

Urbanisation and Slum Growth in Assam

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ABSTRACT: India, being a major developing country with its focus on urban growth as engine of economic development witnesses rapid urbanisation in terms of increase in number of cities and population, as well as in increasing slum growth. The state of Assam in India's North Eastern region bears this imprint very clearly. This slum growth in India, so also in Assam is the result of dependent urbanisation. This dependency is seen to start from colonial penetration in India and is more prominently observed in post- economic reform period mainly in Neo-liberal era.

KEYWORDS: Urbanisation, dependency, slum growth, North East India, Assam

Introduction

The growth of slums witnessed by most of the urban centers in last two or three decades in India is no doubt, an unwelcome development. Not only India, but most of the third world countries are also experiencing an alarming growth of slum. This needs prime focus for intervention from multiple corners, right from policy makers to academia to members of civil society. Today, out of total world population, around 863 million people of the world live in slums, which constitute 33 percent of the urban population of the peripheral or developing countries (UN Habitat, 2012). The problem of slum is gradually increasing and it has become a major challenge for government as well as city planners. At present, above 65 million urban dwellers in India reside in slums.

Slum growth is not only observed in metropolitan centers of India, it is equally visible in other urban centers as well. In Assam, which is a gateway to all the North Eastern states of India, the pace of urbanisation and slum growth can be said to go hand in hand and recently slum growth rate is so fast that it cannot miss the attention of anyone specifically to the researcher and policy maker.

Slum growth in Assam, and so also in the whole country can best be found is a result of peripheral urbanisation which is highly triggered by India's Neo-liberal

economic policy. Here, slum can be understood as a heavily populated area within the urban centre which is characterised by substandard housing and lack of basic amenities such as water, sanitation, electricity etc. Slum dynamics in Assam is understood by focusing on the three urban centers of Assam viz. Guwahati, Jorhat and Silchar, the three cities selected from three geographical zones of the state.

Urbanisation and Slum Growth

The dependency approach to urbanisation explains that urbanisation in third world countries is different from the core countries of the world. According to dependency theory, countries of the world can be divided into two major regions, namely, core and periphery (Baran, 1954; Sweezy, 1966; Frank, 1966). Core countries are those countries which include major global powers and they have plenty of wealth. Peripheral countries include underdeveloped as well as developing countries. They have resources but they are not receiving the benefit of globalization and global wealth.

In fact, dependency theory to underdevelopment is a reaction to modernisation theory of development. For modernization theorists, developed or core countries are successful in the process of development as they enhanced global finance and investment through the expansion of industry and trade. Their level of urbanization is very high (Rostow, 1960; Bradshaw and Noonan 1997). For modernization theorists, urbanization is a transitional process from agrarian society to modern industrial nation. Rapid urbanization should be encouraged as it is a positive sign of development (Berliner, 1977). Njoh's (2012) says that in developing countries, urbanization and economic growth has positive relationship.

The economic developments in poor countries are on the other hand, seen as completely different from core countries by some of the critiques of modernisation theory. Economic development of the core countries did not lead to the growth and development of the peripheral countries. Most of the poor countries did not attain noticeable advancement in the process of urbanization which developed countries attained. Social thinkers like (Lipton 1977; Dumont and Mottin, 1983) mentioned that core nations experienced great wave of urbanization due to pull factor. They are advanced in manufacturing field, technology and provide favourable economic condition to the people through the creation of stable and well-paid industrial job. Thus, it pulled rural people towards urban centers. But in peripheral countries, push factor is a dominant factor of urbanization which forces rural people towards urban centers without proper employment opportunity as well as housing, where they are unable to find high paid employment (Obeng-Odoom, 2011). Thus, most of the people in peripheral countries have lack of job security and engaged in informal sectors with low wage. So, peripheral urbanization creates slums, as poor rural people are forced to go in to informal settlement.

