

CHAPTER - I

URBANIZATION IN INDIA.: PRE - COLONIAL EXPERIENCE

The city defies a universal definition which would be acceptable to everyone. Is it a physical conglomeration of streets and houses ? Or is it a centre of exchange ? Or is it a kind of society ? Or even a frame of mind ? Has it a certain size or specific density ?

Some countries adopt a simple numerical value. A town or city is bigger than a village community and if we are dealing with very large settlements there is often little doubt. But at the lower end of the scale, if size is the criterion, who is to say what the size of the town is ? In Denmark a settlement of 200 people constitutes a town as it does in Sweden and Finland. In Greece a settlement must have over 10,000 inhabitants before it can be called a town. Between these is a great variety of figures. A thousand inhabitants make a town in Canada and 2,500 in the U.S. Clearly numbers alone mean very little. There are circumstances in which numerically small settlement may have urban characteristics - like density, markets, administrative functions. In India, for instance, a town must not only have more than 5,000 inhabitants, but its density must be over 1,000 to a square mile and over 25% of its adult male population must be engaged in work other than agriculture. Thus, there are other criteria, namely density and function to qualify a settlement to be a town¹. The United Nations² has attempted to classify the various definitions used by different countries into five principal groups on the basis of the criteria used.

Accordingly the first group consists of those countries which define an urban centre on the basis of historical, political and administrative status. The second group consists of those countries which use statistical criterion to define their town, that is, they take a specific size or population as a criterion. The third group is that of the countries which take the existence of some form of local government as a qualifying attribute of a town. The fourth group is comprised of those countries which take into account the layout and amenities of a settlement as conditions for a town. The fifth group is of those countries which

stress on the economic function as a criterion to define a town, that is, a specific minimum proportion of its workers are required to be engaged in non-agricultural activities.

As there is no unanimity on definition of a town, so is with the factors which lead to the growth of the town. For some, a town emerges with the movement of people to a certain area. Thompson uses 'urbanisation' just in this sense when he writes, "urbanisation is characterised by movements of people from small communities concerned chiefly or solely with agriculture to other communities generally larger, whose activities are primarily centered in government, trade, manufacture or allied interests."³

Prof. Houser and Duncan echo a similar opinion when they characterise urbanisation as 'a change in the pattern of population distribution. It involves an increase in the relative size of the urban population, a growth in number and size of urban settlements, a place and an increasing concentration of the population in such places.'⁴

Hope Tisdale Eldridge, who has appeared to have treated urbanisation systematically also considers population factor of vital importance when he says that there can be no meaning of it (urbanisation) but a process of population concentration which involves two elements : a) the multiplication of points of concentration; b) the increase in the size of individual concentrations⁵....." There are others who would prefer to explain urbanisation in terms of economy. R.B. Vance and N.J. Demerath criticise Eldridge on this ground when they point out that urbanisation means more than a mere increase in number of points at which population concentrates and a growth in the size of those concentrations, it means 'an increasing shift from agrarian to industrial service, and distributive occupations.'⁶

Again some would stress the political aspect as Prof. B. Bhattacharya puts it, 'as seats of administration, thus, political role took a very important part in setting the urban pattern.....'⁷

Conceptually speaking urbanisation has three main aspects :

- 1) Behavioural
- 2) Structural
- 3) Demographic.

The first aspect is generally associated with Louise Worth who formulated a theory of urbanisation based upon the existing knowledge of social groups and which refers to the changes in the pattern of behaviour of people. According to him, 'it is the size of aggregate population which affects the relationship between members whereby increasing process of differentiation ultimately leads to segregation.'⁸

The second aspect highlights the transformation of primarily agrarian economy to primarily industrial economy. This concept also recognises the differential ordering of occupation with a given territorial space. Lampard interprets the structural aspect as a product of increasing specialization and advancing technology. The third aspect visualizes the process in terms of increasing degree of population concentration.⁹

Urbanisation thus is a complex process which defies any simple and isolationist explanation. It can be studied and viewed properly only in a total societal framework. Any explanation emphasizing one aspect of its growth at the cost of other relevant factors will render it lopsided. Indeed urbanisation is a whole process of change and its consequences when a society gets transformed from an agrarian economy to an industrial economy and from a small homogeneous society to a large heterogeneous mass.¹⁰

X But inspite of the fact that most towns originate in diverse circumstances and derive their rationale for existence from diverse causes, historical studies of individual towns have also used the approach that every city is unique, a discreet entity occupying a unique position and having a unique history.¹¹ In studying the process of urbanisation in Darjeeling, we will notice this uniqueness amply exhibited. The study will also reveal that though Darjeeling's urbanisation owed to a specific cause, that is, a search for suitable place in the North East to develop it as a sanatorium for the British personnels serving in this area, yet in the absence of other factors, it could not have been urbanised. In other words apart from its original function -"to serve as a sanatorium", Darjeeling came to perform many other funtions, it became an important seat of education modelled on the public school education of England, it assumed an economic function particularly with the coming of the tea industry in its hinterland and above all it became an important administrative centre being the headquarter of the district

and also the summer residence of the Governor General of British India and many Indian princes. No wonder that by the turn of the 19th Century Darjeeling's urbanisation had reached a level of maturity.

