

Chapter- VI

CONCLUSION

Satish Chandra Mishra in his “Urban History in India: Possibilities and Perspectives” said : “urban history is the study of urbanization, of the expansion of urban centres in the span of time, the factors which promote and retard such growth, and the ecology which towns generate in several related dimensions: in the natural environment, in the economic system, in political apparatus, in societal network, and even in the minds of men living in towns”.

In the first chapter we have studied the several approaches to the growing urbanization in societies and the functions which the towns serve. Max Weber through his Eurocentric view, stressed its key role in the transition to a capitalist economy in Europe. Pirenne saw the market function of the town as a lever in its growth¹.

In India, colonial policy and economy were superimposed on a pre-existing pattern². For that reason Old Malda was becoming less important town and English Bazar had emerged with a new trade zeal of the colonial authority. Industrial development in Britain had opened a new type of colonialism. The pattern of urbanization in hinterland of India is not applicable to the areas of North Bengal. Among the major success of colonial rule in Bengal was the foundation of plantation economy specially tea industry in hill areas and of Dooars, silk industry of Malda and jute industry of Dinajpur. Apart from this, hill stations developed to the colonial masters as recreational tourist centres (sanatorium) as well as an administrative centres.

¹ S.C.Misra, Urban History in India.

² Narayani Gupta, Urbanism in South India: Eighteenth- Nineteenth Centuries, in Indu Banga ed. book, op.cit.

The second chapter deals with the formation of district administration in North Bengal which accelerated the process of urbanization. How these district administration began to develop and what was their role and who were the sole head of the district have discussed here. We have also mentioned District Board and Local Boards as precursor to municipal administration. The Local Self-Government Act was introduced in Dinajpur, Malda and Jalpaiguri but not in Darjeeling. British officials in India tried to create a municipal system like that of England. The first attempt to introduce Municipal Government outside the Presidency Towns was made by an Act X of 1842 and Act XXVI of 1850. How these Acts were implemented and what were their clauses are discussed in the chapter mentioned. In 1856 the Government passed the Town Police Act imposing upon the householders of a town. Act I of 1900, takes necessary measures to ensure the safety of the town specially hill towns like Darjeeling. Apart from this we have also studied the formation of several municipalities of North Bengal. At the very beginning, the members were nominated and mostly they were Europeans but gradually election system had emerged and many Indians were engaging themselves in running democratic system of municipal administration.

In nineteenth century British established hill stations especially Darjeeling of North Bengal as military outposts, to guard rapidly expanding British frontiers, particularly along the Himalayas. The towns of North Bengal formed as collection and marketing centres for the produce of the surrounding tea and cinchona plantations and other hilly produce such as fruits and timber³. So from the point of view of strategic, political and economic importance the colonial administration needed a good road and railway communication in North Bengal.

³ Aditi Chatterjee (July 2000), The Indian Hill Stations, A Study of Social Space Centre for Urban Economic Studies.

The roads and railways of the district of Darjeeling⁴ and of North Bengal was a creation of British rule. Those roads were maintained and managed by PWD and District Board of different districts of North Bengal. Even the District Road Cess Committee and Planters contributed, though in a small scale, fair sums for the maintenance and improvement of some of the roads in the Dooars⁵. Planters had their own commercial interest.

The Northern Bengal State Railway line effected the increasing cultivation of jute in the Terai for making gunny-bags. Tea cultivation and ordinary agricultural produce was also profitable with the railway expansion. In this connection we have mentioned in the chapter III that the bazar of Matigara became a centre of trade and distribution second only to Darjeeling. It happened because of communication system and therefore the terminus at *Silligoree* in 1880s had effectively registered the Nepal trade in place of the old frontier station at *Nakshwarbaree*⁶. We have enough references of road communication in North Bengal as we have discussed. But regarding the development, metal roads in North Bengal was very negligible at the beginning of the twentieth century and was not sufficient for the growing urban public demand. To serve plantation estates was the purpose of colonial masters.

For the convenience to the residents as well as the tourists of Darjeeling the Commissioners of the Darjeeling Municipality regulated the working of the *Porters and Dandywallas*. Therefore the Act for the regulation of *hackney carriages and palankeens* was brought. Though the changes were limited to a certain tariff⁷. The Act V (B.C.) of 1883 was in force in the Darjeeling and Kurseong Municipalities

⁴ LSSOMalley, Bengal District Gezetteers, Darjeeling, Logos Press, New Delhi, 1907, p.132.

⁵ General-Miscellaneous Proceedings, September, 1886.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Report on Municipal Taxation and Expenditure in the Lower Provinces of Bengal for the year 1881-1882, No.775.

only. The Chairman of the Kurseong Municipality reported that the Act worked smoothly during the year of 1917⁸.