The first scholar to explore the relationship between dependency and urban growth was Manuel Castells (Castells, 1977). He said that peripheral urban growth is highly related to historical process of capitalist penetration and development. For him there is a dependent urbanization in the third world which is the expansion of the imperialist or neo imperialist social dynamic as the level of space. The study by Roberts (1978) in Latin America, Gugler and Flanagan (1977) in Africa, London (1980) and Nemeth and Smith (1983) in Asia put emphasis on current urban patterns of third world and which show the subordinate role of these countries in world economic expansion.

Scholars like Samir Amin (1974), Davis (2006), Rice and Rice (2009), McMichael (2012), said that economic dependencies as well as neoliberal trade policies, a high level of peripheral urbanisation, lead to growth of slums. Bradshaw (1987) said that due to structural adjustment policy, international loans, free trade agreement, there is an establishment of manufacturing units in poor nations. These units do not create well paid jobs. This goes in line with the view of Wallerstein (1974) who also focuses that the high skilled well-paid jobs remain in the core countries, whereas the low paid, low skilled factory jobs are created in peripheral countries. Thus, the peripheral countries produce cheap labour, minimising production costs, lack protection for labour under the environment and labour law which together allow the core countries to increase its profit. The exploitation or what A G Frank (1966) calls 'super exploitation' ultimately does not lead to any economic growth in peripheral nations. McMichael (2012) and Amin (1974) say that this increases the dependence of poor countries on foreign loan or assistance which increases the dependency further. The structural adjustment policy along with privatisation, limits investment of government on welfare activities like health, housing etc. As a result, the poor involved in informal sectors are unable to afford a good accommodation for them. This cause informal settlement in the form of squatters, slums or illegal settlement in urban areas.

Urbanisation and Slum Formation in India

The modern process of urbanisation in India can be said is the result of colonial penetration to feed the requirement of the empirical regime (Kundu, 2014; Chakma, 2011; Singh, 1997). It was the colonial economy which led to the movement of population towards the major urban centers that emerged during that period. For Kundu, the hierarchical settlement in urban centers and spatial segregation, started with the colonial period to meet the need of the empirical regime (Kundu, 2011). He emphasised that because of colonial economy there was a flow of goods and services towards the port and administrative towns. Here examples can be drawn from the city of Kolkata, Surat, Madras and Bombay which played a key economic role during colonial rule. As a result, the centripetal forces established between different regional

urban centers during medieval period were weakened during that period. This replaced the rural urban interaction as well as interdependence between small and large urban centers that got established over centuries in the country and their hinterland of primary production. For Kundu, these new urban centers acted as satellite of port towns which by themselves acted as satellites of the global metropolis.

The urban settlement in post-independent India remained almost the same with similar administrative structure. Though there are some reforms in urban structure, the urban administration and urban trends were not much affected or changed in post independent period. Depending on the growth of new states and industrial centers, though there are growths of some new urban centers, by and large, the urbanisation pattern is no more different from colonial period. The urban centers worked as a satellite of global metropolis what many social scientists describe under neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism. The structural adjustment policy adopted by Indian government in 1991 reinforced this neo-imperialism along with the slow inculcation of Neo-liberalism which can be vividly seen in many initiatives taken by Indian state and private investors.

It can be argued that, the process of urbanisation began with the advent of British in Indian subcontinent along with its capitalist expansion. British established number of towns and cities for their administrative as well as commercial purposes. After independence, mainly after 1991, the year when India embraced economic liberalisation and participated in the global economy, it expanded its trade, commerce and industry. As a result, a good number of new urban centers grew up and the existing urban centers got expanded. Urban centers have become a core point for trade and commerce in India and India is urbanizing rapidly. There are 35 million-plus cities consisting nearly 30 percent of total urban population in India (Bhagat, 2005). Using city-level census data, Haque and Patel (2017) examined the trends, patterns and determinants of the growth of metro cities in India and observed that the post-economic reform period has heralded a rapid pace of metropolitan development, causing a dispersed pattern of metropolitan growth in the last two decades.

