

## Chapter – I

### A. Historical Introduction to the theme of Urbanization and the Contextual Literature

Demography from the Greek demos “people”-is the study of human populations. Kingsley Davis pioneered the study of historical urban demography. He is particularly fascinated by the history of world urbanization: the increase in the proportion of a population that is urban as opposed to rural. Davis raises fundamental issues and lays out a clear framework for understanding population dynamics and urban growth.

Davis’s extraordinary data on how tiny European urban settlements were, and how slowly they grew throughout the Middle Ages and early modern period, provides the demographic backdrop for historian Henri Pirenne’s account of nature of medieval cities. He also emphasizes the role of trade in both the decline of medieval cities. It was trade which revived cities during the eleventh century. Merchants emerged as a separate class-independent from the clergy, the landed aristocracy, or the vast submerged population of serfs. They often lived and traded in suburbs below the walls of medieval cities built on hills.<sup>1</sup>

Pirenne argues, as the merchants grew in numbers and influence, they revolutionized the social structure of cities. Cities took on new life. The old stagnant class structure<sup>2</sup> loosened up. The cities produced and exchanged new goods. New, distinctively urban forms of thought and cultured emerged. And urban culture in turn revolutionized social relations and thought throughout the countryside.

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<sup>1</sup> The word suburbs itself is derived from the Latin “below the town”.

<sup>2</sup> The City Reader edited by Richard T. Le Gates and Frederic Stout, “City Origins” and “Cities and European Civilization” from *Medieval Cities*, 1925, p.37.

Contrast Child's views on the role of agricultural production in the origins of Mesopotamian cities and Kitto's emphasis on the importance of defense and religion to the emergence of the Greek polis with what Pirenne has to say about economics and trade in the reemergence of cities in Europe.

Compare Pirenne's views on the emergence of a free middle class and the positive contributions of capitalism to European culture with Engel's devastating description of Manchester, England, during the full flowering of early capitalism. Compare Pirenne's views on the essentially economic function of cities to Mumford's view of the city as stage for human culture. Pirenne's thesis is fully developed in *Medieval Cities*.<sup>3</sup>

Friedrich Engels describes in detail what this revolution in urban demography meant to the impoverished urban proletariat of Manchester and other nineteenth Century industrial cities. His analysis is extremely relevant in assessing prospects for 'Ecumenopolis'(Doxiadis) as advanced industrial societies and eventually the world reach the end of the urbanization process, with the habitable portions of the globe perhaps becoming a single world city.<sup>4</sup>

Doxiadis developed a theory he called "ekistics" and a vision of the urban future he called "Ecumenopolis". Doxiadis first used the word *ekistics* in 1942 while lecturing at the Athens Technical University. Derived from the Greek words for "home" and "settling down", *ekistics* was intended to be an entirely new discipline of human knowledge, what Doxiadis called "the science of human settlements". Reducing ekistic science to its basics, Doxiadis argued, "Human settlements consist of five basic elements, Nature, Man, Society, Shells and Networks, which together form a system. Their

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The City Reader "City Origins" and "Cities and European Civilization" from *Medieval Cities*, 1925, op.cit.p.1.

goal is to make Man happy and safe.” Then *ekistics* revealed *Ecumenopolis*, which means “the World City of Tomorrow”.<sup>5</sup>

Davis found that the rural population in Third-World Countries today continues to grow as these countries urbanize, unlike European cities in the nineteenth century where industrialization led to depopulation of rural areas. His vision of Third-World societies unable to sustain their population helps to explain Saskia Sassen’s description of growing poverty and inequality worldwide and the growth of large, poorly paid immigrant labor forces in the largest cities in the developed world.

Sociologist Saskia Sassen, provides insight into the way in which the rapid and profound changes<sup>6</sup> in the world economy have affected the evolution of cities. He has carefully examined data on the economies and workforce characteristics of the largest global cities and the way in which they connect to other cities in the world economy. He actually describes the nature of the new global system of cities.

