

CHAPTER II

URBANIZATION IN SILIGURI AND THE ISSUE OF MIGRATION

In the perspective of global population scenario, about two third population of the total population increase in the developing world will add an amount of 600 million people during the present decade. It is estimated that 1.9 billion people will be living in towns and cities in developing countries and it may approach 3.5 billion by the year 2020 (Sandhu,2000:3). According to Philip A. Houser and J. Metras, “Urban area is that area where people live in large numbers and the density of population is high and large part of population is engaged in non agricultural activities” (Jhingan,2003:148). According to UN Report, the definition of an urban area can be given on the basis of five concepts viz. size of population, administrative area, expansion of local government, urban features and domination of economic activities (cited in Sandhu,2000:4). In the Indian Census of 1951, whichever area had municipality was called urban area; even it does not possess any other urban features. In the census of 1971, the following strict scale definition of urban area was adopted –

- i) All places with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee etc. so declared by a state law.
- ii) All other places that satisfy the following three conditions viz. a) a minimum population of 5,000;
b) At least 75 percent of male working population engaged in non agricultural pursuits; c) Density of population of at least 400 persons per square kilometer.

According to Census 2011, out of total 1210.2 million population in India, the urban population is 377.1 million or 31.16 percent. The urban population is expected to reach at 564 million by 2021 (Singh, 2005:1). Moreover by now about 1/4th of India’s population resides in urban areas called as towns and cities (Nagpaul: 1996, 30-31). The rapid urban growth in India is not confined within any specific region, it is a common phenomenon of the entire nation and the region of North Bengal is not exceptional from this trend. In the said region,

Siliguri is recognized as the largest urban center and it is also the second largest urban center of the state.

Importance of the Area

The town of Siliguri, “ the stony site” is 396 feet above the sea level and is situated at 26° 43' N latitude and 86° 26' E longitude, in the foothills of the Darjeeling Himalayan Region on the verge of Terrain. It lies on the bank of river *Mahananda* river close to the border of the Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district. It was mere village with a population of 784 in 1901 and from where it has emerged as a town by reason of its importance as a centre of communication and transshipment. When the North Bengal State Railway was extended to Siliguri in 1878, the village was transferred from the Jalpaiguri district to Darjeeling. The Darjeeling Hill Railway on a different gauge was very soon completed and the cart road to Darjeeling was thereafter steadily improved. Siliguri thus became a transshipment point from the meter gauge railway to the narrow gauge railway and the Cart Road. Roads and railways were later opened out in the Terai and up the Teesta valley, thus increasing the business importance of Siliguri. Such administrative importance as Siliguri has secured is due to its position as a focus of communication (Dash, 1947:263). Siliguri's geographical location is very important to understand its phenomenal growth in the post partition Bengal. The Siliguri subdivision is bounded by Kurseong on the North, Bihar and Bangladesh on the South, Jalpaiguri on the East and Nepal on the West. Though administratively a mere sub divisional town, its importance lies in its role as a commercial centre at the nodal point on the cross roads from east to west and from north to south in the gateway of Northeast India. Siliguri is well communicated with other urban centers of North Bengal and South Bengal; other states of India and with a number of adjacent inter national countries. Primarily Siliguri is a commercial centre and connected with entire dooars, Sikkim. Further, the Northeastern states like Assam, Arunachal Pradesh are well communicated with Siliguri. Through railways, Siliguri is communicated with almost all prime urban centres of India. International countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh are at very close vicinity from Siliguri. Even through Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet, Siliguri is communicated to China and Myanmar. Primarily Darjeeling, Sikkim and adjacent hill stations are considered as one of the renowned tourist

spots throughout the world. The scenic beauty of Dooars and historically important towns like Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar also attracts a number of tourists from every corner of the country and from abroad. Siliguri is considered as the juncture spot for the tourists. Diversified occupational pursuits and alternative ways of survival can be easily availed in Siliguri. As a result, people from adjacent districts and states frequently migrate to Siliguri for permanent source of income and in search of common minimum livelihood. The sudden increase of population in Siliguri might be ascribed to the partition of Bengal in 1947 and a huge number of migrants came to Siliguri and established their permanent settlement. Its importance further increased after the Sino-Indian border war of 1962. Further, due to political unrest in Nepal and due to various problems in Bihar a huge number of Nepalese and Bihari migrants came directly to Siliguri town. Primarily on the basis of tea industry in Darjeeling and dooars along with rapid urban growth of Siliguri, a number of supportive industries and factories started to develop here and the migrants got the opportunities of involvement in it. Again, a number of new small scale cottage based industries mainly chemical produces, automobiles, household appliances, small scale iron based implements, food processing products, mining, asbestos, slate, marble and urban construction based works provided a wide and open job market to the educated youths and uneducated labour forces.

