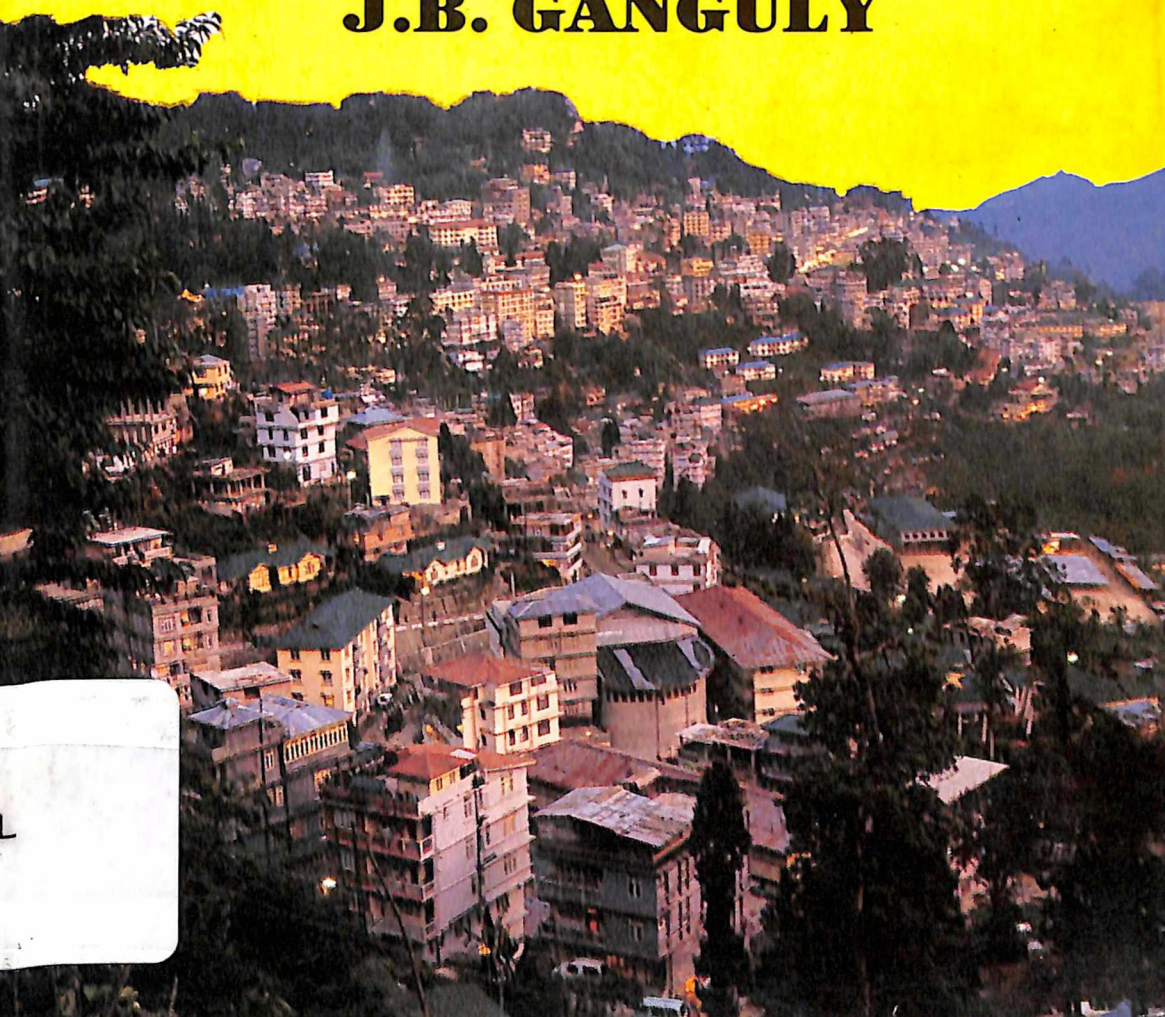


# Urbanization and Development in North-East India

Trends and Policy Implications

Edited by

**J.B. GANGULY**



# URBANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

TRENDS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS



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## *Preface*

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Towns are the focal points of trade and administration in history. Administrative compulsions, economic policies and interests and social attitudes determine the location and growth of urban centres. When the British occupied the country, India had a feudal economy, mainly agrarian in character, bulk of the people groaning in dire poverty. British trading centres became centres of economic activities and old administrative centres continued for the time being as before. Strategic requirements also determined the setting up and growth of new towns.

Low productivity of the traditional agriculture and the new administrative and economic activities in and around existing urban centres led to the migration on a large scale since 1950 to the urban areas in search of better employment opportunities. New administrative towns also grew. Number of towns grew in North-East by 27% during 1981-91 against less than 16% else-where in the country. New towns are extended villages with a minimum of urban outfit. The new towns are mostly trading centres with some rural development administrative offices. There are hardly any agricultural surplus in north-east India to sustain the urban life and its expansion with better facilities. Most of the people in the new urban centres do not get modern sanitation and potable and safe water for their minimum daily requirements. North-East India in 1991 had 195 towns of various categories. Of the total of 31.54 million people in North-East 4.38 million (13.88%) live in urban areas (1991), most of them living in slum like situation. Socio-economic forces compel people to migrate to the urban areas and a number of extended villages acquired the character of census towns to serve as service centres for the surrounding settlements having crossed the rural-urban threshold. What we need today is strengthening and upgrading the urban infrastructure to withstand the increasing

population migration from the rural areas and inter-state migration to north-east India.

Professor M.G. Michael, the then Vice-Chancellor, North Eastern Hill University, inaugurated NEICSSR seminar on Pattern, Problems and Prospects of Urbanization in North-East India on 22-23 November 1991. North-East India Council for Social Science Research requested Professor J.B. Ganguly, the then Vice-Chancellor, Tripura University, an eminent economist of the country, to edit the volume. We are grateful to Ministry of Urban Affairs, Govt. of India, particularly to Mr. C.D. Tripathi, the then Additional Secretary to the Ministry, and to Mr. L. Menezes, the then Secretary, North Eastern Council and to the Government of Meghalaya for giving support to hold the seminar. We take this opportunity to thank Mr. G.S. Bhatia and Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi-110027 for undertaking the expeditious publication of the volume.

NEICSSR, Shillong

B. DATTA RAY



## *Introduction*

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The North Eastern Region consists of seven States, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. During the colonial period, large parts of this Region were kept as "Excluded Areas" or "Partially Excluded Areas". Further, under the Inner Line Regulation outsiders were prohibited from entering into the tribal area beyond the Inner Line without an 'Inner Line Pass' issued by the competent executive authority. The British rulers, through such measures, sought to protect the tribals from so-called exploitation by the non-tribals. The tribals were also largely left to themselves to pursue their traditional methods of livelihood and manage their affairs in accordance with their ancestral customs. Consequently, the level of urbanization in the region was very low. But after Independence and particularly since the planning era began, substantial amounts of investments have been made in building up and expanding the basic infrastructure in the region and setting up of a large number of administrative centres at different levels. For the development of agriculture and allied activities and industries also considerable amounts of resources have been spent for the balanced development of this region. Such developments have been resulting in the growth of urban centres in the region at quite a rapid pace.

The process of economic development and that of urbanization are in many respects interrelated. The urbanites generally have greater access to modern amenities of life, education, health and other civic services than the ruralites. Employment opportunities are also much more diversified and numerous than in the villages. But urbanization may also give rise to a host of problems like over-crowding and scarcities in housing, water-supply, and educational and training facilities, pollution of environment, lack of proper sanitation and health care services and even unemployment. On account of historical and

geographical factors the rates of urban growth and the pattern of urbanization as also the nature and extent of urban problems vary from State to State in the region. The challenges of proper management of civic services in the urban centres of the different States are also not uniform. Consequently, the implications for planning of development of urban areas and social, cultural and economic activities therein are different for the different States. A seminar on "Urbanization in the North Eastern Region: Trends and Policy Implications" was therefore organized by the North-East India Council for Social Science Research in Shillong on 22 and 23 November 1991 to analyse the trends in the growth and pattern of urbanization and the problems faced by the urban-dwellers as also the prospects for future urban growth.

This book is a collection of papers presented at this seminar excepting for the three papers—one each on Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura—written by the authors concerned on the request of the editor.

Debendra Kumar Nayak, Sukla Chakravorty and Subrata Chakravorty have pointed out that the pattern of urbanization in the NER presents a paradoxical situation; while the hilly areas, 'with their quasi-subsistent tribal economies' have been going through the phase of an urban explosion in the recent years, the valley areas having surplus-producing peasant economy have been experiencing stagnation in respect of the growth of urban areas. Reckoning literacy rate, death rate, infant mortality rate, per capita consumption per month of the urban population as the indices of their quality of life, P.C. Dey shows that the quality of urban life in the NER is much better than that of the country as a whole. Examining the Census data about migration of population to urban areas, P.R. Bhattacharjee concludes that, in the initial phase inter-State migration of population acted as the exogenous impetus for the urbanization process in the NER. Of late, however, 'the endogenous factors of urban growth', that is, natural growth of urban population, increased flow of intra-State rural-urban population, etc. are becoming more significant in contributing to the pace of urban growth.

To B.S. Butola urbanization is a process of perpetuating spatial and sectoral dependencies and it is 'antithetical to development and regional balance'. The phenomenon of high rate of growth of urbanization in the NER in the face of relative stagnation in its economic growth, according to him, has been 'strengthening the bonds of regional dependency and the process of its underdevelopment'.

P.H. John has noted the severe shortages of housing facilities and

other civic amenities as also the erosion of values suffered by the indigenous people as they had increasing interactions with the 'business-minded communities' coming from outside the region. Saifun Nessa is distressed by the fact that in the wake of the growth of urban centres, the rural areas have been suffering from the drainage of brain as well as scarce physical resources. The urban areas have been also facing innumerable problems but their solution, she thinks, can come only through the solution of the basic rural problems. After analysing the causes of social tension in the region Biman Kar concludes that persistent social tensions in Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura are partly attributable to 'the immigration dominated urban growth' in these States. A.K. Neog opines that studies in urban poverty should be 'regional and location-specific'. For the all India surveys like those conducted by the NSSO generate data which are too general to enable the policy makers to draw inference about the different regions on account of their socio-economic diversities. Pointing out the need for the society to take care of the elder citizens Mathew George has given details about the working of the 'Mercy Home' in Shillong as 'a home away from home' for the elder citizens.

Facts marshalled by Abhik Gupta indicate that "the majority of the towns and cities of North-Eastern India have so far remained mere centres of trade and administration, and not of industry, even then grossly unplanned development combined with increasing population have resulted in degradation of water bodies in or near them". M.P. Bezbaruah considers the low level of urbanization and industrial and economic backwardness of the NER is 'a blessing in disguise' since it provides for the opportunity of launching a development process "programmed to achieve balanced expansion of rural and urban sectors". Sarit Kumar Chaudhuri, Dipak Kumar Adak and Anirudhya Dey have confirmed by referring to Census data that both the birth and death rates in urban areas are lower than that in rural areas. J.B. Ganguly surveys the rate and pattern of urban growth since 1951 and the different problems faced by the urbanites in the NER and discusses their implications for formulating the policy frame for regulating the directions of future urban growth and tackling the growing urban problems.

