PART : I
CHAPTER : I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PROBLEM:

A house is one of the three fundamental needs of mankind. Almost every one desires to have a house of his own either purchased or constructed or hired. Because it provides the basic domestic and personal need of family life. Housing provides working efficiency, emotional security and social status of a family. A suitable home is important to the modern family; but the most of the families cannot construct such a house with their own resources. The agglomeration of houses indicates the origin of settlements and reflects the nature of an area since their character is related to the environment and the cultural heritage of the people.

As an economic activity, housing provides income and employment, increases household savings and forms capital and hence growth. Housing and its various amenities emerges as a major problem and public issue because of dissatisfaction with existing conditions. Housing problems are continuously created by population movements of all kinds and by industrial changes and development of new resources which lead towards urbanization. Besides, there are so many problems in
housing conditions and amenities. The very existence of a building stands on a suitable plot of land. But land is very limited. The ever-increasing population is the main cause of problems of land. Father's land is fragmented among sons.

On the other hand, due to non-availability of building materials like - thatches, woods, grasses, leaves, reeds, bamboos, bricks, stone, sand, cement, tiles, slate, iron, metal sheets, asbestos etc., the housing problem in Nalbari district is turning to be very nagging. In the remote past, people have enjoyed a nomadic life. At that time people moved from one place to another in search of better livelihood and new opportunities. In that age, people used to live in mountain caves or holes of big trees. Those people never had shelter or housing problems. In that period, man like animals, used natural housing as shelter.

But in the passage of time due to population explosion men are bound to migrate from one place to another, to accommodate the increasing number of population.

In the case of Assam, there was no major housing problem before 1947. As a part of Assam, Nalbari district also does not suffer from the same housing problems before that period. However, after 1947, the state received immigrants load due to country's partition. In this time, the immigrants, specially Muslim
people had to reside in the low-lying river bank and char land areas in the district. The same migration began again after 1971. Due to the partition of Pakistan, many Bengali Muslim and Hindu people have entered into Nalbari district. These people settle down mostly in Barkhetri and Tamulpur development blocks. Another migration has been going on from Nepal, Sikim and Darjeeling district of West Bengal. These Nepali immigrants are also settled in the foothill zone e.g., Baska, Tihu-Barama and Tamulpur development blocks.

Besides, the interstate migration, like Marwaris, Bengalis, Biharis, Punjabis and Orias is also a common feature.

These immigrant people created high population growth in Nalbari district. So the question of providing shelter to people becomes quite crucial. The demand-supply gap in housing shows that in rural and urban areas housing unit for the economically weaker section and lower income groups will be in short supply. These types of population growth may also lead to the space problems. The new spate of population, is to be accommodated within the limited land of the district.

On the other hand, the wide diversity in terms of topography, climate, economy and social profile led to the housing problems to a crucial stage. Topography of Nalbari district is uneven in nature. Most land in Barkhetri, Pub-Nalbari, and Borigog-Banbhag blocks is
low-lying. So in rainy season most of the areas of these blocks are overflooded. Therefore, these areas are not suitable for house construction. Baska, Tamulpur and the northern portion of Tihu-Barama blocks are affected by bad climate. Malaria fever is common in these block area. So these are also not good for shelter. The people like Bodos, Santhals, Nepalies, immigrant Muslims, Fishermen etc. are generally poor social groups. Their housing condition is miserable.

Besides, people of the district depend mainly upon agricultural economy and their financial condition is alarming. Hence they are unable to provide a good housing themselves. So, they are suffering from various types of diseases and loosing working efficiency.

1.2. REVIEW OF RELEVANT WORKS:

Housing problem or problem of shelter has its own place in settlement geography. It analyses the dwelling sphere of mankind. House type has better co-relation with settlement geography. If settlement pattern is compact, the vertical expansion of houses is a common phenomenon. Kleinert\(^1\) cited this relation with reference to the house type and settlement pattern in Nepal Himalayas. Krishan\(^2\) discussed how the rural housing has been affected by population growth. Krishan\(^3\) also shows the rural population's impact on housing in the villages of Punjab. An article is forwarded in the types of houses in context of Junsar-Himalaya. Tewari\(^4\)
pointed out various types of houses in this region.