Again, urbanisation can not only be defined by increase of population but also by increasing amenities like shopping malls, educational facilities, medical facilities etc., along with growth of infrastructure as housing, roads, flyovers, etc. Thus, Chandchan and Shankar (2012) explains urban growth on the basis of spatial trends, prevailing zoning, building byelaws i.e., floor area ratio and density, development control regulations, urban housing and transport. They said that in post reform period, there is emergence of urban corridors linking Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad and many important urban centers and absorbing the new investments. The elimination of licence raj in one side and opening up of cent percent Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in real estate has attracted international investors in joint ventures

to invest in Indian cities. Chanchan and Shankar (ibid) highlighted that due to the Liberalisation, Globalisation and Privatisation policy of the government, there is a growth of large scale private township which are coming up in the peripheral areas of large cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Pune, Gurgaon, Chennai, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Bengaluru that are sometimes occupying an area up to 1000 acres and more.

That urbanisation in India has led to increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is no doubt undebatable. According to eleventh five-year plan, share of urban areas to national GDP was 62-63 percent which was 38 percent in 1971, 52 percent in 2001 and 60 percent in 2011 respectively. It is also estimated that by 2030-31 it will be increased to 75 percent (Revi et.al, 2014). Thus, urban areas are the main centers for economic development of the country. These provide various jobs for the people in both informal and formal sectors and generate revenue for the country.

If we look at the Indian economy it can be noticed that India is the fifth largest world economy with 7.6 percent economic growth as well as GDP \$2.95 trillion (CEO World, 2018). Service sector is the largest economic sector in India as it provides 53.66 percent total GVA to Indian economy. Other two sectors namely, industrial and agricultural sectors provide 31 percent and 16 percent GVA to Indian economy. Service sector is one of the leading economic sectors in urban India. As per report, 59.1 percent male and 55.1 percent female population in urban India is engaged in service sector. Similarly, 35.3 percent male population and 34 percent female population in urban India is engaged in secondary sector. On the other hand, very small section i.e., 5.6 percent male and 10.9 percent female engaged in primary sector (NSS, 2014).

Although in India, urbanization plays an important role in the process of increase in economic growth, inclusive urban growth is still question for India. Urban centers generate wealth and income for the people and people's dependence on urban centers increased in India. As a result, rural people migrate to the cities in search of employment opportunities. But urbanization bypassed most of the people from mainstream of urbanization and they are living in slums. Development of urban centers increased the dependence of the people towards urban centers but urban centers lack well-paid jobs, affordable shelters, and basic amenities etc., which lead to the growth of informal settlement in the cities.

The view that city as a dynamic generator of economic and social development, is criticised by scholars like McGee (1969). For him, there is an increasing level of urban problems. If we look at the statistics, it is found that in 2001, there were 5161 urban centers in India and all these centers contributed above 52 percent share to national GDP. At that time, 1743 urban centers had reported to have slums (Census 2001). But in 2011, urban centers increased to 7933 and contributed above 60 percent share to national GDP. As per the latest survey (Census, 2011), out of 7933 urban centers,

2613 urban centers have slums. It is observed that, Tamil Nadu (48.45%), Maharashtra (45.23%), Gujarat (42.58%), Karnataka (38.17%), Andhra Pradesh (33.49%), West Bengal (31.89%), Madhya Pradesh (27.63%), Uttar Pradesh (22.18%) and Delhi (97.50%) are the most urbanized states and union territories in India. Similarly, these states and union territories share significant number of slum population in the country. As per latest survey (Census 2011) of Government of India, it is found that Maharashtra shares the highest i.e., 18.1 percent, followed by Andhra Pradesh 15.6 percent, West Bengal 9.8, Uttar Pradesh 9.5 percent, Tamil Nadu 8.9 percent, Madhya Pradesh 8.7 percent, Karnataka 5.0 percent, Delhi 2.6 percent and Gujarat 2.6 percent slum population respectively. All these states and union territories are advanced in the field of industry, business and commercial activities. Thus, they contribute significant share to Gross National Product of India. Maharashtra is the only state which contributes the highest i.e., 430 billion US dollar to GDP of India followed by Tamil Nadu 250 billion, Karnataka 226 billion, Uttar Pradesh 225 billion, Gujarat 213 billion, West Bengal 187 billion, Andhra Pradesh 130 billion, Madhya Pradesh 125 billion and Delhi 110 billion US dollar to Indian GDP.

