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Preface

About two hundred years of British rule had changed the traditional socio-economic fabric of India. The traditional agricultural society with artisans producing daily needs and a textile industry with high demand for export faced de-industrialisation under the first phases of colonial rule - followed by re-industrialisation in the line of large-factory based manufacturing as in the case of post-industrial revolution England. There were changes in the process of production, agents involved in production. With the introduction of Western education, a new class emerged, major part of whose earning came not from land but from salaried jobs.

Apart from the spread of administrative tentacles of the colonial government, other activities like railways, plantations, led to emergence and growth of urban centres in the country. Bengal was the first province to go under British rule and was subject to the changes much earlier than the other parts of the country. Though Calcutta started to emerge as a trading post for cotton much earlier, it transformed into the second largest city of the empire under the British rule. And the urbanisation of the province became centred around Calcutta and the jute towns along the banks of river Hooghly. Prominent cities like Murshidabad and Dhaka were completely overshadowed by Calcutta.

Dr. Biplab Dasgupta looked at the historical evolution of urbanisation and migration and urban society in Bengal, as a part of his *magnum opus* on economic history of Bengal. Parts of it were published as discussion paper of centre for urban Economic Studies. After a decade, most of them are out of print. So, with popular demand we are re-publishing Discussion Paper no. 29 (2005).

Dr. Mahalaya Chatterjee
Professor and Director
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Biplab Dasgupta

I. Introduction

This paper consists of several sections. After this introduction in the first section, in the second section, we set out the benchmark of our study, that is the level and pattern of urbanisation on the eve of the battle of Palashi, and brief accounts of the four major cities of the time - Murshidabad, Dhaka, Hooghly and Calcutta. In the third section we discuss the process of deurbanisation that followed the British takeover, as they pursued a systematic policy of decimation of the indigenous textile industry, and reversed the flow of bullion. The policy virtually destroyed the great Mogol cities of Dhaka and Murshidabad, as the traders associated with textiles had to fall back on land for livelihood.

In the fourth section, we narrate the process of reurbanisation followed by the colonial government to serve its own economic interests. This led to the growth of administrative towns, the *kuthis*, the jute towns, the railway towns and also the towns catering to the needs of mines and plantations. All these were needed to serve colonial economic interests. Above all, they built Calcutta as a major metropolis, a port town that was linked with the hinterland through railways and roads. Since the port towns were essential to export raw materials and import finished goods, there was a tendency for a port city to grow under the colonial patronage, to draw towards itself all the resources, including human resources, in the area, and to grow faster than the other urban centres, making it a primate city towering over the pigmy settlements, while the hinterland suffered from lack of resources. In Bengal's case this process was compounded by the permanent settlement of 1973, which brought parasitic, absentee landlords to the big city, along with their retinue, thereby acting as a major mechanism for the transfer of rural surplus to the primate city. In section V we examine the migratory movements to other parts of the British Empire and its impact on urban processes.

Section VI examines the emergence of the Indian industrialists in relation to the British capital, and the developments in the field of industries, which were parallel to urban developments. In Section VII we examine the emergence of urban middle class who formed the core of urban society and politics. Section VIII discusses the relation between village and town and the impact of urbanisation on the village economy and society. In Section IX we discuss various aspects of population growth and rural-urban settlement pattern, mainly on the basis of Census data since 1872.

II. Urbanisation on the eve of the battle of Palashi

Four major cities - all mainly based on the European Textile Trade

There were four major cities in Bengal - Murshidabad, Dhaka, Hooghly and Calcutta - and many minor ones on the eve of the battle of Palashi. Two of the major cities were built by Mogols, then ruling Bengal, and the other two by the Portuguese and the British mercantile interests. But, no matter how or why a city was built, its economic base was the textile trade, largely conducted by the Europeans for almost two hundred years [Dasgupta, Biplab, 2000c].

It shocks even scholars to learn that the Europeans came to India and Bengal three decades ahead of the Mogols. It further shocks them to learn that, this trade in high quality textiles, of which there was mainly market in Europe, made cheaper by the evolution of water transport and the discovery of a new route, was exclusively controlled by the European 'joint stock' companies, which came to Hooghly or Calcutta for conducting this trade. The ideas of modern firms with vast capital, transacting with many nations, and operating under joint ownership, and travelling in open seas with modern navigational tools, and daring their pirates on the way with their naval power, were unknown in India at that time. To describe the Indian traders of the time as 'peddlers' was probably wrong, because many of the Indian enterprises controlled and owned large capital, but they had the mentality of peddlers, running the business on a small scale on a personalised basis. There was not a single instance of a ship carrying Indian merchandise, but owned and commandeered by an Indian, reaching the European shores for the

purpose of trading, when a very large number of European ships regularly moved in the reverse direction [Dasgupta, Biplab, 2000c].

Textile trade brought prosperity and bullion during the ending years of the Mogols, but at a high cost to the indigenous political power; it also subverted the state from within. Along with the external trade, the Europeans came to control the internal trade, and the very large army of intermediaries operating between the European commercial interests and the actual producers. The ground for Palashi was being prepared for decades and centuries. It was not as sudden and as great a surprise as many of the historians would make us believe [Dasgupta, Biplab, 2000b; Prakash, Om, 1998, 3; Dasgupta, Ashin, 1994: 7, 10-11, 355].

Take the two great Mogol cities of Dhaka and Murshidabad, into account. Dhaka was chosen as the capital, in early seventeenth century, in preference to the cities of North Bengal, to fight the rebels of the eastern marshes, who were taking advantage of the criss-crossing rivers of this rich alluvial land, on their home ground. But, from the time of Raja Mansingh to its last days as capital and beyond, there was another story: it was nearer the sea at a time when the overseas textile trade had started blooming, and Sonargaon, close to Dhaka, had no parallel in the world, in the quality of her textiles. Ignoring the military aims, there was a strong economic rationale for shifting the capital from the crossroads of two mighty branches of a great river to a location that was nearer the sea and specialised in the main item of the overseas trade.

When Murshid Kuli Khan served as Dewan, and a prince, a son of the emperor, was Bengal's Nawab, he shifted his Dewani to Murshidabad (which was then known as a village called Maksudabad), because of the fear of assassination by the prince in Dhaka. This is how the story goes. However, Kasim Bazar, near Murshidabad, was an important centre of silk production, prominent from the time of the Dutch establishment in the 1650s. Another traditional silk producing centre, Malda, was close by. Running away from the knife of a potential assassin, it is possible that Murshid Kuli Khan's location decision was no less influenced by the reality of this textile trade, then mainly controlled by the Dutch [Prakash, Om, 1998: 220-221].

The third, Hooghly, remained hidden under Hogla reeds, abundant in that landscape, until the Portuguese traders, looking for a replacement of the dying port

of Saptagram nearby, found it. Until Calcutta was built, Hooghly was by far the most important trading centre of Bengal [Campos, J.J.A, 1919: 45, 64-65].

Though Chattogram, located on the banks of the river Karnafuli on the coast was their favourite great port, *porto grande* as they called it, they held Hooghly, their creation, in affection, and described it as their little port, *porto piqueno*. Their foolish military encounter with the Mogols at the zenith of their power and glory, in 1632, at Hooghly, brought their downfall, and eased the entry of other European powers, who were at that time scared of Portuguese naval power in the Bay of Bengal, within two years. When they came, one of the first acts of the European powers was to secure some presence in Hooghly, a factory or shop. Later they built their own towns, in distinctive styles, around Hooghly: Chandannagore by the French, Chuchurah by the Dutch and Srirampur by the Danes. In all these towns, the main economic activity was, it is not necessary to say this repeatedly, textile trade [Campos, J.J.A., 1919: 46, 301- 307; Roy, Nihar Ranjan, 1993: 673-690].

These were the big ones. A large number of small ones also sprang up in localities around Hooghly. Bator, a minor halt of the ships going to Hooghly, and Thana, a fort nearby, created the complex around which the modern city of Howrah, across the river from Calcutta, was built.[1] In the travel book by Cesar Frederick, there is an interesting reference to Bator, which is now a part of Howrah, Calcutta's twin city across the Hooghly river. A temporary port and settlement, that came to life when a boat came, and was folded up and burnt down as soon as the boat left: "They make and unmake a village, with houses and shops, made of straw and all things necessary... and the village standeth as long as the ships ride there, and depart for the Indies, and when they are departed, every man goeth to his plot of houses, and there setteth fier on them." [Frederick, Cesar, 1588: 23]. This shows two aspects. First,that the influence of the port of Hooghly extended to neighbouring areas that benefited from trade. Second, these confirmed the view that, initially, the authorities were unwilling to allow the Portuguese to build buildings. Baranagar, now a part of suburban Calcutta, was once the location of a pig (*baraha*) factory owned by the Dutch [Wilson, C R, 1895: 54].

Many of the towns listed in Bipradas' Manasa Mangal[2] [Ray, Nihar Ranjan, 1993: 75-76] might be later day inclusions by the village *kathaks* or storytellers,

but were also indications of the way urban areas grew in various parts of Bengal. There are, however, two views on Bipradas. First, from the names of the settlements in Bipradas, some view this as a proof that these existed at the time the epic was written, around the last decade of the 15th century. The second view is that, reference to these relatively modern settlements proves that Biprdas' Manasa Mangal was not written before the eighteenth century [Sen, Sukmar.1978: 158, fn158 in 198]. Since the experts are divided on this issue, it is for the reader to decide on how much reliance to place on Bipradas to determine the ages of the settlements.

Calcutta: almost did not happen

The last of the four major cities, by no means the least, was Calcutta, already a major city in the pre-colonial period. Built by the British East India Company chief, Job Charnok, it almost did not happen. The Company, looking for a fortified settlement, preferably near or at the coast, to stave of both their European commercial rivals and the interfering Mogol bureaucrats, originally chose Chittagong as the main base of their operation. But they abandoned the idea after 1688, when the attempt to seize the town, with the naval help from England, failed [Hedges, William, 1887-89: lxii-lxxv; Dasgupta, Biplab, 2000b].

"Hijli, being an island, seemed suitable enough at first sight, but it was not really more defensible, for the river, which cut it off from the mainland, was so narrow that it could be easily swept by the enemy's guns. It was besides a malarial swamp." The idea of making Hijli the base was similarly abandoned after a humiliating defeat, in 1687, in the hands of the Mogol army, although, thanks to the generosity of the Mogol Chief, the handful of British soldiers were allowed to retreat with drum-beating and flag flying, when they could be massacred. [Hedges, William, 1887-89: lxv-lxvii]. After this experience, the nearby Sagar island was abandoned as an option. Charnock tried for Sutanuti, "a position as secure for a naval power as the others were insecure.... it was strategically safe." according to Wilson, the historian. [Wilson, C.R, 1895: 116]

There was always the alternative of Hooghly, to which they were permitted to return, but the British think-tank drew the conclusion that this city could not be defended against Mogol onslaught. To cut the long story short, the Company had

two choices, located on the two opposite banks of river Hooghly, Uluberia and Sutanuti. Initially, the Company's London office favoured Uluberia, and derisively dismissed Job Charnok's preference for Sutanuti. Though their knowledge of these two places was derived from trusted servants of the Company working in the field, and the London bosses knew no more than what they were thus told, their know-all letters spoke in an imperious manner, as if they, only they, knew what was in the best interest of the company [Hedges, William, 1887-89: lxxiii-lxxv].

Interesting, from the point of what happened latter in the course of history, Charnock, apart from being accused of being too diffident, was also criticised for his irrational liking for a place called Sutanuti. However, the Court at London, despite heaping these abuses on him, proved, in a letter dated 15th February, 1987, that at times they could also be in a generous and indulgent mood in their attitude towards this trusted servant. The letter said: "Since he likes CHAUTTNAUTTEE so well, we are content (that) he should build a factory", but added, cautiously, not to sound over- indulgent, "with as much frugality as may be (appropriate)" and also hoping that the new factory would "in some few years reimburse us the charge of our new Factory" [Hedges, William, 1887-89: lxxiii-lxxv]. Nevertheless, he was castigated for his preference for Sutanuti over Uluberia: "Your town of ULABERREAH we understand hath depth of water sufficient to make docks and conveniences for the repairing of any of our biggest ships, and is a healthful place" [Hedges, William, 1887-89: lxxv]. In a letter that was addressed to the head at St. George - which was virtually the headquarter of the Company in the East at that time, and was latter to grow into the great city of Madras - the Court wanted Charnock to move, from his place of 'ill advised settlement', that is Sutanuti, to Chittagong, and to make it his headquarter after a 'surprise attack' [Hedges, William, 1887-89: lxxvii].

Sutanuti grew into Calcutta, was fortified during the attack by the King of Chandrakona, Sobha Singh in 1696, and three villages were conferred to the company as a zamidari of the company, in 1698. Initially, the Company grabbed as much of wasteland as it could. The first settlement at Sutanuti consisted of mud and straw hovels, and a few masonry building, protected by a flotilla of boats in the river. Over time, more and more masonry buildings were erected. The letters patent granted by the Governor in 1698 gave the British settlement a proper, legal status,

at an annual rent of Rs.1200, over the three villages; the company was free to tax and govern these [Firminger, Walter Kelly, 1917:lxv].

Calcutta: as it was at the beginning

The city was built largely around the fort, and contained many nationalities, from Europe, Asia and within India. Between 1690 and 1741, more than five decades of peace, more or less made what Calcutta became later, as the largest centre of trade in India, dwarfing other centres including Dhaka and Murshidabad. The town they built, Calcutta, grew as the trade grew, became prosperous and beautiful, and drew migrants as a magnet. Within it, from the beginning, the town was divided into well-demarcated white and native areas; the Europeans lived in great style and ostentation in palatial buildings surrounded by gardens [Edwards, Michael, 1963: 26], while the natives lived in miserable conditions.

The fort, whose defence capabilities were under question, formed the nucleus of the city. To quote Orme: "The river forms a crescent between two points, the one called Perrin's Garden, the other Surman's Garden. The distance between these, measuring along the bank of the river, is about three miles and a half. In the deepest part of the crescent, about the middle between the two points, is situated Fort William, a building which many an old house in this country exceeds in defence." [Edwards, Michael, 1963: 27]. This proved to be the case when Siraj easily took it over in 1756, and about a year latter Clive took it back from the Indian hands as easily.

From its inception, Calcutta was a British city. Ostentatious, architecturally novel, big buildings covered the area around the fort. The forest, an extension of Sundarban, began in Chowringhee, which people avoided as wild beasts roamed, unless they went for hunting or pig-sticking. It was a British city only for the European part; in the larger part, however, natives lived, performing various services for the Europeans, in hovels, ghettoes and kutcha houses. It was only as late as in the 1860s that the colonial rulers learnt, at a great cost to themselves, that epidemics know no frontiers [Long, 1983:14].

A survey of Company's land made in 1706 estimated Calcutta's population to be 10000-12000. Another estimate by Holwell, that assumed a certain density (20 persons per bigha) uniformly spread over 5243 bighas, would give a figure of

105000 in 1756, probably a grossly exaggerated figure. The figures could have been higher, but for the high mortality rate; about a third of the population died in a year [Wilson, C R, 1895: 192-193, 208]. Some estimate Calcutta's population in 1750 as 120000, and 200000 by 1822 [Basu, Mrinal Kumar, 1996: 68].

The establishment of Calcutta was followed by almost five decades of peace and trade. In the 1720s the British, for the first time, overtook the Dutch as the principal trader in textiles. The peace was interrupted in 1740s with the Maratha raid, which brought extortion from the Nawab, but also provided justification for further fortification of Calcutta, a major issue of dispute with the Nawab [Dasgupta, Biplab, 2000b].

There were two decisive arguments in favour of Calcutta, one military and the other economic. The military argument hinged round Calcutta's location on the 'wrong' side of the river, since the greater part of the country was located on the west. The British had the confidence, that with a wide stretch of water between them, they could defeat an army of the Mogols coming from the west. The fort, cause of so many disputes, proved to be one that was not defensible against land armies, coming from the north led by the Nawab or the south led by Clive.

The economic argument was based on the expertise of this area in textiles. Two renowned weaving families - of Seths and Basaks - originally living in Saptagram, and moved out as the river decayed, lived in Sutanuti, while its name indicated the existence of a yarn mart nearby. Both of these families acted as the intermediaries for the Company for a long time. After arriving they opened a market for cotton bales at what came to be known as Sutanuti. In their decision they were certainly influenced by the foreign trade in Bator, on the opposite bank, at that time sponsored by the Portuguese [Wilson, C.R, 1895: 135]. In time, the name of Bator was changed into Thana, forts were established on both banks to combat Portuguese-Mog piracy, and the foreign trade flourished in Sutanuti, particularly with the English trading company.

While all these four cities were based on textile trade, the bulk of the actual production took place in the villages, in the cottages of the weavers, with the participation of the entire family, young and old, male and female. Ignoring a few factory-like structures here and there, the bulk of production came from the villages. In those days, the present division of labour between the village and the

town, the village specialising in agriculture and the town in industry, did not exist; for both agriculture and industry the villages were key producers. In contrast, the towns specialised in trading, everywhere their main function, and consumption, by virtue of the concentration of purchasing power in those. In the case of textile industry also, town population grew with textile, as more men were needed for trading, storing, banking, loading and other related activities.

The greater part of the industrial production originated in the countryside and was organised at the household level [Buchanan-Hamilton, Francis, 1833]. In the villages, until the European arrival, like other artisans in the village, the weaver was a part-time farmer, mainly producing for fellow villagers and, occasionally, for markets outside the village, to satisfy his other needs in exchange. Until the time the textile trade took off, the 'quality' component of the industry was located in Dhaka and other urban centres, and catered to the luxury market patronised by the royal court [Alavi, Hamza, 1982: 47]. Until the boom in textile trade, probably the rural production was 'crude', while the urban industries were more developed, better-organised and produced high quality products [Gadgil, D.R., 1971: 97].

In the towns, the textile trade by the Europeans received good support from the indigenous bankers and moneylenders. Their main requirement was for the bridging loan between the times a ship left, and when the next one arrived. This was the time for making purchases and storing textiles in their warehouses, so that the ship, when it came, could be quickly loaded and sent off, thus reducing the 'turn around' time to the minimum. The way they organised the trade, they had to make advance payments to the Chief Agent or to *gomosthas*, who in turn made advance payments to the intermediaries, and so on down the hierarchy of intermediaries, until the level of the actual user was reached.[3] The companies were always short of money to pay for those advances, and the Sarafs, who controlled the banks, and in effect controlled the indigenous fiscal and monetary system, and advanced the necessary credit [Choudhury, Sushil, 1995: 65-67; Roy, Indrani, 1992]. Mughals had a highly developed system of mints that helped them to standardise weights [Prakash, Om, 1998: 4]. The Dutch, to make the relationship smooth between them and the suppliers, suggested the formation of a joint stock company by the latter, but the idea did not find much enthusiastic support.

It is not clear how large these cities were. There was no Census before 1872, and most population figures were no more than intelligent guesses. In some cases, those included the surrounding villages, in some others it did not. Town territory was not defined. Some villages got easily integrated into urban landscape, while some others could not. To make matters worse, the town was very often pushed into a new location by advancing water or moved forward as water receded. The ruins of a city were often scattered over a large alluvial plain as the city moved forward or backward with water rushing in or draining out; and this process probably worked for many centuries, while at a particular point of time, the city occupied a small area within the frontier delineated by the ruins. In this case it would be a blunder to judge the size of the city only from its ruins. It should also be noted that estimates by guesswork and eye inspection, almost invariably, tend to overestimate the figures.

III. De-urbanisaion after colonial take-over

In Bengal, most probably, the level of urbanisation was lower than that for the rest of Mughal India, given its distance from the capital of the country and the low level of development of the northern and some of the western districts; but it too boasted of a number of important urban centres. As we mentioned earlier, we just do no know how large these were. Lord Clive wrote to the London office of the Company, soon after the conquest and his arrival in Murshidabad, the capital of Bengal, located only a few miles away from Palashi: "The city of Murshidabad is as extensive, populous and rich as the city of London, with the difference that there are individuals in the former possessing infinitely greater property than in the last city" [Hunter, W.W, 1876, Vol. IX: 63, 74; Hunter, W.W, Vol. VII: 94-95, 48; Crowford, D G, 1902:4-9]. Probably he was exaggerating, to impress his superiors regarding his military accomplishments; though these four pre-1757 cities were quite large by all accounts. The population of Murshidabad rose to 165000 in 1865, before it embarked on its journey downwards [Basu, Mrinal Kumar, 1996: 68]. Some accounts talk of very high level of trading activities in these urban centres, and an extensive commercial link of Bengal with the Persian Gulf, South-east Asia, Sri

Lanka and the coastal areas of the country, but these are not well documented or otherwise corroborated, apart from the trade with Europe [Dasgupta, J.N, 1914; Mukherjee, Radhakamal, 1967:98-131, Dasgupta, Biplab, 2000b].

