

Chapter-VI

Settlement Analysis and Social Relationship

I

The word 'urbanization' is a multi-dimensional process and it has been considered not only as an index of economic development and population concentration but also an important factor for social change. Some sociologists tended to consider the population agglomeration as the chief feature of urbanization. No doubt, a town or a city means concentration of population, but there are social processes underlying it, which should be the focus of sociological studies¹ in historical perspective; that is to say that the population concentration, settlement patterns and evaluation of social interactions, activities, value system of town-dwellers, in short a study of urban settlement structure and social relationship.

II

But before we go into the complexion of the evolved society of English Bazar town under study, let us first turn to the demographic changes which provided stimulus to both urbanization and the resultant urban society of English Bazar town.

At the time of the establishment of commercial factory at English Bazar, the place was sparsely populated but gradually centring the factory a commercial town grew up and people from surrounding areas started entering to the town to settle there. But no authentic statistical information was there regarding the population of the town prior to the first census of 1872. The first attempts at enumeration were what were called khana sumari or house numberings, which were conducted by local police but the result was more or less guess-work.² It was in 1872, the first general census was done and from then on we have regular and authentic information about the population of the town. Demographic study of the English Bazar town revealed that, despite the existence of some urban characteristics, population growth of the town was not impressive even by the turn of the century as compared to even the than populous villages of the district like Kaliachak, Sibganj and Kharba.³ Moreover, its population went down from time to time. The pattern of population growth, as shown by table no.1, can be seen as consisting of two distinct phases of unequal length: 1872 to 1921 with a disturb curb but a small rise on the whole; and 1921 to

1951 with a real spurt in growth. During the first phase from 1872 to 1921 marked ups and downs in the population curve. In this phase sometime population went down such as 12,859 in 1872 to 12,430 in 1881 i.e., 2.95% decrease and 13,818 in 1891 to 13,667 in 1901 i.e., 1.09% decrease and 14,322 in 1911 to 14,057 in 1921 i.e., 1.85% decrease.⁴ This slow-down is particularly surprising since there has been no significant fall in total population growth of the district. So, in the first phase from 1872 to 1921 the total population of English Bazar increased only by 9.32% from 12859 in 1872 to 14057 in 1921. In the same period the district of Malda in which English Bazar is situated recorded a 38.74% increase in population. The possible reason for this stagnation or slow rate of population growth during the subsequent period from the time of the official census, until 1921 was partly because of the prevalence of unhealthy conditions of the town, and partly because of its unhygienic water supply which caused the outbreak of cholera, malaria etc and other health hazards of epidemic nature and thereby deterred people from taking a permanent residence in it. Furthermore, during 1893 to 1902, the excess of deaths over births of the town⁵ than that in the decade 1881 to 1891 but comparatively total fall in the population was not very large. It was mentioned in the minutes of English Bazar Municipality of year 1913 and 1915 that there was series of cholera, malaria and other diseases in almost every year⁶ which created obstacles to population growth. So the population concentration of the town was not remarkable even by the end of the second decade of the 20th century. It was almost static with a negligible increase rate of 9.23%.

The next decade, however, showed a sharp rise of 20.27% in the population of the town from 14057 in 1921 to 16907 in 1931. It was for the first time that the English Bazar town registered a remarkable growth in the population. It was partly due to the improved sanitary condition and partly minimization of epidemics specially cholera, malaria and pox.⁷ The biggest surprise thrown up by the 1941 census is the significant rise recorded in urban population growth relative to the previous 1921-31 decade which is the highest rise recorded before Independence i.e., 128.50% from 16907 in 1931 to 23334 in 1941. The main reason for this huge growth was the supply of healthy water by the municipality. It was mentioned in our previous chapter that the annual report of the year 1935-36 shows that a plan was estimated to increase the sources of water-supply of the town.⁸ Prof. Dasgupta also

mentioned the same reason for the maximum growth of population of the town.⁹ The next memorable decade, in which India got her independence, also shows a sharp rise in the growth of population of the town though comparatively less from the preceding decade. At the census of 1951 English Bazar registered 30663 i.e., 31.40%. Apart from the existing favourable condition, the influx of large number of refugees coming from East Pakistan started settling in the municipal area of English Bazar town was partly responsible for this huge growth of population of the town¹⁰ during 1941-51. It is interesting to mention here that migration was so large that in 1951 the Municipality was forced to lease land at Mukdampur to the refugees coming from East Pakistan at a lowest rate.¹¹ It revealed that during second phase from 1921 to 1951 the population of English Bazar registered a huge increase i.e., 118%.