X The urbanisation of Darjeeling also offers an insight into the new elements introduced by the British into the whole gamut of development in India. Before they came and ultimately established themselves as the political arbiter of the fortunes of India the urban scene presented a unique resilience. Even after going through an extremely difficult situation on one or innumerable other occasions over a period of six and a half centuries of Muslim rule, the Indian urban centres as in the Hindu period overcame this temporary set-back again and it embarked on a vigorous flourishing career.¹² This indomitable life force so characteristic of Indian urban centres is gathered from the unique location as well as the rich economic situation enjoyed by them. Political disturbances, much shorter in duration than the spells of peace, could hardly affect these inherent qualities so that the cities could easily spring back to normalcy as soon as the difficult time passed off.¹³

I

✓ To understand the basic vitality of the urban centres, surviving and careering through the most turbulent times of Indian history, one has to understand the attitude of the Muslim rulers. The Muslim rulers came to India to stay in India, the innumerable invasions conducted by them within the country were aimed at widening their territorial power. But once subjugated, the towns and cities were never pillaged again, not at least by the victor, and were left undisturbed to prosper.¹⁴ The Muslim rulers, in general, however had not taken greatly to town-building and many of them were less inclined to the general welfare of the people. Nevertheless, it is far from true that all of them were impervious to the fundamental rules of economics. Besides, they could not fail to understand that urban prosperity ultimately enriches the royal exchequer, and this is only possible under an able administration, taking care of the productive organs and helping the safe movement of goods from one place to another.¹⁵ We learn from Barni,¹⁶ for instance, that there was safety on the roads in all directions, honest dealings for the merchants were guaranteed. Sher Shah, during his brief rule, took every measure to ensure prosperity by undertaking revenue reforms¹⁷ and contributed largely to the improvement of

the communication system, connecting important places of his Kingdom by a network of excellent roads, fruit trees were planted, caravan sarais and wells were constructed at short distances along these roads. And it was ordered that all strangers without distinction of country or religion" be give entertainment at public expenses." However, neither the Muslim historians nor the European travellers visiting India at the time of different muslim rulers, did mention anything that might lead us to believe that they were positively keen on urban development in the proper sense of the term.¹⁸ In spite of that urban development does not appear to have been slackened.

What could have kept urban life and functions uninterrupted ? The basic prop of the towns and cities of this period were either industry or trade and commerce besides being capitals or garrison towns, and they were located on the important trade routes of both land and water-generally in the riverine plains. There was no large-scale industry at that time,, the entire industrial structure was built upon the solid ground of different guilds and crafts of the village and urban communities having long traditions in the individual sphere of activities. The important industries, developed on the basis of this traditional skill, could withstand every political upheaval as the producing units being house-bound were invariably small in size and thus easily inovable or could remain obscure at the time of unrest. Thus, the absence of state guidance during the Sultanate period or support to the industrial and commercial activities did not hamper their normal progress and places, whether urban or rural, performing such functions could survive similar shocks of political changes. During the time of the Mughals the situation certainly had changed and the rulers had not only set up industries ((Karkhana) but had also participated in trading activities. The industrial and commercial activities, thus, were no longer the absolute monopoly; of the state capital, in other words, capital-function was no more the only decisive factor for giving rise to urban centres. ¹⁹ Thevenot, travelling in India in 1666, provides us with information about widespread nature of urban development. There were thirty towns in the province of Gujarat. ²⁰ in the province of Agra there were forty towns²¹, the province of Multan had many good towns.²² The province of Allahabad had' a great many good towns,²³ the country constituting Bengal and Orissa is full of castles and towns²⁴; there were great many trading towns in Rajasthan²⁵. The country of Khandesh and Berar were 'full of popular

towns and villages!²⁶. Between Aurangabad and Kalvarala a distance of about 60 leagues had eight towns,²⁷ in the Kingdom of Bijapur there were 'great many good towns'²⁸ the east coast had several towns' some of which are good'²⁹. Manucci also giving an account of the country in his time (1656-1717) reveals the existence of several prospering urban centres. The province of Agra abounded in white cloth, silk-stuffs, cloth of gold and silver of great fineness³⁰. and indigo. The province of Lahore produced fine white cloth, silk of all class, embroidered materials, carpets, tests, saddles, swords, coarse wollen-stuffs, boots and shoes, etc.....³¹ The famous products of the province of Ajmer were very fine white cloth and great quantities of grain, milk, butter and salt.³² Benaras and the adjoining places laying in the province of Allahabad were noted for their production of many types of milk-stuffs, cloth of gold and silver, turbans, waist-belts, and women's wear.³³ The vast region of the province of Dhaka produced the 'prodigious quantity of fine white cloth and silken-stuff of which the nations of Europe and elsewhere transport several shiploads'³⁴

Bernier, visiting sometime earlier, commented on the general conditions of India as follows - " It is important to observe that of this vast tract of country, a large portion is extremely fertile, the large kingdom of Bengal, for instance, surpassing Egypt itself, not only in the production of rice, corn, and other necessaries of life, but of innumerable articles of commerce which are not cultivated in Egypt, such as silks, cotton, and indigo. There are also many parts of the Indies where the population is sufficiently abundant and the land pretty well tilled, and where the artisans, although naturally indolent is yet compelled by necessity or otherwise to employ himself in manufacturing carpets, brocades, embroideries, gold, and silver cloths and the various sorts of silk and cotton goods, which are used in the country or exported abroad." ³⁵ In his words "There is in Bengal such a quantity of cotton and silks, that the kingdom may be called the common storehouse for these two kinds of merchandise, not of Hindoostan(India) or the Empire of the Great Mogol but of all the neighbouring kingdoms and even Europe".³⁶ The picture of affluence did not escape the notice of Marco Polo who found the province of Malabari as 'the first and noblest in the world.' ³⁷ At that time ships used to come from many parts of the world for the purchase of pepper, ginger, cinnamon, and beautiful cotton cloth produced in plenty in the Kingdom. ³⁸ Merchants from different nationalities congregated

at the port like, Tana,³⁹ Cambay, etc., for collecting the rich merchandise.