Marshall does not subscribe to the theory regarding deurbanisation. If there was a decline in the urban population, according to him, that was more than compensated by growth in the population of Calcutta. By the mid-1880s around 200000 lived in Calcutta, and another 100000 came every day. Murshidabad had a population of 165000 in 1815 and 146176 in 1829 (after adding Baharampur garrison?). He also admits that investment in Murshidabad declined, as capital, superior court and mint shifted, and there was a change in the course of the river. Though Hooghly town looked like an overgrown village, Dhaka was by far the largest town, having a population of 200000 in 1801, followed by Chattogram, in the East. In the latter part of 18th century 8000 new looms were installed around Dhaka. However, Marshall admits that Dhaka population declined form 150000 in 1815 to 66989 in 1830 and stagnated up to 1872, when the population became smaller. There were also other towns that flourished - such as Chandarnagore (41000), Chinsura (19000), Chandrakona (18000) and Serampore (11000); for first two of which a decline of 40% was recorded in 1872. The following were the leading textile centres: Dhaka, Lakhipore, Malda, Baranagar and Khirpai. The second rank centres: Patna, Santipur, Haripal, Sonamukhi and Kashimbazar. Next: Medinipur, Rangpur, Kumarkhali (68595) [Marshall, P.J, 1987: 17, 24, 160-161, 278-79].

One of the immediate consequences of the British take-over in 1757 was de-urbanisation of its population. The population of the two major cities - such as Dacca and Murshidabad declined to less than one third of their pre-Palashi figures, and most other urban centres of importance too suffered similar decline in their population. The population of Dhaka declined from around 200000 in 1757 to 66000 in 1830 [Hunter, W.W, 1876, Vol. V: 167-168] and of Murshidabad from around 150000 in 1757 to 46000 in 1872 [Hunter, W. W, Vol. IX: 63-64]. By the early 1870's the collector of Dacca wrote "since the almost total annihilation of the once flourishing trade in Dacca in muslin the manufacturers of the town have become comparatively insignificant" [Hunter, W. W, 1876, Vol. V: 109]. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the District Magistrate of Murshidabad contrasted the low

level of urbanisation in the district at the time with glorious tradition of textile manufacture in the past; but then curiously mentioned, by way of explanation, that "the inclination of the people is now strongly in favour of country life," as if their shift to village and agricultural occupations was a matter of voluntary choice on their part [Hunter, W.W., 1876, Vol. IX: 62]. A report by the collector of Birbhum district wrote, in 1879 "Towns once populous are now deserted, the manufactures are decayed, and where commerce flourished, only a few and wretched hovels are seen" [Hunter, W.W, 1897: 83].

Some smaller towns stagnated too, e.g., Hooghly and Santipur. Calcutta was partly responsible, as it grew at their cost. Many of them changed their character: Naihati, an old seat of learning, with a high female-male ratio, was transformed latter into a jute town with hardly a female face around [Basu, Mrinal Kumar, 1996: 68].

The second was the collapse of the urban economy and the consequent pressure on the rural economy to absorb the urban unemployed who had nowhere else to fall back upon [Mukherjee, Ramkrishna, 1958; Baines, E, 1966]. Between production and trade, the latter, located in the towns, was more severely hurt by the monopoly imposed by the Company, and the coercion and torture by the employees of the company, and the disappearance of the surplus bullion that the European companies used to bring, regularly year after year, before 1757. Those engaged with various activities associated with textile, now had to fall back on land, leaving the towns.

Another impact of the disintegration of the rural industries was on the social division of labour between the village and the outside economy. Whereas earlier the villages were the main location of industries, the towns being in the main places for trade, consumption and administration, now the locus of industrial production shifted to ports (latter to new towns) from where industrial goods were imported for both rural and urban consumption. Thus, a new social division of labour arose, under which rural areas specialised only in food and raw material production, while the towns took care of production and import of industrial goods. The traditional 'unity of agriculture and industry' within the village, making the village economy self sufficient, was no longer sustainable.

The village level self-sufficiency was also severely eroded by the massive extension of food trade under the colonial rule, and the consequent withdrawal of

surplus food from the villages soon after the harvest. The main function of this food trade was to feed the ever-increasing army of the colonial government, and the non-agricultural urban workforce, the two major components to receive priority in food allocation. The value of grains trade increased sharply with the development of transport from 200000 in mid-1830s to 4,000,000 in 1864-65 [Chowdhury, Benoy Bhusan, 1967: 247]. Traditionally, zamidars stored food surplus of the good years for bridging deficits during the bad years; but now whatever was surplus in a given year was taken out of the village to meet urban, non-agricultural needs, thus making the peasantry vulnerable to even a minor shortfall in agricultural production in a latter year [Hunter, W.W, 1897: 51].

IV. Re-urbanisation under colonial impact

The period of stagnation and even de-urbanisation continued up to 1850, when, except for the growth of Calcutta and some administrative and trading centres, virtually little urban development occurred. This was followed by a period of spectacular growth in terms of both the number of towns and the urban population. The process of urbanisation in West Bengal during the colonial period can be divided into four district phases: (1) the period up to 1856 when new towns were mostly trading or administrative towns; (2) from the 1850s to 1881 when new towns were formed, in response to the development of railways, the jute industry, mining and plantations: the number of towns was 50 at the time of the census in 1872, which increased to 72 in 1881; (3) this was followed by a period of slight de-urbanisation due to the spread of epidemics and the famines in a number of districts, between 1881 and 1911; and (4) the last, phase from 1911 to 1941, when the number of towns increased to 85 in 1921, and 90 in 1931 and to 99 in 1941 - but no qualitative change was brought about in the process of development, and no new factor promoting urbanisation arose.

Over this period a new pattern of urbanisation evolved, with Calcutta as the nucleus of a network of dependent small towns: the main impetus for the growth of these towns having came from the administrative and economic policies pursued by

the colonial regime. For convenience we will classify the explanatory factors behind the growth of such towns into the following six groups:

a. administrative decisions;

b. trading activities;

c. commercial farming;

d. the growth of the jute textile industry;

e. the growth of the railways;

f. the development of mining and plantation activities.

a. Administrative decisions: One of the early decisions of the colonial regime was to replace the highly decentralised administrative and judicial system of the Mughals by a centralised system of administration with the districts as the basic unit. Although most of the district and sub-division headquarters were located in the established urban or semi-urban centres, now their importance was enhanced by the disintegration of the village-based administration. Their importance was further enhanced by the dramatic increase in the disputes over land rights following the permanent settlement of 1793, and the consequent increase in the personnel associated with the functioning of the courts, such as magistrates, judges, lawyers, *mukhtars, peshkars* and other subordinates [Mishra, B. B, 1961a: 74-75; 163-177; 130-131].

Another factor contributing to their growth was the setting up of a number of schools and colleges at the district and sub-divisional headquarters, following the introduction of the modern system of education. This encouraged the immigration into the urban areas of the children of the well-to-do rural families for education and their subsequent absorption in professional jobs in the towns after the completion of such education [Mishra, B. B, 1961: 150-161]. The growth of the population spurred construction work and the establishment of various civic facilities - such as the shops, health centres and transport, which in turn further attracted migrant employees. These centres were often the first to be linked by railways and roads with Calcutta, which further boosted their importance and population size.

b. Trading centres: Most of these centres were located along the banks of the main rivers, particularly Ganga. Until the 1850s river transport was the most

important mode of transport, and the East India Company maintained a network of outposts for carrying out trade by the river routes. Over time, many of these outposts grew into small and medium-sized towns, such as Hooghly, Kalna and Katwa. By 1872, Kalna (27336), Katwa (7963), English Bazar - Maldah (12859), Chandrakona (10580), Ghatal (15492), Howrah (97784), Hugly-Chinchurah (34761) etc. were some of the major river-based towns. Population figures for those are given in parentheses [Hunter, W.W, 1876. various volumes].

c. *Commercial crop processing factories*: The introduction of commercial crops - such as poppy, indigo or mulberry - led to the setting up of a number of 'factories' both for the supervision of the work and for the processing of the crops before export. The 'factories' or 'Kuthies' grew in size when the planters switched to 'neej' cultivation, that is, cultivation on their own account with imported labourers from outside. Many of these 'kuthis' e.g. one in Sonamukhi, eventually grew into small towns which attracted various types of artisans and also functioned as local trade centres [Ghosal, H.R, 1966; Chowdhury, Benoy Bhusan, 1970].

d. *Jute towns*: The processing of jute, the most important commercial crop, was undertaken on a large scale and required the mobilisation of a large working force. Beginning in the mid 1850s, the jute factories were concentrated in the neighbourhood of Calcutta, along the bank of the river Hooghly, in order to facilitate their export via the Calcutta port. The majority of the present day towns in 24-Parganas, Hooghly and Howrah owed their origin to the setting up of jute factories [Wallace, D. R, 1928; Sengupta, J N, 1935; Ghosal, H.R, 1966]. Old towns like Srirampur and Rishra changed their landscape as 12000 jute operatives in three mills occupied the central area of these two adjoining towns [Basu, Mrinal Kumar, 1996: 70].

e. *Railway towns*: The introduction of the railways in the 1850s made possible the development of towns around the main railway terminals. The growth of Baharampore, in contrast with the decline of nearby Murshidabad, the old capital, or the growth of cities like Asansol and Kharagpur have been largely due to their importance as major railway junctions. The growth of Howrah was helped, amongst

others, by the location of the important railway terminus and the construction activities connected with the railway system that helped the growth of its small-scale engineering industry. Baharampore was set up as Military Barrack after 1757, but by 1872 it's population become 27110 compared to 46182 in case of Murshidabad [Hunter, W.W., Vol. IX: 62]. By 1981, the populations of these two urban centres were 100150 and 21946 respectively, the former a major urban centre and district capital, and the latter almost its satellite, their respective roles having been reversed. In 1872, Raniganj had a population of 19578, where Asansol barely existed as a settlement [Hunter, Vol. IV: 52]. By 1981 their respective populations were 51893 and 365371, the latter the most important centre of the mining region, completely overshadowing Raniganj, where it all began.

f. <u>*Mines and Plantations*</u>: The growth of the railways created favourable conditions for the development of the mines and plantations. This facilitated the transport of the products - particularly of coal, a heavy material - and, no less important, of migrant labourers, without whom these activities could not be developed. It was therefore not an accident that the first railway line in Bengal was linked with Raniganj in 1854, the main coal mine of Bengal, and a number of mining towns came into being by the end of the nineteenth century. Though coal mining began from 1777 in Raniganj, It was not until 1860's, that is, the construction of railways, that its production became significant [Hunter, W. W., Vol. IV: 109]. Similarly, much of the urban growth in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling is associated with tea plantations facilitated by the establishments of the railways [Choudhuri, Ashim, 1988: 338-342].

Having listed the main factors responsible for urban growth during the British period, let us note the following. First, these factors were not mutually exclusive, and often worked jointly to create conditions favourable for urbanisation. Many of the jute towns were also important trade centres before the establishment of these industries. Most of the major railway terminals were established in areas, which had already assumed a certain amount of importance as a settlement for other reasons – e.g. Baharampore, whose initial growth was due to the establishment of an army camp to keep an eye on the neighbouring Murshidabad. Second, irrespective of the original cause for their growth, over time, trade and commerce came to play

the dominant role in terms of the occupational composition of the population in practically all these centres. Third, the colonial policies, which led to their growth, had practically nothing to do with local agriculture; these centres were not seen as the focal point for agricultural development in their respective regions. The main thrust of the colonial urbanisation policies was export, which also explains their proximity or relatively more extensive rail-road links with the metropolitan city - Calcutta. Yet, the development of these towns could not fail to have a significant impact on the scope for agricultural development, in various parts of the province.

A new pattern of urbanization

Overshadowing the developments of these towns was the growth of Calcutta itself, the capital of British India, which grew very rapidly during the British period. By 1872, its population had already exceeded 400000; by far the largest urban centre in the region, the next largest town having a population one-tenth of the size of Calcutta. The population of the city increased even more rapidly during the first half of the twentieth century to reach figure of 2698000 in 1951, soon after India's independence [Census of India, 1951].

The initial cause for the growth was its role as the seat of power of the British Raj. Economically, the basis of the life of the city was the port, which handled the overwhelming proportion of the country's export trade; the city was extensively linked with the major urban centres in the country, particularly in the Eastern region. From the second half of the nineteenth century the development of the jute industry in and around the city came to play a very important part in the growth in its population - particularly the inflow of migrant labour from Orissa, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh [Census of India 1951]. The city also played the role of the main centre of recruitment of labour for the plantations in Assam and for indentured labour supplied to other parts of the British Empire to work in the plantations, army or the construction of roads and railways [Tinker, Hugh, 1974].

No less important was the fact that Calcutta was the main residence of the absentee landlords, who came into being as a class following the permanent settlement of 1793 and the subsequent land transfers. Through the landlords a large amount of rural surplus poured into the city; large enough to support a variety of occupations and trades catering to the ostentatious life style of this parasitic class.

The occasional famines, epidemics and other disasters also helped the growth in the population in the city and its suburbs by way of immigration of the poorer section for relief. They preferred Calcutta to neighbouring urban areas because of its more extensive road-rail link and because it was the seat of government and thus in a better position to provide relief. During the 1866 famine many moved towards Calcutta from the famine-stricken villages, as the word went around that the streets of that city were flowing with milk and honey [Chattopadhayay, Haraprasad, 1987:19-20].

Howrah, the twin city of Calcutta on the other side of the river, did not develop until the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Even by 1845, it was observed that Howrah was far from becoming the Southwark of Calcutta. Then a number of factors helped its growth: the setting up of the jute mills, the construction of the bridge across the river to link it with Calcutta, the location of the main terminus of the railway system in the Eastern region, and the demand placed by the railway for a variety of engineering works. The combined effect of these was to increase the population to 84,069 in 1872 and to 157,594 in 1901, to make it one of the largest urban centres in the eastern part of the country [O'Malley, L. S.S, 1909:31, 104-110]. By 1909 12 jute mills and 7 cotton mills were in operation, as well as 8 iron works - the aggregate employment in these plus the railways was around 64,000, that is more than one third of the population of the city was engaged in one industrial activity or another [O'Malley, L. S.S, 1909: 110].

Outside Calcutta-Howrah complex the only other major industrial urban centre, which was in the process of development was the mining region around Raniganj-Asansol on the West. Most of the urban population in what is now West Bengal became concentrated in these two areas; but the rest of the province - particularly the areas to the north of the Farakka on the river Ganga, and those on the western fringe, remained very rural. In 1872, among the present day towns of North Bengal, Darjeeling town of today was not described as a town; Jalpaiguri had a population of around 4000 - 5000 including the army personnel in the regiment stationed there; Cooch Bihar had a population of 10000, Dinajpore 13042, while Old Maldah and English Bazar had populations of 3356 and 12859 respectively. These were the largest settlements in the five northern districts of West Bengal today. On the western fringe, the four major towns of the Birbhum and Bankura districts were,

in 1872, Bishnupur (18047), Bankura (16794), Suri (9001) and Ilambazar (2235), while there was no town on the western part of the large Medinipur district and the present day Purulia district [Hunter, W.W, 1876, various volumes].

In other words all the three main features of the pattern of urbanisation in West Bengal to-day, emerged by the end of the nineteenth century as a major outcome of the policies pursued by the colonial regime: (a) a very high concentration of urban population in a small number of urban centres around Calcutta, (b) the special role of Calcutta, and (c) the lack of urban-industrial development in the larger part of the province. The overall level of urbanization was quite low until the independence.

V. Migratory movements during the colonial period

In our discussion on the village society we have emphasised on the largely self-reliant character of the pre-British village economy, and the variety of population movements generated in response to the British colonial economic policies. This should not give the impression of a totally immobile population in the pre-British days, since movements connected with pilgrimage, army, and trade were not unknown. While for the vast majority of the population, particularly in the alluvial plains with adequate rain and harvest, the economic compulsions for outward movements were few, and the alternative opportunities were either unknown or inaccessible; in the northern and western fringes of today's West Bengal migration was for many people a way of life. We have already noted that the conventional villages were conspicuous by their absence in most parts of North Bengal, where the prevailing agricultural practice was shifting cultivation and people were continuously on the move [W.W. Hunter, op.cit, Vol. X]. On the western parts too, particularly in the hilly and forest areas, the local population were not tied to land and were from time to time forced by drought to move into the plains [W.W.Hunter, op.cit, Vol. X.: 326-327].

Even in the central and southern parts the area under settled cultivation was continuously increased by pioneer agriculturists who cleared the forest and founded new villages. Another type of village was founded on the rich alluvial land created by the rivers, called 'char', particularly near the mouth of the river. During the closing years of the rule of the Nawab, a large part of West Bengal came under frequent attack from the

Marhattas which led to large scale out-migration from those areas However, even a most generous estimate of the aggregate of such population movements would probably come nowhere near the scale of migratory movements prompted by the colonial economic policies.

The colonial policies encouraged the growth of migratory movements in three ways: by increasing the demand for labour, by increasing the supply of those looking for opportunities outside, and by providing the means and organisation for such migration. Without repeating what has already been discussed elsewhere, the factors that influenced the demand for labour could be listed as follows:

i. to compensate for loss of labour power due to famines and epidemics;
ii. to undertake large scale forest-clearing operations;
iii. to provide labour in the newly set up mines and plantations;
iv. to work for the construction of roads and railways;
v. to operate the factories;
vi. to perform a variety of services for the urban population;
vii. to work in other parts of the Empire; and
viii. to man the bureaucracy, police, court and other institutions of the government, the related professions, and the hospitals and educational establishments.

The factors influencing supply were as follows:

i) the breakdown of the village industries with increasing competition from the products of large scale industries, which forced the artisans to look for other occupations;
ii) the famines which made a large number of people destitute and willing to take any job which would provide them with food and security;
iii) the penetration of money into the economy, and the consequent increase in the degree of commercialisation of the village economy, which led to rapid differentiation of the peasantry and the proletarianisation of a section of the peasantry;
iv) the policy towards the tribal population in the adjoining districts in Bihar. This was to use them as a reserve army of labour in order to meet such demand, which could not be satisfied by the local labour force.

In other words, the colonial economic policy both created a surplus labour force, and at the same time created new employment opportunities for their absorption.

No less important was the third element, the provision of the means and the organisation of such migration. The railways and roads brought ruin to the village industries, and by encouraging trade in foodgrains made the village economy fragile and vulnerable to periodic shortfalls in harvest; but at the same time their construction proved to be an important source of employment and also facilitated migration to distant centres. Long distance migration, in response to labour demand both within and outside India, thus made possible by the development of communication and transport facilities, was also helped by the active role the state undertook to organise such movements. Most of the recruitment for the coal mines and plantation was done through the *sirdars*. As for the migration outside the country, Calcutta acted as the main centre of recruitment for this purpose, with a network of depots spread throughout the eastern part of the country [Grierson, Geoge A, 1883].

During the British colonial period, three major types of migratory movements were discernible; (a) those prompted by disaster, (b) those organised by the employers, and (c) the residual category of 'voluntary' migration. The following is a brief account of these three types of migratory movement.

As for the disaster-induced migration, most of these were linked with harvest failure, although, towards the end of the British rule, political disasters, arising from communal riots, also played a major role. Throughout the colonial period, a series of famines occurred, the severest in terms of lives lost being the first and the last one - the famines of 1770 and 1943. Famines not only forced those unable to maintain themselves in the villages to move out and search for food and employment, but, as we have already noted, at least until the 1902s, also created a deficit in labour power in the post-famine period which necessitated import of labour from outside. In the late nineteenth century no less important than famine for the rural exodus was the malaria epidemic which accounted for more than one third of the population in several districts (particularly Burdwan, Hooghly and Nadia), and forced a large number of people to move towards the urban centres or to the eastern part of Bengal [Chowdhury, Benoy Bhusan, 1969a: 160-162, 173-

174; Wilcox, William, 1928: 17]. Plague visited Bengal for the fist time in the closing years of the 19th century [Chattopadhayaya, Haraprasad, 1987: 18]. Communal strife became an important factor behind migratory movement in the 1940s on the eve of the country's independence, when many people left home and moved to areas where their own communities were in the majority. During the Hindu-Muslim riot in August 1946, it is reported that about 150000 people left Calcutta by train [Census of India, 1951: 84]. The period of the Second World War witnessed some movement away from Calcutta, particularly after the air raid of the Calcutta port by the Japanese, but other urban centres were not much affected [Census of India, 1953a]. The famine of 1943 also took a toll between 0.6 and 3.0 million deaths, and forced rural population to move towards the towns in search of food [Census of India, 1951: 79].

