

**GROWTH OF POPULATION IN THE URBAN CENTRES OF THE INDIAN
HIMALAYAN REGION**

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Introduction

There is no doubt in the minds of academics and governments that rapid urbanization is one of the biggest social transformations in human history. The uppermost global question in the government's national agendas is how to make these cities sustainable (Savage, 2018). The level of urbanization is a strong indicator of economic development. These two aspects have a more positive correlation. Towns which have higher economic growth have a higher level of urbanization. The contribution of the service sector has increased since independence particularly in the towns of Indian Himalayan Region. On the contrary, the Indian Himalayan Region is experiencing a lot of environmental as well as socio-economic problems. In this situation, rapid, unplanned and unregulated urban growth is very alarming and creates several problems. Numbers of less known places of Indian Himalayan Region have begun to urbanize because of the extension of connectivity by rail, road and air, expansion of tourism, the establishment of various districts, tehsils, block-level offices, educational, medical institutions and economic globalization. Several studies have addressed the urbanization in a diverse range of themes in different countries/regions of the world (Acioly and Davidson, 1996, Paiz and Scott, 2004, Hedblom and Soderom, 2008, Geymen and Baz, 2008, Sharma, 1981 and 1992, Tripathi, 1987, Bose, 1970 and 1978, Dube, 1988, Mukharji, 1973, 1975 Chandna, 1976 and 2014, Bhutia, 2012 and 2015, Kavitha and Gavathri, 2017 Koiri, 2014 Bhagat 2011, Pant, 2003, 2012, 2013, Pant and Chand, 2013, 2018 and 2020 Pant *et al*, 2018, Chand and Thakur, 1983, 1986, 1991, Chand, 2013 and 2017 and Taragi *et al*, 1995). Review of work done thus concluded that no study has been done so far particularly for the whole Indian Himalayan Region. The present exercise will, therefore, fill this academic gap. The main objective of this study is to analyze the pattern of population growth, density, the sex ratio of 540 urban centres in particular and urbanization in general of the Himalayan Region of India.

Census of India has divided the total population of any geographical unit into two groups – rural and urban. The proportion to the total population of rural residents is considered as rural

and urban residents are registered as urban population. The percentage of the total population living in urban settlements is a simple method for determining the degree of urbanization in any region. From the demographic point, urbanization is an increase in the proportion of the urban population to the total population in a specified period. As long as the urban population to total population increases there is urban growth and there is a process of urbanization at work. Another viewpoint is that urbanization means more participation of urban residents in secondary, tertiary and quaternary occupations leading to increased productivity and industrialization. From the behavioural sense, urbanization is a process leading to change in attitudes, value, characterized within a large population, high density and heterogeneity of its residents. As per the Census of India, there are two types of urban places. First of all those places which are notified by the States/UTs such as Municipality, Corporation, Cantonments, Notified Town Area Committee, Nagarpalika, Nagar Panchayat, City Municipal Council, Estate Office, Industrial Notified Area and Industrial Township are included under the category of urban places. Second, besides these statutory towns, some settlements are considered as towns which have minimum 5000 population, more than 75 % male working population engaged in non- agricultural activities and have more than 400 persons per square kilometre density of population. These places are recognized as census town.

Objectives, Data Source and Methodology

The basic purpose of this paper is to analyze the population growth, landman ratio (arithmetic density), sex composition of the total 540 urban centres in particular and distribution of the urban population from 1901 to 2011 in the twelve states/ regions of the Indian Himalaya in general. The second aim of the present investigation is to explain the distribution and growth of towns as per 2011 census.

The information for the present study has been collected from the website of the Census of India, 2011 (www.censusofindia.gov.in). The suitable analytical tools and techniques are used for analysis and interpretation of data. It is worth to mention that the population for 1981 and 1991 is not available respectively in Assam Hills and Jammu and Kashmir. Out of total 540 towns in the region, area of 59 (10.9%) towns of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur are not available for computation of land-man ratio (arithmetic density). Some states of NE Himalayan Region are created after independence. These are some of the limitations which have affected the data output considerably. However, the pace of urbanization in the twentieth century

and growth, density and sex composition in the first decade of the twentieth-first century are amply visible in the total 540 urban centres Indian Himalaya that forms the core of the present study.