There is a regional inequality in the process of urbanization in peripheral countries and India is a very good example in this case. In India regional inequality in the process of urban development is not only noticed in the states and union territories, but also at city level (Amitav Kundu, 2011). If the major Indian cities namely Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Pune and Ahmadabad, are taken into consideration, it can be found that Mumbai, one of the largest industrial cities in India has maximum number i.e., 12.44 million slum population and which is 42 percent population of the total urban population in Mumbai (NSS 2015). On the other hand, this city has highest amount of GDP i.e., 310 billion US dollars. Similarly, Delhi has 20 percent urban population that live in slum and it has estimated GDP 293 billion US dollars, in Kolkata 32 percent urban population live in slum and estimated GDP is 150 billion US dollars. Other cities namely, Pune 40 percent and, Hyderabad 23 percent, Ahmadabad 20 percent urban population live in slum and these cities contribute namely Pune 48 billion, Hyderabad 74 billion and Ahmadabad 64 billion US dollar to national economy.

All the cities in India started to grow with the modernisation of economy and India gradually came under the world system of capitalist development which started with the colonial period. In the post-colonial as well as neo-colonial periods also, these cities expanded rapidly with the increase of industry, business and commercial activities. As a result, people from rural areas migrated to these urban centers in search of employment opportunities. But since these cities have inadequate supply of shelters as well as basic amenities to serve the increasing population, it increased the boundary of the cities. Thus, numbers of informal settlements grow in the urban centers and gradually these

turn in to slums. Thus, slum formation in India can be related to the growing urban population and informalisation of employment caused by the dependency relationship that prevails between the countries of core and periphery of international system of capitalism.

Urbanisation and Slum Growth in North East India

The North Eastern Region (NER) is a lowly urbanized region in India and only 18.36 percent of total population live in urban centers (Census 2011). It has got a unique existence due to its physical and political geography and many other socio-economic peculiarities. Physically, the region is characterised by the presence of hilly terrains with some of the river valleys in between. The region has a constitutional recognition by its North Eastern Council Act (NEC) of 1971 which includes seven states as Assam, Arunachal Pradesh Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram Nagaland Tripura and Sikkim with its later addition of Sikkim in 2002. The region has got its special status due to a number of common factors as geographical distance due to its unique topography and political geography. The region is connected to rest of the country by a corridor of 22 kilometres in its westernmost part. The region has a special position due to its strategic position having 99 percent of its boundary sharing international borders, China, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. High concentration of population is sharing its boundary with china in north, Bangladesh in south, Bhutan in north east.

Urbanisation in North East India can be divided into four phases. The first phase constitutes ancient and medieval periods, the colonial North East comes under second phase, the post-independence period constitutes the third phase while post-liberalisation north east constitutes the fourth phase.

But, the proportion of urban population increased in every decade in the region i.e., from 13.82 percent in 1991 to 15.66 percent in 2001 and finally it increased to 18.36 percent in 2011. Similarly, there is an increase in number of urban centers too. In 1991, there were 204 total urban centers in NE and it increased to 254 in 2001 and finally, as per information from the latest survey, total number of urban centers in NE India is 416 (Census 2011).

During the British period the resource exploitative motive of British has led to the beginning of new industries. The oil industry led to the growth of a number of urban centers as Digboi, Naharkatia, Duliajan etc., were developed due to oil refinery. The extraction of coal has led to the growth of Ledo, Naharkatia etc. Through the construction of railway lines, numbers of towns such as Rangia, Chaparmukh, Lumding, Mariani, Tinsukia, Badarpur, Silchar etc., were developed. On the other hand, British set up Tura, Haflong, Kohima, Aizawl etc., hill towns and established number of planned towns such as Dibrugarh, Goalpara, Karimganj, Hailakandi to expand

their business as well as administrative stability of this regions (Bhattacharjee,1993; Bhagabati, 1996).