As for the organised migratory movements, these were mostly to the plantations and mines and the overseas, which have already been discussed. Some of these were of the seasonal variety, particularly those connected with road construction, some based on time-bound agreements, as in the mines or plantations, and in some cases, for example the movement of tribals to Damin-E-Koh, these were for permanent residence [Hunter, W.W., 1897: 218-227; Government of Bengal, 1910: 33, 44]. Migration to indigo processing factors were also largely organised [Hunter, W.W, 1876, Vol. II: 102-103; Chowdhury, Benoy Bhusan, Vol. I, 1964: 128], while for the Jute industry not much organisation was necessary as most of these were located around Calcutta, and therefore benefited from the recruitment drives centred round Calcutta for plantations and overseas territories without any additional effort on the part of their employers [Hunter, W.W, Vol. II: 102-103; Chowdhury, Benoy Bhusan, 1964:128].

The 'voluntary migrants' were usually the better offs in the countryside who also migrated to the towns - the landlords and the richer section of the peasantry and those who came to serve them in different capacities. Another section were the traders, and workers in port, municipalities, hospitals and other establishments, who came from outside the state, mostly from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa, but many also came from Rajasthan, Punjab and the southern states. (In this context one may look at the distribution of skilled and unskilled workers in Bengal industries in 1921

by place of birth given in Table 1) They were the ones who quickly responded to the opportunities offered by the urban areas, and usually migrated with the help of their relations and friends or co-villagers who had earlier migrated.

Table 1: Workers in Bengal Industries- classified by place of birth (1921).

Place of birth	Skilled Worker	Percentage	Unskilled Worker	Percentage
Total	181974	100.0	588448	100.0
Bengal	71170	38.9	174339	29.7
North Bihar	27 120	14.9	36099	6.1
South Bihar	24 779	13.6	63977	10.9
Chota Nagpur	2427	1.3	122972	20.8
Orissa	15524	6.9	51766	8.8
Uttar Pradesh	35 991	19.8	68154	11.5
Madras	4180	2.3	13294	2.3
Other parts of India	3225	1.8	57535	9.8
Outside India	588	0.3	342	0.1
Same district	51151	28.1	135669	23.1
Adjoining district	13429	7.3	21725	3.7
Other district	6560	3.5	16 975	2.9

Source: Broughton, G. M., 1924, *Labour in Indian Industries*, London.

Table 2: Caste / tribal composition of the tea workers in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri, 1911

Tribal/caste group	*Jalpaiguri*	*Darjeeling*
Oraon	55543 (55.21)	1357 (5.37)
Munda	17280 (17.18)	404 (1.62)
Santal	11319 (11.25)	362 (1.45)
Kharier	6048 (6.01)	--
Khambu/Jindar	2582 (2.57)	9771 (39.12)
Murmi	2130 (2.12)	8582 (34.36)
Total	100605 (100)	24979 (100)

Source: Census of India, 1911, Vol.V, Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Sikkim, Part I, Report, Calcutta, 1911, pp. 537-538.

By their very nature these migratory movements were lopsided in their distribution over various districts. By far the biggest pull was towards the region around Calcutta, the capital, where both industrial and non industrial employment

grew rapidly during the colonial period. The second major area of migration was Burdwan district, the location of the coal mining industry and of a number of industries, which grew around it, apart from being a major centre of agricultural production. The third major destination was the North Bengal districts, which were sparsely populated upto the first half of the nineteenth century, but, thanks to the development of tea plantations in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri, a large scale movement of population took place both for working in the tea gardens and also for colonising the virgin land. (Table 2 shows the tribe and caste composition of tea workers in the districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri, as per Census 1911.) The colonisation programme in both Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling and also in the Sunderban forest area on the coast were organised under the auspices of the government, which distributed land to the pioneer farmers under generous conditions. On the other hand, districts on the western part of the present day West Bengal appeared to be losing population as the agriculture there remained weak and agricultural employment opportunities did not develop.

These trends were reflected in Census figures for 1872-1951 for various districts. Whereas in the early days of the Census, when intra-province movements were not considered, and only movement out of the province was taken into account in migration statistics, the general impression was that "the natives of the lower provinces of Bengal, taken as a whole, are above all things a domestic stay-at-home people" [Census of India, 1951, section IV: 294-295]. By 1891 this impression was corrected as district-based data became available, and the following observation was made: "It is true that there is little emigration in the European sense, across the seas, but I doubt if any nation of the Old World is within its own limits in a more constant state of movement or more ready to change its homes" [Census of India, 1951, section IV: 294 - 295].

Table 3 shows how the proportion of migrants from other states of India grew between 1881 and 1951, from a meagre 2.2% of the population to 10.0% excluding the refugees. Among the districts, Calcutta, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Burdwan, Howrah, Hooghly and 24-Parganas showed a very significant proportion of the inter-state migrants in their population. Taking the period between 1881 and 1951 into account, all the districts showed substantial increases in the proportion of

immigrants from other states, excepting Darjeeling and Howrah (since 1921) where the weightage of the inter-state migrants was reduced by the entry of migrants from within the state. Both the proportion of such migrants and their growth over time are, however, low for three western districts, Bankura, Birbhum and Medinipur, and also for Murshidabad and Nadia in the central part and Maldah in the north.

The 1951 Census of India further examined the weightage of the inter-state migrants in four types of districts in eight occupational categories (Table 4). It showed that the migrants from other states played a significant role in 'transport' in all the regions, while the next in order of importance were 'industry' and 'commerce'. Taking all the non-agricultural activities into account these inter-state migrants accounted for 16% of the workers, relatively more in the industrial and plantation zones than in the other three. They played a minor role in the agricultural sector, excepting in the plantations, both as labourer and as rent-receivers.

Table 5 shows that in 1951 immigration from other states far outweighed migration out of West Bengal. However, the districts varied widely in terms of net immigration from other states. At one end were districts like Calcutta, 24-Parganas, Hooghly, Howrah and Burdwan, with quite healthy net-immigration figures, while at the other end were two which actually lost more people in the exchange than gained from it (Bankura and Murshidabad), and several others with very low positive figures (Birbhum and Medinipur on the western part, Nadia in the central part and Maldah, West Dinajpore and Cooch Bihar among the northern districts).

Most of the inter-state migration however was in the direction of the urban areas. In 1951 the share of the inter-state immigrants in the total urban population in the state was 30.1% among the males and 28.5% among the females; but the corresponding figures for the rural areas were 3.4% and 2.3% respectively.

Table 3: Percentage of all immigrants from outside West Bengal to its total population in each decade, from 1881 to 1951

State/ District	*1951*		*1941*	*1931*	*1921*	*1911*	*1901*	*1891*	*1881*
	Total	*Displaced persons*							
West Bengal	18.5	8.5	9.5	8.4	8.9	8.5	6.6	4.7	2.2
Burdwan	15.8	4.4	9.7	7.4	6.6	5.4	5.1	1.6	0.5
Birbhum	4.5	1.1	3.0	3.2	3.3	3.7	3.6	0.7	0.1
Bankura	2.3	0.7	1.6	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.0	0.3	0.1
Midnapore	3.7	1.0	2.4	2.3	1.8	1.7	0.9	0.4	0.1
Hooghly	11.7	3.3	9.7	9.9	8.4	6.3	4.2	1.5	0.5
Howrah	12.5	3.8	13.8	12.5	13.0	11.6	10.2	6.4	2.4
24-parganas	21.2	11.4	10.3	9.3	11.2	10.0	6.3	4.7	1.2
Calcutta	54.5	17.0	32.7	33.2	36.0	39.8	35.3	33.7	21.6
Nadia	40.6	37.3	1.3	0.8	1.0	1.1	0.7	0.6	0.2
Murshidabd	4.6	3.4	1.5	1.6	1.8	2.2	2.1	1.9	0.7
Malda	8.8	6.4	2.7	4.2	6.4	7.9	2.8	3.4	1.2
West Dinajpur	21.3	16.0	4.4	4.4	6.6	8.5	6.3	3.6	0.8
Jalpaiguri	30.5	10.8	18.5	21.5	23.5	23.0	17.6	10.2	7.6
Darjeeling	22.5	3.5	25.4	31.5	36.0	41.9	45.6	53.6	38.3
Cooch Behar	21.7	14.9	2.9	2.5	3.8	4.2	3.3	2.5	1.0
% of immigrant males to total males	21.1	8.4	13.1	11.2	11.8	11.4	8.9	6.5	3.0
% of immigrant females to total females	15.5	8.6	5.3	5.2	5.7	5.4	4.2	2.8	1.3

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol. 6 (West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore) Part 1 A - Report, p. 307

Table 4: Distribution of immigrants from other states of India in the eight main livelihood classes in four zones of West Bengal

Livelihood class	*Industrial zone*	*Western agricultural zone*	*Central and Northern agricultural zone*	*Plantation zone*	*West Bengal*
All agricultural classes	1.6	1.2	1.1	3.2	1.4
I	1.1	1.1	0.5	1.8	1.0
II	1.8	1.0	1.1	3.9	1.6
III	2.2	1.6	2.9	10.5	2.2
IV	3.7	1.4	1.9	20.0	3.2
All non-agricultural classes	19.2	8.1	4.1	18.7	15.9
V	22.0	7.3	4.8	18.4	18.3
VI	17.2	6.3	3.3	19.1	14.4
VII	32.1	25.6	15.6	21.9	30.1
VIII	14.5	6.3	3.3	18.6	11.5
Total migrants (' 00)	1476	139	103	163	1881
Total population (' 000)	12515	5745	5190	1360	24810

Notes: Industrial zone - Burdwan, Hooghly, Howrah, 24-Parganas and Calcutta

Western agricultural zone - Birbhum, Bankura, and Midnapur

Central and Northern agricultural zone - Nadia, Murshidabad, Malda, West Dinajpur, and Cooch Behar.

Plantation zone - Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol. 6 (West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore) Part 1 A - Report, pp. 313-14.

Table 5: Migration between West Bengal and other states of India and immigration from Pakistan , 1951 (in '000)

State/District	Population	Inmigration from other states of India	Emigrants from districts of West Bengal to other States of India (estimated)	Net migration (inmigration - emigration)	Displaced persons from Pakistan
West Bengal	24810	1881	311	1570	2099
Burdwan	2192	235	31	204	96
Birbhum	1067	33	17	16	12
Bankura	1319	20	59	-39	9
Midnapore	3359	87	62	25	34
Hooghly	1554	109	21	88	51
Howrah	1611	106	6	100	61
24-parganas	4609	350	14	336	527
Calcutta	2549	677	45	632	433
Nadia	1145	22	6	16	427
Murshidabd	1716	14	19	-5	59
Malda	938	18	11	7	60
West Dinajpur	721	24	4	20	115
Jalpaiguri	914	122	5	117	99
Darjeeling	445	41	7	34	16
Cooch Behar	671	23	4	19	100

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol. 6 (West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore) Part 1A - Report, p. 305.

Table 6: Inter-district migration in West Bengal 1921 and 1951

District	Inter-district immigration as % of district population		Inter-district emigration as % of district population		Net migration as % of district population	
	1951	1921	1951	1921	1951	1921
Burdwan	7.0	6.9	5.1	4.9	1.9	2.0
Birbhum	3.1	3.0	13.1	4.1	-10.0	-1.1
Bankura	3.8	1.7	7.1	11.9	-3.3	-10.2
Midnapore	3.4	0.9	6.0	5.3	-2.6	-4.4
Hooghly	8.1	11.6	7.9	7.7	0.2	3.9
Howrah	7.6	5.3	9.5	5.3	-1.9	..
24-parganas	5.5	6.2	2.9	4.3	2.6	1.9
Calcutta	12.3	30.3	5.7	4.6	6.6	25.7
Nadia	3.8	3.2	5.8	7.0	-2.0	-3.8
Murshidabd	2.7	2.9	4.0	7.2	-1.3	-4.3
Malda	1.6	3.9	3.3	2.2	-1.7	1.7
West Dinajpur	2.0	2.5	1.6	1.1	0.4	1.4
Jalpaiguri	2.9	5.2	1.1	1.7	1.8	3.5
Darjeeling	1.5	3.0	2.8	1.8	-1.3	1.2
Cooch Behar	0.5	6.3	2.3	4.2	-1.8	2.1

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol. 6 (West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore) Part 1 A - Report, p. 297.

Table 7: Population density across the districts of West Bengal in 1921 and 1951

(person per square mile)

District	Density per sq. mile		Change in density 1921-1951	
	1951	1921	absolute	Growth rate (%)
Burdwan	810	530	280	52.83
Birbhum	612	489	123	25.15
Bankura	498	385	113	29.35
Midnapore	639	508	131	25.79
Hooghly	1286	894	392	43.85
Howrah	2877	1781	1096	61.54
24-parganas	817	468	349	74.57
Calcutta	78858	31921	46937	147.04
Nadia	759	472	287	60.81
Murshidabd	828	591	237	40.10
Malda	674	493	181	36.71
West Dinajpur	520	354	166	46.89
Jalpaiguri	385	292	93	31.85
Darjeeling	371	236	135	57.20
Cooch Behar	507	448	59	13.17

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol. 6 (West Bengal, Sikkim and Chandernagore) Part 1 A - Report, p. 297.

Table 8: Balnce of migrationfrom other districts of West Bengal to Burdwan, Hooghly, Howrah, 24-Parganas, and Calcutta 1951

Balance of migration (immigration *minus* emmigration)

From \ To	Burdwan	Hooghly	Howrah	24-Parganas	Calcutta
Burdwan	..	7152	7370	1796	17389
Birbhum	26732	3079	5336	1206	6903
Bankura	24235	12160	3641	2426	8306
Nadia	5232	-653	-1684	3633	13757
Murshidabad	7802	1524	1333	1850	12841
Malda	379	334	446	444	1436
West Dinajpur	293	71	251	155	1148
Jalpaiguri	9	-85	67	309	200
Darjeeling	150	36	180	807	4159
Cooch Behar	31	34	285	545	1316
Net inter district migration	64863	23652	17225	13171	67455

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol-VI, West Bengal, Sikkim & Chandernagore, Part IA, Report, p.302.

Table 9: Interdistrict emigration in Burdwan, Hooghly, Howrah, 24-parganas and Calcutta

From \ To	Burdwan	Hooghly	Howrah	24-Parganas	Calcutta
Burdwan	-	18687	13609	6306	27463
Hooghly	11535	-	39206	14654	36741
Howrah	6239	26829	-	49303	55622
24-Parganas	4510	14753	17761	-	83176
Calcutta	10074	15230	23374	76885	-

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol-VI, West Bengal, Sikkim & Chandernagore, Part IA, Report, p. 302.

While data for inter-state migration were available for the years before 1951, the figures for intra-state migration were not available for the previous years. However, the 1951 Census of India made an attempt to reconstruct the figures for migration between districts for 1921 for comparison with 1951 figures. These figures are presented in Table 6. These show that Calcutta, 24-Parganas and Burdwan, and to a lesser extent Hooghly, West Dinajpore and Jalpaiguri, were net immigrating districts in both of these two years. On the other hand, the three western districts mentioned above (Bankura, Birbhum and Medinipur), two central districts (Nadia and Murshidabad) and one northern district (Maldah) lost population to other districts in both of these years. Darjeeling and Cooch Bihar in the North showed net outmigration in 1921, but net in-migration in 1951, while in Howrah's case, the out-migration exactly offset in-migration in 1921 but failed to do so in 1951. Purulia, among the present districts of West Bengal, was not constituted until 1956, and so was not covered in these exercises.

Among the districts losing population to other districts, Howrah more than made up for this deficit by net in-migration from other states, while Nadia gained much more in terms of the in-migration of refugees from East Pakistan, and in Murshidabad the rate of population growth was high enough to keep the population growing at a healthy rate. But no such mitigating factors were present in the three western districts.

Table-7 also provides the figures on population density for the districts in both 1921 and 1951, as well as the rate of growth in density over these three decades.

This again confirms the low rate of population growth in the three western districts as also in Cooch Bihar in the north. The five top districts in terms of in-migration - Calcutta, Howrah, Hooghly, 24-Parganas and Burdwan again occupied the top places. Bankura and three north Bengal districts - Cooch Bihar, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri - occupied the bottom positions in terms of density in 1921 and 1951.

The pull towards the five main districts from other districts of West Bengal was further revealed by Table 8. It shows that in order of their importance as suppliers of manpower to the five core districts, Medinipur emerged as the most important, contributing almost half the net in-migration into the core, followed by Bankura and Birbhum; and these three western districts accounted for four-fifths of such net in-migration to the core. Among the other non-cored districts, Nadia and Murshidabad were the most important, although for Nadia we should note that in its relationship with Howrah and Hooghly it gained more people than lost in 1951. While most of the migrants from Medinipur went to Calcutta or 24-Parganas, the other two western districts, Birbhum and Bankura, tended to send more to the other three core districts. Among the core districts Calcutta, 24-Parganas and Burdwan received migrants in that order, followed a long way behind by Hooghly and Howrah.

Movement of population was by no means restricted to those from the non-core districts to the core. As Table 9 shows, no less important was the flow of population between districts within the core. Naturally Calcutta was the recipient of the largest number - about two-fifths - involved in such intra-core movements; but at the same time it was also responsible for one-quarter of those classified as out-migrants.

Taking the various Tables discussed so far together, a clear picture of the pattern of migration during the British periods emerges. Although most of the figures are based on the 1951 Census, these can be taken as broadly indicating the situation as it existed at the time of independence in 1947. We have deliberately avoided any discussion on the refugee movement so far, which we propose to consider as a major movement of population in the post-independence period. The main trends were as follows:

a. The rates of urbanisation and migration were low. In 1881, the second census revealed 6.11% as level of, urbanisation in Bengal proper. By

1891; it was a slightly lower figure of 5.59%, to be followed by 6.12, 6.48 6.82, in the next four censuses, and the Census of Bengal in 1931 reported a small 7.3% in Bengal. This happened at a time when practically the whole of England was urbanised. The province was a vast sea of rural areas, dotted by urban enclaves here and there.

b. Urban development was lop-sided, with greater emphasis on Calcutta, the main port, and its neighbouring districts, while the hinterland was neglected. Like a giant banyan tree, Calcutta overshadowed other towns and the province, nothing like which happened anywhere else in India. Nothing happened in Bengal of which Calcutta was not a party. No matter how good you were in your subject, as an artiste, sculptor, writer, player, or anything else of specialisation, recognition of your excellence had to be derived from a source in Calcutta. In the history of urban development, there are few cities that dominated its hinterland so thoroughly and completely. Even strong regional loyalties did not grow in this situation.

c. Bardhaman was the second area of concentration of the migrants; while the backwardness of the western districts - Bankura especially, and to a lesser extent Birbhum and Medinipur - as revealed by their failure to attract migrants and in some cases by their loss of population through net out-migration; and the relative backwardness of Maldah, and to a lesser extent Cooch Bihar, among the north Bengal districts, coninued, while the other three were also low density areas.

d. The urbanisation pattern as a whole did not do any justice to central place theory of urban settlements. The towns were not arranged hierarchically and were not spread uniformly over the entire space. Almost all the towns were connected with Calcutta, through railroad links, no matter how far Calcutta was from that town, while towns in the hinterland were not connected to one another independent of Calcutta, even when these were very close to each other.

VI. The Indian industrialists and developments

Parallel to urban developments were those in the field of industries that formed the economic basis of many urban economies. Deurbanisation followed by reurbanisation in colonial interest, was, therefore, more or less, like deindustrialisation followed by reindustrilisation in many towns. The immediate impact of the British takeover of India was to take away the option of indigenous industrial development. We ask whether, in case of no colonial intervention, it was possible for India to industrialise, via the textile route followed by many developed countries of today in the early phase of industrialisation. There we discussed both positive and negative aspects of this issue. On the positive side was Bengal's 'the very best textiles of the world, produced as cottage industry in both the villages and the towns. On the negative side, was that the market for Bengal's quality textiles was very much under European control, because Bengal lacked knowledge of navigational science to take their boats to negotiate the open sea, or the naval power to confront the pirates on the way. These handicaps by themselves could be overcome, as long as the country retained its independence and was able to play one European power against another.

However, taking advantage of their control over external trade, the Europeans came to control the internal trade too, and their army of gomosthas developed a vested interest in the continuation of the activities of the European companies. There was no new technology in agriculture, and its productivity remained where it was for several centuries though, spurred by the bullion the textile trade brought, a great deal of colonisation of virgin land took, and the frontier of agriculture was extended.

We also ask whether the Bengal society in the middle of eighteenth was ready for industrial revolution. We found that nothing similar to the European renaissance happened in Bengal, and the scientific attitude in Education and a craze for knowledge, were conspicuous by their absence. Taking both the positives and the negatives together, whether Bengal could industrialise without colonial intervention, is, for this reason, a matter of speculation. What is not under

speculation is that the colonial rule took away the option of autonomous industrial development.

