

## TREND OF URBANISATION IN INDIA: A STUDY IN ASSAM

**Dr. Bijay Raji***Principal i/c, Govt. College, Daporijo, P.O.: Daporijo-791 122, Dist. Upper Subansiri, Arunachal Pradesh***ABSTRACT**Article DOI URL: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra3218>

*Urbanisation is the most essential for all round development of a developing nation, as it increases employment, income and standard of living in these countries. There is a growing realisation in the recent years that the environment is fast deteriorating and the earth's resources are fast running out. Environmental problems centre on human activities which can adversely affect the atmosphere, oceans and land, and creates global warming, ozone depletion, contamination of fresh water resources and urban pollution.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Population explosion, Environmental problems, global warming, Ozone, urban pollution***INTRODUCTION**

Urbanisation is a physical growth of urban areas as a result of global change. Urbanization is closely linked to modernisation, industrialisation and the sociological process of rationalisation. Urbanisation is an index of transformation from traditional rural economies to modern industrial one. It is progressive concentration of population in urban unit. Quantification of urbanization is very difficult. It is a long term process (Davis, 1965). Kingsley Davis has explained urbanization as process of switch from spread out pattern of human settlements to one of concentration in urban centers (Davis, 1962). It is a finite process- a cycle through which a nation passes as they evolve from agrarian to industrial society (Davis and Golden, 1954). He has mentioned three stages in the process of urbanization. Stage-I is the initial stage characterized by rural traditional society with predominance in agriculture and dispersed pattern of settlements. Stage-II refers to acceleration stage where basic restructuring of the economy and investments in social overhead capitals including transportation, communication takes place. Proportion of urban population gradually increases from 25 per cent to 40 per cent, 50 percent, 60 percent and so on. Dependence on primary sector gradually dwindles. Stage-III is known as terminal stage where urban population exceeds 70 per cent or more. At this stage, level of urbanization remains more or less same or constant (Davis, 1965). Rate of growth of urban population and total population become same at this terminal stage. We have conceded the Kingsley Division view in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that "it is not possible to have industrialisation without urbanisation". It is fact that the urbanisation is the

most essential for all round development of the developing nations, as it has increases employment, income and standard of living in these countries. But these developments mean the destruction of vegetation of the nature.

Although, cities serve as 'engines' of growth in most developing countries by providing opportunities for employment, education, knowledge and technology transfer and ready markets for industrial and agricultural products. But high urban populations impose enormous stress on natural resources and impose 'ecological footprints' on the peri-urban areas (Rees, 1992; Rees and Wackernagel, 1994). For example, urbanization leads to the outward expansion of cities and results in changes in land use whereby urban residents buy up prime agricultural land for residential or commercial purposes. The conversion of farm lands and watersheds for residential purposes have negative consequences on food security, water supply as well as the health of the people, both in the cities and in the peri-urban areas.

The increasing urbanisation has led to a number of socio-economic problems like crime, suicides, drug abuse, unemployment and poverty, alcoholism, overcrowding, housing shortage, slums, traffic control and pollution. At the same time they are also centres of civilisation and culture by helping a lot in the process of modernization. The very pattern of economic development in the third world countries has resulted increasing imbalance in the distribution of per capita national income and large number of people are relegated to below poverty line. The poor occupy the environmentally vulnerable areas liable to water logging or flooding, other natural hazard, epidemics and chemical pollution.

**Objective:** The present study concentrates to examine the trend of urbanization and its impact on environment.

**Methods and Materials:** This study is descriptive type of research. The data is gathered through secondary sources like books, articles, websites and web-based journals published in different times.

**Analysis:** The different materials collected from the different sources have been scrutinized, verified and set up systematically under appropriate heading in such a way to hold requisite presentation and conclusion.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The percentage of urban population to total population of India and Assam since 1901 to 2011 has been shown in the Table-1 and Fig.-1. It reveals that the urban population of

India which was 10.84 per cent of the total population in 1901 increased to 23.64 per cent in 2011. Consequently, the percentage of urban population to total population of Assam also increased from 2.34 per cent in 1901 to 11.03 per cent in 2011. The table shows that the urbanisation in Assam has been really augmented only since 1950's. The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century revealed that the urbanisation remained stagnant around 2 per cent to 3 per cent but suddenly increased to 4.29 per cent in 1951 and 7.21 per cent in 1961 and 11.10 per cent in 1991 and further to 12.90 per cent in 2001. However, it is remarkable to note that the percentage of urban population decreased in the year 2011 in comparison to 2001 in both state and the country as a whole.

