

Socio-economic Condition of Marakhali Slum Dwellers in Guwahati City

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Abstract

The process of urbanization, in addition to progress and development, is attached with many vices, including growth of slums. The Guwahati city is not an exception. There are many recognized and unrecognized slums in the city. The study looked into the causes for living in slum, the basic amenities available in the area, and the problems faced by the slum dwellers. Out of the 200 households, 46 household respondents were selected as sample of the study. Many of the respondents were migrants from other places. The duration of staying in the slums found that 26.03% of the dwellers were staying from birth, 15.21% of dwellers from the age of 5 years, 17.4% from the age of 8 years, 15.1% from the age of 10 years, 17.4% from the age of 20 years, and 8.8% from the age of 30 years. 69.56% of dwellers were Sikhs and 30.44% were Hindus. The maximum number of respondents were illiterate (93.49%). 54.35% were married, 37.61 % were unmarried, and 4.35% were separated. They were mainly sweepers, small shopkeepers and labourers. The basic amenities were not sufficient, as a result multiple of social problems were reported from the locality.

Keywords: *Slum, urbanization, basic amenities, problems, slum houses.*

Introduction:

Along with continuing urbanization and globalization, the global population of slum dwellers continues to grow enormously. Slums were common during the 19th and early 20th centuries in the United States and Europe. More recently slums have been predominantly found in urban regions of developing and undeveloped parts of the world, but are also found in developed economies. According to UN-HABITAT, around 33% of the urban population in the developing world in 2012 or about 863 million people lived in slums (UN-HABITAT, 2013). The proportion of urban population living in slums was highest in Sub-Saharan Africa (61.7%), followed by South Asia (35%), Southeast Asia (31%), East Asia (28.2%), West Asia (24.6%), Oceania (24.1%), Latin

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America and the Caribbean (23.5%), and North Africa (13.3%). Among individual countries, the proportion of urban residents living in slum areas in 2009 was highest in the Central African Republic (95.9%). Between 1990 and 2010 the percentage of people living in slums dropped, even as the total urban population increased (UN-HABITAT, 2013). The five biggest slums of the world are - i) Neza-Chalco in Mexico city of Mexico; ii) Orangi Town in Karachi of Pakistan; iii) Dharavi of Mumbai in India; iv) Khayelitsha of Cape town in South Africa; and v) Kibera of Nairobi in Kenya (Tovrov, 2011).

In India, a total of 65.49 million slum inhabitants live in 13.92 million households; 2613 cities/towns across 31 States/UTs have reported slums while four states/UTs of Manipur, Daman & Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep have not reported any slum; the slum population constitutes 5.4% of the total population of the country and 17.4 % of the total urban population (GoI, 2015). The data on housing stock and amenities in slums showed that 13.67 million slum census houses were used as residence and residence cum other uses, 58.4% occupied slum census houses were in good condition, 37.5% were in livable condition, and rests 4.0% were in dilapidated condition; 78.9% census slum houses were permanent, 15.1% semi-permanent, 4.9% temporary and 1.1% were unclassified; 70.2% households were owned, 26.3% were rented and 3.5% were living in any others accommodation; 74% households used tap water, 20.3% hand pump/ tube well, 3% well water and 2.8% used other source of drinking water; 90.5% slum households used electricity as main source of lighting, 8.2% kerosene, 0.7% had other source of lighting and 0.5% households had no lighting in the slum areas; 66% households were having latrine facility within the premises, 34% had no latrine facility, 15.1% used public latrine and 18.9% used to defecate in open; 67% of slum households had a bathroom facility, 14.5% had enclosure without roof and 18.5% had no bathroom facility in slums area; 36.9% households had access to closed drainage, 44.3% open drainage and 18.8% had no drainage connectivity for waste water outlet; while only 53.2% slum households were availing banking service (GoI, 2015). Further, 30% of slums were located in open space or parks, 23% along nallahs or drains, 9% along railway lines and 27% else-where (GoI, 2015).

The Encyclopaedia Britannica defined slums as “Densely populated area of substandard housing, usually in a city, characterized by unsanitary conditions and social disorganization” (The Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018). The National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) of India defined slum as a compact settlement with a collection of poorly built tenements, mostly of temporary nature, crowded together usually with inadequate sanitary and drinking water facilities in unhygienic conditions. Slums may be “non notified slum” and “notified slums” (NSSO Survey,

2002). The census 2011 categorised three types of slums in India as notified, recognized and identified (Census, 2011).