All the five papers on Arunachal Pradesh have noted that the process of urbanization in the State has been linked with the setting up of administrative headquarters at different levels. R.P. Bhattacharjee has emphasized the communication bottleneck as the basic constraint

of development of urban centres in the State. He has suggested the building up of a lateral road running from the eastern to western parts of Arunachal Pradesh linking all the district towns which will augment production of agricultural goods and disposal of marketable surplus by the local producers. This will ultimately help the growth of towns. Anticipating that the trends of urbanization in Arunachal Pradesh will be further accelerated in the coming decades and considering the fact that the terrain of the State is hilly, A. Mitra suggests that "instead of population cogglomerating in or two large towns, there should be an increased number of medium and small-sized towns in the different districts of Arunachal Pradesh." Gurudas Das characterizes the process of urbanization in Arunachal Pradesh as an induced one in the sense that it 'has been superimposed on a comparatively simple tribal socio-economic structure'. The urban centres, according to him, "absorb and transmit the consumerist culture and consumer goods of the metropolis to the surrounding rural areas." No wonder, an important fall-out of this development has been the virtual extinction of the indigenous crafts. A.K. Agarwal has particularly studied the variations in the growth of population in rural and urban areas in the circles of six existing towns between 1971 and 1981 and found that the rates of growth of population in the rural areas adjoining urban areas were also high excepting for the Along Circle. This has been so, according to him, on account of the fact that growing number of persons have migrated from the remote interiors to the villages in the vicinity of the towns. M.C. Behera has shown that not only the share of scheduled tribe population in the total urban population has been increasing but also that, under the impact of urbanization, literacy rates among both the male and female scheduled tribe population have been rising and, what is more, significant shifts in occupation of the tribal population from primary to secondary and tertiary sectors have been taking place.

P.L. Bhuyan and N.C. Das observe that most of the urban areas in Assam are continua of rural areas and, therefore, 'it becomes difficult to demarcate the actual town area from that of village area.' The process of urbanization is also marked by lack of proper planning of development of urban infrastructure and productive activities. Kailash Sharma has constructed a model to explain with illustrations how quite a good number of growth centres in Assam have evolved over time into busy and crowded urban centres. Based on his field work and the available secondary data Dipankar Banerjee has highlighted the fact that immigration of population from different parts of the country and

even abroad substantially accounts for the population boom in Guwahati city which is the premier urban agglomeration not only for Assam but for the NER as a whole. In fact, it is the gateway to the seven North Eastern States. He has brought out the glaring deficiencies in the basic amenities particularly in respect of sanitation and drainage systems. He urges upon the preparation and implementation of the plan of development of Guwahati by involving the city-dwellers shunning too much of bureaucratization and having one centralized authority to formulate and carry out the plan instead of relying on too many agencies as at present.

Karbi Anglong district in Assam is the home of the Karbis. There are only two towns in the district, namely, Diphu and Hamren. The process of urbanization in the district, even as its pace is still a slow one, has already set in motion as S.S. Mishra and R.P. Athparia point out, the process of detribalization among the Karbis living in urban areas.

In Manipur 28 per cent of the total population lives in towns. It is the second highest urbanized State in the NER. Tombi Singh has, however, noted that the problems of unemployment, air pollution, emergence of slum areas, violence, shortage of housing, proper medical facilities, etc. have been afflicting the process of urbanization in Manipur though not in a very acute form as yet.

Reviewing the trend of urban growth in Meghalaya, Siddheswar Sharma has emphasised the fact that development of urban amenities has been lagging far behind the growth of each of the seven urban centres in Meghalaya. Nandini Chakraborty, A.C. Mahapatra and D.K. Nayak have formulated a model of peripheral urban development to explain the emergence and development of Shillong as an urban centre. They have highlighted the enclave character of the city as it had no organic link with its 'quasi-foraging and quasi-peasant' hinterland. The city's early growth, they have shown, was 'linked with the region's growing contact and integration with the colonial metropolitan economy'. Danny D. Nengnong, Debendra K. Nayak and A.C. Mahapatra have analysed the spatial pattern of migration in Meghalaya, particularly migration from rural to urban areas and have observed that, contrary to the all-India pattern, a very high percentage of rural to urban migrants in the State, i.e., 46.5 per cent, consists of women, which, according to them, is a reflection of the 'higher overall status' enjoyed by the women. S.K. Agnihotri has brought out the weaknesses in the structure of urban administration in Meghalaya. He opines that

inadequacies of legislative enactments for ensuring proper planning of urban development, deficiencies in the functioning of the local boards and municipalities in managing civic affairs in their respective domains, meagreness of investments made in the urban sector and *ad hocism* in implementation of development schemes, etc. are responsible for tardy development of urban amenities and infrastructure in Meghalaya.

Urban population constitutes 46.20 per cent of the total population in Mizoram. This is the highest proportion among the States in India. A.K. Agarwal in his study of the urbanization pattern in Mizoram has cited the disquieting feature of 'exorbitantly higher rate of growth of the large metropolitan urban centres without any proportionate increase in housing and infrastructural facilities'.

In bringing out the main features of the process of urbanization in Nagaland, Jogamaya K.K. Saikia has highlighted the characteristics of the two premier towns of Nagaland, namely, Kohima and Dimapur. She has identified the factors contributing to the growth of these two towns very fast and their impacts on the social, cultural and economic life of the people.

Reviewing the pattern and problems of urbanization in Tripura, P.R. Bhattacharjee opines that the urban areas in the State still reflect some traits of rural areas and that 'the urban culture, amenities and opportunities are yet to grow' in the towns of Tripura.

Studies made by the participants in the seminar have thrown up the problems commonly facing the North Eastern States. The process of urbanization had a late start in these States, but its pace in the recent decades has accelerated so much so that expansion of essential urban amenities and civic services has been severely lagging behind the growth of urban population. The most common urban problems like overcrowding and growth of slums, scarcity of water-supply, inadequacies of public health and sanitation system, growing unemployment among the educated youths and the consequent frustration among them, etc. are already in evidence in the towns of North East India. In such a milieu it is the urban poor who suffer most. Secondly, this also breeds social and political tensions. But in the North-Eastern States these problems are not yet as acute as in many other parts of the country. By formulating appropriate planning of development of urban infrastructure and civic services and implementing them for benefiting all classes of urbanites these problems need to be tackled. But for this purpose, as pointed out by

several participants, the management structure must be streamlined by abolishing the system of multiplicity of authorities dealing with urban planning and execution thereof. Appropriate legislative measures for this purpose need to be taken by the State Governments concerned before it becomes too late.

No plan of urban development can be carried out without mobilization of adequate resources for this purpose. And in this respect these States will have to heavily depend on the resource transfers from the Centre. But they must also raise resources locally. The municipal tax structure should be a progressive one and the households belonging to the upper and middle income groups should be required to pay for the civic amenities they enjoy at the least possible subsidised rates. In the ultimate analysis, the possibility of generating resources locally will depend on the extent of participation of the people in the process of planning and execution of planned schemes that can be ensured by installing popularly elected local self-governing authorities.

Some participants view the urbanization process in the NER as a process of development of underdevelopment. For the region's economic backwardness still persists and the growth of urbanization is not being backed by growing diversification of productive activities, particularly, development of manufacturing activities utilizing locally available natural resources. The actual process of development has been a lopsided one as this is sectorally unbalanced and therefore cannot be sustained. In 1991, more than two-thirds of the main workers in the region were engaged in the primary sector consisting of agriculture and allied activities. The secondary sector including cottage industries accounted for 7 per cent of main workers in Manipur, 2.5 per cent in Assam and 1.95 per cent in Tripura. In the remaining States this ratio is less than one per cent. Roughly one-third of the main workers were occupied in the service sector, that is, mostly in government offices, institutions and government-aided bodies. But the scope for further absorption of educated youths in government jobs is extremely limited. No wonder the region is faced with steeply growing problem of urban unemployment.

Urbanization has also been affecting the rural productive activities, particularly, rural crafts. Shifts in demand from indigenous to imported products have been causing leakage of incomes out of the region, sucking away of natural resources and destruction of some indigenous productive enterprises. Yet the process of urbanization, like the process of modernization, cannot be halted as the trend of migration

from rural to urban areas is likely to continue, more and more new towns are likely to come up and the existing towns are likely to continue to spread into the adjoining rural areas. Therefore, planning of development of the NER should integrate into it the planning of development of urban infrastructure and civic services which are the prerequisites of development and diversification of productive activities for generating more employment opportunities and income.

The upshot of the matter is that, in terms of the territorial dimension of organizing productive activities, the urban sector in the NER has assumed much importance and it needs to be given considerable weightage in making allocations for planned development of this sector, without, of course, undermining the importance of the rural sector. Basically the two sectors are symbiotically related with each other and neither sector can advance steadily at the cost of the other : the two sectors need to grow in a mutually balanced manner.



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## *Pattern of Urbanization in the North-East*

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DEBENDRA KUMAR NAYAK, SUKLA CHAKRAVORTY  
AND SUBRATA CHAKRAVORTY

### GENERALITIES

Degree of urbanization in a region does provide a fair measure of its social and economic progress. Urban development, as the historical evidences suggest, takes place as a consequence of structural transformation of the economy from subsistent peasant based production to a surplus generating economy wherein a substantial segment of the working population gets engaged in non-agricultural pursuits. The functional quality of towns gets closely associated with the stage of socio-economic development. The geographic patterning of urbanization, therefore, is seen as a vital clue to the understanding of the degree of socio-economic transformation in any region.

However, this generalization needs to be treated with caution. There are evidences, particularly in the underdeveloped countries, which suggest that urbanization may not truly reflect the socio-economic transformation in any region if it tends to be unrelated to the regional economy and is not accompanied by structural changes in the economy.

Whatever be the quality of urbanization, its geographic patterning is an important key to unravel the true nature and implications of the process. An attempt is made in this paper to evaluate the nature of urban development in the North-Eastern part of India. The selection of the region is based on the understanding that the region is characterized by a striking diversity in its geographic setting—both physical and human—and the urban development in this part of the country is of recent origin.

## THE REGION

The region presents the complexities of the sub-Himalayan ranges, the Indo-Burmese hills of Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram and the eroded surfaces of the Meghalayan plateau—all encircling the Brahmaputra valley. The hills are sharply marked from the plains physically as well as culturally though so linked locationally that to some extent they must be treated together.

The complex physiographic conditions proved restrictive to large-scale urban development in the region in the past. Often described as a microcosm of the Indian subcontinent, the North-East is represented by all the three physiographic divisions of the country though on a much smaller scale—the northern mountains, the central plain and the southern plateau.

The northern mountains are in fact an extension of the Himalayas with modification introduced in the erosional features by much heavier rainfall. The Indo-Burmese hill ranges are much less imposing as a relief feature. The hills consist of ranges aligned in the north-south axis with intervening parallel valleys. The altitude of the Manipur and Naga hills varies between 900 and 2100 metres. Mizo hills are of much lower altitude; rarely rising above 900 metres. Parts of Tripura and the Imphal valley in Manipur represent areas of low relief.

The Assam valley is an alluvial expanse laid down by the mighty Brahmaputra and its numerous tributaries extending for nearly 640 kilometres between Dhubri and Sadia. The average width of the valley varies between 90 and 100 kilometres.

The Meghalaya and Karbi plateau, a fragment of the peninsular block, is a highly dissected tract. The only prominent relief features are found in Garo, Khasi and Jaintia hills. The summit levels in these hills rise upto 1300-1800 metres. The southern face of the plateau descends precipitously towards the Surma valley.

Difficult and inhospitable terrain conditions in the hilly and plateau areas and the dangers of annual flooding in the entire stretch of the Brahmaputra valley renders the whole of the North-East economically backward, supporting for most parts, a legion of tribal groups at different levels of technological attainment ranging from palaeolithic hunting and gathering to primitive subsistence agriculture of shifting cultivation in the hill slopes and settled cultivation in the limited river valleys. The tribes are highly concentrated in the hills and the plateaus. The valley too, that is, the region to the north of Brahmaputra as well as the river islands still retain their predominantly tribal character.

