

CHAPTER EIGHT

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

English Bazar town is centre of urbanisation in North Bengal, has different rates and nature of growth. Since Independence English Bazar has been uprising and has already established its claim as the gate way of North Bengal. This vitally important strategic town along with its adjacent areas attracts streams of people by its economic and other socio-economic pull-forces. Urbanisation in this town is dependent mostly on its locational importance as the main point of transport to whole of North India. The town bases for its growth on the wholesale and retail trade as well as its transportation and other services.

The urbanisation process in the town is very rapid which is incomparable with any other urban centre in the state. Among the 24 wards in North Bengal the town ranks 3rd among the class I towns of West Bengal excluding urban agglomeration in 1991.

Among physiographical constraints, drainage and floods are very acute the area. These problems had been tackled since the eighteenth century. The committee of enquiry regarding the drainage problem in 1901, recommended the following remedies : (i) The cross-dams in the main rivers should be removed and reconstruction of them should not be allowed, save where they were really required in order to protect cultivated land. (ii) The construction of embankments should be stopped and if possible remove the embankments which are not required, (iii) Government should take charge of the maintenance. (iv) certain obstruction to drainage caused by canals should be removed (v) Certain engineering devices should be taken up for the drainage of particulars tracts.

Other remedies for good drainage are : (a) the number of cross-dams should be reduced, and these should not be built on small streams and water channels, (ii) the number of sluices in an embankment should be increased for quick removal of flood from agricultural fields.

The problems will be solved if these recommendation are carried out in the town. As regards the uncertainly and uneven distribution of rainfall man cannot control or regulate the rainfall or cyclones but man can solve the problems of deficiency and super-abundance of rainfall by alternative arrangements like storing of rain water and establishing irrigation projects. Various irrigation projects like river lift pumps and shallow and deep tubewells have been undertaken to

solve the problems. Though there is sufficient water in the rainy season, it becomes scarce in the dry period. Arrangements for supplying diesel on priority basis can be made for improving irrigational facilities and lowering cost of irrigation. Some institutional problems like small and fragmented land holdings can be solved by forming co-operatives and introduction of modern agricultural machineries like tractors.

In English Bazar Municipality the total population was 13,667 in 1911 and now it is 1,76,861. The population increase is very faster rate than the other towns in the neighbouring districts. The town is situated in a N-S alignment but with an increase of population the town is spreading in the western direction. Mainly people are concentrated in wards VII, VIII, X, XIV & XVI give an idea about the housing facilities available for the urban residents. Here it is found that there are 33,011 households, out of which 27,493 are residential and 5,518 are non residential. From the data it is observed that large number of residential houses are in ward XXIV. Slums population are also growing up in the urban area rapidly. In English Bazar Municipality slum population is found in many wards but the number of slum families occupy in large number in Buraburitala and Ghorapir.

In this municipality, 9240 of holdings are occupied with buildings. Where as 5110 holdings have water connection 937 holdings have service privies. In 1180 holdings there are vacant land as well as ponds. In English Bazar, houses are mainly one storied with cemented floor, brick walls and concrete roofs. Maximum houses are constructed within 1000 to 1500 m where people live in their own houses with three to four and five to six family members. Head of the family is mainly service holder and businessman. Mainly houses are furnished with three to four bed rooms, one drawing room, one kitchen, two bathrooms and latrine (sanitary type). It is noticed that each and every house is connected with electricity. Maximum number of residential houses are connected with water lines.

Though the rivers are helpful for the city as well as the dwellers some-times they create various physical problems for the cities development. The town under study has such type of problem and in many places of the town it creates acute traffic problem as well as delays the development. The low concentration and high pressure of population, problems like slums low standard of living and insufficient urban amenities have come to surface as inevitable reasons for low level of development. As a result the town for services and stagnation of the town develops.

From analysis of the landuse it is evident that the town under study has had a hapazard and unbalanced development and need a sound planning for restructure, reconstruction and reorganisation of landuses. There is an immediate need for control and regulation of the landuse pattern for avoiding future misuse of the land and providing of future course of action programmes for healthy urban life.

