

## CHAPTER VI

### DYNAMISM OF URBANIZATION

Urbanization is a multifaceted phenomenon and hence a study of it from all directions is a Herculean task. Some aspects of urbanization in the North Bengal region has been measured and presented in the preceding chapters. The background and components of it have been studied. It has only been possible to measure urbanization by comparing the data available at the two ends of an interval. Sometimes the data are not even comparable. What has been achieved by the exercise can at best be described as the presentation of the structural aspects of urbanization. This does not reveal the dynamism of the process.

The dynamism of urbanization is an abstract happening and can only be seen or felt indirectly. However, certain indices can be selected, through which the manifestations of the continuing process can be observed. Some of these are more concrete and physically verifiable but others are not so. Increasing 'urbanism' falls within this last category, when it is studied through changes observed in the social processes and social interaction.

In this chapter some aspects of the social processes and social interaction in the towns of North Bengal shall be presented. This discussion will, in most part, be confined to

the focal points of urbanization as described in the preceding chapter. Our intention is to examine the changing aspects of (a) urban occupations, (b) urban associations and (c) social disorganization. The basic premise of this discussion is rural urban dichotomy.

### Changing Urban Occupations

Urban occupations differ from rural occupations largely in ~~the~~ being non-agricultural. Urban occupations generally have a wide range -- from urban services to industrial works and complex stratification from unskilled manual workers to highly educated professionals with matching economic classes. The extent of diversity in occupations as observed in North Bengal will be discussed briefly in this section in order to enable us to concentrate in the changing social relations of production that emerge in the urban scene.

The economy of North Bengal is based on 'tea, timber and tobacco'. Agriculture and cultivation of pineapples, mangoes and oranges are also important components of the economy<sup>1</sup>. The uneven terrain of the region and the contiguous situation of Bangladesh are, possibly, the reasons for the

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1 In the three physical divisions the three different fruits grow naturally. Mango in the Barind, Pineapple in the N.B. plains and oranges grow in the N.B. Hills. Tea is grown in the Terai and the hilly areas. Timber is the product of forests in the Terai. Tobacco is grown in the plains.

development of a transporting and trading market here. The nearness of the international borders has made this region strategically important, requiring a standby body of large military contingents.

The urban centres of North Bengal in this economic set up have a medley of occupations — both agricultural and non-agricultural. There are many urban residents whose income is supplemented by agricultural activities. Many tea-planters have residences in towns. Some of the North Bengal towns, Jalpaiguri and Mainaguri <sup>for instance,</sup> owe their development ~~to~~ mostly to the tea-planters and jotedars. Balurghat municipality has a considerable number of residents, who depend on agriculture for their livelihood, but prefer to live in the urban area for security reasons and for the educational and other facilities for their families. In Malda agriculture and marketing of mango supplement the urban income<sup>2</sup>. Thus the widely accepted basic distinction between urban and rural occupation is not yet tenable here. However, a shift towards non-agricultural occupations is also noticeable nowadays.

The array of urban occupations in North Bengal can be arranged into several categories from traditional to modern,

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2 Marketing of mango is undertaken at different stages of development of the fruit, e.g. trees are leased out before the blossoms come out, when the trees are in blossom, when the small mangoes appear, when the mangoes are in different stages of growth, etc. As the mangoes become bigger risk in capital-investment decreases and the amount of investment increases.

which in turn is related to the changing political set up in the region. The occupational classification attempted here refers to the changing time with three broad categories — (1) the traditional occupations, (2) colonial occupations and (3) occupations in the post-Independence period. In the 'traditional' category it has not been possible to distinguish between urban and rural occupations but in the other two categories the focus is the urban situation.

### The Traditional Occupations

The traditional occupations has been agriculture, crafts (weaving, basketry, pottery, black-smithy, etc.), trade and commerce, priesthood and religious preaching, warfare, administration in kingdom or chieftaindom.

A historical background of the area has been presented earlier. Therefore, it is already known that this area, in comparison to south Bengal, was sparsely populated and lacked in urban centres. The occupations were, naturally, of traditional rural type. Brahman and other western Hindu settlement in North Bengal appear to have been scanty and mainly during the recent centuries Brahmans and 'caste Hindus' have felt attracted to North Bengal districts<sup>3</sup>. So specialization in

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3 Suniti K. Chatterjee, Kirāta-Jana-Krti. The Indo-Mongoloid Their Contribution to the History and Culture of India, The Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1974, p. 111.

religious preaching and priesthood was not much, although many mendicants of different religions (Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim) were there. The warfazes with people from the hills and from the plains were frequent and warfare was a high ranking occupation. A small number of people were also occupied in administrative work of the numerous kingdoms and chieftaindoms. Craftmanship was a restricted group of occupations. Trade and commerce, of course, had been important occupation in this area, not only to meet the requirements of the people, but also because of the peculiar physical situation of the area. Trading route of hills to lower Bengal passed through this area. Trade route to China and Tibet have been very important and trading had been a lucrative activity since time immemorial. Against this backdrop the colonial rule brought in new types of occupations.

### The Colonial Occupations

The colonial occupations are associated with the colonial administration and related services, trading and tea plantation. The first British town in North Bengal is English Bazar. It originated from the factory which was built by the East India Company to carry on trade, mainly in silk and cotton textiles. The town which sprang up around the factory came to be known as Englezavad and later as English Bazar. About ninety years later, in 1771, a fortified commercial

residency was built there<sup>4</sup>. This town consisted of a series of trading villages<sup>5</sup>. The trading was controlled by the British from London<sup>6</sup>. However, this gave rise to a group of Indian merchants who worked as middle-men. When Dr. Buchanan Hamilton visited the town in about 1810, he found it to be inhabited almost entirely by traders and weavers<sup>7</sup>. Indigo plantation also was pursued in the districts of Malda and Dinajpur. By the Charter Act of 1833 the East India Company's trading activities came to a close in India<sup>8</sup>, but by then a new character of the town has been established.

The town of Darjeeling was set up as a health resort. Kurseong and Kalimpong also served the same purpose. In addition, Kalimpong had the advantage of being on a trade route to Tibet. Darjeeling became a favourite holiday spot and the ~~residence~~ station of the Governor. In the later half of the nineteenth century tea plantation developed in the hills of Darjeeling as a very lucrative industry. Thus the occupations generated in these towns were of different types. Administrative

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4 J.C. Sengupta, West Bengal District Gazetteers, Malda, Calcutta, 1969, p. 60.

