



## **SLUMS AND URBANIZATION IN INDIA- SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY**

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### **Abstract**

*Slums are bye-products of urbanization and industrialization. Slum is an area emerging with the industrialization and urbanization, where the buildings are unfit for human habitation, overcrowded, lack of ventilation, light or sanitation facilities or combination of these factors leading to backwardness. Slum dwellers suffer from economic hardships, lack of education and absence of health infrastructure, ill-effects of overcrowding, pollution and rootlessness characteristic of large metropolitan cities. In spite of the fact that they are living in the developing/growing or expanding metropolitan cities, and they contribute significantly for the development of the cities, their socio-economic conditions are different and backward. Moreover, their conditions and characteristics vary across regions.*

*The concept of slums and its definition vary from country to country depending upon the socio-economic characteristics of each society. Irrespective of location, whether in the core of the city, in the form of old dilapidated structures or in the outskirts, in the form of squatting, slums have often been characterized. Physically, slum is an area of the city with inadequate housing, deficient facilities, overcrowding and congestion. Socially, slum is a way of life, a special character which has its own set of norms and values reflected in poor sanitation, health values, health practices, deviant behaviour and social isolation. Slum is defined as that area, where the buildings are in any respect unfit for human habitation, or by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement of buildings, streets lack of ventilation, light or sanitation facilities or combination of these factors, are detrimental to safety, health or morals (Slums Improvement and Clearance Act, 1956). Slums are not*

*fit for settlement and are a danger both for residents and the urban population living nearby. The authors analyses would like to the Slums and Urbanization in India.*

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**Key words:** *Demographic approach, Slums, Urbanization, Slums dwellers suffer Economic and Physically*

**INREODUCTION:** Slums are part of urban environment. They are identified by the presence of features of undesirable living conditions such as overcrowding, lack of hygiene and sanitation, inadequacy of drinking water, poor construction etc. They are a clear manifestation of a poorly planned and merged urban sector and in particular a malfunctioning of housing sector. These informal and illegal settlements manifest poverty and subhuman living conditions. They are a threat to urban environment.

Indian cities and urban centres are no exception. They too have slums. As per 2011 census, there are 13.9 million slum households in India, providing shelter to a population of about 65.5 millions. They constitute 17.2 per cent of the countrys total population. They represent urbanized poverty and pose a formidable challenge to the urban administrators. That is why slums have attracted the attention of researchers.

The present study is also about slums and slums dwellers. Since urbanization, catalyzed by migration, is a major cause of slum-proliferation in India as is the case elsewhere in the world, it is more appropriate to review the trends of urbanization and the impact of migration before examining the status of slums and slum dwellers in India.

### **Urbanisation in India:**

Urbanization is an index of transformation of traditional rural economics into modern urban economics. Globally, more people live in urban areas than in rural areas, with 54 per cent of the worlds population residing in urban areas in 2014.

The huge increase in urban populations amounts to a crisis of unprecedented magnitude in urban shelter provision. Every year the worlds urban population is increasing by about 70 million, equivalent to seven mega cities. It occurs as the agrarian societies evolve into industrial societies. Many nations pass through this phase. There are two approaches to measure urbanization: 1) demographic approach and 2) geographic approach in the first approach, the level and growth of urban share of total population and its distribution by size classes of cities and towns are considered. In the second approach, changes in the number and growth of urban centres and expansion of the geographical boundaries of the existing urban centres, are considered.

### **Level and Trend of Urbanization in India:**

India is also urbanizing. About 10 per cent of the worlds urban population lives in India. It accounts for 21 per cent of Asias urban population. Table No.1 shows the trends of total and urban population in India, along with the level of urbanization, over the period 1901– 2011.