About the Study Area

Indian Himalayan Region is the study area in the present analysis. It includes ten states completely (Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Meghalaya) and two partially mountainous regions of West Bengal (Darjeeling district) and Assam (Dima Hasao and Karbi Aonglong districts). Geologically and structurally Meghalaya and some portion of North Eastern states originally belong to the genesis of Deccan Plateau. But keep in mind the mountainous nature of the whole region, it is considered as one unit for planning point of view (Anon, 2010).

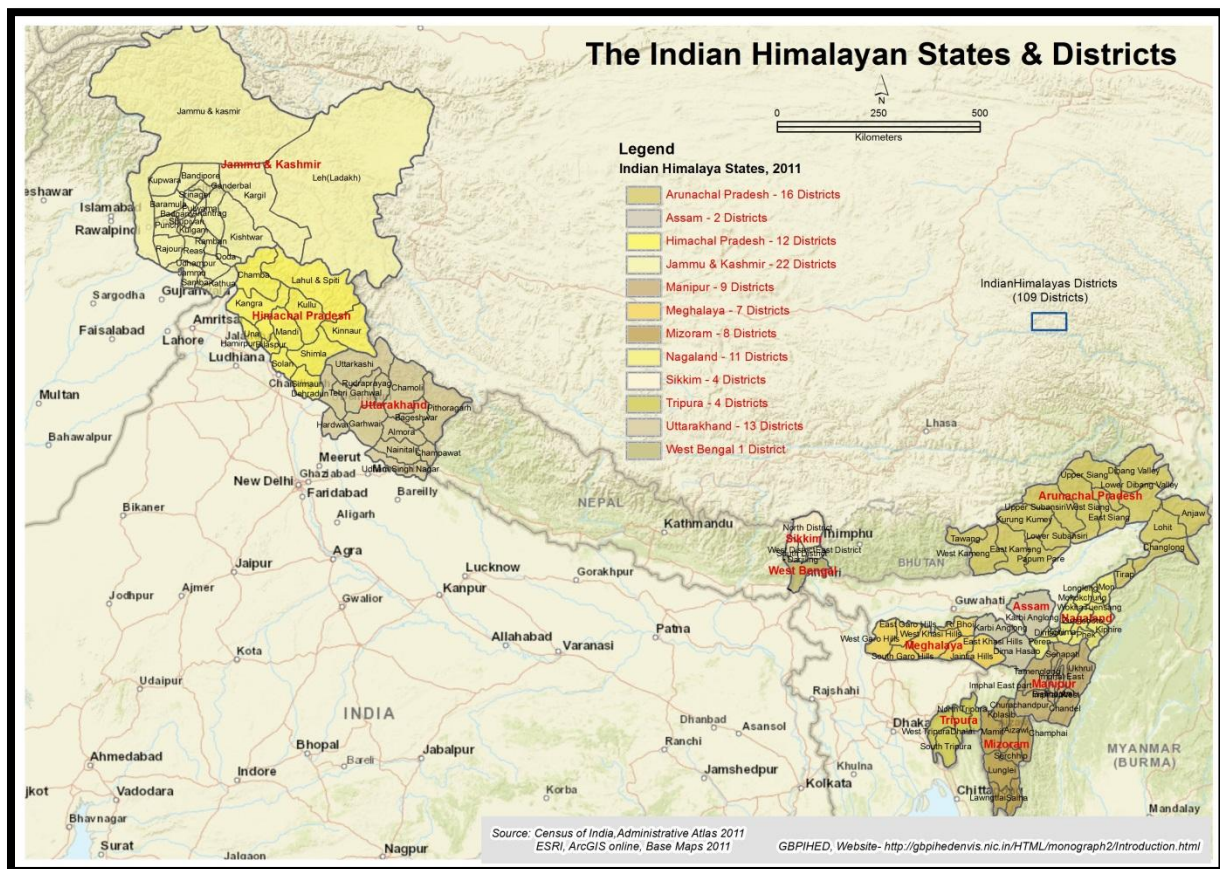


Figure -1 Administrative set up of the Indian Himalaya, 2011

It forms the International northern boundary of India extending from Nanga Parvat (8126 m) in the west to Namcha Baruwā (7755 m) in the east, having a length of about 2500 km and width