Slums are pathological manifestations of urban localities, where people mainly from lower socio-economic background reside. They are having numbers of problems, including overcrowding, lack of basic amenities, etc. They live in such conditions and often having multiple of social and physical problems. The operational definition of slum used in this is a compact settlement of at least 20 households with a collection of poorly built tenements, mostly of temporary nature, crowded together usually with inadequate sanitary and drinking water facilities in unhygienic conditions.

There are many studies on slums across the world (I.L.O, 1983, Marx et. al., 2013, Chetia, 2014, Lucci et. al., 2015, Subasinghe, 2015, Singh, 2016, Kamruzzaman and Hakim, 2016), India (Rayappa, 1967, Yadav, 1987, Dhadave, 1989, Rao, 1990, Laskar, 1999, Kumar & Aggarwal, 2003, Edelman & Mitra, 2006, Sheth, et. al., 2009, Tsujita, 2009, GoI, 2010, GoI, 2011, Sufaira, 2013, Bandyopadhyay & Agrawal, 2013, Goswami & Manna, 2013, Kundu, 2013, Sawhney, 2013, Jha and Tripathi, 2014, Basu and Tripathi, 2014, Basu, 2016) and Assam (Bhattacharyya & Barua, 2013, Bhattacharjee, 2014, Desai et. al., 2014, Phukan, 2014, Dhar, 2015, Hazarika, 2015, Kalita & Harsha, 2015, Rahman, 2016, Rahman, 2016a, Lahon, 2017). However, the review of literatures showed no such study on Marakali slum of Guwahati City.

Research Methodology

The main objective of the study is to examine the socio-economic condition of the slum dwellers in Paltan Bazaar area in Guwahati city. The specific objectives include:

1. To study the causes for living in slum.
2. To study the basic amenities available in the area,
3. To study the problems faced by the slum dwellers.

A total of 46 households as samples were selected for the study from the Marakhali slum of Guwahati city. The sample was selected by purposive sampling method. Both primary and secondary data are collected for the study. The secondary data are gathered from internet sources and libraries. The primary data are collected using interview, interview schedule and non-participant observation. In addition to writing down the information, audio and visual system of recording was also done at times.

Slums – a macro view:

India is one of the fastest developing countries with many metropolitan cities. Similarly, Guwahati being the gateway to north east India and the largest urban locality, slums are quite prevalent in the city. The census 2011 showed that India had total of 173, 54,411 slum houses, out of that 12, 58,664 houses were vacant houses and 160, 95,747 houses were occupied. Andhra Pradesh had the highest number of slum houses of 28,13,475, of which 1,65,536 were vacant houses and 26,47,939 were occupied houses. On the other hand, Andaman & Nicobar Islands had lowest number of total slum houses i.e., 3,704, of which 272 were vacant houses and 3,432 houses were occupied houses (Census, 2011). The states/union territories not reporting slums in India as per census 2011 were Manipur, Daman & Dui, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, and Lakshadweep. Further, the number of towns having slums, as per Census 2001 was 1743, while in 2011 it was 2613. Therefore, in 2011, there were 870 numbers of more towns reported slums (Census, 2011).

In Assam, as per the latest census data 31 out of 88 towns in Assam had slums; the total slum households were 42533 with a slum population of 1, 97,266, which was 4.48% of the total urban population of the state (in compare to 17.42% in India) and 0.30% of the total slum population of India; the average slum household size was 4.6 in compare to 4.5 in urban Assam and 11.3% of total slum population were in the age group 0-6 years; the literacy rate of slum population in Assam was 81.6 in compare to 77.7 in India; the work participation rate was 36.3 for all, 57.7 for males and 13.7 for females (GoI, 2015). Among other North-eastern states, Tripura had the second highest number of people in slums with 15 out of 16 towns having slums, with 1, 39,780 people residing in slums; in Nagaland, 11 out of the 19 towns had slums, with 82,324 people residing in such places; in Mizoram, there were 78,561 people in slums, all concentrated in one town; in Meghalaya six out of ten towns had slums with a total slum population of 57,418; Arunachal Pradesh had 15,562 slum dwellers in five of the 26 towns in the state; while Manipur was one among the few states not reporting any slums (AT, 2013).