On the other hand, given its geographical and population sizes India was in a position to reap economics of scale, and thus industrialise rapidly in a way very few countries of Africa and Asia could. Given a certain distribution of minerals over the Earth, the larger the country the greater was its chance to find those within its own territory. India also had a large market, which could be made larger through land reform, whose demand for daily necessities could sustain several industries. And yet, never a serious attempt was made to during the colonial period to industrialise India.

One of the major consequences of the colonial rule accompanying deurbanisation, was the deliberate decimation of indigenous Indian industries, particularly, textiles. Charles Grant, a former Chairman of EIC, when asked if British textiles could not meet the entire requirement of India and whether India could not be compensated by adequate import of raw materials, said : "... we have, by protecting duties at home, and our improvements in machinery, almost entirely excluded from this country the cotton fabric of India, which was formerly their great staple; and if we use the power we have on the country now, to introduce into it the fabrics of this country, so as to exclude their own, it may be questioned how far we act justly with respect to our Indian subjects; for it may be taken for granted, that if they were under an Indian government, they would impose protecting duties upon their own fabrics, in their own markets, as we have done in ours." [Chaudhuri, K.N, 1983:810]. The latter was brought under the monopoly of the company, and the weavers were offered a price that was far from remunerative, apart from the fact that, weavers were subjected to physical coercion by the company officials for violating company rules that were calculated to destroy their livelihood. In contrast, the cotton textile industry of Britain was given a gift in the form of a captive market from which all its competitors – Indians and others of non-British linkages were driven away [Dutt, Romes, 1906: 264].

The systematic destruction of the cotton textile industry, coupled with the famine of 1770 and other regular famines that followed, brought unprecedented misery to its people. According to one view, one way the misery was manifested was in the 'de-industrialisation' and 'de-urbanisation' of the economy and the

society. It now seems that neither was immediate, and it took some time for the process to work [Chaudhuri, K.N, 1983: 817-821]. Even fifty years after the British take over, Buchanan-Hamilton witnessed families belonging to diverse castes engaged in weaving. The Census of 1872, undertaken more than one hundred years after Palashi, found that a lion's share of the industrial activities was concentrated in weaving. Similarly, it took time for a great metropolis to be reduced to a mere settlement, though the population of both Murshidabad and Dhaka in 1799, declined to 20% of what it was in 1757 [Podder, Arabinda, 1970: 237].

But, no matter how many years it took to flood the Indian market with the products of the factories of Lancashire, eventually it did. Chased by the cheap, factory made products of the colonising country, backed by suitable tariff instruments, the products of the village cottages took shelter in the labour-intensive, luxury end of the urban market, leaving the vast countryside open for exploitation by the British textiles.

No less important than the destruction of old, indigenous industries, was the 're-industrialisation' of Bengal's economy in tune with the colonial economic needs. The first set of industries to be formed, from the 1880s, concerned commercial agricultural products like Poppy, Silk, Sugar and Indigo. All these commercial produces required a certain amount of processing, and an office that directed their operations – that is for keeping accounts, giving advances, stocking the material until it was sold, Both these office and processing functions were combined in the 'kuthi', a primitive version of a factory. In many cases, the forest tribal populations (buna) were brought in to work in those.

The second set were more organised and bigger industries, such as railways, coal mines, tea plantations and jute factories. But these began much latter, after the 1850s. Both of these two sets of industries were mainly owned by the British capitalist interests, and were virtually 'no go' areas for the indigenous producers.

The biggest and the most organised industry was the railways. The construction of railways has always been claimed as a major development activity undertaken by the British colonial regime. It has been hailed by no less a person than Karl Marx, as the forerunner of modern industry in India[4] [Basu, Deepika, 1993:1], and is claimed by the colonial government as one of its major

acievements. There is no doubt that railways greatly facilitated the transport of heavy raw materials like coal and made recruitment of workers from distant places possible. Starting from the railway line constructed in Bombay in 1853, and, the linking of Calcutta with Ranigunje coalfields in the following year, railways did indeed help the process of economic integration of the country [Buchanan, D.H, 1966: 136]. The capital for its construction came mainly from Britain, but they were guaranteed a certain percentage of profit, 5% to be precise [Hurd, 1983: 738].

In 1870, 51519 shares in railway companies were in British hands, while the Indian contribution amounted to only 368 shares [Buchanan, D.H, 1966: 150]. But, it should also be noted that the railways had no spread effect on the Indian economy. Most of the machines, including engines and boggies, as also other accessories came from Britain; permission to buy for government stores in India came only in 1928, the local manufacturers were given preferences only in 1931[5, 6] [Kidron, Michael, 1965: 14].

Another major enterprise was shipping and dockyard, mostly located in Howrah and 24 Parganas. In Howrah, dockyards and roperies worked since 1796, when a Mr. Bacon opened the Salkia dockyard. By 1872, there were 8 large docks between Howrah and Ghusuri. There were in addition the docks at Kiddirpur, 24 parganas. Shipping had a long tradition, before the British took over power.

The Jute Industry was located on two banks of the river Hoogly. The industry subsisted by the supply of raw jute from the eastern part of Bengal. For a long time after the British captured power, for jute manufacture the country was dependent on the jute mills at Dundee. In 1855, the first jute mill of Bengal, Wellington Jute Mill at Rishra, was open by George Auckland, who was financed by an Indian Banian.This was followed by the jute mills opened at Champdani, Srirampur, Budge Budge, Kamarhati, Shyamnagar and Baranagore. By 1882, there were 20 jute mills, 11 in 24 parganas, 4 in Hoogly and 5 in Howrah. In 1884, the owners of the jute mills formed IJMA. By 1897, the majority of the jute mills were connected with electricity, which enabled them to have an additional shift [Basu, Deepika, 1993: 6-9].

Another major industry was cotton textile, which began in 1850s. However, its main centre of production was Bombay, under the control of the Indian capitalists. In Bengal, unlike Bombay, the Industry was under European

domination. The Bowreah cotton mill, beginning in 1818, was the oldest cotton mill of Bengal. In 1830, the Fort Gloster mill started and in 1875 the Dunbar mill started, the oldest in 24 parganas. Under the impetus of the Swadeshi movement, Bangalakhsmi cotton Mills and Mohini mills. During 1910-1911 there were 18 cotton mills in Bengal, which employed 10,802 operatives [Basu, Deepika, 1993: 9-14, 24, 33].

The first unsuccessful attempt to build an Iron and Steel industry was made in the first half of 19th Century. In 1839, the Jeshop Company began an experimental iron works near Borakar. Another attempt was made in 1855 by Mackay and Company in Birbhum. In 1874, the Bengal Iron Company was set up, but it lasted only for 5 years and the concern was bought by the government. One difficulty was that the government need of iron and steel was met by British imports, which is why companies like Burn & Company could not make much headway. The Martin & Company was formed in the year 1892. In 1898, Bengal had 11 foundries, 9 engineering workshops and 9 railway workshops and two coach making factories. Two major steel companies were Bengal Iron & Steel Company at Burnpur and the Tata Iron & Steel Company at Jamshedpur. One of the reasons for the success of the later was its ability to find a market [Basu, Deepika, 1993: 18-22].

Another major industry was pottery, which began working in 1866 at Ranigunj. In 1909, Maharaja Monindra Nandi began Calcutta pottery works. Bengal pottery works began more or less in the same time at Baranagore. In addition, there were several paper mills of which the one's at Srirampur, Titagarh and Ranigunj were important [Basu, Deepika, 1993: 22, 25].

A major inspiration for building industries came from the Swadeshi movement, which began in the early part of the 20th Century. One major personality of this period was Prafulla Chandra Roy, the great scientist and educationist, who began Bengal chemical and Pharmaceutical Works in 1893. Apart from the Industries mentioned above, the Indian capitalist started three cigarette companies. Despite the enthusiasms of the protagonist of Swadeshi, the main contours remained more or less unchanged [Basu, Deepika, 1993: 25].

Indian pioneers in industry

In the early days of the British rule, in their first flash of enthusiasm, many enterprising Indians entered into a wide range of activities including plantations, mines and even fields as sophisticated as banks. Pioneers, such as Dwarakanath Tagore, had their fingers in every conceivable field of industrial activity. They, generally, sought British cooperation in order to receive official backing, e.g., Rustomjee-Turner, Carr-Tagore [Marshall, Peter, 1979: 208]. All these enterprises failed. With bankruptcy staring at their face, most of them fell back on land and an assured income from it.

Why did the Bengali enterprises fail? Was it bad management? A major reason was the British feeling, we have mentioned already, that industry was their exclusive preserve, and a 'no go' area for the indigenous population [Kling, Blair, 1976: 14; 241]. The administration was not cooperating, nor were the banks and other agencies. If it so wanted, a government was always in a position to debar their entry, by methods both subtle and not too subtle. Prince Dwarakanath lost so much of money that his son, Debendranath, the father of the poet Rabindranath, had to spend a great deal of his time in repaying loans incurred by his father's commercial misadventures.

Though the British colonial government patronised the Indian rural elite, both the traditional and the new varieties, and expected the latter to play an entrepreneurial role modeled on the British aristocrats, they were unwilling to see them as competitors in the field of industries. In 1793, on the eve of the permanent settlement, the Indians held more than one fifth of the bonds of the East India Company itself [Poddar, 1970: 234]. However, very soon the British capital took measures to demarcate their respective areas of influence.

Another major reason was that the British Colonial Government opened a new area of employment for the middle class: in salaried jobs of various kinds. These jobs assured a certain amount of income per month, whether there was drought or flood in the countryside, or whether there was recession or boom in the towns. These jobs ensured a certain income, and more so in many cases as a proxy of the colonial government. With a high education and jobs available all over India, the new government created new opportunities in contrast with unstable, fluctuating

income from business. Besides the salaried jobs earned social rank and high dowry during marriage. Even the so-called merchant castes, like subarna baniks, were lured by high caste and high salary jobs, and ignored business [Ghose, Benoy, 1972: 17-19].

According to the 1921 Census figures 33 million Indians, that is one tenth of the population of the time depended on 'industries' for their livelihood, and half of them, 1.3 million, were actual workers in organised industries, including sweepers, scavangers etc. But the 'industries' they were engaged in were mainly cottage and small scale ones, the majority located in the countryside [Buchanan, D.H, 1966: 75]. In only a few the Indian craftsmen had turned his shop into factory. In 1793, on the eve of the permanent settlement, the Indians held more than one fifth of the bonds of the East India Company itself [Poddar, 1970: 234]. However, very soon the British capital took measures to demarcate their respective areas of influence.

By the middle of the 19th century, one hundred years after the Brtish captured power, very few industries were in existence, at a time when the industrial revolution was working in full swing in UK. But the very few, that existed or sponsored by the managing agencies lacked patronage. There was the firm of William Jones, the mechanic, in Howrah, in 1910, on the canvass industry. 65 steam engines were built in 1837 and 150 in 1845, mainly for the use of Fort Gloster, the cotton mill built in 1817. By 1830 it was owned by Ferguson's; it was sold to Gouger in 1833 at throwaway prices, with Dwarakanath having one twelfth. Indians ran these machines, mills etc. but were paid less on the ground that they lacked stamina and their productivity was one fourth that of Englishmen. While British officials like Bentinck, Auckland, Ellenborough and Hardinge supported India's industrialisation, but in general Biritish interest was against it.

By the early part of the twentieth century, that is several decades latter, according to the Census of 1911, situation remained unaltered; there were very few industries, and those which existed remained under the firm grip of the British capital. The Europeans dominated plantations, jute and engineering establishments, half the collieries and two-thirds of cotton mills. Indian presence was felt in the

small establishments like brass foundries, oil mills, rice mills, boot and shoe factories, brick, tile and surki works [Basu, Deepika, 1993: 3].

Relationship with British capital

From the very beginning of the British rule, the relationship between the British and Indian capital was multidimensional, containing elements of both compatibility and conflict. The Indian capitalists, many of them beginning their career as *gomosthas* or *banians* of the East India Company or of the private British interests, had no illusion about the fact that their fate was inextricably linked with the British colonial regime and also its varied activities. They also realised that they were no more than pygmies in comparison with the major British industrial interests [Kidron, Michael, 1965: 67]. The Indian capital always sought collaboration with the British. In 1928, the Indian Merchants Chambers wanted Western Indian Match Company (WIMCO) to register in India, to hold three quarters of its capital locally, and to allow three fourth of its directors to be Indian. Foreign investemt was acceptable if their interest was not overlooked. In 1945, a group of Indian industrialists, led by Birla and Tata, visited UK and USA to explore possible areas of cooperation between them [Kidron, Michael, 1965: 69].

At the same time, as a group, they were looking for opportunities to make the most for themselves within the colonial framework that often brought them in conflict with the British colonial interests. In pressing their claim, against private British interests, they solicited support from all sources, and were not averse to mouthing patriotic rhetoric. They realised that the colonial power would not seek India's industrialisation, excepting to the point it helped their own colonial needs, but were also aware of their own limitations as enterprises as compared with their British counterparts, in the style of functioning etc [Kidron, Michael, 1965: 67-68].

The boycott of British goods by the Congress party, led by Mahatma Gandhi, indirectly helped Indian business. In general, Congress party supported their fiscal demands, including the need for protection against foreign competition. Towards the end of the colonial rule, the Indian capitalists, Birla included, wanted the British capital to be repatriated after independence [Kidron, Michael, 1965: 65] as they blamed the colonial regime for India's backwardness [Kidron, Michael, 1965: 66]. After India's independence, FICCI, the federation of Indian business interests, was

worried about the conversion of the British companies into "(India) limited" companies [Kidron, Michael, 1965: 68].

However, when their mutual interests were involved, two chambers, representing British and Indian capital, found no difficulty in working together. When in 1890 the Lancashire cotton textile interests proposed a factory Act for the Indian labourers, these two chambers opposed this legislation jointly [Ray, Rajat Kanta, 1984: 37]. Despite their mutual antagonism based on a genuine conflict of interests, the Indian capital always sought collaboration. From the early days, leaving aside exceptions like Tatas and the cotton textile industry of Bombay, the Indian capital was mainly deployed in trade and other commercial activities conducted on a small scale, while leaving the giant concerns to be managed by the British.

Success of Indian capitalists of Bombay

On the other hand, beginning much latter than Calcutta, Bombay's Indian capitalists, remained in control of their industries, particularly the Cotton textile industry [Bayly, Chris, 1988: 119]. Table 10 shows that in 1914 Indian capitalists accounted for the largest share of capital investment in Bomaby. While the wages were similar in 1900, by 1939 the average wage was nearly double in Bombay [Bagchi, 1972: 126]. Along with the British there were some Jewish, Armenians and Greek participation in Bengal's industries [Buchanan, D.H, 1966: 145].

The question is, while the Indian capital played a major role in the establishment of the cotton textile industry in Bombay, why similar enterprise was lacking among Indian capitalists in Bengal? By 1890, of the 300000 employed in factories in India, 110000 were employed in cotton alone, while jute and coal mines followed with figures of 60000 and 30000, respectively [Buchanan, D.H, 1966: 139]. In fact the first cotton mill was started by the East India Company in Bengal, in Howrah in the 1820s [Buchanan, D.H, 1966: 136], but the British capital did not show much interest in this field in latter years.

The initiative for opening cotton textile mills was undertaken by the Parsees of Bombay; by 1861 9 cotton mills were set up, and after 1875, the industry bloomed under Indian management. By 1877 41 cotton textile mills had come into existence [Buchanan, D.H, 1966: 137]. In 1921, 3 million people were working in textile but outside the factory system, using factory.

Table 10: Racial Composition of Capital Investments in Different Regions of India, 1914

	Calcutta	Bombay	Rest	India
European	81.263	41.532	70.529	65.353
Mixed	15.858	9.834	17.285	13.731
Indian	2.878	48.632	12.185	20.915
Total	100	100	100	100

(Source: Investor's India Year Book, 1914)

[Ray, Rajat Kanti, 1984: 16].

New fiscal arrangements

Fiscal policy was a major issue. With the loss of independence, India lost control over the fiscal decisions. Had India been independent, her industry would have been protected from the products of British textile factories, by ways of tariff, quota, and total bans. Free trade in the Indian context implied British colonial government was prepared to leave the countryside to the locals, while industry was reckoned as their exclusive preserve. Initially, the Europeans were not allowed to buy land in rural areas. When that ban was witdrawn and the zamidars strongly opposed such policy, the plantations were consigned to sparsely populated areas such as North Bengal or Assam. In exchange, they wanted the Indian elite to confine their activities to countryside, and to treat the field of industry as a 'no go' area for the Indian capitalists.

As we have already noted, the task of coordinating divergent British imports was left in the hands of managing agencies, while the Indian counterpart was consigned to producing raw materials for British industries such as raw cotton, raw jute, coal, indigo, oil seeds, hides and skins and foodgrains. On the other side, Bengal was the largest market for British textiles [Ray, Rajat Kanti, 1984: 14]. A major implication of the colonial conquest was that a country producing and exporting mainly industrial goods was transformed into a raw material exporting component of a mighty empire.

From the time of the First World War the colonial government, realising the logistic difficulties of defending their empire in India with the resources located in Britain, decided to allow for some industrial development in India. During the war they experienced genuine difficulties of maintaining such a long supply line with enemy submarines and other crafts lurking under water on the way. In other words, it was in their interest too, that India developed to a certain extent her industrial capabilities.

This conformed to the national sentiment, and led to the formation of an Industrial Commission. The Indian Industrial Commission recommended in 1918: "in future Government must play an active part in the industrial development of the country with the aim of making India more self-contained in respect of men and materials." [Kidron, Michael, 1965: 13]. Following this, more emphasis was placed on the protection of Indian industries by way of import tariff. The general import duties were raised in 1921 and 1925, while excise on Indian cotton textile was dropped. A Tariff Board was set up in 1921.

In 1924 iron and steel was given protection at 33.5%, along with a number of subsidies. The production of Indian dominated industries went up. Cement output increased six fold between 1922-23 and 1938-39 to reach a figure of 1.2 million tons, the output of the cotton piece goods increased two and half times to reach 4.3 billion yards, the production of paper more than doubled to 60000 tons, and that of pig iron to 1.6 million tons. And steel ingot output increased more than sevenfold to a million tons [Kidron, Michael, 1965: 20].

Latter, however, the drive towards protection was slowed down by the Tariff Board, import duties on iron and steel was lowered in 1927 and the subsidy given to Tata steel was abolished [Kidron, Michael, 1965:13]. Though the Indian industries were producing high quality ships, they were discriminated against and the British ships were favoured, as clearly shown by Walchand Hirachand, the pioneer of Indian merchant marine [Kidron, Michael, 1965: 16].

By the end of the period, 39% of the off take of manufactures was 'made in India'. Between 1939-40 and 1944-45 further expansion took place: of cotton by a fifth, of steel by two fifth, of cement and paper doubled. Minute chemical industry grew, and also new industries such as ferro alloys, non-ferrous metals, diesel engines, machine tools, seqing machines, railway equipment and so on. By 1943-44

three-fifth of the offtake of manufacture came from local plants. But the growth of Indian capital was lopsided, in 1946 cotton and jute textiles together accounted for 45% of fixed capital in 29 major industries. Textiles accounted for 40% of industrial workers in India [Kidron, Michael, 1965: 21].

According to D. H. Buchanan, Parsees acted as an excellent bridge between the Indians and the Europeans: "They are tall and well built, with lighter compelxion than most Indians and with acquilline features which are very agreeable to the European taste." [Buchanan, D.H, 1966: 144]. It cannot be said whether the closer physical resemblance to the Europeans was a factor in their favour from the point of view of the racist colonial regime.

Answer to the question with which the section begins primarily lies in Calcutta's importance as the center of British capital. Three fifth of British capital (66%, Rs 19 crores out of Rs 28 crores) exploiting minerals and manpower was located in Calcutta, the main entrepot. It was also more resourceful, compared with the other metropolis. Bombay had 23.86% and others 10.05% of European capital in 1914. But of the Indian capital, 87.26% was located in Bombay, and only 7.31% in Calcutta. Of mixed capital, 61.39% was located in Calcutta, 26.88% in Bombay and 11.73% in other places. In the first decade of the 20th century Bengal produced an export surplus of Rs 243.5 crores, while Bombay produced Rs 93.9 crores and Madras 72.9 crores. Income tax constituted only 3% of revenue, mostly indirect taxes and land revenues [Ray, Rajat Kanti, 1984: 15, 16, 47].