In the Naga, Garo, Khasi and Jaintia hills, the Manipur plateau and the Himalayan belt in Arunachal Pradesh, the responses of the tribes to the physical environment are expressed in shifting or settled agriculture on hill terraces and valleys. In the Brahmaputra valley, the Cachar plain and the Manipur valley, the dominant economic response is subsistence peasant agriculture.

The topography and the associated subsistent or quasi-subsistent nature of the economy have been the most severe constraints on urban development in the hills and the plateaus. The great length of the valley in relation to its breadth too hardly offers good sites. Dhubri, Guwahati and Tezpur—important towns in the valley—are all situated on tiny outliers of the Shillong plateau. Other towns are either railheads or river ports on the widely variable banks of the Brahmaputra.

Despite the constraints imposed by the physical environment and the socio-economic structures, the region, of late, is experiencing great proliferation in the number of towns and increase in the proportion of people living in urban areas. These changes are, however, not accompanied by any significant and perceptible shift in the economic organisation. Moreover, the level and growth of urbanization reveals striking regional variations with its concomitant implications for the region's overall growth and development.

The present attempt is to document, and analyze the process of urbanization as it unfolds itself in the region. The analysis is based on the data generated by the 1991 census operations.

### STATE LEVEL PATTERN

A comparison of the census data on the percentage of urban population during the past 30 years (1961-91) shows dramatic shifts

and changes in the levels of urbanisation in the seven states included in the region (see Table 1.1 and Fig. 1.

Table 1.1 reveals that the level of urbanization in all the states was much below the national average in the year 1961. Meghalaya was the only state with a substantial proportion of its population (15.3 per cent) living in towns. The states located in the Himalayan ranges were characterized by an extremely low level of urbanization. The people in Arunachal Pradesh were entirely rural in their composition. However, only Manipur, located in the Himalayas, had a semblance of urbanization, where about 8.7 per cent of the population preferred an urban living. The level of urbanization in Tripura was only marginally higher than that of Assam.

The most spectacular changes in the level of urbanization seem to have taken place in Mizoram. Only one out of twenty persons preferred urban living in the state in 1961. The latest census enumerated only a little less than half of the population (46.2 per cent) living in urban areas. The level of urbanization picked up a higher pitch during the 1981-91 decade. Degree of urbanization showed an impressive upswing in Manipur too, though much less dramatic than that of Mizoram. The gain in urbanization in the state took place during 1971-81, after which the pace slowed down substantially. Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh too are experiencing high level of urbanization in the recent years. While the former experienced large scale urbanization during 1971-81, urban development in the latter is more recent; confined to the last decade.

It is significant that the level of urbanization remains stagnant in Meghalaya, Assam and Tripura. All these three states had recorded a relatively higher level of urbanization in the year 1961.

Interestingly, the highland region is experiencing unprecedented urban growth and are fast outpacing the level of urbanization found in the states dominated by plains and plateaus. Despite having a large proportion of plain areas, the level of urbanization in Assam remains incredibly low and its growth negligible during the past three decades. Likewise, Meghalaya, having the largest share of urban population in the entire North-East, now occupies much lower rank and the urban growth was only marginal in the past three decades.

#### DISTRICT LEVEL PATTERNS

The pattern at the state level gets substantially modified when the

TABLE 1.1

**North-East—Levels of Urbanization**  
(Percentage of Urban to the Total Population—1961-91)

States	1961	R	1971	R	1981	R	1991	R	% Differential			
									1961-71	1971-81	1981-91	1961-91
Arunachal Pradesh	0.0	7	3.7	7	6.6	7	12.2	6	3.7	2.9	5.6	12.2
Assam	8.4	4	8.9	6	10.3	6	11.1	7	0.5	1.4	0.8	2.7
Manipur	8.7	3	13.2	2	26.4	1	27.7	2	4.5	13.2	1.3	19.0
Meghalaya	15.3	1	14.6	1	18.1	3	18.7	3	-0.7	3.5	0.6	3.4
Mizoram	5.4	5	11.4	3	24.7	2	46.2	1	6.0	13.3	21.5	40.8
Nagaland	5.2	6	10.0	5	15.5	4	17.3	4	4.8	5.5	1.8	12.1
Tripura	9.0	2	10.4	4	11.0	5	15.3	5	1.4	0.6	4.3	6.3
India	18.4		19.9		23.3		25.7		1.5	3.4	2.4	7.3

'R' stands for the rank of the state.



analysis is extended to lower spatial units, i.e., the districts. It is clear from the following table that as many as seven districts confined to the highland areas of Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh are yet to experience any urban development. Likewise, in another three districts located north of the Brahmaputra, the level of urbanization is only negligible, accounting for less than five per cent of the total population. Over one-thirds of the districts, most of which are located in the Brahmaputra valley, the Cachar and Tripura plains; and the Meghalaya plateau, the level of urbanization ranges between five and ten per cent.

TABLE 1.2

**North-East : Frequency of Districts in Size-Classes of Urbanization (1991)**

<i>% Urban Population</i>	<i>Districts</i>	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Above 40	3	5.0
30-40	5	8.3
20-30	3	5.0
15-20	8	13.3
10-15	10	16.7
5-10	21	35.0
0.1-5	3	5.0
Nil	7	11.7
Total	60	100.0

On the other hand, high level of urbanization is noticed in the hilly tracts of the region. Over forty per cent people live in urban areas in two northern districts of Mizoram and Imphal district in Manipur valley. The share of urban population ranges between thirty and forty per cent in two more districts in Manipur valley and one district each in Assam, Meghalaya and Nagaland, supporting the capital towns of these states.

Lower Subansiri district in Arunachal Pradesh and West Tripura district in Tripura too record a relatively larger proportion of urban population. These two districts contain in them the capital townships of

Itanagar and Agartala respectively. The urban proportion varies between twenty and thirty per cent in these two districts. Significantly, the hilly tracts of the north Cachar hills to record a similar proportion of urban population in sharp contrast to the adjoining plains.

The spatial patterning in the levels of urbanization in the region reveals two strikingly divergent trends: the valley and plateau pattern and the hilly pattern. Barring a few notable exceptions, the urban growth in the valley and the plateau remains uniformly low. Districts with capital towns and oil establishments stand out as pockets of high urbanization. South of Brahmaputra is slightly more urbanized than the north.

Spatial variation in the level of urbanization in the hilly tracts gets highly accentuated depending upon local differences in topography and altitude. Areas of very high level of urbanization stand as islands amid or in close proximity to areas without a semblance of urbanization. Significantly, higher level of urbanization in the hilly areas is by and large restricted to the river valleys of varying width. This pattern is remarkably clear in Manipur Himalayas wherein the plateau is virtually rural whereas nearly half the population in the adjoining valley lead an urban life. Likewise, the small river valleys of Lohit, Dibang and Subansiri in Arunachal Himalayas are being urbanized very fast while the neighbouring highland areas continue to be entirely rural. The Mizo hills provide another pocket of very high urbanization. Unlike other areas in the hilly tract, the valley character of urban development is modified here, primarily due to the less imposing relief of the Himalayan ranges in Mizoram. Urban development in Naga hills is confined to the low altitude foot-hill zone.

The process of urbanization in the North-East seems to have been restricted to the administrative centres and the valleys in the hilly areas. In the Brahmaputra valley, the process of urbanization is yet to take off in areas with a strong concentration of tribal population.

### PROLIFERATION OF TOWNS

A major factor in the rising levels of urbanization in this region has been a great proliferation in the number of towns. Within the last 20 years, the number of towns, irrespective of their sizes, has doubled. The census of 1971 recorded only 95 towns of different sizes in the entire North-Eastern region. The total number has risen to the astounding figure of 184 by the year 1991. Table 1.3 reveals that there

has been significant increase in the smaller order cities during the past 20 years. However, the preceding decade (1981-91) shows a remarkable increase in the number of towns in the middle order, i.e., class III and class IV towns. Bulk of this rise seems to be a result of the shift of the lower order towns during the past decade. Significantly, the number of class-II towns remain constant despite rise in the number of class-I towns.

TABLE 1.3

**North-East: Number of Towns—1971-91**

<i>Size Class</i>	<i>1971</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1991</i>
1	3	4	8
2	6	6	7
3	11	18	33
4	33	36	57
5	27	45	50
6	15	28	29
Total	95	137	184

A comparison of the number of towns in a district and its level of urbanization shows interesting patterns. In general it seems that the level of urbanization is strongly and positively associated with the proliferation of towns. However, there are significant deviations. These deviations may be grouped under two broad types: (a) areas with great proliferation of towns, but the level of urbanization remains low; (b) areas having fewer urban centres, but the level of urbanization is high. The former category includes lower Brahmaputra valley, particularly on its north bank and the Tripura plains. The second category comprises of most areas in the hilly tract. All the pockets of high urbanization in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, the Meghalaya and Manipur plateau, the Cachar hills of Assam and the Lunglei area in Mizoram have a few urban centres, but the level of urbanization achieved is far more impressive (Fig. 2 and Table 1.4).

The sharp contrasts in the hilly and valley patterns once again become clear. The hilly areas, by and large, have permitted fewer urban centres to grow which are attracting great concentration of people. The valley, on the other hand, is experiencing great proliferation in the

number of towns without having much impact on the level of urbanization.

TABLE 1.4

**North-East : Frequency of Districts in Size-Classes of Number of Towns**

<i>No. of Towns</i>	<i>No. of Districts</i>	<i>% of Districts</i>
Nil	7	11.7
1	18	30.0
2-3	17	28.3
4-5	8	13.3
6-9	7	11.7
10 & Above	3	5.0

Areas showing both proliferation in the number of towns and high level of urbanization include the Manipur valley, the Aizawl district in Mizo hills, West Tripura district in Tripura and the Karbi plateau.

Interestingly, the analysis of the proliferation of towns and the level of urbanization brings the Meghalaya plateau closer to the hilly pattern than that of the valley.

A more refined measure of proliferation in the number of towns can be achieved by developing an index which takes care of not only the number of towns but also their size differences. This index, henceforth called the proliferation index, is developed by assigning a weightage structure of 1 to 6 in reverse order for the 6 classes of town sizes recognized by census of India and by multiplying weight with the number of towns of the particular class. The index is arrived at, after adding all the weighted values for a particular district.

The distribution of districts according to the size-classes of proliferation index (Table 1.5) reveals interesting spatial patterns of urbanization in the North-East (Fig. 3).

Figure 3 makes it clear that the proliferation index is either low or very low (i.e., less than 9) in almost the entire hilly tract consisting of the whole of Arunachal Himalayas, the Manipur hills, the Meghalaya plateau, the Indo-Burmese hills of Nagaland and Mizoram and the Tripura plains. Kohima in Nagaland and Aizwal in Mizoram are the only exceptions. Both the Cachar valley and the hills are characterized

by a low index. Predominantly tribal areas in the Brahmaputra valley too have low proliferation of towns. On the other hand, towns have greatly multiplied in select pockets comprising the Manipur valley, lower Assam excluding the tribal areas: Aizawl and Western Tripura.

TABLE 1.5

**North-East: Distribution of Districts in Size-Classes of Proliferation Index**

<i>Proliferation Index</i>	<i>Number of Districts</i>	<i>% of Districts</i>
0	7	11.7
1-4	19	31.6
5-9	15	25.0
10-14	8	13.3
15-19	4	6.7
20% & above	7	11.7

The positive association between proliferation index and the level of urbanization is too obvious to merit detailed discussion. The only glaring instances of deviations are observed in Dhubri in Lower Assam adjoining West Bengal where the high proliferation index is not accompanied by a similar urbanization level. On the other hand, with an extremely low proliferation index, much higher level of urbanization is noticed in the valleys of Arunachal Pradesh.