5 W.W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, Trubner and Co., London, 1876, p. 48.

6 Sengupta, Op. cit., pp. 59-60.

7 Hunter, Op. cit., p. 50.

8 Sengupta, Op. cit., p. 60.

services and municipal services were taken up by many. For administrative work Indians were recruited for all the lower and middle ranking jobs. Peons and other lowest posts were also filled up by the Indians. This was happening in all the administrative and revenue collecting centres of all the districts of North Bengal. The region was sparsely populated and the indigenous people, such as Koch, Rajbanshi, Rabha, Mech, Lepcha, Bhutia and Garos, had neither the inclination nor the training to serve under the British. Immigrants came from densely populated eastern Bengal. An old Rajbanshi gentleman (Sri Harikanta Roy of Mainaguri) has very succinctly summarised this migration as coming of groups of babus and chaprasis following in train. ("Babur dal elo ar chaprasir dal elo").

The village community was characterized by the absence of the functional castes. There were no barbers, washermen and sweepers as found in Bihar villages. In the towns, the municipal sweepers were imported from Bihar or Calcutta and washermen from Bihar. Very few servants of the European community were natives of the districts. The local population of Rajbansis, Muslims and Meches could make a living too easily by cultivation and hardly had any incentive to learn a trade. So for carpentry, were brought in Chinamen and up-country men; for sawing wood, the Nepalis.

In the colonial situation the importance of Western education and knowledge of British law increased tremendously. Teachers and lawyers migrated from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) in large numbers. The medical practitioners also came from East Bengal. These professional men and the administrative personnel settled down in the urban areas in residential clusters. Thus in most of the towns of North Bengal we find neighbourhoods with names such as Ukilpara (lawyers' area), Hakimpara (magistrates' area), Keranipara (clerks' neighbourhood), Babupara (neighbourhood of the babus), etc.

The increasing population size and cash economy contributed towards the growth of trade and commerce in the urban areas. The growing commercial opportunities attracted, in turn, trading communities from far away places. Thus we find in Siliguri, a whole neighbourhood (Khalpara) is occupied by the Marwaris. But urban trade in North Bengal was also helped considerably by the local jotedars, who contributed handsomely to the 'Market Fund'. This is a special feature of the smaller towns of North Bengal.

Although development of tea-industry in this region generated new job-opportunities, it did not directly affect the urban situation, because of the enclaved social system of the plantations. The indirect effect of it, however, was felt in many towns. Special mention of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri must be made in this context. In both these towns planters or

entrepreneurs set up their business centres and often their families lived in the urban areas for various facilities, such as educational or medical. These entrepreneurs contributed towards the development of the towns.

### Occupations in the post-Independence Period

Occupations in the post-Independence period show a greater diversification. A continuity, albeit in an increased scale, is seen in administrative and basic municipal services. Owing to the change in the international boundaries, scope of transportation as an occupation increased tremendously. North Bengal became a corridor for transporting commodities to and fro north-east India and western India and south Bengal. This entailed a growth and diversification in wholesale trading activities. Side by side, we see a greater pursuance of professions, such as, legal, medical and engineering. With development of communication network in the area, construction work multiplied manifold — bringing in the requirement of engineers and construction workers. These construction workers are largely the unskilled migrants from Bihar and U.P.

Development of communication system is the major contributing factor in the growth of trade and transport in North Bengal. The Farakka Bridge has removed the hurdle of crossing the Ganges and connected this region with southern Bengal. It had far-fetched implications. Communication, both

by rail and road, has increased. It is no more an isolated area and people from lower Bengal, who used to consider North Bengal as a punishment area, no longer think so. Population increased due to coming of refugees from East Bengal (present Bangladesh) as well as migrants from lower Bengal. Larger population-size coupled with the increase in consumerism (thanks to the media explosion!) has extended the scope of trade and commerce. Siliguri, has become especially a traders' paradise. Most of the other towns of North Bengal also thrive on trading. Transporting has become a lucrative business while industrial development in the region still remains in the low key.

From a recent study of Siliguri town we learn that the number of wholesale trading establishments have increased about three-fold since 1955. From the data of collection of commercial taxes the author establishes the manifold increase in the flow of goods that is handled in this town. Road transport is more favoured than rail transport and hence the increase in transporting activities is seen here. He has also presented (a) the proportion of various commodities that are brought into the town from its catchment area and (b) the outflow of goods from Siliguri. He notes that "the most interesting aspect of growth of Siliguri is that the high rate of growth has been there without the support by any type of large scale industries. There is practically no big industry in and around

Siliguri, which could be ascribed as the main reason for the high growth. .... This is primarily an out and out commercial centre which cater the growing need of the neighboring states or countries"<sup>9</sup> .

The disappointing industrial development in the district of Jalpaiguri has been reflected in the editorial of a little magazine, Tistapaksha. It discusses the non-utilization of the available raw materials, such as, dolomite, bamboo (for paper), fruits (for preserving) in the district .<sup>10</sup>

The economic base in some towns is, still today, agriculture, such as Mainaguri, Dimhata, Balurghat. In most of these towns trade and commerce have developed greatly in the absence of an alternative urban industrial occupation. Services in public sector and educational institutions are the main white collar jobs and often serve as a secondary source of income to supplement the income from agricultural activities. The shift in occupation from agriculture to urban occupations, such as trade and services are, of course, taking place. The change in the political scenario is heavily responsible for this. The town of Balurghat is a case in point.

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9 Ranajit Roy, Economic Change in Siliguri and Problems of its Urban Development, Ph.D. Thesis, North Bengal University, 1985, p. 246.

10 A Collection of editorials of Tistapaksha, 1987.

After the Partition (1947) and the Bangladesh war (1971) refugees have come in and settled down in Balurghat town area and in the surrounding rural areas. Agriculture was their primary occupation. After 1967, the land policies were changed by the United Front ministry of West Bengal, the thrust of which was felt by the landlords. In addition, immediately after 1971, the international border between India and Bangladesh could be practically freely crossed over either way, enhancing the problem of dacoity in the rural area. Often cattle and other assets were robbed off and taken across the border, thus making it impossible to retrieve. The landed people started moving into the town -- with a house in the town and another in the village -- their occupation being still then agriculture. Agricultural produce were often forcibly taken away from the field or from the store of the agriculturists. Agriculture thus became a non-lucrative occupation. Next came a gradual shift to other occupations -- the available avenues being (i) trade and commerce, (ii) teaching in schools and (iii) job at the collectorate. The rural people from the surrounding countryside poured into the security of the city-limit with its retinue of protective police forces. Thus we find the political changes in both the international and national level have triggered off certain changes in social control and economic conditions which in turn have brought about movement of people into the urban areas and into non-traditional occupations. But industries have not grown

here — the reasons being lack of raw materials in the locality; high cost of transportation due to the location of the town into a strip of land bounded by Bangladesh on almost three sides; reluctance of the entrepreneurs to invest in a place so close to the border with the incidence of shelling across the border looming large in the people's mind.