VII. The Evolution of Middle Class

This section explores the evolution of the middle class. As a class, it did not exist until the British colonial government took over. However, the nucleus of such a class existed even in the pre-colonial period in the forms of merchants, moneylenders and artisans and *banians* and *gomosthas* associated with the foreign companies [Mishra, B.B, 1961: 23-40]. With the expansion of the schools, colleges and hospitals at various levels, in the colonial period, middle-class job opportunities were created in the towns. Jobs were created for interpreter, clerks, typists and copyists in thousands [Mukherjee, Amitava, 1968:16]. Besides, in

Kuthis, mines and plantations demand was created for those who would be keeping account and performing other office duties. In case of plantation in the North, the middle-class workers were recruited from the South.

We begin with the role played by education in the formation of this class. And examine the rationale of this class from the point of view of the colonial government, as an intermediary as also as a purchaser of British goods. In the following section, we explore the dilemma confronting the government in the treatment of this class which, armed with western liberal views, asked many awkward and discomforting questions.

Then we deal with satires depicting babus, which concealed, on the part of the British, a certain fear of their own creation, and the rural roots of this class, partocularly how peasant differentiation gave rise to *jotedars* in the first place, also gave birth to caste differentiation, bringing some intermediate agricultural castes to the fore and splitting others. Lastly, we deal with middle class unemployment, and in the following section with its various platforms.

Western Education: the base of the Middle Class

The English education did not remain confined to the towns. The first English school was opened in rural Bengal, in 1854, located in Munshiganj, Vikrampur near Dhaka, a place known from time immemorial as one of learning. At the beginning, the rural response was hostile, as the teachers were taken as Christian missionaries in disguise. Gradually, the modern schools with their modern curriculum became a part of the rural landscape [Sinha, Pradip, 1965:36-37].

Eventually, the westernised schools, teaching mathematics and science, took precedence over *tolls*, imparting traditional education in Sanskrit. Even In Nadia, the main centre of Sanskrit education in the province, the Sanskrit tolls numbered 8, with 99 students in 1891 [Sinha, Pradip, 1965:46-48]. Sherbourne, another Eurasian like Derozio with a Brahman mother, started a famous school; among whose students were Dwarakanath, Prasanna Kumar and Harekrishna Tagore and Ramgopal Ghose. The first school for teaching was, however, not meant for the natives, Bellamy Charity School. Later, a great deal was done for the vernacular society by Calcutta School Book Society and Calcutta School Society,

founded, respectively in 1817 and 1818 [Mukherjee, Amitava, 1968:19-21, 36]. One Jaynarayan Ghosal contributed Rs 20000 to London Missionary Society for furthering English education; this was typical of many philanthropists of Indian extraction at that time [Sastri, Sibnath, 1955:56].

The problem was less with the Hindu middle class, for whom it was a matter of learning English in place of Farsi, the court language under the Mogols, and under the British till 1837. Among Hindus, the new rich, those who prospered in association with the British, took special interest in western education [Sinha, Pradip, 1965:32]. The success was less pronounced with *madrasas*, the traditional education in Islam, largely because the Muslims were still sulking from their defeat in the hands of Englishmen [Sinha, Pradip, 1965:51]. The Muslims were not equally enthusiastic about western education and continued to depend on Madrasa education, that deprived them of the employment opportunities that proliferating administration created. As a community the Muslims were sulking, as the British had replaced them from government, and as Farsi was replaced by English as court language.

The British attitude on western education was, to say the least, ambivalent. Not every Englishman or the government was supportive. A part of the reason was the view held by many that they lost USA because of schools and colleges in English [Mukherjee, Amitava, 1968:72].

It was found by many Indians later that the western education introduced in India had more of a literary flavour than a technical one they aspired. The students learnt more about Shakespeare and Milton than about science, physics or mathematics. Moreover, such education came at the cost of local language, thus creating a group of rootless people not knowing their country and its people, but knew more about England and its people and culture. Till about 1890s an independent degree in science was not established in Calcutta University. As late as 1908, of the 1200 odd students given the degree of the Calcutta University there were only 38 holding B.Sc as a degree. Bengali was not introduced as a compulsory paper until 1906. There was much cramming and parrot learning as the students grappled with a foreign language [Sarkar, Sumit, 1973: 149-152].

Revulsion against western education came in the twentieth century, with the onset of the Swadeshi movement. But even earlier, Debendranath was among

the first to promote Bengali education, through his Tattabodhini pathsalas, in the 1840s. Bankim Chandra noted with alarm the growing gulf between the English-educated elite and the common masses. Prafulla Chandra Roy, Gurudas Bandopadhyay and Ramendra Sundar Trivedi were among its early advocates [Sarkar, Sumit, 1973: 149-152]. Between 1857 and 1888, 26862 matriculates, 3032 BAs, 645 MAs and almost 3000 holding degrees in law, medicine and engineering passed their examination. Educated wanted to be either in government services or in professions. According to a survey in 1882, 30.6% of graduates, employed between 1858 and 1881, were holding government jobs. Another 35.8% were in various legal jobs, while 9.2% took up teaching assignments. Only one of them was a merchant and two were planters. The western education, they found to their horror, produced many generalists, but not many qualified for technical jobs [Roy, Shivnarayan, 2000: 105].

From this revulsion was born the National Council of Education, under the leadership of Satischandra Mukherji, in 1906, during the movement against the partition of Bengal in 1905, and funded by the Landlords' Association. Various zamidars with money conrtributed generously to its fund: Subodh Mullick paid Rs one lakh, Brajendra Kishore Roychoudhury Rs five lakhs and an unnamed source Rs two lakhs [Majumdar, R.C, 1988:44]. Under this umbrella many schools and colleges were launched, with a technologically loaded curriculum. One problem the Council faced was that the students were looking for government jobs, which were easier to obtain with the degree of the Calcutta University. Many colleges did not seek the affiliation of the Council, including B.M.College of Aswini Dutta, although they were sympathetic to the Council. A number of colleges was sponsored by nationalist leaders during this time, including the Ripon College of Surendranath, the City College of Ananda Mohan Bose and Bangabasi College sponsored by Girindra Bose. But these too were affiliated to rival Calcutta University [Sarkar, Sumit, 1973:149-181].

Rabindranth's Santiniketan represented a "poet's imaginative reaction against the factory-like atmosphere of conventional urban schools." He talked about the self-reliance of people, independent of the political context [Sarkar, Sumit, 1973: 155].

Rationale for the Middle Class

For several reasons, the British wished to create a middle class. One major rationale was to use them as intermediaries between the rulers and the ruled. As, stated in his famous minute of 1935, Lord Macaulay, legitimised the role of the middle-class, in the following words: "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern - a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect."[7] From 1844, priority in government jobs was given to those with English education [Sinha, Pradip, 1965: 34].

In asking for the Indian intermediaries, who would be English in every possible sense of the term, excepting in the colour of their skin, Lord Macaulay was assigning to them an important political function that is to act as proxy for the British rulers.[8] As we observed, elsewhere, on colonial perspective, that, given their small number compared to the multitude they were governing, they decided, early during their rule that their rule could last as long as they succeeded in building a halo around their rule. One of the ways in which this was built was by making them almost invisible in public eyes and by working through others. In the rural areas, the zamidars, a class created by them, acted as their proxy. In the towns, the middle-class played the same role, of acting on behalf of the colonial government.

The western education provided the Bengali middle-class with an unforeseen opportunity. But now, with the English oriented education as their asset, they worked as intermediaries of the colonial government, from Baluchisthan in the West to Assam in the East. The Bengali intermediaries did a good job for their masters, practically running the country on their behalf. Clearly, the colonial regime was not interested in providing education *per se*; universalisation of primary education was not on the agenda. English education was to serve colonial interests. Wood made this unmistakably clear when he stated, that the objective of university education would be to do "as much as a government can do to place the benefits of education plainly and practically before the higher classes in India" [Mishra, B.B., 1961: 161]. The main concern was the establishment of a class that would further British colonial interests, economically, socially and politically.

Even those who had earlier supported *sati* and opposed widow remarriage, like Radhakanta Deb wanted English education, as it would provide jobs in the colonial administration.[9] For many Hindus this was not dissimilar to the role they played during the period ruled by the Muslims; they learnt Farsi, the court language of that period, dressed in the style of North Indian Muslims, and occupied important professional positions, and humble positions in the administration, as clerks and other low level office functionaries.

Macaulay also thought that the westernised education with English as a major vehicle, would be more meaningful even for the work in the offices and factories [Mishra, B.B, 1961: 154]. Here, the schools and colleges, operating with government funding, were in a sense subsiding private sector activities, particularly mines and plantations, as these helped to produce skilled labour required by those commercial and manufacturing establishments. By 1882 English education became a major social phenomenon even in villages. It was a passport to a good job and a good dowry in marriage [Sinha, Pradip, 1965:41-44].

Later, the English were horrified by their own caricature, as reflected by this class that absorbed half-baked English ideas of custom, dress and eating in Indian setting. As Kopf observed, later, the Bengali middle class was trying to reconcile partially digested alien traits with unsatisfactory indigenous traditions [Kopf, David, 1969: 8]. But, no matter how they turned out at the end, initially this class undoubtedly served a specific colonial purpose.

There was another justification for the class. There was a feeling in the class-ridden British society that no society can prosper without a class system complete with aristocracy on the one hand, and manual workers on the other. Fourthly, there was an economic angle that the middle class so created would become buyers of British goods.

Wood commented, as early as in 1854, that there was "an almost inexhaustible demand for the produce of British labour" in India [Mishra, B.B, 1961: 157]. He further added, supporting university education that it would: "secure to us a large and more certain supply of many articles necessary for our manufacturers and extensively consumed by all classes of our population, as well was as an almost inexhaustible demand for the produce of British labour." [Mishra, B.B, 1961: 157]. Holt Mackenzie once said to House of Commons Committee:

"Judging from Calcutta...there has been, I think, a marked tendency among the natives to indulge in English luxuries; they have well furnished houses, many wear watches, they are fond of carriages, and are understood to drink wines" [Dutt, Romesh, 1906: 290].

Long before Lord Macaulay, the British activities created demand for middle class jobs, e.g, a system of judicial administration, and around indigo plantation. By 1772, a system of district administration had been established with the district collector as its king-pin. For a proper functioning of these institutions a large army of qualified Indians became necessary [Mishra, B. B, 1961: 177]. In the words of B. B. Mishra: "the large scale production of indigo created in rural areas a clerical or supervisory group of persons called amlas, ad another group of contractors whose business it was to distribute advance and supply the plants. In addition to these, there emerged a middle class landed interest, who held land on behalf of the indigo factory (for before 1830 planters were not permitted to buy land on their own). Together, these groups constitute a class of persons who might be called rural bourgeoisie. Besides, their salary and mddlemen's profit, their income arose from a money-lending business in which they invested their savings as means to acquire indigo lands, unlike the old zamindars who were a class of intelligent, enterprising, and independent peasant proprietors who partly cultivated their own land and partly let them to others. The formation of agricultural capital began with them, and the establishment of an indigo factory served as a means in this formation. Sociologically, the commercialisation of other agricultural products, like sugar and opium, tea or coffee, produced similar results." [Mishra, B.B, 1961: 82-87].

This creation and promotion of Bengali middle class paid rich dividends to the colonial government when during the critical hours of the 1857 revolt, when every show of support counted, the Bengali middle class was supportive of the British. It is no wonder that their support for the British did not go unnoticed. In his proclamation, one of the most prominent leaders of the rebellion, Nana Sahib sought the annihilation of Europeans, Indian Christians and "groups seen to be dependent on them, such as Bengalis." [Bayly, Chris, 1998: 87].

Banians: the first group of Indian Indusrtrialists

The *gomosthas* and *banians* associated with the East India Company formed the core from which this class emerged. It is not that this trading class had no conflict with the British and other European capital before Palashi, but that faded in comparison with their unity of interest in pushing the textile trade that could thrive only with European patronage. As we have already noted, having no direct access to the market for quality textile in Europe, these traders were heavily dependent on the European companies for their prosperity. On the other hand, the European companies, having no intimate knowledge of the Indian countryside, or of local customs and norms, could not avoid relying on these Indian traders and their agents, both for conducting the textile trade and for mobilising capital needed to make advances to the producers before the ship arrived from Europe [Choudhuri, Sushil, 1995: 65-67]. Indigenous banking had a long pre-capitalist history; *hundies* had been used as a major way of transferring money for many centuries [Buchanan, 1966: 159].

When Bengal passed into the hands of the British, the *banian* assumed a new, more powerful role. His power was derived from his proximity with an Englishman, through whom he gained access to political power. Even when he was quite rich, and required no wage, it was to his advantage to be associated with an Englishman. The latter, no matter how important he was, represented the colonial state, and association with him boosted his image.

The term '*banian*' is probably a mixture of two corrupted words: the corrupt form of Portuguese word 'vaniya', and Indian word, bania. In Madras the equivalent term is Dubash, a corrupt form of *Dobhasi*, some one who knew two languages, and could translate one from the other. Whatever be the origin, the word indicated some one who straddled two worlds, English and Indian, and helped in the exchange between the two.

A *Banian* gave personal service to an Englishman, on matters financial and commercial. He was the intermediary through whom the English gathered his profit from all types of business. In the process, the *banian* also took his share. "He missed no opportunity of benefiting from his master's folly or neglect", thus said a Company servant. Bolts described the *banian* as, "interpreter, head book keeper, head secretary, head broker, the supplier of cash and cash keeper and in general

also store keeper." [Bolts, William, 1772, Vol.I: 84; quoted in Marshall, P.J, 1976: 45]. In fact, he acted as everything for an Englishman, seeking profit from his business activities without sweating. What the *banian* took as his remuneration, or, as compensation for his labour was of little consequence; no more than a token payment for his services. Some took wage for their labour. Kantobabu, Hasting's *banian*, took a wage of as little as Rs.15 to 20 a month. Some others took commissions, of about 10%. But he was well paid in terms of the deductions he made, of which the master had the haziest of knowledge. For 30 years since Palashi, both they and their masters benefited from "opportunities for taking bribes, misappropriating revenue, and speculating in salt". Their income came mostly from those activities [Marshall, P. J, 1979: 192, 195].

Some of the b*anian*s were so rich that they helped their masters by lending them money, apart from the help they rendered with their linguistic skill and knowledge of intricacies of the market. Huzuri Mal had claims on at least 20 Englishmen, Ghosal on 48, at 9-12% interest rates [Marshall, P. J, 1979: 199, 203]. The Indian merchants became *banian* without compromising their independence. In many cases, it was not easy to discern from their activities, who was working for whom. In some cases the *banian* in effect acted as the senior partner in taking many decisions, while paying 20-25% of the profit to European, almost as if he was paying out a fixed commission for lending their names to the business. Some noticed that Banians assumed air of insolence when talking to such Europeans; as if they knew their relative contributions to the undertaking they had [Kling, Blair B, 1966: 57].

Some were of humble origin, when they began their service; but they ended by making a big fortune, in the company of an Englishman. All of them adapted themselves to new opportunities after the conquest.[10] Money earned for them social status, which they enhanced by buying land. But rags to riches stories were rare. Most were men of some substance when they entered the services of an Englishman.

*Banian*s were mostly from the top three castes, Brahman, Baidya and Kayastha.[11] But, there were also some from other, intermediate castes, like Motilal Seal and Ramgopal Ghosh.among them [Kling, Blair, 1976: 57]. In their case, the aristocracy of birth was replaced by the aristocracy of wealth. Wealth counted no

less than birth in the towns; but it would be too much to suggest that caste did not matter, and being born in a low caste created no handicap. Radhakanta Deb, an adversary of Rammohan, grandson of Nabakrishna Deb, Persian interpreter of the company, a *sudra* by birth, was a leader of Kayasthas, and by 1830 emerged as the mouthpiece of Brahmanism. He was a good example of vertical mobility. They were contrasting characters. As Sir Edward Hyde East, Chief Justice of Supreme Curt, observed, "While Rammohan saw English education from an intellectual standpoint, Radhakant Deb for sheer practical consideration, as the Hindus learnt Persian during Muslim rule. For 30 years he was an active Director of Hindu College. He was all for English education, and saw it as opportunity for the Hindus." [Ahmed, A.F. Salahuddin, 1963: 11, 13, 15, 20, 28-29]. Many prominent citizens of Calcutta were not from one of the top three castes; over time, what mattered more than caste qualifications at the birth were his accomplishments and ability to earn money in later years [Ray, Rajat Kanta, 1984: 52].

*Banian*s were "... largely of obscure caste origins inspite of their surnames, who subsequently raised their caste status by adopting the cultural and religious customs of higher castes. They spent their money buying land, building bathing ghats and temples, exhibiting dancing girls, and lavishly fulfilling their religious and familial obligations" and were not the cultural type. Their descendents were more literate, like Radhakanta Deb or Tarini Charan Mitra, a teacher at Fort Williams [Kopf, David, 1969: 61]. We have already seen that they made common cause with the British during Palashi [Mishra, B.B, 1961:76-78].

The next generation of the *banian*s constituted the core of Calcutta's aristocracy. They were famous for the money they owned and earned, and dominated the Bengal society of Calcutta. Their origin was not remembered, while their wealth was appreciated. Many of them combined genuine trading activities with service under Europeans, as Darpanarain, one of the senior members of the Tagore family did. They furthered their social status by buying new zamidaris. Laha, Mullick and Seal gained from the foreclosure of mortgages. The founder of Dhaka Nawab family came from Kashmir and then, from the beginning of 19th century, amassed wealth. Raja Baikuntha De, the Kars and Bhagwan Das purchases land in Balasore after 1828. But not all the aristocrats went for the purchase of land. Palchoudhuri family of Ranaghat, began as humble betel traders,

but benefited from the disintegration of Nadia Raj. Seth-Basaks or Ramdulal Sarkar did not go for zamidaris. Further, many purchased land when their commercial and industrial ventures failed.

Often the zamindars themselves auction-purcahsed their own land put on sale - the most notable being the Maharaja of Burdwan, buying those under fictitious names. They also sold off over-assessed land and purchased the under-assessed ones. Selling a large part of Bishnupur Raj, Nawab of Murshidabad purchased Midnapore forest pargana land; in Midnapur, Mahisadal gained at the cost of Mynachura. In Dinajpur also four families benefited from auction-purchase. Managers of Birbhum grabbed most of the land, and some by merchants. In 1810 the majistrate of Dinajpore described the 'auction purchasers' as 'low people' in the payroll of zamindars. Half of Chandradwip was grabbed by the Manager. In Midnapore 'char yarees', four lawyer friends, cheated their clients. Often big zamidars lost land by non-payment of credit, and it went to *banian*s. Amlas, government servansts connected with land, were also land purchasers. In Orissa, out of 232 estates owned by Bengalees, 61.5% were of amlas. They were normally the ones to know first of the estates on sale and their worth, and had the ability to manipulate. Land was also purchased by professionals - mukhteers, pleaders, judges and doctors, in particular, who saw property 'as a medium of safe investment of their saving' [Chowdhury, Benoy Bhusan, 1983a: 111-118].

In industrial activities some found an alternative outlet. But, one way or another, they maintained close links with the English establishment. Many of the merchant and business families moved to property business when they lost money in those non-land ventures. Ramdulal De belonged to that age when, as a gomostha, he was able to amass a huge fortune by selling cargo valued at Rs 367.20 lakhs to 155 vessels. And this spectacular success was achieved without knowing a word of English [Mukherjee, Amitava, 1968: 19]. Among those who entered into joint Indo-European ventures, notable were, apart from Dwarakanath, Rustomji Cowasji, and Motilal Sil. The first two were also in the Union Bank, the biggest institution in Bengal during 1830s and 1840s, shipping companies, insurance companies, coal mining and salt trade, while Sil was also engaged in money market dealings. Dwarakanath had six indigo factories [Poddar, 1970: 234, 5]. All his ventures failed.

One of the most prominent among the zamidar followers of the East India Company, both before and after Palashi, was Raja Krishna Chandra of Krishnanagar, Nadia. Apart from owning almost all land in Nadia region of South Bengal, he drew towards himself the best of Bengali culture. Stalwarts like Bharat Chandra and Ramprasad Sen and Gopal Bhanr were members of his court. In addition, he was supposed to be the main defender of Hindu faith against the Muslims during his time. He was not a banian himself, but was close to the East India Company at the time of transition to power.[12] However, his association with the East India Company did not prevent his being a revenue-prisoner and his zamidari disintegrating [Sastri, Sibnath, 2001:9-14].

In contrast, Jaikriishna Mukherjee of Uttarpara built his zamidari as a banian. He was associated with the 14th regiment of Foot that took over and plundered Bharatpur. His father had invested in Agency Houses that failed. Jaikrishna was record keeper of the Hooghly collectorate, and he used his information regarding estates on sale to purchase those 'which went for a song', and thus the foundation was built of the prosperity of the family.