### STRUCTURE OF URBANIZATION

The structure of urbanization as revealed from the pattern of distribution of towns and population in different size-classes shows high degree of unevenness. The 1991 census recognized as many as 8 cities in the region, supporting a population of over 1,00,000 each. That a very large proportion of the urban population in the North-East lives in very large townships is clear from the fact that nearly two out of five urbanites (38.29 per cent) are claimed by these class-I cities. The class-II towns representing a population size of 50,000 to 1,00,000 are, however, few in comparison and account for a little over 9 per cent of the urbanites in the North-East. Towns having a population of 20,000

to 50,000 are far more numerous and support close to a quarter (23.2 per cent) of the urban population. The largest number of towns are, however, in the size-category of 10,000-20,000 which claim 18.93 per cent of the urbanites. About 8.4 per cent of the urban population is distributed in 50 townships with population ranging between 5,000 and 10,000 in each. Interestingly towns of the lowest size, i.e., with a population below 5,000 persons each, contain a very sizeable proportion (i.e., 19.84 per cent) of the urban population.

It is significant that the bulk of the urban population in the North-East is concentrated in either too large or too small urban centres. Together, the class I and class II towns claim 58.13 per cent of the urban population. Towns with a population size of 20,000-50,000, in the middle order, however, claim a substantial urban population. It is worth noting that well over 80 per cent of the urban population in the North-East is distributed in only three classes of towns numbering only 70 out of the total of 184 towns recognized in 1991.

Predictably, nearly all the large towns are located in the valleys and the Meghalaya plateau. Assam has 4 class I towns while Tripura, Meghalaya, Manipur and Mizoram claim one each. Barring three of these towns in Assam, the remaining are the state capitals. Class II towns are found only in Assam and Nagaland. However, class III towns are much more widespread, irrespective of the ecological diversities. The only exception is found in the Arunachal Himalayas, where the size of the towns is very small, having a population less than 20,000 each.

Excepting, for Tripura, class IV towns are very few in all other states. The class V towns are, however, far more numerous all over the region, but more so in the Brahmaputra valley, Cachar plains, Manipur valley and Tripura. In the hills, only Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh have relatively large number of class V towns. While the plateau as well as the Arunachal and Nagaland Himalayas are devoid of towns less than 5000 population, the Mizo hills have the largest number of such towns.

Table 1.6 reveals the change in the share of urban population in different sizes of towns in each state.

In the case of Assam the rise in the number of class I towns is remarkable; i.e., from only 1 in 1971 to 4 in 1991. This has led to a situation in which about 38 per cent of the urban population lives in large towns in 1991 or 1981. Bulk of the remaining population is distributed in class III and IV towns. The share of urban population in

TABLE 1.6  
**Distribution of Towns of Different Size Classes and Share of Urban Population**

State	Class	1971		1981		1991	
		No. of Towns	% pop.	No. of Towns	% pop.	No. of Towns	% pop.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Assam	I	1	14.8	1	15.0	4	37.6
	II	5	19.2	5	24.0	5	11.7
	III	9	27.3	9	23.0	20	25.6
	IV	24	17.4	24	24.0	32	19.3
	V	20	13.7	20	12.0	15	4.6
	VI	8	7.4	8	2.0	12	1.8
Manipur	I	1	70.8	1	41.7	1	39.6
	II	—	—	—	—	—	—
	III	—	—	2	11.5	3	17.9
	IV	—	—	4	14.6	5	15.4
	V	4	22.2	10	16.7	17	14.1
	VI	3	7.0	14	15.5	4	10.1
Meghalaya	I	—	—	1	72.3	1	67.5
	II	1	55.4	—	—	—	—
	III	—	—	1	14.7	2	20.1
	IV	3	34.4	1	5.4	2	8.1
	V	1	6.6	1	2.5	2	4.2
	VI	1	3.6	3	5.1	—	—
Tripura	I	1	61.8	1	59.4	1	37.6
	II	—	—	—	—	—	—
	III	—	—	4	9.3	4	27.5
	IV	4	32.5	4	23.4	7	24.7
	V	1	5.7	2	6.1	4	7.9
	VI	—	—	2	1.8	2	2.1
Nagaland	I	—	—	—	—	—	—
	II	—	—	—	—	2	52.3
	III	1	41.8	2	55.9	2	21.7
	IV	2	58.2	2	25.2	3	17.8
	V	—	—	3	18.9	2	8.1
	VI	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mizoram	I	—	—	—	—	—	—
	II	—	—	—	—	1	48.7
	III	—	—	1	61.9	—	—
	IV	1	84.1	—	—	2	17.8
	V	—	—	1	14.5	3	12.9
	VI	1	15.9	4	23.6	5	10.1
Ar. Prad.	I	—	—	—	—	11	10.6
	II	—	—	—	—	—	—
	III	—	—	—	—	—	—
	IV	—	—	—	—	—	—
	V	1	36.2	5	90.4	6	66.1
	VI	3	63.8	1	19.6	—	33.9

the remaining classes of towns has fallen substantially and the gain is taking place in the largest urban centres.

There are only two classes of towns in Arunachal Himalayas. However, here too, larger proportion of the urban population now lives in bigger urban centres—a situation in sharp contrast to that of a decade ago. In the Naga hills, more than half of the urban population now lives in the two class II towns. However, the primacy level of the larger order urban centres is showing signs of decline as evident from the fact that about 41.8 per cent urban population in 1971 lived in a single town and the two larger order towns accounted for 55.9 per cent of the urban population in 1981.

Large proliferation in the number of towns and fast increasing levels of urbanization in Mizo Hills have been responsible in the massive decline in the extent of urban primacy observed in 1971. Only a single city in 1971 accounted for more than 84 per cent of the urban population. It fell to 61.9 per cent in 1981 and to 48.7 per cent in 1991. A similar trend is observed in Manipur too.

The trend in Meghalayan plateau is peculiar to itself. The number of towns remained nearly constant over the last three decades. However the pre-eminent position of the only class I town shows a decline with a corresponding increase in the share of population in the lower order towns. Despite this, however, the majority (67.54 per cent) of the urban population is claimed by a single city whereas the remaining 6 cities together account for a meagre 32.46 per cent.

In Tripura, smaller order towns are very few and they account for an equally small proportion of the urban population. The level of primacy of the lone class I city shows a precipitous decline in the preceding decade with a corresponding rise in the number and population in the middle order.

In most parts of the region, proliferation of towns has been responsible for the decline of the dominance of a few large towns.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The pattern of urbanization in the North-East reveals the piquant situation in which the hilly areas, with their quasi-subsistent tribal economies, are going through the phase of an urban explosion in the recent years, whereas the peasant based valley areas show stagnation in their urban growth. The traditional homelands of the tribes are getting urbanized very fast while their plains counterparts remain vastly rural.



This is despite a high level of proliferation of towns in the valleys.

Lack of space does not permit a full discussion on the factors responsible for such a pattern. However a few questions come inevitably as one attempts to assess the implications. What is the direction of change in the tribal areas, particularly in the hilly tract? Urbanization is certainly not a response to the transformation of their economies. In fact, there are sufficient reasons to hazard the guess that the reverse may be true. In other words, it is urbanization which has been inducing far-reaching changes in their economy and social order. The fragmented nature of the spatial pattern of urbanization in these areas is likely to heighten the rural-urban divide in a manner causing further underdevelopment of the tribal areas. Moreover, it may be anybody's guess as to the environmental impacts of high densities in select pockets of these ecologically fragile zone.

The questions that arise in relation to the valleys are exactly of an opposite nature.

The available patterns are only indicative and call for further intensive research in this area to get better insights into these questions.

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## *Some Aspects of the Pattern of Urbanization in North-Eastern India*

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P.C. DEY

### **PART A INTRODUCTION**

Any discussion on the pattern of urbanization in a space should normally be preceded by an analysis of (a) the concept of urban agglomeration, (b) the factors behind the growth of urban areas, (c) the question of prediction of the course of urban growth-trend. In view of all this we are to begin our discussion on urban economics taking the aforementioned points one by one.

In the historical past it was easy to describe what used to constitute urban areas like cities and towns. The areas surrounded by walls were called cities/towns. They were normally administrative centres with all the economic, cultural, defence and other facilities. But along with the change in social, economic, administrative and cultural patterns during the course of history, we do not have now anything like the walled cities or towns. We have many urban agglomerations over a space with interactions amongst themselves in very many ways. Not only this, these urban centres also go on interacting with their surrounding areas. So, in this context many attempts are made now-a-

days to define an urban area. One such attempt defines an urban area on the following criteria: (a) a minimum size of the area based on 'threshold demand levels' sufficient for catering to the needs of wide ranging urban services, (b) a minimum level of population, (c) a minimum level of density of population, i.e. higher non-land/land input ratios, (d) availability of all sorts of economic, cultural, health and educational facilities on which the surrounding rural areas look forward to meeting their very many needs from time to time.

The 1971 Census of India defined an urban area which had the following characteristics: (a) a minimum population of 5,000, (b) a density of population with minimum 400 persons, (c) a minimum of 75 per cent population pursuing non-agricultural activities, (d) all places with a municipality, corporation, and notified town area committee. All Cantonment Boards were included as urban areas.

As regards the factors behind the origin and growth of urban areas, we find them diverse in nature. The famous German economist (who died prematurely) Mr. August LoSch had something to say on this question. According to him "if resources were evenly distributed and if there were constant return to scale in production, population would be equally distributed because each household could produce all that it needed at a minimal scale of production. This hypothetical world would consist of self-sufficient, evenly distributed households. Relaxation of either of these assumptions is . . . sufficient justification for cities to develop." (H.D. Richardson: *Regional and Urban Economics*, page 272).

Proximity to natural resources (tantamounting to the economies of scale) is the dominant cause for agglomeration of industries leading to the growth of tertiary sector in the agglomerated areas. Again, as the growth and existence of urban areas depend on food products for the population therein, the surrounding areas must be in most cases agricultural with the production of surplus food.

The administrative centres in a space develop themselves as urban areas like towns and cities because they cater to the needs of the population.

As regards the prediction of growth-trend and future pattern of an urban area it is a tricky task. A number of demographers have been trying to do it without much success. As for example, Kingsley David's projection for the population growth of big cities in India like Calcutta and Bombay did not become facts for their census calculated population in 1961.