The work is central to debates about the effects of global economic restructuring on cities. Marxist and neo-Marxist writers such as David Harvey, Doreen Massey, Richard Walker and Micheal Storper see the changes in the global system of cities as the inevitable result of current capitalist development, though they do agree among themselves on how capitalist processes are unfolding.<sup>7</sup>

Research and scholarly debate continues on the nature and causes of world urbanization. Everyone do not agree with Davis or any other standard account because of fragmented and incomplete records. Debate continues on the relative importance of war, plague, medical advances, trade, technology, religion, and anything, governments should do about population growth and urbanization. Davis

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<sup>5</sup> Constantin Doxiadis, “Ecumenopolis, World City of Tomorrow” *Impact of Science on Society*, 1969, p.458

<sup>6</sup> Saskia Sassen, “A New Geography of Centers and Margins: Summery and Implications” from cities in a World Economy, 1994.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p.70.

stresses that family planning is essential if cities are to meet human needs. But many governments reject family planning on religion or policy grounds.<sup>8</sup>

Cities are civilization. In the nineteenth century, the standard categories of anthropology proclaimed that mankind arose from nomadic savagery through village based barbarism to true civilization only when the first cities were established. City life alone gave rise to writing, to the authority of the state, and to complex economies based on equally complex system. Twentieth century researchers adopted a new system of terminology for the evolution of humanity- from Paleolithic, through Neolithic, to urban and later industrial and postindustrial stages of development- but the central place of cities as the incubators of advanced culture remained the same. The first true cities arose most probably in Mesopotamia sometime between 4000 and 3000 B.C.E.-the influence of city-based cultures and the steady spread and increase of urban populations around the world have been the central facts of human history. Though Kingsley Davis makes the point that “Urbanization” and “the growth of cities” are not the same thing.

The first stage of urban history is what the Australian archaeologist V. Gordon Childe called “the Urban Revolution”. For Childe the development of writing was a crucial cultural element of true urbanism, and the emergence of the cities of the ancient Near East, where writing began, constituted the second of a series of massive transformations that gave shape to the whole of human evolutionary development. Although the successive stages overlapped, each of his three “revolutions”- the agricultural, the urban and the industrial- totally changed the world as it had been before.<sup>9</sup>

As Henri Pirenne argues in “Medieval Cities” (1925), it was the economic function of the great trading towns that led inevitably to their growing power and political independence. Having used their wealth

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<sup>8</sup> Kingsley Davis, *Cities : Their Origin, Growth and Human Impact* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman, 1973), p.1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p.16.

to win from the barons the right to self-government, the medieval towns became islands of freedom in a sea of feudal obligation.<sup>10</sup>

The defensive walls of the medieval city provided a clear demarcation line between the urban and the rural, and the small size of most towns allowed for an easy reciprocity between urban industry and commerce, on the one hand, and agricultural pursuits on the other. Within the towns walls, the guilds provided for the organization of economic and social life, while the church saw to the citizens' spiritual needs and established a framework for social, ritual and communal unity. Cathedrals, guild houses, charitable institutions, universities, and colorful marketplaces were all characteristics medieval institutions. Together, they established the perfect stage for what Lewis Mumford called "the urban drama".

Lewis Mumford even goes on to say "Once the unity of this social order was broken," he wrote, "everything about it was set in confusion... and the city became a battleground for conflicting cultures, dissonant ways of life."<sup>11</sup>The City, he writes, is "a theater of social action," and everything else – art, politics, education, commerce- only serve to make the "social drama...more richly significant, as a stage-set, well-designed, intensifies and underlines the gestures of the actors and the action of the play." In his magisterial "The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects"(New York: Harcourt Brace, 1961), he wrote that the city is "above all things a theater" and, as if commenting on the cultural conformity of the 1950s, warned that an urban civilization that has lost its sense of dramatic dialogue "is bound to have a fatal last act."

As a historian Mumford was the antithesis of Henri Pirenne, whom Mumford considered too much of an economic determinist despite his "excellent basic scholarship," but Mumford's emphasis on

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p.17

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.18.

community values and the city's role in enlarging the potential of the human personality connects him with a long line of urban theorists that includes Paul and Parcial Gaodnam, Christopher Alexander and Peter Calthorpe.<sup>12</sup>

The slow decay of medieval urban unity began with the Renaissance and the rise of nation-state monarchies. The new national rulers built their royal palaces- such as Louis XIV's Versailles- outside the traditional urban centers. The Enlightenment and the Age of Revolutions brought down the divine right of kings and reestablished the political<sup>13</sup> power of the urban commercial interests. In the end, it was capitalism and capitalist industrialism that destroyed the last vestiges of the medieval city by separating the Church from its social role and reducing the marketplace to its purely economic functions. The capitalist city – especially the city of the Industrial Revolution-created an entirely new urban paradigm and established the physical, social, economic and political preconditions of all that was to follow. With the Industrial Revolution, the modern city began to emerge.