As per the census of 2011, the urban population in 2011 is 377.1 million accounting for 31 per cent of the countrys total population of 1210 million.<sup>6</sup> Urban population has been steadily rising since 1901. It is observed from the table that urban population increased from 25.8 million in 1901 to 62.4 million in 1951, to 217.6 million in 1991 and to 286.1 million in 2001. It increased further to 377.1 million in 2011. As a per cent of total population, Indias urban population stood at 10.8 per cent in 1901 and declined slightly to 10.3 per cent in 1911. However since 1911 it has been on the steady rise. It rose from 10.3 per cent in 1911 to 17.3 per cent in 1951, to 25.7 per cent in 1991, 27.8 per cent in 2001 and finally to 31.2 per cent in 2011. It is however observed from the table that the annual exponential growth rate has been fluctuating. After rising from 0.03 per cent in 1911 to 3.47 per cent in 1951, it declined to 2.34 per cent in 1961 and again started rising from then onwards to reach 3.83 per cent in 1981. However, the annual exponential growth rate of urban population resumed its fall since then and steadily declined to 3.09 per cent in 1991 and 2.73 in 2001. Again it increased slightly to 2.76 per cent in 2011. It is clear from these growth rates that urbanization in India has been slow but unsteady.

**TABLE No.1: LEVEL OF URBANIZATION, IN INDIA, 1901-2011 ( IN MILLIONS)**

Year	Total Population	Urban Population	Percentage of urban population	Annual exponential growth rate	Decadal growth rate
1	2	3	4	5	6
1901	238.4	25.8	10.8	--	-
1911	252.1	25.9	10.3	0.03	5.7
1921	251.3	28.1	11.2	0.79	-0.3
1931	278.9	33.4	12.0	1.75	11.0
1941	318.6	44.1	13.9	2.77	142
1951	361.1	62.4	17.3	3.47	13.3
1961	439.2	78.9	18.0	2.34	21.6
1971	548.2	109.1	19.9	3.21	24.8
1981	683.3	159.5	23.3	3.83	24.6
1991	846.3	217.6	25.7	3.09	23.9
2001	1028.6	286.1	27.8	2.73	21.5
2011	1210.5	377.1	31.2	2.76	17.7

**Source:** Compiled from various census statistics and Census of India, 2011, Registrar General of India

It is observed from Table 3.1 that the decadal growth in urban population stood at 5.7 per cent in 1901 and rose to 13.3 per cent in 1951 and steadily increased to reach 24.8 per cent by 1971. Though there was increase in urban population in India in absolute terms in the subsequent decades, in terms of percentage, the decadal growth has been declining since 1971. As is clear from the table, the decadal growth rate declined from 24.8 per cent in 1971 to 24.6 per cent in 1981, 23.9 per cent in 1991, 21.5 per cent in 2001 and finally to 17.7 per cent in 2011. This is in contrast to the increase in the percentage of urban population from 19.9 per cent in 1971 to 23.3 per cent in 1981, to 25.7 per cent in 1991 and 27.8 per cent in 2001, and finally to 31.2 per cent in 2011. From this analysis, it is clear that urbanization has slowed down from 1971 onwards in terms of decadal growth. It may be inferred that India is urbanizing but at a slow rate. It is also evidenced by the steady fall in the annual exponential growth rate from 3.21 per cent in 1971 to 2.76 per cent in 2011.

Another measure of urbanization in demographic approach is the distribution of population by size classes of cities and towns. In India, cities and towns are categorized into 6 classes on the basis of the size of the population, as follows.

1) Class I : more than 1,00,000 2) Class II: 50,000 -1,00,000 3) Class III: 20,000 - 50,000 4) Class IV: 10,000 - 20,000 5) Class V: 5,000 - 10,000 and Class VI: less than 5000

Table No.2 furnishes data on the distribution of Indias population among the six categories of cities and towns, from 1901 to 2001. It may be observed from the table that the number of cities of all categories except class VI, increases during 1901- 2001. Class I cities increased by 16 times from 24 in 1901 to 393 in 2001. Class II cities increased by 9 times from 43 to 401. Class III cities increased by 9 times from 130 to 1151 while Class IV and Class V cities increased by approximately 3 times each respectively from 391 to 1333 and from 744 to 888. It is clear from these details that class I and Class II cities increased more in number than all other categories of cities/towns. It may also be noted from the table that the number of class VI cities declined by 2.5 times from 479 in 1901 to 191 in 2001.