The phenomenal growth of population of the town during second phase was primarily attributed to migration. Apart from surrounding villages, migration, from the neighbouring districts like Murshidabad, Rajshahi, Dinajpur¹² made maximum contribution. Migration occasioned by two factors viz. 'pull' and 'push', contributed to the process of urbanization.¹³ In case of English Bazar, the early growth of the town was owing to 'pull' factor but the growth of population of the town during later period was due to 'push' factor operating at the above mentioned districts. One of the commonest 'push' factors in the above mentioned districts of presently Bangladesh or earlier East Pakistan, during the closing period of colonial rule, was the fear-psychois of partition of the country operating in the mind of the people of both the country.

As table-1 shows that sex ratio in general always remained in favour of the male. The probable reason was higher birth rate among of males, along with highest rate of mortality among women and immigration of more males in the town in search of employment. Following table exhibits the total population of the town recorded in subsequent census reports.

Table-1

Population of English Bazar Town						
Tow n	Year	Total	Male	Female	decade variation	% of decadal variation
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
English Bazar	1872	12859	6460	6399	-	-
	1881	12480	6289	6141	-379	-2.95%
	1891	13818	7381	6437	+1338	+10.72%
	1901	13667	7314	6353	-151	-1.09%
	1911	14322	7697	6625	+655	+4.79%
	1921	14057	7869	6188	-265	-1.85%
	1931	16907	9387	7520	+2850	+20.27%
	1941	23334	12816	10518	+6426	+38.01%
	1951	30663	16348	14315	+7330	+31.41%

Source: Bengal District Gazetteer, B. Volume, Statistics, 1911-1912 to 1920-1921, p.3, & Ratan Dasgupta, Poursabhar Karyabibaranite Enggrejbazar Shahar: 1900-2000, (Kolkata: Progressive, 2004), Table-1.5, 20.

III

Though the population growth of the town since its inception was not significant, yet, English Bazar being the district headquarters, could retain its position as the most populous town of the district by way of possessing some urban facilities such as better medical and public health services, more educational institutions, gradual expanding administrative and judicial services, growing banking establishments and communication links. For better understanding a few examples may be cited. Apart from administrative setup, the English Bazar Charitable Hospital and the departmental hospital of the Police and Jail were situated at the district headquarters. The first government-managed High English School (Malda Zeela School) started functioning at the town as early as 1858. The Birlow Girls High School, Malda Model Madrasa, and later on Malda College, the only college of the district and other educational institution attracted the people from surrounding areas. The Central Co-operative Bank, State Bank of India and United Bank of India started

functioning at the town from 3rd decades of the 20th century.¹⁴ All these caused internal migration which is closely related with urbanization. Internal migration and urbanization are in fact inter-related phenomenon.¹⁵ It was the rural urban migration that was primarily responsible for the growth of urban population.¹⁶

IV

The population of English Bazar was presumably heterogeneous in its composition. For all practical purposes it is an important aspect of urbanism or in other words the prime criterion of a city.¹⁷ Apart from Europeans or the factors of the factory the native people who came and settled around the factory belonged to various castes, creed and language. Even among the Bengali people there were various caste divisions. A thorough list of various castes was given by Hunter in his statistical account of Malda which enumerated the castes composition of the society. Though the Hunters account is related to entire district but from the list an idea will be inferred regarding English Bazar town. Besides the Brahman, Kayastha, and Baidya many manufacturer castes like Kaibarta, Aguri, Barui, artisans like Kamar, Kansari, Sonar, Sutradhar, Kumar, Laheri, Teli etc, weaver like Tanti, Jogi, Ganesh, Kapali, and labouring castes Beldar, Chuneri, Naik etc were there. Even a considerable number of persons who engaged chiefly in personal services like dhopa, hajjam, dhanuk too had contributed to the mosaic of English Bazar population. Together with this Bengali speaking people were found the denizens of the trading communities namely Agarwala, Marwari, Khatri, Subarnabanik, Gandhbanik, Baniyas, etc.¹⁸ As table 2 shows that the census of 1872 and 1901 English Bazar registered 12859 and 13667 populations respectively which divided into two major religions and other were minority. Though most of the people belong to Hindu and Muslim religion but they use Bengali language as their medium of interaction. Following table represent the population composition of the town according to their religion.

Table-2

Classification of Population According to Religion															
year	Total population			Hindu			Muslim			Christian			Animist & Others		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1872	12859	6460	6399	7605	3930	3675	5218	2506	2712	10	7	3	26	17	9
1901	1366	7514	6153	7856	4347	3509	5792	2953	2839	14	9	5	5	5	-

Source: Hunters Statistical Account-49, Census of India, 1901, Volume- VI A, The Lower Province of Bengal and their Feudatories, Part-II, 1902, p20-21.