The forces of industrialization helped to complete the process of world domination by dividing the world between the advanced industrialized nations- originating Europe and North America- and the underdeveloped, non-industrialized nations. It also created a new social order based on poverty-owning capitalist and property less proletarians. And the cities, especially the new industrial centers, became dismal congeries of factories and slums as the world had never before seen.

Friedrich Engels was one of the earliest and most acute observers of the new urban-industrial order. He himself was the son of a major German industrialist. In “The condition of the working class in England (1845)”, Engels detailed the unrelenting poverty and misery that characterized the working-class districts of Manchester and strategies employed by the capitalist bourgeoisie to protect themselves from the

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<sup>12</sup> Lowis Mumford “What is a City?” Architectural Record (1937), p.183.

<sup>13</sup> Kingsley Davis, op.cit., p.18.

physical and social horror that was the source of their wealth. One key to that overall strategy was middle- class flight to the suburbs. Suburbanization with its consequent segregation by social class became one of the continuing features of the modern city and one of the sources of its ongoing social disharmony and class conflict.<sup>14</sup>

## **B. Urbanization in India**

### **(a) Ancient Period:**

Urbanization and the city have been the focus of scholarly attention among social scientists despite the elusive character of urban theory and definition of the city. Urbanization is perceived as the product of societal change, the manifestation of certain economic and social systems at work.<sup>15</sup>

City was a nodal point that was linked with a network of hierarchically ordered settlements. The size and importance of a city and its relationship with the hinterland were not static, as they evolved over time and had many ups and downs within a continuity of developments.<sup>16</sup> “ Three major periods of urbanization have been identified in pre-medieval (pre-Sultanate) India. The first is represented by the proto-historic cities of the Harappan/Indus Valley culture assignable to a long period from the middle of the third millennium to the middle of the second millennium B.C. The urban character of this phase is recognizable in a hierarchy of settlement sites, in the planned cities, in the urban infrastructure provided at Mohenjo-daro, their design, monumental architecture and orientation, apart from other significant archaeological evidence”.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pp.17 & 18.

<sup>15</sup> R.S.Sharma,Urbanization in Early Historic India, p.14.

<sup>16</sup> Brajadulal Chattapadhyay, 1994, p.173 & 183-84.

<sup>17</sup>R. Champakalakshmi,Trade, Ideology and Urbanization, South India 300 BC to AD 1300, Oxford India Paperbacks 1999, p.8.

Trade was a major theme of many Jataka stories, including journeys across deserts or water courses. Among many routes one was to Sri Lanka via Pataliputra and Tamlitti (Tamralipta). Urban decline started from the last years of the first millennium B.C. In the fifth century, the Chinese traveller Fa Hien (405-411 A.D.) mentioned some specific cases of urban deterioration, that were corroborated by Yuan Choang (630-644 A.D.) two and half centuries later .<sup>18</sup>

From the 6<sup>th</sup> Century A.D for six and seven centuries there was virtually no growth. Example can be given from the decay in the fall of Kusan empire, that had the effect of substantially snapping trade ties with Europe. Whatever still remained eroded with the collapse of the Roman empire and subsequent attack of the Hunas.<sup>19</sup> Apart from the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. onwards, beginning with the Hunas, and followed by Gurjars and Ahirs in their wake, that choked the trade extending to Europe along that route.<sup>20</sup>

The Arab takeover of a vast territory also affected trade with Europe. The decline of Buddhism could also have been a contributory factor,<sup>21</sup> as also the collapse of kingdoms like Satavahanas, Kusanas and Guptas.<sup>22</sup>Towns in Punjab and Western UP thrived because the centre of Kushan power lay in north-western India. Most Kushan towns in India lay exactly on the north-western or 'uttarapatha' route passing from Mathura to Taxila. The end of the Satavahana power together with the ban on the trade India imposed by the Roman empire in the third century impoverished the urban artisans and merchants. Archaeological excavations in the Deccan clearly suggest a decline in urban settlements after the Satavahana phase.<sup>23</sup>

The decay of the urban areas, and the shrinkage of trade in both internal and external, led to ruralisation of the society. Therefore the emergence of feudalism, the making of land grants and of self-sufficient

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<sup>18</sup> Chattopadhyay, Brajadulal, 1994:142-145.

<sup>19</sup> Kosambi,D.D,1965:185; Sharma, R.S,1987:135-36.

<sup>20</sup> Thapar,Romila,1978:170;Thakur,Vijoy Kumar,1981:263,308.

<sup>21</sup> Thakur,Vijay Kumar,1981:313.

<sup>22</sup> Sharma,R.S, 1987:132.