Studying the landuse pattern in the town, the different landuse zones like residential, residential cum commercial, transport and communication are each in commercial, public semi public, industrial and agricultural are found. These residential zones are not contiguous and separated by other landuses due to lack of proper planning and implementation of standard landuse practice which is used in some other towns in India. Residential-cum-commercial zones are separated by residential areas and due to lack of proper commercial centres some residential houses have been transferred to commercial in a central place where commercial activities are predominated. Transport and communication zones are located in different places within the town and this is due to the lack of space for accommodating so many buses and trucks in one place.

During the last few decades changes of landuses took place and some landuses like commercial, residential as well as public and semi-public have been experienced a higher growth rate than other landuses. On the other hand, areas under vacant lands, parks and play grounds have been reduced due to pressure of population in the urban landuses.

Regarding the socio-cultural problems the growth of population can be checked by birth control which can be done by strengthening family planning programmes in the town. Unemployment problems can be partly solved by checking the high rates of population growth. Agro-based industries can also be established in the town having potentialities. Quick transportation and mobilisation of agricultural products are essential, ensuring good return to the cultivators. These can be done by constructing new roads in the area. Income from agriculture can be made stable by increasing multiple cropped area and supplying agricultural inputs and increasing the number of extension services.

Infrastructural deficiency like financing institutions, health services, educational institutions and others can be solved by increasing the number and order of these functions in the existing selected settlements. The spatial and functional gaps in the area can be minimised. It is submitted that the area proves to be a

complicated region requiring considerable care and attention in the matter of intensive development.

From analysis of different socio-economic problems it can be concluded that English Bazar has inadequate socio-economic functions compared to population of the town. Due to insufficient space and allocation of area for shopping centres a number of problems like traffic jam, environmental disorder, overcrowding etc. have been created. Lack of proper transport facilities have profound influence on other activities. They are also suffering from inadequacy of major roads as well as from narrow and unmetalled roads and unplanned road network. The narrow bridges on the river Mahananda and large number of slow-moving vehicles as well as trucks and buses complicate the transport system. Moreover, due to heavy rainfall, now maintenance of the roads and lack of management of traffic accelerate the problem. Railway Gate-5 in the town creates traffic jam for long hours on the major road very frequently. Lack of proper water supply in the town, use of well water are highly detrimental to the health of dwellers of the town. The town have surface drainage and sewerage systems and poor conservancy system which create unhygienic conditions for the town dwellers. Poor electricity on many streets has been a great concern of public safety, undesirable activities, accidents, antisocial activities or crimes of the town.

As English Bazar has established its identity as a service town from long before, majority of people are engaged in services. The development of the town though has its start with the beginning of the present century, the socio-economic facilities e.g. education, health, finance, transport, retail services and other urban amenities have limited growth and these somehow feed the inhabitants of the town and adjacent areas. Number of shops and shopping areas in the town have increased but the number of workers engaged in trade does not have significant increase during recent years. Power supply as well as street lighting arrangements are not satisfactory in the town. More over, huge shortage of water supply is evident in the town and some areas remain dry for a considerable period of time of the year. Measures such as construction of number of water reservoirs and digging of deep tubewells have been done to meet the scarcity of weather in the town. Other community facilities also are meagre in the town compared to the population and demand.

Environmental problem needs social attention and from the study it can be noted that living conditions of majority of the town dwellers are far below the normal standard. In the highly dense residential area and slums, shortage of drinking

water, latrine, open space, proper roads and poor socio-economic amenities are the major characteristics of low level of development. High rate of immigration in the town creates various social and economic problems. A proper plan for the development of the town including their socio-economic functions and their proper distribution in the town are urgently needed. Before suggesting some plans review of earlier strategies and their implementation in the town is necessary.

Development is an indispensable factor for a nation. This may take place in the economic, financial, cultural and social and environmental sectors. In this study socio-cultural aspects have been emphasised, analysed and interpreted. English Bazar Municipality has taken up many programmes for the development of the town mostly connected with improving the living conditions of the urban residents. Such programmes include water supply and sewerage improvement. In 1981, facilities for water supply was inadequate. Later on the municipality had taken up a programme to double the supply. It was to be noted that about 20,000 people come daily to the town from outside for different purposes and they require the essential services like water, sewerage etc.