Siliguri is communicated with other national and international territories mainly through NH 31, Siliguri-Jalpaiguri state highway, New Jalpaiguri railway junction and Bagdogra Airport mainly. Due to this communicational importance it became the leading business centres of West Bengal and entire Northeast India. The contemporary economic characteristic of Siliguri was service cum trade and commercial cum industrial. Despite the prime urban centre of North Bengal, Siliguri became the most important trade-commercial centre of the entire North Bengal and one of the major urban centers of entire Northeast India.

Urban Development in Siliguri and Neighbourhood Areas

The scenario of urban development in Siliguri had taken place in a very quick succession. According to the report of Siliguri Municipal Corporation of 2013, the total area of it was 41.90 sq.km; with a population of 5,09,709 and the population density was 11,171/sq.km. Regarding urban amenities, the town was provided

with a number of civic conveniences like markets, educational institutions from school to university level, nursing homes, hospitals, medical colleges etc. To provide the civic amenities and daily requirements to the urban dwellers approximately 189 factories of medium to small scale based with its subsidiary outlets got emerged in and around the Siliguri town. A number of township and industrial projects had grown up and many of them were under construction. Regarding its importance as a tourist center, a number of luxury hotels were developed which became a direct source to earn foreign currencies. With the continuous flourishing as the largest urban center of North Bengal, a number of new job sectors and sources of income gradually started to emerge. People from adjacent districts and states started to come in Siliguri in search of occupation and settled down permanently. Even a huge number of migrants from the adjacent international countries like Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh were dwelling in and around the Siliguri for the sake of livelihood. In this way, there occurred a huge population growth. Along with the continuous urban development, there were huge scopes of construction works, wage based skilled labour works and other labour works. The people of adjacent sub urban areas and nearby villages came regularly to this town for their daily livelihood. There were 500 neighbouring villages and local hamlets around the vicinity of Siliguri town that were dependent on it for economic and various other reasons. The continuous urban flourishing of this town was not only concentrated within the area of Siliguri Municipal Corporation, rather the areas upto 10 miles radius like Matigara, Shivmandir and Bagdogra had been included under the greater urban agglomeration of the Siliguri town. The potential and process of urban growth and development in Siliguri received recognition in 1931 when it became a non-municipal town, which was followed by its declaration as a Municipal Town in 1950. Siliguri Municipality had an area of 15.54 sq. km, which was substantially increased in 1994 to 41.90 sq. km when it was upgraded to Siliguri Municipal Corporation. This is an indicator of the rapid pace of urbanization in Siliguri Urban Area (SUA), which comprises Siliguri Municipal Corporation and the adjacent urban growth centres. Siliguri has shown consistently high rate of population growth throughout its 63 years of existence. A population of less than 6,500 in 1931 had multiplied manifold to 32,480 in 1951. In 1991, Siliguri Municipal Corporation area had a population of 3,70,421 whilst the population of

the Siliguri Urban Area was 5,09,709 (Source: <http://www.sjda.org/about-us/location.html>). The following tables are highlighting in details about the scenario of urban development in Siliguri-

Table 2.1: Growth of urban population in Siliguri

Year	Total Population	Percentage of decadal variation
1931	6067	-
1941	10487	72.85
1951	32480	209.72
1961	65471	101.57
1971	97484	48.9
1981	154378	58.36
1991	216950	40.53
2001	284602	31.18
2011	509709	44.16

Source: Annual Report of Siliguri Municipal Corporation, 2013

Table 2.2: Present population of Siliguri and adjacent sub urban areas

Sub Division	Rural			Urban			Total		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Siliguri Sub Division	98532	93248	191780	261218	248491	509709	359750	341739	701489
Siliguri(MC)	-	-	-	261218	248491	509709	261218	248491	509709
Matigara	65123	58798	123921	2881	2524	5405	68004	61322	129326
Phansidewa	87945	83563	171508	-	-	-	87945	83563	171508
Naxalbari	67595	61546	129141	8236	7538	15774	75831	69084	144915
Kharibari	45449	42781	88230	-	-	-	45449	42781	88230