ranging from the south to north 160 to 400 km. Extending between 700 47' and 97022' East longitudes and 21057' and 37015' North latitudes, the Himalayan Region of India encompasses an area of about 533586 km² which accounts 16.23% of the country's total land area (Fig.1). In census 2011, the Indian Himalayan Region consists of 4, 67, 90, 642 persons in 61592 inhabited villages and 540 urban centres accounting for 3.87% of the total population of the country. Total towns in IHR are 540 (530+10=540)) but 4 towns - Imphal, Nambol, Lilong and Samurou - of Manipur state are divided into 9 civic units by the Census of India 2011 and spreading over in different administrative divisions and enumerated as separate major and minor towns. These towns are also categorized by different size classes according to their population. Kral Pora of Jammu and Kashmir is also considered into two urban centres such as Kral Pora (Kupwara tahsil) and Kral Pora (Chandura tahsil). Similarly, one town Devprayag in Uttarakhand is divided into two parts and located in two districts- one major part lie in Tehri district and a minor part in Pauri district. In the present paper urban centres of Manipur and Jammu Kashmir are considered separately and parts of Devprayag town of Uttarakhand are considered as one urban centre which is included in Tehri district. According to Census of India 2011, the urban population of the study the area is enumerated 12079291 persons which contain about 3.2 % of the total urban population of the nation. Out of the total population, 25.8 % population is urban in the study region which is lower than the country's average (31.2%). There are 109 districts which account for 17% of the total 640 districts in the country as per 2011 Census.

Regional Distribution of Urban Population

According to 2011 census, about 25.8 % (12079291 people) of the total population (46790642 people) in the study region lived in 540 urban centres which are less than the national average (31.2%). The Indian Himalayan Region has only 3.2 % of the country's urban population in 2011. Table 1 reveals that the percentage of urban population which varies from a minimum of 10 % in Himachal Pradesh to the maximum 52.1 % in Mizoram. Mizoram is the most urbanized state of Indian Himalaya, in terms of the percentage of people living in urban centres. Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand states have respectively 28.42 and 25.24 % of the total urban population of the whole Indian Himalaya.

The urban centres of Jammu and Kashmir accounted for respectively 28.42% and 0.91% of the Indian Himalaya's and country's urban population, which is the largest share contributed by any state /region of Indian Himalaya. Three states/region has more than 30% urban

population. These are W.B. Hills (39.4%), Manipur (32.5%) and Uttarakhand (30.2%). Fifty per cent of states have 20 to 30 % urban population. Assam Hills is second from the bottom has only 15 % urban population. Remaining 10 states/regions have only 46.44% urban population. The average size of urban centres in the Indian Himalayan is worked out 22369 persons which are about one-third of the country's average size (61109 persons per urban centre).

In comparison to the country's average urbanization, the Indian Himalaya constitutes a low degree of urbanization. The difficulties of the mountainous terrain in the development of means of transportation, limitations of natural resources etc. may explain limited urban development in the region.

However, the districts which have the rich potential for revenue in the field of tourism and horticulture have a more urban population and more possibility for urban development in future. Eight districts of Indian Himalaya have more than 50 % urban population to total population. These are Srinagar (98.6%), Aizawl (78.63%), Imphal West (62.33%), Kolasib (55.84%), Dehradun (55.52%), Papum Pare (54.51%), Dimapur (52.23%) and Jammu (50%). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the urban population in the IHR was only 6.2% (452866 persons) in 1901, lower than the national average of 10.29%. There were only 54 urban centres in 1901 census.

