CHAPTER-I
CHAPTER - I

URBANISATION AND ASSAM

URBANISATION : DEFINITION

Urbanisation is a social process and it occupies an important place in the study of modern civilisation. The world urban population is increasing at an alarming rate which necessiated the introduction of urban sociology as a special discipline under sociology. The sociologists have attempted to define it properly over the years depending on the nature and location of different urban centres in the world. Usually urbanisation is defined in terms of the proportion of the total population of a country that lives in the urban centres. It indicates that urbanisation is exclusively viewed in terms of number of people in cities. Although density of population is considered to be a criterion of urbanisation, population, however, do not represent all characteristics of the dynamic process of urbanisation. The rural population is also increasing, but it is not accompanied by the simultaneous development in road and transport, accommodation or sanitation. Without any urban amenities we cannot call a place 'urban'. It may, however, be mentioned that urban growth evidently is very rapid in developing countries, particularly in African tropical areas and Asia, where urbanised area is very insignificant compared to the extent of rural areas. On the otherhand, the picture is quite opposite in the western industrialised countries, where rural area is insignificant to the urban area. So the nature of urbanisation is not same in all parts of the world. we need some more precise criteria for defining urbanisation.

Definitions of towns or urban areas have been in existence in India from the census of 1911 to the census of 1961 and all of them are more or less the same; but in the 1961 census the definition is more strict. In 1961, the Govt. of India
laid down some more specific criteria for defining and identifying urbanised areas. Untill 1961, however, all persons living in the jurisdiction of municipal corporation or other types of municipal or quasi-municipal govt. bodies, including town committees, modified area committee and cantonment boards were classified as urban areas. After 1961, however as many as 800 places lost their urban status.¹ It has been agreed since then that as a criteria of identifying and classifying an area as urban and giving it urban status that at least three fourths of the population should have an occupation other than agriculture. The occupation criteria denies all other quality of life and cultural and technological changes. This definition includes even the dirty slum areas or the shanty colonies in a metro area as urban where the life is worse than that of a village. The definition adopted for census by Govt. of India in 1971 follows that of 1971, which is as follows

" (i) A minimum population of five thousand

(ii) At least seventy five percent of the male working population is non-agricultural.

(iii) A density of population at least 400 per sq.kms".²

Though the occupational pursuits and population size have their own defects in determining the urban and non-urban areas, it must, however, be admitted that they are perhaps clear and simple ways of classifying urban areas. This population-based and occupation oriented method is rule of thumb. That is why, world statistics commonly use this simple universal method to avoid some complicated situations. Both demographic and sociological orientation expand the meaning of urbanisation which Separate an urban population from a rural one. As we see below, such definitions are variously determined by political, administrative, historical, cultural and demographic factors.
According to *International Encyclopaedia of Social Science,* "Urbanisation is characterised by movements of people from small communities concerned chiefly or solely with agricultural to other communities, generally lower, whose activities are primarily centred in govt, trade, manufacture or allied interest."³ It is based on the study of world urbanisation and the writer makes migration and upward mobility as the criteria for urbanisation. Among the moderns as an individual sociologist, the first man to define urbanisation is Botero. He writes, "City — an assemble of people, a congersion drawn together to the end they may thereby better live at ease in wealth and plenty." To him and perhaps to his contemporaries, "The greatness of a city was not the largeness of the site or the circuit of the walls, but the multitude and no of inhabitants and their power."⁴

After Botero, the next famous sociologist to define urbanisation is Louis Wirth, who is famous for his study on 'urbanism.' His discussion on urbanism is more important for the changes brought about by the process of urbanisation. In shorts he writes, "A city may be defined as a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogenous individuals."⁵ The most pronounced name in Urban sociology, Louis Mumford has also made a detailed and in-depth study on the issue. He has insisted more on the hostorical and cultural studies of the subject. "*In culture and cities*, as to the number of population of urban places Mumford opines, "An ideal city should have population of 3,00,000, but evidently not in sympathy with it. It appears that his choice will fall on 2,00,000 inhabitants with two universities as the ideal unit."⁶ Without university he cannot even think of an urbab place.

Mitchell (1954) refers to urbanisation as being the process of becoming urban, moving to cities, changing from agriculture to other pursuits common to cities and corresponding behaviour pattern. According to Hauser (1955), however,
Urbanisation is a process of concentration or agglomeration. Talking about urbanisation Shepherd says that urbanisation is the movement of people from rural to urban areas.

Trivedi, H.R. (1976) makes a subtle distinction between a city and an urban area and says that the concept of 'city' is based on dominant material or manifest aspects whereas the concept of urban is based on dominant non-material or latent aspects. These two concepts, according to Trivedi are conceptually separate realities. Bell and Newby (1971) remark significantly, "If the city is a community and if urbanisation represents extension of patterns typical of a city, urbanisation ought more logically to represent particular kind of community formation rather than community destruction." It is, however, generally accepted that urban society is not possible outside the framework of a city. These two terms city and urban are not synonymous, because, by concentration and in reality, they appear to be "Both inclusive and exclusive of one another."

Reiss Jr. (1964) was a very serious sociologist and he devoted a lot of time to the systematic examination of different urban studies. After examining all the available studies till his time, he attempted to divide broadly all the definitions of urbanisation into four categories. For a comprehensive definition of the topic, let us categorise and discuss each point separately. It includes both sociological and demographic point of view.

(i) Urbanisation may denote a diffusion of influences of the influence of urban centres to on a rural hinterland. The 'influence' diffused usually refers to the customs and traits of these urban centres. This definition of urbanisation is close to the ecological definition of the dominant functions of cities. A major disadvantage of this definition, however, is that it confuses the process of concentration in cities with the 'influence' of the centres.
(ii) A second major type of definition holds urbanisation as synonymous with the appearance of 'Urban traits and characteristics' in a population. The definition is usually found in the literature of rural sociology. The appearance of certain cultural practices (usually associated with cities) in a rural area is said to be an evidence that rural population is being 'urbanised' or that it is undergoing urbanisation. This definition poses the special difficulty in that the traits and practices must first be clearly differentiated as urban because they naturally presuppose some other processes of urbanisation.