North Bengal saw the unhealthiness due to various diseases. If we look into the discussion on public health, we will see that highest rate of mortality caused due to fever, specially malaria with other causes occurred in towns. We have discussed in this connection the Sanitary report by Sanitary Commissioner of Bengal in the year 1892, the death rate by cholera per thousands of population for Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri under Rajshahi Division was 0.59 where as for Malda was 0.41⁹. This indicates the condition of sanitation or health and hygiene was poor in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri in comparison with Malda. Buchanan Hamilton says that ‘Fever makes such ample havoc’ in Dinajpur than other diseases¹⁰. Due to this causes proper sanitary arrangements were needed. Therefore public latrines and drainage arrangements had taken in different municipality area to keep the town clean. If we look into the sanitary endeavor of different municipalities as of North Bengal, then we see it was not enough to meet the growing city demand. However, the Government Municipal Proceeding showed a satisfactory management. Our primary sources collected from those proceedings showed the same picture.

The water supply in Darjeeling district was mainly obtained from springs. Jullapahar hill was the source of the pipe water-supply of the civil station. Different schemes were taken by the municipality for the improvement of water-supply in the municipal area. The water rate was levied in Darjeeling Municipality at the rate of 3³/₄ percent on the annual valuation of holdings. Sometimes we found that pilgrim centre like Buddhist monastery and two Hindu temples at Kalimpong were exempted from water rate in 1927. In the plain areas of Dinajpur and Malda town, water supply was obtained from river and from tanks and wells. Although various steps were taken to supply the drinking water in many municipal

⁸ Municipal Department, December, 1917, File No.M-1R/4.

⁹ Municipal Department, July 1893, Proceedings 15.

¹⁰Dinajpur Gazetteer, op.cit. p.31.

area, but filtered water-supply schemes were not prevalent at the earlier period. It was the later inclusion made by the colonial attempt.

We found from Major Garstin's Report that he was very much anxious about the health condition of the European soldiers of staying in the hill region for the safety of sanatorium. For that reason he urged to the Government to establish a hospital "it would go a great way in convincing the natives, that there was no intention of abandoning the place, and to the more timid, the presence of a number of European soldiers would give them an idea of security now much wanting for its prosperity"¹¹. Gradually for the inhabitants of British in different towns of North Bengal, the responsibility for public health goes on to the District Board, Municipality and Government as a whole¹². To recover the situation of 'dreaded belt of fever-laden forest-the Terai'¹³. Some efforts were taken by the Government at the end of the nineteenth century which is discussed in the chapter. We have seen indoor and outdoor patients treated in the different dispensaries of North Bengal. Dispensary establishment with their staffs also has seen. Also mortality for various causes in the year between 1884 and 1885 with table representation also seen which shows unhealthiness of North Bengal and most mortality comes from fever other than any causes. Although Government endeavor of vaccine operations were marked increase in Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling Terai. For that reason vaccinators were appointed in the town under the orders of the Civil Surgeon. The member of Medical institutions in North Bengal were three- the Eden Sanatorium for Europeans, the Lowis Jubilee Sanatorium for natives and the Victoria Memorial Dispensary for natives and Europeans. A kind of differentiation in medical treatment also appeared.

¹¹ Major Garstin's Report cited in Fred Pinn's book *The Road of Destiny 1839, Darjeeling Letters*, Oxford University Press, Madras 1986, p.46.

¹² A.J.Dash, *Bengal District Gazetteer*, p.91.

¹³ Major L.A.Waddell, *Among the Himalayas*, Westminster, Archibald Constable & Co. 2, Whitehall Gardens, 1899, p.5.

Educational development in North Bengal in the modern concept was started with the British. In the middle of the nineteenth century the Government was responsible for the education of the people under its rule¹⁴. Before they had come the Pathshalas and monasteries education were there. Then with the missionary activities vernacular schools were established. Hindi was used as the vernacular language in the hills. Various subjects of Grammar, Geography, History and Arithmetic to be able to keep accounts of their business affairs were taught in the vernacular schools in the plains. The children of labourers employed in tea-gardens of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling district got education under the management of Scottish Mission.

We showed a picture of educational development in North Bengal in the year of 1870-71. Government schools were established in different districts. European schools based on European model were secondary schools. European children were educated there and further sent for education in England¹⁵. For this a number of schools were opened for the education of European and Anglo-Indian boys' and girls' at Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong. Even to expand as a resort for visitor from plains due to comfort who can afford European educational development¹⁶. Apart from these schools there were training schools for girls' in North Bengal e.g., the Helen's Convent Kurseong, St. Andrew's Colonial Homes, Kalimpong Mission Training School and cookery classes in the Dow Hill School, Kurseong were important.

