

Chapter Eight

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Since urban centres play a dynamic role in the process of development, it is essential to understand fully the bearing of human and cultural factors on the process. Economic development would not be possible 'unless people begin to question the traditional values in several directions and to ~~to~~ discard the regressive elements in their culture' (Hussain, 1956, p.136). The study of the process of urbanisation and the role of cities, which exert the most direct influence on social institutions and attitudes and stimulate changes, calls for a 'a historical insight and a deeper understanding of the forces behind social change' (Bose, A. 1970, p.94).

India is overwhelmingly rural. The rapid increase of population in most of the cities and industrial centres is due, chiefly, to heavy influx of rural migrants, who bring with them the traditional culture and behaviour patterns. Economic considerations, if not the only causative factor, are the most important motive force behind the city-ward migration. The lingering parochialism in outlook and the traditional value system become

explicable in the light of the fact that a large section of the urban population maintain links with their rural kinsfolk and continue to have caste consciousness. This in turn has been responsible for the formation of ethno-lingual groups and the development of hierarchical relations within the groups along traditional lines. Such group formation and relation seriously affect urbanism and the development of 'city consciousness', and, leave the whole situation in a state of 'immature or imperfect urbanisation' (Bose, N., 1969, p.85).

But the urban way of life has never been one of 'fixed, enduring relationship' (Anderson, 1964, p.4). Under its impact an individual is subjected to many pressures; - social, political, economic and cultural - and therefore, can never keep himself within the fold of fixed forms and structures such as caste, occupational or ethnic groups. These pressures impel him to cast aside old forms, values and attitudes and to accept new ones; or he may try to adopt new values while still retaining some old ones, because the movement from rural areas to urban areas also means a change from agricultural to non-agricultural occupation, which demands, among other things, the acceptance of universalistic values. The total productivity of the urban industrial labour force is ultimately found to be dependent on the acceptance or rejection of these

values by the industrial labourer.

Having presented the available data bearing on the social and physical situation in Kharagpur, it is now possible to analyse them in a broader context. The discussion is divided into : (1) an analysis of the existing social situation to examine the changes, if any, from the assumed norms in family system, in parochialism of attitude and behaviour, and in the hold of casteism affecting inter-personal relationships, (as depicted by the Indian social organisation) and (2) assessment of the city's potentiality for further industrial development. These two have been considered in turn.

It is generally assumed that under the impact of industrial urbanism, the multi-generational or joint family system yields to the nuclear type. 'In the long run', Bottomore holds (1968, p.178) that, 'as industrialisation progresses, there is no reason to suppose that the Indian family system will differ greatly from that which exists today in Western societies'. The enquiry into the family structure of the population of the city, shows that more than 58% of the households in the sample studied resemble the Western type, that is, comprised husband, wife and

their dependent children or the head and his or her dependent children.

One of the major problems associated with industrialization and urbanization in India, as viewed by some scholars, arises primarily from parochialism in attitude and behaviour of her industrial labour force. Such a population fails to adapt its way of life to industrial discipline and to be emotionally integrated with and absorbed in the urban milieu because the loyalties of such urban dwellers 'are frequently to groups whose centre of gravity is outside the city' (Hoselitz, 1955). It was observed by earlier investigators that these migrants regard their stay in the city as only temporary and even after they have become permanent city dwellers, they maintain some ties with the place of origin. But the fact of a number of urban workers maintaining close ties with the village has another implication. It means a communication between the two cultures which affects the traditional outlook of the rural society as a whole. Prabhu (1956, p.85) rightly points out that this process is of great importance to a social scientist, for, it implies the transmission of values and life styles : new ideas, ideologies, modes of behaviour learnt in the city, are carried to the village.

The present survey of 1527 units of city dwellers at Kharagpur, however, shows that more than 59% of the sample do not maintain any contact with their native place or their

village of origin. They are apparently aware of the fact that their position in the community depends to a great extent on their employment in the Workshop or in factories. They seem to have adjusted themselves to many of the facilities and amenities available in the city. This may explain the lessening of the ties with the village of origin and the consequent change in parochial outlook and behaviour. It is, no doubt, a big stride towards urbanization.

Caste, among the Hindus in India, is ordained by birth and as such, it still holds sway over an overwhelmingly large population. In the present study, 89% of the respondents were found to be aware of their caste hierarchy. But then, it was also observed that for the diverse ethno-lingual culture groups residing side by side, caste has a limited and circumscribed role to play in their daily work relationships. It is limited to religious rituals and practices. Such rituals - rooted in family, community and religion - often die hard. But they are usually disrupted when sweeping social changes begin to erode the whole peasant way of life (Smelser, 1965, p.104).