V

The oldest nucleus of the town containing the District Magistrate office, Municipality office, Old Circuit House, D. M. Park, Malda Court, Police Club, State Bank of India, Mahatma Gandhi Statue etc. is located within the Netaji Subhas Road in the north, Bipin Gānguli Road in the south west, Ramkrishna Mission Road in the south and Bandh Road in the south-east and from where the modern town gradually expanded. The community centres are mostly consisted of academic institutions and hospital. The hospital is situated on the Rabindra Avenue Extension. Among the academic institutions the Malda College is on the Rabindra Avenue, the schools both for boys and girls are located along the Rabindra Avenue and R. K. Mission Road. The Malda Model Madrassa is situated along the Cemetery Road. The only Jail in the district is situated along with Baladebi Giri Road.¹⁹

The ruling class occupied the most privileged position by virtue of being the administrators of the place enjoyed the top position in social hierarchy. Initially, they were mostly Europeans, mainly English and consisted of District Magistrate, Superintendent of Police etc. The residences of those Government officers are found

along with the river Mahananda which was conscious selection of the Britishers for hygienic purpose. This area is spacious, airy, full of green and less-crowded. The residences of some higher class native Indians are to be found in scattered manner along with the Netaji Subhas Road, The Jiban Krishna Sanyal Road, B. G. Road in the south, Bandh Road on the east, and eastern part of the Rabindra Avenue.²⁰

There are few aristocratic families which reside in the town. The most influential family is that of Rai Saheb Jadunandan Chowdhury and his cousin Babu Asutosh Chowdhury. This family is said to have come originally from Banaras in the middle of the 16th century. Eventually they settled down in English Bazar and became prosperous from their silk and banking business. In the first half of the 19th century they began to acquire Zamindari property by purchase. Later on they engaged in Company's commercial service. The other notable families are Bulbulchandi and Singabad zamindars, Babu Rajendra Narayan Ray and Babu Bhairabendra Narayan Ray. Among the Muslims there are several old influential families of which Begum Sahiba, Zamindar of Rohanpur, and Khan Bahadur Abdul Hayat Khan Chaudhury, Zamindar of Kotwal.²¹

With the growth of the town a considerable portion of population emerged as the middle class population of the town and their percentage is relatively higher. They consisted of lawyer, doctors, teachers, and service holders including officers and clerks engaged in public offices or in Zamindari and business establishment, merchants, traders' money lenders, and landlords and affluent agriculturalist. Among the above mentioned category of middle class section the professional and service holders are generally better educated and have more advanced outlook about social interaction.²² These professional men and the administrative personnel settled down in the urban areas in residential clusters. Thus, in most of the colonial town of North Bengal we find neighbourhoods with areas such as Ukilpara, (areas of lowers) Hakimpara, Keranipara (clerks neighborhoods,) Babupara, (neighborhoods of the babus) etc.²³ But in English Bazar, there is no such areas bearing the above mentioned name except Babupara which is situated between the Netaji Subhas Road and Binoy Sarkar Road. Other middle class settlements are found mostly on both sides of the Netaji Subhas Road in the north. The area is congested leaving no space between the houses and bearing a sharp contrast from the nucleus of the town or British residential area. Mukdampur is another middle class residential area

extending along the both sides of the Bipin Ganguly Road and The Singatola Road in the south. The Muslim community has clustered along the Hyderpur Road and the Dosadpara Road in the central part of the town. Congested area, lack of green space, narrow lane between the houses is the remarkable feature of middle class residential areas. The residential areas of the middle class urban dwellers were spatially segregated from those of the Europeans, and more densely populated which is the most striking characteristic of any colonial town.²⁴ The poor class which formed the lowest stratum of the society found on the river side of Mahananda. Generally they occupy low land of the town.²⁵

VI

With the extension of British power over India by the first quarter of the nineteenth century brought about certain basic changes in the physical form of some of the towns. This meant the addition of 'western' extension to the already existing towns in the form of civil lines and cantonments and also the founding of new towns as commercial station planned with geometrical regularity. When the British established their administrative centres in the Indian subcontinent they found the condition of the towns 'unhealthy, noisy and distasteful'. This prompted them to keep themselves from the ordinary native Indians. The officials and the professional people as well as the well-to-do businessman lived in the separate area out of the old town in newly planned area. This European settlement stood in sharp contrast to the native towns and it was marked by its segregation.²⁶ The increasing segregation of the colonists from the indigenous inhabitants of the city went hand in hand with growing permanence among colonial settlers in India.²⁷ The settlements are characterized by low-density, horizontal, single-storey developments and broad, tree-lined roads which gave access to a system of large compounds, each containing a roughly centrally sited bungalow.²⁸ These bungalow set in their compounds essentially functioned as oases of cultural space.²⁹ It was the primary duty of the Company's administration to protect the European civil and military officers from the polluted environment and from the unhygienic places. The European area stood apart from the native city, which was overcrowded, the house are closely packed together, the streets being very narrow, some of them not wide enough for a wheeled vehicle and lacked basic amenities. Even the main streets, in which the chief business is transacted, will hardly allow of one cart passing another. The European settlement

patterns were introduced firstly by a desire to protect European from the diseases and to maintain distance from native Indians.³⁰