The special analysis of housing problem in the urban areas specially in Guwahati city is an elaborate work forwarded by Barthakur.\(^5\) He has pointed out inadequate home ownership and burgeoning activity, indifferent urban planning, role of development authorities, political will and social commitment, need-based affordable housing, citizen's Psyche and flexible and progressive co-operative Act and so on. Bhattacharyya\(^6\) is one of the pioneers in North East India to express his view in Guwahati city's housing and its problems. The quantitative approach has been made by Raju\(^7\) about the Government's new national housing policy with an estimated housing shortage of 33 million in 1993, of which rural shortage is 21.7 million and urban 11.3 million. Vagale\(^8\) shows the housing phenomenon with relation to the planning process as a social work in Indian context, Rao and Ahmed\(^9\) express views on the urban housing in relation to economic urban planning with landuse control. Joshi\(^10\) throws light on the housing as a big challenge to society. Demand-supply gap in housing sphere shows that in rural-urban units for economically poorer section with be in short supply. Shelterless people are looking for government-built houses and converting kutcha houses into pucca houses. Singh\(^11\) also indicates the diversity in topography, climate and economic conditions of people. Again Safi\(^12\) highlights the value of planning in the housing needs in
Singh has given a survey work about the amenities like transport and marketing. Charles shows the problems of urbanization in the context of world. Though urbanization provides so many good things to the mankind, yet it has tremendous bad effect to society. Men are to fight for shelter which is a basic need. Kaul expresses her view that the Central Government is aware of the large dimensions of the housing crisis in the country and proposes to reduce homelessness by the next 10 years. She also advocates for expansion in the supply of infrastructure and basic facilities in rural and urban areas.

Sharma draws the attention of people about the pattern of urbanization in Assam. He opines that urbanization is a new phenomenon to Assam as well as to the North East India. He widely analysis the pattern of urbanization. Das throws light on the slum areas and their various problems, with a geographical deservation in the field of Guwahati city areas. As Guwahati is the largest city in North East India, people, specially very poor, come for livelihood and take shelter in the slum areas. Gosal point out about the rural settlements, its various aspects like pattern and so on. Settlement in rural areas has various problems.
A.P.P.S. indicates different housing problems and its policies. Dwyer comments upon the human habitation in the cities of the third world. Rao compares tenants and land-lords in the light of housing problems. While the rich people are living in palatial bungalows or luxury flats provided with all amenities, poor people are living in slums in miserable conditions. He also writes about middle class and poor class, who do not have their own houses. Nearly 30 per cent of the urban population lives in rented houses, due to lack of their own houses. Malik in his book provides various engineering drawings and designs of different types of houses. He also shows the house building techniques and standards.

Sharma has given the crop landuse pattern which affects agriculture, the vital need for human being. Vagale investigated the housing needs and its trends in India. Das contributes a general idea of Assam which is much helpful for this study. Sarma is the mile-stone in the background of Nalbari. Sarma in his two books, has written about geographical, educational, social, cultural demographic and economic development of past Nalbari. He also analysis the district from different corners. Barman has discussed the settlement characteristics in the district from the view point of various aspects of settlements, its types, patterns, nature and size, etc. He shows the morphology of urban centres and rural service centres also. Bhagabati
in his work in the village Kãithãlkãuchi has given a note of economic development. Baruah\textsuperscript{31} also describes the background of development and glorious past of Tihu areas. Nath\textsuperscript{32} describes the rural transformation pattern in Darrang district in the post independence period. She shows the various aspects of the rural transformation including rural housing.

Spencer\textsuperscript{33} cited in his article 'the transformation of the traditional rural village' about transformation of rural settlement and housing. Despande\textsuperscript{34} has shown the settlement types in Bombay and Karnataka. Ali\textsuperscript{35} in 1942 discussed the rural settlement sites, house types, patterns and locations in Ghagar plain in comparison to the population distribution, Singh, Rana, P.B.\textsuperscript{36} discussed the settlement distribution and types in Saran plain.

1.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

After a close examination of the housing problem of the Nalbari district, the following significant points are chosen for consideration. The major part of the population of the district are living in the rural areas, only two urban centres are there in the district viz, Nalbari and Tihu town. Therefore, major problems of housing are found in rural areas. It has the great significance of the work. The Nalbari district is situated in the thickly populated area of lower Brahmaputra Valley region of Assam. The said population
can be divided in the four major communities; (1) immigrant non-tribals (Nepalies) (2) indigenous tribal and tea-garden labourers; (3) indigenous non-tribal (Muslim and Hindus) and (4) immigrant non-tribal (Bhatia Muslims and Hindus) inhabiting in four different ecological zones.

The four different ecological zones have different social-cultural heritage. Therefore, their housing method varies from one to another and at the same time their earning sources are also different.

As the district is industrially backward, her housing policy is solely based on agricultural product.

The modern housing materials (iron, cement, tiles etc.) and technology (design and planning) are to be purchased from outside the district. So the cost of transportation is too high for the needy population.