Upto 1983-84, there were 100 street taps and 70 tubewells in different parts of the town. Since then, 5 new pumps have been installed in the town. A project with a budget of Rs. 1 crore 71 lakhs has been taken up for providing more water supply. Under this project, 3 large tanks with a capacity of 3 lakh gallon each has been setup along with 8 new pumps and 1,66,503m of water line have been constructed. Once this project is brought into reality, there will be no dearth of water in the city till 2001. Serious efforts are being made to fulfil the Master Plan which has been made for developing the drainage system. 25,000m pucca drain has been constructed at a cost of Rs. 4 lakhs. to drain out the excess water during the rains.

For the betterment of general health of people, a plan has been lunched to dispense with the service previes once for all. In the meantime nearly 500 service privies have been replaced by sanitary latrines.

Of late, work has started in improving the power situation. During the last few years nearly 70 new lamp posts have been constructed in different wards, and it has plan to provide more than 100 lamp posts. The dark Mahananda bridge has been illuminated by sodium light. Besides, mercury lamps, Halogen and search light are being used at different corners of the roads to meet the demand of more lighting for the residential population. A new truck stand has been set up at Ghorapir to minimize the traffic congestion on the National Highway at an

expense of more than Rs. 4 lakhs. The construction of waiting rooms, urinals etc. are nearing completion aiding further in increasing comforts for the urban residents.

Under this project the extension of roads as-well-as the extension of Netaji market has been included. Apart from this, a project for the construction of bus and taxi terminus at Kani more has also been taken up keeping in view the development of child health. The construction of parks and gardens have been started in different localities. The "Kshuriram Municipal Park" has been constructed at Kalitala, occupying an area of 15,000m An open air stage has been completed at an expense of Rs. 4 lakhs to facilitate the cultural activities of the people. A footpath has been constructed among the Rajmahal Road, and covering the half portion of Makdumpur.

From the discussion it is visualised that majority of wards in the town have low centrality scores which has been given to each function for their poor infrastructure. Number of existing functions in the wards of the town and their distribution are hapazards. As large number of population are dependent on central functions those are inadequate. Such a large functional gaps in the wards show the nature of backwardness. Consequently, the town remained backward infrastructurally. To develop the town, these spatial and functional gaps have to be filled up by setting up new functions in the appropriate places in the wards. By developing each ward functionally all round development of the town can be possible. Consequently, the sort of population dependent on functions are mostly large, so the standard of availability of functions is low in the wards specially for poor infrastructure of majority of wards. Existing educational facilities and health services are inadequate for such a large population. Educational institutions have low infrastructural facility due to lack of students and qualified teachers. Health centres have neither medicines nor qualified doctors. Other socio-economic facilities in the town are, poor and inadequate as compared to demand. Inadequate transport increase the price of consumer goods to retailers and decreases the price of local products.

English Bazar town, though did not have any effective urban plan has recently been provided with O.D.P. The ODP area of English Bazar extends over 13.25km². The plan has focused that the projected population in the town in 2001 will be 2,50,000. Of which 71% will be total working force. The economic growth of the ODP area cannot substantiate the population growth. The sectoral employment pattern of the ODP area in English Bazar reveals that the urban