(iii) Most demographers look at urbanisation as a process of population concentration. H. Tisdale, for example, defines urbanisation as a process of population concentration with the process proceeding in two main ways: the multiplication of the points of concentration and the increase in size of the individual concentrations. The definition of urbanisation as a process of population concentration implies urban state of moving from a non-urban to a completely urban state of population concentration. There is, however, no implication in the definition that the process is a continuous one, for there can be de-urbanisation or equilibrium states short of complete urban concentration. It should, therefore be clear that the definition of urbanisation as a process of population concentration implies a definition of urbanisation of the points of concentration as well. Cities may be defined simply as points of population concentration.

(iv) A fourth type of definition holds that urbanisation is a process of population concentration in which the ratio of urban people to the total population in territory increases. This definition, in fact, implies city independent of urbanisation process. From this point of view, an increase in both the size of individual points of concentration, and the number of points of urban concentration may possibly occur even without an increase in the urbanisation of a territory.
This definition seems to emphasize that urbanisation occurs only when a larger proportion of the inhabitants in an area come to live in cities. It is, therefore, not satisfactory definition.

Reiss Jr.'s classifications of definition of urbanisation cover all types of urbanisation irrespective of the place and time. The study for urbanisation always had been paying more importance on the western cities. Reiss's discussion is also part of that tradition, yet he has attempted studying some Oriental cities also. It has been attempted to make this study general, both Western and Oriental cities have some common elements like the population and culture. He has left no stone unturned in order to make it acceptable from the sociological and the demographic point of view.

**URBANISM : A WAY OF LIFE**

It was Louis Wirth, the professor of sociology in the "university of Chicago", who first introduced the idea of urbanism in urban sociology. From the sociological point view, as seen by Prof. Wirth, urbanism refers to a way of life.\(^8\) It is the result of the urbanisation process. The society is undergoing changes not only physically but also mentally which defines the urban way of life as a case of cultural and social change due to urbanisation and modernization. His study was recognised worldwide. Following him another great thinker on sociology of the same country Louis Mumford made a systematic study through two books, "The culture of cities" (1938) and "The city in History". (1963). The great sociologist has drawn a detailed picture of the urban culture right from the beginning of the human civilisation to the development of the mega cities. The influences which cities exert upon the social life of man are greater than the ratio of the urban population world indicate; for the city is not only increasingly the dwelling place and the working place of modern men, but it is the initiating and controlling culture of economic, political
and cultural life that has drawn the most remote communities of the world into its orbit and diverse areas, people and activities into a cosmos. This cosmos state of diversified life and culture is the result of the profound changes brought about by urbanisation. In the advanced countries this change is rapid, whereas in the third world countries, it has been the result of the gradual development of the global communication and media — in fact, it is, in many cases, result of induced urbanism or imitation or aping of the western culture. "Some of these changes enrich the little tradition also and thereby become a part of the great tradition", noted Indian sociologist Yogendra Sing has remarked it observing the orthogenetic changes in the little tradition.

Urbanism reflects an organisation of society in terms of a complex division of labour, high levels of technology, high mobility, interdependence of its members in fulfilling economic functions and impersonality in social relations as said by Theodorson. The characteristics of urbanism, according to Ruth Glass (1956) are mobility, anonymity individualism, impersonal relations, social differentiation, transience, and organic type of solidarity. Marshal Clinard has talked of growing social change, conflict between norms and values, increasing mobility of population, emphasis on material things and decline in intimate interpersonal communication etc. are the main features of urbanism. Wirth has given five characteristics of urbanism. They are namely heterogeneity of population, specialisation of function, anonymity, impersonality and standardization of life and behaviour. Let us discuss the points.

**a. Heterogeneity of population**: He describes city as a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of social heterogenous individuals. In his view, because of large size, mixed population, heterogenous nature of life urbanisation creates a new situation to the society. All these new situations lead to different type
dependence on secondary relationship. Wirth, however, gives a clear picture of decaying primary relationship and greater dependence on secondary relation. In the new situation city people confront with different individuals and groups and thereby through interaction a new attitude and life-style is formed. One cant deny the hegemony of the majority group as to the culture in such situations.

**b. Specialisation of function and behaviour:** The heterogeneity and the large size of population of a city favour the development of specialization. Since the city has many facets of life and an individual can participate only in some of them, he becomes and takes interest only in a few fields. Specialization in function encourages a diversity of life patterns. Doctors, engineers, businessmen, lawyers, bureaucrats, factory workers, teachers, clerk, policemen, for example, have different life patterns, different interests and also different philosophy of life. Each specialist group makes its own contribution to the community and thus a division of labour is created. To say, the cloth merchant sells only cloth, and depends on many other specialists to manufacture, process and distribute so that it reaches his shop. We can ignore the works of a tailor or the hands in the mill. so he will be engaged in his cloth only, but he is dependent on the services of a mason, physician or washerman. One need not be required to learn the technique of each profession.

