CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Prologue to the problem:

Urbanization is a global phenomenon experienced by economically advanced as well as developing countries. The increasing movement of people from villages to towns and cities continue to scale up, as countries place emphasis on industrial development. In general, cities and towns provide large economics of agglomerations and provide a variety of choices in terms of economic opportunities and urban life styles for the people. Rapid urban development has brought in its wake an alarming inevitable and persistent growth of slums where living environment is pathetic.

In India there is an acute problem of slums not only in big cities but also in medium and small towns. As an observation, most of the Indian small towns are much congested and unhygenic although their effect on an individual is mitigated by the openness of the environment. For a planned healthy growth of a small town it is essential to check the problem of slums at their primary stage. The study of dynamics of slum formation is not limited with the information of the physical aspects, but to understand the process through the experience of the dwellers and using the same for evaluation.

1.2 Statement of the problem:

The idea of slum is very lucid. The dimension of the slums is presumed as something that is deteriorating urban areas that is densely populated and contains dilapidated housing, often in multiple occupation, poverty, social disadvantage and other forms of physical and social deprivation. In addition to the above, development of slums, dynamics of slum formation, all are synonymous to industrialization and urban growth. Their existence is not a cause for cities, rather with their specific function the slum communities are a blessing in disguise for the elite and other strata of the city population, in as much as they provide a wide variety of services and contribute greatly to the survival of the rich.

Slums are spread all over the world from Mumbai to New York and Birmingham to Manila. There are varieties of slums. In some parts of Africa and Europe even cellar ruins and caves have become dwelling places. Such is the magnitude of the shelter problem in a mad world of profit hunt, urbanizing chaotically.
The slum became part of the urban complex created by industrial revolution. As Lewis Mumford puts it, the factory, the railway road and the slum existed together.

There are various characteristic features of a slum like inadequate housing, lack of basic amenities, over crowding, unhygienic surrounding etc, however it is a community in process and a way of living. Moreover it is a subsystem in a large urban system which is characteristic by attributes.

The increasing numbers of people who have taken up residence in cities and the large scale urbanization that has gained momentum due to the multifunctional character of the city has created serious problem in respect of urban facilities especially housing. This type of flow is bound to create slums in the long run, irrespective of the fact, whether it is an industrial city or not. Assam being the gateway to North-East India has attracted a lot of people and therefore we tend to find slum formation in many over crowded areas where basic amenities like water, drainage etc. are lacking. Therefore, it is time that one makes a serious attempt to study the problems and how it could be mitigated.

1.3 Study area:

Western Assam is located between 89°49'20" to 91°48'16" E longitude and 25°27' to 26°54' N latitude and cover an area of 15,619 sq. km. According to 2001 census of Assam the total population of Assam is 26638407 and urban population 3389413 (12.72 percent) of which the total population of Western Assam is 7074218 and urban population 584372 (2.19 percent).

According to the Town and Country Planning Department, Assam (2001) the total slum population of Assam is 936394 (3.52 percent) and the slum population of Western Assam is 97396 the percent being 0.36. The old Kamrup and Goalpara districts have been considered as Western Assam for this study. Today this part comprises of six districts, within which seven selected towns have been considered on the basis of recorded slum population as specified by the Town and Country Planning Department. These towns are - Dhubri, Kokrajhar, Goalpara, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Barpeta Road and Nalbari.

One remarkable fact is that the highly populated districts of Assam is located in this part. In contrast to the high population in this part of the State it has the lowest rate
of education in comparison to other parts of Assam. Many towns of Western Assam have had very slow rate of development due to lack of proper communication and economic activities. With the birth of new district from the old Kamrup and Goalpara, it was required that every district head quarter establish new administrative offices and related working offices. Almost all these districts show formation of slum areas, within their district head quarters due to migration of population from rural to urban areas, with the expansion of new establishments. But Barpeta Road is an exception in that sense, because it is not a district head quarter but simply a developed town of Barpeta district in which there is formation of slum pockets.

1.4 Objective:

Besides studying the physical environment and structural aspects of the slums in western Assam the main aim of this work would be to -

(1) Assess and evaluate the existing slums.