All these facts reveal the unique position that India enjoyed in the eastern hemisphere over a period of tens of centuries and the inevitable role of Indian ports in handling the merchandise, obviously enormous in quantity as well as in quality, to feed such a large market. The entire framework of this external trade of India, however, could have developed on the basis of ports alone, it depended upon a far more gigantic infrastructure composed of a transportation system developed all over the country, highly skilled artisans producing quality goods, intermediaries and merchants collecting the produces from distant places, markets acting as collecting and distributing points etc. and above all, the facilities, including protection and patronage offered by the rulers of the respective areas. The combination of all these factors and the sustained efforts of this nature were not possible from an agrarian base, urban backing was an absolute necessity for that.⁴⁰ About the roads of his days Ibn Battuta observes - "It (Dhar) is twenty four days journey from Delhi and all along the road between them there are pillars on which is engraved the number of miles from each pillar to the next"⁴¹

Manucci paid glowing tribute to the system of 'sarais' or resting places for the travellers-the latter mostly being, the trading merchants. The sarais were fortified places, built of stone or brick, offering accomodation to 800 to 1000 persons or more, in many cases along with their-horses, camels, and carriages.⁴²

The speciality of Indian products regarded as rarities by foreigners gave India a highly esteemed position which could not have been achieved without a strong urban foundation. ⁴³ The ever growing demands of the European markets for Indian goods, the rivalry between European and Arab merchants, the latter ultimately getting dislodged in the race, establish the supremacy of Indian merchandise beyond any question. The entire industrial structure, even if largely localised in the rural areas, was mainly oriented in urban needs. This offers an indirect proof of the extent of urban development that has taken place in the country.⁴⁴ Movements of goods, their long haulage in great bulk over hundreds and thousands of miles both inside and outside the country by land and main routes could not be possible without chains of stations functioning as trading posts. They have, for instance, found a caravan of over a thousand oxen carrying

cotton cloth from Agra to Surat.⁴⁵ Such a scale of industrial and commercial development can not be the product of rural economy. A widespread and well developed urban superstructure formed the necessary base for that.⁴⁶

In spite of the widespread nature of urban development in the country, the material standard of the urban centres in respect of their houses and streets was not very high. Besides the capital-cities others were not well built, generally giving a very poor look with ramshackle structures.⁴⁷ Bernier, for instance, states that most of the Indian towns were 'made of earth, mud, and other wretched materials,'⁴⁸ and there was no city which did not show the signs of decay. However, there did exist elegant, prosperous cities, as had been pointed out by Farishta, "Hyderabad was the best city in the world for its appearance and cleanliness where the shops and private houses were built of stone or mortar"⁴⁹ Ahmadnagar came to rival Baghdad & Cairo with its buildings⁵⁰ 'most of the houses in the city of Ahmedabad were built of brick and mortar and the main streets were as wide as to allow ten carriages to pass abreast,'⁵¹ the city of Mathura, with a thousand edifices of marble 'teeming with imposing temples, the glittering spires which towered above the house tops'⁵² made a unique spectacle.

Yet there is no denying the fact that until then Indian towns and cities developed without any plan, the streets were narrow and crooked, the houses belonging to the common working mass were mostly of mean structure and extremely crowded, the shopping areas were equally crowded places without having any provisions for displaying their exhibits. But out of this crowd and squalor came a large number of classic products which set the minds of the European merchants afire, culminating in the establishment of European settlements in India.⁵³

II

The first among the Europeans to settle in India to reap the benefit of Indian merchandise were the Portuguese who within a quarter of a century were not only able to completely oust the Arabs from their exclusive control of the Indian trade but also succeeded in establishing their settlements all over the western coast. The Portuguese achievements in India did not, however, go unnoticed for a long time.⁵⁴ Both the Dutch and the English 'almost simultaneously took measures to contest the claim of Portugal to the monopoly of oriental commerce.'⁵⁵ The last of the European powers to enter the contest were the French. But finally, the English earned unquestioned supremacy over all the foreign competitors in the trade of Indian merchandise. The growth of European settlements in India, howsoever small in number or the total area being inconsequential at that time, carried immense importance in historical perspective. They offered, for the first time, a permanent foothold for the European powers on Indian soil which was to determine later the course of the political and also the economic history of the country. What in the beginning was merely a commercial ambition gradually developed into colonial aspirations, and it was fulfilled during the following centuries.⁵⁶ The European settlements from the very commencement made positive contribution to the urban development of the country. The 'factories'⁵⁷ establishing direct contact between the city and foreign traders undoubtedly strengthened the economy. Thus, hitherto obsolete centres burst forth into a new life through the activity of the foreigners.⁵⁸ The progress of the English settlements in India makes an interesting study. At the beginning of the 18th century, the English society was mainly confined to four principal settlements, namely, Madras (Fort St. George), Calcutta (Fort William), Bombay and Surat. Except Surat, all the remaining three towns were established at new sites and these small settlements were already becoming nuclei of Indian towns where Indian merchants had settled for trade and security. Having rather, a free-hand in building these settlements, the English tried their best to make these towns an exact replica of-English towns. In course of British expansion a new type of township, popularly called the Hill Stations, had grown in India with Swiss-Gothic type of residential

buildings, hotels, restaurants, market-places including show-rooms facilities, the Mall, the gardens and the Public Schools offering British system of education.⁶⁰