**TABLE No. 2: NUMBER OF TOWNS AND PERCENTAGE OF URBAN POPULATION BY SIZE CLASS OF CITIES**

Census Years	No. of Towns by the size Class						Percentage of urban population					
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1901	24	43	130	391	744	479	26.0	11.2	15.6	20.8	20.1	6.1
1911	23	40	135	364	707	485	27.4	20.5	16.4	19.7	19.3	6.5
1921	29	45	145	370	734	571	29.7	10.3	15.9	18.2	18.6	7.0
1931	35	56	183	434	800	509	31.2	11.6	16.8	18.0	17.1	5.2
1941	49	74	242	498	920	407	38.2	11.4	16.3	15.7	15.0	3.1
1951	76	91	327	608	1124	569	44.6	9.9	15.7	13.6	12.9	3.1
1961	102	129	437	719	711	172	51.4	11.2	16.9	12.7	6.8	0.7
1971	148	173	668	827	623	147	57.2	10.9	16.0	10.9	4.4	0.4
1981	218	270	743	1059	758	253	60.3	11.6	14.3	9.5	3.5	0.5
1991	300	345	947	1167	740	197	65.2	10.9	13.1	7.7	2.6	0.3
2001	393	401	1151	1344	888	191	68.6	9.7	12.2	6.8	2.3	0.2

**Source:** Computed from Various Census Reports, Registrar General of India

What is more important in terms of urbanization is the distribution of population by the size classes of cities. Table 3.2 shows the distribution of population as a per cent of total population for each size class of cities/towns. It may be observed from the table

that the proportion of population in class I cities increased from 26.0 per cent in 1901 to 44.6 per cent in 1951, 65.2 per cent in 1991 and 68.6 per cent in 2001. There is steady increase. The proportion in class II cities fluctuated during 1901-2001. It stood at 11.2 per cent in 1901 but declined to 9.7 per cent by 2001. It may be further observed that the proportion of urban population of all other classes of cities/towns declined at different levels between 1901-2001.

Obviously, urbanization largely benefited class I cities. Though natural increase of population is a major cause of urbanization, migration is a very important factor that contributes to urbanization. From the above data, it can be safely concluded that migration to class I cities must be in large proportion than to any other class of cities. This is because class I cities offer better economic opportunities in terms of employment and better wages in industrial and service sectors which record higher productivity than agriculture. Migration to class I cities may be not only from rural areas but from other cities.

#### **PROBLEMS OF URBANIZATION:**

Urbanization does not occur without problems though it promotes economic development. It creates the following problems.

1. It creates shortage of basic amenities such as housing, transport, water supply and sanitation. This leads to formation of slums. Shortage of social infrastructure such as schools and hospitals also arises. Class I cities reach saturation level in this regard.
2. Urban centres do not absorb all migrants and urban poor in employment. Many cities switch over to capital intensive technologies and create unemployment problem for the distressed poor. Thus rural poverty transforms into urban poverty.
3. Poverty induced migration of illiterate and unskilled or marginally skilled labourers to class I cities occurs due to push factors. Many cities grow in urban population and not in urban prosperity and culture. Hence it is urbanization without urban functional characteristics. This leads to involution but not evolution. Shelter becomes a problem to many poor migrants and filthy slums are created.
4. Social and economic inequalities that are created by urbanization lead to social conflict, crime and anti-social activities.
5. Lopsided and uncontrolled urbanization leads to air-pollution, water-pollution and environmental degradation. This causes degradation of quality of urban life.

6. Illiterate, low skilled or unskilled migrants from rural areas are absorbed into low grade urban informal sector at a low wage rate. Urban informal sector becomes inefficient and unproductive.

#### **SLUMS IN INDIA:**

Slums are now a common feature of many major cities and towns in India, as in many other countries, particularly developing countries in the world. Net migration is a major factor that contributes to the proliferation of slums. Poverty and economic inequalities push the rural population to the urban centres. Industrialization in the cities and towns and consequential expansion of tertiary sector provide employment and other economic opportunities and therefore attract the migrants in large numbers. It is mostly the labour force that migrates from rural areas to the urban areas in search of employment and better wages. But when the poor labourers reach urban centres they find it very difficult to secure dwelling accommodation at affordable rents and therefore they are compelled to occupy vacant public land to erect temporary structures for their dwelling.

Sometimes they occupy vacant private lands also. Over a period they may improve the structures depending upon their income and permanently settle in the sites occupied by them. It may be the case sometimes that new migrants may rent accommodation from the old migrants already living in these settlements. They fail to secure any title / patta for the land on which they have erected housing structure. Such settlements are illegal and hence denied the basic civic amenities like electricity, water, drainage and roads by the civic bodies.