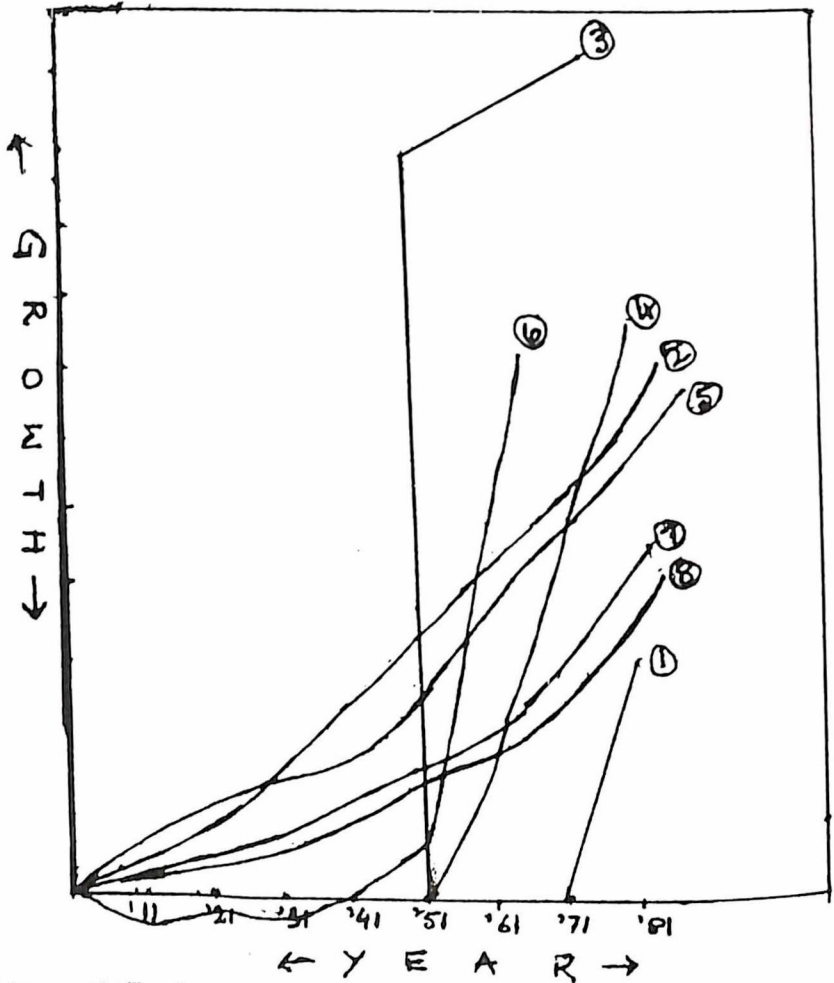
The difficulty with the current literature on Demography is that it has not yet been possible to incorporate in its prediction-models all the extremely diverse factors which cause the growth and pattern of urbanization. Demography has given us—what is called—Logistic Curve which *inter alia* states that: (a) urbanization rate is slow at the initial stage, (b) it then grows fast for some time, (c) and at the last stage it falls. This kind of trend might have been noticed in some advanced countries, but it is hardly noticed in under-developed countries like India. Our study on the growth of urbanization in N.E. India will show the inapplicability of Logistic Curve. In this connection one may aptly make submission that so many diverse factors play their role in the change of growth and pattern of urbanization which are humanly impossible for one to incorporate them into any kind of prediction model.

## **PART B**

If one is to do justice to the discussion of urbanization in N.E. India he will have to take up the issues like causes of urbanization, its present structure and position, its future trend and pattern and its problems and solutions. To take up all the issues one by one will take a lot of space which the author at this stage cannot afford. The data constraints will prevent even a good researcher to analyse all the issues scientifically. So, here we will restrict ourselves to the analysis of pattern of urbanization in N.E. India giving, of course, the background statistical materials presently at our disposal.

The whole of N.E. India is an agricultural land. We do not find here large scale industries and barring the state of Assam no other states here have any medium-sized industries. The expansive tea plantation industry(?) is the mainstay of the economy of Assam. In view of all this one cannot find any pure industrial town in this zone. What one finds are commercial towns—and they are mainly concentrated in Assam. As census was not conducted in Assam in 1981 we have no alternative but to avoid taking up the question of urbanization there. We will, however, try to incorporate in our discussion something of this state where it is unavoidable. The unavailability of the Assam data for the year 1981 will put a number of restrictions in our attempt to analyse the pattern of urbanization in the whole of N.E. India.

**Trend of Urbanization Diagram for N.E. Indian States**



- Notes:
- (A) Trend covers: (1) Arunachal Pradesh, (2) Assam, (3) Manipur, (4) Meghalaya, (5) Mizoram, (6) Nagaland, (7) Tripura.
  - (B) Standard graph paper with one unit taken to be equal to 10 (per cent).
  - (C) Source: Basic Statistics of N.E. Regions, 1987. Table No. 2 'Percentage variation of Population from 1901 to 1981 where percentage of growth of urban population to total population for each of the 7 N.E. Indian states are given.

Let us take the trend of urban growth in all the states of N.E. India first. The following diagram also implies the pattern of urbanization in N.E. India states from 1901 to 1981.

The trend diagram shows that the growth rate of urbanization is highest in Manipur and lowest in Assam, during the period 1901 and 1981. And, in comparison with the urbanization growth rates of all the N.E. Indian states, the overall relevant growth rate of India as a whole is lower (than the growth rates of the respective N.E. Indian states).

As regards the number of cities and towns we have the following table for the N.E. Indian States.

TABLE 2.1

**Distribution of Cities and Towns (in Population Size Class)**

Size (Population) Yr. 1981	Arunachal Pradesh	Manipur	Megha- laya	Mizo- ram	Tripura	Naga- land
1 lakh & above	—	1	1	—	1	—
50,000-less than 1 lakh	—	—	—	1	—	—
25,000-less than 50,000	—	—	—	—	—	2
10,000-less than 25,000	—	6	4	1	5	2
5,000-less than 10,000	5	9	3	4	2	3

Source: Series 1, Paper-I of 1987 General Population Tables.

Table 2.1 shows that Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura have one town each with population more than a lakh. All the states have more number of towns with population between 5,000 and less than 10,000.

It may be interesting to note here that the percentage of female urban population in all the towns of N.E. India is less than 50. The following table gives clearly this picture.

The dispersal of urban population amongst the states of North East India is uneven. The S.D. (Standard Deviation) of this dispersal for the years 1981 and 1991 (projected dispersal) are 6.9 and 8.9 respectively. It shows the widening of urban population distribution amongst the states in 1991.

Note: For calculation of S.D. figures from Table No. 12—Estimation of Growth of Urban Population 1981-91 of Basic Statistics of N.E. Region—1987 were referred to.

TABLE 2.2

**Percentage of Female Population in Towns**

<i>Yr. 1981</i>					
<i>Arunachal Pradesh</i>	<i>Manipur</i>	<i>Meghalaya</i>	<i>Mizoram</i>	<i>Tripura</i>	<i>Nagaland</i>
38	43	47.5	47	49	40.77

TABLE 2.3

**Percentage of Female Population in Big Towns**

<i>Yr. 1981</i>				
<i>Imphal</i>	<i>Shillong</i>	<i>Aizawl</i>	<i>Agartala</i>	<i>Kohima</i>
49	47	47	49	42

*Source:* Figures in Table Nos. 2 & 3 were calculated from Table 30 'Population and Growth rate in urban areas 1981—Basic Statistics of N.E. Region.

TABLE 2.4

**Correlation between the P.C. of Urban Population and Percentage of Main Workers in Different States of N.E. 1981**

<i>States</i>	<i>Main workers as P.C. of total population</i>	<i>Urban population as P.C. of total population</i>
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>
Arunachal Pradesh	49.61	6.6
Assam	—	—
Manipur	40.35	26.4
Meghalaya	43.44	18.1
Mizoram	41.73	24.7
Nagaland	47.53	15.6
Tripura	29.64	11.0
Coefficient of correlation between (1) & (2)		= .90
Probable error		= .063

TABLE 2.5

**Correlation between the P.C. of Urban Population and Percentage of other Workers in Different States of N.E. 1981**

<i>States</i>	<i>Other workers as P.C. of total population</i>	<i>Urban population as P.C. of total Population</i>
Arunachal Pradesh	12.87	6.6
Assam	—	—
Manipur	8.77	26.4
Meghalaya	11.56	18.1
Mizoram	10.86	26.7
Nagaland	12.60	15.6
Tripura	9.27	11.0

Coefficient of correlation between (1) & (2) = .90

Probable error = .063

*Source:* Figures for Tables 4 & 5 were taken from Table Nos. 9 & 12 of the Basic Statistics of N.E. Region, 1987.

TABLE 2.6

**Quality of Life of the Urban People**

<i>States</i>	<i>Literacy rate (Urban)</i>	<i>Death rate (Urban)</i>	<i>Infant mortality rate (U)</i>	<i>Per capita consumption per month</i>
Arunachal Pradesh	52.22	—	—	—
Manipur	52.44	4.6	35	138.25
Meghalaya	64.12	4.7	—	227.91
Mizoram	74.06	—	—	191.51
Nagaland	64.23	—	—	194.86
Tripura	73.66	4.9	71	186.61
Assam	—	8	86	154.01
N.E. India	64	5.55	64	182.19
India	57.40	6.9	74	164.03

The table clearly shows that the quality of urban life in N.E. India is much better than that of the All India level.

*Source:* Basic statistics of N.E. India 1982 & 1987, Statistical Hand Book of Manipur 1985 Tables No. 10.8; N.S.S. Report No. 319 (38th Round)—monthly expenditure of Jan.-Dec. 1983.



An additional factor, quality of life of the urban population is a matter considered in the pattern of urbanization. The quality of life taken into account literacy rate, death rate, mortality rate and per capita (urban) consumption.

### CONCLUSION

In brief it may be mentioned that the pattern of urbanization in N.E. Region (—in growth rate, quality of life, percentage of urban female population, correlation between main workers and p.c. urban population and correlation between other workers and p.c. urban population)—is enviable to the urban areas of other parts of the country.

*Features of Urbanization in North-East  
India as Reflected in Migration  
Statistics*

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P.R. BHATTACHARJEE

INTRODUCTION

The most important aspect of urban growth is the growth of population in cities, towns and their suburbs. As Richardson has so aptly put it, "the city grows upwards (in density) as well as outwards (in area)".<sup>1</sup> Both these two dimensions of urban growth are reflected in urban demography. As the city expands "outwards", a portion of the rural population is automatically transformed into urban one. When the city grows "upwards", its demographic change is profoundly influenced by migration apart from the natural factors of births and deaths. Although migration, takes place both in rural and urban areas, it has a special role in shaping the socio-economic face of the urban area. This is firstly, because of the fact that economic migration, i.e. migration in search of education, training and employment swells up urban population much more than the rural population. Secondly, diverse origin and differential characteristics of the migrant population have important bearing on the nature of urbanization. Thirdly, migration pattern is a determinant of the relation between a city and its

hinterland deciding, among other things, whether the growth of the city will produce a spread effect or a backwash effect. In view of the vital importance of migration in the urban dynamics, it is worthwhile to analyse the implications of available migration statistics relating to the urban areas.

As is well known, migration has played a very important role in the demographic changes of the North-East with far-reaching social, economic and political impacts. It is therefore interesting to analyse the role of migration in urban societies of the N.E. Region in particular. With this end in view, we have undertaken an analysis of census data on migration relating to the urban areas of the N.E. Region. Our data pertain to 1961, 1971 and 1981 census. Unfortunately, Assam, the premier state of the N.E. Region, was left uncovered by 1981 Census.<sup>2</sup> This has resulted in great loss of information in many important aspects of demographic change in that state. However, efforts have been made to make use of whatever information is available. It is necessary to mention here that in the Indian Census, there are two concepts of migrants. Those whose places of birth are different from the places of enumeration are called migrants by place of birth (POB migrants). Those whose places of residence during the preceding census were different from the places of enumeration in the current census are regarded migrants by place of last residence (POLR migrants). In this paper analysis has been made of data relating to both POB migrants and POLR migrants to highlight some features of urbanization in the N.E. Region.

#### PROPORTION OF MIGRANT POPULATION IN URBAN AREAS

As already mentioned, the N.E. Region has been affected by migration to a remarkable extent. Naturally the impact of migration has been heavier on urban areas as these are more accessible and attractive to the migrants. Table 3.1 shows percentages of place of birth migrants in urban and total populations in the North-Eastern States and in India as a whole in 1961, 1971 and 1981. It is observed that in Assam, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, p.c. of migrants in total population is higher than that in India. But the predominance of migrants is much greater in the case of urban population. The N.E. states are markedly different from the average of India in so far as the proportions of migrants in the urban areas are concerned. For example.