Hili, a growing and prosperous town of pre-Independence time, became doomed when the international border passed through the middle of the town. Now it is not only declining but also has got a vicious economy, which thrives upon smuggling activities across the border. In the day-time the town looks forlorn and comes to life only after dark. Smuggling — both from the country and into the country has been adopted as an alternative clandestine means of livelihood by many in Balurghat. The items of smuggling are of diverse nature as is shown in the following table.

In this situation Raiganj has developed rapidly even after a late start. It has the advantage of being situated on a National Highway on the one hand and at the junction of the roads leading to Balurghat and Hili on the other. It is also connected by railway. Yet, industrial development has not taken place here. A spinning mill and a small paper mill are there, but not much else.

In the recent past, several industries have been planned for some parts of North Bengal, but these are yet to

Table 53

Items of Smuggling at Hili Border

Items Smuggled	
From India to Bangladesh	In India from Bangladesh
Rice, jute, paddy (depending on prevalent market price)	Fish Intoxicants — heroin, brown sugar
Cycle (a large number is smuggled out and only a small number sold to Bangladesh with Government approval)	Gold Electronic goods Chemical fibre garments (second hand), chemical fibre materials (yarn is from Japan and weaving done in Bangladesh)
<u>Sil-nora</u> (flat stone slab and pistle for grinding), <u>Janta</u> (grinding wheel) <sup>+</sup> Handloom cloth <sup>++</sup> , salt, Kerosine, sugar.	Cosmetics

\* Hard stone is not available in Bangladesh.

\*\* Gangarampur, a small town nearby, thrives on weaving and smuggling out a big part of the products.

materialise. A steel plant at Malda has been conceived as a joint sector venture with a proposed investment of Rs. 500 crores (which will be increased to Rs. 700 crores when the plant starts producing sponge iron). An appeal of the public sector concerned for a letter of intent from the private sector

representative has evinced no response<sup>11</sup>.

The only large scale industry in North Bengal is the Raiganj Spinning Mill. There are some medium scale industries and a large number of small scale industries in the region. Several industrial estates have been set up by the Government in the districts of North Bengal. Jalpaiguri district has received the greatest attention in this respect. There are two small scale and three medium scale Industrial Estates and a small Commercial Estate. In these estates, in addition to the industrial or commercial accommodation, infrastructural facilities and technical guidance are provided to the entrepreneurs. In the following table the present status of the districts are given.

Table 54

Distribution of Industrial and Commercial Estates in the Districts of North Bengal

District	No. of Large Scale Industry	No. of Medium Scale Industrial Estates	No. of Small Scale	
			Industrial Estate	Commercial Estate
Darjeeling	-	-	1 <sup>+</sup>	-
Jalpaiguri	-	3	2	1
Koch Bihar	-	-	-	-
West Dinajpur	1	1	-	1
Malda	-	-	-	1

+ Another industrial estate at Bagdogra has been proposed.

11 The Statesman, July 27, 1987.

With this encouragement from the Government there is emerging a trend of setting up of one's own enterprise. At Siliguri Industrial Estate, which is, incidentally, situated in Jalpaiguri district, training of prospective entrepreneurs is offered once or twice each year. A list of prospective industries for North Bengal has been prepared and is being circulated among potential entrepreneurs by a Government agency, Small Industries Service Institute.

All the districts of North Bengal have been declared as industrially backward districts. There are two categories of industrially backward districts. Malda, Darjeeling, Koch Bihar and Jalpaiguri fall under Category A and West Dinajpur in Category B. Under both the categories entrepreneurs receive subsidy from the Government for setting-up of plant and machinery — "A" receiving more than "B" (25% and 15% respectively). In Siliguri Industrial Estate, 18 industrial units have already started functioning, of which 10 units have been set up by local entrepreneurs and 6 by the entrepreneurs from places outside North Bengal. Two are managed by Government agencies. There are other enterprises in the estate which are in various stages of development and are yet to start functioning.

However, these governmental supports are creating, on the one hand, conditions conducive to industrial and commercial development of North Bengal and thus changing the

earlier occupational pattern and, on the other, increasing the pace of urbanization by bringing in greater area under urban purview and attracting larger population. Recent internal political instability may be one deciding factor in the channeling of central support to North Bengal.

Thus the urban occupations in North Bengal has evolved through political changes, migration and development of communication system. Although traditional occupations have extensively given way to trade and commerce with service following as a close second, agricultural occupations are still being pursued. Industrially this region is very backward, but even in the industrial sector agro-based industries seem to have an edge. Of the small scale industries in Malda and West Dinajpur agro-based industries are 26.32% and 28.68% respectively<sup>12</sup>.

From the functional classification of some towns of North Bengal, on the basis of 1961 and 1971 Census data, the shift in occupations can be examined.

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12 Reports of Small Industries Service Institute, 1985, p. 81 and 1987, p. 41.

Table 55

Distribution of Different Size Classes of Towns of North Bengal by Their Predominant Function

Size Class of Towns (1961)	1961			1971					
				Unchanged			Changed		
	Trading	Transport	Service	Trading	Transport	Service	Trading	Trans- port	Service
II	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
III	6	-	7	6	-	5	2	-	-
V	6	1	5	5	1	3	2	-	1
All	13	1	12	12	1	8	4	-	1

Source : Mitra, A. et al. Shifts in the Functions of Cities and Towns of India. 1961-71.

Main Table : 221-278.

In this table the functional categories are based on pre-dominant function worked out by triangular coordinate method. From this table a shift towards trading is apparent. Service is losing its primacy and manufacturing is conspicuous by its absence or lack of importance. The functional intensity of the trading has also increased during the decade (1961- 1971)<sup>13</sup>. This shift has created a sizeable floating population in the bigger towns of North Bengal. This is particularly true for Siliguri, with trading as a highly accentuated predominant function. Balurghat, on the other hand, seems to be continuing as a predominantly service town, with an inconsequential floating population.

In spite of these changes the towns of North Bengal show many preindustrial features. The close inter-personal relationships that exist there is worth attention. "Particularism" has not yet given way to "universalism", as is seen from the high status enjoyed by the members of old established families. Personal relations in the market and business context is also very important. Social relations in various productive activities are based on region of origin and ethnic group to which the persons belong. Inequality of classes is

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13 Asok Mitra, Surendra B.L. Sherry and Brahm Dutt, Shifts in the Functions of Cities and Towns of India. 1961-71, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 221-278.

less pronounced. This is also observed when studying the forms of association — both formal and informal — in the towns of North Bengal.

### Urban Associations

Associations are assumed to be the products of urban society. "Indeed, the theoretical model of 'urban society' was worked out above all in opposition to 'rural society' by analysing the passage of the second to the first in the terms used by Tonnies, as the evolution of a community form to an associative form"<sup>14</sup>. Wirth, while looking into the consequences of city-life from ecological perspective notes that due to social heterogeneity of the urban milieu fluidity of the class system and the resultant high rate of social mobility is possible. This makes the groups unstable. There is, therefore, a predominance of association over community. The above two views regarding association may be examined in this context, although the urban society is of a different nature here.

