

PREFACE

From pre-historic days mankind exhibits its nature of living close to one another. In old days it was mere physical closeness, and closeness in areas and regions where boundaries of nature are the prime movers of human activities. As for example, nature gave him shelter in the form of caves, rivulets or springs gave him drinking water, rivers fed him fish, forests gave him animal meat and trees gave him fruits. Things changed when man began to act upon nature and change its surface. Small settlements began which expanded into cities. The change is not quantitative but qualitative also. Nature proved insufficient to meet the basic needs – he made houses, for drinking water he dug wells, tanks and tubewells, he made roads; thus cities came into being and it invited pollution, diseases, drinking water problem, waste disposal problems etc.

Attempts were made to address these problems. Thus urbanisation is a problem created by man but he can not do without it. Instead of being a slave to his creation, he tries to overcome it, master upon it. He failed as in Harappa or Mohenjodaro, he succeeded in London or in Mumbai. The investigator has selected an area in West Bengal and has tried to show how problems emerged and suggested how to combat it. The study area is Barasat in Uttar 24 Parganas in the state of West Bengal.

The first chapter is about the history of the locality, from pre – Mughal period to the partition of Bengal. It started as “ vergin soil upturned “ , with the establishment of small huts, small ponds, improvised roads and plots for agriculture. In the Mughal period it increased in size but not in character excepting the betterment of dwelling houses, commercial centres and bigger tanks in place of shallow ponds. The

concept of city planning was a distant dream not to speak of civic rights – rights for better living, rights for job-opportunities, rights for getting education. These ideas waited till the coming of the British rulers under East India Companies and later on replaced by the direct rule of the British administrators.

They erected some modern buildings for living, made it a centre for administration. A military training school for the cadets was put up here. In 1823 the 30th of July a separate magistracy was created. For about 40 years, it continued as one of the two fiscal divisions of the district. Before this, in 1834 some parts of Nadia and Jessore were transferred to 24 parganas, a district of which the study area is a part. The district was divided in two divisions, Alipur and Barasat. But in March 1861 it was reduced to a subdivision. In 1861, a municipality was established here.

An avalanche of population explosion took place since the partition of India. Hordes of refugees descended upon Barasat and the adjoining areas. Before 1947, the flow of population was a natural process and it was a slow one. But now “unnatural” happened. Streams of uprooted people upset everything; the dreamy municipality became a centre of turmoil. The old style of combatting civic problems yielded place to organised, total planning keeping a eye to the future. The investigator dealt with this organised planing and the problems for their execution.

In chapter two, the concept of fringe areas is discussed. The characteristics of fringe in its different dimension are identified. An urban area is a gradually widening space, engulfing the adjacent regions. But these adjacent regions themselves are gradually losing their original characters succumbing to the urban characteristics. These areas are fringe areas. The fringe dies and new fringe arises.

The investigator has noted a difference with other urban and fringe relationships to that of Barasat. Barasat might have been classified as fringe of Calcutta area but for its recognition as a municipal town from 1869 and as the district head quarter in 1986. But so far as planning is concerned it is a part of Calcutta metropolitan area (CMA). But it is outside the corporate limit of the Calcutta city. The investigator has identified the fringe areas of Barasat. It is maintaining all the characteristics of fringe.

The chapter three deals with population and its growth. For the study area this population problem is phenomenal. It is an administrative centre only with no factory or industry worth the name is visible. The chapter discussed how the population rose by years, the composition of population (caste wise, sex wise, age wise), the percentage of literacy etc. This section also dealt with other areas of population studies.

Chapter four devotes landuse of the town. The investigator first deals with the concept of landuse . He has glossed over the opinions of Mather (1986), Mondal (1982), Dudley Stamp (1930), Vink (1975) and Bertholomew (1955), along with Chatterjee (1940). The importance of landuse and need for landuse survey were discussed. The table is provided in details the share of land under different uses in Barasat towns (1999).

The past and present land use pattern was compared with why and how colonies emerged, how did they alter the landuse map of the locality are given. Concentration of residential areas is given in separate section.

The slum and their problem is discussed in other section. Industries mostly small scale are shown in another table. A table with a heading Traders survey of Barasat town shows the different trading activities. Landuses in different shapes like open spaces, agriculture, utility services etc. are shown. The investigator has studied how open spaces, water bodies are being encroached upon due to pressure of urbanisation.

Chapter five is on socio-economic functions. Schools, health-care facilities, medical facilities, transport, railway, roads etc. are the areas of discussions. These are followed by water supply system, sources of water, sanitation etc. In fine, the quality of urban life, attempts of municipal authorities, are explained in this chapter. It is shown that inspite of the periodic explosion of population the problem is not out of control till now.

Chapter six is devoted to the problems of several socio-economic functions. Primarily a discussion the aspects of educational problems in the town. Afterwards housing, sanitation, sewage, drinking water, roads, electricities fuel, environmental pollution and its level are also discussed. This section includes other community features like parks, play-grounds, libraries, encroachment of agriculture land etc.

Chapter seven is on the review of the earlier plans made by different government agencies on the basis of extensive data collection from survey work. The town is located on the eastern margin of the Calcutta Metropolitan Area (CMA). After the declaration as the district head quarter of uttar 24 parganas in 1986, CMDA and municipal authority prepare several plans for development of infrastructural facilities. Annual development plan has also been prepared by CMDA in 1985-86. Next an outline development plan made by a group of engineers, architects and

geographers has also been mentioned. After that, various transport projects like Serempore- Barrackpore-Barasat express way, Dum Dum – Barrackpore express way were dealt with. Belgharia express way etc. are also mentioned in this chapter.

Mention has also been made on the development control guide line 1986 and the development control zones of Barasat municipal area (1997). These made special emphasis on preventing misuse of land and formulate guide lines against the misuse of land, against environmental pollution etc.

Chapter eight refers to the suggestion for the future development of the town. In this chapter special emphasis is given to the improvement of infrastructural facilities in respect of education, medical service, water supply, sanitation, roads/transport open space, parks etc. Some proposal for market management, repairing workshop for transport vehicles, storage or warehouse, development planning are made in this chapter. These are informed suggestion for the betterment of city planning, community living etc. Keeping an eye to the future and based on extensive survey work these suggestions were made.