The table 1 shows that Assam had a total number of 67,248 census slum houses, of which 4,955 were vacant and 62,293 occupied houses. Guwahati Municipal Corporation had highest number of total census houses of 7,280 houses, of which 602 were vacant houses and 6,678 occupied houses. This was followed by Dibrugarh (MB + OG) (Part), Nagaon (MB + OG), Silchar (MB + OG) and Dhubri (MB); while the Hojai (MB) had the least number of slum census houses of 54. In the Guwahati (M Corp. +OG) (Part) there were 2,837 slum houses, of which 234 were vacant and 2,603 occupied census houses.

Table 1: Slum Census Houses and Its Uses in Assam, 2011

| Area Name | Total number of census houses | Vacant census houses | Occupied census houses |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| ASSAM | 67,248 | 4,955 | 62,293 |
| Gauripur (TC) | 2,246 | 137 | 2,109 |
| Dhubri (MB) | 5,533 | 291 | 5,242 |
| Sapatgram (TC) | 1,403 | 53 | 1,350 |
| Bilasipara (TC) | 1,897 | 80 | 1,817 |
| Chapar (TC) | 1,300 | 24 | 1,276 |
| Sarthebari (TC) | 89 | 7 | 82 |
| Nagaon (MB + OG) | 6,983 | 1,063 | 5,920 |
| Hojai (MB) | 54 | 1 | 53 |
| Lanka (MB) | 247 | 24 | 223 |
| Rangapara (TC) | 1,416 | 90 | 1,326 |
| Tezpur (MB + OG) | 2,617 | 111 | 2,506 |
| North Lakhimpur (MB) | 249 | 11 | 238 |
| Tinsukia (MB + OG) | 283 | 31 | 252 |
| Margherita (TC) | 968 | 108 | 860 |
| Dibrugarh (MB + OG) (Part) | 7,123 | 249 | 6,874 |
| Sibsagar (MB) | 269 | 11 | 258 |
| Nazira (MB) | 1,222 | 120 | 1,102 |
| Moranhat (TC) | 763 | 58 | 705 |
| Jorhat (MB + OG) (Part) | 3,547 | 440 | 3,107 |
| Bokakhat (TC) | 235 | 23 | 212 |
| Golaghat (MB) | 1,228 | 118 | 1,110 |
| Silchar (MB + OG) | 5,693 | 304 | 5,389 |
| Lakhipur (MB) | 1,003 | 46 | 957 |
| Karimganj (MB) | 1,988 | 54 | 1,934 |
| Lala (TC) | 1,020 | 68 | 952 |
| Bongaigaon (MB) | 1,619 | 128 | 1,491 |
| Bijni (TC) | 3,407 | 239 | 3,168 |
| Guwahati (M Corp.) (Part) | 7,280 | 602 | 6,678 |
| Guwahati (M Corp. + OG) (Part) | 2,837 | 234 | 2,603 |
| Nalbari (MB) | 1,547 | 166 | 1,381 |
| Kharupatia (TC) | 1,016 | 59 | 957 |
| Udalguri (TC) | 166 | 5 | 161 |

Source: Census 2011.

It is also found that out 62,293 occupied census slum houses in Assam, 46,911 were used as residence; 1,128 as residence-cum other use; 8,493 as shop, office, hotel, lodge, guest house etc.; 576 as school, college, hospital, dispensary, etc.; 539 as factory/ workshop workshed, etc.; 798 as place of worship; and 3,484 for other nonresidential use (GoI, 2015).

Study of Marakhali Slum:

Marakhali slum is located towards east of Guwahati Railway Station in Paltan Bazaar. Paltan Bazaar is a business locality in the centre of the Guwahati city and is surrounded by the localities of Panbazar, Dighalipukhuri, Ulubari and Fancy Bazaar. The slums adjacent to Paltan Bazaar area are the officially notified slums in Guwahati and are for more than thirty years. In

Marakhali slum there are around 200 households belonged to many ethnic communities, in an area of one square kilometre, located below the Paltan Bazaar Fly Over. The detailed of the 46 respondents are shown in table 2.