The settlements become overcrowded, disorganized and suffer from lack of basic sanitation. Soon they develop into slums and squalor settlements. Migration of labour force from rural economy to the urban centres and their occupation of public or private land for dwelling bring severe pressure on the urban infrastructure. Absorption of migrant labour force in urban sectors poses serious problems to the civic bodies by straining the capacity of cities and towns to absorb them by way of providing employment, shelter and basic civic amenities. The problem assumes more serious proportions in certain cities as the migrants are selective in choosing their destinations. The influx of migrants is more into the cities which offer more economic opportunities, leading to growth of slums in such cities.

Though migration is the main contributor to growth of slums, it cannot be ruled out that some of the poor inhabitants of non-slum areas in the urban centres also shift to these settlements at some point of time due to worsening poverty conditions or loss of property etc. People keep coming to these settlements, add to the



congestion and further deteriorate the living conditions and environment. Quite often, such settlements may develop near industrial areas or close to commercial areas where employment is available to the slum dwellers. Hill slopes, canal bunds, river beds, and railway yards are some of the common sites of slums. Many of these inhabitations are environmentally fragile. They are dangerous zones prone to landslides, floods and other disasters.

Though cities are considered to be reservoirs of talent, capital and work force which enable them to generate wealth and income for the nation, it is to be recognized that large sections of poor population live in cities. Most of them are slums dwellers. That is why inclusive growth of cities has now become a critical issue in public policy. There is focus on developing smart cities. So as to avoid mushrooming of slums, the basic problems of the urban poor including the slum dwellers, need to be effectively addressed while planning for urban growth. In fact, it is very much necessary to remember that slum dwellers offer the human resource and play a key role in the process of the economic development of cities. Their number is so large that even a small increase on their productivity will mean a lot in terms of contribution to GDP. That is why focus of poverty shifted from villages to towns and cities, not only in India, but also all over the developing world.

The growth of slums can also be attributed to absence of effective urban planning and failure of urban governance, often accentuated by interference by local and influential leaders. In order to help administration to have better understanding of the problem of slums in its entirety and enable the authorities to initiate appropriate steps to mitigate the hardships of the slum dwellers. Data on various aspects of slums is collected by the National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) and the Registrar General of India and the Census Commissioner of India. National Building Organization (NBO) is the nodal agency that develops a statistical system on housing, slums and urban poverty.

It is attempted in this chapter to review the state of slums and slum dwellers as presented in various reports of the NSSO, Census and NBO.

### **NSSO Reports on Slums**

National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) conducts sample surveys on slums as part of its exercise to collect data on housing conditions. The first survey on slums (31st round) was conducted in 1977. It was on conditions of slum areas in Cities confining the survey to class I cities only. The second survey (49<sup>th</sup> round) 13 on Slums in India was conducted in 1993 and slum data was collected separately for rural and urban



areas. The third survey (58th round) 14 was conducted in 2002 exclusively on urban slums which was titled as Condition of Urban slums. The fourth survey (65th round) was conducted for urban slums in 2008-09, named as Some Characteristics of Urban Slums. The fifth and the latest survey (69th round) was conducted in 2012 for urban slums and it was named Urban slums in India.

The particulars collected during the 49th, 58th and 65th rounds are summarized and furnished in Table No.3

**TABLE No.3: STATUS OF SLUMS IN DIFFERENT NSSO ROUNDS**

S. No.	Indicator	49th Round (1993)	58th Round (2002)	65th Round (2009)
1	Total slums	56311	51688	48994
a)	Notified	20364	26166	24781
b)	Non-notified	35946	25522	24213
2	Total No. of Households (Approx)	5934000	8229744	NA
a)	Notified slums	2606700	5358272	NA
b)	Non-notified slums	3327300	2871472	NA
3	Surround Area (% age)			
a)	Residential	98.4	79.9	81.7
b)	Industrial	0.7	8.0	7.8
c)	Commercial	0.1	6.5	5.5
d)	Others	0.8	5.7	4.9
4	Ownership of land (%age)			
a)	Private	NA	35.3	39.3
b)	Public Railways	NA	4.9	4.4
c)	Public local bodies	NA	41.2	40.9
d)	Public Others	NA	17.5	11.7
e)	Non known	NA	1.1	3.7
5	Housing structure			
a)	Pucca	30.5	47.6	56.9
b)	Semi- Pucca	33.7	34.5	29.3
c)	Katcha (both serviceable and unserviceable)	35.4	29.3	13.8