**Table-1: Percentage of Urban population to total population from 1901 to 2011 in India and Assam**

Census Year	India	Assam
1901	10.84	2.34
1911	10.29	2.41
1921	11.18	2.74
1931	11.99	2.92
1941	13.86	3.11
1951	17.29	4.29
1961	17.97	7.21
1971	19.91	8.82
1981	23.34	9.88
1991	26.73	11.10
2001	27.82	12.90
2011	23.64	11.03

Source: RGI, New Delhi, Basic Statistics of NER, 2006 and Population census, 2011

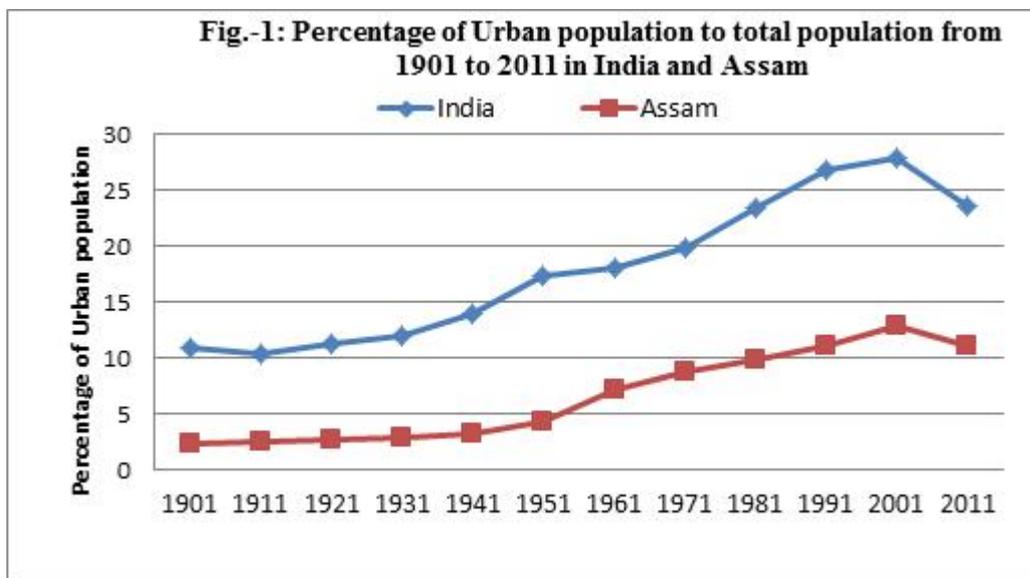


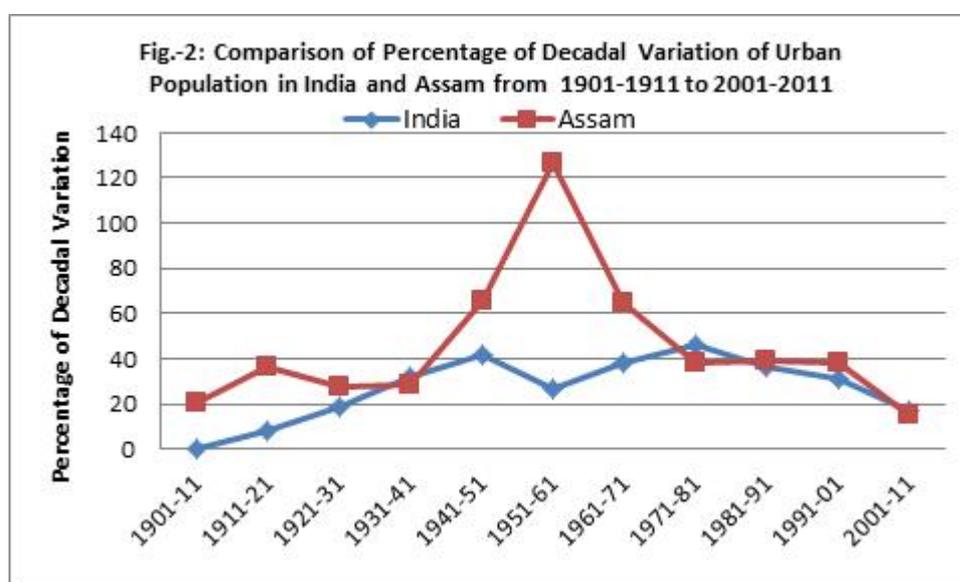
Table-2 shows the percent of decadal variation of urban population of India and Assam during 1901-1911 to 2001-2011 and it is also depicted in Fig.-2. It reveals the fact that percentage of decadal variation of urban population of Assam is seen always much higher in all decades under

consideration except 1931-1941, 1971-1981 and 2001-2011. The percentage of decadal variation of urban population during 1951-1961 was the maximum (126.57%) in Assam due to the settlement of non-assamees, most of them were Bangladeshi.

