

Lack of proper town planning and its problems: A sociological investigation with regard to Dhemaji, Dhemaji district, Assam

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With the development of science and technology and growing prospects in the occupational and educational sectors, it is witnessed that urbanisation has occurred in an unprecedented rate in the otherwise less populated and sub-urban areas. Such growth of urban areas has resulted in a lot of problems such as housing, health, sanitation, etc. This has become a matter of worry, threat and concern to the district administration and the public as well. This has clearly proved the necessity of town planning in the growing urbanisation process. The term '*planning*' takes into account certain rules, system or constraints to accomplish a certain goal so that it has smooth continuity and ending. It requires the use of logic and imagination to envisage not only a desired end result but also the necessary strategy to achieve that result. Town planning refers to the control of the development of towns and their buildings, roads and other infrastructures so that they can be pleasant, undisturbing and complacent for the inhabitants of that region, by managing the land resources. It ensures and involves the control of existing as well as new developments with the strategy to manage the future requirements.

Objective of the Paper

The paper has been written with a view to have a detailed study of the following objectives:

1. To study unplanned urbanisation as a threat to the housing, health and hygiene of the inhabitants of Dhemaji.
2. To figure out the different areas affected by unplanned urbanisation in the region.
3. To suggest remedy to the existing problems of unplanned urbanisation.

Methodology

To study the problem I have basically used descriptive method and used different secondary sources such as articles from journals, newspapers and internet for reference.

Review of Literature

1. **Md. YahiaBapari, Md. Enamul Haque, Dr. Mir Khaled Ikbal Chowdhury and Md. Jahidul Islam(2016)**, in 'Impacts of Unplanned Urbanisation on the Socio-Economic Conditions and Environment of Pabna Municipality, Bangladesh', talked about Pabna, which is one of the oldest municipal cities in Bangladesh where population is increasing and unplanned urbanisation creates enormous pressure on this low lying piece of land which is highly vulnerable to monsoon flood.
2. **Dr. VenkatigallaVenkatesham(2015)** in 'The problems and issues in urbanization in India', has talked about the various problems and issues in urbanisation in India viz. urban lounge, overcrowding, housing, environmental concerns, sanitation etc
3. **Srikrishna.G (2017)** in 'A study on Urbanisation In India- Issues and Challenges', has talked about both the positive and negative effects of urbanisation. He has highlighted on urban sprawl, overcrowding, housing, unemployment, slums and squatter settlements, sewerage problems, urban pollution etc. as major issues of unplanned urbanisation.
4. **Singh Abha Lakshmi and Abbas Md Zahir(2011)**, in " Planning for Urban Basic Services in the Residential Suburbs of Aligarh City", have focused most suburbs are residential in character and they offer the greatest challenges to urban planners. These areas mainly suffer from the problems of land-use, lack of provision of urban amenities and services and lack of administration. In this paper an attempt has been made to assess the provision of urban basic services in the residential suburbs of Aligarh city and identify the areas which lack in it for future planning
5. **Ramotra K.C. and Bansode R.B. (2011)**, in 'Migration and growth of slum population in Kolhapur city, Maharashtra (India)', have focused on slum and squatters as the major problem areas for urban environment particularly in a developing country like India. They are illegally occupied houses and creating nuisance of environment pollution and degradation of urban living conditions. The slum dwellers in most of the cities are mostly the migrants from its surrounding areas and have come in search of regular and high wages to improve upon their social and economic condition. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data collected by conducting the intensive field work in slums of Kolhapur city. The author

concluded that, the slums are found all over the city but its major concentration is in the central part of the city

6. **Kurani (2012)**, in 'Changing pattern of Land-use and Land value in Belgaum city – Karnataka state –a spatial Analysis', has focused on the study of land use and land values of the in urban centres that have gained importance as a themes for research in urban geography. The land use is result of various social- economic activities performed in the urban centres, the cultural level of the people and the characteristics of the population in the surrounding regions. The land use in city is a dynamic phenomenon influenced by the location of the city, the nature of socio- economic activities, resources, transportation facilities, around the urban centres. The study area has recorded the significant increase in residential area due to which gained more land from agriculture, water bodies and vacant lands. Its clear from the study that the agricultural land use is decreasing during the study period, this is mainly because the agricultural land is being converted into residential and other uses for the growth and development of the city.