Associations in North Bengal can be classified into three broad categories on the basis of the primary purpose of

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14 Manuel Castells, The Urban Question : A Marxist Approach, London, 1977, p. 75.

their formation — (1) Interest-oriented associations, (2) Community-service-oriented associations and (3) Political associations. These associations are the platforms of interactions of diverse nature, such as — social, economic, political and cultural. Although categorised as above, all associations serve towards their members' interest. However, the 'interest-oriented' associations are formed out of the necessity to protect and augment the members' interests. The 'community-service-oriented' associations are initially formed with the interest of the community in mind. The political associations on the other hand are supposed to have the party's interest in the forefront. With these basic distinctions in mind we shall discuss about the nature and function of the urban associations in the towns of North Bengal.

#### Interest-Oriented Associations

These are the work associations and trade unions of various types. Under this category would fall — (a) the professional associations of doctors, lawyers and teachers, (b) the associations of merchants, (c) the associations of industrial entrepreneurs, (d) the associations of workers in various trade (trade unions) and (e) the associations of the employees of various public and private sector offices/services.

The professional associations of doctors or lawyers or teachers are localized in particular towns or institutions. These are found only in the cities and big towns. All these associations also form part of a bigger body of professionals, covering a wider area, such as the state or the country. For example, the members of North Bengal University Teachers' Council are also the members of West Bengal College and University Teachers' Association and is linked with All India Federation of University and College Teachers Organisation. The Bar Association of Siliguri is also affiliated to the Bar Council of India. History of the Bar Association of Siliguri illustrates the growth of professional associations in North Bengal. It was established with less than 10 members in a small katcha room in the first part of this century. Today it has 158 members. There are similar associations in all other sub divisional headquarters. In addition to protecting the members' interests and codifying the legal ethics it provides them with bar library and organizes the legal aid services for the poor community members.

There are associations of merchants in all the big towns. There are district merchants' associations in all the five districts of North Bengal. In Balurghat town the headquarters of the West Dinajpur Byabshai Samiti is located. There is also a Balurghat Byabshai Sangha, a registered body of merchants, that states its objective as the establishment of peaceful and well-organized condition for carrying out business

activities of the merchants from all strata. One of their activities was to resist against some Governmental policies and Acts, such as Essential Commodities Act, 1981, Professional Tax, 1980, Governmental policy of selling of salt in Balurghat sub-division, etc. It is a growing body and meets annually. A big poster in the committee-room of the association depicts the traders' plights.

In Siliguri there is an apex body — Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industries in North Bengal (FOCIN). There are 38 associations of merchants associated with FOCIN. A list of these associations include Atta Chaki Association, Banik Sabha, Bidhan Market Byabsayee Samity, Retail Cloth Dealers' Association, Hardware Merchants' Association, etc. In Hardware Merchants' Association, Siliguri, only there are 173 members (1987). In addition to this there are Siliguri Merchants' Association and North Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Associations of industrial entrepreneurs are of a more recent origin. There is a North Bengal branch of the Federation of Associations of Cottage and Small Industries (FACSI) of West Bengal. The zonal office of FACSI is located in Siliguri. FACSI in its turn is affiliated to the all India body of the Federation of Associations of Small Industries of India (FASII). Industrial enterprises in North Bengal have come up erratically. Only very recently the trend towards industrialization is locking up. There are, naturally, not

many members of these associations or of FACSI. Tea-industry is the first industry of the region, and there are several associations of the tea-planters. Indian Tea Association and its branches have an European heritage, whereas the Indian Tea Planters' Association was started by Indian planters. These associations are found only in the northern districts of the region.

Of the associations of workers in various trades, those of the plantation workers cover the greatest number of workers, but these are primarily non-urban workers. Of the urban workers, in organized as well as un-organized sector, those of the rickshaw-pullers are found in almost all the urban centres. The transport carrier workers' unions are common to all the towns that are communicational nodes of whatever size. These associations are working in close collaboration with the political parties. Thus we find that the number of rickshaw-pullers' unions in a town vary according to the number of rival political parties there. Besides these, there are railway porters' unions, organized again in the party lines. In Siliguri there are a Commercial Carriers (Road) Workers Union associated with INTUC and a Carrier Transport Employees' Union affiliated with CITU. In addition to these there are unions of AITUC, R.S.P., Forward Block and S.U.C.

Besides these there are the association of the employees of various Government offices and banks. These associations

are the forum of interaction of only a handful of people. The annual sports meet and cultural function are about the only activities undertaken, although, it is expected, that at the times of crisis these associations would look after the interests of their members.

### Community Service Oriented Associations

Unlike the interest-oriented associations, community service oriented associations were formed with the objective to do something for others -- be that spiritually or through cultural and literary activities or through physical and material betterment of the community members. After formation, however, these associations have become the meeting place of people with similar interests, and protecting these interests and the interest of the members have automatically followed. But these associations have their roots in the urge of self-expression and psychological satisfaction of the urban man. These are the indicators of the intricacies of the urban mind.

Under this category would fall -- (a) religious associations, (b) secular cultural associations, (c) sports associations, (d) social welfare associations and (e) social associations. This categorization has been done for the purpose of conceptual clarity, but in reality quite a bit of overlapping exists among the categories. Thus we find that many religious

associations also perform the functions of social welfare, secular cultural activities and are formed mainly by the members of a particular ethnic group, fulfilling the social needs of its members.

Religion has always been an important area of social interactions. This is true in the urban places also. Therefore, we find religious associations, such as Harisabha or Ashta-prahar, in rural areas and town-based religious associations with wider coverage, like Satsanga, Bharat Sevashram Sangha, Ramkrishna Mission, etc.

Religious festivals also form a part of the activities of the religious associations, but these associations are not always localised. Sometimes informal local associations form around a religious shrine. But formal religious associations cover much wider area. To these associations belong people of all classes but there appears to be a preponderance of urban individuals over rural. An element of sophistication enters there. The common religious associations in North Bengal are — Ramkrishna Mission, Ramkrishna Vedanta Math, Bharat Sevashram Sangha, Gouriya Math, Satsanga of Anukul Thakur's disciples, Sikh Gurdwaras, Krishna Pranami Sangha, Roman Catholic and other Christian Churches, Jamia Islamia Masjid.

The concentration of the Christian associations are found in the hills and in the rural tribal areas. In Kalimpong

town only there are Diocesan Church, Catholic Church, Free Church, etc. In Darjeeling and Kurseong also there are several missions. This prevalence of Christian missions and associations can be attributed to the early infiltration of various Christian missionaries in the hills and their dedication to the advancement of Christianity through education and charity-works. "They left permanent marks on more than one field on education, development of the vernacular language and on the social history of the district"<sup>15</sup>.