Ruttoo Sarkar was the first prominent *banian* who was rich before 1757, had nine houses, rented eight of them to Europeans and 11 Europeans owed to him in bond. Nabakrishna was associated with Clive, until he left in 1759, and joined him again in 1765. Nabakrishna was "much courted by the Indians and Englishmen alike." He had a big fortune in Burdwan, Sutanuti and Baghbazar. When he died, he was worth Rs 10 crores. It is said that he spent a million rupees for his mother's funeral ceremony (*sradh*). Before the British rule was imposed, his family served the Nawabs.

Gokul Ghosal, associated with Henry Verelst from 1760, was son of a rich man, and one of the Company's early revenue farmers. He first made fortune as salt trader. It is reported that he abused his power as an official to make money - as Diwan of Chittagong. In 1779, when he died, he had 24 houses in Calcutta, property in Chittagong, Sandwip, trade in salt, and was worth Rs 10 million.

Though the first fortunes of the Kandi family was made before Palashi in money-lending and silk, a prominent member of the family, Radhakant, worked with land revenue department and then become collector of Octroi at Hooghly, a lucrative job. Ganga Govinda Singh was made Diwan by Hastings in 1772. His

grandson, Krishna Chandra Singh, abused his power as Diwan to amass property in Orissa.

Kassim Bazar's Nandy family was linked with silk business; but Kantubabu, its real founder, was connected to Hastings, first as writer, and then as *banian*. He was also connected with Francis Sykes. Hastings favoured him with land at low revenue after the 1772-77 settlement. His father was a silk merchant doing business with the Company.

Huzuri Mal was quite rich before he joined as *banian* of one European in 1759. He was the brother in law of Omichand, the richest man of the 18th century. Like them, the Sovabazar family of Nabakrishna Deb, one of whose descendents was Radhakanta Deb, a major adversary of Rammohan, Derozio and Vidyasagar, became wealthy by his British association. Gobindara Mitra was Holwell's black deputy who collected money on behalf of himself and Holwell.

Nemaicharan Malik, *banian* of James Ellis and Nicholas Grueber, was worth Rs 8 milllion, when he died. Other *banian*s of substance were Santiram Sinha, Kashinath, Ramlochan, Ramcharan Roy and Ramratan Tagore [Marshall, P.J, 1979: 194-199]. During the 1830s, the Indians, led by the grandfather of the poet Rabindranath, Dwarakanath, who was not *banian* but some of his ancestors were, entered into many business activities, such as indigo, poppy, silk, coal, shipping and banking, among others. Prosanna Kumar Tagore, of the older section of the family, moved over to legal business and went for large scale investment in land after loosing money in indigo business and his lawyers handled his affairs badly in the court. Those connected with Watson & Co, having extensive business in silk and indigo, went to purchase land in Midnapore. In Chittagong, many clerical Baidya families purchased land, then they lost to merchants; out of 8 major estates 3 belonged to clerical families and 4 to merchants, while one was split up into many shares.

Ramram Basu, the best known pundit of Fort Williams College, was a Bengali kayastha, born in 1757. He became munshi to John Thomas, an indigo planter and missionary like William Carrey when he came. He taught Carey Bengali and Sanskrit, and helped him to translate Bible into Bengali in1796. It is said that he was sacked after he made a widow pregnant and made her abort. He was reconciled later and became associated with Fort Williams College. In

Jnanodoy Ramram Basu catalogued several failures of Hinduism, latter elaborated by Rammohan and Debendranath. He even protrayed Brahmins as bad and conspiring. Carey was happy that it exposed the "folly and danger of the Hindu system." Ramram later composed Christ's messages in Bengali. But he was never converted and died a Hindu [Kopf, David, 1969:121-125].

This brief survey of some of the prominent *banian*s shows that they were quite rich when they entered the services, but became richer as *banian*s. They helped their masters to circumvent the East India Company's monopoly in salt. The importance of a *banian* was dependent on the position of his English patron in the official and social hierarchy. The *banian*s of the Governor Generals were, obviously, at the top. Clive, Warren Hastings, and Verelst all had *banian*s. Cornwalis was the first governor who had no *banian*. From 1780s, Managing Agencies eventually replaced the *banian*s, in the management of the enterprises of the Englishmen in the 1780s [Marshall, P.J, 979: 205-206].

Relationship with the rulers: a paradox

Educating the Indian middle class with the best of English literature and language had its grave risks. After a period of honeymoon, the relationship turned sour, as the middle-class learnt more about English values and ideals than what Lord Macaulay desired. Very soon, they began asking some awkward questions. The first question they asked, having completed their education, was whether the liberal orientation and outlook of the education imparted to them fitted in with the subjugated status of their own colonies. They were not satisfied with the answer that while it was good for one part of the globe, it did not apply to their part for some inexplicable reason. Democracy and popular participation were legitimate demands and aspirations of the masses of the colonising country, but were not to be the agenda of the masses in countries subjected to the absolutist colonial state. It was a matter of time before this double talk was to be exposed.

The paradox became more acute when, thanks to the hard work done by the British and German Orientalists, it was confirmed that the Indian and the Europeans belonged to the same racial background - Aryan. Apart from anything, this discovery struck at the very root of European claim of racial superiority. Given

that a few thousand of years ago the ancestors of both began their outward journey from the same place, the slopes of Caucasus, it could no longer be said that the Indians were inferior to them, and hence the conquest was justifiable.

A new explanation was now forwarded, we have seen, in terms of the degeneration suffered by the Indian branch of the Aryans, since the days of their living together in the slopes of Caucacius. The Indian Aryans lost their purity by thoroughly mixing with the indigenous population, and adopted the absurd fables and monstrous superstitions of the local population. No less responsible was the tropical climate that sapped energy and vitality. The Indian present resembled what Europe was like many centuries ago, since when the Indian life had been frozen, while that of Europe flourished and moved away many light years from that point of common origin. The colonial intervention had the effect of de-freezing that static life that had remained unchanged from time immemorial. There was also an alternative explanation, in terms of anarchy that left them "a masterless multitude swaying to and a fro in the political storm", from which only be British could rescue them. It was providence that called upon the British to "replace and improve" their predecessors [Metcalf, Thomas R, 1995: 86, 89-90, 111].

In response to the questions raised by the middle class, armed with the liberal literature of the west, the English administrators took recourse to satire, depicting the Indian middle-class as Babus, unfit for practically any tasks. To the ICS (Indian Civil Servants), the bhadraloke - who had lost touch with people, ape the British, were hybrid, a laughing stock, produced nothing but words - was not to be trusted [Broomfield, J.H, 1968:25].

While this class was created to ape the colonial masters, but when they actually began doing this, they became the subjects of ridicule and laughter. In 1932, Holt Mackenzie wrote that they had a marked tendency to indulge in English luxuries, forgetting that was exactly the rationale for bringing this class into being [Mishra, B.B, 1961: 153].

It is not clear whether the satire was directed against the middle class as a whole or a section of it. If it was directed against the *banian*s or the wealthy among the middle class, this could only be justified from the point of view of the Indian masses, and not from that of the colonial government. There is no doubt that all sections of this class emulated the British culture, more in terms of its language,

dress code and eating etiquettes, more or less, in their own ways. According to some, to be like the British one had to cultivate various dress codes. According to some others, going to the prostitutes or entertaining *baijis* was a part of their life style. Some others combined feudal habits with what they thought were English habits. They spent the daytime in sleeping and maintained a parasitic existence and spent with prostitutes at night. If, after this, they had spare time, they engaged those in flying kites and birds, marriage of pets, funerals, spending crores of rupees, or in music.and kabigan. One of the noted poet-singers of kabigan was Anthony Firinghi, one of mixed caste, with a French origin. It is needless to say, that such habits could be cultivated by only those who had adequate income of rent from land. [Sastri, Sibnath, 2001: 40-41].

There were several satires written by Bengalis themselves about Babus, which were merciless in ridiculing their ostentatious living and emulating the British. The first Bengali novel of the time, *Alaler Ghare Dulal*, was a satire. This was followed by *Hutom Panchar Naksa* and *Kalikata Kamalalay* [Bandopadhyay, Bhabani Charan, 1979; Nag, Arun, 1991; Ghose, Benoy, 1972: 15].

The new rich consisted of people of diverse social origin. But most of them were *banian*s, who were looking for social recognition. In a feudal society, ownership of land and sleeping with prostitutes were norms followed by feudal families. Similarly, in the English society there were certain behavioural norms. The new rich wanted to acquire those to elevate themselves in the eyes of the Englishmen and the established Indians. Most of them were linked as *banian*s with Englishmen, one way or the other, such as the Tagores of Pathuriaghata, the Ghosals of Kidderpore, the Singhas of Jorasanko and Paikpara, the Devs of Sovabazar, the Duttas of Hathkola and Wellington, and the Dey-Sarkars of Simla. In one or two generations they came to form the nucleus of Calcutta's new urban aristocracy [Ghose, Benoy, 1972: 15]. Vivekananda once told about them that they were no more than "a few hundred modernised half-educated and denationalised men" who were "all the show of modern English India" [Chakravorty, Jagannath, 1977: 113 (Atin Bose)].

Various strata in the urban population of Calcutta had their own sub-culture, consisting of separate sets of schools, temples, social clubs and paras for various migrant streams, particularly those coming to Calcutta from various

districts. But, overriding all those was the concept of Bengali Culture, and a sense of pride in Bengali language. This was, no doubt, the contribution of the Bengali middle class. A few exceptions like Rabindranath Tagore and Madusudan Dutta notwithstanding, most authors of Bengali prose and poetry belonged to this class, and can genuinely take the credit for its excellence. While their wealthier counterparts specialised in aping Englishmen and in ostentatious living, most of these middle class bhadroloks had to struggle hard for an acceptable life style, often living in messbaris and boarding houses, and directly learning from experiences in mines, plantations and jute factories.

When opportunities came, a section of the upper crust of this middle class, so derided by the English, competed successfully with Englishmen in open competitive examinations held in London, in foreign surrounding, in a foreign language. Though those who flocked in London, in ever increasing number for this purpose, were sub-servient and loyal to the colonial rule, their success in open competitive examinations over English boys of the same age, braving cold and other handicaps, delivered a hard punch to the concept of racial superiority, the foundation on which the British colonial government was based. It showed that, in a level playing field, Bengalis could match the rulers point by point.

The first to succeed in the competitive examination, held in London in 1863, was an elder brother of the poet, Rabindranath, Satyendra Nath Tagore. No doubt, his presence was resented by the public school boys in England, who got fewer marks than him, a Bengali *baboo*, an object of ridicule and fun. The authorities manipulated the examination to bar Indian entry, but failed in their endeavour. Indians were usually posted in obscure areas, to minimise the damage [Ballhatchet, Kenneth, 1980: 6].

Then came others. Surendranath Banerjee, Ramesh Chandra Dutt, and Biharilal Gupta, together, in 1869 [Mason, Philip, 1985: 252-3]. But, Banerjee was initially discarded on the ground of falsifying his age, and was reinstated after a court appeal, only to be terminated again, within one year, because of some mistake in filling a return. There was a feeling among the Indians, after this case, that despite the queen's proclamation in 1858, that no discrimination would be made among her subjects on grounds of religion and creed, Indians were not welcome at the highest level of governance, despite meeting all the qualifications

[Broomfield, J.H., 1968: 66; Mason, Philip, 1985:252-3; Ray, Rajat Kanti, 1984: 93].

In Romes Dutt, the contradictions this class suffered from were ruthlessly exposed. It was he who played an important role in revealing British hypocrisy, particularly in transforming the province from one exporting manufactures to exporting raw materials for the British industry. But, having said all these, he made a surprising statement, which indicated that he wanted the British rule to strengthen itself by purging its abuses. Dutt said, that the virtual exclusion of Indians from the top "makes the British rule needlessly unpopular and weakens the empire." [Dutt, Romes, 1906:325].

Urban Middle Class with rural roots

The middle class in the towns had their origin in the villages, and they came in different streams, occupying varying places in the town hierarchy. Like other classes, it became stratified in due course, into upper and lower middle classes. Obviously, the first group had its origin in the zamidar. They were the absentee landlords, many of whom came to Calcutta after the permanent settlement of 1793. They were reinforced by new zamidars who purchased land and became aristocrats. Many of their family members joined the first group of professionals, as lawyers, doctors, accountants and other professionals. Many of them burned their fingers when attempting to become industrialists.

The lower middle-class, working as clerks, typist and other similar occupations, originally came from the richer peasant families or from lower level under-tenure holders. Like others, they derived a part of their income from land and maintained connections with their villages [Government of Bengal 1925:11]. Over time, their bundle of connections and transactions within the urban centres, far exceeded those with the rural areas. After a few generations the family became divorced from land and became a full time citizen of the urban areas.

The middle layer between the two is not easy to define. Most probably, they originated from both the ends - zamindars, as also jotedars and under-tenure holders - and performed middle level jobs. The matching of the urban occupations with their rural roots was far from perfect. The society was more mobile than in the

past, while the urban societies, almost by definition, more mobile and less rigid than their rural counterparts [Ray, Rajat Kanta, 1984: 52].

The concept of bhadralok and Grihasta

The definition of the middle class was basically economic. The Bengali equivalent of Middle Class was 'Madhya Bitta', the first word meaning 'middle' and the second 'wealth'. This class stood between the rich and the poor. But it had a caste implication also. Most of the middle class belonged to the upper three castes, and were popularly known as *bhadralok*, which meant 'civilised people'. The implication of this definition was that, the other caste groups, apart from these three, were 'uncivilised'. Defined this way, in status this class enjoyed a higher category than middle - it was at the top. The hallmarks of this class were abhorrence for manual work and love for education. It was not wealth or income that made this class, but education. By definition, it was not a closed elite; it was possible for the highest achievers belonging to other castes to join it. It was only education and merit that counted [Broomfield, J.H., 1968: 6,8-9,14]. In practice, there were difficulties for those belonging to other than the top three castes to join their ranks. The top three castes resented the intrusion of 'chasis' in their category [Broomfield, J.H., 1968: 16].

Bhadralok was indeed a mixed category, including many big or small householders, and not an economic or occupational category. Only wealth or employment did not make one a bhadrolok. In status terms they were upper and not middle class, but in Marxian sense of an economic group, included both above and below middle class. To quote Alfred Cobban, it included 'a few big fish, many of the moderate size, and host of minnows, who all knew that they swam in the same element, and that without the pervasive influence of the social hierarchy and the maintenance of individual and family property rights, their way of life would come to an end.' (Cobban talked about bourgeois in late 18th century France). [Broomfield, J.H, 1968: 14].

The *bhadralok-chotolok* dichtomy in the towns was as powerful as, and comparable with, the *Chasi-Grihastha* dichotomy in the villages. In the later, every one had some interest in land, but the *grihasta* seldom used his or his family member's labour power for the cultivation of his land. He employed others to

cultivate the land he owned, and received rent from them. Whatever land they had, the *grihasta*, like jotedars, got cultivated by sharecroppers and landless labourers. Grihasta was almost synonymous with rent-receivers. Others in the village, who soiled their own hands to turn the land, were described as 'chasis' [Broomfield, J. H, 1968: 6-7].

Whereas in the towns the distinction was based on education, in the villages it was made in terms of holding the plough. In most cases these two categories matched, because both bhadrolok and grihasta mainly consisted of the three main upper castes. Renaissance reduced the gap within three castes, but that between them and others remained [Broomfield, J.H, 1968: 15]. In most cases, *bhadraloks* in the towns and the *grihastas* in the villages belonged to the same family of under-tenure holders or *jotedar*s, the land connections easing the supply of rice and other agricultural produce to the 'urban component' of the family. In many cases, they left the substantial part of the family behind, while the adult males were engaged in their professions and the minor boys received their education in schools. The 'urban' members of the family, when no more than one or two, often made make-shift arrangements for their stay in the towns; messbaris, or boarding houses of adult males, with only a permanent cook and a manager, accounting based on cooperative principle, thrived on their clientale.

By all accounts, *bhadrolok* was a socially privileged group, which kept its distance from the illiterate masses and manual labour, and took pride in their English-orientated education, sophisticated culture and accent, as well as language [Broomfield, J.H., 1968: 12]. They were addressed by *chotalok*s and *chasis* as 'apni' (thou), while they themselves addressed the latter as 'tumi' (you). This movement of chotoloks was in response to both powerful demand and supply factors. On the demand side, creation of many new urban opportunities provided the necessary stimulus. On the supply side, there was now a steady flow of outmigrants from the villages.

Most of the outmigrants belonged to the top three castes, who were among the first to quickly seize the new opportunities. They were the first wave to become lawyers, doctors, professors, and accountants in the towns. In the second wave, those who belonged to the 'intermediate' or 'dominant' castes, using the terminology of social anthropology, joined in large number. As it is always the

case, in the villages, the other caste groups followed the cultural norms and modes of the dominant category, *grihasta*. Since, the family members of *grihasthas*, manually did not participate in agriculture, following their cultural norms involved withdrawal of family members from active agriculture. By undertaking this action, a particular caste group approximated the grihasthas, and later claimed their comparable ritual status.

Peasants originally, over time the rich peasants had become prosperous and wealthy in various ways[13], producing a surplus over and above their consumption needs, and continuously interacting with the market. Emulating the life style of the three top castes, to become recognised as *bhadrolok*, they withdrew their family labour from cultivation, and often moved to the towns. They engaged sharecroppers or agricultural labourers to get their land cutivated [Mishra, B.B., 1961: 84-87] in contrast with other sections of the rural society. As they were claiming grihastha status in the villages, they made similar claim, to be recognised as *bhadraloks* in the towns. The aspiring *bhadraloks*, former cultivators who divorced themselves and their family members from agriculture to gain *grihastha* status, now became a major source of the middle-class in the towns. It was easier for them to be recognised as *bhadraloks*, the urban society being less rigid and more mobile.[14] However, their 'intrusion' in what was considered so long as an exclusive preserve of the upper three castes, was deeply resented.

The peasant differentiation that initially led to the formation of jotedars, now also led to substantial caste differentiation by splitting up the existing castes.

Middle Class Unemployment

Unemployment was not a serious problem among the middle class, until 1920s. If one knew the right people and had the right connections, with so many schools, hospitals and offices to man, he had a job waiting for him some where [Sinha, Pradip, 1965: 67]. However, with the changes in the demographic pattern, from 1921, the supply constraint imposed by high death rates was no longer operating, and the supply-demand balance began working against the job seeking youth of the middle-class.

A government committee, set-up in 1925, to identify the causes of unemployment, came out with the following conclusions. On the demand side, they

put the blame on the recession that followed a few years of boom following the First World War. On the supply side, they blamed the high natural growth of the population and a large flow of migrants in to the towns, particularly those in "lower classes". By this term they meant the agricultural castes that joined migrants [Government of Bengal, 1925: 4; Government of U.K, 1931a:357-359; Calcutta Review, 1868; Broughton, G.M, 1924].

They attributed this migration to the decay of the village society. Another factor the committee mentioned was the lack of correspondence between job opportunities and the education offered by the schools. This last factor let the committee to recommend an extensive examination of the school curriculum. The committee noted that this unemployment prevailed among the middle-class at a time when the factories were short of manual workers. But they noted also that the middle-class was loath to take the manual jobs [Government of Bengal, 1925: 2-4,11,12-21; Calcutta Review, 1868].

Middle Class Platforms

Legislative Bodies

The British government was keen to provide the educated class with some platforms to ventilate its grievances. The legislative bodies were among those, but these bodies were no more than empty showpieces with a franchaise of around 3%. These had no power, the decisions firmly remaining in the hands of the Governor, counselled by ICS and army officer.

Calcutta Corporation

Since the country was owned and controlled by a foreign power, and since the government was reluctant to allow them initiative in the industries, a major avenue opened to the middle-class for its advancement was Calcutta Corporation. Calcutta Corporation was organised on elective basis from 1876. After Lord Ripon's various changes in the legislation that furthered opportunities for them, the Calcutta municipal bill, drafted later by Surendranath Banerjee, gave Indians an elective majority - in a Municipal Council of 75, 24 were nominated and 2 were executive officers, while the rest were to be elected [Roy, Rajat, Kanti, 1984: 84-

90, 143]. Though the Europeans retained their overall majority Surendranath became the first Indian Chief Minister at the age of 72, in January 1921, took charge of local self-government and public health, and drafted the new Corporation bill, only to be defeated by a newcomer, Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, in the election held under it [Broomfield, J.H., 1968: 174].

In 1924, C.R. Das became the mayor of Calcutta Corporation and Subhas Bose his chief eecutive officer. The biggest asset of Das[15] was that he could somehow keep hindus and muslims together, but, after his death, in June 1925, there was no one in the Congress party to play that role, and the hindu muslim unity received a severe jolt [Roy, Rajat, Kanti, 1984: 319,325,344].