**Table-2: Comparison of Percentage of Decadal Variation of Urban Population from 1901-11 to 2001-11 in India and Assam**

Year	India	Assam
1901-11	0.35	20.56
1911-21	8.27	36.8
1921-31	19.12	27.58
1931-41	31.97	28.3
1941-51	41.42	65.73
1951-61	26.41	126.57
1961-71	38.23	65.01
1971-81	46.14	38.25
1981-91	36.44	39.58
1991-01	31.51	38.24
2001-11	17.51	15.32

Source: RGI, New Delhi, Basic Statistics of NER, 2006 and Population census, 2011



The pace of urbanisation in Assam has always been lower than that of other states of India. Apart from the slow rate of growth, Assam has the very bad colonial experience in matters of urbanisation. Even in 1991, when all India rate of urbanisation is 25.75, it is below 20 per cent in Assam. Of course, the number of first class town increased to 4 at that time. The reason for slow growth was that Assam is situated in far of the country and so it was not linked with business and commerce of the different provinces due to its specific geographical position and climatic condition. Unlike the other kingdom of India, the Ahom dynasty in Assam, which ruled for about six hundred years, could not create an atmosphere of trade and commerce. The foreign trading companies of England, Portugal, Holland, France etc. settled in the selected places 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 barter system. The bulk of the items needed for the people were marketed by the outside communities like the

Marowaries and the Syhleti people. The indigenous people under the Ahom state were not interested in trade and business. 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 environment reasons. The British authority in Assam crushed the independent business after the 1857 rebellion.

The pattern of urbanisation in Assam in terms of numbers of towns under various class sizes in post independence period is shown in the **table- 3**. It confirms the fact that in 1951 there was no class-I town in Assam. Out of total towns in Assam, six towns viz. Guwahati (818809), Silchar (156948), Dibrugarh (133571), Jorhat (120415), Nagaon (108786), Tinsukia (101957) had been placed as class-1 towns in 2001. Dominance of class size IV and V towns is visible in the table-3.

**Table-3: Urban Agglomeration and Towns in Assam as per class size (1951-2001)**

Town class census	I (1 lakh and above)	II (50000-99999)	III (20000-49999)	IV (10000-19999)	V (5000-9999)	VI (below 5000)	Total I to VI
1951	-	4	7	8	2	1	22
1961	1	4	8	22	14	4	53
1971	1	4	10	26	23	8	72
1981	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
1991	4	4	19	34	20	12	93
2001	6	7	24	34	43	11	125

Source: Census of India 1951-1991 provisional population total. Statistical Hand Book, Assam-2008

Many people are moving to cities because of the available opportunities and the availability of infrastructure facilities. The economic growth of India has also brought in foreign investments and hence is increasing opportunities for locals. However, infrastructure facilities are bottleneck to the rapid growth of the economy of Assam and consequently there has been an infrastructure crunch in many big cities also in India. The infrastructure in the metros of India is under severe stress and may crumble in a few years if there are no suitable measures taken. Pollution is increasing; transportation systems are not developing with the rhythm of population growth; water and sewage systems are decrepit and failing. India is undergoing a gradual transformation from a predominantly rural society to a more urban society. There are significant shifts in the economy in terms of decline in the share of primary sector in view of output and employment. The employment trends between 1971 and 1991 show that there has been some decline in the manufacturing employment and increase in service sector in urban India.

### IMPACT OF URBANIZATION ON ATMOSPHERIC ENVIRONMENT

Modernization and urbanisation are closely correlated. Urbanisation, which is the formation of urban areas like towns and cities, is an ongoing process, the rate of which shows a rising trend. Urbanization reflects society's shift from resource-gathering (fishing, hunting, etc.) and traditional low-production agricultural practices to intensive agriculture, industrialization and mass production of goods. This has resulted in the migration of large sections of the rural populace into the cities to serve as the work force for industrial and allied activities. Although the cities perhaps represent the ultimate in man's capacity to alter his physical environment, ecologists feel that in spite of all the sophisticated technology that they contain, the cities are nevertheless, artificial systems which are dependent for all the vital resources, like air, water and food on the natural 'rural' system that surround them. The greatest significance of forests, however, lies in their critical role in maintaining ecological processes and life supporting systems (Singh and Sudarshan, 1996). Various studies on Indian urbanisation reveals that Indian cities are expanding on the one hand and losing green field areas on the other, with disastrous ecological crisis in our towns and cities. The deterioration of the environmental quality is regarded as the inevitable consequence of urbanisation.

Environmental degradation is no longer an issue that concerns only environmental activists. The concern has become a part of mainstream culture, across the political spectrum. But as if the environment itself is not enough for us to worry about, there is another aspect of how human activities are affecting our lives on planet Earth that receives less attention. This is an insidious problem because comprehending it requires thinking about processes occurring

on geological time scales interacting with processes occurring on the human time scale, and humans are not typically wired to think in geological time (Alan L. Kafka, *et.al.*, 2009).

### CONCLUSION

There is an urgent need to tackle the problem of population growth in the urban areas in a rational manner. Comprehensive land use planning and revision of planning standards and administrative procedures would, go a long way to, reduce many of the problems that face urban populations in India ,especially in Assam. Vehicular pollution control in town deserves top priority. Urgent attention should be given to reduce the generation of solid waste at the sources through mandatory standards. Improved technologies should be developed for waste collection, treatment, and disposal in order to ensure proper solid waste management. Evidences from the present study indicates that the maintenance of high quality of life in town requires the innovative economic growth potential as well as our urban population in the urban areas should be stabilized at sufficient level in lieu with the resources available and the protection of environmental quality leading towards sustainable development. Serious attention should be given to the need for improving urban strategies, which promote efficiency in resource use.

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**Notes**

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