(2) The origin of the people and pull and push factors.

(3) Reasons for migration if any and their choice to settle where they have.

(4) Composition of work force and similarities in terms of affinity, place, language and society.

(5) Service rendered to the economy by the people and their per capita income along with nature of service in terms of economic activities.

(6) Spatio temporal spread of slum in seven urban centres of Western Assam.

1.5 Research Questions:

In order to achieve the above objectives the following research questions are proposed to be tested in the study area.

(a) Do floods and river erosion compel people to leave their villages in search of livelihood? Is it voluntary or forced migration.

(b) Do inadequate source of livelihood force the poor to migrate to town?
(c) Does perpetuation of socio-cultural marginality of the disadvantage social segments caused by caste discrimination contributed to the growth of slums?

(d) Do social linkages such as caste, language, religion influence or pull individuals or households to move to cities?

(e) Does disintegration of family results in out-migration of a member of the family from the place of origin?

(f) Do people migrate because of only job opportunities or they see some other advantage?

(g) The birth of new district head quarters and new establishment and services boost migration?

1.6 Significance and Scope:

All district head quarters in Western Assam have undergone change due to influx of population which has been added pressure on the existing poor infrastructure which have not been keeping pace with increasing population.

National urban policy is adopted at the national level, but due to the diverse regional characters, the same policy may not be applicable in all the regions. Hence studies at micro and mesolevel is of utmost importance. For it is a known fact that a problem well analysed is half solved.

All the seven towns display certain common characteristics. The economic strength of these urban centres has rapidly changed the size of their settlement, with certain gross deficiencies in the supply of essential services. The thrust of unplanned urban growth has created pressure on the existing assets of the city consequently impoverishing the town-base. Rapid migration from inside and outside the respective states has overstressed existing health, sanitary, environmental and educational facilities and services. Congestion and the lack of access to administrative offices and commercial locations have been serious problems. Unemployment and poverty have accelerated because the labour force has been expanding steadily. The urban infrastructure that has been assembled slowly over several years has suddenly become inadequate for the town dwellers lowering per capita availability of services.
This study will hold a lot of significance from the context of dynamics of slum formation because of the fact that selected towns of Western Assam are now being better connected by railways and roadways which will impact the movement of people within the district and out of the district which will increase the flow of goods and people to a greater extent than the existing volume and number. It is anticipated that such a study will help to mitigate and channelise work force and improve slum settlement which is a problem. It will also open up windows for future researcher for further investigation of the problem. Moreover, no research study in the regard to slum has been made in this part of the state.

1.7 Methodology:

The primary concern of the work being slum population characteristics, collection of data from both primary and secondary sources have been made. Collection of data for the present work has been conducted in three stages. In the first stage, prefield work which comprised of library works wherein books, journals, periodicals, monographs, administrative reports, gazetter and research articles including relevant literature were collected and refered. These not only helped to frame the scope of the work but also aided to build up the theoretical background for the study. In the second stage, the identification of slums for this work was made based on the already identified pockets by the Government of Assam. All data related to population and socio-economic aspects of the towns have been collected from 1999 to 2003 from various towns, municipality office, Town and Country Planning Office, Census Office (Census report in 2001), Economic and Statistic Department and the like. Historical records, memoirs are being consulted to know the history of the towns and districts, over and above personal interviews of senior citizens.

In the third stage, field work was conducted to collect primary data keeping in view the push-pull factors of migration, through a well designed questionnaire covering the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and other related information relevant for the work.

The seven towns of Western Assam that had been identified by the Town and Country Planning Department was taken up for this work which comprise of 6353
households. In total 645 (10.15 percent) households were covered comprising of 3142 persons out of which 1591 (50.6 percent) were male and 1551 (49.4 percent) female.

The data from the field had been collected through two phase field survey in seven towns of Western Assam to identify the slum pockets. This was followed by questionnaire survey covering 3142 samples in the selected slum pockets, representing different types of immigrant labourers, migrant people from various areas, pushed and pulled into the slum pockets.