TABLE 3.1

**Percentage of Migrants (by place of birth) in Total and Urban Population of the North-Eastern States**

State	Percentage of Migrants					
	Urban Population			Total Population		
	1961	1971	1981	1961	1971	1981
1. Assam	55.0	50.8	NA	32.3	32.7	NA
2. Manipur	13.1	15.0	10.9	19.1	18.7	15.2
3. Meghalaya	53.6	41.8	45.9	24.9	39.9	23.8
4. Nagaland	55.4	71.7	63.5	10.6	17.9	24.1
5. Tripura	59.7	52.8	41.8	51.5	47.2	36.6
6. Arunachal Pradesh	—	79.6	64.6	90.6	37.3	42.8
7. Mizoram	52.3	61.0	56.8	33.8	56.4	40.9
8. India	44.8	39.3	38.3	33.0	30.4	30.7

Source: S.K. Sinha (1986), *Internal Migration in India 1961-81*, Census of India, 1981. Census Monograph No. 2, pp. 37 & 39.

in 1971 the proportion of migrants in the urban population of India was 39.3 p.c. whereas the said proportion was 79.6 p.c. in Arunachal Pradesh, 71.7 p.c. in Nagaland, 61.0 p.c. in Mizoram, 52.8 p.c. in Tripura, 50.8 p.c. in Assam and 41.8 p.c. in Meghalaya, Manipur provides the sole instance (in the N.E. Region) where the proportion of migrants in urban population (15 p.c.) was lower than that in India. Another striking fact about Manipur is that here the proportion of migrants in rural population was higher (18.7 p.c.) than the proportion of migrants in urban population (15.0 p.c.) in 1971 (and also in other census years). Historically, the urbanization process in the North-East with the exception of Manipur seems to be a migration-associated process. Of course, the proportion of migrants in the urban population has declined between 1961 and 1981 in Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh. This bears similarity with the all-India trend. It must be noted that here we are dealing with place-of-birth migrants who will remain migrants for their lifetime. Hence the secular fall in the proportion of migrants indicates that the non-migrants are going to play increasing role in the urbanization process and endogenous factor of urban growth are becoming more active. Even in a state like Tripura

supposed to be continuously affected by immigration, the proportion of birth-place migrants in urban population has fallen from 59.7 p.c. in 1961 to 41.8 p.c. in 1981.

An analysis of proportion of migrants by place of last residence yields conclusions similar to those derived from the data relating to migrants by place of birth. This is evident from Table 3.2 which shows that proportion of migrants in the urban areas of N.E. states is remarkably higher than that in India as a whole. As before, Manipur represents the sole exception. It is also true that over the years the proportion of place-of-last-residence migrants in the urban population is betraying a downward trend in all the N.E. states. The rural-urban divergence in the matter of proportion of migrants also holds good for migration from the place of last residence.

TABLE 3.2

**Percentage of Migrants (by place of last residence) in Total and Urban Population of N.E. States**

States	Percentage of Migrants in			
	Urban Population		Total Population	
	1971	1981	1971	1981
1. Assam	51.6	N.A.	33.8	N.A.
2. Manipur	15.2	10.9	18.7	15.2
3. Meghalaya	42.3	46.0	31.9	23.8
4. Nagaland	71.9	63.9	17.8	24.3
5. Tripura	53.2	42.2	46.9	36.9
6. Arunachal Pradesh	66.6	64.8	36.9	43.5
7. Mizoram	—	57.0	—	42.4
8. India	40.0	38.6	30.6	31.2

Source: S.K. Sinha, (1986), *op. cit.*, pp. 40-42.

**REGIONAL PATTERN OF POPULATION MOVEMENT INTO THE URBAN AREAS**

Data relating to percentage distribution of birth-place urban migrants by type of movement reveal the regional pattern of population movement into urban areas. Table 3.3 shows that for India as a whole, around 30 p.c. of the migrants to the towns come from within the

TABLE 3.3

**Percentage Distribution of Birth-place Urban Migrants by Type of Movement, 1981 in N.E. States**

States	Year	Type of Movement				Total
		Within District	Inter-District	Inter-State	From outside India	
1. Assam	1961	21.2	14.2	24.7	39.9	100
	1971	26.6	15.7	26.6	31.0	100
	1981	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2. Manipur	1961	51.4	—	29.7	18.9	100
	1971	60.0	9.2	23.9	6.9	100
	1981	—	—	—	—	—
3. Meghalaya	1961	26.8	18.9	22.0	32.3	100
	1971	27.6	0.7	45.4	26.3	100
	1981	34.8	8.6	45.5	11.1	100
4. Nagaland	1961	47.2	4.2	32.8	15.8	100
	1971	21.6	6.2	59.5	12.8	100
	1981	25.3	27.2	43.1	4.4	100
5. Tripura	1961	8.6	—	5.9	85.5	100
	1971	7.7	4.2	7.2	80.9	100
	1981	11.6	8.5	9.6	70.3	100
6. Arunachal Pradesh	1961	—	—	—	—	—
	1971	18.0	2.3	56.5	23.2	100
	1981	17.1	6.2	65.5	11.2	100
7. Mizoram	1961	80.7	7.0	3.3	0.8	100
	1971	92.8	3.5	2.5	3.7	100
	1981	79.6	8.9	10.2	2.3	100
8. India	1961	31.4	31.2	24.4	13.0	100
	1971	30.5	33.6	26.0	9.9	100
	1981	31.4	36.7	25.2	6.7	100

Source: S.K. Sinha, (1986), *op. cit.*, pp. 55-56.

district while slightly more than 30 p.c. of the migrants come from outside the district but from within the state. In this respect, the N.E. states present a diverse scenario. Around 80-90 p.c. of the urban migrants in Mizoram come from within the district; 55-65 p.c. of urban migrants in Arunachal Pradesh originate from outside the state but from within India while more than 70 p.c. of the birth-place urban migrants in Tripura had their birth outside India. Within-district urban migrants also predominate in Manipur. For Nagaland, in the earlier census year, within-district migrants occupy the pride of place while in the later census years the interstate migrants are found to be predominant. In Meghalaya, interstate migrants constitute the dominant group while the within-district migrants occupy the next place of importance. Of course, migrants from outside India also form a sizeable group.

On the whole, with few exceptions, migrants from outside the states have contributed significantly to urbanization in the N.E. Region. This has happened not only in the comparatively advanced state like Assam where urbanization has been influenced by the development of plantation and other industries, mining, railways etc. but also in the comparatively backward state of Arunachal Pradesh where urbanization has been affected mainly by administrative expansion. Another peculiarity of migration to the towns of the N.E. Region is that in the most of the states, inter-district migration has played an insignificant role. Migrants have come to the towns either from within the district or from outside the state. This means that urban centres in the N.E. Region have very small hinterlands and they have poor linkage with places within their own states but outside their immediate neighbourhood. Hilly topography, weak transport and communication links, growth of towns merely as administrative centres and not as centres of industry and commerce may be responsible for this feature of urbanization.

#### GROWTH RATES OF THE MIGRANTS AND THE NON-MIGRANTS IN URBAN AREAS

Relative contribution of natural factors and migration to population change in urban areas is an interesting feature of urban dynamics. This may be assessed by comparing decadal growth rates of migrants and non-migrants. Table 3.4 gives a comparative picture of growth rates of internal birth-place migrants and non-migrants during

the decade of the 1960s. It is observed that except in Meghalaya and Tripura, the growth rate of internal migrants exceeded that of non-migrants in the towns of the N.E. states. (Interestingly, Meghalaya experienced a negative change in the number of urban migrants during the sixties). But a reverse trend is visible during the 1970s when growth rate of non-migrants exceeded that of the internal migrants in all the states except Meghalaya. The experience of the N.E. states bears a contrast to that of some other Indian states like U.P. where contribution of the non-migrants to the growth of urban population has been greater than that of the migrant population during both the decades mentioned above.

TABLE 3.4

**Percentage Decadal Growth Rate of Birth Place Migrants and Non-migrants in Urban Areas of N.E. States, 1961-81**

<i>State</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Decadal growth rate of internal migrants</i>	<i>Decadal growth rate of non-migrants</i>	<i>Decadal growth rate of total urban population</i>
1. Manipur	1961-71	137.99	104.56	109.0
	1971-81	93.95	177.92	165.4
2. Meghalaya	1961-71	2.44	57.34	25.3
	1971-81	80.00	52.49	64.0
3. Nagaland	1961-71	247.42	70.12	168.3
	1971-81	107.11	201.92	134.0
4. Tripura	1961-71	39.27	84.85	57.6
	1971-81	10.00	71.24	38.9
5. Arunachal Pradesh	1961-71	—	—	—
	1971-81	94.52	315.10	139.6
6. Mizoram	1961-71	209.06	116.44	164.8
	1971-81	200.44	257.27	222.6
7. Uttar Pradesh (Reference State)	1961-71	8.61	44.23	30.7
	1971-81	42.95	68.79	60.6

Source: S.K. Sinha, (1986), *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.



In short, migrants have made significant contribution to urban population growth in the N.E. Region but their relative importance is on the decline and the endogenous process of population growth in the towns of the N.E. Region is assuming greater importance.

#### CONTRIBUTION OF RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION TO URBAN GROWTH

It is expected that internal migrants to a town will be mainly from the villages of the same state or neighbouring states. Therefore, cases of rural-urban migration are likely to form a substantial proportion of the total number of cases of migration although the major proportion of the cases of migration must be accounted for by rural-rural migration in a predominantly ruralised country like India. Table 3.5 shows that proportion of rural-rural birth-place migrants in India has fallen from 73.8 p.c. of the total to 65.4 p.c. while that of rural-urban migrants has increased from 14.6 p.c. to 17.50 p.c. between 1961 and 1981. Coming to the N.E. Region we find that proportions of rural urban migrants in Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram exceeded that of India as a whole in 1981. (Meghalaya: 22 p.c.; Nagaland: 27.4 p.c. and Mizoram: 31.3 p.c.). In other N.E. states migration data do not reveal any clear trend of the contribution of rural-urban migration to urban population growth.

#### SEX RATIO OF THE URBAN MIGRANTS

One important feature of the urban migrants in the N.E. States is the high proportion of males among them. This is evident from Table 3.6 which gives number of males per 1000 females (not females per 1000 males as is usual) among the internal migrants according to the place of last residence. Male/female ratio is spectacularly high among the interstate urban migrants in the N.E. Region. In 1971 there were 5041 males per 1000 females among the interstate migrants in the towns of Nagaland. The relevant figures are 3658 for Arunachal Pradesh, 2892 for Mizoram and 2390 for Assam. In contrast, there were 1055 males per 1000 females among the interstate migrants in the towns of U.P. in 1971. The proportion of males among the urban migrants in the N.E. states has declined in 1981, but this is still high when compared to that of the states like U.P. Of course, West Bengal presents a picture similar to that of the N.E. states.