The rise of European settlements culminating in the territorial acquisition of the country by the English definitely had its impact on the course of urbanisation.⁶¹ Towns and cities long famed for their specialised products faced a continually shrinking market ; the entire industrial structure crashed down under stiff competition from imported goods resulting in the slackening of the activities in the commercial centres. For example, Dhaka, judged from the 'magnificence of its ruins such as bridges, brick causeways, mosques, caravan serai, gates, palaces, and gardens, now overgrown with jungle'⁶² was at the peak of its prosperity during the 2nd half of the 17th century, but the transfer of capital from Dhaka to Murshidabad in 1704 spelt its doom. Likewise Murshidabad lost its glamour and importance when the Nawab was defeated by the English in 1757. Lucknow increasingly declined with the establishment of British rule and the consequent 'waning splendour of the Nabob's Court.'⁶³ In contrast, the really flourishing cities of this period were Calcutta, Madras and Bombay and according to Hamilton's account, the first two were occupying respectively the second and fifth position among the largest cities of India in the first quarter of the 19th century. It is highly interesting to note that each of them owed its origin to English activities in the country and they rose to that eminence from an insignificant beginning, while the other big cities, belonging to the list of big sixties,⁶⁴ had a long career - spreading over a few thousand years in certain cases.⁶⁵ What is really striking is that, though born in a disturbed period and careering through a difficult time, the cities of English origin gained in size and importance when during the same period most of the rest had suffered heavy losses in both political and economic status.⁶⁶ The basic fact behind these contrasting results is not far to seek.

The cities of English origin, acting as headquarters of British political and economic activities in India were in a privileged position and care than the other cities.⁶⁷ The prolonged political disturbances upsetting the economic life of other cities certainly came to an end with the establishment of British rule, but in no time they had to negotiate a strong apathy of the rulers towards the revival of their economy in any large measure. The industries were discouraged,

the market gradually shrank and the trade slowly passed hands from the local people to the English free traders. The result was disastrous. The cities were degraded, the spectre of economic threat slowly depopulated them which could be clearly assumed from the shrinking size of many of those cities.⁶⁸ This naturally leads to the obvious conclusion that the cities, remaining in decayed condition at the beginning of the 19th century, were in better shape and position in the immediate past or distant past, that is before the installation of British power in India. The most convincing example is that of Agra—once an imperial city, at the first quarter of the 19th century, was surrounded by extensive ruins all around. Vijayanagar a great metropolis of the 16th century was mostly in ruins, Cambay, the sea port and one of the most important metropolises of India (rising to that position from its trading activities, dating back to ancient times) represented a collection of uninhabited streets, ruined mosques, and mouldering palaces⁶⁹. The list can be lengthened considerably.

The entire country, groaning under the strain of internecine warfare and paving the way for British domination in India, could not sustain its urban prosperity as the entire economy was greatly shaken to its very foundation. To this was added an unsympathetic, almost hostile attitude of the new rulers to the Indian industries which gradually languished under the pressure of unequal competition and forcible closure of foreign markets.

The installation of British rule in India, beginning as early as 1765, with the grant of Dewani⁷⁰, had a negative effect on the urban development in the country. The towns and cities hitherto acting as centres of political and economic activities of independent kingdoms lost their freedom of action. Their functions being restricted in many fields, the very purpose for which the cities existed became largely superfluous. The entire economy of the country was going through a devastating change necessary to serve the needs of the ruling power. The towns and cities had to fit into this changing pattern. Their obligations and responsibilities were not the same as before. Their economic or political role was replaced by a role in general administration for which most of the important towns and cities were converted into some tame administrative headquarters of the British India. This meant a great curtailment of activities in a much wider field which quite naturally could not be conducive to their growth. Decadence

slowly crept into the urban life making its toll on high or low depending on circumstances.⁷¹ This is very clear when we compare the list of 16 largest cities given by Hamilton in his *Description of Hindostan*, written in 1820, and the 16 cities given in the first Census held in 1872.⁷²

The table given in the first census shows that within five decades Benaras was brought down from 1st position in 1820 to the fifth position in 1872, whereas Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, all of English origin, had emerged as the three largest cities of India.⁷³ Another interesting fact is the names of the cities, none of them is in a new centre except for Calcutta, Bombay, Madras which has maintained a long history, going in some instances back to a hoary past.⁷⁴ It is rather strange that the peace offered by the British administration in India did not help much in the real proliferation of urban activities in the country.⁷⁵ The reason seems to be that the urban activities being reduced to administrative functions, supplemented by commerce, mainly in foreign goods, and was followed by a planned, systematic demolition of the old industries had destroyed the basic, sustaining force for urban growth.⁷⁶ The changes, thus, introduced in the urban functions had a great effect on the urban life in general. Those cities which could survive the shock had to lean on other means, such as enlarged administrative and military importance and managed to make an existence out of them. It may be interesting to know that in 1891, 21 out of 26 first grade towns and another 20 out of the total 47 second grade towns of the country had either forts or military cantonments in them. It is of additional importance to note that, barring a few, almost all these towns were administrative headquarters.⁷⁷