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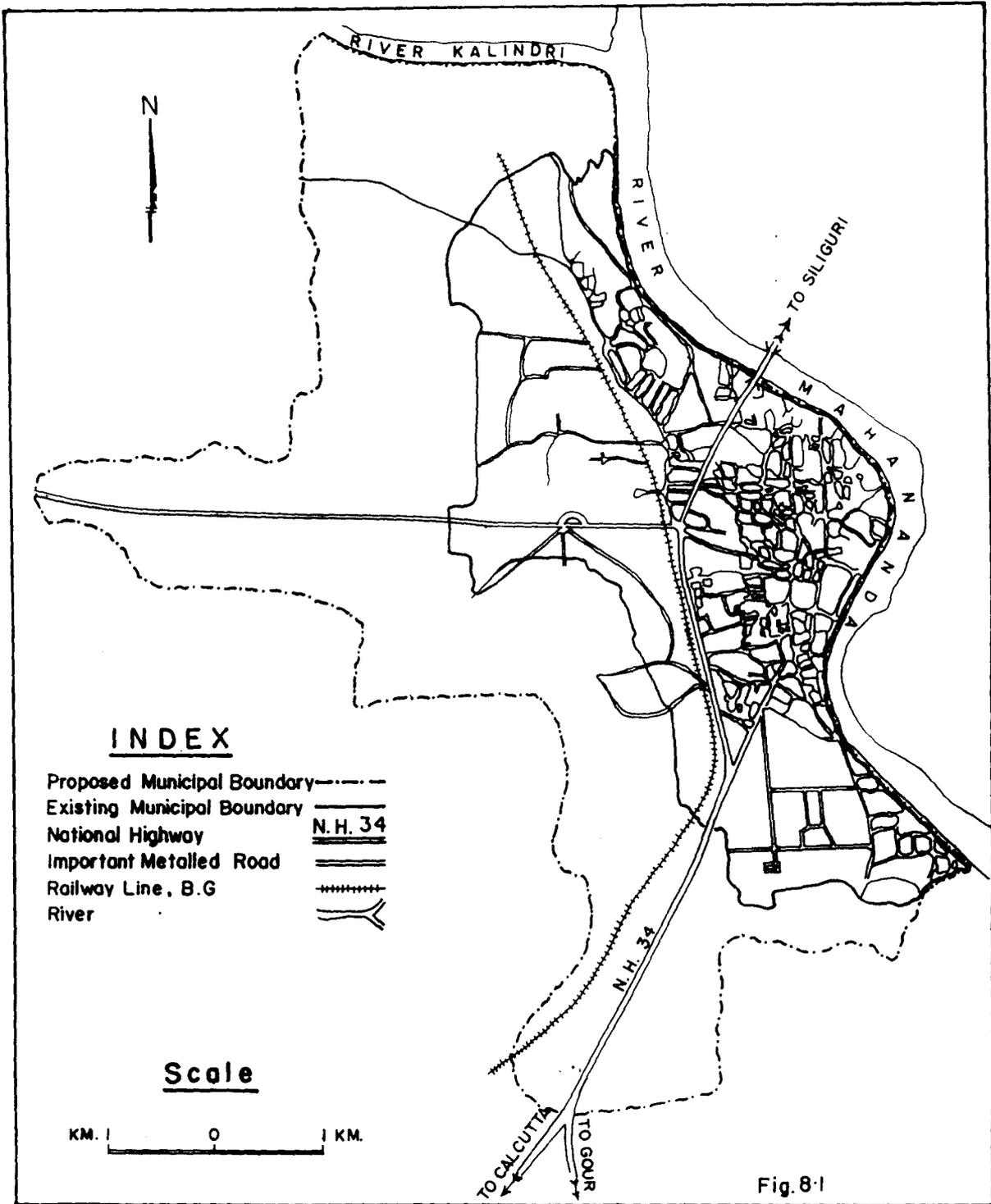


Fig. 8-1

area have primarily tertiary services, people of the peripheral rural areas have not yet adopted non-agricultural pursuits to improve their economic conditions. English Bazar municipality has under taken many programmes for the development of the town, mostly connected with improving the living conditions of the urban residents. water supply, sanitation, transport, parks and play grounds. Some slum developmental programmes have been suggested for English Bazar. More than 36% of its people are slum dwellers. Economic activities in the town are based on tertiary activities. Little scope has been generated by the secondary activities since Independence. For industrial development, some suggestions and proposals have been given and new joint industrial ventures will provide better scope for employment in secondary activity. The transport system in individual town can be solved by introducing new routes and the town can be well connected by better communication system. Other urban amenities in the town is not sufficient but some plans and proposals have been given to increase their availability to the users.

The return from the soil of this belt is not at all satisfactory. So scientific chanalization of future industrial and commercial infrastructure with allied residential areas is planned along the National Highway 34 in order to realize a complementary city growth combining English Bazar to other towns. The vast land along this way along with other infrustructural facilities available within a satisfactory raiodous might change this agricultural belt to a prosperous in agriculture cum industrial belt in the coming years.

These proposals lead to need of a master plan by combining the infrustructural resources. Thus the hinterland also can be developed. The master plan is to be framed in such a way that the future growth of population and the development of the town might take place side by side. Above all, more programming and planning would not serve any purpose and by implementing proper plan in no time the town might be put on the way of real development. The comparative analysis of growth, functional characteristics as well as prospects of the town has dealt with aspects of urbanisation of a small area of North Bengal. There are much more potential areas in the region which need further research which will enable the region to emerge from a backward to one as an advanced prosperous region. (Fig. 8.1).