Table - 1: Percentage of Urban Population to Total Population, 1901-2011

Year	Jammu & Kashmir	Himachal Pradesh	Uttarakhand	Sikkim	Arunachal Pradesh	Nagaland	Manipur	Mizoram	Tripura	Meghalaya	Assam Hills	W.B. Hills	Indian Himalayan Region
1901	8.4	4.0	7.8	0	0	3.0	0	0.0	3.7	2.8	0	8.0	6.2
1911	10.6	3.1	8.5	0	0	2.3	0	0.0	3.0	3.5	0	8.8	6.7
1921	10.5	3.4	9.2	0	0	1.8	0	0.0	2.5	4.1	0	9.8	7.0
1931	11.7	3.6	8.5	0	0	1.5	0	0.0	2.5	5.5	0	13.1	7.9
1941	13.0	3.8	10.3	0	0	1.8	0	0.0	3.4	6.9	1.1	14.9	8.2
1951	14.1	6.3	13.5	2.0	0	1.9	0	3.5	6.7	9.7	1.3	20.6	10.5
1961	16.2	6.3	13.7	4.2	1.7	5.2	0	5.4	9.0	15.3	1.2	23.2	11.3
1971	18.5	6.8	16.3	10.4	4.6	10.0	12.4	9.5	7.8	14.5	3.4	23.1	13.4
1981	21.5	7.5	18.5	17.0	8.2	15.5	23.3	24.7	11.0	18.1	N.A	27.2	17.0
1991	N.A.	8.6	22.4	10.0	12.8	17.2	25.6	46.1	11.7	18.6	12.9	30.2	13.6
2001	27.1	9.7	25.7	9.4	19.8	17.2	24.8	49.6	19.8	19.6	15.1	43.9	22.9

2011	27.2	10.0	30.2	25.2	22.9	28.9	29.2	52.6	26.2	20.1	15.0	39.4	26.0
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Source: Census of India, 2011. @ excludes the figures of J & K where Census was not conducted in 1991. Also excludes the figures of Assam where Census was not held in 1981

It is interesting to see that out of 54 towns; maximum 20 towns were in Uttarakhand, followed by Himachal Pradesh with 19 and 10 centres in Jammu and Kashmir. Remaining five urban locations were Kohima village, Agartala, Shillong, Darjeeling and Kurseong. It implies that in 1901 only five towns were in the eastern part of the Himalaya. The urban population of the Indian Himalayan Region had increased by 2567.3% from 1901 to 2011 which is more than two folds (1358.5%) of the national growth during the same period.

The growth of urban population in the Indian Himalayan Region and country has been fluctuating from decade to decade due to changes in the definition of standards of the urban population. Only seven states/regions had an urban population in 1901. That was Jammu and Kashmir with the maximum 8.4 % of the urban population of the total urban population in the Himalaya. It was followed by W. B. Hills with 8% urban population of the total urban population in the Himalaya. Maximum towns were in Uttarakhand in 1901 which ranked third with 7.8% urban population. Like Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh had only 4% urban population with 19 towns in 1901. It is however clear that the population size of urban centres in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh was very small as compared with the towns of Darjeeling, Kurseong of W. B. Hills and Shillong, Agartala and Kohima Village.

During 1901 to 1911 decade, it registered 17.2% urban growth in the IHR while it was only 0.36% at the national level (Table 2). Among Himalayan states; Meghalaya had 41.8 % growth followed by Jammu and Kashmir with 34.3 %, while Himachal Pradesh registered a negative growth of 24.4%. The growth in the urban population decreased considerably from 17.2 % to 7.8 % in the next decade of 1911 to 1921 as against 8.26 % growth which was recorded by the country in the same decade. During this decade only Nagaland state had 18.5 % negative growth and remaining states showed positive but lower growth rate than the previous decade. The pace of urban growth in the Himalayan states from 1901 to 1921 was very slow. The year 1941 marks a significant demographic divide in the history of urban growth both in the Indian Himalayan Region and country.

The average urban growth rate in the Himalaya and the country slowed down further in 1931. About 8.2 % of the total population was urban in the IHR in 1941 census which was lower than the country average of 13.86%. But a higher urban growth of 28.9 % was recorded between 1931 to 1941 in the IHR which was however lower than the country's growth (31.98%). It is thus implied that the pace of urban development in the IHR was less than that of the country average. The rate of urban growth since 1931 has been increasing except from 1951 to 1961. However, five Himalayan states had more than 100% urban growth during the same decade of 1951-1961. It was due to new towns were included in the category of urban centres.