After independence and formation of new states in NE region, numbers of new urban centers were developed in this region. Again, after liberalization, due to expansion of business and commercial activities in the region, urban centers as well as people's concentration in cities were in rise. People migrated to the urban centers in search of working opportunities and it increased the boundary of the urban centers and its population. So far as urban population in this region is concerned, it is noticed that in 1951, the region had only 45,9874 urban population and it increased to 18,46,685 in 1971, 43,82,005 in 1991 and finally in 2011 it increased to 82,16,089 (Census 2011). Most of the urban centres are unplanned. As a result, urban centers have problem of shelters, water and other basic amenities. Thus, excessive pressure on population increased the informal settlement and slums in most of the urban centers.

Again, if we look at the contribution of eight North Easter states to GDP of India, it is found that, eight states of NE India contribute 2.8 percent to India's total GDP (Statistic Times 2019). As per estimate, Assam contributes the highest i.e., 57 billion US Dollar followed by Tripura 6.5 billion, Meghalaya 4.6 billion, Arunachal Pradesh 3.3 billion, Manipur .2 billion, Sikkim 3.3 billion, Nagaland 3 billion and Mizoram contribute 2.5 billion US Dollar to 3.3 Trillion US dollar Indian economy (MOSPI 2017-18). As it is already discussed that in India urban centers contribute maximum share to Indian economy and service sectors are dominant economic sector in urban India. From that point of view, it can be assumed that after liberalization of Indian economy in 1991, there are number of business and commercial activities developed in NE India and major urban centers namely Shillong, Itanagar, Aizawl, Gangtok, Guwahati, Agartala, Imphal and Kohima have become highly urbanized and these also have turned into important business centers in the region. Although, industrial growth is quite low in this region, high urban growth has also been noticed in these underdeveloped states. Despite the low rate of industrialisation, there are number of reasons which helped the region in attaining high urban growth. In post reform period central government launched Look East Policy to develop North East India. Under Look East Policy through infrastructure development programmes government constructed roads, airport etc., in NE India. Apart from these, government connected NE region with entire South East Asian countries through the Golden Quadrilateral, a road development program and Stilwell road. Thus, there are numbers of tertiary sector such as tourism, real estate, and other business activities developed in this region.

Along with the growth of urban centers and rise of business and commercial activities in North East India, there is a rise in slum population and slum pockets. As per 2001 census, Government of India, only three states in North East namely Assam,

Tripura and Meghalaya had reported slums in 20 urban centers. But in 2011 it increased to 76 urban centers in all the seven states except Manipur (Census 2011). Manipur has no slum reported urban centers in NE India as well as India. Among the seven states, Assam has the highest i.e., 31 urban centers have slum followed by 15 in Tripura, 11 in Nagaland, 7 in Sikkim, 6 in Meghalaya, 5 in Arunachal Pradesh and 1 in Mizoram.

In case of urban population and proportion of slum population in the seven prominent as well as capital cities of North East India, it is found that as per population, Guwahati is the largest city in NE India with population 9.63 lakh followed by Agartala 4.04 lakh, Aizawl 2.93 lakh, Kohima 2.67 lakh, Shillong 1.43 lakh, Gangtok 1.00 lakh and Itanagar has only 59490 thousand urban population (Census 2011). As far as proportion of slum population is concerned it is found that Shillong has the highest percentage i.e., 34.90 percent urban population live in slum, followed by 23.51 percent in Gangtok, 20.44 percent in Aizawl, 20.05 percent in Itanagar, 14.42 percent in Guwahati, 13.21 percent in Agartala and only 8.81 percent in Kohima (census 2011).