The introduction of good lighting facilities made the town different from village. Before going to tell the installation of electricity in elsewhere districts of North Bengal, it's better to know the indigenous lighting system. Lamp was used by musterd oil then, gradually candle light and kerosene lamp has come.

¹⁴ F.W.Strong, Dinajpur Gazetteer, op.cit.

¹⁵ LSSO'Malley, op.cit., p.177.

¹⁶ A.J.Dash, Bengal District Gazetteer.

After the mid eighteenth century municipality arranged the kerosene lamp in the towns. In 1885 Jalpaiguri Municipality managed this¹⁷. The first hydro-electricity of Darjeeling district claimed to have first hydro-electric undertaking in India. The original plant at Sidrapong was set to work on 10th November 1897. Although the production of electric power was only a small scale engaging very few persons except in the supply systems for the towns of Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong¹⁸.

LSSO'Malley mentioned the heaviest charge on the income of the municipality was the electric charge installation in the streets and a large number of houses in the hill region of Darjeeling¹⁹. As it was depended largely on hydro-electricity of Sidrapong in the dry season, supply of water power became scanty, therefore for solving this problem another remedies were taken by municipal commissioners which we have mentioned in the chapter. We have also mentioned the extension of the Hydro-Electric plants of the Darjeeling Municipality in the chapter named 'Street Light'. Here one thing we want to refer that Shesadri Prosad Bose has mentioned that Jalpaiguri district did not have any electricity before 1933. But if we look into the Table No.III.26 given in the chapter is telling different thing. There is a clear mention of electric bulb light. From this we see the level of urbanization in the different parts of North Bengal. The scheme for the electrification of the town of Dinajpur made no headway owing to the bad financial position of the municipality, whereas in English Bazar we found fair progress in the year of the 1940²⁰.

Trade and commerce played an important role in the economy of the town. The urbanization in North Bengal's hill areas had its roots in North-East frontier when company authorities had found alternative

¹⁷Charuchandra Sanyal, Jalpaiguri Saharer Ekso Bachhar 1869-1969, an article cited in ed. Book of Ananda Gopal Ghosh, Paribartaner Dharai Tistabanger Jalpaiguri Jela, Pragatisil, Kolkata, 2016.

¹⁸ A.J.Dash, op.cit. pp.177-178.

¹⁹ LSSO'Malley, op.cit., p.167.

²⁰ Resolution Reviewing the Reports on the Working of Municipality in Bengal under 1936-37, Proceedings No. 39 and Department of Public Health and Local Self Government, Municipal Branch, March 1940.

to Cherrapunji while acquiring Darjeeling in 1830s²¹. Old Malda had its long trade history of cotton clothes. It was a prosperous trade region for having French and Portuguese 'factory' there. However, at the time of British rule it became less important and English Bazar town was established and regarded as an important seats of commercial transactions for its enlarged silk trade. The principal items of manufactures in the Rajshahi Division, specially in the district of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur, were jute clothes and bags, tea, cinchona, a little silk, indigo and country clothes. Migrated labourers were attracted to the prosperity of jute industry in Dinajpur upto 1929. Sugar-mills in the Rajshahi Division specially in Jalpaiguri became very important. But of all these the most important was the tea industry, manufactured in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling made a profitable industry for the British for international demand. Labourers coming from ChotaNagpur and Bihar region came those regions for the betterment of their lives. So Northern Bengal was vital for the prosperous trade business with Bhutan, Nepal and Sikkim on the North: with the other provinces of India on the West; with the other registration blocks of Bengal and Calcutta; and with Assam on the North-East. It had also trade with Dacca. But the trade with Calcutta was the most important of all²². We have mentioned in chapter IV of different export and import commodities in various parts of North Bengal. Also have information of main distribution centres of elsewhere North Bengal. With the commercialization or plantation agriculture North Bengal was entered into the world capitalist system. The main traffic of the North Bengal was carried on by means of river and railway communications. Trade of the several districts of the Rajshahi Division was almost entirely carried on in the bunders, gunges and hats which abound in the division, carts, pack bullocks and poies being the means of conveyance to and from the centres of business, where the growers sell their produce and the merchants purchase it from export²³. Weekly markets were held in

²¹ D.R.Syiemlieh, Soweia or Cherrapunji in ed.book of A.C,Sinha, Hill Cities of Eastern Himalayas, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, p.56.

²² Hurry Mohun Sannail, op.cit., p.53.

²³ Proceedings of the Lieutenants-Governor of Bengal, September 1886, No.23.

the towns or large villages and trade were also carried on annual fairs or religious gatherings. Of the local manufactures, tea and coarse bags woven from jute were chiefly manufactured for export²⁴. In market area it is noted that except Darjeeling, sanitary arrangements in Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur was very poor²⁵.