These were Nagaland (364.4%), Sikkim (149.6%), Tripura (141.9%), Mizoram (105.4%) and Meghalaya (100.8%). It may be worth to mention here that the fall in the average growth

rate of urban population from 1951 to 1961 was due to a conceptual change in the definition of urban centres. The definition of an urban centre in India was rationalized and made stricter at the time of 1961 census. As a result, a large number of towns were declassified. The growth of urban population in the Indian Himalayan Region as well as in the country as a whole again picked up in the subsequent decades reaching over 53.1 % and 38.23% during 1961 to 1971 and 60.7 % and 44.51 % during 1971 to 1981 respectively. Table 2 reveals the same trend in the Himalayan states during the same specified decades. However, during the inter-decadal period of 1981 to 1991, the rate of urban growth has declined significantly to 5.5% and 36.84 % respectively in the Indian Himalayan Region and national averages due to decline in the magnitude of rural to urban migration. Another factor was that the census was not conducted respectively in Jammu and Kashmir and Assam in 1991 and 1981.

The process of urbanization is slow even in 2001 with only 22.9% of the Indian Himalaya's population had an urban residence which was lower than the country's average (27.81%). It improved marginally from 13.6 % from 1991 to 22.9% in 2001 in the Himalaya and 25.49% in 1991 to 27.81% in 2001 in the country. The level of urbanization varies from a minimum of 9.4 % in Sikkim to a maximum of 49.6 % in Mizoram. Mizoram is followed by W. B. Hills with 43.9 % urban population. The Indian Himalaya has recorded unprecedented urban growth (110.4%) during 1991 to 2001 decade which is much higher than the urban growth of the nation (32.6%). Due to the inclusion of Jammu and Kashmir for population enumeration in the 2001 census the growth rate was registered 113.4% from 1981 to 2001 (20 years). The process of urbanization also intensified. In 2011, the percentage of urban population has gone up to 25.8 % in the Himalaya and 31.14% in India. The number of urban dwellers in the Himalaya increased from 9088547 people in 2001 to 12079291 people in 2011 while in the country it increased from 286119689 people in 2001 to 377106125 people in 2011.

Table-2: Growth of Urban population During 1901 to 2011 (% increase- decrease)

Year	Jammu & Kashmir	Himachal Pradesh	Uttarakhand	Sikkim	Arunachal Pradesh	Nagaland	Manipur	Mizoram	Tripura	Meghalaya	Assam Hills	W. B. Hills	Indian Himalaya Region	India
1901-1911	34.3	24.4	14.8	0.0	0.0	10.7	0.0	0.0	6.5	41.8	0.0	14.9	17.2	0.36
1911-1921	5.1	12.1	7.2	0.0	0.0	-18.5	0.0	0.0	13.4	26.1	0.0	16.8	7.8	8.26
1921-1931	23.0	10.9	0.3	0.0	0.0	-1.1	0.0	0.0	23.7	54.3	0.0	51.5	16.1	19.12
1931-1941	21.6	17.6	27.6	0.0	0.0	27.1	0.0	0.0	84.7	43.9	0.0	33.8	28.9	31.98
1941-1951	19.8	77.0	32.1	0.0	0.0	17.6	0.0	0.0	1.4	53.2	47.4	62.4	42.2	41.40
1951-1961	26.0	18.2	19.5	149.6	0.0	364.4	0.0	105.4	141.9	100.8	50.6	53.1	36.6	26.41
1961-1971	48.4	31.4	32.6	218.3	270.4	168.3	0.0	122.3	18.1	25.3	371.6	24.6	53.1	38.23
1971-1981@	50.4	37.2	30.8	146.6	142.6	133.9	148.9	283.8	85.3	64.0	N.A.	54.6	60.7	44.51
1981-1991@	N.A.	37.6	32.8	-24.7	114.3	73.2	42.1	161.0	43.4	36.6	581.6	41.0	5.5	36.84
1991-2001	113.4	33.5	27.7	25.3	96.5	64.6	21.2	38.7	96.0	37.8	44.2	79.8	110.4	32.60
2001-2011	25.0	16.6	39.6	202.8	46.0	66.6	46.4	29.7	51.7	31.1	15.9	3.0	34.6	31.80
Inception Year to 2011	1799.9	792.3	1874.0	5496.9	5424.3	18359.9	528.2	8126.9	14887.6	6089.1	11827.6	3302.8	2567.3	1358.5

Source: Census of India, 2011. @ excludes the figures of J & K where Census was not conducted in 1991. Also excludes the figures of Assam where Census was not held in 1981

Thus, there was an increase of 34.6 % and 31.8% urban population respectively in the Himalaya and country just in a decade. In 2001 there were 421 towns in the Himalaya, and with an addition of 119 towns, it reached to 540 in 2011. Thus, there was an increase of 28.3 % in the number of towns in the Indian Himalaya during the same decade. It reflects that a significant number of large villages earned the urban status for the first time in 2011 as census towns. The largest increase in the number of towns was in the category of 174 census towns which sharing 32.46% of the total 540 towns. These are those large villages which are generally situated almost in the plain areas of Tarai, Bhabar, Duns and wide river valleys which grew into a small town.