Source: Annual Report of Siliguri Municipal Corporation, 2013

Scenario of Migration

Migration is generally known as the movement of people from one residence to another permanent or temporary residence for a substantial period of time. Paterson,1958 defined migration as “movement motivated by the individual willingness to risk the unknown of a new home and breaking form a familiar social universe for the sake of adventures, achievements of ideals or to escape a social system from which he has become alienated.” Caplow,1975 observed that “migration is strictly speaking a change of residence and need not necessarily involve any change of occupation, but it is closely associated with occupational shifts of one kind or another.” Migration is relatively a permanent transition of a collectivity called migrants from one geographical location to another preceded

by the decision making on the part of the migrants on the basis of hierarchically ordered set of values and valued ends and resulting in changes in the interactional pattern. Movement of people, especially rural people from the land to the cities, from one country to another and from one continent to another is an international phenomenon and not a phenomenon of modern times only. Migration flows are generally pronounced from economically backward or stagnating areas to prosperous and dynamic areas. Most economic factors that motivate migration may be termed as a push and pull factors and general economic condition. Push factors in reality refers to the poor economic condition, low productivity, unemployment, underemployment, low income, low level of production and consumption. Pull factors are those which encourage migration to an area such as opportunities of better employment, higher wages, amenities of modern life etc. attract people to certain areas. Further, social and cultural factors also play their role in migration. The quest for independence, the desire to break away from traditional constraints of social organization, conflicts among the family members, exclusion from the community circle for one reason or other or affecting of being isolated etc. may cause migration. The persons when move from their ancestral village to another place and establish a settlement they will be striking roots again. In this context, the earlier migrants used to have a great support to them. The movement of people tends to be at those places where they have contacts and where the old migrants serve as links for the new migrants. The chain which was thus formed is usually termed as chain migration. They usually have kinship chains and networks of relatives and friends who helped them. Migrants belonging to a particular region, language, religion, caste and tribe tend to live together in separate neighborhoods in cities. They form ethnic groups on the basis of shared elements of culture and ideology. They also build their own place of worships. The social phenomenon has favourably or adversely influenced the place of origin of migrants and the place of their destination. Their impact on both places can be assessed in terms of morphological, economic, social and political aspects. Indeed the importance of economic factors is crucial in human migration as it provides necessary conditions for migration. Despite that, the social factor play significant role simultaneously in human migration, which in reality strengthen and motivate to take final decision of migration.

According to the 64th Round of National Sample Survey, it was estimated that almost a third of Indians that was some 325 million people, out of a population of 1.14 billion in 2008 were migrants (Hazra, 2012:4). During the last 50 years rural population had decreased from 82.0 to 68.9 percent. Migration from rural to urban areas was up from 27.8 to 31.1 percent since 2001. It is estimated that approximately 2 million people were shifting from rural to urban areas annually and approximately 22 million people had migrated from rural to urban areas since 2001. It is reported that 57 percent of urban migrant household were migrated from rural areas. Further, 67 percent of the households in the urban areas had migrated for employment related reasons (Gautam,2012:6-7). West Bengal has received 5.5 million of migrants by place of birth. During the last decade (1991-2001) the number of migrants in India rose by 32.9 percent high in comparison to India's total population which recorded a growth of 21.5 percent during this decade. It is to be mentioned here that, according to the 55th round of NSS conducted during 1999-2000, the migration rate stands at about 266 per thousand total persons in the country (Datta, 2005: 147). The migration differences are clearly observed between males and females in the rural and urban areas. In rural areas the female migration rate was nearly 5 to 6 times higher than the male migration rate, while in urban areas, it was about 1.5 times higher for females. The male migration rate in urban areas was 2.5 to 3 times higher than that in rural areas. The following table will illustrate the fact more clearly-

Table 2.3: Migration rates per thousand population of by sex and residence based on Census and various NSS Rounds-1971 to 2000

Census Year/ NSS Round	Category	Male			Female			Total
		Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	
Census 1971	POB	141	375	189	431	413	428	304
	PLR	140	381	190	434	421	431	306
Census 1981	POB	122	349	178	449	423	443	306
	PLR	126	353	187	459	428	452	312
Census 1991	POB	100	276	146	425	373	412	274
	PLR	102	276	148	430	375	416	276
Census 2001	POB	109	323	170	452	396	437	299
	PLR	115	329	175	461	403	446	306
NSS 38 th Round Jan-Dec. 1983		72	270	120	351	366	354	234
NSS 43rd Round Jul 1987- Jun-88		75	268	119	399	396	398	254
NSS 49 th Round Jan- Jul.1993		65	239	108	401	382	396	248
NSS 55 th Round Jul 1999- Jun-00		69	258	117	426	418	424	266