<sup>23</sup> R.S.Sharma:India's Ancient Past,2005; Oxford India Paperbacks, p.229.



village communities, were logical consequences of this development. Urban guilds were frozen into castes. The new urban phenomenon was marked by garrisons, palaces, pilgrim centres and temple establishments.<sup>24</sup>

Harbans Mukhia differed from Sharma on the nature of feudalism and have stated-“The main theme in the works of Professor Sharma and Professor Yadava is woven around the assumed antagonism between trade and urban life on the one hand and feudalism on the other, and particularly, the rise in importance of landed intermediaries owing to an increasing number of grants of land by the state to its officials and to the Brahmans in charity; this resulted in the subjection of the peasantry to the intermediaries and in the peasants’ dependence on them. R.S.Sharma visualizes the development in India of almost all components of west European feudalism-serfdom, manor, self-sufficient economic units, the process of feudalization of crafts and commerce, apart, of course, from declining trade and urbanization. The elements which had allegedly undermined the European feudal structure, namely the revival of trade and towns, the flight of the peasants to the towns to escape excessive impoverishment at the hands of the lord and the process of communication of forced labour into monetary payments- all these , in Professor Sharma’s view, developed in India also and similarly undermined Indian feudalism. Indeed, the only important determinant of European feudalism which Professor Sharma could not trace in India was foreign invasions- and B.N.S.Yadava has made up even this deficiency by drawing attention to the barbarian, particularly the Hun, invasion of India which shattered the late Gupta empire, and contributed to the rise of feudalism. ‘The Gurjara-Pratihara empire’, says Yadava, ‘arose in Northern India like the feudal Frankish Carolingian Empire’”.

The alleged antagonism between feudalism and the trade-urbanization complex has been a matter of great dispute between historians ever since Henri Pirenne’s days; increasingly, however, the two are

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<sup>24</sup> Sharma,R.S,1987:167-177;Chattopadhyay,Brajadulal,1994:130-131;Thakur,Vijay Kumar,1981:314-316.

being seen as less incompatible than was the case in the 1930s and the 1940s—a point that we have noted earlier. In terms of historical evidence, Dinesh Chandra Sircar and B.D.Chattopadhyaya have questioned the extent of the decline of trade and urbanization in the period concerned.<sup>25</sup> B. N. Mukherjee had shown that there was continuous circulation of silver coins in south-eastern Bengal between the seventh and the thirteenth century.

### **(b) Medieval Period:**

It has been seen earlier that Sharma and Yadav's theory of urban decline is difficult to accept. Nihar Ranjan Ray in his book has found that there was no evidence of decline of urban areas in Bengal prior to the Turkish invasion in early thirteenth century, although he has suggested that there is no evidence of expansion of urban areas of Bengal during this period<sup>26</sup>. Declining trade characterized the earlier (sixth century) period. According to R.S.Sharma in his 'Urban Decay in India (c300-c1000)', after eleventh century some portions of India came under the limited light of urbanization and fourteenth century had seen urbanization in a large extent<sup>27</sup>.Turko-Afghans take over of Bengal brought about a significant increases in trade prospects in two ways. First, Arab take over of the area around Gulf became a factor in promoting trade. Secondly, it established a link between Bengal and Delhi and made Bengal more of the overall Indian reality than it was hitherto.

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<sup>25</sup> Harbans Mukhia, "Was There Feudalism in Indian History?" cited in Hermann Kulke (ed)-Themes in Indian History-The State in India 1000-1700, 2003, Oxford India Paperbacks, p.112. There he cited D.C. Sircar,'Landlordism confused with Feudalism',in Sircar (ed) Land System.

<sup>26</sup> Aniruddha Roy, Towns and Cities of Medieval India, Manohar, 2015, p.31.

<sup>27</sup> R.S.Sharma, 'Urban Decay in India (c300-c1000)' Bengali translation[Bharate Nagar Abaksay(anu 300-anu 1000)], k.P.Bagchi and Co., January 1999,p.237.