Table 1 reveals that there are wide inter states /region and decadal variations both in the proportion of urban population and change in such a proportion from 1901 to 2011 (Table 1). There are states like Mizoram where the urban population increased from 49.6% in 2001 to 52.6 % in 2011. On the other hand, Himachal Pradesh has the lowest 10% of the urban population which gained only 0.3% urban people during 2001 – 2011. It is very striking to note that the proportion of the urban population was decreased by 0.1 % in Assam Hills from 15.1 % in 2001 to 15% in 2011. These two states/region are topographically more inaccessible with a little scope for urban development. The proportion of the urban population was almost stagnant with marginal changes. However, out of the total 12 states/regions, 6 states/regions had a higher proportion of the urban population than the overall average of 26% in the Indian Himalayan Region. These were Mizoram (52.65), W. B. Hills (39.4%), Uttarakhand (30.0%), Manipur (29.2%), Nagaland (28.9%) and Tripura (26.2%). Most of these states/regions have a larger proportion of their workforce in tertiary activities and service sectors. These states have significant development of institutions and infrastructure. Average growth of urban population in the Himalaya in 2011 was 34.6 % which was higher than the average growth of the nation (31.8%). The growth of the urban population was more than the growth in the total population.

Spatial Population Growth, 2001-2011

As per 2011 Census, 540 urban centres /towns are in the Indian Himalaya which is considered for the study of urban growth from 2001 to 2011. The growth rate varies from negative 81.8% in Gangotri to positive 3909.9% in Tral. Table 3 reveals that 92 (17%) towns are included as urban centres in the first time in the 2011 census. The growth rate of such newly created urban centres is cannot compute because of the population data of previous census (2001) is not available. It is a very considerable aspect that out of the total urban centres, 56

(10.4%) are shown negative growth rate ranging from 0.2% in Amarpur to 81.8% in Gangotri. Maximum depopulated (negative population growth) urban centres are located in very inaccessible locations, politically unrest towns and military areas (cantonment) where the conditions for expansion are not favourable. These are Amarpur, Bakloh Cantt., Kishtwar, Kunzer. Baramula, Bhalwal, Ranikhet, Arnia, Bhota, Jammu Cantt. (CB), Chamba, Mandi, Dehradun (CB), Zunheboto, Reasi, Banbasa, Darlawn, Nagla, Nandprayag, Shillong (CB), Dalhousie, Tehri, Purana Daroorh, Spituk, Wokha, Ram Nagar, Bashohli, Bairatisal, Dhwanjagar, Dwarahat, Maralia, Palampur, Sool Koot, Devaprayag, Jutogh Cantt., Chhatha, Ramban, Hiranagar, Roorkee (CB), Dogadda, Chak Kalu, Maibong, Nihampur Simbal, Samba, Kasauli Cantt., Marhi, Lansdowne, Virbhadrha IDPL, Sabathu Cantt, Almora (CB), Siliguri, Now Gam, Bari Brahamana, Mahur, Khonmoh and Gangotri.

Table-3- Urban Centers / Towns by the Ranges of Population Growth from 2001 to 2011

Population Growth Range (%)	Urban Centers / Towns		Remark
	No.	%	
First time Recognized as urban centres	92	17.0	Appendix 1
Negative	56	10.4	
Up to 10	73	13.5	
10 to 20	110	20.4	
20 to 30	76	14.1	
30 to 40	48	8.9	
40 to 50	15	2.8	
50 to 100	38	7.0	
100 to 200	21	3.9	
200 to 400	06	1.1	
400 to 3909.9	05	0.9	
Total	540	100.0	