The researcher is born and permanently residing in the district of Nalbari and therefore he is fully familiar with the housing problems of the district.

The study has a vital importance to the geographers, the academicians, the planners and the various government wings for economic planning and developmental work.
1.4. OBJECTIVE:

The principal objectives of the present study are:

(i) to analyse the nature of house sites, size, growth and their spatial distribution;

(ii) to study the present tendencies with regard to socio-economic base, internal structure of housing and to see if there exists a correlation between these on the one hand and the natural and human resource base of the area, socio-political organization, the production system mechanism, technology and the governance system on the other;

(iii) to examine the role of local materials to solve the housing problems;

(iv) to study the land use pattern and its role to solve the problems;

(v) to examine the other basic household amenities or conditions which are attached with the housing;

(vi) to study and compare the problems in the viewpoint from urban and rural morphology; and

(vii) to visualise future needs and suggest means for house planning, so that better habitable environment will be grown up and to point out the area of further research to fill the missing gaps between the knowledge at hand and the task ahead.
1.5. **HYPOTHESIS:**

In order to achieve the above objectives, the following hypotheses are built-up for general and quantitative study:

(i) The house types including their local building materials of the Nalbari district are different in different ecological zones.

(ii) There is a relationship of house sites with elevated grounds like the river levees and hill slopes.

(iii) The environmental quality of a residential area primarily depends upon the quality of houses, infrastructures, facilities and their spatial arrangement as well as the activities carried out there.

(iv) The unplanned and uncontrolled development in rural areas has often led to many housing problems especially in crowded areas of the district.

1.6. **ORGANISATION OF THE WORK:**

The whole work is divided into two parts. The first part consisting of preliminaries, which is composed of two chapters: The first chapter is the introduction to the study and it contains the problem, review of relevant works, significance of the study, Objective, hypothesis, Organization of the work, methodology and scope and limitation of study. The second chapter is devoted to geographical setting of the study area, Early geography, Physical
setting, Cultural setting, and Economic setting are discussed here.

The second part consists of the main text having four chapters. The third chapter is named after site, size, growth and spatial distribution of houses. The sub-heading of this chapter is: the house site, which includes site of northern foothill zone, middle plain zone and villagewise house-size in each zone, house-size of different ethnic groups, density of houses, nature of concentration of houses, growth of houses and spatial distribution of houses. The chapter fourth deals with building materials which includes - source of materials, house types influenced by materials, roof materials, wall materials and lastly floor materials. The fifth chapter contains housing problems and civic amenities.

The concluding chapter is devoted to summary and conclusion which deals with the synthesis of the study. Bibliography and explanatory notes on certain terms are also included in this part.

1.7. METHODOLOGY:

The whole work is done through deductive and inductive method, where questionnaires, random sampling survey, library work, statistical technique, map processing and drawing, studying and analysing, writing and typing works are done for having the final work.
First of all, various study works are done through different books, journals, census reports of different years, periodicals, souvenirs, bulletins, various maps and so on.

Secondly, for collection of primary data stratified random sampling survey is done, through door to door questionnaires and necessary investigation in some villages in different zones e.g. Bhabar, Terai, Central elevated zone and floodplain zone. Field observations were carried out during 1996-97 with the help of one inch to a mile thana level maps published by the Govt. of Assam.

In the third stage all data (primary and secondary) are analysed in quantitative interpretation in different ways. Various tables, maps, diagrams are prepared at desired levels from the collected data.

The last stage is the writing of the thesis in a systematic manner.

1.8. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF STUDY:

This study of housing problems has ample scope in the present society, because it throws light on such a subject which is not discussed widely in a populated district like Nalbari. Most population lacks in housing altogether with its various amenities. So discussing both housing and its conditions (amenities) in the light of
Nalbari district is very much important, because many homeless people are there in Nalbari district. Besides, some houses accommodate more people than their capacity. Moreover, housing amenities are not provided in an even manner. All these housing problems in Nalbari district create scope for investigation.

In conducting this work, there are some limitations. Its progress is interrupted by some unavoidable reasons. First of all is the late publication of 1991 census data related to housing. Secondly, these census data of housing are not published at village level. Other organisations like Economic and Statistics Department, Housing Board, District Rural Development Agency, Town and Country Planning Departments are lacking in proper study materials except the data relating to amenities. But the researcher cannot spend more money and energy to make door to door survey to collect primary data, himself. Hence, as many as 30 villages out of 803 have been visited thoroughly for collection of primary data. As Nalbari district is situated on border areas, so large scale, topographical maps are restricted for use, yet all these interruptions are overcome and the work is completed.

References


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