Thus, in course of time, administrative headquarters emerged as the most prominent towns and cities of the country. The leading role of the urban centres selected as seats of administration added new feature to their urban scap; in order to feed the racial pride of the British, British township was marked by its segregativeness. It was called 'Civil Lines' with its well-laid streets, widely spread buildings introducing - English architectural styles into Indian cities and with enough of green and open space breathing an air of ease and comfort in sharp contrast to the crowded atmosphere of the old city. The social significance of this new element can not be ignored. The 'Civil Lines' appearing as an appendage of the main city kept the Europeans separate from the main

life-style, of the country. This detachment had a deep impact on the urban life is general. The plans and their achievements systematically carried out in them left no imprint on the main city-body where crowdedness and squalor went hand in hand unchecked due to the absence of proper planning.⁷⁸

A similar, if not more important development had taken place by this time in a completely different direction. A number of Hill-stations were established at selected spots; developed at high altitudes they gave rise to a new set of urban centres for the specific use of the British administrators for temporary shifting of their capital to these places during the hot summer period.

III

The British were directly drawn into the Himalayas as the result of The Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814-16.

In 1816, the treaty of Sagauli settled their relations with Nepal. This treaty gave the British direct control of the Himalayan districts of Kumaun and Garwal. A group of Hill-tops from Terai to the borders of Ladak also came under British protection. The British relations with Sikkim also had its origin in the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814-16. Due to its strategic location, the British sought the assistance of Sikkim during the war, and at the termination of the war restored to Sikkim by the Treaty of Titalya in 1817 territory occupied by Nepal during the war and assumed the position of Lord Paramount of Sikkim.

An equally important development in regard to the Himalayas which the 19th century witnessed, remarks K.M. Pannikar, "was the growth of great hill-stations from Dalhousie to Darjeeling."⁷⁹ There emerged an extensive Himalayan frontier of India dotted with hill-stations like Simla and Darjeeling and cushioned off from the secretive hinterland of Tibet. The hill-station of Simla so close to the Sutlej route to Tibet, "was destined to play a part in the history of Anglo-Tibetan relations," According to Alastair Lamb it is, "comparable to that played later by another hill-station-Darjeeling."⁸⁰ "Surrounded by Nepal Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet, Darjeeling had, in the second half of the 19th century splendid

opportunity to develop as an entrepot of Central Asian trade". Lamb further says, "the cession of Darjeeling was an event of the greatest importance in the history of Northern frontier of India. Not only did it place the British in close contact with the hill states, their people and their politics, but also it provided a constant reminder of the possibilities of trade with Tibet."⁸¹

However, the first resort that comes to mind when the Himalayas are mentioned is Simla, for here the hill-station concept was born and matured.⁸² As early as 1830 a visiting Frenchman, a Monsieur Jacquemout, described Simla as-"the resort of the rich, the idle, and the invalid." Following the rapid development and quick popularity of Simla other resorts soon appeared in the Himalayan foothills.

Mussoorie was the next to come up. It owed its development to a Capt. Young who stopped with his hunting party into the Mountainous area above the Doon Valley and the town of Dehradun. Attracted by the potential of the area, Young with typical military zeal completed the first building in the region in 1827. Later to become the Mullinger Hotel, and Mussoorie, as the new resort was called, quickly enticed a stream of visitors.

Like "gulls' nests on a cliffside," as one writer commented in 1830s, adding that because of the precipitous slopes, there were scarcely ten square yards of level ground in the town. The position, he went on, made it all worth it, as it was "exquisitely romantic", and the view grand beyond description". Spread out along a lower ridge of the outer Himalayas and surrounded by varied and wide ranging mountain scenery, Mussoorie, later dubbed "Queen of the Hills", became one of the most popular hill resorts in northern India. Long considered a specially healthy place for children, Mussoorie quickly developed a reputation as a scholastic centre.⁸³

In 1839, an English businessman, a Mr. Barron, lost in the Almora region, stumbled upon a lake hidden in a valley of the Gagar Range, until then visited only by local herdsmen. Deciding there and then to retire from the sugar business. Barron planned a small colony for the most popular hill stations in India - Naini-Tal. Barron was enthused over the locale, 'An undulating lawn.....interspersed with occasional clumps of oak, cypress and other beautiful

trees continues from the margin of the lake for upward of a mile, up to the base of a magnificent mountain standing at the further extreme of this vast amphitheatre. The sides of the lake are also bounded by special hills and peaks, which are thickly wooded down to the water's edge."⁸⁴

In 1842 there were 12 houses in Naini-Tal, by late 1845, 16 stood on the hill slopes with 14 more under construction in the newly-created municipality. By 1847, 40 homes were in evidence, with the arrival of 61 casual summer visitors recorded for that year. The British soon developed a preference for the hilltop sites with views, while the Indian traders clustered around the lakes's edge. Apart from the unrivalled view of the Himalayas, Darjeeling is set apart from other Himalayan Hill stations by the almond-eyed, Mongolian appearance of so many of its residents.