Source: Census of India, 2011

Out of total urban centres in the Indian Himalaya, 73 (13.5%) has only 0.2 to 10% growth only. If the same growth trend (2001 to 2011) will continue in these centres, these will also register a negative growth rate in the 2021 census. It is only due to the huge out-migration from the towns where the areal expansion is limited and the cost of land and maintenance of old structures is very high. Maximum 20.4 % (110) urban centres are between the growth ranges of 10 to 20 %. Onwards this range number of towns is decreased. About 14.1% and 8.9% urban centres have recorded respectively 20% to 30% and 30% to 40% growth from 2001 to 2011. Of total 540 urban centres in the Himalaya, 38 (7%) towns are in the group of 50 to 100% growth. More than 100 % growth rate is recorded by the 5.9% (32) urban centres in the Indian Himalaya. These are Tral, Luwangangbam, Doda, Kolasib, Namchi, Gyalshing, Rudraprayag, Mangan, Gangtok, Jorethang, Achhabal, Rangpo, Qazi Gund. Ambassa, Rawali Mahdood, Nathan Pur, Sarang, Nowshehra, Gulmarg, Uri, Haripur Kalan, Chuglamsar, Fatehpur Range (Dhamua Dunga Area), Central Hope Town, Lakhanpur, Kamalpur, Agartala, Jagjeetpur, Gakulpur, Ganderbal, Awantipora and Shafipur. The high growth rate is due to heavy in-migration from rural areas to urban centres and fast transformation of villages into urban centres.

Conclusion

The capitals of native principalities, commercial centres located in the piedmont zone, pilgrimage centres and halting places of herders, have provided the initial base of urbanization in the Indian Himalaya. The Indian Himalayan Region had a long history of urbanization going back when several communities flourished but few of these have been able to exist to present time. The army stations- cantonments, hill resorts and health resorts- sanatoria, educational centres created by the British ruler later contributed to the growth of urbanization. British ruler established new towns for the supply of the commodities nearby the hill towns or in the foothill contact zone.

Urbanization in the Indian Himalayan Region during the last century was associated with a particular aspect mostly in each decade: 1901-11 famine, malaria, cholera and plague; 1911-21 first world war, typhoid, cholera and influenza epidemic; 1921-31 post world war and protest against British rule; 1931-41 second World war and various types of movements for Independence; 1941-51 quit India movement and partition; 1951-61 planned development; 1961-71 emergence of new urbanization in mountain areas and concentrated urban development near

the big towns; 1971-81 decentralized urban growth; 1981-91 decelerated rural-urban migration and declining rate of natural increase; 1991-2001 fast urbanization due to heavy migration from the rural mountainous region to almost plain region; and 2001-11 number of big villages in the plain areas recognized as Census towns.

The nature of Himalayan urbanization is subsistence where people from rural areas are attracted to the towns, not for urban facilities but employment and education. They may be living in worst conditions but they stick to the towns for a job and schooling. This affects badly the quality of urban life in the Indian Himalayan Region.

The states/ regions of the Eastern Indian Himalaya are more urbanized than western states while 54.8 % of the total urban population of the Indian Himalaya is a resident of only three western states (Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand). Mizoram stands first in urbanization point where more than half (52.6%) population is urban. Eight districts of Indian Himalayan Region have more than 50 % urban population to total population. These are Srinagar, Aizawl, Imphal West, Kolasib, Dehradun, Papum Pare, Dimapur and Jammu. The districts located in the adjacent with mountain and plain or purely in the plain are more urbanized than the districts lie in the mountains but Srinagar district of Jammu & Kashmir is an exception where 98.6% population is urban because, besides town, few villages are included in the district while two districts of the Indian Himalayan Region – Lahul & Spiti and Kinnaur districts of Himachal Pradesh have no urban population in 2011 Census. Towns of the eastern Himalayan region had registered record growth from the inception of towns in the state.

The population growth rate of the total 540 urban centres varies from negative 81.8% in Gangotri to positive 3909.9% in Tral. It is a very considerable aspect that out of the total urban centres, 56 (10.4%) are shown negative growth. Maximum depopulated (negative population growth) urban centres are located in very inaccessible locations, politically unrest towns and military areas (cantonment) where the conditions for expansion are limited. Out of a total of 13.5% of urban centres has only 0.2 to 10% growth only. If the same growth trend will continue in these centres, these centres will also register a negative growth rate in the coming 2021 Census. It is only due to the huge out-migration from the towns where the areal expansion is limited and the cost of land and maintenance of old structures is very high. Seven per cent of towns are in the group of 50 to 100% growth. More than 100 % growth rate is recorded by the

5.9% urban centres in the Indian Himalaya. The high growth rate is due to heavy in-migration from rural areas to urban centres and fast transformation of the villages into new urban centres.