Thus the impact of industrial urbanism was found to have a profound influence in 'narrowing social distance between castes' (Veeraraghavan, 1962, p.163) and a number of caste stipulations such as eating taboos, residential segregation, etc. affecting interpersonal relationships as well as caste

occupations have become less rigid, giving way to a different hierarchy based on occupational and economic status. On the socio-political level while the members of the higher castes follow a nonaggressive aloofness, those belonging to the lower castes have become vociferous in their demand for equal treatment and acceptance (Neihoff, 1958, pp.102-10). It was observed in the present study also that a dual system of gradation - based on traditional caste and economic status - exist in the city. This observation substantiates the view that 'although the urban milieu is experiencing greatly accelerated change, certain traditional patterns persist alongside the new organisational forms that have emerged' (Sjoberg, 1967, p. 161). They operate independently of each other though every individual has a place in both the systems. Caste is probably a weaker force in determining social relations than economic status and among the economically higher classes caste appears to lose many of its traditional characteristics. In general, it appears that urbanisation and industrialisation have produced some changes in social structures and attitudes and also in the value system, like a change from the 'particularistic, ascription-oriented to universalistic achievement-oriented' value system, and like the edging of the urban social structure for an egalitarian society.

The other aspect of the discussion is concerned with the assessment of the potentiality of a centre to develop and to promote the maximum development of the region. So long as the population continues to increase and puts its pressure on the available means of subsistence, any policy of full employment will involve a gradual withdrawal of surplus labour from agriculture and its absorption in industry. Industrial location is an important problem in the planned development of an underdeveloped economy. Despite the proposal for industrial development through what is called 'regional promotion measures' imbalances in regional development pattern appear to persist in India. The urban centres are known to play an important role in a developing economy by facilitating exchange of economic activities between their rural environs and other urban areas of the region. Consequently, the treatment of urban centres as growth poles in regional planning and development has been the subject matter for both theoretical and empirical studies (Lasven, 1969; Darwent, 1969; Picro, 1969; UNRISD Programme IV 1970, etc.). The Wanchoo Working Group set up by the National Development Council for India also suggested (1969) that urban centres having certain facilities should be identified in an industrially backward region, and promoted for the development of the region.