Calcutta University

A third major area opened to the middle-class of Bengal was the senate of the Calcutta University. Many of the members of the Calcutta University senate were elected (20), but the majority (80) were nominated. For a long time, the Vice Cancellor was Asutosh Mukherjee, who was very conscious of the autonomy its authority enjoined, and was to protect that. At one stage the government was seriously considering replacing him by a compliant Englishman, on the ground that he had recommended for the post of a lecturer, three persons with dubious association, from their point of view. A young man from England came as DPI to oversee. This only helped to rouse bhadralok suspicion about the intention of the government [Broomfield, J.H., 1968: 78-79,194]. At one point, later, Lord Lytton, Viceroy, attempted to interfere in Calcutta University and said that he would not be reappointed unless he agreed. Asutosh sent in his resignation [Broomfield, J. H, 1968: 194].

When Bengal was partitioned in 1905,there were strong protests to this decision, both in the chambers of Calcutta University senate and Calcutta Corporation [Sarkar, Susobhan, 1970:63-64].

Scientific Associations

The Indian Association for the cultivation of Sciences was formed in 1876, by Dr. Mohendralal Sarkar [Roy, Rajat, Kanti, 1984: 86; Sarkar, Susobhan, 1970: 42]. It was a part of the science movement that had its origin in Bengal

renaissance. A leading figure was Prafulla Chandra Roy (1861), the founder of Bengal Chemical and the author of "The History of Hindu Chemistry" who was critical of lack of scientific orientation among the Bengalis. Roy felt that a culture of science should be built and fostered among them [Mukhopadhyay, Ashim Kumar. 1995: 2-5].

Father Lafont, a lecturer of St. Xavier 's College and who spent 43 years in India, was another towering figure of the science movement .He and Dr.Mahendra Lal Sarkar, together, founded in 1876, the Indian Association for cultivation of sciences. As the culture spread, and the language flourished, Bengali became more diversified in their interests. In 1876, as a part of that process, Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar started Indian Association for the Cultivation of Sciences [Kopf, David, 1969: 42; Sastri, Sibnath, 1955: 150, 170-176]. Then there was Prafulla Chandra Roy, who founded Bengal Chemicals and repeatedly urged the Bengalis to show enterprise and enter trade and business. Jagadish Chandra Bose, by his astounding scientific discoveries, without much help from the government, showed that it was possible to combine science with Bengali temperament. Towards the end of the colonial period, two scientists of Bengali origin, Satyendranath Bose and Meghnath Saha, made the Bengalis proud by their achievements. But, undoubtedly, jewel among the scientists was Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858), who with scanty laboratory arrangements at his disposal, tirelessly went on making one fundamental discovery after another [Mukhopadhyay, Ashim Kumar. 1995: 2-5,32-50]. There worthy successors were C.V. Raman, Satyendranath Bose and Meghnad Saha.

Other Associations

One of the most effective was the Bengal Landholders' Association led by Asutosh Choudhuri. We have seen that landlords were an important class formed by the British Government as its ally. The British Indian Association was formed in 1851, with Rajendralal Mitter, Kristo Das Pal, Raja Degumber Mitter and Maharaja Jyotindra Mohan Tagore as its leaders. The literally genious of this group was Raja Rajendralal Mitter, while Raja Peary Mohan Mukherjee as its leader. Surendranath's Indian Association was another one dominated by landlords [Asiatic Society, 1978: 4-6; Chattopadhyay, Gautam, 1978: 181-234; . Sarkar, Sumit, 1973: 336-338].

Congress

Perhaps the biggest platform of the middle-class Hindu Bengalis was the Congress party itself. The Congress party was formed in 1885 to ventilate the feelings of the middle class, a class sponsored by the British, but dropped its support for it when it became too demanding from their point of view [Broomfield, J. H, 1968:21]. This class used the Congress party for the first two decades to express their anguish at various aspects of the British Policy, mainly in order to advance their own interest as a class. In the first 21 years of the Congress party, the Bengali Hindus, dominated the organisation by holding chairmanship of the organisation six times: W. C. Banerjee, Surendranath Banerjee (twice), Anandamohan Bose, Ramesh Chandra Dutta and Lalmohan Ghosh [Sarkar, Susobhan, 1970: 54].

Partition of Bengal was a major issue for the Congress party. In the movement that followed, including the 18 October (1905) demonstration and the tying of rakhi, Rabindranath, Rajanikanta Sen and others of similar stature took part. But, Congress was divided into moderates and extremists. There were those like Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, Bepin Paul and Aurobinda Ghosh, who preached militant nationalism, and were prepared to take the required risks. There were others whose aims were modest, and were not willing to go that far [Sarkar, Susobhan, 1970: 63-67].

It may sound strange, but S.N. Banerjee, despite his stature, was not invited to the first meeting of the Indian national Congress in 1885. When the Congress party was formed, Surendranath was agitating on the issue of reducing the age for civil service, and on vernacular press legislation [Ray, Rajat Kanta, 1984:93-94]. He was at that time associated with the India League, floated by Amrita Bazar Patrika ten years earlier for the middle class professionals, who were hostile to European monopoly. From the second meeting onwards he was associated with congress and played a major role inside it.

Almost from the beginning of the twentieth century, the organisation took a radical turn under Lala Lajpat Rai, Balgangadhar Tilak and Bepin Paul. What galvanised the organisation was the movement against partition. This was followed

by intense terrorist-revolutionary activities, in some cases camouflaged by the 'non-violent' garb of Congress.

From 1914 the Congress at the national level came under the domination of Mohondas Gandhi and his creed of non-violence. In Bengal, however, one of his key followers, C.R.Das, deviated from his policy and took part in elections with his Swaraj Party as the spear.[16]

From early 1920s the politics in Bengal was shadowed by the Hindu-Muslim conflict. Since the formation of Muslim League in 1906, it had become the mass organisation of the majority of Muslims, and the Congress Party was finding it increasingly difficult to recruit Muslims. In such a situation, C R Das's asset was his image as a friend of Muslims. But his death, followed by factional feuds between the followers of J. M. Sengupta and Subhas Bose led to further degeneration of the Congress Party and the further communalisation of Bengal Politics.

Bengali Newspapers

We have noted that the root of a large section of the middle-class in Calcutta and other urban areas lied in their class origin in the rural areas. Most of them championed the cause of jotedar or under tenure holders, classes from which most of them originated, in the urban context. They also had a certain amount of influence on Bengali newspapers. When the Rent Act of 1859 was being discussed, Amrita Bazar Patrika, a spokesman of the jotedars, wrote on 18th May, 1976, "The middle-class is the backbone of society on earth. Whatever be the case in other countries, in Bengal the origin and growth of middle-class is to be traced to land rights. The Zamindars may be proprietors of the land, but hitherto it is the middle-class which has exercised authority on the land."

Similarly, the other local newspapers took up the fight the jotedars were wedging against both the zamidars and the bargadars, when the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 was discussed [Roy, Rajat, Kanti, 1984: 53-62]. While the Amrita Bazar Patrika supported the jotedars, [17]the Indian Association, representing the interests of the upper class Bengalis favoured the occupancy rights of raiyats [Roy, Rajat, Kanti, 1984: 66-92; Sinha, Pradip, 1965: 36,40,].

Terrorist - revolutionary activities

Terrorism was another activity in which the Bengali middle class Hindus took a leading role. The two major outfits were Jugantar and Anushilan [18]- but there sprouted several others, in Calcutta and district headquarters, centering round daring leaders, and a handful of followers. Most of these were penetrated by informers and spies of the colonial government and were busted by the government before they could do any serious harm to the colonial government. But, there can be no doubt, that those contained the best of Bengal youth. They sacrificed their lives for a cause, without blinking [Majumdar, R.C, 1988:198-215].

After the murder of three consecutive District Magistrates, in the hands of the revolutionaries, Medinipur was in considerable turmoil, and judged as almost ungovernable [Broomfield, J.H., 1968: 302]. The District Magistrate, who followed the murdered three, penetrated all the revolutionary organisations and took their members to gallows. This enemy of theirs, who was responsible for their death at a young age, paid the best compliment to them when, in a radio interview, five decades after the event, he described them as the cream of the Bengal youth, who, totally fearless, to his amazement, put their nooses round their necks, on their own, and shouted 'bande mataram' while dying. This official was highly impressed, as he had never seen such act of heroism, during an eventful, long, career.[19]

Terrorism or revolutionary activities have not been given the importance due to them in the history of the country's struggle for independence. The history is misleading, because there existed many currents inside the struggle for country's independence, the activities of the Congress or revolutionary groups being only two of those. The message conveyed by most histories on national struggle is, as if, it was only Gandhi-led movement of the Congress party, based on the creed of non-violence, which made India's independence possible. The revolutionary activities provided an alternative to the Congress route towards independence, by basing themselves on the creed of non-violence. It might be argued that the terrorist activities, by engineering disorder on a large scale, might make India ungovernable, and hasten the departure of the British.

Gandhi's line of mass action is often contrasted with the political role of the terrorists, who shunned mass actions and organisations. However, this doesn't

imply that the terrorist actions had no mass approval. In one instance, when one major leader, Birendra Kumar Sasmal, criticised the terrorists, in a Congress session, he was unceremonially bundled out of the pandal [Broomfield, J.H., 1968: 279]. Some of the terrorists graduated to become revolutionary Marxists. Bhupendranath Dutta, Swami Vivekananda's youngrer.brother, was one of those.[20]

The first terrorist-revolutionary was Sher Ali, a Wahabi, who killed Viceroy Mayo when he visited Andaman [Sarkar, Susobhan, 1970:47]. Yet, led by the Hindu middle class, the revolutionaries alienated the Muslims and also the other caste groups, who could not identify with them. Some of these terrorist groups took their oath of allegiance in front the image of Mother Kali, a Hindu goddess, which the Muslims resented [Ahmed, Kamaruddin, 1967:4-6].

There were three types of revolutionary activities. First, there were akhras we have already talked about. Second, the group led by Hemchandra Das Kanungo, centered on Medinipur. Third, the group named Anushilan Samity. There was, fourthly, an offshoot of Anushhilan Samity, around Aurobinda and Barin Ghose, who hailed from Baroda and published a paper called Jugantar in 1906. Chitta Ranajan Das and Aurobinda Ghose were two vice-Presidents of Anushilan Samiti. Among its many branches the one at Dhaka, under Pulin Behari Das, became very popular. Das received his training from Murtaza in one of the akhras of Sarala Devi. Some of them felt that their activities were amateurship and were not likely to succeed unless more professional outlook was brought in. Jatindranath Mukhopadhyay joined the army of Baroda to get military training [Chakravorty, Jagannath, 1977: 235-238, 241-243 (Gopal Halder)].

Almost all their members belonged to the top three Hindu castes. The revolutionary groups tolerated casteism, even when casteism was not practised in their ranks. The Sedition Committees' report of 1918 provides the caste-based list of persons convicted or killed while committing a political crime during 1907-17. Here, of the186 persons listed, as many as 166 persons belong to the upper castes, 16 belonged to lower castes and four of them belonged to the Eurasian Community. Of the upper castes, 65 were Brahmin, 87 Kayastha, 13 were Baidyas, and there was a lone Rajput. It is significant that 6 out of 16 were Mahisya-Kaibartya, and Saha, Karmakar, Tanti, Banik and others accounted for the remaining 10.There was no Muslim in the list. However, Arun Mukherjee, who

had sudied the report, had found that 13 Muslims and 12 Sahas were omitted from the list, deliberately or not. Several Muslims participated in swadeshi movement. Even if these Muslims are taken into account, the predominance of the Hindu middle class is illustrated by these [Mukherjee, Arun, 1995: 187-191].

The middle class participating in these activities consciously tried to avoid some of the middle class traits. In the nineteenth century, they participated in lathikhela, though holding a lathi was taken as an inferior activity, indulged in by low castes like Namasudras and Bagdis. Lathials of zamidars were drawn from these lowly castes.and play with lathi was taken as the occupation of Chotoloks. Bhadrolokes usually despised these. Some of them, like Aswini Dutta of Barisal, were in favour of opening the terrorist activities to all castes and religions. [Mukherjee, Arun, 1995: 173].

The secret societies[21] began to blossom before the partition of Bengal, but the partition of Bengal in 1905 provided it with a focus. Looking at it chronologically, it began in 1900, when Sarala Ghosal[22], a lady in her twenties, met a Japanese, named Okakura, and P. Mitra, a barrister and head of the Anushilan group to be formed latter, in a secret meeting, to plan the assassination of chief officials. That was the period when the akhras teaching wrestling and lathkhela sprouted all over Bengal, physical training reckoned as an absolute must without any political overtones. Sarala Ghosal also started one akhra .in Calcutta. Even akhras were not new, as they were supposed to provide strength to the ordinary people, and were quite legal. However, these activities failed to draw people and the movement was in its downward turn in the early part of the twentieth century.

All these changed with the declared partition of Bengal. The partition was preceded by the patriotic writings of Bankim Chandra, and his slogan of Bandemataram and the Chicago visit of Vivekananda and the western education imparted to a large number of people, and significantly, in the defeat of the invincible British in the American War of Independence in the 1770s. The motivation (of funding or joining those akhras) might have been vague to start with, but with the progress of the anti-partition and swadeshi movements the focus became sharper till it synchronised with the call for the liberation of the motherland, in which *bande mataram* became the war cry." [Mukherjee, Arun,

1995: 171-173]. There was a feeling among many that somehow religious nationalism would have to be brought in, otherwise the movement would have not much ahead. [Majumdar, R.C, 1988: 68-73; Chakravorty, Jagannath, 1977: 231-235].

The song sung by a student at Bakharganj, on 26 July, 1905, in a meeting protesting against the partition, urging people to rise with a sword in hand, was perhaps the first open call for violence against the colonial government. This was followed, in 1906, by the founding of Anushilan Samiti, and in 1907 by the attempted destruction of the lieutenant Governor, the attempted murder of Allen, the District Magistrate of Dhaka and the unfortunate murder of Mrs Kennedy and his daughter at Muzaffarpur, Bihar, because their vehicle was taken by mistake as that of a notorious officer named Kingsford. The last incident evoked a great deal of sympathy because one of the two assassins, who was hanged for this action, was a boy of 16, named Khudiram Bose, who became a symbol of Indian armed resistance to the British rule. Police investigation on the last led to Maniktala Garden, and 34 were arrested including Aurobinda Ghose and his brother, Barindra, in this case in three days. This was followed by the murder of Naren Gosain, a traitor, inside the jail by Satyendranath Bose and Kanailal Dutta.Then an attempt was made on the life of Lord Hardinge in 1912 [Broomfield, J.H., 1968: 72; Chakravorty, Jagannath, 1977: 238-239; Majumdar, R.C, 1988:199-200].

The trial of Maniktala Garden revolutionaries became a matter of national importance for three rasons. First, as the trial proceeded, one of the approvers, Naren Gossain, was killed by the terrorists inside the jail. Second, the defendents became household names. Thirdly, Aurobinda, who was supposed to be the leader of the group, was freed after trial, thanks to the advocacy of young barrister called Chittaranjan Das [Chakravorty, Jagannath, 1977: 239-240].

During 1906-12, 98 political crimes were committed, of which 51 were of this nature. Many decoities were committed by terrorists during this period to raise funds [Mukherjee, Arun, 1995: 174-178]. That was the beginning. Ksudiram and his associate, Prafulla Chaki were followed by many others., culminating in 1930 in the armoury raid in Chittagong.The colonial government suppressed the terrorists by penetrating their organisations, and by making its less mature

members talk .after apprehending them. [Broomfield, J.H., 1968: 72; Chakravorty, Jagannath, 1977: 253-256].

The terrorist activities helped to change the 'efffiminate' image of Bengali Bhadralokes as no less prepared than other communities to make sacrifices for the interests of the nation. But from the beginning it was dogged by isolation from common masses, as they had little mass activities. Many of them later joined the Communist Party, as they increasingly believed that the British government could not be dislodged by these alone without supplementary mass actions.

VIII. Village vs. Town

The Theory of Urban Bias

The theory of urban bias, as presented by Michael Lipton, postulates a conflict between rural and urban interests. This he considers as more important than intra-rural and intra-urban class conflicts between various segments, such as, those between the zamidar and jotedar on the one hand, and the sharecropper and agricultural labourers on the other. For instance, he calls zamidars and landless labourers to bury their differences and join hands against urban interests [Lipton, Michael, 1977:13]. [23]

Quite popular in the seventies, in India and abroad, this theory alleged policy bias in favour of the urban areas, in the allocation of resources, because rich and influential persons lived there. Such bias, Lipton contended, was not justifiable, on grounds of efficiency and equity, in poor countries. As for efficiency, he claimed that, the rate of return was higher on the capital in rural areas, and as for equity, the majority of the population, and more significantly, the majority of the poor population, lived in rural areas. Therefore, a policy of poverty reduction would in all fairness focus on rural areas, if there was no urban bias.[24] [Lipton, Michael, 1977: 13]

There are many ways that such bias, according to Lipton, is revealed. While urban population pay most of the direct taxes, the incidence of the indirect taxes, the bulk of the tax revenue, mainly fall on the fragile, poor shoulders of the rural population. On the other hand, the governments tend to invest more, on roads, schools, hospitals, in the urban areas, while the rural needs for irrigation, power,

roads remain neglected [Lipton, Michael, 1977: 270-272]. Then, the credit-deposit ratios of banks are invariably biased against rural areas. The saving generated by rural masses are, in effect, mobilised by the banks, and then transferred mainly to the urban areas for investment [Lipton, Michael, 1977: 238-252]. For example, the successful agriculturists of Punjab provides for investment by his urban counterparts through the banking system [Dasgupta, Biplab, 2000a: 227-233]. Though the agriculturist saves it accrues in the hands of non-agriculturist in towns, who benefits from a high credit-deposit ratio in towns. Lipton further adds that migratory movements draw away the local talent and resources from rural areas towards towns. Extraction of rural surplus for the country's development is almost always at the cost of that segment of the population, which can afford the least [Lipton, Michael, 1977: 89].

These are the major arguments in favour of this theory. One might wonder how far this conflict is real, and to what extent the relationship between the rural and urban areas is a symbiotic one. Rural development beyond a certain limit, transforms a settlement into an urban one, in order to provide market opportunities, as also economics of scale to many activities, such as the maintenance and repair of tractor, that are required by almost all the villages, but very few villages would be able to afford it. Urban areas are, for this reason, indispensable for rural development. The relationship between them is, therefore, not at all one of conflict, On the other hand, urban areas, by their logic, involve concentration of population and resources., including its quality dimension. Furthermore, there can be no urban areas without rural surplus; people in the urban areas do not producing for themselves. Rather than moaning about urban bias, a better attitude would be to monitor a healthy and balanced development between two sectors, in order to avoid excesses. In India, the level of urban development was low (about 6% during the colonial period), largely because the rural hinterland was so poor. In contrast, in England itself, urban development, which was modest even in the 1850s, took off in the second part of the 19th century, as the efficiency and productivity of agriculture and allied activities rose in the countryside.

A more fundamental objection to the theory would be that it visualises conflict between the two sets of elite - rural and urban - when they were, for all practical purposes, the same set of people and belonging to the same family. The

better off in the villages, who as rural elite, dominated the countryside, and also, as we have noted already, maintained establishment in towns, and dominated life in those as well, as urban elite, and there could be no question of conflict between the two.

A third objection is methodological, that Lipton had been selective in the choice of his material [Byres, T. J., 1979]. One instance was where he highlighted the amount spent by the family to finance transport and other initial expenses, and remittances sent by the family to the town until the migrant found a job, but, almost deliberately, underplayed remittances sent by the migrant to his family back in the village. Curiously, Lipton exempted the major capital cities from urban bias, and only blamed the elite in the smaller towns. This was strange. One would argue that because the population in the major cities were more likely to be divorced from land, more of them were likely to be professionals not depending on rural income and exhibiting urban bias. The maintenance of the capital city involved heavy public expenditure, including costs for all types of building. Yet, these were declared free from bias on the unsubstantiated ground that the bureaucracy located therein would have no axes to grind and were likely to take an objective and balanced view [Lipton, Michael, 1977: 58].

Lipton's writings convey the message that urban interests are divorced from the rural ones. This may not be true, but the impression among many people linger on that the interest of villagers are opposed to those in the towns [Byres, T. J, 1977].

Urbanisation driven by bullock carts vs. urbanisation driven by automobiles

One can argue endlessly whether urban bias exists or not. But there can be no argument about the miserable conditions of life in villages, which have serious implications for settlement patterns evolving in an urban society .In most western societies, it is assumed that the household has an automobile. With cars in possession, the difference it makes is that, distance is now measured by the time taken from one point to another, after taking into account distance and road and traffic conditions, but not in terms of kilometres e.g., one would say that his house was located half hour away, and would not say that it was 20 kilometers away.