6	Approach Road for slum (%)			
a)	Total Motor able	84.0	75.0	72.2
	i)Pucca	68.6	64.0	65.5
	ii)Katcha	15.4	11.0	6.8
b)	Total non-motorable	15.6	25.0	27.8
	i) pucca	5.0	12.0	18.4
	ii)Katcha	10.6	13.0	9.4
7	Internal Roads in Slums			
a)	Pucca	46.5	54.2	67.3
b)	Katcha	53.1	45.3	32.4
8	Distance from nearest motorable road			
a)	<1 km	98.0	97.3	97.3
b)	> 1 km	2.0	2.7	2.7
9	Slums by availability of electricity			
a)	For both street lights and households	NA	69.1	64.6
b)	Household only	NA	17.8	20.9
c)	Street lights only	NA	4.9	10.8
d)	No, electricity	NA	8.2	3.6
10	Motor source of drinking water			
a)	Tap	64.8	77.7	77.8
b)	Tube well / Hand pump	26.7	15.7	17.0
c)	Well	4.4	2.4	1.9
d)	Others	4.0	4.3	3.1
e)	Not reported	0	0	0.2
11	Latrine facility			
a)	No latrine	54.4	33.4	14.7
b)	Septic Tank/Flesh	35.1	50.4	57.8
c)	Service Latrine	6.9	7.5	5.9
d)	Others	3.5	8.8	21.6
12	Drainage System in slums			

a)	No drainage	31.6	29.3	16.0
b)	Open katcha	20.1	13.2	17.8
c)	Open pucca	35.1	38.4	34.7
d)	Covered pucca	4.9	6.2	14.7
e)	Under ground	8.0	12.9	16.8
f)	Not reported	0.3	0.0	0.0
13	Sewerage system in slum			
a)	Underground	16.6	22.5	26.0
b)	Not underground	83.4	77.5	74.0
14	Garbage disposal arrangements			
a)	No arrangement	34.8	31.2	16.4
b)	By resident	10.8	6.9	6.9
c)	By Panchayat / Corporation	52.0	60.7	60.7
d)	Others	2.4	1.2	1.2
15	Distance to primary schools			
a)	< 0.5 km	62.4	67.8	52.9
b)	0.5 – 1 km	27.6	24.2	33.7
c)	1 -2 km	7.1	6.5	10.9
d)	2 – 5 km	2.0	1.5	2.2
e)	> 5 km	0.4	0.0	0.3
16	Distance to health centre			
a)	<0.5 km	29.8	21.1	20.2
b)	0.05 – 1 km	33.2	26.2	27.9
c)	2.0 km	15.2	23.2	22.9
d)	2-0 – 5.0 km	17.2	24.9	20.8
e)	> 5 km	4.1	4.7	8.1

Source: Compiled from the data available in the *State of Slums in India – A statistical compendium, 2013* published by the National Building Organisation

From the data given in the above table, it may be observed that total slums declined from 56311 in 1993 to 51688 in 2002 and to 48994 in 2009. There is increase in the notified slums whereas the non-notified slums decreased. The approximate number of slum

households in notified slums increased from 26,06,700 in 1993 to 53,58,272 in 2001 while households in the non-notified slums decreased from 33,27,300 to 28,71,472 in 2012. All the survey results show that the slums are largely surrounded by residential areas, followed by industrial areas and commercial areas in that order. The number of pucca housing structure increased from 30.5 per cent in 1993 to 47.6 per cent in 2009. The proportion of katcha housing structures has been on the decrease. In 2009, only 13.8 per cent of the housing structures were katcha, while semi-pucca structures were 29.3 per cent and pucca structures 56.9 per cent.

During all the periods covered by the surveys, slum households had approach roads and the proportion of motorable pucca approach roads was much higher at more than 70 per cent. More than 60 per cent of the households had electricity and more than 65 per cent had access to tap water, The proportion of households without latrine declined from 54.4 per cent in 1993 to 33.4 per cent in 2002 and 14.7 per cent in 2009. The proportion of slum households with no drainage facility also declined from 31.6 per cent in 1993 to 29.3 per cent in 2002 and to 16.0 in 2009. However there was only slight improvement as far as sewerage system was concerned. Garbage disposal also improved.