Specialisation provides to an individual diverse opportunities to act, to express himself and to develop his potentialities. However, the contacts become secondary and formal and the sense of living a common life and having a common concerns is destroyed. The relationship between two persons remain for a short duration till they serve each other's purpose. The behaviour of different persons, sometimes, creates confusion for proper behaviour in a given situation. For example, the case of bribery is cited. One person gets a job after bribing a big sum of money to the authority, who was otherwise unfit for the post. One becomes confused
whether to report the case and get the bribe-taker arrested or he should remain indifferent to the case. This kind of moral, social and legal dilemmas are overwhelming in the city life.

c. **Anonymity and impersonality**: High population density in the city erodes a sense of personal identity leading to loneliness and a loss of sense of belonging. Hundreds of viewers enjoy a movie in a cinema hall together and laugh together but after the show is over, everyday becomes strange outside the hall. The common emotions that they shared inside the hall disintegrate into anonymity and impersonality. On the other hand this anonymity becomes useful also in some situation, which gives freedom to act freely or to talk finely. Nobody has the interest in anybody. In may cases, the responsibility ends with payment. Even the club members donot behave properly each other. One advantage of anonymity is that individuals are not judged according to their parents' lower class status but are judged on the basis of their appearance and behaviour in casual contacts.

d. **Standardization of behaviour**: The urban life neccessiates an individual to standardize his behaviour which ultimately helps him and others with whom (he interacts) to understnd each other and make interaction simpler. A shopkeeper, for example, finds the same question being asked by a succession of customers. Then he comes to conclusion that some customers always bargains, some seek quality of the commodity and some others just looking at the commodity without purchasing intention. This helps both the shopkeeper and the customers to handle the sale procedure simply and quickly. Such standardized expectations and behaviour are part of urban life. One must learn to adjust with such behaviour otherwise he would be out of step in such a situation.

Bernard has added environment, social difference of classes and social mobility to the above points as said by Wirth. Mumford says that the wall in the
ancient villages, the segmented houses in the middle ages and the introduction of private bed rooms in the modern age brought a difference between two types of life-styles — i.e. rural and urban. He later found that with the beginning of the machine age, the spread of urban values furthered.\(^{10}\) Taking part in the study of urbanism, Iswaran and N. Anderson has compared the urban values to radiation which passes from cities to villages. While cities grow in size, urbanism, the way of life, in cities spread outward. Unlike Mumford, they want to say that the urbanism is mainly a social product of two or three centuries. It is in large part the cultural side of modern commercial and industrial development. "Today's urbanism, unlike pre-industrial urbanism", they argue," is more informed and sophisticated, more technically oriented, more global in its perspectives. Today it is almost impossible to draw a line between city and country, or to know where the urban ends and rural begins. The rural penetrates into the city as the urban penetrates into the country."\(^{11}\) Iswaran and Anderson have found out some characteristics of urbanism also; they are 'readiness of the city people to accept a change and any surprise'. to be readily stipulated in order to be alert and resourceful etc. The above-mentioned values are to be found in urban society in particular and in all societies in general.

The Indian urbanism can be traced back to the Indus Valley civilisation. The art and culture of the city of Mohenjodero and Harappa is a clear example of the fact that some of the modern values are rooted in Indian tradition since ancient times. All are not the result of the impact of westernisation. We had some indigenous urban values though antique in outlook. D.D. Kosambi writes that the towns of Harappa and Mahenjodero were thickly populated. There was no park like today. But, the localities were planned. In every big houses there were big wells, bathrooms and latrines. There was sewage system also to get rid of the refuse. The holes of the refuse were made clean off and on. Beautiful pots in
beautiful shape and colour were made. People were used to irrigation system also through canals. All these tell us about an ancient city culture.

Of course, these values were modernised in course of time. With the contact with the British rule and people new values also affected the Indian educated people. Saberwell has discussed in a book called "Issues and Institutions" about the pre-colonial urbanism in Indian society. It is also endorsed by him that Pax Britanica reinforced some of those values in the later years. In the 18th century the Brahmins of Saurashtra state were equipped with administrative knowledge. Surat, Calicut and the native capitals like Murshidabad, Pune and Delhi had shown unbelievable modern techniques or skills in trade and commerce and administration. Saberwell has identified the Bengalis and Marowaris of the 19th century as the torch bearer of many urban values along with the British people. "The spread of educated Bengalis in the wake of British advance from their Calcutta base is well known. They went to various British occupied states as govt. servants, teachers, journalist and so forth, carrying with them new world views — Christianity and especially the Brahmo Samaj — adopted or forged in Bengal. They went typically as salaried employees, however, the quick rise of intellegentia, the demand for their services, at least in the provinces and districts worldwide."13 The Bengali colonies in different parts of the country spread an urban culture hitherto unknown to those areas. Similarly, to every corner of the British-occupied India the Marowaries went as traders in grocery and money lender and the local people learnt many new things from them. But both of the communities, particularly the Marowaries maintained at the same time the traditional values of kindship and many others including food-habits. These new things created a curiosity among the indigenous people of the rural or urban areas. The institutional education as introduced by the British authority also helped in acquiring many urban values by the commoner. Assam was no exception in this respect as a part of British India.
After the renaissance the ancient cities of the world began to develop with the introduction of machinery inventions, the industries grew up in Europe and it spread to other parts of the world gradually. This led to the growth of modern cities in Europe and America. The rapid growth of cities became a world phenomenon in the twentieth century. The Industrial revolution not only brought a sea-change to the means of production, but also to the growth of industrial cities. Just two centuries ago in 1800 A.D., not more than 3% of the population was classified as urban, in 1950 it increased to 29% and a good number of people, 37% became city-dwellers in 1970. Actually the history of the modern city started right from the industrial revolution. It should be mentioned that all the regions of the world were not urbanised simultaneously or at the same time. London and Paris began to attract migrants in huge number right from the renaissance days. The age of machine brought them to a great city. Regarding the role of modern commerce and industries Max Waber says, "The genesis of modern cities lie in the development of world commerce and manufacturing for the world market which went with it". This force made the cities vigorous, complex and beyond recognition. The manufacturing towns became city with increasing population. It happened first in Europe and in U.S.A. and after that in other countries of the world.