This expanded trade opportunity brought a new set of port towns to the fore. Therefore e.g. Gaur emerged as an important riverine port for carrying goods to the Indian interior.<sup>28</sup> Nihar Ranjan Ray commented that after the fall of Tamralipta in the eighth century AD there was no overseas port in Bengal till the rise of Satgaon in the fourteenth century. But from the accounts of Arab and Persian geographers we get references to Samandar and Harikel which are supposed to be near Chittagong which acted as overseas ports at least from the end of the thirteenth century throughout the medieval period. But Chittagong was not always under the control of the Sultans of Bengal or even the Sena dynasty prior to the Turkish attack in the thirteenth century.<sup>29</sup> In the seventh century the Chinese traveller I-tsing mentioned certain prosperous towns in eastern Bengal in which one may mention Harikel as a port-town which has been taken as Bakla of later days. In this Nihar Ranjan Ray has included Chittagong, Noakhali, Bakhargang, some portions of Comilla and Tripura. One therefore sees some kind of urbanization in both eastern and western Bengal before the end of the twelfth century.<sup>30</sup> Syed Nurul Hasan had showed that with the coming of Islam in India there started the 'Iqta' system which was based on urban settlements. In order to meet the demands of their army bands the cottage industry flourished. Irfan Habib saw 'Iqta' system in that way whose principal centres began to emerge as towns and controlled by neighbouring villages<sup>31</sup>. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the majority of the inhabitants of the Indian sub-continent passed their entire lives in a predominantly agrarian village-oriented environment. A small minority were acquainted with urban patterns of living. The sixteenth, seventeenth and part of the eighteenth century, appears to have been a veritable golden age of urbanization, at least for much of northern and central India. There was both an expansion in the size of pre-existing cities and towns and a proliferation of new foundations.

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<sup>28</sup> Biplab Dasgupta, *op.cit.*, p.49.

<sup>29</sup> Aniruddha Roy, *op.cit.*, p.31.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32.

The cities and towns of the sub-continent fulfilled diverse and overlapping roles. The largest were thriving centres of manufacturing and marketing, banking and entrepreneurial activities, intersections in a network of communications by land and water which crossed and recrossed the sub-continent and extended far beyond, to south-east Asia, to the Middle East, to western Europe, and elsewhere. Smaller urban centres performed a more modest role in relation to local commerce, local resources and local consumer needs.

A number of metropolitan cities derived their prosperity partly from their role as political centres and administrative headquarters, as capitals of the empire or at least temporary residence for a peripatetic court. What Delhi or Agra were for the empire as a whole, Patna was for Bihar, or Burhanpur for Khandesh, the administrative focal point of a province or region. Other cities and towns had a sacral significance with their economic or political importance, as was the case with Benares or Nasik, or on a much smaller scale, Ajmer. Above all, whatever their individual characteristics, the cities and towns of the sub-continent served as the repositories of higher culture and learning, both as reservoirs in which were preserved the Sanskrit and Indo-Islamic 'Great Traditions' and as conduits through which those traditions could be transmitted to society as a whole.<sup>32</sup>

For northern India, four distinct types of urban centres can be identified.<sup>33</sup> First, cities whose prime function was administrative were Agra, Delhi, Lahore, and later, Hyderabad and Fyzabad. Secondly, cities enjoying a predominantly commercial and manufacturing character like Patna and Ahmadabad in the Mughal period. Thirdly, there was the case of pilgrimage centres where trade and craft activities were drawn to in the case of Benares or Mathura, both conveniently located in relation to the major river system of northern India. Finally, there were those centres which developed and flourished because of

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<sup>32</sup> Gavin R.G. Hambly; *Towns and Cities*; p.434.

<sup>33</sup> H.K. Naqvi, *Urban Centres and Industries in Upper India 1556-1803*, Bombay, 1968; p.269.

some distinct manufacturing technique, craft skill or local commodity which ensured their ongoing prosperity. Bayana owed its prosperity to the indigo grown in the surrounding countryside. Khairabad and Daryabad in Awadh were famous for their textiles.

The flowering of an urban-based economy and urban culture during the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir, Shahjahan and for much of the reign of Aurangzeb, derived largely from the establishment of political conditions highly advantageous to commerce and to the trading and artisan classes of the cities. Similarly, the spread of political instability over much of northern India during the eighteenth century led inevitably to a contraction of urban prosperity over large areas of the Panjab, Rajasthan, the Jumna-Ganges Doab and of the country between the Chambal and the Narbada. Wherever that instability could be held at bay- in Awadh, for example, or in the 'new' Maratha capitals, Poona, Nagpur, Baroda, etc.- urban life continued to flourish. Most strikingly it was in the port cities under the control of foreigners and relatively immune to the disorders consequent upon Mughal political decline (i.e. in Calcutta, Madras, Pondicherry and Bombay), where urban growth in the eighteenth century was most conspicuous. Benares or Ujjain were a Hindu sacral centre as well as also a major manufacturing and commercial centre during that time.