The south Indian hill stations exhibit two essential differences from their Himalayan counterparts. (i) For topographical reasons their buildings are not crammed into narrow ledges, but are generally sited on small plateau, with plenty of elbow room.

(ii) The scenery is markedly different from that of the Himalayas. Instead of plunging crevices, steep ravines and rearing walls of snow, green and rolling downs, reminiscent of much of Europe, greet the visitor. The absence of nearby temples, mosques, and bazars heightens the impression of being in the northern hemisphere. The southern resorts were mostly built in locations remote from existing settlements.⁸⁵

The most important among the southern hill stations is Ooty, which by 1827 boasted of being the official sanatorium for Madras Presidency and the Madras Government began to move up there in the hot season. In September 1827 Mr. Sullivan, Collector of Customs, described the progress of the new hill station :

"Seventeen European houses had been built and five more at Kotagiri. Roads have been made in all directions about the settlements so that invalids may take either Horse or palanquin exercise with almost as such facility as in the low country. A fine piece of water crucible has also been constructed on which boats are beginning to ply. A subscription has been set on foot for a

Public Reading room. Ootacmund, in short, is gradually approximating to a state of comfort and civilization."⁸⁶ This metamorphosis was completed in 1829 when the Governor of Madras, Sir Stephen Lushington, laid the foundation stone of St. Stephen's Church, which was apparently named after him. In 1847 there were 104 'sanatorians' in residence at Ooty, and a total of about five times that number of European permanent residents.

Another hill station in the south-Kodaikanal owes its growth to a Mr. Blackburne, the Collector of Madurai, who built a house at the head of Shembaganur Pass. Unfortunately, Blackburne's house was burnt to the ground, and no more Europeans visited the area until a Mr. Fane started camping there occasionally. He was joined by a Judge Elliot, who planted coffee a little to the east of Fane's Camp site. The first permanent homes in Kodaikanal, for such it was called, were erected by a group of American missionaries, who had been based in Madurai for 10 years.⁸⁷ The new settlement differed from others, for the egalitarian Americans who founded Kodaikanal exercised much influence and society was not as stratified and class-ridden as in other hill stations. 'There was no Dress-Circle in Kodaikanal. By 1850 the number of seasonal visitors was about 40 British and Americans in equal proportion, with a few planters from hinterland.'⁸⁸

Steady growth of Bombay through the mid 19th Century, produced a development boom which put the city enroute to its present eminence as India's premier industrial and commercial centre. The growing number of British residents of Bombay began to look for somewhere cool to escape from the oppressive pre-monsoon heat. They did not need to look far, for the Western Ghats, which peer over the coastal flats of Bombay, offered several suitable locations; one such was Mahabaleshwar, a modest 4700 ft. above the sea level, atop an elongated, nearly level summit. It provides fine views of the coastal Konkan plains leading down to the sea and is comfortable, pleasant walking. It was later written that, "Mahabalshwar contains all conditions requisite for a first-class sanatorium—easy access for invalids from Bombay and Poona, ample level space for carriage exercises at the top of the hill, excellent water supply, picturesque scenery and proximity to a fresh sea breeze."⁸⁹

It has been claimed that the first white man to visit Mahabaleshwar was

Sir Charles Malet, British Resident at Poona in 1791, though others believe that the first European to set foot in these hills was Major Lodwick in 1824. After his initial explorations Lodwick campaigned for the establishment of a hill station at his remote jungle site, the name of which he corrupted to Mahabillysir. A letter which he sent to Bombay Courier on May 1824 outlined the delight of the locations : "We were in the constant enjoyment of coolness frequently cold when the thermometer was at 72 degree, nor was it oppressive at 86 degrees, as the air was sharp and bracing. The river Jenna ran at our feet and afforded the advantage of cold bathing....the high roads to Bombay and Wai enabled us to take horse-exercise and game of every description encouraged walking over the hills. The scenery from the ground in many positions is both grand and romantic, reminding one of old England, from the ground being covered with high fern, the wild rich note of the black-bird meeting the ear on every side....neither tigers nor thieves are to be feared....visitors may calculate upon seven or eight months' enjoyment of as delightful a climate as can be desired. He went on to promise readers a climate in which the days are never sultry and the nights always cold, not that chilling cold arising from dense vapour of the plains, but a bracing cold, peculiar to mountains, which gives elasticity both to body and mind.'⁹⁰ Efforts to build a sanatorium were initiated by Col. Briggs, the British Resident at Satara; unfortunately ill health forced him to retire to England in 1827. It was his successor who built a bungalow on Sondola Hill, which was used in April 1828 for the reception and stay of the newly-arrived Governor of Bombay, Sir John Malcom.