The first modern urban society, as seen above, is the outcome of the industrial revolution in England. England earned the nickname, "The workshop of the world". In 1851, the no of cities increased to 265 claiming 45% of the total population. The figure went up like the barometer scale to 622 only after forty years in 1891, which was the 68% of the total population. London became the commercial capital of the world from 8,64,000 in 1801 to 42,32,000 in 1891, an
increase of population at an unbelievable rate of 400%. In terms of aggregate urban population, 44% resided in London and in 23 other cities. Manchester, Liverpool etc. became the million population city by 1950. By the end of the 19th century, most of the European nations were touched by this twin process of industrialisation and urbanisation. This is the same story with the growth of cities in U.S.A., Asia, Australia or the Latin America. Newyork or Boston has the same force behind their growth as mega cities. Around 1960, two people out of every ten lived in cities of 20,000 or more population. If the present trend continues there is every indication that by 2050, more than half of the world population could live in the cities and nine out of every ten will be city dwellers. This trend is more so in the developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America as in those regions the rural to urban migration is continuing in full swing at an alarming rate. The population of Beijing, Shanhai, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Cairo, Mexico city, Tokyo, Osaka, Buenos Aires etc. has already proved this trend.

THE HISTORY OF CITIES IN MODERN INDIA

India is dominated by villages and it continues to be so till now. The bulk of population is to be found in rural areas and only a small percentage of population live in the urban areas. But the no. of towns are also increasing with the passages of time. With the arrival of the western merchants, more particularly the East India Company the process of modern urbanisation in India started with a new momentum. The history of modern cities in India, therefore, begins from that time. It has three phases in two centuries. The whole 19th century and the first half of the 20th century witness the process of urbanisation under colonial rule and the post independence era under the Indian Govt.

History of cities in 19th century: When the British and other European companies occupied selected places, then those places had a long history of trade and
commerce with the middle East countries or kingdoms. India had a reputation of being the exporters of textile items and different kinds of spices, through the sea and river routes. The British East India company, the Portugese, the Dutch and the France came to India for business and they established trading posts in many places. These posts witnessed tremendous business activities resulting in the expansion of business areas and the spreading of urban values through contact. The one and half century after the arrival of the British people witnessed the decline of the native kingdoms and the supremacy of the British authority in the Indian sub-continent. The British consolidation of British power encourged slow but steady growth of urbanisation. When India became a crown colony in 1858, the influences of the British on urban landscape became prominent. They built Calcutta, Bombay and Madras as capitals of the three Presidencies they occupied. So this type of presidecy cities became very big and important. In the subsquent years. they also established administrative Head Quarters. They constructed good bunglows, lawns, drainage, arranged drinking water and electicity, hospitals in the outskirts of the old towns, thereby making a division of quality of life in the same town. The second type of cities they set up were the summer capitals in the hill stations like Shimla, Shillong etc. The once deserted or thinly populated places also attracted people there increasing the total urban population. With the construction of the railway and ships, a no. of railway towns and sea and river ports came up. Even Calcutta, Bombay and Madras were sea-ports before the arrival of the British. The civil line of the new towns or cities were beautiful and clean. But the municipalties largely under British control, neglected the old central part or city part of the town. Nehru writes, "The city part is always grossly neglected, and of course, the poorer parts of the city are almost ignored; it has few good roads, and most of the narrow lanes are ill-lit and have no proper drainage or sanitation system. It puts up with all these disabilities patiently and seldom
complaints; when it does complain, nothing much happen." On the other hand, the civil line blooms fully. The old and traditional business places started to decline as the foreign rulers never encouraged handlooms and other cottage industries. Hamilton, Walter, writing his account of India in "Description of Hindustan" in 1820 has recorded the existence of as many as 1500 towns and cities in the beginning of the 19th century. According to his account, the provinces of Gujrat and Bengal had the largest no of urban centres. Of course, these two provinces were very advanced in trade and commerce from the middle ages. Calcutta, Bombay and Madras city, quite young, rose to second and fifth and eleventh rank respectively in the first quarter of the 19th century. On the other hand, the ancient cities like Surat, and Patna lost their importance. Delhi, Lucknow, Dhaka, Murshidabad, Ahmedabad, Srinagar etc. also showed sign of degradation. The British-made port cities carried out the export and import business resulting in the non-functioning of the traditional business ports and towns. Towards the end of the century the no. of cities with more than one hundred thousand population is like this -

**TABLE : 1**

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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>1872</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>25</td>
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*Source: Quoted from Urbanisation in India, M.S.A. Rao.*

So within a period from 1820 to 1901 the no. of big cities has increased from 16 to 25, that is only 9 cities in 80 years, which is a sign of very slow growth. By the turn of the century the small towns with traditional business suffered total stagnation. The big towns became the leaders in trade and commerce. However, after the world war-1, the urban growth in India began to increase. By that time, the economic hold of the British authority on India was almost completed. The
presidency cities and the administrative centres grew day by day, while the traditional towns suffered from stagnancy.