Both Bharat Sevashram Sangha and Ramkrishna Mission are very well-known for religious and social services. In North Bengal we find another well-organised religious association — the Pranami Dharma Sabha. This association has been operating in Kalimpong since early twentieth century with social welfare activities, albeit in a relatively smaller scale. Darjeeling branch of Shri Krishna Pranami Dharma Sabha was established in 1984. This has 44 members, of which 12 are non-Brahmin Nepalis, 3 Marwaris and the rest Brahmins or Chetris or Thekuris<sup>16</sup>.

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15 Chhanda Chakraborty, The Role of the Christian Missionaries in Promoting Education among the People of Darjeeling District in the 19th Century, Department of History, N.B.U. Occasional Paper No. 1, 1986, page 29.

16 T.B. Subba, "The Pranami Dharma in the Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas: A Preliminary Study" in Religion and Society, Bangalore.

The overlapping spheres of social welfare and religious activities often combine with socio-cultural activities of ethnic associations. In a recent religious gathering at Siliguri this has been clearly observed. A very temporary association was formed for the purpose of bringing a religious guru, Sree Ramsukhdasji Maharaj, to Siliguri. This association, Siliguri Satsanga Samiti, requisitioned help from several other more permanent associations. It was found that all these associations comprised of Marwari members mainly. The gathering was about three thousand strong. The whole atmosphere was festive with men and women, young and old coming together. The cooperating associations helped by providing space, hospitality, drinking water supply and other necessary amenities. These associations had their own stalls outside the main pandal. In these stalls some sold religious books, some gave drinking water, some snacks and tea, some homeopathic medicines, some handed out information regarding their various activities, public information like train-timings, etc. One, the Agrawal Seva Samiti, was recruiting new members on the one hand and recording information about prospective brides and grooms on the other. The number of associations with predominantly Marwari patronage were seven<sup>17</sup>, although some

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17 - The seven associations are Sree Balaji Sewa Samiti, Sree Bajrang Bhajan Mandal, Star Sangh, Friends' Club, Sanskriti Parishad, Yuba Jagriti Sangha, Agrawal Seva Samiti.

of them objected to the ethnic identification of the associations by this observer. For example, Sree Balaji Sewa Samiti comprised of only the Agarwala Marwari Vaishyas, but the spokesman of the association vehemently objected to the name Marwari association and asserted that anybody could become a member. This place (North Bengal) is like 'matri-bhumi' to them and now they are confining their marriage relations within eastern India only. During the recent flood they organized relief-work at Raiganj, where they distributed 30,000 food packets. They worked in close cooperation with the Lions' Club and Sree Bajrang Bhajan Mandal. Yet the Marwaris' identification with Hindi language is quite obvious through some activities and objectives of the associations. Sanskriti Parishad encourages Hindi literary activity by organizing monthly literary meets and awarding cash prizes for story-writing or poetry competition in Hindi. Yuba Jagriti Sangha proclaims as one of its objectives augmentation of the national language<sup>18</sup>. Many individuals belong to more than one associations besides belonging to their respective work associations. Thus we find that the work and social-welfare associations cut across the lines of religious and ethnic associations.

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18 Yuba Jagriti Sangha, 'Hamare Uddeshya' in Nay Chetna, 1987.

Social welfare associations without any socio-cultural identities are also there. Jalpaiguri Welfare Organization and Siliguri Welfare Organization need special mention in this context. Siliguri Welfare Organization was started in the mid-seventies and Jalpaiguri organization in 1982. The main activities of these organizations centre around health and related activities, such as, running of free clinic, developing medicine bank, organizing eye operation camps, etc. The Jalpaiguri organization has moreover organized camps for fitting amputees with Jaipur Foot. A total of 215 amputees were fitted with artificial limb<sup>19</sup>. They were working in cooperation with trade unions in the tea-gardens and matters relating to the plantation workers. This cooperation is an outcome of conflicts between the Organization and trade union leaders. Sarker admits that "support from trade unions is necessary because then we can compliment each other in our activities. Our experiences show that our efforts can be frustrated if there is hostility from these organizations"<sup>20</sup>.

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19 Subrata Sarker, "Specific Areas of Cooperation between Trade Unions and Voluntary Agencies", Paper presented in the Seminar on Labour Market Development in the Eastern Himalayas held in Gangtok in December, 1987, p. 4.

20 Ibid., p. 1.

Cooperation and conflict go hand in hand in the adaptive spheres of urban life. In the formations and workings of the secular cultural associations and sports associations these often come to light. The secular cultural associations refer to all those associations that do not seek for any material gain but strive for the expression of the creative and the aesthetic. The literary circles, drama clubs and cine clubs are examples of such. These associations and sports clubs were the earliest expressions of adaptation of the migrants in the urban milieu. In North Bengal these were conceived and formed mainly by men. The women were included later on as secondary members. The neighbourhood clubs, created to satisfy the gregarious nature of man, also ran along the same line. The ethnic associations, too, while looking after the particular ethnic welfare and providing familiar social atmosphere, allowed a somewhat secondary position to the women of the same group. This secondary status of women, of course, is traditional in Indian society. However, in urban set up some change in women's status occur and this has been reflected in the women's associations.

The activities of literary circles are multifarious --- from setting up of libraries to organizing debates and literary competitions. The creative urge of the members of these circles finds vent in the literary magazines. The number of little magazines that have mushroomed in North Bengal is astounding.

According to available statistics of the districts of West Bengal the largest number of little magazines are published from West Dinajpur district. The first little magazine was published in 1955 (Suchana) and since then a total of 141 magazines have come out, although many of these had a short life. Common men, like ordinary businessmen, traders and office employees, came together to bring out or patronise these little magazines<sup>21</sup>.

Table 36

Distribution of Little Magazines by their Publication Centres in West Dinajpur District.

Centres of Publication	No. of Magazines
Balurghat	29
Raiganj	63
Kaliaganj	20
Islampur	17
Dalkhola	1
Ganjarampur	1
Hili	1
Others	9
Total	141

21 Tapan Kiran Roy, "Little magazine O Ami" in Tathagata, Annual Number 1394 (1987), pp. 111-116.

From the above table it can be seen that the largest number of magazines were brought out from Raiganj, although many of these had a very short life. In 1986 the number of little magazines published from the district of West Dinajpur were 60.

