

Preface

The trajectory of the concept of development in the time-line framework has come under the most stressful period in the form of sustainable development. This particularly applies to urban conglomerations in India and the city of Siliguri is no exception to it. The manifold problem of urbanization has now compelled one to think over the question, 'Can city be a livable place?' This is in the context of human-induced damage to the physical environment of almost all cities in India which usually have harmful consequences for human welfare, either now or in the future. In a nutshell, if development of an urban area is to done on a sustainable basis, there is an urgent need for the adoption of 'good practice' on the part of all stakeholders residing in a city/town.

Given this background, the present dissertation modestly seeks to explore some of the key issues of development within Siliguri Municipal Corporation area, one of the fastest growing cities of West Bengal. Due to its location advantage, this city in the northern part of North Bengal in the State of West Bengal has witnessed unprecedented growth from a Class V town in 1931 with a meager population of 6,067 to a big city today catering a population of about 0.58 million. Needless to say, this phenomenal growth, majorly in an unplanned manner, has led to the degradation of urban Siliguri's water, air, land and greenery and has transformed it into a concrete jungle on the one hand and innumerable spots of slum and squatter settlements on the other hand. The present work, thus, tries to deal with some of the relevant contemporary issues of development of Siliguri, namely, sanitation; water supply; transportation, pollution and social forestry; and slum improvement and urban poverty alleviation from two perspective: one, the efforts and inadequacies of Siliguri Municipal Corporation and other associated institutions'; and two, the level of participation of city-dwellers in the developmental process of Siliguri. The present study may be bracketed as an evaluative one with reformative suggestions.

The present dissertation is divided into six Chapters. Chapter One is an introductory one laying down the objective, theoretical framework, methodology and significance of the study. Chapter Two peeps into the framework of urban

development, urban governance and urban participation in the Indian context. Chapter Three seeks to provide an insight on the historical profile of Siliguri Municipal Corporation Area. Chapter Four looks into the efforts and inadequacies of Siliguri Municipal Corporation and associated institutions in the developmental aspects of Siliguri undertaken for study. Chapter Five makes a case of the level of and problems in participation of the city-dwellers in the above mentioned issues of development of Siliguri. Finally, Chapter Six concludes with the summary of the whole issue of development, governance and participation in the context of the city of Siliguri.

In writing this dissertation, the most distinctive contributions have been of my supervisor, Dr. M. Yasin, who motivated, supported and guided me during various stages of its preparation and my father, who used to send newspaper cuttings and copies of various Reports and Acts related to the topic from distant Mumbai on a regular basis. My special thanks go to the Principal and all teaching and non-teaching fraternity of my A.C.College, Jalpaiguri as well as to all my dear students for extending their warm support throughout my endeavour. I will always feel indebted to Sri Sujit Ghosh, Assistant Professor, Department of History, A.C.College; Sri Parimal Bapari, Assistant Professor, Department of History, A.C.College; Sri Joydeep Bhattacharya, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Kurseong College and my friends Sri Harendra Sharma and Sri Rakesh Jha, all of whom despite being busy in their assignments, accompanied me during my field surveys on several occasions and provided me with valuable inputs being natives of Siliguri. It would be unfair on my part if I do not mention the names of Dr. Sudip Chakraborty, Associate Professor, Department of Economics, A.C.College and Sri Prabir Panda, Assistant Professor, Siliguri Institute of Technology, both of whom have been a tremendous source of inspiration for me.

I must admit that before undertaking my case study of Siliguri Municipal Corporation, I had expected grudging cooperation from the political representatives and urban officials. To my surprise and delight, I found them eager to discuss, baring few aberrations, the manifold problems confronting Siliguri and they also suggested the ways in which the work might be utilized to help them. However, it is not possible to mention in this short space the names of all of them who gave their time, energy and hospitality. I am profoundly in their debt as without their enthusiastic cooperation and candid approach, I would not

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People who responded my questionnaires need special thanks, particularly the Chairpersons of the CDSs, RCVs and citizens dwelling in slum pockets.

Finally, I do not want to belittle the status of my better half, Smt. Kakoli Ghosh, by extending formal thanks to her who throughout the work successfully shared my moments of doubt and frustration. How can I forget my source of trance, my son, Master Shlok Das, who perhaps felt my stress and never ever demanded paternal love, affection and care during the last stages of the work? Mention must be made of my brother and sister for their encouragement on a continual basis. In the end, I touch the feet of my father and mother who very often encouraged me on phone from distant Mumbai and I dedicate this work to them.

I cannot help submitting that the present work is a humble effort on my part. There may be few shortcomings in the work and I owe on to myself, mistakes committed unknowingly in the preparation of the material.

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