Slum Growth in Assam: A Peripheral Syndrome

It can be said that in Assam, the growth of the majority of the city took place due to British administrative set up which gradually emerged as major centers of attraction for rural migrants. Guwahati being the gateway as well as main centre of business, transport and communication in North East India has shown a high growth of urbanization as well as slum formation followed by Silchar, the gateway of Mizoram, Tripura, Manipur as well as southern Assam and Jorhat, one of the leading urban centers of upper Assam.

If we look at the history of urban growth of Guwahati, it is found that in the beginning of twentieth century i.e., in 1901, total urban population in Guwahati was only 11,661 which increased to 43,615 in 1951, it increased to 9,57,353 in 2011 (primary census abstract 2011). Similarly, in Silchar at the beginning of twentieth century i.e., in 1901, total urban population was 9,256, then it increased to 34,059 in 1951, 1,15,483 in 1991 and finally it increased to 1,72,719 in 2011 (census 2011). Again, in Jorhat town also in 1901, total urban population was 2,899, then it increased to 16,164 in 1951, it increased to 71,782 in 2011 (Primary Census Abstract 2011).

The size of urban area also expanded with the increase of population in the three urban centers. This is shown by the following figure:

The three urban centers of Assam were not industrial centers in the beginning. Originally all these centers developed for the purpose of administration during British rule but later on, these centers had developed into important business and commercial centers too. In Guwahati, there are significant numbers of big, medium and small industries developed after independence. Significant numbers of small and medium range industries are found in Jorhat and Silchar also. Construction activities and transport sectors also gradually increased in the three urban centers. All these sectors

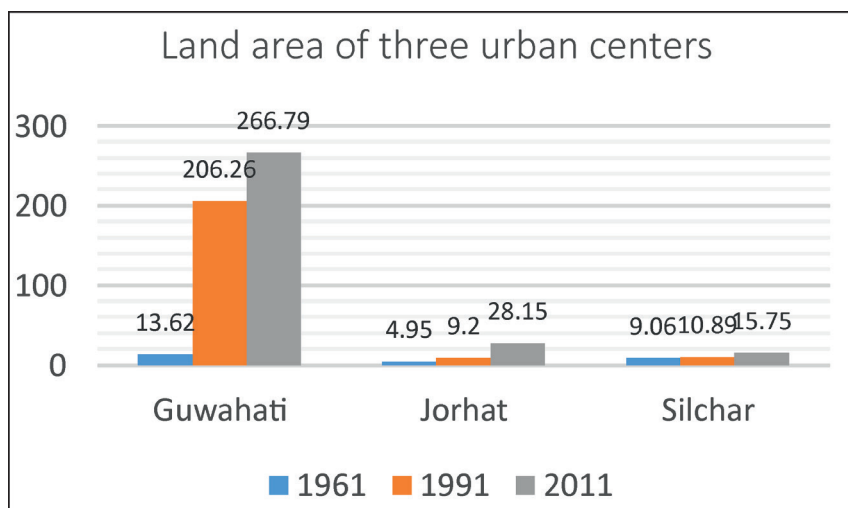


DIAGRAM 1: Land area Covered by Guwahati, Jorhat and Silchar

provided opportunities to the migrants to easily enter to the informal sector unskilled working opportunities in the urban centers. Similar kinds of experience are also observed in most of the other developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Kar and Marjit 2011). The increasing job opportunity in urban areas and decreasing means of livelihood in rural areas along with growing population is the cause of migration to urban centers and growth of slum in India as well as in Assam.

The urban economy of Assam is largely controlled by tertiary or service sector. As per latest information, it is found that in 2016-17 contribution of service sector to state GSDP is 45.51 percent which was 43.97 percent in 2011-12 (Economic Survey 2017-18). Similarly, in 2011-12, secondary sector shared 30.63 percent in state GSDP, but it declined to 28.72 percent in 2016-17. On the other hand, primary or agricultural sector contributes 19.34 percent to state GSDP (Economic Survey 2017-18). It has been seen from the above information that primary and secondary sector's contribution to state GSDP is gradually decreasing and at the same time service sector's contribution is increasing in every financial year. From the NSS report no 544, it is found that 72.9 percent male and 80 percent women of urban areas were engaged in service sector in 2011-12. Engagement in primary sector is very low in urban centers as only 4 percent male and 7.4 percent female were engaged in this sector. This is because of lack of opportunity in the urban centers to engage people in agriculture. Similarly, industrial as well as manufacturing sector establishment is also very less in urban Assam creating very less employment opportunities in the urban centers. Only 23.2 percent male and 12.6 percent female in urban Assam are engaged in secondary sector (Deasi et.al 2014). People's concentration in tertiary sector is the result of absence of employment