Table 57

Little Magazines in West Dinajpur, 1986

Categories of Little Magazines	No. of Magazines
Weekly	10
Fortnightly	23
Monthly, trimonthly and biannual	27
Total	60

Of these 60 magazines 42 were published from Balurghat and Raiganj towns and the rest from the smaller towns or market and administrative centres. Most of these little magazines have limited circulation, its contributors being local people from the towns and surrounding villages. Only a few have a wider circulation, with authors from other districts and Calcutta. Many of these are published irregularly and quite a few meet an untimely end. However, these little magazines open up a window for the villagers and the townsmen, through which they

can have a look into new ideas, attitudes and values, and can ventilate their own thinkings too. From this aspect the little magazines have a considerable impact that contributes towards increased urbanism. The impact of newspapers and journals in instituting change in attitude and values is no new thing. In the Renaissance Bengal we have seen similar occurrences. The politico-economic situation has changed since then. Technological advances have brought in new amenities and means of exposure to the outer world, yet it seems that the utility of the written medium has not diminished. Is it because creative writing allows ideological expression of one's self? Is it a way to assert and justify one's own self and in so doing find a psychological security and a feeling of acceptance by others in the community? In other words, the little magazines serve the dual roles of spreading urbanism and helping one in the search of a place for himself in the changing social milieu. In this changed milieu the urban man voices his realizations and learnings in these magazines. Thus the little magazines are the positive manifestations of growing urbanism. A little magazine also requires concerted activities of a group of people and their continued interaction with a much wider group. Thus the core group meets urban as well as rural people with a common interest.

The recreational and social needs of persons in the towns of North Bengal were fulfilled through drama clubs and

sports clubs. At present there are 13 theatre-groups in Siliguri, of which the oldest one (Mitra Sammilani) was established in 1939 with a record of 275 productions till date<sup>22</sup>. In this respect Balurghat had developed earlier, even though it was declared urban much later. The first theatre group (Balurghat Theatrical Association) was formed there in 1909. Later on more such groups have been formed and Balurghat has earned a name for the high standard of its theatrical productions. This early development of drama groups may be due to the relative linguistic homogeneity, isolation and consequent fulfilment of the void in recreational and social aspects of life in Balurghat through these innovative activities. These drama clubs are found in other North Bengal towns too. Many of these are also engaged in social welfare activities.

Social welfare activities are also carried on by sports clubs and women's associations. The registered sports clubs in North Bengal are accountable to the West Bengal Sports Association through the respective sub-divisional Sports Associations. For example, there are 31 clubs affiliated to the Siliguri Sports Association in Siliguri sub-division. 29 of these clubs are located in Siliguri urban area. Most of

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22 Uttardhwani, 1987, p. 129.

these clubs emerged as neighbourhood clubs, but transgressed the boundaries of the respective neighbourhoods later on. Some amount of multiplication of clubs have occurred due to fission caused by internal conflicts. This is not confined to the sports clubs only, but is an universal feature in all the categories of urban associations.

The situations of conflicts are rather multiplying with introduction of more and more impersonal character in urban interactions. The previous close personal relations are revealed through the interviews with some old members of women's associations. Both Renuka Datta of Siliguri and Ashoka Sarkar of Balurghat disclosed the close interpersonal relations that existed in these towns. Persons were addressed by kinship terms. Thus Mrs. Datta was Sajdi to all the younger persons who imagined themselves to belong to the same generation. It was also possible to exert some amount of social control through personal ties. This, according to Mrs. Sarkar, is not totally lost in Balurghat, whereas, Mrs Datta, in the context of Siliguri, feels otherwise. She says that a definite attitudinal change has taken place, such as orientation to self-interest, party (political) interest and aggressiveness. Now formal control is the only effective measure.

The involvement of the women in the urban associations of North Bengal seems to have undergone a qualitative change. In the initial years the women's participation was rather

tentative. They surreptitiously took some time off from their household duties. The first associations were organized by some members of the National Congress party. Later on, with increasing importance of other parties, split in the Mahila Samiti occurred. Jativa Congress Mahila Samiti of Siliguri was renamed Siliguri Mahila Samiti in the sixties and Pashchim Banga Mahila Samiti of Siliguri fissioned out of that. These associations not only provided a base for social interaction and freedom from domestic monotony but also widened the horizon of the women, who were mostly middle class housewives. The activities of these associations were oriented towards social welfare with particular emphasis to the social economic welfare of the women. In Balurghat representatives of the Mahila Samiti had participated in decision-making committees of judicial department and hospital management too. These associations were also the vote-banks of the political parties.

With more and more women receiving formal education and larger number of persons coming to urban centres the process of individualization has started. As a consequence, interest in the activities of Mahila Samitis is now on the wane, but a qualitative difference can be observed between the interactions at Siliguri and Balurghat. Anonymity is much less in Balurghat, which may be due to the greater isolation and relatively more homogeneity in the town. The Ladies Club of Siliguri is an example of the cosmopolitan nature of urban

association. The ladies' involvement are less intense, although the social welfare perspective persists. The women are now increasingly asserting themselves as was voiced by Mrs. Kulasreshtha, the Secretary of the club. She is also the Principal of the Hindi High School for Girls in Siliguri. The members are no more middle class housewives only, but many are in service or professions and wives of well-to-do men. Political overtones of the earlier women's associations have now become diffused.

#### Political Associations

The political overtones, however, have become more pronounced in the case of the other associations. Often, individuals belong to more than one associations and follow certain political ideologies. The ideologically like-minded people cooperate with the respective political parties, even though they may not necessarily be members of that political party. The workers' associations and trade unions openly participate in the political parties. The activities and the relationships of these associations are not confined within the city limit. These have periodic interaction with sister associations in other towns or they are guided by the directives of the parent body, which often is affiliated to a political group. This links up the urban situation in one town with the mainstream. This is still more true for the political associations.

The associations that are politically active belong to one or the other of the political parties. These associations simply form the local unit of the particular political parties. College and high school students have their own wings of political parties. The political parties are quite active in North Bengal. The Naxal movement started here. What is more, the ethnic associations in North Bengal have also assumed political colour. These are strong moving forces and frequent interaction results because of these, but how far they affect urbanism is to be studied closely. Ideally, these associations are oriented towards the welfare of the people and advancement of the party's interest. Yet, lobbying for self-interest is rampant. This, no doubt, creates situations of conflict and dissonance, but these are also medium for dissemination of knowledge and creating an awareness about one's identity and rights.

Thus, today's associations are not exclusive to the urban people, but by virtue of necessity the associations have encompassed rural people also. In the urban areas, where kingroups are residentially separated, we do find a predominance of association over community, but that is not solely due to the fluidity of the class or the social mobility. Rather the social heterogeneity gives rise to a need for identity and asserting one's values and rights, which can be fulfilled through various associations. The membership to

different associations, on the other hand, encourages the growth of urbanism.