MAJOR URBAN CENTRES

EASTERN INDIA

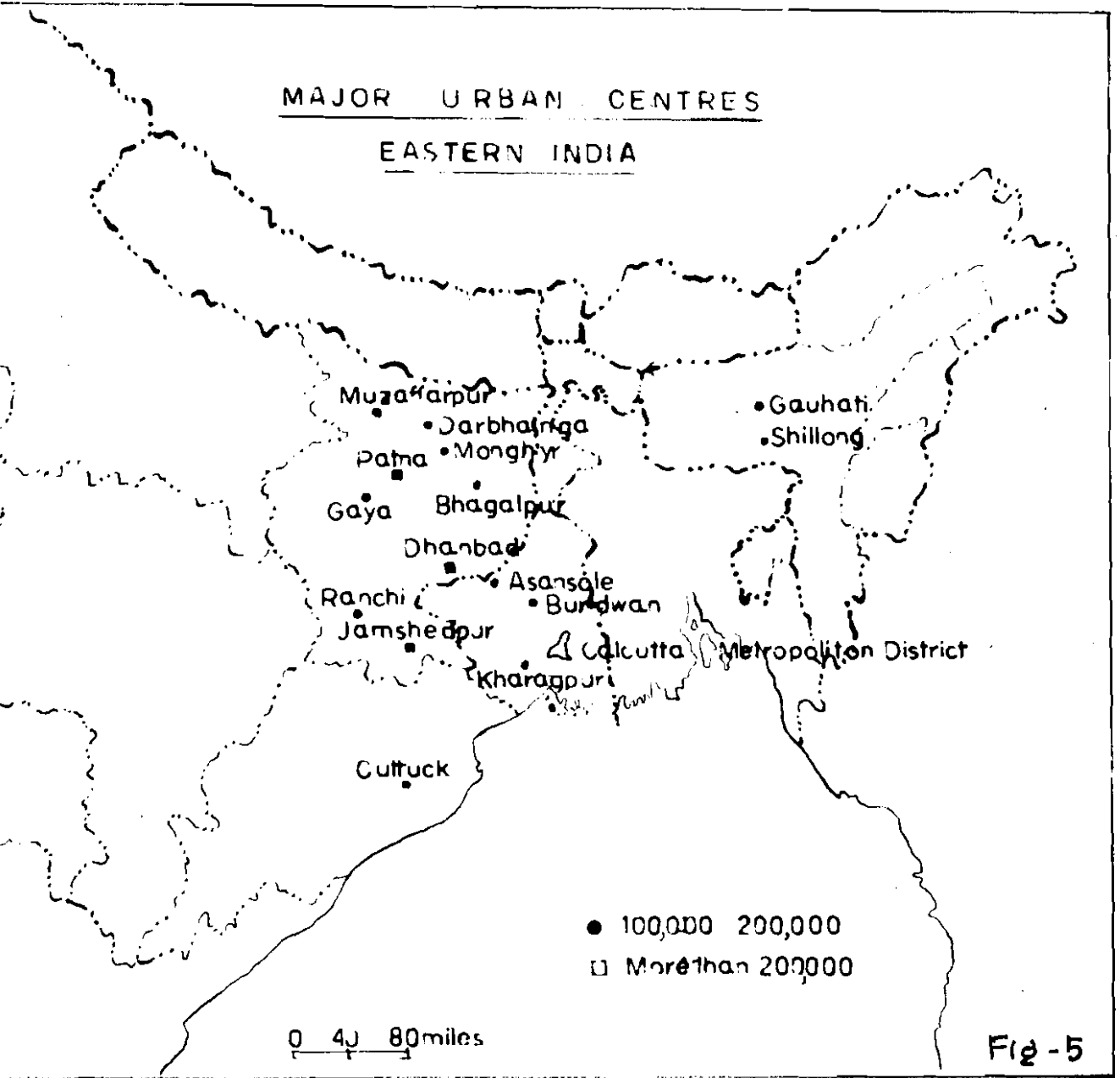


Fig - 5

Not all locations or centres in any geographical region are equally developed, nor do they all have the same potentiality to grow. The factors responsible for the uneven development may be of different kinds, but in each region one centre with the greatest potentiality to grow can be identified. There are certain socio-economic conditions and geographical factors which determine this potentiality of a centre to act as a 'growth point'. The growth point approach advocates promotion of this advanced centre, which has a certain edge over all other centres in the region. It is argued that if this nucleus is developed, maximum utilization of resources will have been achieved and maximum prosperity for the region attained.

The analysis of the general demographic characteristics of the population of Kharagpur reveals that there is a high proportion of economically active, literate, skilled and semi-skilled component in the population structure of the city. More than 56% of the city's population are found to be in this group.

The infra-structure facilities in terms of educational and vocational training facilities, power, transportation and communication and other facilities are available in the city. There also exists a favourable industrial climate in the city.

As a transport node, Kharagpur is well-linked with the important urban centres, industrial complexes and markets of

West Bengal and of India. It commands a geographically central position in a region bounded by large industrial complexes at Jamshedpur (Tata) and Ranchi in the west, Paradip port in Orissa in the south and Haldia port-cum-industrial complex under construction in the southern most of Midnapore district, the Calcutta-Howrah industrial belt in the east and the Durgapur-Asansol industrial belt in the north. It is served by a wide network of trunk roads, national highways and railways including two major cross-country rail and road links connecting Howrah and Bombay and Howrah and Madras.

Various techniques are available for ascertaining the hierarchial order of urban centres in an area in terms of the feasibility of their development. The statistical analysis of urban centres with the Q-technique seems to provide useful information with regard to the identification of such localities which can act as potential centres in the process of development in an industrially backward region. In the present case both descriptive and quantitative types of analysis together establish that as an urban centre Kharagpur is different in its character and functions from other urban centres of Midnapore district. On the other hand, its similarities in some degree to six industrial urban centres of West Bengal indicate its industrial character.

In a developing country with scarce resources, it is not only difficult but also unwise to spread assistance too thinly over the entire region as it may fail to generate self-sustained growth. Hence, instead of thinking in terms of massive and wide-spread programmes, incentives should be given only to some selected areas in the backward regions 'having a potential for development' (Wanchoo, 1969, p.9). Compared with other urban centres of the district the infra-structural facilities in the city of Kharagpur already exist in good measure hence the strain on the scarce capital resources will be less if Kharagpur is selected as an advanced growth centre in the district.

The present study attempts at putting together all relevant information, collected and interpreted, to be made use of in an integrated planning programme for an underdeveloped region. That is, a model is offered for 'growth point' study, following the method of 'case study', with Kharagpur in the district of Midnapore, West Bengal as the case.

The study, in addition to being an examination of the city as a vehicle of social change, is expected to provide a scientific method of site selection for industrial planning and its resultant economic development.

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