opportunities in manufacturing sector and lack of opportunity to continue agricultural activities. In tertiary sector, people are engaged in both the self-employment and regular employment sector. In Assam, 55 percent male and 46.7 percent female workers were engaged in self-employment in 2011-2012. On the other hand, regarding regular employment in 2011-2012, 35.2 percent male and 44.4 percent female were engaged in the urban areas (Deasi et.al 2014).

If we look at the city economy of Guwahati, the capital of the state of Assam as well as one of the most important cities of NE India. Tertiary sector seems to dominate all other sectors. As per information from the NSS report (2014), it is found that in the year 2004-05, large number i.e., 63.4 percent male and 82.8 percent female were employed in tertiary sector. Again, 24.1 percent male and 0.9 percent female were engaged in secondary sector. On the other hand, only 12.5 percent male and 16.3 percent female engaged in primary sector economic activities of the city. Tertiary sector provides both formal and informal sector employment opportunity for the city dwellers.

Thus, like other third world countries, North Eastern part of India also shows growth of informal sector in urban areas. The role of informal sector according to scholars is highly observed in development of peripheral economy. McGee (1969) in his study on South East Asian cities says that the informal sector growth is linked to the dependency of peripheral economy on the metropolis within the international system.

It is found that informal sector constitutes a most important part of Indian economy and above 90 percent workforce is engaged in this sector. It is also mentioned here that almost 50 percent national product is accounted from the informal sector. Regarding formal and informal sector workforce in Guwahati city, it is found that those who work in formal sector, are mostly engaged in administrative, education and other governmental institutions of the city and employment level in this sector was only 11 percent during the period of 2001-2011. Informal sector city dwellers are mainly engaged as driver; rickshaw puller, domestic worker, sweeper, construction workers etc., and most of them are poor and are from low income group. This sector constitutes 89 percent workforce in the city during the periods of 2001-2011. Thus, informal sector dominated the labour force as well as employment level in Guwahati city (Das, 2016). As for example, there are 30,000 street vendors in entire Guwahati city and they sell their products in different parts of the city (STTEP 2011). Similarly, in Jorhat also (Chetia, 2017) informal sector is dominant sector for the engagement of labour force. It is found that 62.57 percent of workforce is self-employed informal sector workforce and 28.88 percent of workers are hired workers. On the other hand, dominance of informal labour force in the urban area of Silchar and other urban centers of Barak valley is also reported in some studies (Paul, 2006)

Informal economy and informal settlements as urban slums, are closely linked with each other as people working in informal sectors are totally underprivileged and

cannot afford formal housing. Davis (2006) and Obeng- Odoom (2011) maintained, informal sectors largely arise due to lack of formal sector and it represents an integral part of capitalist world economy because informal sector provides low-cost labour and fulfils the need of labour force necessary in the zone of capitalist economy. So, peripheral urbanization is not a symbol of development in core but rather the symbol of tremendous prevalence of urban slums and urban poverty in peripheral countries.