For convenience, the sampled population were grouped into four broad categories (i) from within the district of Assam (ii) from different districts (ii) from other states of India (iv) outside the country.

The entire work is based on pull and push theory of migration. Data acquired from both secondary and primary sources, were compiled, analysed, interpreted and translated into maps and diagrams through different qualitative and quantitative techniques such as correlation coefficient, regression, bar graph and other cartogram were used for better representations.

Finally a systematic analysis has been made on the observed patterns, processes and life style of the slum population.

1.8 Relevant literature:

In the contemporary world, as the cities are growing and expanding in size, simultaneously the slums are also growing with the influx of people comprising of employed and unemployed, flowing into towns in search of skilled or unskilled work. It is a universal problem and different national and international level authorities have reviewed the issue of slum development and tried to address their concern in different ways and forms.

Within the last half century, the percentage of population in the cities of 11,00,000 and more persons has more than doubled the world over. By 2010 over half of the world population will lie in cities of this size.

With increasing number of cities and slums, critical studies on slums have
also increased in different levels. Such significant studies on different dimensions of slums are highlighted.

**Global scenario:**

The earliest known study on slums dates back to 1844 by Engels Frederick who found in his study that the slums of England existed in the worst parts of a town and the houses were congested of three to four rooms. But in today's context this may not hold good, because space is limited.

Nels Anderson had written an article in 1960 where he wrote about the slums of Birmingham, England during the industrial revolution. He highlighted the movement of people from village to city in less than two centuries and the problem of growth and change attached to it.

Barrington Kaye in 1960 studied the concept of overcrowding and was convinced that it must necessarily depend upon a subjective estimate of what constitutes the right amount of space that a person may comfortably inhabit, and in the report the term overcrowding has been avoided except where it has been used by other writers. This concept is also contrary to the slums of the study area.

Oscar Lewis (1961) described about slums of Mexico. He mentioned that the vecindades, as the slums are known by, consists of one or more rows of single storey dwellings, with one or two rooms facing a common courtyard. But the slum pockets of study area contain some individual dwelling unit, with separate courtyard though with negligible area.

Charles Abrams (1964) in his book ‘Mans struggle for shelter in urbanizing world’ wrote about slum population increase of Jamaica, where half portion of increased population came annually from hinderlands, while the other half represent the natural increase. This condition holds good for slums of some towns of western Assam too.

Clifford Geertz (1965) in his article mentioned that the Kampong type of settlement is characteristics of town and city life everywhere in Java and is in fact something of reinterpretation of the village pattern in terms of the denser, more urban environment. In the Kampong pattern people quite commonly but necessarily one of the
people in the stone houses faced the street. The small bamboo houses of the same sort common in villages are placed about haphazardly in crowded profusion within this block, often with very little space between them, there being no gardens in the town except around a few of the tanger stone houses. The bamboo houses are usually owned by the occupants, though they are sometimes rented. This has similarities with the morphology of the slum of the study area but the causes of slum formation differs.

There was another book written by Marshall B. Clinard (1966) about the slums of cities in the United States. He wrote that early in the development of a city the areas were the home of upper classes, with the expansion of commercial and industrial ventures the neighbourhood become slums. But such type of mode of slum development is not seen in the study area.

In global level besides all these works on slums many works have been done from time to time. Mention may be made of—Morton Grodzins (1958), Michael Harrington (1962) and T.G.Mc. Gee (1967).

Studies in National level:

Population expansion and rapid influx of job seekers towards the cities are giving birth to new slums in the cities of the Indian subcontinent and for co-ordinating of the same, studies on slums are also getting more importance.

P.K. Nambiar (1961) in one of his papers adopted a simple definition for his study wherein he identified slums where hutting was there with squalid surroundings, with bare minimum basic amenities lacking. He divided the city of Madras into four slum zones based on area and population size and made a detailed socio-economic study. A very interesting point to be noted is the insights made into the water courses that run through the city and how they served as fertile grounds for the growth of slums. This has a lot of similarity to our own home state too.