The Himalayan urbanization has poly – metropolitan apex accounting 42.8 % of the total urban population. These are as many as 18 towns in the Indian Himalaya Region claiming a size class I status. The big towns of the Indian Himalayan Region exploding in their population, while the small towns are stagnating, in 2011 Census 18 (3.33%) class size I towns have 42.8% of the total urban population and 183 (34%) towns of class size V have only 11.1% of the total urban population. Less number of towns has more population and more towns have less population in the Indian Himalayan Region.

The Himalayan towns are growing more based on tertiary and quaternary sectors rather than based on the secondary sector. However, the growth of district and tehsils (subdivision) headquarters in the recent decades has built up an infrastructure of large scale urbanization based on a higher degree of industrialization in general and district and tehsils headquarters in the plain area in particular. The multi-functionality of a large number of towns of the Himalaya is an index of the kind of decentralized urban development taking place in the Himalayan Region of India. Approximately 900% growth has been registered by towns from 1901 to 2011 in the study region.

The average density in the Indian Himalayan Region is 2755 persons / km² which lower than the country average of 3081 persons / km². The average density of the urban centres ranges from 49 people in Purana Daroorh of Jammu and Kashmir to 85654 people per km² in Shafipur of Uttarakhand. Twenty-two urban centres of Indian Himalayan Region could not fulfill the minimum density criterion of 400 persons per km². The topographical conditions are not much favourable for both the development of infrastructure and provide economic security to its inhabitants. The urban density point, maximum urban centres have a low density in comparison to the other parts of the nation. Three urban centres are in Indian Himalaya that has more than 50000 persons per km² density. Among these urban centres, two are located almost plain area of Uttarakhand where the probability of infrastructural development is more than other Himalayan urban centres. Pattan is situated in Baramula district of than the Jammu and Kashmir state and has settled in only 0.28 km² area.

The study reveals that in all urban centres of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh the womenfolk continue to have relatively low

status while Mizoram, Manipur and Meghalaya, and the women enjoy comparatively better status. It is worth to mention that in the eastern Indian Himalayan Region the women have all patrimonial rights.

The sex ratio varies from minimum 04 in Gulmarg of Jammu and Kashmir to maximum 1209 in Heironk of Manipur state. The main reason for the low sex ratio in these Himalayan urban centres is seasonal (summer) habitation. These are statutory urban centres and movement of the floating population only in summer or pilgrimage season. It is very considerable that out of a total of 82.8% of urban centres have fewer women than men. It shows very serious social problems in the urban centres of the Indian Himalaya. The reason for this imbalance is the main employment and education seeker male migration from rural areas to urban centres to avail so-called institutional and infrastructural amenities. The migrants left their female and aged member in the villages. The influx of uneducated and uncivilized economically poor male population from backward areas creates filthy slums and a lot of environmental sanitation problems in the developing urban centres. The main reasons for the low sex ratio in the urban society are son preference, unequal treatment given to boys and girls, female foeticide, neglect of female infants, early marriage and death during pregnancy. Some of the Himalayan urban centres have shown high sex ratio because of outmigration of female population from villages to urban centres in equal numbers in search of employment and better educational facilities.

In conclusion, urban centres in the Indian Himalaya Region are facing a lot of environmental problems as they have already exceeded their carrying capacity. The adjoining area of any urban centre is overcrowded due to immigrants and they are also relentlessly exploited of all the available services and facilities of the urban centres which are made only for its residents. As a result, the supply of essential services is badly affected in one hand and creates a financial crunch of the local civic body on the other. The heavy loads of haphazard construction activities and resource shortage due to encroachment in the surrounding bioregion of the urban centres are creating severe health hazards and poor condition of sanitation, sewage, congestion, security and safety. Similarly, social/racial unrest, religious turmoil, crimes and political instability and associated several problems may grip the Himalayan urban centres if timely action is not taken. To short out these problems feasible sustainable urban development plans should be instituted without further delay keeping the local geographical environment and the specific nature of the urban centres in mind.

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