History of cities in 20th century - Part-I: Now let us see the history of cities in the 20th century under the British rule, that is up to 1947. In the last census made under the aegis of the British authority in India, that is in 1941, we donot see a different picture of urbanisation in India as compared to the census reports before it. It is true that total no. of towns increased. It is because the territory of the British India was expanded even to the North Eastern part of India in the early part of the 20th century. The population growth records an increasing trend. We find that the urban population growth rate of 10.84% to 13.85% in 1941. The no. of towns that rose in this period tally this growth, it is clear from the census reports. The indigenous towns slowed no significant improvement in 19th century. Even ancient cities like Banaras could not overcame its poor urban condition. When it was placed in the first place it had about 60,000 pacca houses and the rest were huts and mud-walled homes. From 1901 to 1951 we find that the towns belonging to higher category have been able to maintain their status than those of the lower categories. The large cities are more consistant than the smaller ones. From 1800 to 1941, within about one hundred fifty years the total no of towns rose from 1500, as said by Hamilton to 2424 in 1941 showing an increase of 976 centres. It increased more in the 20th century. It is because of the increased business and administrative activities of the British authority in India. Secondly the political equation after the world war I changed. The Indian struggle for freedom also drew attention of the foreign rulers for bringing about some reform the govt. and developmental activities. However, they were still promoting colonial type of business rather than setting up primary industries. From 1891 they formed municipalities in the urban centres with finance and power of administration. But, paucity of fund crippled the civic bodies badly. Nehru recalls his experience when
he was Chairman in the Allahabad Municipality from 1924 to 1926. "The whole steel frame of municipal administration, as erected by govt., prevented radical growth or innovation. The financial policy was such that the municipality was always dependent on the govt. Most radical schemes of taxation or social development were not permissible under existing municipal laws." The lack of fund coupled with Gov't's. apathy frustrated even a charman like Nehru. The improved communication also helped in the growth of cities in modern India. But, the govt's insulin attitude towards the main centre of the city, where the native cityzens live, never changed. The cities were dirty, unhygeneic, without proper roads and sewage facilities except the civil lines. In inspite of that the big cities became bigger and bigger and some indirect benefits helped grow the cities during that period under the British rule. In a mix economy of agrarian and capitalism, India never got the momentum in urbanisation from the industrialisation what made the nations like USA and UK a total urban nation, during about two hundred years of British rule. However, after independence the situation changed a little.

History of cities in 20th century Part-II (1947-1971): India became an independent nation at midnight on 15th August of 1947 when the world was sleeping. J.N. Nehru headed the new govt. with a vision of a modern India. Naturally, the new govt. attempted to increase the economic growth and some changes were observed. But the colonial impact was felt for a long time. The govt. adopted new policies of five year plan from 1952 in order to boost up the industry and agriculture. As a result, the urban scene improved some way, particularly during the second plan from 1957 to 1962 as the govt. insisted specially on industrialisation. Govt. gave priority in setting up heavy industries which gave rise to a no. of new big industrial towns. More than five hundred independent kingdoms were annexed by the govt. raising its revenues to improve the economy. The capitals of those kingdoms like Hyderabad, Jaipur, Ajmere, Boroda etc. became
new cities with all modern facilities of a modern city. The surface and air communication were improved much giving rise to many transit towns. With the central assistance many new, provincial govts. built up or rejuvenated the old cities. They looked new and attracted people. Through majority of the people lived in poverty even after assuming state power by an indigenous govt. the no of towns, cities and richmen increased. From census report, it is clear that the no. of total towns increased from 2424 of 1941 to 3119 in 1971, that is, within 30 years a good no. of 695 urban centres has been added to the tally. As mentioned in earlier section, many towns had to lose their status due to the new definition of an urban centre in 1961. They were not economically solid. So, only a slight change in the definition, turned them into a village. Many other urban centers have been fluctuating their class except the class-I towns, which are stable. This is the characteristic of the Indian towns, particularly the small towns are far from stability. It is also clear that not only the no. of class-I towns has increased but also the bulk of the urban population live in mega cities in 1971. Just before independence the no. of such class-I towns in 1941 was 49 and it increased to 151 in 1971. Among these five are regarded as Mega cities or Metropolis with million population. The cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras acquired this status before independence, after 1947, they attracted more people. Bangalore and Delhi have joined them after independence. The trend of growing cities in India is such that the Indian mega cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Delhi have been placed in the first thirty world agglomeration. The no. of second class town was also 219 and total urban population increased from 13.86% to 19.91% in 1971. The bulk of this population live in class-I and class-II towns, which is 12.97% in 1971. So, it is clear that the growing of big cities is the general trend of modern urbanisation in India making it a tradition of indian urbanisation as a result of British legacy. The medium and small towns have come to a point of stagnation. The fact is that
The socio-economic and political situation helped grow million cities only. Out of total increase of 29.9 million in the urban population in India during 1960-61, the big cities accounted for 18.8 million, which is 63.0% of the total urban population. The number of big cities with a population over one lac is 142. So the big brothers, not only in economic fields, but also in the field of urbanisation emerge as leaders after independence. Among the 142, 8 centres have more than 1 million population. But the growth of big cities is not accompanied with general economic growth.

How many countries in the world have so many big cities? But a good development of the history of cities in India is the growth of steel cities, other industrial cities, ports, and new capital cities. The steel city of Bokaro, Jamshedpur, Bhillai, Durgapur, Rourkella etc. have become major industrial cities after independence. The government has received major help in establishing the public sector units of heavy steel factories from USSR. Jamshedpur is the city of Tata group. The capitalist countries are interested in selling finished products, but USSR was liberal in this respect to make the developing nations self-sufficient. The other industrial cities are Surat, Boroda, Ludhiana, Noida etc. Delhi and Bangalore have made significant development in software technology. Another significant feature of the cities after independence is the birth of a series of new planned capitals. These planned cities are Chandigarh, New Delhi, Gandhinagar, Bhubaneswar etc. They also have attracted people. The port cities of Cochin, Calicut, Goa, Vishakhapatnam along with Calcutta, Bombay and Madras port have come up as International ports, after 1947. Their contribution to industrialisation and urbanisation is tremendous.