This sojourn in the hills so impressed Malcom that he ordered a survey of the Mahabaleshwar Hills and directed the Medical Board of Bombay to appoint an expert to investigate the climate and its effects on the invalids. In this way the decision was taken to establish a convalescent home in these hills for the British soldiers, after signing a treaty with the Rajah of Satara for a territorial exchange giving him title to the village of Khandala near Wai, itself later to be developed as a hill resort. In a short time, Mahabaleshwar attained such popularity that it was quickly named as the summer capital of the Bombay presidency. This new status was soon confirmed by the construction of a Government House on a site personally chosen by Sir Malcom called Mount Charlotte after his wife.'⁹¹ The new station was initially called Malcom path, or Malcolmvile, by the Rajah

in honour of the Governor. Both men were urbane, polite and of charming disposition, which undoubtedly helped them to become fast friends and after the transfer of the land, the original name, Mahabaleshwar, was again bestowed on the settlement by Sir John, in return compliment to his new friend. So it remains, except for the bazar, which is still known as Malcom Path.⁹²

So taken with the new resort were the inhabitants of Bombay that in 1840, Mahabaleshwar catered for 300 visitors as compared to 197 eight years earlier. With such steady growth, business also flourished and in 1840, 6 well-stocked shops catered to Europeans with goods offered at prices competitive with those in Poona and traveling salesmen came up from Bombay to add to the range of supplies available in the busy bazar of Malcom Path.

Almost due north of the Bombay stations lies another well-known resort namely Mount Abu in the ancient Aravalli Range, 4000 ft. in elevation, which has long attracted visitors from the hot, sandy plains stretching for miles around. The first Briton to climb the mount was one Col. Todd, Political Agent for Western Rajputana, who laboured up the steep slopes in 1822. In *Travels in Western India* Todd wrote, "....the discovery was my own. To Abu I first assigned a local habitation and a name when all these regions were a terra incognita to my countrymen." Later he expanded on his feelings, in a state of euphoria, "It was nearly noon when I cleared the Pass of Sitla Mata and as the buffhead of Mount Abu opened upon me, my heart beat with joy as with the sage of Syracuse, I exclaimed 'Eureka.'" Over two decades were to pass before such rapture had a concrete result. From 1822 to 1840, the British made informal use of Mount Abu as a summer residence, principally by the Political Superintendent and officers of the Jodhpur Legion. In 1840 invalid European soldiers ascended the mountain for the first time, encamping for the hot season only, and five years later the British leased for 100 years several pieces of land on this isolated mountain from the Rajah of Sirohi, Rao Sheo Singh, for use as a sanatorium and it was announced that Mt. Abu would be the headquarter of the British representative in Sirohi. The first European buildings to be erected were barracks for the soldiers at the edge of the lake, but these crude structures were soon pulled down.⁹³

Several other sanatoria were developed in central India around the same time as Mt. Abu. Panchmarhi built on a plateau 3550 ft. up in the Satpura Range was another hill station which derived its name from a corruption of 'Panch Mathi' or Five Huts, though this title in fact relates to five caves on the small hill on the plateau. Its potential as a hill station was first realised by a Capt. Forsyth on a shooting trip in 1857, and the name of the shooting box he built, Bison Lodge, was preserved by a house erected on the same site. However things did not move as quickly here as elsewhere, and it was more than a decade later that building land was set aside, and then only after the Chief Commissioner for the Central Provinces began to reside here during the summer months. Because of its moderate altitude, Panchmarhi affords only limited relief from the heat of the plains, though the heat here is seldom oppressive, and then only for a short period at midday.⁹⁴ The growing importance of many hill stations led to a number of them adopting corporate identities and becoming municipalities. Naini Tal was the first to leave the starting gate in the Mayorial stakes as early as 1845, with Mussoorie and Darjeeling the minor place-getters in 1850, and Simla a surprising fourth in 1891. Develoution of authority came to Ooty, Almora, Coonoor, Dalhousie, Dharmsala, Hazaribagh and Ranchi in 1860s. Lonavala and Kurseong in 1870s, Kodaikanal in 1899, and Maymyo came as a dismal last in 1923.

Far away in the Eastern India at 6,500 ft. at the foot of the range bearing the same name, the Himalayan station of Shillong was selected in 1864 as a Civil Headquarter in place of teeming Cherrapungi. A decade later Shillong was chosen as the administrative Capital of the new province of Assam. The township was laid out with taste and foresight and recreational facilities provided via a full-sized Polo-ground, a fine eighteen-hole golf course and, a small one for the beginners, lawn-tennis courts, a race course and a cricket ground. To complement the easy availability of exercise to maintain good health, the spring-fed water supply flowed directly from the hillside into the mains, thus sheilding the populace from any possible risk of infection.⁹⁵ Regarding the number of hill stations constructed by the British and their functional classification different views are being held. Nora Mitchell has identified nearly about eighty hill stations that existed at the time of the British rule. Kennedy had, of course, a modest estimate, he did not think there could be more than sixty five.⁹⁶ Regarding the

classification of Hill stations done by Nora Mitchell there could not be much that was said to modify it. Nora's five categories consisted of :

1. Official multifunctional hill stations, like, Simla, Darjeeling, Nainital,
2. Private multifunctional hill stations like, Kodaikanal, Matheran;
3. Single purpose hill stations, though Nora had put them in a class apart, her identification was not free from doubts. However, Kalimpong can be held to be one such station as a transit trade hill station;
4. Minor hill station like, Dharmkot for Presbyterian missionaries, Yercand for coffee planters, and Lonavala for Mumbai Railway employers, and
5. Satellite hill station like, Kurseong.⁹⁷

IV

Military significance of many of the Himalayan hill stations made the army high ups to have a closer look at them. To assess the conditions, the Hon'ble Major General Sir H.W. Norman, KCB visited Darjeeling Cantonment in November 1871 and he wrote, Darjeeling is most healthy for the troops, as is shown by the fact that the average annual mortality per thousand from 1860 to 1869 was 9.6 - a lower death rate than any station in the three Presidencies. The daily sick rate, too, is one of the lowest in India. Darjeeling is not favourable to advanced liver complaints and one or two other diseases, but for men judiciously selected, and for men in health, the climate is admirable."