### **(c ) Colonial Urbanization and its nature:**

We begin with the premise that colonial urbanization in India cannot be understood as a separate structure with its own laws of transformation and construction but should be analysed as an expression of a set of relationships of domination and dependence which evolved vis-à-vis a metropolitan economy.<sup>34</sup>Two types of interrelated domination coexisted in nineteenth-century India which affected

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<sup>34</sup> Indu Banga (ed) –The City in Indian History : Urban Demography, Society and Politics, Manohar, 2014,p.151.

the structure of urbanization during this period: (a) Colonial domination with the essential objectives of direct administration and intensive exploitation of resources; and (b) capitalist-commercial domination effected through the terms of exchange by which raw material was produced below its value and manufactured goods were sold (in deliberately created markets) at prices higher than their value.<sup>35</sup>

The entry of the large, multinational trading companies of European origin, brought about a `quantitative change in the pattern of textile trade, by creating a market for the quality textile products, and at the same time brought profound changes in the urban scenario too. Textile trade, under their umbrella, reached a new height and led to the emergence of many new towns<sup>36</sup>.

Dhaka and Murshidabad had been established by the Mogol rulers themselves. The European especially English first came in India , so in North Bengal also, as traders. In 1676 A.D. Richard Edward first came in North Bengal in order to inspect the possibilities for the establishment of trade and `karkhanas'(industry) especially for the trading possibilities of silk industry in Malda. As a result of which on April 1680 AD the first industry of English in North Bengal had found in a rent house of Old Malda town. In December eighties of the seventeenth century the British bought 15 bighas land with Rs. 300 at Moquddampur Mouza of Old Malda town for the establishment of new karkhana and settled them to the soil of North Bengal first<sup>37</sup>. Further English Bazar, an integral part of the city of Malda earned its prominence due mainly to silk trading by the local English factory.

Such urbanization brought about significant changes in the lives of the cities. Migrants, drawn from all over the country, as also those from many other countries, were often the overwhelming majority of the male dominated population of these major towns. Some of the European cities, formed around their

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<sup>35</sup> Atiya Habeeb Kidwai : Urban Atrophy in Colonial India: Some Demographic Indicators, an article in Indu Banga's edited book, p. 151.

<sup>36</sup> P.J.Marshall(ed), Themes in Indian History, The Eighteenth Century in Indian History, Oxford India Paperbacks,2005,an Article by Rajat Datta 'The Agrarian Economy and the Dynamics of Commercial Transactions', p.406.

<sup>37</sup> Sukumar Das, 'Uttaranger Itihas' (Bengali book), 2<sup>nd</sup> June,1982, p.170.

factories, were divided into 'white' and 'native' parts; while the former was well organized and well preserved, the growth of the latter was unplanned and the maintenance was poor.<sup>38</sup>

The British colonial policy had undergone a shift during the first half of the nineteenth century. This policy was focused primarily on increasing the resources of the Company through land revenue<sup>39</sup>. Land revenue system was improved in North Bengal by the Britishers to make themselves strong<sup>40</sup>. There also was a maximization of mercantile profits during this phase<sup>41</sup>. Nevertheless, with the stabilization of industrial development in Britain and the consequent accumulation of large amounts of industrial capital, new areas and avenues of investment had to be found. Colonialism in this new garb has been well designated 'the imperialism of Free Trade'. The new ambitions engendered increasing parliamentary assaults on the East India Company's privileges. The successive Charter Acts of 1813, 1833 and 1853 were followed by the complete transfer of the Government of India from the Company to the Crown in 1858<sup>42</sup>. From 1858 onwards to 1947 the British (as established a firm territorial control in India under the rule of the crown) exercised unquestioned sway over the whole of India and the course of urbanization was determined by their economic interests and policies<sup>43</sup>.

Most of the capital was invested in government, railways, plantations and finance, that is, in purposes auxiliary to the commercial penetration of the country<sup>44</sup>. The urban structure and the process of urbanization was affected by the drain of the appropriated surplus, the increase in foreign trade consisting of imports of cheap machine-made goods and exports of industrial raw material, and the

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<sup>38</sup> Biplab Dasgupta, pp.66-67.

<sup>39</sup> Dharma Kumar (ed), *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol.II, Orient Blackswan, 2010, p.277.

<sup>40</sup> Sukumar Das, *op.cit.*, p.190.

<sup>41</sup> Vide H. Walters *Census of the City of Dacca*, Asiatic Researches, XVII, Calcutta, 1832, in D & B. Bhattacharya, *Report on the population Estimates of India* (New Delhi, 1965), pp.285-327.