From the above discussion we can fairly say that after independence the pace of urbanisation and industrialisation has increased in a big way. But still, India remains a nation of villages as the rural population is increasing equally. That is why there is a rural-urban difference in India for which the rural-urban
migration has been in full force. Unlike western nation, the agricultural sector is not totally mechanised, so a bulk of labour force is engaged in agrucultural sector. Moreover, for employment the urban centres are still attracting people from villages. Under such situation, India has not been able to acquire the status of an urban nation like UK or USA. Many Indian people like the calm and peaceful life of villages. In the western developed countries the cities are going to the villages and gradually expanding the process, but the opposite is happening in India or in other developing countries. So, we cannot compare the urbanisation process in India with the western models in toto. Until and unless our country rulers adopt proper developmental policies and give up colonical legacies it remains to be so. With the statistics alone we cannot say that India is over-urbanised or pseudo-urbanised. We must look through our own reality and past. The long colonial rule, the low literacy, the corruption of public money, the competitions or tussles for power of the political leadership etc. have made India a semi-urban nation till 1971.

**URBANISATION IN ASSAM : HISTORY, PROBLEMS OF GROWTH & FUTURE PROSPECT**

The pace of urbanisation in Assam is much slower than that in other states of India, not to speak that of the provinces of the developed nations. Apart from the rate of growth, Assam has the similar colonial experience in matters of urbanisation. Assam is situated in the far North Eastern region of the country and so it was not linked with the business and commerce of the different provinces due to its specific geographical position. Unlike the other kingdoms, the Ahom dynasty in Assam could not create an atmosphere of trade and commerce in the multi-divided states. The foreign trading companies of England, Portugal, Holland, France etc. settled in the selected mainland of the country. The British also arrived in
Assam very late, that is after 1826 following the 'Treaty of Yandaboo'. At that time Assam's economy was reeling under old and outdated baratar system. The bulk of the items needed for the people was marketed by the outside communities like the Marowaries and the Syhleti people. The indigenous people under the Ahom state were uninterested in trade and business. Jagnaram Khargharia Phukan, Moniram Dewan and a few people knew the modern accounts and they earned money also but could not invest it like their counterparts in Bengal in order to increase the capital due to the socio-economic and environmental reasons. The British authority in Assam crushed the independent business initiative of Moniram Dewan by rendering him to death after the 1857 rebellion. It is noteworthy that a no of families like the Dhekiaphukan's family earned through the check posts at Hadirachoki plenty of money. "Jagnaram had good business relationship with the 19th century's famous Indian merchant Jagat Seth."\(^{17}\) But their number was small. The condition of the commerce was not of the level that could help urbanisation. The general economic condition of the people also suffered after the arrival of the British owing to heavy land taxes. The Ahom rule could not do anything significant in matters of economic development or industrialisation. Their achievement was unifying the different scattered communities within a single boundary.

In the days of company also, Assam was an unimportant region for the Bengal Presidency till 1874. When the British people found the oil-wells and prospects of tea industry and land-taxes, they began to consolidate their position. After the division of Bengal, Assam was made a separate province with Syhlet and East Bengal in 1905. The pace of trade and commerce increased with the tea plantation and oil industry. Railways was introduced, road communication also received the attentions of British authorities. Like all other places of India during British rule, the province of Assam also suffered from underdevelopment under colonial rule. They introduced economic changes only in order to gain profit.
Regarding railways and industrialisation during company days, Prof. Bipan Chandra writes, "In the absence of simultaneous Industrial revolution, railways in colonial India only introduced a commercial revolution and further colonialized the Indian economy." It is absolutely true for Assam's economy but it indirectly helped to the growth of urbanisation. In the 20th century also, the rising middle class comprising of lawyers, civil servants, Clerks, Mandals & Kanago and patty traders were not purely independent of the British authority. They could not guide or force the Britishers for the progress of Assam as they themselves were wooing the British for favours. They turned into petitioners only. Of course, with the spread of the struggle for independence in Assam, the Assamese middle class could extract some facilities in education or certain political reforms. The polices the Minto-Chemsford reformation, the Govt. of India Act of 1935 etc. made for some administrative and political advantages. They built some administrative towns as mentioned in the Indian part of urbanisation. The whole economic scene was left, as termed by Fox, in a 'Prismatic condition'. What we have described in previous section partially applicable to Assam also in matters of urbanisation under colonial rule. But after 1947, when Assam also became a state of Indian union of states, the new govt. reorganised the state and set up new administrative centres, educational centres, trade and commerce centres to a certain degree only. But till 1971, like India, Assam remained basically a rural state.