Norman, however, was against stationing a large body of effective troops in Darjeeling, as he felt this would render them useless for general service in India for 7 or 8 months of the year and clearly he was thinking of the events of 1859. To transport them to the plains en masse, he thought, would be sentencing a large proportion of them to contracting 'the fever'. In the same vein, he considered that the logistics of moving the troops were another strong reason to limit their numbers in the hills, for he calculated it would take a month to collect sufficient carriages at the foot of the hills for their onward movement to the nearest railhead. The General was in favour of keeping some European

troops in Darjeeling as he predicted withdrawal would cause panic among the white population of the town and the planters scattered over the hills, though he reckoned that no real military threat was present in Sikkim or Bhutan. There was of course the possibility of the Nepalese erampaging over the foothills if the opportunity presented itself, as they had done decades ago, thus indirectly bringing about the birth of Simla as the first hill station. Though a small, highly-trained force of European troops left in Darjeeling could fend for itself, Norman however calculated that it was improbable that any such attempt would be made by the Nepalese and if it did it was equally improbable that it would meet with success. He was against moves made to vacate the barracks at Jalapahar, as the locale was somewhat bleak and treeless and to move to the old temporary barracks at Sinchal. The latter location was, he felt, far bleaker than Jalapahar was three quarters of the year, and was too far away from the unspecified pleasures of Darjeeling, access to which doubtless contributed to the happiness and contentment of the ordinary soldier." It had been always true that tropical diseases and health hazards caused by them had been the single important preoccupation of the British to induce them to set up stations at hills for recuperation of the diseased. But it had other underpinnings which had been very ably underlined by Deane Kennedy. The hill region of India corresponded to the topography of the highland of Welsh and Scotland from which British aesthetic sensitivity towards landscape could be said to have originated. The natural ambiance of an undulating green meadow abandoned to a state of soundlessness and infrequently visited by a shepherd with his flock of sheep had framed the British imagination. Indian hills had appealed to them because they had more green and loneliness than even those landscape with which the British had been familiar. If they had to negotiate something in the Himalayan Mountains, in its vastness, in its unusual dignity and with the snowcapped peaks befuddling all of one's concept of great and mighty which the British had never had the opportunity to see before it might have unnerved them at the first encounter. Gradually they had augmented courage to reduce a part of it to 'human proportion'. On the whole it was the familiarity of landscape that had fascinated them so much so that a British Governor-General could have written back home after seeing rainfall at Ooty, "What beautiful English rain, what delicious English mud." The other important point which Kennedy has made out

regarding British preoccupation with hill stations was the feeling of exclusiveness which was triggered in them by their being the rulers. The rulers of Indian native states too had imbibed a culture of exclusiveness always seeking to be different as a mark of royalty, but it was not identical to the British exclusiveness. The British exclusiveness was a product of British pride of being the ruling class and the British racial prejudice against the Indians. While establishing the administrative headquarters in the plains they sought to preserve their exclusiveness by being sequestered in a settlement contraption called 'Civil Lines' not being frequented by Indians and exposed to Indian habitation. In spite of the cordon sanitaire which they had woven around it, it was only the hill stations which would have fulfilled their dreams. The hill stations were not only physically and aesthetically satisfactory they appeared to be most ideal place where the English could have lived a quarantined life of their choice. In spite of its being in India and being sustained by Indian labour the hill stations could be very British in all details that were required by the British pride and prejudice. So, while selecting the settlement sites they had always had the topmost and convenient place for their location with the Indian bureaucrats pushed to the ridges and the clerical community being settled somewhere down the slope. They could have lived alone without negotiating any Indian in their township except the domestics.⁹⁸

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Hamilton's List**Census List**

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Beneras | 1. Calcutta |
| 2. Calcutta (500000) | 2. Bombay (644405) |
| 3. Surat (4,50,000) | 3. Madras (3,97,552) |
| 4. Patna (3,12,000) | 4. Lucknow (2,84,779) |
| 5. Madras (300000) | 5. Beneras (1,75,188) |
| 6. Lucknow (20000) | 6. Patna (1,58,900) |
| 7. Hyderabad (200000) | 7. Delhi (1,54,417) |
| 8. Dacca 1,80,000) | 8. Agra (1,49,008) |
| 9. Bombay (1,70,000) | 9. Allahabad (1,43,693) |

10. Delhi (1,50,000)	10. Bangalore (1,42,513)
11. Moorshidabad (1,50,000)	11. Amritsar (1,35,813)
12. Poona (1,20,000)	12. Cawnpore (1,22,770)
13. Nagpur (1,00,000)	13. Poona (1,18,886)
14. Baroda (1,00,000)	14. Ahmedabad (1,16,873)
15. Ahmedabad (1,00,000)	15. Surat (1,07,149)
16. Cashmere (1,00,000)	16. Bareilly (1,02,982)

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