Note: POB= Place of Birth, PLR= Place of Last Residence (Source: Singh, 2005:274)

Regarding the migration pattern, the rural to rural migration stream is most dominant, followed by rural to urban stream and urban to urban stream of migration. Various small scale sample surveys including periodic NSS rounds have collected information on the reasons for migration, which include movement due to economic reasons such as search for employment, better employment, transfer of job, proximity to work place, for pursuing study, after marriage, due to movements of parents or earning members, political problems, natural calamity, health, housing and other reasons. The following table illustrates the reasons of migration-

Table 2.4: Percentage distribution of life time migrants by sex and reasons for migration, NSS 2000

Reasons for Migration	Rural			Urban		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
In search of employment	6.49	0.21	1.12	17.08	0.67	7.26
In search of better employment	10.52	0.38	1.83	15.66	0.77	6.75
To take up employment/Better employment	6.55	0.15	1.07	9.21	0.49	3.99
Transfer of service-contract	6.02	0.22	1.05	9.1	0.93	4.21
Proximity to work place	1.04	0.03	0.18	1	0.07	0.44
Studies	5.31	0.39	1.09	6.24	1.35	3.32
Acquisition of own house	3.95	0.35	0.86	4.13	1.41	2.5
Housing problem	3.67	0.44	0.9	2.28	0.8	1.4
Socio- Political problem	3.96	0.51	1	1.44	0.72	1.01
Health	0.99	0.07	0.2	0.35	0.12	0.21
Marriage	9.51	89.1	77.6	1.62	58.7	35.77
Family Migration	26.15	6.27	9.13	27.14	31.1	29.48
Other reasons	15.84	1.92	3.92	4.76	2.9	3.65
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Singh, 2005:281

Thus, besides an economic phenomenon, migration is more a social phenomenon. The massive increase of population in India was due to both natural growth and migration from outside. The situation in West Bengal vis-a-vis North Bengal was much more intricate since it had to receive an increasing number of immigrants from neighbouring Nepal, Bangladesh mainly and also from Bhutan. The phenomenon of migration had an immense importance in the context of North Bengal. Regarding the population growth and economic development of the said region, the importance of migration could never be overstated. The existence of three international borders viz. Bangladesh, Nepal

and Bhutan had contributed to a continuous flow of migrants to this region. Therefore, North Bengal is achieving a remarkable experience of steady and continuous flow of migrants from different places (Datta, 2005:16). The population of North Bengal was being raised continuously through the past century, from an initial level of 0.27 crore and a settlement density of 12.5 persons per sq.km in 1891. The population growth in the region during the first part of the last century was directly attributable to the proliferation of tea plantations. Further acceleration was noticed after 1947 because of massive population migration associated with India's partition and its aftermath (Mondal, 2007:132-133). There was a tremendous population growth in this region after the independence of the country. The overall population trends in North Bengal through the first half of the present century indicated an increasing migration between 1931 to 1951. But after 1951, the population of North Bengal increased sharply. As such the population in the region which was 39, 61,000 according to the 1951 Census, was raised to 1, 47, 24,940 in 2001. This growth is due to normal population growth as well as migration and immigration. Owing to locational and other advantages, many people from the other states in India and also from neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Tibet etc. were also settled in North Bengal (Mondal, 2007:132). Most of the migrants in this region had come from Bangladesh because hunger, poverty, security threat recognize no border (Datta, 2005:147). The partition of Bengal in 1947 and further the political turmoil in Bangladesh in 1971 forced a continuous migration. Though the border between Bangladesh and India was demarcated, but the free movement across the border was a common phenomenon. It was estimated that there were about 15 million Bangladeshi nationals living in India illegally. According to one estimate by Border Police Department about one thousand migrants cross the border every day and enter West Bengal. Meanwhile, India shared 4095 kilometers of border with Bangladesh while West Bengal had a border of 2216 kilometer running with it. Ever since the independence, India was facing the issue of Bangladeshi migration. During 1948-1952 it took place due to partition of India and Hindu backlash. In the period of 1964-1965 the migration was due to the Indo-Pak war. Further, during the Bangladesh liberation war in 1971, migration took place extensively. It is to be mentioned here that upto 1971 the political factor was the main reason for

migration; in between 1971 to 1990 both political and economic factors were the underlying causes. From 1996-2001 the migration mostly took place due to economic reason and onwards from mid 2001, the reason for migration was political including the insecurity of life and property of the minority community (Datta,2005: 148-155).