All those above mentioned characteristics of colonial town have also existed in English Bazar. Though it is not an easy task to find out these characteristics from the present perspective, if we go through the settlement pattern of the town of an early date, we can trace those characteristics. At the time of its inception the European settlement was mainly concentrated with and around the factory which is now the Collectorate, together with the maidan south of it, the compound of the Superintendent of police, the Collector's house and Guru training school.³¹ Around the European settlement, the native settlement sprang up consisting of traders, shopkeepers and others functional class which indicates the hierarchical position of the British. It is also perceptible that the selection of the area for their commercial as well as residential purpose was hygienic because of the environmental factors like the proximity of river. The selection was not accidental, because the company's primary policy was to protect the Europeans from the India diseases like Cholera, chicken pox, malaria and keep distance from native Indians. It was their policy to maintain spaciousness of their houses and garden and absence of close contact with Indians.³² The main objective of Imperial settlement policy was based on racism.

Notes & References

-
- ¹ M. S. A. Rao, ed. *Urban Sociology in India*, (Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1992), 2-4.
- ² W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Voll-VII, (Delhi: D. K. Pub. House, 1974), 36.
- ³ Ibid. 36.
- ⁴ Bengal District Gazetteer, Malda, B. Volume, Statistics, 1911-1912 to 1920-1921, (Calcutta: The Bengal Secretariate Book Depot, 1923), 3. & Ratan Dasgupta, *Pourasabhar Karyabibaranite Enggrejbazar Shahar: 1900-2000*, (Kolkata: Progressive, 2004), 20.
- ⁵ Ratan Dasgupta, *op.cit.* 18.
- ⁶ Ibid. 18.
- ⁷ Ibid. 20.
- ⁸ Resolution Reviewing the Repots on the Working of Municipalities in Bengal, During the Year 1935-36, Bengal Governmental Press, Alipore, 1937, p.8.
- ⁹ Ratan Dasgupta, *op.cit.* 20.
- ¹⁰ Ashim Kumar Sarkar, *Changing Profile of A Bengali District Malda (1932-1953)*, (Kolkata: Classique Books, 2008), 75.
- ¹¹ Ibid. 76.
- ¹² Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Internal Migration in India: A Case Study of Bengal*, (Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi & Company, 1987), 179.
- ¹³ K.Ojha, *19th Century Darjeeling, Study in urbanization: 1835-1890*, (Unpublished Thesis Paper, Submitted in the Dept. of History, N.B.U. 1997), 202.
- ¹⁴ J.C. Sengupta, *West Bengal District Gazetteers, Malda*, (Calcutta: State Editor West Bengal District Gazetteers, 1969), 122-127.

¹⁵ Haraprasad Chattopadhyaya, *op.cit.* 377.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 401.

¹⁷ K.Ojha, *op.cit.* 206.

¹⁸ W.W. Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, Voll-VII, (Delhi: D. K. Pub. House, 1974), 41-43.

¹⁹ Shyamal Mukhopadhyay, *Urban Development in North Bengal Its Process, Character and Future Trends*, (Unpublished Thesis Paper, Submitted in the Dept. of Geography, N.B.U. 1977), 12-13.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 108-18.

²¹ M. O. Carter, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Malda; 1928-1935*, (Alipur: Bengal Government Press, 1938), 38-39.

²² *Ibid.* 38-39.

²³ Shyamal Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.* 108-18.

²⁴ Susan J. Lewandowski, "Urban Growth and Municipal Development in the Colonial City of Madras," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXXIV, No.2, (1975), 341.

²⁵ Shyamal Mukhopadhyay, *op.cit.* 108-18.

²⁶ Reeta Grewal, "Urban Morphology under colonial Rule," in *"The City in Indian History, Urban Demography, Society and Politics"*, ed. Indu Banga, (New Delhi: Monohar, 2005), 173-184.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 178.

²⁸ Anthony D. King, "The Colonial Banglow-compound Complex in India: A Study in the Cultural use of Space," in *Urban Studies*, eds. Sujata Patel and Kushal Deb (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 45-46.

²⁹ Susan J. Lewandowski, *op.cit.* 207.

³⁰ Dipesh Chakroborty, *Itihaser Janajiban O Ananya Prabandha*, (Culcutta: Ananda Publishers, 211), 56-57.

³¹ M. O. Carter, *op.cit.* 62.

³² David Arnold, "Smallpox and Colonial Medicine in Nineteenth Century India," in *Imperial Medicine Indigenous Societies*, eds. David Arnold, (New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), 47-48.