Mddhurband to which also Municipality sanctioned a monthly grant. As a protest
against the policies of the British govt. Dinanath Nabakishore Balika Vidyalaya and Cachar School were established in 1921 A.D., and 1930 A.D., respectively during the freedom Movement. Municipality granted sanction not only to these schools but also to the weaving training schools. Silchar Municipality Board also sanctioned grants to tols time to time run by individual priests. By this time many schools were established in other parts of the town and Municipality as far as possible on its part sanctioned both monetary and land grant.

After independence Silchar Municipal Board worked both directly and indirectly for the upliftment in the field of education. Regarding the medium of instruction whenever the Assam Government tried to implement Assamese as the medium of instruction, Silchar Municipality expressed strong resentment. Municipality also strongly protested against the government policy of discrimination regarding the establishment of institution like Medical College and Engineering College in this valley. Another contribution of Silchar Municipality in the field of education was the establishment and maintenance of different libraries.

To improve the condition of women in the society Silchar Municipality along with female education took steps to provide better facilities for female health like appointment of midwife and opening of female ward in the hospital. It also helped Shiv Sundari Nari Shikhasram with financial aid after it was founded by Shymacharan Deb to help the distressed class of women. With the spread of female education indicate a change in the outlook of the people in the society is proved by the election of Mrs. Monika Chakraborty and Meena Das respectively were the nominated members. It is no wonder that this humble beginning has been culminated in the election of a female chairman who at present has been running the affairs of the Board with ability.

The earliest mela was organised by the Government at Silchar in 1860 A.D. And when the station committee was formed, it took certain steps to popularise the mela. In order to create interest among the people in other field Municipality organised Mela in the last part of 19th century and also in the first part of the 20th century. It also made arrangements for circus and cinema. Before the opening of any cinema hall at Silchar, Municipality made arrangements of showing cinema at Reading and dramatic Institute.
At the initial stage Silchar Municipality like other municipalities of the country was loyal to the British Government under compulsion, but slowly and gradually there was a change of attitude. On the one hand Lord Ripon’s policy to train the Indian people for self-Government and democracy and on the other hand the feelings of nationalism created political consciousness among people of Silchar.

In the beginning when the British Government passed different Municipal Acts there was no system of election. The Act of 1876 had the provision of election in case the rate payers demand for election. In Silchar when the Station Committee was formed. The members of the board were nominated at first but after few years election of the members of the board started in a limited way. Slowly in place of European chairman, Indian chairman were elected in the Board. When the freedom movement started the Silchar Municipality was also not lacked behind to express its dissatisfaction or resentment against the British Government whenever it got opportunity. This anti-British feeling within the Board was evident during, non-cooperation movement, Civil Disobedience, Hartals and Quit India Movement. Silchar Municipality tried to show respect and honour with its limited resource to the Indian national leaders like Jawharlal Nehru and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose whenever they visited Silchar for the purpose of agitation against the British government. Some members of the Board actively participated in the agitation of the freedom movement and were imprisoned. In protest against the British Government policy the natives of Silchar established two educational institutes named Dinanath Nabokishore Balika Vidyualaya and Cachar High School.

From 1941 onwards most of the members of the Board contested the election with nomination from different political parties. During this period from the activities of the members of the Board it was evident within the Board there were two groups – Anti-British and Pro-British. For example the Board election in June, 1945 the Government nominated Rukmini Kumar Das was defeated in the election of Chairman. Another remarkable change reflected in the attitude of the natives when they wanted the distribution of seats for the membership of the Board should be based according to the ratio of different communities in the town.
During the riot of 1946 in Bengal Silchar Municipality tried to help the refugees who had taken shelter at Silchar railway station. During the post independent periods, factionalism became a dominant feature in Silchar Municipal politics.

Silchar Municipality along with the people of Barak Valley strongly protested against the demand of Assamese people to implement Assamese as the state language in 1950. It not only condemned it but passed resolution in favour of Bengali language. It criticised killings of innocent people for language issue at Silchar railway station in May 1961 and demanded judicial enquiry. In 1972 Silchar Municipality raised a strong protest against Gauhati University’s decision regarding the medium of instruction at the Pre-university level. Silchar Municipality criticised the state Govt. appealed to centre to look into the matter. The Municipal Board expressed its dissatisfaction when Mohitosh Purakayastha was deprived of any portfolio in the Assam ministry because of his involvement in the language movement.

When emergency was declared in the country in 1975, the Government took over the Silchar Municipality into its own hand. In 1979 when new board was elected after emergency Santosh Mohan Deb was elected its Chairman. Due to his efforts Silchar Municipality had the privilege to get sanction of many big schemes. The Silchar Municipality celebrated its centenary during the tenure of this Board. With the coming of the Asom Gana Parishad in power in the state Government there was no election in all the Municipalities of Assam including Silchar Municipality from 1985-1990. During this period the Municipality was either run by Executive Officer or Ad-hoc Board nominate by the Government.

By 1990 Silchar has undergone rapid urbanisation due to its location, better transport facilities, peaceful atmosphere as compared to other parts of North-East India and establishment of educational institutions. The rapid urbanisation causes various problems like improper drainage and sanitation, unplanned construction of houses, growth of slums, and insufficient facility for disposal of waters and drinking water and above all populations. Thus to overcome all the problems Silchar Municipal Board submitted a detailed proposal in 1988 seeking corporation’s status for itself and a wider jurisdiction. The proposal was forwarded to the state Government by the district administration of Cachar in 1989. However
the Government is yet to decide the fate of the request made by the Silchar Municipal Board till this day, though the validity and desirability of this proposal have not been contested any quarters. It appears that a favourable decision in this regard is held up for some technical and political reasons and it is hope that in future all these obstacles would be overcome and Silchar town would be placed under a corporation.

From the preceding pages, we get the glimpse of a Municipal Board which has a chequered history of ups and down with some features that deserve to be mentioned.

First, Lord Ripon visualised establishment of local bodies as medium of local representation to perform some civic responsibilities. Silchar Municipal Board, at its initial stage, served the purpose effectively with an official chairman to preside over the body. Secondly, with the passage of time, consciousness of people went through gradual transformation and the function, role and formation of local bodies had to meet the demand of the changing time and Silchar Municipal Board was also faced the problems of negotiate with the challenges of the passing phases of history from time to time. It is evident from our discussion that Silchar Municipal Board could rise up to occasion and in spite of external pressure and internal conflicts, municipality could deal with different difficult situations with dignity and retained its honour which ultimately enhanced the prestige of the people whom it represented. That is no mean achievement and it is expected that the tradition would continue gathering strength from its past tradition and attainments.

History of a locality means history of its society and the civil bodies are manifestation of different aspects of the society. So history of Silchar Municipality in a sense throws useful light on the different less known aspects of the inner life of Silchar society. It is because of this humble pioneer work on Silchar Municipality claims attention of the knowledgeable quarters.
Notes and references:

2. Bhattacharjee, J.B., Cachar under British Rule in North East India, New Delhi, 1977, P-145.
6. Bhattacharjee, J.B., Cachar under British Rule in North East India, New Delhi, 1977, P-175.