Table 2: List of the respondents interacted during the field study

| Respondent No. | Age | Sex | Age from when started living in the slum | Language speaking | Education | Marital status | Occupation |
|----------------|-----|-----|--|-----------------------------|---------------|----------------|----------------------|
| 1. | 20 | F | Since birth | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | House wife |
| 2. | 27 | F | From age of 5 years | Punjabi, Assamese and Hindi | Upto class 12 | Married | Work in Coffee shop |
| 3. | 23 | F | From birth | Hindi & Assamese | Nil | Married | Veterinary Sweeper |
| 4. | 28 | F | From the age of 6 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Veterinary Sweeper |
| 5. | 21 | F | From 10 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Sweeper |
| 6. | 24 | F | From 12 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Sweeper |
| 7. | 23 | M | From 16 years | Hindi & Assamese | Nil | Unmarried | GMC Health Inspector |
| 8. | 20 | F | From 9 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Unmarried | House wife |
| 9. | 21 | M | From 16 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Unmarried | House wife |
| 10. | 24 | M | From 10 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Widow | House wife |
| 11. | 42 | M | From 26 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Upto class 1 | Widow | Sweeper |
| 12. | 32 | M | From the age of 5 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Unmarried | Sweeper |
| 13. | 35 | M | From 8 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Separated | Shopkeeper |
| 14. | 42 | M | From 13 years | Hindi & Assamese | Nil | Separated | Shopkeeper |
| 15. | 31 | M | From birth | Hindi & Assamese | Nil | Separated | Shopkeeper |
| 16. | 23 | M | From 10 years | Hindi & Assamese | Nil | Married | Shopkeeper |
| 17. | 24 | F | From 10 years | Hindi & Assamese | Nil | Married | Sweeper |
| 18. | 37 | F | From 10 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Sweeper |
| 19. | 35 | M | From 20 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Separated | Labourer |
| 20. | 45 | F | From 20 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Upto class 11 | Separated | Labourer |
| 21. | 41 | F | From the age of 5 years | Hindi & Assamese | Nil | Separated | Labourer |
| 22. | 24 | M | From the age of 6 years | Hindi & Assamese | Nil | Married | Labourer |
| 23. | 21 | F | Since birth | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Labourer |
| 24. | 43 | F | Since birth | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Sweeper |
| 25. | 35 | M | From the age of 6 years | Hindi & Assamese | Nil | Married | Sweeper |
| 26. | 31 | F | From birth | Hindi & Assamese | Nil | Married | Shopkeeper |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|----|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|-----|-----------|------------|
| 27. | 30 | F | From 23 years | Hindi & Assamese | Nil | Married | Labourer |
| 28. | 32 | F | From 30 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Separated | Labourer |
| 29. | 32 | F | From the age of 8 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Shopkeeper |
| 30. | 21 | F | Since birth | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Labourer |
| 31. | 27 | F | From the age of 5 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Separated | Labourer |
| 32. | 28 | M | From 15 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Separated | Shopkeeper |
| 33. | 22 | M | From 15 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Shopkeeper |
| 34. | 21 | F | From the age of 8 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Labourer |
| 35. | 35 | F | From the age of 6 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Labourer |
| 36. | 41 | F | From birth | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Separated | Sweeper |
| 37. | 25 | F | From the age of 8 years | Hindi & Assamese | Nil | Married | Labourer |
| 38. | 27 | F | From the age of 6 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Sweeper |
| 39. | 21 | F | From the age of 5 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Separated | Labourer |
| 40. | 24 | F | From birth | Hindi & Assamese | Nil | Separated | Shopkeeper |
| 41. | 25 | F | From 5 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Shopkeeper |
| 42. | 31 | F | From the age of 8 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Labourer |
| 43. | 20 | F | From birth | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Separated | Labourer |
| 44. | 31 | F | From the age of 5 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | mil | Separated | Labourer |
| 45. | 34 | F | From the age of 5 years | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Labourer |
| 46. | 33 | F | From birth | Punjabi, Assamese & Hindi | Nil | Married | Labourer |

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

1. The gender distribution of the respondents shows that 69.57% were females and 30.43% were males.
2. The age group distribution of the respondents' shows that majority of them (50%) belonged to the age group 20-30 years, while 34.8% were from the age group 30-40 years and 15.2% from the age group 40-50 years.
3. Many of the respondents were migrants from other places like Punjab (43.5%), Ajara in Guwahati (26.1%), Andhra Pradesh (17.4%), Tamil Nadu (10.8%) and Shillong (2.2%). They migrated for better work, income and for better livelihood.