Commodity markets and trade generally was financed by Marwari, Bengali and Behari bankers, branches of the Imperial Bank provided general banking facilities in Darjeeling²⁶. Darjeeling was rapidly organized as a commercial head quarter for Himalayan trade and European health resort. The route to Lhasa was mapped out by Campbell²⁷.

From the discussion in chapter V, it is being shown there a development of the urban facilities which increased the urban population of North Bengal of our study area in comparison with whole North Bengal. We saw the population of Malda contributed a large share to the population of North Bengal in comparison with others and uneven urban growth appeared in various censuses in the districts of North Bengal. It happened due to various causes. Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri was famous for a growing centre of trade specially tea. North Bengal Railway facilities made Dinajpur a greater agricultural producing trade centre, as a result of this large influx of permanent settlers from Santal Parganas, Bihar, Nadia and Murshidabad came to settle there. Although Old Malda lost its glory but English Bazar was a commercial factory of trade in silk business.

It is true to say that migration, birth-rate and death-rate influenced the population very much. Migratory people coming from different districts mentioned above increased the population and with them

²⁴ W.W.Hunter, op.cit. p.158.

²⁵ Report of the Sanitary Commissioner for Bengal for the year 1876, Section V.

²⁶ A.J.Dash, Bengal District Gazetteer, p.173.

²⁷ Chittabrata Palit, British Economic Penetration into North Eastern Hills: Overland trade and Allied Questions, 1800-1850,taken from Welby Jackson and Campbell, Papers on Sikkim Morung, Calcutta, 1351 as in intra, 20, pp.7-8. in Himalaya Frontier in Historical Perspective edited by N.R.Ray, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, 1986.

therefore in the town of trading centre made the possibilities of increased urban population growth. Migratory people were found even from Nepal and to Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri. The rapid advance of the town settlement in Darjeeling by leaps and bounds was owing to the exertions of Dr. A. Campbell of the Indian Medical Service. He was a political resident at the court of Nepal and was appointed later as the superintendent of Darjeeling. He attracted the Nepalese to settle in Darjeeling ‘in their thousands’²⁸. Traders bringing wool and other merchandise from Tibet came into Darjeeling; also immigrants coming from Tibet and Sikkim in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri, although very few; regarded as tea-garden coolies²⁹. Europeans also came to settle in the different districts of North Bengal which we have already discussed in the chapter.

Emigration to Bhutan from Darjeeling appeared with a certain number of Lepchas because there was the opportunity for the Nepali cultivators “to clear the vast and fertile jungles of that country”³⁰

With the establishment of the East India Company’s rule in Bengal, specially in North Bengal brought a series of changes in the society. “Social mobility among the Hindus, their cooperation with the Company’s administration and the participation in the new openings in business and trade led to creation of a new aristocracy based on wealth; it stood in sharp contrast to the traditional caste based society”³¹. It is true to say that people of different languages, races, and cultures lived in North Bengal. With the process of evolution in the thesis-antithesis-synthesis cycle; after an initial period of hostile contact or reaction settled down for a peaceful co-mingling and cultural and racial fusion with their predecessors

²⁸ Major L.A.Waddell, *Among the Himalayas*, Westminster, Archibald Constable and Co., 2 Whitehall Gardens, 1899, p.39.

²⁹ Census 1931, p.100.

³⁰ C.A.Bell, *Kalimpong Settlement Report*, p.17, cited in the census of 1911, p.174.

³¹ Chhanda Chakraborty, *Christian Missionaries and the Development of Education in Darjeeling and Terai Region in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century: The Story of Liaison between Evangelism and Imperialism* cited in *Omnibus of North Bengal Volume I* edited by Anita Bagchi, B.R.Publishing Corporation, 2015, p.125.

in the land³². In North Bengal there is a notable distribution of the major language groups. Bengali was very common³³ and bi-lingualism e.g. Hindustani language was prevalent in Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Dinajpur and Malda also. It is regarded as indigenous language by permanently settled population. Kherwari dialects were spoken by Mundas, Santals and allied tribes. Half of the people of Darjeeling speaks Nepalese of different dialects of Khambu, Murmi, Limbu, Lepcha, Magar etc³⁴. kherwari dialects spoken by Mundas, Santals and allied tribes in North Bengal of tea area³⁵. This characteristic of racial-linguistic differences is suggestive of cultural diversity³⁶.

³² Dr. Jasobanta Kar, Cultural Encounter and Exchange in the Eastern Himalayas in Himalaya Frontier in Historical Perspective ed. by N.R.Ray, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, 1986, p.76.

³³ Census 1931, p.349.

³⁴ Dr. Jasobanta Kar, op.cit.

³⁵ Census 1931, p.349.

³⁶ Dr. Jasobanta Kar, op.cit., p.78.