The urbanisation in Assam: History & problems from 1901 to 1971: Assam was famous for its ancient city Pragjyotispur since the Mahabharata times. It attracted many foreign travellers like Hiu-en.Tsang and Megastinis. They described the capital Pragjyotispur as good place. The Ahom rule continued, after the fall of Pragjyotishpur, for long six hundred years. For the above mentioned socio-economic condition, no urban development took place in their rule except the capital city of Rongpur. Gargaon and Jorhat. Guwahati was the administrative
centre of the lower Assam— a Borphukan represented the king as administrator. No architectural monuments like that of the Mughals were built by the Ahom kings. The Karengghar or Tolatal ghar are small achievements compared to the forts or mosques of the Mughals. With the coming of the British the pace of urbanisation began. The British people found this place quite uncomfortable for them. Yet they continued to stay for the exploitation through tea, natural resources like timber & and coal and taxes. They never found this place important when the East India Company started business at Calcutta, Bombay or Madras. It was an underdeveloped area having no important ports. They had to face a lot of problem while settling in Assam. Many people died out of unknown diseases. The condition of the towns were not good. Hamilton found 'Gauhati' in 1808" a very poor place." Ma'cosh considers it to be "The most unhealthy station in Assam." The condition of the houses and general sanitation was deplorable. Hopkinson, wrote,"Guwahati has had yet to fit it for the habitation of European officers and their families or for natives of India beyond Assam require an expenditure beyond all reasonable or possible limits." The English officer, at first, made the town clean and started to live. For this they charged a tax on income. Gradually they constucted courts, residences etc. in civil lines and made it their capital. Similarly they improved the existing conditions of the town of Tezpur, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar etc. as district H.Q.s. So a new type of towns with European civil lines and offices came into being for the first time in Assam. The general people also were benefited by the improvements in the local towns. All the new towns were either district H.Q.s, or sub-divisional office or Taluk with all kinds of offices. They also shifted their capital to Shillong, a hill-station of good climate and used it as summer camp also. Moreover, the different tea gardens set up at different places helped in the growth of the nearest towns. As for examples, Dibrugarh and Jorhat are such towns frequented by the planters. Digboi and Lido also were developed as industrial
towns. But whatever they did, it was necessiated by the rulers in order to facilitate their policy of exploitation. The indigenous towns were neglected and some new railways towns also came into being. The role of the company and the British capitalists were confined to their own interest only. The British capitalists had many gardens in the upper Assam region, but they paid little attention to the development of the roads and others in a particular locality. The people's taxes deposited in the state's exchaquer had to be sanctioned and utilised for this purpose. Even the local body's taxes were used for the development in communication around the gardens. Dr. Amanlendu Guha, eminent writer observes, "A total subsidy of Rs. 1.2 million was paid by the Assam govt. to the Dibru-sadya Railways over the period 1884-1903. The Jorhat Railways was a project of the govt. of Assam for the convenience of numerous tea-gardens in the neighbourhood of Jorhat, involving public investment of nearby rupees one million and an accumulated loss of Rs. 5 lacs upto 1901. Even the local govt. funds were utilised for the railway construction. For Example, in the case of the Tezpur-Balipara Railways, while teapgardens subscribed to 45% of its paid-up capital of Rs. 4 laks, the govt. supplied timber free of royalty, and the local Board of Tezpur paid a total subsidy of Rs. 1 lac in twenty annual instalments". This kind of partial activity led to the degeneration of the indigenous towns and other developments in the state.

The pace of urbanisation got a momentum after 1947. The pace of urbanisation accelerated after the local Congress govt. assumed office. They reorganised the whole state and broke into many districts and sub-divisions and circles and blocks, established colleges, university, medical and engineering colleges, polytechnics, radio station etc. These new offices opened avenues for appointment of lots of educated youths in the state. Administration even was expanded to the hill district of Khasi hills, Mikir hills etc. It attracted many people
to the new urban centres. The urban percentage began to increase. So the urbanisation in Assam has two distinct stages of development—Pre— independence and Post — independence. Now let us survey the second stages.

After 1947, the pace of urbanisation in Assam increased. In 1901 the percentage of urban population was 2.33% of the total population, that is only 86,695 persons lived in the towns. In 1941, during the British rule, it increased to 3.32%, only 2% growth in about 40 years is a sign of slow pace of urbanisation. That the colonial masters were not paying any attention to industrialisation and modernisation is clear from the data. But in 1951 it increased to 4.64% and in 1971 it was 8.66%. Of course this rate was much lower than the all India rate. As to the district cases, Kamrup district with the capital city of Guwahati after 1972, had the highest urban population, which is 10.64% of the total. It is more than the state average. The lowest percentage is 2.35% of the total population, which was of Mikir hills. Kamrup is followed by Lakhimpur with the Dibrugarh town, the percentage being 9.68%. The total urban population percentage is far below than the national rate. Now let us see the list of towns in the following table.

**TABLE NO - 2**
No of towns and tocon groups in each class of town of Assam from 1901.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of town</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census report, 1961*
The above table from Census Report of 1961 shows that there is a marked increment of the no. of towns from 1901 to 1961. Most of the towns in Assam are only class IV category towns. That is, they are small towns under population of 20,000. During colonial rule, in 1941 we see, there was no class-I and class-II towns. But after 1947, Shillong rose to a class-II town and for the first time in the history of Assam, two towns, Guwahati and Shillong group attained the status of a class-I town in 1961. The post independence govt. established many new offices and other establishments which accelerated population structure in these two towns. From the table it is also clear that Assam has no big cities with million population till today, which obstructs spreading of urban values. Lacking in industrial units in great numbers is the best known reason for not having a city or a Metro which can accelerate the spread of urbanisation. Assam had to wait till 1961 to have a city of population over one lac when the no of such cities in 1961 was more than a hundred in India. The underdeveloped Ahom rule and the long colonial rule are responsible for which Assam could never lay down a foundation for rapid urbanisation.

The second important characteristic of the towns and cities of Assam is that most of them are administrative centers, with some of them having trade and commerce and other factors of urbanisation also. The excessive no of administrative towns other than industrial towns are a sign of backwardness both in urbanisation and economy. These towns are 'ungenerative and parasite'. The British legacy of the same policy in matters of urban development, as the reality shows, has not disappeared yet. Out of 5.6 towns in 1961, 26 places are administrative centres leading one to the conclusion that the successive new govt's have added only to the tally of such cities initiated by the British authority in Assam. Guwahati and Shillong also belong to this group. Only 8 urban places including Digboi are regarded as industrial and manufacturing towns according to the census report of
1961. Of course, the tea industries, though set up in the remote areas have a big labour force with division of labour. Only one heavy industry, the Guwahati refinery as a public sector industry was opened in Guwahati in 1961. Tinsukia, Dibrugarh and Bongaigaon have some manufacturing industries of Aluminium, Copper etc. The five towns of Pandu (part of Guwahati agglomeration), Lumding, Mariani, Badarpur and Amingaon are, however, almost entirely for transport and communication in as much as they are railway junctions. Pandu, being the H.Q. of the N.F. railway has residential colony for the railway staff and administrative house. There are other small railway towns also which helped in communication. The bus station, the small residential area outside the main town, the small river ports or railway stations are examples of one kind sub-urbanisation. The trade centres like Silchar, Tihu, Tinsukia, Barpeta Road etc. are small urban places and work as transit units helping in the spread of urban values.