The study of slums of the three urban centers in Assam shows that most of the slum dwellers are rural migrants, they are poor rural people and most of them are uneducated. Most of them are engaged in informal sectors and work as wage labourer, domestic help, rickshaw puller, shopkeeper etc. Their income is very less and they are not able to dwell in high rented house. Housing problem is a major problem in all the three urban centers. As a result, migrants go to vacant government land to settle down and these settlements gradually turn in to slums

It has been mentioned earlier that the three urban centers of Assam namely Guwahati, Jorhat and Silchar are the main economic centers of three parts of Assam. Geographically and economically, these cities have plenty of opportunities in comparison to other major urban centers of the state. Geographically, Guwahati city is situated on Bank of the Brahmaputra River and south eastern portion of Kamrup district. In the north, the city has border with Nalbari, Marigaon and Darrang districts in the East, Meghalaya state in the south and in the west, it has boundary with Barpata and Goalpara district. As a gate way of North East India, Guwahati has good connectivity with rest of India through air, road and train. It is well connected to the neighbouring districts as well as cities and the northern and southern portions of the city have regular bus services and train. Economically, Guwahati is one of the largest business as well as commercial centers of India and North East India. From health care and educational service point of view, the city is quite advanced in India. Industrially, city has one oil refinery and numbers of food processing industries. Thus, there are number of work opportunities in the city for people living in rural area. On the other hand, expansion of city boundary also reduced the distance of most of the neighbouring areas namely Sonapur, Byrnihat, Hajo, Rajapara etc. Apart from this, the city has economic linkage with Nalbari, Rangia, Chaygaon, and Jagiroad through the retail service. Thus, economically, the city is the most important zone for migration of the people in the state.

Again, Silchar is the gate way of southern Assam as well as other north eastern states of Tripura, Mizoram, and Manipur. Silchar is well connected to the rest of India as well as upper and lower Assam through train, air and road. There are number of business as well as commercial activities grew in the city. Thus, it attracts the rural people towards city to earn their livelihood. Same kinds of activities are noticed in prominent urban centre of Jorhat in upper Assam. Jorhat is one of the leading administrative and

business centers of upper Assam, situated 310 km. away from Guwahati. It has very good link with rest of India through rail, road and train. This is also well connected to neighbouring districts viz, Majuli, Sibsagar and Golaghat, etc., and neighbouring places namely Mariani, Titabar, Amguri, etc., through regular bus and train services. In last few decades a number of small and medium industries business and commercial activities developed in Jorhat.

Besides, being at the centers of many districts and north eastern states these three urban centers are the attractions of a number of multinational brands having outlets in these centers. It is only few years' back these urban centers have come up with good educational services, medical services besides providing other services. Anyone of the place or visitors who visits these centers after a couple of years can see a sea change in these cities. A number of housing complexes multiplexes, shopping malls developed by national level builders, giving these centers a new look and ways of life. Thus, these urban centers have become a boon to the job seekers and attract people from rural areas.

Hence it is seen that the development of economic opportunities in the three urban centers push the rural people towards urban centers and which not only increased the population in the urban centers but also increased the pressure on shelter and other amenities. So, the rural migrants go to the vacant government land and other private land or low rented house to live. All the illegal and informal settlements in the government land gradually turn in to slums. This happened due to heavy migration of the population. As all the three urban centers are situated in three main parts of Assam, business, commerce as well as other amenities develop in those parts resulting in migration of people from rural areas. in search of livelihood. But unlike the west, these urban centers do not provide employment to these migrants in formal sector adding to the urban poverty in these urban centers. As per the information attained regarding urban poverty rate of Assam it is found that in 2011-12, 20.49 percent urban dwellers in Assam live below poverty lines (Planning Commission, 2013). In the case of Guwahati city, 31 percent city dwellers live below poverty line and most of them live in slums (CDP, GMC 2006). Thus, for urban poor slums are the only options to have a stay in cities.

Conclusion

Thus, it can be said that, slum in general in India and in Assam grew due to colonialism and neo-liberalism in recent decades. Both colonial and post-colonial India show urban growth, though faster in in recent decades with neo-liberal economic policies of the government, there is no distributive justice. Poor are becoming poorer and riches are richer. As a result, underpaid workers find slum as the only place to survive in.

This slum formation can be linked to modernization which has led further inequality between poor and rich. Thus, slum growth in India so also in north eastern states, are clearly found to be the result of peripheral urbanisation that is symptomatic of the third world countries, which got a major stride with the globalisation process geared by the policy of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation in India.

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