Table 2.5: Migration by place of last residence

Total migrants by last residence	314.5 million
Duration less than 1 year	8.8 million
Duration 1 to 4 years	47.2 million
Duration 5 to 9 years	42.1 million
Duration 10 to 19 years	69.4 million
Duration 20 years and above	101.0 million
Duration not stated	45.6 million

Source: Census,2001

According to Census 2001, there were total 3,031,127 Bangladeshi migrants in West Bengal. Among them, regarding the place of enumeration 1,578,141 were the rural dwellers while 1,452,986 were the urban dwellers. Further, in Darjeeling district there were total 58,103 Bangladeshi migrants among whom 33,778 were rural and 24,325 were urban regarding their place of enumeration. According to the report of UNDESA 2013, the total number of Bangladeshi migrant in India was more than 3.2 million. The people who came from Bangladesh, got started to settle down in different places of North Bengal. In this region, the rapid growth of population had created several problems in terms of effects on forest, decrease in open spaces, decrease of agricultural lands, problems in economic development and man power planning, scarcity in job opportunities, development of slums and congested areas, increasing settlement in the banks of hilly rivers and so on. In the present study such a situation has been observed which are gradually discussed.

The evolution of Human society reveals the fact that the permanent settlement of livelihood is an out come of interaction between the social and cultural process. The prime aspect of any social system is to protect the fundamental right of its every individual. In one hand these are related with their common minimum livelihood requirements and on the other hand it is intimately associated with their self identity. Thus a nation should protect the nationality of its citizen and it

should secure their existence in a comprehensive manner. Any country is made up of both the rural and urban areas. The prosperity of a nation is intimately associated with the prosperity of both of its rural and urban areas. Because, both of them are the core centre of entire domestic production and its marketization. The economic stability of a nation is very much depended upon the interaction between its rural and urban centre as well as upon the exchange of goods and services. However, due to different emerging social turmoil such stability may have to face a severe challenge and a number of consequent affect may be noticed accordingly. In the context of North Bengal, the locational importance of Siliguri was immensely important. It was regarded as the gateway of Northeast India and it was adjacent to a number of neighbouring countries of India. Onwards from the decade of 1970s, rapid flourishment of Siliguri was noticed. Gradually it became the largest Urban centre of North Bengal and the second largest centre of West Bengal. Siliguri became well communicated with rest of the megacities of our country and abroad through surface, railway and aviation. Along with the rapid flourishment of Siliguri town, numerous organized and unorganized occupational sectors emerged in and around of it. Consequently different white collar jobs, semiskilled and unskilled economic pursuits developed and gave a new dimension to its economic growth. Obviously it became the core urban centre of North Bengal to sustain the livelihood of a large section of population. Meanwhile, ever since independence, the migration of displaced people from Bangladesh is a continuously happening factor. The issue became more severe during the period of 1971 at the time of freedom struggle in Bangladesh. During that time a huge section of Hindu Bengali people were forced to get displaced from their livelihood, settlement and stable economic pursuit. They became completely roofless and almost resource less in condition. For the sake of survival any mere economic opportunity was earnestly required for them. At that point of time, diversified newly emerging economic oppurtunities provided them a new ray of hope. However, they were primarily associated with traditional caste based agricultural occupation. They had hardly any opportunity to get involved in any skilled technology based organized occupational sectors. In that circumstance, different unorganized occupational sectors left the only alternative for them. On the other hand rural people from the districts of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur etc. were also finding severe

hardship to sustain their livelihood with their traditional caste based occupation due to several causes. They were also looking after some sorts of alternation and keenly desired to move into the rapidly flourishing urban centre i.e. Siliguri in search of their economic security and livelihood sustainability. Thus, the population of Siliguri town and its adjacent suburban areas got started to increase into manifold and it gave different new economic oppurtunities as well as new scopes of resettlements to the rural migrants.

In the present era of globalization, urbanization is rapid and an ongoing phenomenon. It has also been noticed in different parts of our country and in this consequence Siliguri had emerged as the largest urban center of North Bengal. The locational importance of Siliguri played a major role for its rapid urban growth. In this region, the people came from different regions and countries from a prolonged period. It might be due to the fact that, the said region had a number of working oppurtunities and people had the scope to accumulate their common minimum livelihood. Along with this population growth, several situations had also emerged like the decrease of forest land, decrease of open spaces, development of slums and congested areas and continuously increasing settlement in the banks of hilly rivers and so on.

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