TABLE 3.5

**Percentage Distribution of Birth Place Internal Migrants by  
Stream in the N.E. States**

State	Year	R-R	R-U	U-R	U-U	T-T
1. Assam	1961	89.45	6.98	1.39	2.18	100.00
	1971	85.24	7.78	3.35	3.63	100.00
	1981	—	—	—	—	—
2. Manipur	1961	84.33	4.28	10.52	0.87	100.00
	1971	82.27	8.03	7.59	2.11	100.00
	1981	74.00	12.70	6.90	6.40	100.00
3. Meghalaya	1961	69.42	18.75	2.62	9.16	100.00
	1971	75.99	11.26	5.95	6.80	100.00
	1981	58.80	22.00	5.90	13.30	100.00
4. Nagaland	1961	66.69	21.42	4.90	6.99	100.00
	1971	53.85	31.93	6.37	7.85	100.00
	1981	45.50	27.40	12.50	14.60	100.00
5. Tripura	1961	90.89	2.79	4.42	1.90	100.00
	1971	84.53	4.01	7.67	3.79	100.00
	1981	78.10	5.00	12.20	4.70	100.00
6. Arunachal Pradesh	1961	82.88	—	17.12	—	100.00
	1971	86.17	5.59	6.73	1.51	100.00
	1981	82.10	8.00	7.70	2.30	100.00
7. Mizoram	1961	89.57	8.20	1.78	0.45	100.00
	1971	84.97	12.06	2.23	0.74	100.00
	1981	58.80	31.30	5.20	4.70	100.00
8. India	1961	73.80	14.60	3.60	8.00	100.00
	1971	70.30	15.30	5.50	8.90	100.00
	1981	65.40	17.50	6.00	11.10	100.00

Source: S.K. Sinha, (1986), *op. cit.*, pp. 74-75.

TABLE 3.6

**Sex Ratio (Males per 1000 Females) of Migrants in Urban Areas of N.E. States by type of Movement (Place of Last Residence), 1971, 1981**

<i>State</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Within State Migrants</i>	<i>Inter-state Migrants</i>	<i>Total Internal Migrants</i>
1. Assam	1971	1267	2390	1553
	1981	NA	NA	NA
2. Manipur	1971	810	1860	985
	1981	704	840	729
3. Meghalaya	1971	998	1852	1439
	1981	930	1490	1130
4. Nagaland	1971	1358	5041	2982
	1981	1730	1810	1761
5. Tripura	1971	1043	1148	1070
	1981	896	1073	939
6. Arunachal Pradesh	1971	2011	3658	2919
	1981	1456	1215	1309
7. Mizoram	1971	1070	2892	1101
	1981	1051	2050	1111
8. Uttar Pradesh (Reference State)	1971	868	1055	894
	1981	687	732	692
9. West Bengal (Reference State)	1971	941	2786	1484
	1981	821	2059	1141

Source: S.K. Sinha, (1986), *op. cit.*, p. 131.

High proportion of males among the interstate migrants in the towns of the N.E.R. hints at the possibility of income leakage out of the states of present residence of the migrants through remittances.

## CAUSES OF IMMIGRATION TO URBAN AREAS FROM THE PLACE OF LAST RESIDENCE

Analysis of reasons of immigration into urban areas from the place of last residence provides important insight into the nature of urbanization process. In Indian Censuses, reasons for migration are divided into: (a) employment, (b) education, (c) "family moved", (d) marriage and (e) others. Among these reasons, employment and education may be termed as the economic reasons for migration. Males are economically motivated to migrate much more than the females who migrate mainly because of marriage or movement of the family. Table 3.7 shows that among the male immigrants into the towns of the N.E. Region, employment and education have served as powerful motivators. More than 70 p.c. of the male immigrants in Arunachal Pradesh are motivated by the reason of employment. The relevant figure for Tripura is 49 p.c. More than 14 p.c. urban immigrants in Meghalaya and 12 p.c. in Nagaland are motivated by the reason of education. Table 3.8 shows that employment and education provide motivation to a larger proportion of immigrants coming from rural areas. Of course, proportion of economic immigrants is small in Manipur and Mizoram where shift of the family, marriage etc. act as prime motivators for migration. Tables 3.7 and 3.8 also show that even among the females employment and education are acting as significant motivators for immigration into the towns of Meghalaya and Nagaland. Table 3.7 shows that in these two states, employment and education together account for 20 to 25 p.c. of the cases of female immigration. In Tripura also employment motivates about 9 p.c. of the female immigrants to the towns. In contrast, these causes have motivated only around 5 p.c. of the female immigrants in U.P. and West Bengal.

## INTERSTATE INFLOWS AND OUTFLOWS OF MIGRANTS (BY PLACE OF LAST RESIDENCE)

An analysis of interstate inflows and outflows of (place-of-last-residence) migrants in the urban areas of the N.E. Region in Table 3.9, shows that between 1971 and 1981, the net inflows of males into the towns of Meghalaya and Nagaland have been 19,294 and 15,432 respectively while net inflows of females have stood at 11,791 and 7,982 respectively. Net inflows are also significant for Arunachal Pradesh (6480 males and 5269 females). It is interesting to note that net

TABLE 3.7

**Percentage Distribution of Immigrants into Urban Areas of N.E. States by Reasons (Reasons for Migration from Place of Last Residence), 1981**

State	Male					Female				
	Employment	Education	Family moved	Marriage	Others	Employment	Education	Family moved	Marriage	Others
1. Manipur	25.0	2.6	39.3	1.5	31.6	1.2	0.8	23.0	58.7	16.3
2. Meghalaya	37.9	14.1	21.3	2.9	23.8	8.2	12.8	40.3	19.3	19.4
3. Nagaland	33.8	12.2	15.0	0.3	38.7	10.1	15.7	45.5	13.1	15.6
4. Tripura	49.1	6.0	36.0	0.9	8.0	9.1	1.7	47.0	31.3	10.9
5. Arunachal Pradesh	70.6	4.1	21.9	0.4	3.0	6.9	0.3	54.8	32.5	5.5
6. Mizoram	21.0	6.0	47.7	0.2	25.1	2.8	4.3	68.2	9.3	15.4
7. Uttar Pradesh (Reference State)	43.2	7.5	28.3	1.6	19.4	2.7	1.6	21.3	66.0	8.4
8. West Bengal (Reference State)	47.1	4.0	24.4	0.7	23.8	4.2	1.4	30.5	45.0	18.9

Source: S.K. Sinha, (1986), *op. cit.*, pp. 134-35.

TABLE 3.8

**Percentage Distribution of Internal Migrants from Rural to Urban Areas of N.E. States by Reasons (Reasons for Migration from Place of Last Residence), 1981**

State	Male					Female				
	Employment	Education	Family moved	Marriage	Others	Employment	Education	Family moved	Marriage	Others
1. Manipur	26.20	20.99	44.40	1.41	25.00	1.48	1.01	26.98	56.87	13.66
2. Meghalaya	37.90	18.20	16.60	2.1	25.20	9.80	17.10	30.30	19.50	23.20
3. Nagaland	30.80	15.30	10.50	0.2	43.20	9.30	19.40	39.10	13.40	19.10
4. Tripura	52.70	8.1	25.10	0.30	13.80	9.10	1.90	40.30	37.30	11.40
5. Arunachal Pradesh	73.50	5.03	19.08	0.50	1.89	5.31	0.26	41.36	46.99	6.08
6. Mizoram	17.09	7.09	52.67	0.31	22.84	2.19	4.15	68.50	10.00	15.16
7. Uttar Pradesh (Reference State)	45.84	8.66	25.81	1.59	18.10	2.57	1.56	19.26	69.29	7.32
8. West Bengal (Reference State)	54.62	3.96	19.07	6.73	21.62	4.75	1.20	26.36	50.32	17.37

Source: S.K. Sinha, (1986), *op. cit.*, p. 137.

inflows into the towns of Manipur and Tripura have been negative both for males and females. Table 3.10 shows that net inflows of 10,637 males in Meghalaya, 6041 males in Nagaland and 5507 males in Arunachal Pradesh are accounted by employment. The table also shows that so far as the reason of employment is concerned net inflow of males is positive in all the states except Manipur and net inflow of females is positive except in Manipur and Mizoram. The conclusion emerging from the above analysis is that employment is largely responsible for interstate immigration into the urban areas of the N.E. Region. On the other hand, this region has not been very successful in obtaining jobs for its urban youths in the rest of India.

TABLE 3.9

**Inter-State In, Out, and Net POLR Migrants by Sex, 1981  
(all reasons) in Urban Areas of N.E. States**

State	Male			Female		
	In	Out	Net	In	Out	Net
1. Manipur	3,731	7,520	-3,789	4,418	4,688	-270
2. Meghalaya	25,576	6,282	19,294	17,274	5,483	11,791
3. Nagaland	19,095	3,663	15,432	10,640	2,658	7,982
4. Tripura	6,024	8,586	-2,562	5,704	6,926	-1,222
5. Arunachal Pradesh	8,236	1,756	6,480	6,800	1,531	5,269
6. Mizoram	3,792	2,510	1,282	1,696	2,234	-538

Source: S.K. Sinha, (1986), *op. cit.*, p. 144.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The upshot of the analysis in the foregoing sections is that migration has played an important role in the urbanization process in the N.E. Region. This conclusion is supported by data relating to both birthplace migrants and place-of-last-residence migrants. At the same time it is also true that over the years proportion of migrants in the urban population of N.E. Region has been falling. This implies that although exogenous factors have been historically important in formation of urban agglomerations in the N.E. Region, the endogenous

factors of urban growth are asserting themselves and going to be predominant in near future.

TABLE 3.10

**Inter-State In, Out, and Net POLR Migrants by Sex, 1981  
(Employment as the Reason of Migration) in Urban Areas of  
N.E. States**

State	Male			Female		
	In	Out	Net	In	Out	Net
1. Manipur	1,365	2,839	-974	24	99	-75
2. Meghalaya	12,992	2,355	10,637	734	420	314
3. Nagaland	7,350	1,309	6,041	701	163	538
4. Tripura	3,284	2,994	290	404	253	151
5. Arunachal Pradesh	6,220	713	5,507	307	66	241
6. Mizoram	992	677	315	86	149	-63

Source: S.K. Sinha, (1986), *op. cit.*, p. 145.

A peculiarity of migration in urban areas of the N.E. states is the poor share of the inter-district migrants within the same state. This implies poor linkage of the N.E. towns with the places outside their immediate neighbourhood. The smallness of their hinterlands is also indicated by such weak interaction.

It is also found that except in two or three states, rural-urban migration (the much discussed topic of Urban Economics) has not yet assumed any important proportion among various directional flows of migrations in the N.E. Region.

It is also very significant that sex ratio among the interstate urban migrants of the N.E.R. is heavily in favour of the males and this hints at the possibility of income leakage out of the region through remittances.

In some of the N.E. states education and employment are found to be strong motivators of migration (from the place of last residence). Moreover, net inflows of (place-of-last-residence) migrants have been found to be positive in most of the N.E. states during 1971-81. These states have not been successful in ensuring jobs for their urban youths in the rest of India as the inflows and outflows of migrants in search of employment to show.



The present work has made use of the secondary data available from population censuses conducted in India during 1961-81. As the details of the 1991 census are not yet known, no data relating to 1991 could be used. The paper has sought to provide a bird's eye view of the long-term trend of urban migration in the N.E. Region in the post-independence period with the objective of analysing the nature of urbanization in this part of India.

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## *Urbanization and Under-development in the North-Eastern India*

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B.S. BUTOLA

Urbanization is often mistaken for development, comfort, safety and affluence. On this presumption, rapid growth of urbanization is reckoned as a prerequisite for development and slow processes of urbanization or less number of urban centres per unit of area as the root cause of socio-economic backwardness or underdevelopment of an area. Consequently, the existing literature largely deals either with the nature, processes and stages of urbanization or the structure, morphology and functions of the urban centres or the problems related to the processes of over-accumulation, safety and comforts etc. in the urban centres. These studies, though very significant in their own ways, have some severe limitations. In this paper an attempt has been made to take up some of the important conceptual issues related to Urbanization and Underdevelopment in its first part. The second part of the paper deals with the same problem in relation to the North-Eastern Region of India. Some of the major conceptual issues which are important from the point of the present article are given below:

- (1) Urbanization unlike many other socio-economic phenomena presupposes ever increasing interactions over time and space

in its intensity and dimensions. Thus, nature, modes, terms and stages of interactions play an important role in the processes and nature of urbanization. Interactions leading to the strengthening of the bonds of dependency in the context of the modern world system is the main cause of dependent and parasitic urbanization particularly in the underdeveloped regions/countries.

