

Preface

The process of urbanisation and development share an intrinsic association as the degree of urbanisation is a good indicator of the level of development in a region. The urbanisation is an outcome of demographic expansion resulting from the natural increase as well as rural-urban migration due to the increasing pressure of population on land in rural areas. Development is a multi-dimensional dynamic process that encompasses within its arena the demographic change, qualitative and quantitative, reflected in a society as well as in economy. The process of urbanisation, though associated with increase in employment opportunities, better living standard, increased level of income, increased production, investment and consumption and availability of social and economic infrastructure, has led to deterioration in the quality of these infrastructures and lowering of the quality of life in many metropolitan cities as well as in the medium and small towns of India. Kurseong town is no exception as its functions have multiplied since its inception and it became more than a mere recreation centre. Inadequate urban services such as acute water shortage, poor housing, improper solid waste disposal, poor sewerage and traffic congestion are the common problems faced which are the results of pressure of ever-increasing population on urban land. The inability of urban goals and planning efforts to defeat the rapid population growth has, further, led to spatial disparity in the level of urban development in Kurseong town.

The town under study has long been a victim of not only retarded economic development but also reveal poor performance in terms of the indicators of level of development as well. It is an inconvenient truth that such issues have been neglected by the policy makers as well as by the researchers and academicians. It is a well known fact that the growth and development of a town is unsustainable without a proper social and economic base. Moreover, if the benefits of the growth and development do not percolate to the common people, the widening gap between the rich and the poor and between the developed and the undeveloped area has a dangerous potentiality of serious social conflicts and tensions. Kurseong town also has witnessed such unfortunate experience during the phases of its growth in the past. These crucial and significant issues have instigated to undertake the present study in which an attempt has been made to get an insight into the level of development in different wards of the town. In the absence of any past research work in terms of spatial disparity in the level of urban development at ward level in Kurseong town, the study, therefore, aspires to evaluate more precisely and scientifically the level of urban development for the purpose of identifying the spatial disparity in terms of demography,

social and economic infrastructure prevalent in the town. The present work is an endeavour to identify the multifarious urban problems associated with population growth and evaluate the widening demand-supply gap in Kurseong town for the purpose of effective planning which will ultimately aid in bringing about an orderly growth and balanced development of the town under study.

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