By and large there was progress in the access to certain basic facilities in quantitative terms as well as in qualitative terms. But there is also much to be desired as 20 to 30 per cent of the total number of slum households are still deprived of some important facilities.

### **SLUM IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES:**

Slum improvement programmes are different from the urban poverty alleviation programmes in the sense that poverty alleviation programmes aim at providing employment to the urban poor including slum dwellers, to eradicate poverty while slum improvement programmes aim at improving the living condition of the slum dwellers by improving housing and sanitation. The following schemes were implemented by the government to improve the conditions of slums and slum dwellers

#### **1) Urban Community Development Project (UCDP)**

This project was launched as a pilot project in 1958 by the central government. It adopted area-oriented approach. The scheme was later modified and it evolved into various new programmes in due course of time.

## **2) Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums (EIUS)**

EIUS was launched in 1972 as a centrally sponsored scheme with total assistance from the central government. Later it was transferred to states to implement up the Minimum Needs Programme (MNP). The objective of the programme was to provide water supply facility, digging canals for free flow of rain water, construction of community bath and latrines, arrangement of street lights, widening of roads, disposal of waste etc. in slums. This scheme was confined to provision of physical facilities only. Health, education and social development were not part of this scheme.

## **3) Low Cost Sanitation (LCS)**

Low Cost Sanitation for Liberation of Scavengers scheme was launched as a centrally sponsored scheme from 1980-81. The main objectives of the Scheme were to convert the existing dry latrines into low cost pour flush latrines and to construct new ones where none exist. The scheme has been continued in the 12th plan period so as to convert the remaining latrines identified by the Census of India 2011 in urban areas.

## **4) Urban Basic Services (UBS)**

This scheme was introduced during 1981-83 as a UNICEF sponsored programme which consisted of three different programmes viz., 1) Urban Community Development(UCD), 2) Low Cost Sanitation (LCS) and Small and Medium Town Development. From 1985, states were involved in this programme. The expenditure was shared by the central government and the states on 50:50 ratio. The objective was to provide basic services like water supply, sanitation and other social services to the members of the low income families, particularly women and children. During 1990-91 this scheme was introduced as Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP) by the central government.

## **5) Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP)**

This is a centrally sponsored scheme launched in 1990-91 on the recommendations of the National Commission on Urbanization(NCU) based on the experience of implementing the Urban Basic Services (UBS) programme introduced in the sixth plan. The new programme was designed to foster Neighbourhood Development Committees ( NDCs) in slums. It was expected to ensure effective participation of slum dwellers in developmental activities and to coordinate the convergent provisions of social services, environmental improvement and income generation activities of the specialist departments. The scheme was transferred to the state sector in 1992. UBSP scheme was sought to be implemented in the slum

pockets within specific towns/cities selected by the state governments/ UTs in consultation with the central government.

The main objectives of the UBSP scheme were as follows<sup>23</sup>

**i) Community Mobilisation and Empowerment :**

To establish and support slum-related community-based organizations so as to enable them to participate actively in planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes. By this, the community was expected to achieve its developmental goals and also contribute towards the success of other social sector programmes in association with the government departments and agencies.

**ii) Convergence through Sustainable Supports System :**

To support the establishment of appropriate systems at community, municipal, district, state and national level for better targeting and convergence of different sectoral programmes for the urban poor, through coordinated needs assessment, planning, monitoring and services delivery at the city and community levels.

**iii) Effective Achievements of Social Sector Goals :**

To contribute towards more effective and rapid achievement of national social sector goals by targeting the poorest through a community based participatory process in harmony with the principles of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992.

**CONSLUSION:**

They are only the types of settlements which the urban poor can afford and access in cities where competition for land and profits is very intense. Slums are not peculiar to any particular country or region. They are a global phenomenon. They are as old as the cities in the world. Slums were a distinctive feature of European and US cities during the period of industrial revolution and they persisted in some of these cities into the twentieth century as well. The well-known slums came up often on the outskirts of cities of dynamic economic growth. They attracted migrants and offered economic opportunities. Large slums and settlements gradually disappeared in most of the advanced economies. Though some of todays slums are in countries experiencing rapid economic growth such as China, many slums are located in countries with slow and stagnant economic growth.

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