4. The duration of staying in the slums found that 26.03% of the dwellers were staying from birth, 15.21% of dwellers from the age of 5 years, 17.4% from the age of 8 years, 15.1% from the age of 10 years, 17.4% from the age of 20 years, and 8.8% from the age of 30 years.
5. It was found that all the dwellers belonged to patriarchal family system.
6. The religion of the respondents shows that 69.56% were Sikhs and 30.44% of dwellers were Hindus.
7. The language spoken of the slum dwellers show that 69.56 % knew the languages Punjabi, Assamese and Hindi, while 30.44% of dwellers knew only Hindi and Assamese.
8. The maximum number of respondents were illiterate (93.49%), as due to poverty their parents could not earn a decent livelihood to send them go schools. Among the literates (6.51%), only one each studied till class one, class three and class 12.
9. The marital status reflects that 54.35% were married, 37.61 % were unmarried, and 4.35% were separated from the husbands.
10. It was found that 26.09% of dwellers were working as a Sweeper in Guwahati Municipality Corporation, 21.74% were working as shopkeepers, 8.7% were labourer; while only one each (2.17%) was housewife, health inspector and worker in a coffee shop.
11. The government was giving them basic facilities for their survival like water supply, electricity, sanitation, housing, health care, etc. An international NGO known as “South Asian Forum for Environment (SAFE)” was also providing free sanitation and drinking water to every household in the Marakhali slum. A few of the facilities provided to the slum dwellers include free housing for all, twelve (12) common latrines and bathroom for all, 1(one) extra latrine for the physically handicap people, and an assistance of Rs 1850/- per year for education of children to every household.
12. Though they were availing many facilities, these were not sufficient for all. They were living in an unhygienic, dirty condition the drainage condition is very bad and the surrounding was full of garbage. They were getting drinking water of 10 litres per day which was not sufficient for each household as there were at least 9-11 members in average in each household. They were facing the problem of artificial flood and water logging in the area

during rainy season. Some of the common diseases reported from the slum were diarrhoea, gastric problems, fever, etc.

Case Studies:

The excerpts of interactions of three of the respondents are portrayed as follows:

Case Study 1: Mrs X, 40 years old belonged to a Punjabi family and was the vice president of the Marakhali Punjabi colony; whose husband was working in Guwahati Municipality Corporation as a sweeper. She had three children - two boys and one girl. She came to Marakhali slum 25 years ago from Ludhiana in Punjab. She spoke about the problems they were facing in the slum including the electricity, water supply, health check up, etc. For example, every day drinking water was supplied from 7am-8.30am morning and 6pm-7.30pm evening, which was not sufficient for the 50 households of the Marakhali Punjabi Colony. She also added that at the time of election many politicians came to see their place and made fake promises.

Case Study 2: Mr Y, 62 years old, a resident of Marakhali Marathi Harijan Colony, had wife, three girls, one boy and one grandson. A retired health inspector in Guwahati Municipality Corporation originally hailed from Andhra Pradesh and came to Assam in 1950. His wife was working in Guwahati Municipality Corporation office as a helper and their monthly income was Rs 15000/- per month. He talked about some of the unsocial activity that occurred in Marakhali Marathi colony including robbery, theft, running away of girls and boys from their home, etc.

Case studies 3: Mrs Z, 27 years old women was living in Marakhali slum from the age of 5 years, belonged to a Punjabi family and was working as a waiter in a coffee shop. She studied up to class 12, whose mother was working as a sweeper in Guwahati Municipality Corporation and her father is in 'coma' for last two years. She was earning Rs 3000/- and her mother Rs 2500/- per month. She said though they were getting all the facilities from the GMC, there were many problems like the common bathrooms were very far from their house especially a concern for the women and girls and also there was no privacy in the slum.

Conclusions and Suggestions:

The dwellers of Marakhali slum were mostly migrants and live in very dirty and unhygienic condition. They did not have any permanent residential land in any place and migrated to the city for better livelihood. Being the dwellers in the heart of Guwahati, were getting lots of opportunities

for their survival and were getting many facilities from the government including free electricity, housing, health-check up twice in a year, water supply, educational assistance, etc. The problems were mainly the unhygienic and dirty condition, poor drainage condition, full of garbage, etc.

There were lots of disparity in socio-economic condition between the mainstream people and slum dwellers, which may lead to rise of unsocial and unethical activities in the slum areas including thefts, robberies pick-puckering, prostitutions and human trafficking, etc. Thereby, some of the steps that may be taken are:

4. Efforts should be made for the cleanliness of the area, so that basic hygienic condition may be maintained.
5. As most of the children were involved in child labour because of poverty; hence the awareness steps about free education to those children and their parents are required.
6. It is also observed that there is a vast potentiality of human resources in the slum and if the people are properly taken care of by the government through various socio/economic and educational schemes, the potential human resources of the area will not go squander.
7. Life skill training such as soft skill development, handloom, computer education, handicraft, tailoring, etc. may be provided to youths of the slum so that they can be engaged in various livelihood generation activities.

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