### Social Disorganization

Growth of urbanism, however, is not a smooth sailing in a peaceful water, rather it is full of competition and conflicts. Conflicts arise between competitors, between generations, between traditionalism and innovations. Social disorganization is an adverse but natural concomitant of urbanization. Social disorganization takes several forms in urban situation. Weakening of kinship bond is a universal urban feature. The vices and corruption are also there. It has been argued that the extent of social disorganization may have direct relationship with the size and heterogeneity of the city. In North Bengal we find that some other factors also contribute towards social disorganization. The factors which are responsible for the urban growth are responsible for social disorganization too.

The hold of family as a social unit is not very loose in North Bengal. Moreover, it is stronger in some towns than in the others. The reason may be relative isolation of some towns and immigration of a large section of kingroups en masse. The morphology of the town also has to do with the close interpersonal relationships. Thus in Balurghat we find that the neighbourhoods are located in a compact form. It is possible

to reach most of the neighbourhoods from one's own by more than one road. In other words, the neighbourhoods are clustered together and not spread out along some important thoroughfare, as is seen in the cases of Siliguri and Raiganj. This, coupled with the lack of high speed modes of urban transport, creates and sustains the primary social relationships. Relative isolation of the town is also an important factor. In this set-up the extended familial bonds were found to be quite strong. In Jalpaiguri, too, the bonds are quite strong, although the town is connected by roads and railway and is much spread out. In both the cases the heterogeneity of the population is much less in comparison to the population of Siliguri, where the influence of groups other than the kingroups are also considerable.

The vices and crimes in this region appear to be associated with the proximity of the town to the international borders. Smuggling, as mentioned earlier, is an important alternative source of livelihood in many towns of North Bengal. What is more, the market of smuggled goods has enticed a large number of ruralites to get involved in smuggling operations. Thus, we find, the tentacles of urban vices are spreading out to the surrounding countryside to usher in cash economy on the one hand, and market principles and contractual market exchanges on the other. Greater interaction among human groups is a necessary result, that probably enhances urbanism in this situation.

An official source from Siliguri informed that there are different groups of people involved in smuggling. These are — (a) the shop-keepers at Dhulabari, the market outlet in Nepal, (b) the carriers, (c) the store-keepers, (d) the shop-keepers at Hong Kong market, the market outlet at Siliguri (e) the buyers of smuggled goods (f) the big financiers and (g) the officials to curb smuggling.

The big financiers are behind the scene of smuggling and are mostly invisible. They form a sort of syndicate. Each member contributes Rs. 25,000/- to Rs. 30,000/, thereby easily amassing lakhs of rupees. They next bribe the concerned officials with five to ten thousand rupees to look away from smuggling. This amount then generates much greater income or provides security to the operators. The magnitude of money involved in smuggling can be surmised from the seized goods. A recent haul has been valued at Rs. 18 lakhs.

The carriers bring the goods across the border at a commission of ten to fifteen percent of the value of the goods smuggled. They are simple and poor people — both men and women. Women wear the goods around their body and appear very plump. They cross the border in groups at unexpected places and rarely by road. They are provided with arms. When encountered, they sometimes open fire. Then they deposit all their haul at some storing place (in Bagdogra and Naxalbari, nearby populous centres in Indian territory) and gradually

shift these to shops in "Hong Kong Market". These storing places are continuously shifted around whenever the vigilance of the anti-smuggling squads become strong.

The shop-keepers at Hong Kong Market (the popularly acquired name of the market-place of the smuggled goods in Siliguri) sell the smuggled goods as well as goods made in India and marked as 'foreign'. The buyers are from all walks of life, with a predominance of military men.

Another type of smuggling consists of smuggling of essential items. Smuggling of crops and cattle across the border near Koch Behar and Balurghat area is a constant problem. This is related with the unchecked population movement to and from Bangladesh. This also has a communal element in the border areas of Malda and West Dinajpur. Involvement of B.S.F. jawans was revealed last year (1987) in the large scale smuggling of paddy and rice from Gangarampur, a commercial centre of West Dinajpur<sup>23</sup>. This corruption on part of the security people is not confined to West Dinajpur only.

From the view point of an officer-in-charge of law and order in Siliguri, the economy of the town is based on (a) smuggling, (b) black-marketerring, (c) theft of wood from forests and timber business, (d) squatting on public land and illegal selling of it. Theft of wood, in most cases, get sanction

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23 Uttar Banga Sambad, 5.1.88.

from the employees of the Forest Department at a premium. The illegal selling of land is correlated with the price-rise of the urban land. Vast land, acquired by various government departments, are lying vacant in this area. People start unauthorised constructions and live on these lands. After some time of illegal occupancy they sell these plots of land to other people. The value of land is increasing rapidly and it is very difficult to salvage these lands from the squatters. Recently, the stadium and the market complex at Siliguri has been built after ousting the unauthorised occupants. The officials of the departments concerned, such as P.W.D. or Railways, simply ignore the occupancy<sup>e</sup>, whatever may be the underlying reasons.

In the towns, red-light areas are a common feature, but this is more pronounced in bigger towns and older towns. Malda had acquired a very bad name for prostitution in the British period<sup>24</sup>. In Siliguri, part of Khalpara is the prostitutes' quarter, which also houses underground criminals.

Although there are many poor people, the beggars are not a very common sight in North Bengal towns, whereas alcoholism and drug-addiction are quite problematic here. Men of all classes and castes take alcohol frequently. Women of lower economic order, especially the lower caste and tribal women,

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24 Pabitra Kumar Gupta, "Janaika Deputyr Jibane Malda", in Madhuparnee, Puja number, 20(1 & 2), 1986, pp. 18-34.

are habitual drinkers. Drug-addiction too has become a serious problem. Common drugs are heroin, ganja, bhang, charas and opium. Many pan-shops are disguised outlets for drugs. Among the addicts, men of all ages and classes are found, but there is an increase of drug addiction among the adolescents, which is a very bad omen. It has been learnt that, heroin is taken by the adolescents only — school-going boys and college-boys mostly being the victims.

There are no authorised gambling places in any of the towns of North Bengal, but gambling goes on nonetheless in many hotels and private homes in a small way. Once in a hotel<sup>25</sup> in Siliguri it assumed a bigger proportion, when the police had to raid it. Gambling among the poor is rather common, specially among the working class and the Nepalis. A particular game of gambling called fit used to be played on the wayside or on river-bridges and the target of cheating were the innocent newcomers. This had drawn the attention of the authorities and have somewhat been controlled.

Looking at the trend of crime in Siliguri and Balurghat, it appears that, the crime against property is relatively much higher than the crime against person. Robberies and theft are the usual crime. According to Mr. Lepcha, a police personnel, barring petty theft cases, there was no crime in Siliguri

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25 Hotel Gateway, Siliguri.

in early 1986. In the later part of the same year there was a dacoity in Bidhan Market area of Siliguri. Common crimes nowadays are burglary, petty theft, scooter/cycle/tyre theft, receiving and disposing stolen articles, etc. Selling of bomb is a new problem in northern parts of North Bengal. Eve-teasing is also quite a problem here.