- (2) Urbanization also presupposes socio-economic and spatial differentiation; therefore, the study of urbanization need not be and should not be done by using the concepts which are valid for the analysis of undifferentiated phenomena. Therefore, it is imperative to change the terrain and the conceptual tools of analysis for a meaningful study of the issue of urbanization.
- (3) Urbanization is always and everywhere a consequence of structural changes in the economy, polity and the spatial components of a region/society. Therefore, it is not only conceptually fallacious but also a historical to maintain urbanization is the cause of bringing about structural changes as is the case with many scholars.
- (4) Urbanization presupposes and thrives on perpetuating spatial and sectoral dependencies; therefore it is always antithetical to development and regional balance.
- (5) The structure and functions of an urban area in its first and the last instance represent the nature of organic linkages between the urban centre and its hinterlands both within and without.
- (6) In a differentiated society like that of today urbanization stands for accumulation through rural deprivation, excellence through perpetuation and reproduction of inefficiency in the rural areas and apparent social harmony through the breakdown of traditional institutions and values. Order on socio-economic levels is achieved through overt and covert coercion in the spheres of rural areas and order and peace in day to day life and maintenance of civic amenities are made possible at a high cost resulting in a corresponding increase in the slums, crimes and law enforcing agencies.
- (7) Social ailments like alienation, estrangement, drug addiction and crime etc. are always associated with the evolution of an urban structure and it cannot be ignored.

- (8) Urbanization in the underdeveloped world has always been an episode of discontinuity and rupture from its heritage and traditional past. Most often it is experienced that urbanization in these countries shows a jumbled up of things and aspects highly uncorrelated to each other, i.e. incompatibility between the socio-economic formation and the superstructure or between the economic organisation and the market relations etc.
- (9) Emergence of an urban centre in a relatively less dynamic social formation does not only create ruptures in the socio-economic spheres but it also engenders discontinuity and disharmony in the normal process of region formation and also in the emergence of a balanced regional structure. Most often it is observed that Urbanization accelerates the processes of regional differentiation and consolidation of regional hierarchy. Most of the developmental opportunities and activities tend to concentrate in and around the urban centres mainly at the expense of the hinterlands as a result of which regions of different importance and levels of development come into existence.
- (10) The processes of urbanization in the context of an omnipresent modern world system is directly related to the expansion and consolidation of the forces of the world market. Therefore, urbanization in the present context implies the drain of resources and economic surplus from the less advantageous regions to the advantageous ones.
- (11) Urbanization in the less developed peripheral regions like the North-Eastern Region of India leads to the growth of spurious consumerism without significant improvement in the productive capacity of the region and its people. It ultimately leads to significant distortions in the development of the region/society.

It is within the premise of this theoretical framework that question of urbanization and underdevelopment has been attempted at in this paper. It is worth mentioning here that the concept of underdevelopment has been used by the Marxist scholars like Baran, Sweezy, Amin, Frank, Wallerstein, Arghiri, Laclau, Furtado, Myrdal, Sau, Alavi, Patnaik and others. Though there are certain fundamental differences among these scholars particularly about the necessary and the sufficient

conditions of underdevelopment yet they have broad agreement regarding the definition of the concept of underdevelopment. According to them underdevelopment is neither a precondition, nor a stage, and nor even lack of development. On the contrary development and underdevelopment are dialectically related processes propelled by the same forces. Development of a few places results from the transfer of economic surplus (potential as well as actual) from a large number of other places (in the context of the modern world system the transfer of the economic surplus takes from the colonies to the colonising countries). The processes of this transfer could be both by consent and under coercion. But in the case of the modern world system the processes of surplus transfer takes place through the terms of unequal exchange between the two or more interacting partners. The transfer of economic surplus results into accumulation and cumulative causations in the developed countries, while the underdeveloped countries suffer from the operation of vicious circle of appropriation, exploitation and poverty. It is a dependent and distorted process of development particularly in the countries suffering from the drain of its wealth and resources. The dependence as well as distortion can be structural, functional and structural-functional. However, the following characteristics remain all-pervasive to all the underdeveloped countries/regions:

- (1) Hypertrophic development of service and tertiary sectoral activities;
- (2) Specialisation in the production and export of primary products mainly from the primary sectors;
- (3) Extroversion towards the production of light branches of industries for the purpose of export;
- (4) Emergence of regional hierarchy centring around the metropolitan outposts, such as, the port towns like Calcutta, Madras and Bombay during the British rule in India; and
- (5) Evolution of exploitative spatial interaction network of the suction type for the drain and exploitation of the economic surplus, wealth and other resources from the underdeveloped region/countries.

India is a classic example of such an underdeveloped country. It is an irony to say that the socio-economic and the regional structures evolved by the British to serve their purpose still persists though in a modified form with varying intensity and magnitude. There are regions

which have partly succeeded in changing or replacing it more significantly than others which are still languishing under the deadweight of the nefarious colonial past. North-East India is included among those regions of India where it is more intact and functional. Therefore the processes of development or changes continue to be dependent and distorted in the region.

### ANALYSIS

North-East India was incorporated in the political and economic folds of colonial India during the third decade of the Nineteenth century and subsequently it was also subjected to the enactment of most of the processes mentioned above. But due to the specificities of its environment, socio-economic conditions and strategic significance it occupied a specific place in the history of colonial rule in India and the changes introduced thereafter were also specific to this region. Introduction of the urbanization process in the region is perhaps the most significant of all the changes brought about by the colonial rulers in the region.

North-East India comprising seven states of the region has a high concentration of tribal population. It proves that this region had remained relatively isolated from the influences of the cultures and civilizations of the Indian subcontinent for relatively longer periods of time in its history. Moreover, continuation of subsistence economy of the primitive type i.e. hunting and food gathering, slash and burn type of jhum cultivation, prevalence of totemic animistic religion and territorial domination of ethnic groups, and existence of relatively intact monolithic tribal structure in most parts of the region till date indicate that the region has resisted the external influences or accepted them with great reluctance. Consequently, this region has failed to generate the necessary objective conditions for the emergence of urban centres in the region. There are evidences available with the historians and archaeologists suggesting that the region had a few capital/administrative townships like Pragjyotishpur, Dibrugarh etc. even before the coming of the British but urbanization in its proper sense was started in the region only after the annexation of this region by the British during the early 19th century, i.e. 1826. Therefore, the number of the urban centres continued to increase along with the development of tea plantations and colonial expansionist policies and increasing strategic importance of the region under the British.

As usual the development of urban centres was preceded by inducement of changes in the economic, socio-ideological and regional structure of the region by the British. The changes brought about by the colonial rulers were considered essential and appropriate for promoting colonial interests and for the consolidation of British empire in the region as well as in the other parts of the subcontinent. With the establishment of these urban centres exploitation of natural resources like forest and forest products including wildlife, promotion of tea plantation activities, encouragement of missionary activities and establishment of army cantonments became the prime concerns of the colonial rulers in the region.

Development of the dependent urban centres without introducing compatible changes in the existing subsistence economy and traditional polity of the region was the instrumental factor in consolidating the processes of dependent development (underdevelopment) during the colonial rule. Some of the characteristic features of it were as follows:

(1) With the development of the modern urban centres the processes of the plunder of the rural areas increased manifold. The nature of the plunder was highly dissimilar from region to region depending upon the specific characteristics of the region. In some places it was used for the collection of the revenue and other dues while in others it was used for the collection of the economic surplus or resources for the purpose of export and in some cases these urban centres were established to destroy the industrial base of the traditional people. Though most of these were applicable to North-East India yet there were certain specific features of the colonial rule and the associated urbanization processes in the region. One of the most significant factors was the need of the ideological control over the people of the region. It was felt by the British that mere control over the economy and the policy of the country like India was insufficient for the continuation of the British rule and the future of the crown itself. Therefore, control over the reproduction of the ideology and the ideological apparatus was considered to be essential for consolidating the colonial domination. Such efforts were made at the all-India level but soon the British realised that the roots of the existing ideological apparatus were too deep to be taken out by any temptation or coercive methods. It was particularly so in the non-tribal areas of the country but the colonial rulers succeeded in gaining great success in the tribal areas of the Central and the North-Eastern areas of India. Introduction of the colonial ideology through religion, education, values, languages and customs and traditions

including architecture etc. played a significant role in keeping the region underdeveloped. These changes were fundamental in creating a rupture and discontinuity in the history, heritage and culture of the region. The ruptures were so significant that these remained the sole bases of social and regional differentiation for all the days to come. Since the task of clinching such discontinuity was initiated in the urban areas from where subsequently this was disseminated to the other parts of the region, the urban areas in the region represent a cannibalised and discontinuous scenario.

(2) Urbanization in the region was introduced by the British to promote the colonial interests and they were not only successful in doing so but they also succeeded in creating an urban structure that would always remain active in reproducing the same relations. Today, the urban centres have become the centres of spreading of cult of demonstrative and spurious consumerism in the otherwise relatively static societies of the region. It is observed that nearly 83 per cent of the households in the urban areas and 98 per cent in the rural areas spend over 87 per cent of their income in non-investment expenditures out of which expenditures on electronic goods, automobiles and items of conspicuous consumption account for over 80 per cent of the total volume of expenditures.

(3) Hypertropic growth of the service sector activities is another characteristic feature of the urban centres in the region. Out of a total of the 27 towns considered for the study it was found that the percentage of the workers engaged in the tertiary sector activities is as high as 78 per cent of the total work force in these towns. As opposed to this the share of the workers engaged in the manufacturing sector is below 6 per cent in all the towns. The functional classification of the towns shows that all these towns are included in the class of the service towns.

(4) It is also observed that almost all the towns have specialisation in the export of the primary products and the products of the light branches of the industry. Included here are the products like unprocessed leather, tea, brooms, betel-nuts, potatoes and other vegetables and some handicraft products. There are only two towns which have specialised in the export of cement and coal.

(5) Evolution of the urban centres in a hierarchical order with well-pronounced extroversion, i.e exerting strong forward suction linkages and weak backward feedback linkages continues to keep the region at a dependent level in respect of its socio-economic and politi-



cal developments.

(6) It is observed that the North-Eastern Region of India has experienced over 4.5 per cent rate of urban growth in the past three decades. Such a high rate of urban growth at this juncture, when most of the urban centres are facing secular crises, is a matter of serious concern. It becomes all the more significant as the economy of the region continues to be relatively stagnant and the region finds itself increasingly dependent on the national market. In such a situation the high rate of urban growth has been only strengthening the bonds of regional dependency and the processes of its underdevelopment.

(7) It is an undisputed fact that the path of development adopted by the Indian planners and the ruling classes for the development of India after her independence is a capitalist one and it is also a fact that unequal and uneven developments are the basic characteristic features of capitalist development. Ever-expanding market is a prerequisite for the smooth growth of capitalist development along with other necessary and sufficient conditions. Capitalism exploits both internal as well as external markets for its survival. But there are only a few fortunate countries in the world which have the freedom and power to rely largely for their development on their respective internal markets. The recent spurt in the growth of the urban centres in the peripheral and tribal areas of the country is essentially an outcome of the policies and programmes to recreate the internal market for the capitalist development in the country.

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