

PREFACE

The process of urbanisation is gaining more and more attention of different disciplines, particularly belonging to social sciences. However 'the historians and sociologists have given much more attention to the urban effects of the Industrial Revolution than have geographers. It results... that the environment factors in this interesting development have been to a large extent ignored, or at least submerged in the discussion of the sociological conditions' (Taylor, 1968). During the World War II and immediately after that the devastation of cities in Europe and else where posed a new challenge to the students of urban problems. Along with the planners, engineers, sociologists, economists and administrators, the geographers had to take important and positive role for judging and evaluating the relation between man and environment (Sinha and Rao, 1968). Today it has been observed that in all human societies the process of urbanisation is present as a natural one. According to L.F. Thomas, 'urbanisation has become so powerful an influence in human life that the very term 'which we use to express larger social loyalties is citizenship' (Taylor, 1968). But, like in many other natural processes here also an unplanned urbanisation may lead to harm instead of good in human life. In such cases a city may be over flooded with population and central functions. This kind of situation is not inherent in the process of urbanisation. Different factors like geographical location, natural calamities, political reformulation, industrialisation etc. make all these differences. Thus, the general preference is for a continuous process of planning. These days it is the belief of many scholars that a good planning may lead to an urbanisation of higher speed and better health so far as humanity is concerned.

Urbanisation whether a process or a system, is basically a movement of people from lower order settlements to higher order settlements. At a given time urbanisation has been an inevitable phenomenon. Urbanisation has been, in theory at least, synonymous with advancement in technology, industrialisation and associated developments in secondary and tertiary activities

Despite a long history of urbanisation going back to nearly five millennia, India entered the 20th century with a low degree of urbanisation. Its 25.8 million urban population in 1901

made only 10.8 percent of the total population. India, like other developing countries, went through a process of rapid urbanisation during the present century. Its urban population grew to about 218 million in 1991 i.e. 25.7 percent of the country's total population.

Kurseong emerged as a settlement with the growth of Darjiling as a sanatorium for the British soldiers. Even though it was declared a municipality in 1879 and a sub-divisional headquarter in 1891, this small hill town has registered a very slow rate of growth of population since its inception. Only during 1981-91, it has a registered a growth of about 50 percent.

The study seeks to answer some basic questions as to what factors are responsible for the slow growth of population till 1981 and high growth during 1981-91? To what extent the land uses in the town are emerging in right direction? What socio-economic factors have caused the existing urban land uses? Which factors are responsible for the present problems faced by the town? What improvements are needed in planning policy for future development of Kurseong town?

The study has been designed into seven chapters. In Chapter I, the geology of the Darjiling Himalaya has been studied and an analysis of the slope of Kurseong town and its environs has been done. The climate of the town along with its flora and fauna has been discussed. Chapter II is devoted to the study of varied demographic structure of the town, i.e. population composition, density and distribution of population, growth of population, literacy and occupational structure. Population of the town has been projected up to AD 2011 by employing mathematical methods. In Chapter III, study of different land uses in the town has been done. The changes in different land uses during 1977-99 period have also been brought out in this chapter. The intensity of land uses and their changes have been studied in detail. In Chapter IV, the different socio-economic functions available on the town have been studied in detail with special emphasis on educational institution, trades and commerce, transport and living conditions of the people. Chapter V tries to deal with the different problems associated with land, people and environment. In Chapter VI, the different developmental programmes taken up in the past, at present and to be taken up in future are critically evaluated and in Chapter VII, plans and

ideas from the geographical viewpoint have been suggested for the future development of the town.