Already it has been mentioned that due to want of a solid foundation for industrialisation, the pace of urbanisation in Assam is very slow. The colonial rule only exploited, did not think for Assam's development. The people's apathy towards trade and commerce is also another reason for the slow growth of cities and hence economic growth. The British authority made Assam a curious blend of agrarian economy and capitalism. Without the flow of capital, the agrarian economy in such a situation is bound to stagnate at subsistence level. In spite of the availability of raw materials, they preferred to make Assam or N.E. India a good and profitable market for their finished products in U.K. It is common to all places under them. But other places like Bombay had the Tatas, who could challenge the British monopoly in the market. They also did not pay any attention to the technical education causing a dearth of technical personnel which prevented the innovations and inventions for industrial development. It is the policy of colonial masters that they would like their subjects to be buyers of their products, not producers. So
the towns in that period were pre-industrial in nature. They remained strictly administrative, residential or places of education only. The towns had to live on the food supplied from the nearby villages. So they remained 'parasites' In spite of those limitations we had some urban centres which are the result of urbanisation and modernisation.

PROBLEMS AND FUTURE PROSPECT:

In the previous section we have already mentioned a few points regarding the growth problems of cities in Assam. The paucity of funds and mismanagement of fund, the colonial ruler's apathy, the lack of industrialisation and proper planning etc. have caused serious problems in the growth of cities. There are many problems in the process of urbanisation in the developing countries of Asia and Africa. It was blighted during the colonial rules of those nations. Apart from political and financial problems there are some internal problems of urbanisation. Many American cities also grew from a small port to a mega city. In course of time it also created serious ecological problems. In the late 18th century a movement called "City Beautiful Movement" was started. The "City Beautiful Movement" as it was levelled by architects, planners, civic promoters, and writers was the dominating trend and motivating force in American design from the 1890s to the 1920s. Thomas S. Hines writes about the aim of the movement, "It was an ambitious effort on the part of various civic-minded and aesthetically-oriented Americans to achieve for their own raw cities something approaching a 'cultural panity' with the great urban centers of an olden and grander European civilisation. And, not surprisingly, the American movement used those cities as the models for its own remodelling efforts."22 The Americans wanted to get rid of the problems of their city and started a movement for it when they faced those problems. So, irrespective of region or development, cities have some problems which demand special attention.
The main problems that have affected the cities and towns of Assam are over-crowding, housing and slums, transportation and traffic, pollution, sanitation, sewage & drinking water, unemployment, corruption of the civic bodies, labour problem etc. and many more.

Guwahati or other towns of Assam cannot escape such problems. As a colonial city, Guwahati's roads were very narrow till 1980s. Most of the roads were not wide enough to facilitate a large volume of vehicular traffic. It is also crowded at the central zone. It is clear from the population pattern that when the capital was shifted to Guwahati, it became over-crowed leading to severe water and housing shortage. Most of the families live in rented house. The growth of slums is also a sign of an over-crowed city. The public health and hygiene in those areas are matter of concern. There is no proper system to dispose of urban waste. The drain water are polluting the river Brahmaputra. The no of public urinals and latrines are very few, particularly at the public places like bus stand and railway station. It is causing water pollution also. The use of old and outdated vehicles in the city causes air pollution with the industries located at the central part of the city. The encroachment of the hilly areas and subsequent hill-cutting have also caused serious problem like devasting landslides etc. in Guwahati. The endless deforestation is leading to a dangerous situation. The haphazard growth of market and multi-storied building are the matter of concern for the healthy growth of a city.

Future Prospect: The future of the present Guwahati and other towns of Assam is not good from the ecological point of view. The above mentioned problems have crippled the city life in all the urban centres of Assam. If this state of affairs continues, what we get in the last part of 20th century the urban life of Assam will be places of death. The health, transport, road, sanitation, pollution—all the problems
will lead us to a city life of darkness. Some small towns like Tezpur are doing well at present, but in course of time the migration is bound to affect them also. To prevent such a bleak future we need to look into the matter seriously.

The govt's policies play the key role in this respect. The govt. should immediately stop construction of unauthorised buildings or multi-storied buildings in the narrow lanes. The big flats have caused the scarcity of ground water in a locality. The govt. with the help of the Development Authority can promote the nearby small towns like Hajo, Mirza, Baihata, Rangia etc. as satellite towns in order to stop the migration. The nearby rural areas also need some facilities to keep people there. The transport policies should be revised like the Delhi govt. which prevents strictly plying of old vehicles more than 15 years old. The Govt. should seek the help of some voluntary organisation to stop the deforestation and encourage plantation in the line of green movement. The developmental bodies like G.M.C. or G.M.D.A. should do as per law everything for the future of the city. The corruption of the officials and clerks have made such a deplorable condition despite the availability of good laws. As to the sanitation and health problem, special drive is necessary to make clean the slum areas or public lavatories in order to stop the spread of some infectious diseases. The immediate blanket ban on the earth filling of the natural ponds or any water reservoir of the city is necessary in order to prevent the artificial flood. This problem poses a serious obstacle to the life of the city. The shifting of the industries to the outskirts of the city can prevent a little of air pollution and a permanent policy in this respect is necessary. Above all the public awareness towards civic duties is the need of the hour, which alone can save our city in the days to come.
REFERENCES AND NOTES

4. Quoted from Ghure, G.S. : *City and Culture*, P - 4.
7. Quoted from *Urban Sociology in India*, Sing, K, P-16.
10. Mumford, Louis, : ibid, P-44.
19. Richard G, Fox : *Urban Anthropology*, 'Prismatic state' means a mixture of Capitalist and feudal means of productions, which is found in the economic a colonial state.
22. Hines, Thomas S. : *Cities*, P-80. In this book of Sociology many American Sociologists have discussed the different problems of rapid urbanisation in USA with examples.

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