P. Ramachandran (1967) wrote a topic where he discussed about Greater Bombay and observed that nearly four out of every five households have an income of less than Rs. 500 per month. He referred to the predominance of low-paid building and civic construction workers the unemployed and the unemployables among slum dwellers in
the study area though the income level is found to be more compared to many but it is not enough in the present times to give them a better living.

Victor S. D Souza (1968) studied about the slums of Chandigarh where the slum dwellers living in compact settlements in six sectors and ten percent systematic sample was chosen for a detailed investigation. He analysed the push and pull factors, household size, occupation etc. He did find an association between the present housing and the condition of housing prior to coming to Chandigarh.

S.N. Sen (1969) discussed slums of Calcutta generally on two basis, the nature of the construction of the houses (Kutcha and semi-kutcha) and secondly the extent of availability of the bare amenities of life such as water for bathing and drinking, toilet etc. He highlighted the percentage of households who has access to their services, which showed a very dismal picture. What was interesting, is the social characters of the dwellers have similarities with the slum dwellers of Western Assam.

A.R. Desai and S. Devadas Pillai (1972) discussed the portrait of a Bombay slum named Golibor slum which is comparatively of recent origin which is evident from the fact that the largest single group of respondents have been living here for only 6-10 years. It can therefore be said that the area developed into a slum during the second five year plan period.

Owen M. Lynch (1974) discusses one of the worst slums in Bombay i.e. Shantinagar which is being inhabited mainly by squatters from all over India. This pocket which is famous for producing the bootleg liquor. He relates their social life with real political life, activity involvement and conciousness. He looked at the Adi-Dravidas out of the many communities living in this pocket. The approach of this paper was to look at political mobilisation at the micro level, as local level politics.

S.S. Jha (1976) in her paper described the relocation and improvement of slums in the metropolis of Bombay and noted that a large number of women were engaged in gainful employment where most of them appeared to enjoy a sense of freedom in their movements outside their home. Her findings indicate that it is not correct to stercotype assumptions. Because looking at the views expressed by women in these slums it is difficult to level them as backward in common parlance.
S.D. Maurya (1985) highlights the consequences of the rapid growth of urbanization and the development of slums in Calcutta. He mentioned that the slums are horizontal rather than vertical, and therefore the nature of the growth of slums are rather sprawling in character with high density of population. He went on to emphasize that more than one million live in slums under physical conditions that are not fit for decent human habitation. Of these about 7,00,000 people live in registered slums or bustees, as they are called in Calcutta. The insanitary conditions of these bustees make them the centres for incubation and spread of endemic and epidemic diseases. These characters are common to most slums of Western Assam too.

F. Gulzar (1987) in one of his articles found that in the growing cities of Pakistan, millions of people are settling on public and private land and have raised temporary haphazard structures thereon popularly known as ‘Slums’.

H.S. Mathur (1987) wrote a research topic where he highlighted that slums punctuate almost every city of the world today. In India also every metropolitan city or industrialized town has slums where nearly one-fifth to one-half of the population lives in demeaning conditions. So without being pessimistic it must be recognized that slums have become an inseparable part of our urban life and more particularly of industrializing and fast growing urban centres. The urban planners have undoubtedly become conscious of their cancerous growth which is some gain by itself, but it does not take us far, due to their ever increasing growth both in population and area.

H.M. Saxena (1987) in his work highlighted that in the developed world, when we talk of the problem of slums, they usually mean the slums in the big cities. But this is not true of the developing countries like India. Hence we have an acute problem of slums not only in big cities but also in medium and small towns. Most of our small towns are much congested and unhygienic, although their effect on individual’s body is mitigated by the openness of the environment. For a planned growth of a small town it is essential to check the problem of slums at their primary stage. His concept is applicable in case of slums of our state as a whole.

C.S. Yadav (1987) have discussed that twentieth century urbanization has brought in its wake an alarming, inevitable and persistent problem of slums. He highlights the fact
that metropolitan cities are widening and on the verge of exploding because of the cancerous outgrowth of the misery belts in the form of slums as a consequence on which cities are running into their present state.