<sup>42</sup> Irfan Habib, *A People's History of India*, Vol.36, *Man and Environment, The Ecological History of India*, Tulika Books, Aligarh Historians Society, 2015, p.112.

<sup>43</sup> Karubaki Datta (ed), *Urbanisation in the Eastern Himalayas Emergence and Issues*, Serials Publications, New Delhi, Introduction.

<sup>44</sup> Durgaprasad Bhattacharya, *A guide to the population estimates of Eastern India, 1811-1830* (Mimeo, Indian Statistical Institute, n. d.), pp.43-47.

changes in the channels of trade, both spatial and social. The railways disturbed the traditional trade routes<sup>45</sup>.

Changes in the course of river affected urban settlements. The role of boats in internal trade as cargo carriers was crucial. Buchanan-Hamilton noted in exasperation that in North Bengal roads laid down in Rennell's maps existed only on paper. Various reports indicate the poor state of the road system, particularly the roads other than the military roads, i.e., those not maintained by the Military Board. It is probable that from 1793 the maintenance of roads and embankments was badly neglected.

Given the condition of roads, the commonest mode of carrying goods by land was oxen carrying back loads, for Dinajpur district the traders had their own oxen and farmers' cattle, when not in use in farming operations, were used for carrying goods.

“An important feature of the population dynamics in the sub-continent is its distribution in terms of rural-urban residence. There is no standard definition of an ‘urban’ locality; and the administrators generally exercise some discretion. In India, the successive censuses have defined an urban area as a place with a contiguously resident population of 5,000 or more, although (1) all places with something like a municipal form of local self-government under the provincial laws, and (2) civil lines and cantonments (areas where the civilian and the military offices and officers were located) not included within municipal limits have been considered towns irrespective of their population size. The provincial census superintendents have also exercised their discretion to exclude places meeting the criterion of population size but not having an ‘urban character’ from the category of towns. Towns with a population of less than 5,000 have accounted for no more than about 4 to 7 per cent of the total urban population during 1881-1941”<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Dharma Kumar, *op.cit.*, pp-265-66.

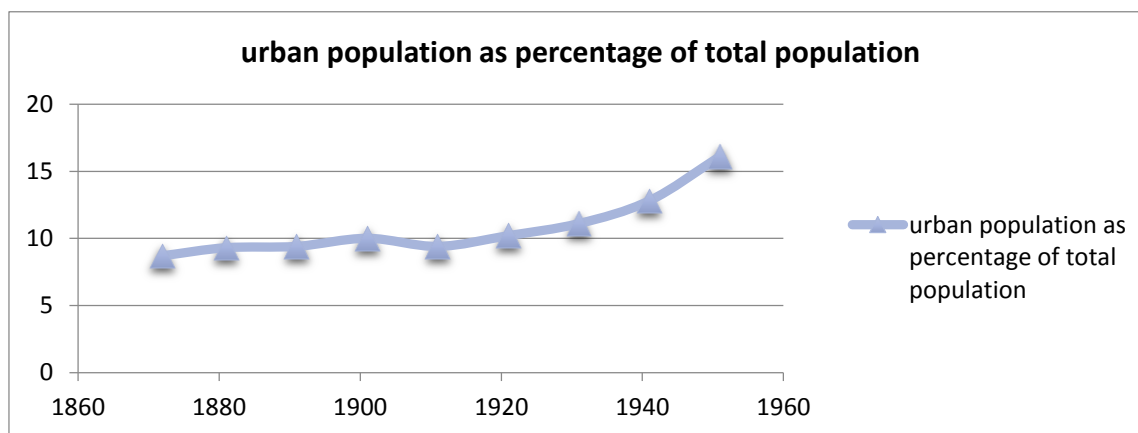
<sup>46</sup> Dharma Kumar, *op.cit.*, pp.517-519.