Discussion

Dhemaji is a town situated on the North bank of the mighty Brahmaputra. The name 'Dhemaji' has been derived from the Deori word '*dema-ji*', which means '*great water*' thus, implying it to be flood prone region. Dhemaji is also the district headquarter by itself. The town though has grown and expanded to a large extent, it was originally a region rich in agriculture. The growth and expansion of the town has been witnessed only a few decades back. With it has been witnessed the various types of social, economic as well as environmental problems. This is worth mentioning that the city has been expanding at uncontrollable rate without proper prior planning. Some of the issues and concerns of unplanned urbanisation in the region has been discussed below:

1. **Artificial Flood:** Artificial flood has become one of the burning problems of the region. The town has been expanding at uncontrolled rates without any proper planning. This has created as many problems as artificial flood, water logging etc. resulting in various other problems on the socio-economic aspects of the region. Lack of proper drainage system is the root cause of artificial flood. During the monsoons, most of the areas lying nearby the main town like Tulsibari, Ratanpur, Bhadrappara, Nalanipam (DI Colony) etc are mostly prone to artificial flood. There are hardly any drains, or proper channels to drain away the rains water thereby logging water and creating flood. This is because the township has expanded with the wish and attempt of the public and not with the consent of the municipality and proper planning.
2. **Pollution :** Artificial flood is not the only problem that has rooted out of unplanned urbanisation. The site for dumping wastes is situated amidst the main town, surrounded by the residential areas as well as educational institute of high repute (Dhemaji Post Graduate Training College), many Government offices and the weekly market in Nimatisuk. This has caused enormous problems to witness problems of land pollution and air pollution. Till date, the District Administration has not taken any strategy to displace this site with effect. Moreover, wastes and garbages are thrown nearby the main road with out much facilities for garbage disposal bins. Water logging is a common phenomenon by the roadside of the main town.
3. **Agriculture :** Growing urbanisation has also greatly influenced the agricultural aspects of the region. Joint family has been witnessed giving way to nuclear family. Industries has been set up resulting in ever more expansion of the town to the rural and suburban areas. Hence, the land that was mostly used for agricultural purposes has now been replaced by setting up of new institutions as well as building separate houses for newly formed single families. Such activities of the people has led to the growth and expansion of urban areas without town planning and hence consequently become prone to many other problems.
4. **Vulnerable Transport System and Traffic Jam:** within the last two decades the town has noticed a drastic increase in the number of vehicles ranging from heavy vehicles to light vehicles including motor bikes and scooters and e-rickshaws. This has made the town prone to problems of traffic jam, parking problems, etc. It is often seen that lack of systematic bus services, small vehicles have even more effected the transport system of the town.
5. **Overcrowding:** It is another undeniable fact or problem of the town. In every sphere ranging from shopping malls to the roadside stalls overcrowding is a a common phenomenon. Overcrowding here implies not only to human population but also of private vehicles to. It is sometimes impossible to find a place to park the vehicles when you want to stop to do some shopping.

Thus, it is clear fro the above that the growth and expansion of the town without planning strategies has led to the deterioration of the town in many aspects as mentioned above, which has also created problems of housing, health and sanitation. The problems of inappropriate infrastructure, mismanagement of wastes, improper drainage system etc. are more than enough to indicate that the development of the town is only an outcome of fulfilling the self-interests the individuals without sufficient planning and scope for sustainable development.

Strategies to mitigate problems of unplanned urbanisation

If there are problems there are also ways to solve them. Awareness of the public and plans of the administration with vision of execution of the plans may together be effective to find ways to mitigate the problems. Some suggestions regarding the problems are mentioned below:

1. **Proper management of wastes and garbages:** Lack of proper management of wastes and is a major issue faced by the township of Dhemaji. Adequate number of dustbins should be made available within the town at a definite distance, so that wastes and garbages are suspended properly. Moreover the dumping site should be displaced to some remote places so that residential areas do not become prone to unhealthy environment.
2. **Appropriate infrastructure ranging from bus terms, roadways, traffic etc:** Another major strategy that has to be taken is provision of appropriate infrastructure. Due to insufficient and inappropriate infrastructure, there occurs problems of traffic jam, noise pollution as well as road accidents. Planning of the town should consider infrastructure as a major concern.
3. **Improving the drainage system:** The drainage system should be improved. Though concrete drains are constructed, artificial flood, water logging are witnessed every monsoon. The reason behind this is inappropriate mensuration is lacking with regard to the construction of drains. The drains are too narrow as per the requirements of the town. Hence, improvement of drainage system is also a required strategy for planning.
4. **Providing employment opportunities in the rural areas so as to minimise migration of rural population to the towns:** Migration from rural to urban areas is another major issue. Providing employment opportunities in the rural areas can minimise migration of rural population to urban areas. This can be a great strategy as it may reduce unstoppable migration in search of job opportunities in the urban areas.
5. **Development of the sub urban areas may also serve as a solution to problems of unplanned urbanisation:** Most of the people migrate to the urban areas due to underdeveloped situations in the sub-urban areas, as people want to live a high quality, standard life, having all kinds of facilities of the modern times. If the sub urban areas are developed then this might prove to be of immense help in the process of town planning.

Thus, it is evident that it is more than impossible to stop urbanisation but urbanisation with necessary planning for sustainability can be beneficial so as to minimise urbanisation related problems. This can make the town attractive and convenient for the inhabitants for now and ever.

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