Dr. (Mrs.) Sudha Kaldate (1989) broadly discusses the nature, characteristic and theories of slums with special reference to Aurangabad and a focus on the weaker sections, children and minorities. She also emphasis the role of the local administration and Voluntary Agencies.

S. Devadas Pillai (1990) in one of his articles highlighted the problems and perspectives of Bombay's housing shortage which has become legendary. Some of the biggest slums in India are found in Bombay. In fact one of them, Dharabi is often mentioned as Asian’s biggest slum. The slum of Bombay ofcourse can not be compared with the slums of western Assam. The reason being housing shortage and high rent often compel middle income people to live here for ever. Situation is different in Assam today, but left unattended the problem will be similar, although smaller in scale.

Ratna N. Rao (1990) discussed the slums and the persistent problems of urban life. She regarded them as being sinks of social disorganisation and have aroused great alarm, particularly among the more affluent city - dwellers and government authorities. The study was on a caste slum called Wadarwadi. Various aspects were looked into like their history, economic live, their social world, morality, education, politics and the relationship between the slum dwellers (Wardars) and the outsider. This particular slum comprising of a particular community is engaged in building construction in various capacities.

A.Ghose, S.S. Ahmed and S. Maitra (1993) in a book showed cases of four slums of Borada, Bhilwara, Sambalpur and Siliguri. The objective of the survey was to assess the access of households to urban basic services in slums and the nature and form of awariness and involvement of the community in the Urban Basic Services Programmes (UBSP). The study was based on primary survey covering 1600 households in 68 slums spread overall the four cities. Number of households covered in each single slum was according to its share in the total population of the sample slums.

Besides all these many works were done by various workers time to time in this field. Mention may be made for few of these. They are Desai A.R. (1990), Gadgil D.R.
Local level studies:

Due to rapid urbanization specially after the post independence period in the towns of the North Eastern Region in general and in the Guwahati city in particular simultaneous growth of the slum occurs and various studies on these slums gained more attention. Due to lack of infrastructural facilities most of such studies were limited in coverage and analysis. However, such pioneering jobs have encouraged and helped as eye opener to the workers in the subject. Studies on slums of Assam is meagre. The work of B. Lahkar can be said to be the only reference work in this context. B. Lahkar wrote a dissertation in 1990. He discussed the present study of the slums of Guwahati and attempted to analyse the spatio temporal aspects of the slums with the socio-economic operations of the slum dwellers. He wrote in detailed about all aspects of slums of Guwahati city like – slum population, their income expenditure, housing condition including all basic amenities. A bird's eye view over the city reveals a scattered distribution of slums all over the city. The settlement pattern of the city slums varies from linear and scattered to clustered. Such type of growth of slums are also seen in the towns of Western Assam.

Many other relevant works were done related to the slum and migration. Mention may be made of H.N. Sarma (1981), M.Barthakur (1983), J. Bora and H.P. Das (1985).

1.9 Organisation of the work:

The contents of the present work has been organised in six chapters. The first chapter is introduction to the problem highlighting prologue to the problem, statement of the problem, study area, objectives, research question, significance and scope, methodology, review and organisation of the work. The second chapter deals with Geographical background of the study area including – physical setup, drainage, climate, natural vegetation, landuse pattern, transport network, population and education. The third chapter deals with the spatial pattern and process of slum formation in Western Assam, which incorporates identification, distribution and factors responsible for the growth of slums. The fourth chapter contains socio-economic characteristics of slum areas including
family types, sex, age, education, food, habits, sanitation, health problem, language, skills, income-expenditure, occupation and other socio-economic aspects. The fifth chapter is findings and analysis of the field observation, comparison between the slums have been incorporated. The analysis is placed in a manner that will help concerned persons to focus on areas that will ameliorate the quality of life of slum dwellers.

The sixth chapter is conclusion and suggestion. This chapter summarises the major aspects of the work and attempts to synthesise the findings and to compare them with existing knowledge to confirm and suggest revision of the existing principles relating to them and to point out possibilities of future researches in this line that would be of both academic and practical value. A selected bibliography is arranged at the end of the work. The appendix includes tables dealing with socio-economic aspect of slum population in selected towns of Western Assam.
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