In the border areas, theft and robberies across the international border has assumed serious proportions. The stealing of cattle is a regular feature in the rural areas of Balurghat and Jalpaiguri sub-divisions. This, however, is motivating greater number of ruralites to settle down in the urban centres, which offer greater security. This security, too, is dependent on the personal charisma of particular police personnels. Thus, in all the towns we find a chain of rise and fall of crimes.

There are specific areas, where the criminals live in groups. In Siliguri, several criminal dens have been identified, all of which are poor slum-like housing areas<sup>26</sup>. The criminals are mainly males of 18-25 age-group. They come from the families of migrant labourers. They are mostly unemployed either due to non-availability of jobs or due to the availability of easy

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26 These are Ganganagar, Jyotinagar, Vidyasagar Colony, Dangipara, Bagrakot, Tikiipara and Coolipara.

money in crime. Some are engaged in petty-business or rickshaw-pulling. The slum areas are congested areas and can conceal the criminals very conveniently. Criminals from surrounding rural areas, therefore, often become temporary inhabitants of these slums and try to avoid the hands of law.

The trend of crime, from the above observations, appear to be on the increase among the poor youth. These migrants in the towns, who have arrived from the rural poverty to face the poor economic generations of the North Bengal towns, live in the congested housings and raise their children in this poverty. But this new generation of migrants' children acquire attitudes and values, different from <sup>those of</sup> their parents, in the urban setting. Their expectations from life differ from that of their parental generation. The generation gap, lack of opportunities and diverse urban corruptions together set them on the path of deviance.

#### A Bird's Eye View of Urban Dynamism

In the foregoing sections of this chapter changing aspects of urban occupations, associations and social dis-organization has been presented as manifestations of urban dynamism. Nature of these three parameters have changed over time. But, the more relevant matter is the change in the social relations in these three spheres. The difficulties in studying social relations are many. The social relations can be studied

by following up several actors in the society. However, no individual obliges the researcher by confining his relations within a clearly defined boundary. Rather he tends to assume multiple roles in multiple spheres. Here arises our first difficulty — the impossible task of sorting out various actors and relating them to different spheres. This becomes more complex with the same actors assuming multiple role-relations.

This kaleidoscopic view of dynamic social relations can be brought within a manageable limit by working out social networks. These networks are ego-centric and show the regular social field of the ego. But, in this highly formal system of analysis, the individual as a human being disappears in the 'network calculation'<sup>27</sup>. This is the second difficulty.

Finally, the actors themselves, in an urban milieu, are unable to disclose the dynamic aspects of urban social relations — as they themselves are enmeshed in that and cannot present an observer's detached and unbiased views.

Working with these hurdles, an analysis of urban dynamism in North Bengal has been presented in the preceding pages. This may become a bit more tangible when the three parameters studied are synthesised and observed from a distance.

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27 S. Ottenberg, "Review of Social networks in Urban Situations: Analysis of Personal Relationships in Central African Towns" in American Anthropologist, 73, 1971, pp. 946-948.

The occupational change in the North Bengal towns is a shift towards service or trade and transport combined with agricultural activities. The introduction of market principles in all transactions is more a quantitative than a qualitative change. Industrialization is slow in coming, and that, too, is very much localized in some areas only.

The social relations, however, are changing — both in the contexts of work and land relations and in the context of non-economic aspects. The associative form of social relations is expressed through innumerable urban associations in North Bengal. The changing aspects of associative relations are (a) greater involvement of political parties in almost all types of relations, (b) gradual merging of North Bengal associations with the all India pattern, (c) a qualitative change in the involvement of women in the associations and (d) consolidation of ethnic associations giving rise to conflict and dissonance. Membership to different associations and the related activities are not only creating greater social interaction within the urban areas, but without too. In short, this encourages the growth of urbanism.

Looking on the darker side of urban growth, we have examined social disorganization. It cannot be attributed to disorganization in family. The kinship ties are quite strong upto a certain limit but its controlling function has been primarily assumed by the formal authorities. In North Bengal

VICES and crimes are not exceptionally big problems but new sets of relations emerge from these criminal activities<sup>28</sup>.

The discussion has primarily been centred around what is happening within the urban centres, but the presence of the rural surroundings has been implied all through. Changes in social relations are taking place in various respects — (a) increase in the number of relations, (b) reduction in the closeness of the relations within the towns, (c) greater interaction with distant cities, (d) establishment of wider social network beyond the urban areas.

This last point needs elaboration. The three parameters discussed in this chapter — the occupation, association and social disorganization — all have their effect on the villages and smaller towns. The urban occupations attract people and encourages market principles. The impact of this is felt more in the villages near a growing urban centre. Prof. Mukherjee's observation "that the rural folk surrounding a township are prone to maintain rural-urban dichotomy in their settlement while inflating the suburbs by moving into the periphery of the town in order to utilize the amenities of life and living therein"<sup>29</sup> is relevant in this context. Later on urban associations diffuse urban thoughts and ways of life to the rural

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28 See pp. 202-203 for illustration.

29 Ramkrishna Mukherjee, "Two concepts and their Implications on Urbanization and Social Transformation" in The Sociologist and Social Change in India Today, Prentice-Hall of India, New Delhi, 1965, p. 18.

areas and encompass the villagers within the urban social relations through little magazines, religious gatherings and trade union movements as well. The villagers' reactions to these extension of urban relations has not really been studied but felt. The concept of 'cultural lag' would aptly describe that. The urban social disorganization also has its impact on the villages and rural deviants seek shelter in the urban anonymity (see p. 210). However, that is beyond the scope of this dissertation. What concerns us is the increasing urbanism in North Bengal — both in the towns and in the villages.

If we consider the urban centres as whirlpools of thoughts and actions drawing in from the surroundings then we have to distinguish between the sizes of these whirlpools and the speed of the involution of them. There are small-sized, medium-sized and large-sized towns and cities. The pace of urbanism — rather the urban social relations — also differ in these towns or cities. But, interestingly, the size and the pace are not closely correlated. In this context other variables must be considered, such as, the increase in the communication facilities and subsequent reduction in the extent of isolation; the increase in the economic opportunities and consequent enhancement of market principles; the increase in the flow of migration and distance of migration resulting into greater heterogeneity of the urban population. All these variables affect the nature of urban social relations. Thus the

nature of Balurghat and Jalpaiguri differ from that of Siliguri and Raiganj. Although both Siliguri and Balurghat are Class I cities (1981 Census) yet the social relations are conspicuously different. In the next chapter the cases of these two cities shall be presented for elucidation of the above observations.