**Table I.1 Selected data on urbanization in India, 1872-1951**

Census year Of towns (millions)	Number population total population	Urban as percentage of total population	Urban population as percentage of total population
1872	N.A.	N.A.	8.7
1881	N.A.	N.A.	9.3
1891	1,999	26.7	9.4
1901	2,093	28.2	10.0
1911	2,087	28.6	9.4
1921	2,234	31.1	10.2
1931	2,483	37.5	11.1
1941	2,703	49.7	12.8
1951	2,682	69.7	16.1

**Table I.2 Graphical representation on urbanization in India 1872-1951**



“The available information on the number of urban centres and the proportion of urban population during the pre-census period is extremely limited. Edward Thornton’s four volume Gazetteer, published in 1854, includes names and brief descriptions of as many as 1,867 towns and cities but the few estimates of population of these towns given by him hardly have any firm basis. Gadgil has argued that the urban population of India did not grow during 1800-72 and that the growth of the port cities of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and a few places in the interior was offset by a marked decrease in the population of a large number of old capital towns like Dacca, Murshidabad, Lucknow, Tanjore, etc. According to him, therefore, the proportion of urban population at the beginning of the nineteenth century was

between 9 to 10 percent, a little higher than 8.7 percent indicated by the censuses conducted between 1865-72” The table above summarizes the available data on the level of urbanization in India.<sup>47</sup>

The pattern of urbanization in hinterland of India is not applicable to the areas of North Bengal of India. The major contributions of the British to the North Bengal urban scene was that creation of a chain of hill stations in the Himalayan foothills and in south India, and the introduction of tea and coffee plantations such as in Simla, Darjeeling, Shillong and Ootakamund etc<sup>48</sup>. Tea industry of Dooars was exclusively created and promoted by colonial rule. Among the major success of this rule in Bengal was the foundation of this new industry in hill areas<sup>49</sup>.

Coming from a cool temperature, they sought to escape from the inhospitable heat of the plains to the hills. From 1815 to 1870 there were over 80 hill stations in four different areas in India. The hill areas which connected the metropolitan cities of the country, were:- (a) Simla-Mussoorie-Nainital near Delhi, (b) Darjeeling-Shillong near Calcutta, (c) Mahabaleshwar in the Western Ghats near Bombay, and (d) the Nilgiri-Kodaikanal area in Tamil Nadu<sup>50</sup>. Strategically, Northern Bengal was significant for the existence of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet to the north, and Nepal to the west. So it was also important on military and security point of view. In order to protect the North-Eastern boundary of the British Indian Empire the authority needed armed base camp. Northern part of North Bengal, especially Darjeeling and Dooars region were very much important to the colonial authority for the cause of its geo-political situation. Dalhousi emphasized the consolidation of the eastern frontier of India. It mentioned in his famous minute dated on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1853. After the conquest of Pegu or the Lower Barma, the question

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<sup>47</sup> Dharma Kumar, *op.cit.*, pp.517-19.

<sup>48</sup> R. Ramachandran, *Urbanization and Urban Systems in India*, Oxford India Paperbacks, p.81.

<sup>49</sup> Subhajyoti Roy, *Transformations on the Bengal Frontier Jalpaiguri 1765-1948*, Routledge Curzon, 2002, p.12.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, *op.cit.*,p.64.

of military defense of the eastern frontier was very essential to the colonial authority for the easy transport of troops<sup>51</sup>.

The Indian princely families followed the British to the hill stations and built their summer palaces and they were followed by the native population. The native population migrated for seeking employment in providing the various services which the British needed. Thus urbanization took place and these developed as recreational tourist centres as well as administrative centres. But regarding the emergence of Kalimpong as a hill urban centre, was different in character during the colonial period. Though it is adjacent to and included within the Darjeeling district, it had neither any strategic or administrative importance nor did its locational or climatic condition induced the British to start a sanatorium there. Colonial feature of trade was there but urbanization as a natural offshoot of thriving trade did not happen to Kalimpong<sup>52</sup>. Therefore taking this area from the Bhutanese kingdom way back in 1866 under British rule after Anglo-Bhutan war, it got the Municipal status after a long while or in 1945<sup>53</sup>.

Thus the emergence of urban centres in North Bengal were not so much a natural development as much of external intervention in colonial period and thereby we see the urban agglomeration. It will further be discussed throughout our discussion.

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<sup>51</sup> Dalhousi's Minute, 20<sup>th</sup> April 1853 Parliamentary Papers, attached to Railway Home Correspondence, 1852-53, LXXVI,(787),p.117 cited in Utpal Roy's unpublished thesis, Growth and Development of Railways in North Bengal and its Impact on Society and Economy(1870-1950), p.35.

<sup>52</sup> Enakshi Majumdar, Emergence of Kalimpong as a Hill Urban Centre, an article in Karubaki Datta (ed), Urbanisation in the Eastern Himalayas Emergence and Issues, Serials Publications, New Delhi, Introduction.

<sup>53</sup> Census of India 2011, West Bengal, Series-20, Part XII-B, District Census Handbook, Darjeeling, p.16.