In such a society, with the infrastructure conditions as good in the villages as in the towns, but the rural environment appearing more attractive with more sun and

wind and openness, those who can afford automobile tend to reside in the villages, everyday commuting to the factories or offices located in towns in fast motorways to work by car. In the weekend they travel to shopping centres, often miles away located in wilderness, to buy food for the entire week in one go, and then return to their homes and keep them cool in the fridges. Neighbourhood shops help with emergency buying, while a regular practice is to buy requirements for a week from the shopping centres located at a distance.

Conversely, where the vehicle exclusively owned is no other than the feet, one looks for a home from where various transactions can be carried out by feet, and shops and other facilities are available within walking distance. Laundry, sweetmeat shop, confectionery, everything is within the reach of his two feet. The luxury of commuting from a healthy village is not for him; he would prefer a home that is close to his office. Whereas in a developed country a person would prefer a quiet home, away from the din and hustle of the main street, in the developing countries the preference would be for a home that is very near a bus stop.

The land use pattern tends to be mixed, as the luxury houses and hovels stand side by side on the main thoroughfare. One of the services that all the big houses require is the domestic ones. Given its cheapness, even the middle class can afford domestic servants but they also require domestic servants to live close by so that they are able to come every day and do the chore. Which is why areas cannot be earmarked for a particular type of housing, as the patrons would not survive without clients living nearby.

Urbanisation and Indusrialisation

To what extent was urban growth, during the colonial period, associated with industrial development? We have already noted that the main incentive for urban development came not from the needs of domestic agriculture or industry, but from the pressure to meet the industrial and consumption needs of the economy of the colonising power, Britain. Urbanisation nevertheless took place, whether in mining or plantation areas of Bardhaman or Jjalpaiguri, or in the jute areas of both banks of Hooghly, or in numerous railway or administrative centres spread over the entire province, and brought about major population movements to satisfy the requirements of these industries and other activities.

Throughout the British colonial period, a certain correspondence existed between urbanisation, migration and industrialisation. Migration, which led to urbanisation, was, almost as a rule, a response to industrial demand, and in most cases organised by the employers themselves. We have seen that, until the 1920s, the employers were constantly complaining about lack of manpower [Dasgupta, Ranajit, 1994]. In the closing years of the colonial government, two types of changes occurred, in addition to the fact that the second generation was more attuned to the urban way of life. The first was demographic, a success with inoculations and injections to fight epidemics, which extended the average expectancy of life.

The second, more relevant from the point of view of our discussion on urbanisation and migration, while organised migration was now less necessary, voluntary migration and migration induced by disaster stepped up. Up to a point, migration corresponded to industrial demand; beyond which the logic of migration took over. Migration continued unabated even when industrial demand for workers ceased. Word went round in the hinterland that jobs were waiting for them in the destination; all that they were required to do was to present themselves at the factory gate. Old links established between origin and destination, were yet to be snapped, and continued with vigour, while prospects for formal employment declined and virtually disappeared.

When they found that job was not waiting for them at the factory gate, the migrant was faced with two choices: to return to the fields in the hinterland from where they came, or to accept whatever job came their way, in order to stay in the destination whether pulling a rickshaw or spreading his rug on the street selling lemons. Unlike the educated middle class local youth, who was supported by his family, he could not afford the luxury of unemployment.[25]

The only alternative of unemployment was a return to his village, which could be also embarrassing for them, while what he did for his livelihood in the towns could be hidden from the family back home. This is how the informal sector made a small beginning in Calcutta. There was always the expectation that the informal sector job was a temporary one, a stepping-stone to the eventual formal assignment in factory. They also found, in those early days of this informal sector, that its financial reward was no less than those of the formal sector in many cases, although a great deal of self-exploitation was involved [Todaro, M. P., 1980].

Urbanisation prompted by agricultural prosperity - the case of Punjab

There is another aspect to the issue of the relationship between urbanisation-migration on the one hand, and industrialisation, on the other. Urbanisation also can result from either a spill-over of agricultural prosperity, as the villages grow, merge, amalgamate and diversify to become towns, or from investment in industries from outside, leading to the formation of towns around industries, or a combination of the two.

It seems that urbanisation of Punjab resulted from the first process, as the towns were in the initial stage no more than overgrown villages specialising in the marketing of agricultural production. The phenomenon of numerous marketing towns dotting the map of the state is widely known. In contrast, the urban development of Bengal had been centered round large and small industries, from the small kuthis located for the functioning of industrial-administrative activities relating to commercial crops to the gigantic, heavily built steel industry [Dasgupta, Biplab, 2000a: 232-233]. The spill-over of agricultural prosperity was almost conspicuous by its absence in West Bengal, excepting to some extent in the districts of Hooghly and Bardhaman [Ghosh Roy, Sudeshna, 1988: 188].

The two alternative processes of urbanisation had different implications. Those following the Punjab-agriculture route resulted in urban societies that were close to the surrounding agricultural hinterland, in terms of gender ratio, while those following the Bengal route of urbanisation via industrialisation and longer migration, away from the paddy and wheat fields, had a gender ratio that was highly adverse to the women. Further, agricultural technology being similar in most places in those days, at least within a state, urbanisation prompted by agricultural prosperity led to a more egalitarian inter-district urbanisation, whereas the second route via industrialisation had a built-in capacity to generate inequality, industrial development being, by its very nature, so uneven region-wise.

Punjab's remarkably high inter-district homogeneity, compared with West Bengal, arises partly from this fact that, in that province, urbanisation was largely induced by agriculture, but also because agriculture and irrigation, along with power and communications and several other variables, were evenly distributed in that province. In contrast, urbanisation in Bengal, induced by industrial development,

very outset, he warned the readers what they ought not expect from his- book - like miracles, thrill and love. His book, he justifiably claimed, was about the peasant life as it actually was. Life in a village was as mundane and dull as one could ever be. In 376 densely printed pages, he gave an unique description of all aspects of village life - how the joint families worked, how their members cultivated their fields, how the village children congregated at night to hear story-telling from an old woman, how the village women gossiped while bathing in a tank, school, astrologer, harvest, car festival, zamidar, nothing was missed. While reading Day's fascinating account, one keeps wondering how different this world of simple peasants was from that of their middle class counterparts of Calcutta [Day, Lal Behari, 1920].

Urban Growth Poles

Given the dismal picture of rural development, particularly in rainy months when the villages would be virtually cut off from the rest of the world, one would expect the nearby towns to play a certain role, in fostering development. By providing a trading platform and an economics of scale, in addition to giving the agriculturists in villages an opportunity to exchange information on things like crop varieties and packages of fertiliser, and other inputs of varying ratios and their relative outcomes, the towns can indeed play a role in rural development [Perroux, F, 1970].

They could act as growth poles through which growth was to be transmitted to lower order settlements. In Boudeville's concept of the original formulation of Perroux, the location of a dense concentration of inter-related industries, with demands for the products of one another, in a geographic space called growth pole, could generate growth that could be transmitted to surrounding areas [Richardson, H.W, 1969]. As a consequence of this, agricultural production pattern in the surrounding villages became diversified. By all accounts the spread effect was extremely limited, if at all it was there.

In many cases, 'the spread effect' was more than neutralised by what Gunar Myrdal described as 'backwash effect', that is local level talents and resources moving towards growth pole denuding the countryside. According to some rough estimates, it takes 15-20 years for the spread effect to overcome the effect of backwash, when a new township is installed. It seemed that, during the colonial

government spread effect was, forever, over whelmed by the backwash effect [Richardson, H.W, 1969].

Such growth poles were never deliberately and consciously created by the colonial Government. But they created many townships, e.g. the steel township at Burnpur, which to a certain extent, corresponded to growth poles. In all these cases, the 'spread effect' was weak, as the industries had few local linkages. In most cases, their heavy machinery was brought from outside, as also their operators, the local economy contributing only unskilled labour to this capital-intensive plant. In addition, the local economy benefited from demand generated for its egg, fruit, meat, vegetable etc, by the workers of these factories who could afford these and also had a taste for good life.

Family as the decision-making unit

As migration progressed, it brought about a profound change in the society of Bengal, in terms of decision-making within the family. From the days of King Gopal, with agricultural as the main means of livelihood, the families were structured in such a way that it was not the 'individual member' but the 'family' that was the unit of decision-making. Buddhism entirely disappeared from Bengal as it came under the shadow of tantrism, a cult taken as undermining the family. Brahmanism triumphed over other rival religions because they championed the cause of family more effectively. The family and agriculture almost became synonymous as ways of life. Among the two schools of inheritance and property laws, the Mitakshara school, allowed for an undivided share in the property of the joint family to every child born, while Dayabhag school, prevalent in Bengal, assigned a greater role to the individual, as also the personal law of Islam. In both the common concept was the undivided Hindu joint family.

Decision-making by the family ultimately boiled down to decisions by the head of the family, the *pater familias*, who had the ultimate say in almost every matter. It was he who decided which family member would go where, what he would do, whom he would marry, and so on. The family members bowed to his wishes, and seldom expressed any disagreement with him, and would not give final word on anything without consent of the head of the family. That was the age-old custom, to which every one adhered.

The family had its economic rationale in agriculture. Agriculture required the participation of family members in cultivation under the supervision of the head; and, thanks to loyalty to the family and its head, with greater success than farms supervising hired workers, as the land productivity figures showed. The land, jointly owned, held the family together, as they worked on land and shared it. Their collective interest remained on land, on which the whole family worked together.

To diversify family earnings and to distribute risks was also a conscious decision of the family. It worked in family's interest that some were engaged, for varying periods of time, in non-agricultural pursuits. The family decided who, among brothers, would work in the tea garden in Assam, who would join the police, who would initiate a small enterprise in the neighbouring town, and who among them would continue to labour on land. For this purpose, often the family endeavoured to sell a part of the family land and to use a part of the family ornaments and saving, to pay for transport and initial costs in the destination.

But migration undermined the family. The migrant had an independent establishment in the destination, beyond the reach of the family head. His behaviour, when deviating from the family norms, e.g., on drinking, smoking, eating non-vegetarian dishes, was never reported back to his head of the family, by co-migrants, according to the code of ethics adhered to by the latter. His remittances continued as long as loan made by the family for financing migration remained unpaid, or migrant's wife and children stayed with the family back in the village; in most cases remittances took a nosedive as the migrant was joined by his family in the destination. His close link with the family, land and the village, a way of life as an agriculturist, became a thing of the past, as the migrant integrated with the urban life, and made friends with his neighbours in *ghettos* [Sinha, Pradip, 1965: 45].

These changes did not come about in a day or suddenly, but gradually the migrant got adjusted to the urban setting, discarded the ethics and norms that guided his life with the family in the village, and acquired new ones. These happened independently of the migrant himself, as surely and as inevitably as sun rose in the morning in the east. As one of the poorest migrants, he discovered his earnings were comparable to earnings in the village he came from. For migrants of Calcutta, *kalkattaya* as they were called, it was a matter of great honour and prestige to be

living in that great city, in the eyes of his co-villager, no matter how he earned his livelihood.

Those who were rich enough to afford it, the family maintained a secondary urban home [Mitra, Asoke, 1963: 433-434]. The secondary urban home served several purposes for the family. First, it allowed the family to take advantage of some of the urban civic facilities, such as hospital and school. Migrating for education eventually made some of them unemployable in the countryside, and therefore made them look for jobs in the urban areas. Secondly, this urban home allowed the family members to circulate between the village and the town. Members took their turn to attend to family agriculture in the village and family business in the town. Migration was varied. There were some who circulated between the origin and the destination, and lost no opportunity to return home and gossip in *chandimandap* [Sinha, Pradip, 1965: 69]. There were others who took their urban residence more seriously, and hardly came to their native villages.

Eventually, their bundle of transactions and economic interests became more urban than rural. Some of the family members living in towns took professional urban jobs, as lawyers, doctors, accountants, which were not available in villages, and thus truly became urban citizens.

These families, drawing a part of their income from land, dominated life both in small towns and surrounding villages. The fact that in their cases both rural and urban elite fused into one, makes nonsense of the idea of conflict between these two types implicit in the concept of urban bias, as propounded by Michael Lipton. As we see from our own recent experience, elites of both types are opposed to land reform and decentralisation of decision-making; in case of the elite in small towns, this follows from their land base and intimate contact with the landed families.

Migration thus fostered the nucleation of households. Migrant households were already nucleated. According to one survey, the size of family was 5.4, compared to 2.8 of the *hindustanis* [Basu Nirmal Kumar, 1965: 5]. The urban component of the joint family eventually separated out from its rural base and integrated with the urban society. The stage of separation was reached only after the urban component of the family acquired an independent economic base. e.g. as a lawyer.

Migration leading to equalisation of income and employment

It was held by W. A. Lewis and other authors specialising in this subject, that migration would, by transferring labour power from the labour-surplus areas to the labour-starved ones, in the long run, equalise income and employment opportunities both in the origin and the destination. When the migration process began, the supply curve was almost perfectly elastic in the village, at the existing wage-differential between towns and villages. Over time, there is was tendency for the supply curve to bend and rise, in response to the market demand in the towns and with the exhaustion of surplus labour in the villages. Economic migration continued as long as labour surplus continued, in response to wage-differential in the towns; it stopped when the surplus dried out, wage- differential closed and employment opportunities gradually ceased.

Migration played this highly positive role in European countries, particularly in East Europe after the Second World War. As a phenomenon, its influence declined and disappeared, as rural-urban wage differential was eliminated. On the other hand, in India, among the known migration streams linking origin with destination, there was hardly one where the initial wage differential was closed and migration stopped. One major difference lied in the magnitude of migration. In India migration, though quite large as a proportion of the urban population, because the country is large and the urban component was quite small in comparison, has failed to effect any depopulation in the countryside. Migration grew in number from census to census, but the growth in the rural population was more, and the net out-migration from the villages failed to reduce the number in the village. So surpluses and wage-differential continued, despite migration, and, as a consequence, migration did not act as an equilibrating mechanism, as many Economists wished.

It might be asked why the urban wage structure did not adjust backwards to balance demand with supply. The answer lies in various downward rigidities that the urban wages had, the working of the trade unions being among those, which prevented urban wages from falling to the base rural level.

There is also the phenomenon of cumulative causation. Areas already advanced and ahead of others, have a tendency to grow faster, and those with slow growth perennially lag behind. The former continued to build on the initial

advantage that added to the disparity and wage differential and hence flow of migration into it.

Non-Bengalis

Calcutta is a mosaic of many cultures and linguistic groups. In the pre-colonial past, merchants came from all over India, Gujaratis, Marwaris, Khetris, in addition to Greeks, Armenians and Iranians and the European traders from outside India. After the colonial take over, those from the neighbouring states came in large number, to work in industries, while local Bengalis opted for other, softer and more remunerative alternatives. The migrant labourers formed the majority of industrial workers, and constituted nearly half of its population [Basu, Nirmal Kumar, 1965: 5]. Hindi became the *lingua franca* of the industrial sector; one was not qualified to become a trade unionist unless he had a working knowledge of Hindi.

As is the pattern world over, the migrant workers came from a selected number of villages in the hinterland, lived in those wards of Calcutta Corporation where his linguistic group predominated, and worked in places where a large chunk of workers came from his area. In evolving these three types of specialisation, the' contact' played a major role. The 'contact' was the person of the area, may be of the same village, who brought to his notice the fact that job opportunities existed in a certain destination. The contacts were as a rule selective in disseminating information. It is, therefore, not surprising that the majority of workers came from a selected number of villages, and were not a random distribution of workers from similarly placed villages, in terms of wage differential, as M. P Todaro would make us believe [Todaro, M.P, 1969]. Similarly, seldom voluntary migration implies was a random movement to maximise earning opportunities, in any direction. Almost invariably some one, most probably his contact, was waiting for him at the end of the journey, by rail and bus, and would take him to the *bustee* where he himself lived. After a few days of living together, the new migrant would find his own accommodation, most probably in the same ghetto or not very far from it. And he would find a job that too was pre-selected by the contact, where most probably, majority of workers came from a selected number of villages.

This job-wise, residence-wise segregation, along with the selection of villages, in the hinterland from which most of the immigrants came, is a worldwide

pattern, and not specific to the industrial cities of imperial Bengal. Among the villages that are equally placed vis-a-vis the city, according to the Todaro formulation, the distribution of migrants is far from random,[26] which indicates that one has to go beyond the simple expected wage differential to unravel the mystery of migration or of the triple segregation suggested above.

Among the migrant linguistic-cultural groups, both of the two tendencies are discernible. First, the tendency to adhere to ethics and cultural norms of the origin, the place they came from. This may be a genuine reflection of the mood of the migrant, or a fear that his deviant behaviour would be reported back to the village by the co-villagers among the migrants. His tendency to adhere to the norms of the place he comes from is more pronounced when his family was back in the village or he was contemplating a return to his village. This tendency was also confirmed by each group having its own school, place of worship, social clubs (and sometimes) and chamber of commerce, in addition to living in segregated *ghettoes* and working in segregated jobs. These severely limited contact with the host population, and raised the possibility that a migrant person could pass his life, living in the ghetto, without ever coming in contact with the local population, while shopping, travelling, working, speaking his own language [Bose, Nirmal Kumar, 1965: 10-11].

The opposite tendency was towards assimilation with the local Bengal culture. After a generation or two, they would become so much a part of the local landscape that one would know only from their surname, or its distorted form, that once upon a time his family had migrated from a neighbouring state.

Integration between various linguistic-cultural groups took place at two ends of the income scale: one at the aristocratic level, like Calcutta Club or Rotary Club, and the other was at the bottom, at the trade union level [Basu, Nirmal Kumar, 1965: 11].

The *ghettoes* sustained social and cultural differences. Even among the Bengali middle class, coming from different districts of Bengal, particularly those of East Bengal, there was a tendency to form district-based committees, in order to retain their social distinctiveness. On the other hand, one finds traces of Bengali chauvinism among otherwise enlightened scholars, when they complained about the small remittances sent by the migrant labourers through post offices, out of their own legitimate earnings [Mitra, Asoke, 1963; 21-23; Basu, Nirmal Kumar, 1965; 4].

Asoke Mitra, in his study, "Calcutta - India's City", expressed unhappiness that a large outflow of money from the city took place because of a very large number of postal remittances by migrants from other states [Mitra, Asoke, 1963: 21-23]. In his Census publication, Mitra reiterated the same point when he said that these remittances "have much of the character of a sponge", which transferred earnings in West Bengal for use elsewhere [Census of India of 1951, 1953b: 308]. Another Bengali luminary, Nirmal Kumar Bose, approvingly quoted Mitra on this point. [Bose, Nirmal Kumar, 1965:4].

Needless to add, both were wrong. It is within the right of a migrant worker to make an honest earning in exchange of his labour, and then to spend the money as he thinks fit. In most cases, all over the world, a large part of this income is remitted by him to his family back home. There is nothing wrong in sending these remittances, because without this right the migrant worker would not come.

If this outflow is considered to be improper, let the economic contribution of the migrant workers to the host economy be taken into account, the fact that the wheels of many factories would not turn without migrant workers. What the migrant worker was remitting was very often less than the amount he was helping to produce.

Lastly, as the old adage goes, you cannot have the cake while at the same time eating it. Many Bengalis were happy that Calcutta enjoyed metropolitan status; but such status could not be acquired without a large migrant population, who travel long distance to earn and remit. Generally speaking, the larger and more urbanised a unit is the greater is the proportion of migrants in it.

It should be noted that, by its very nature, voluntary migration flows favoured high caste migration to the city of Calcutta, no matter what job they were doing at the destination, and whether those were in conformity with their ritual position back in the villages [Sinha, Pradip, 1965: 5-6]. In 1911, out of 123339 who came from 24-Parganas 13373 were Brahmans, 12438 were Kayassthas, 696 were Baidyas, in all 26507, belonging to upper castes. Among others, also were mainly agricultural castes of higher order, while the proportion of scheduled castes was pitifully small [Sinha, Pradip, 1965: 60].

Caste Groups

The extension of cultivation and commercial cropping, as we have noted, were two of the major factors contributing to the stratification of the peasantry and the emergence of *jotedars,* the richer section of the peasantry, which, over time, detached itself from direct cultivation. They played a role in agricultural management as employees of planters or new *zamidar*s or the ordinary peasants with little means, and as haoladar- agricultural capitalists.

The lower middle-class, working as clerks, typist and other similar occupations in the towns, originally came from the richer peasants families or from lower level under tenure holders. Like others, they derived a part of their income from land and maintained connections with their villages [Government of Bengal, 1925: 11]. Over time, their bundle of connections and transactions within the urban centres far exceeded those with the rural areas. After a few generations the family became divorced from land and became a full time citizen of the urban areas.

The matching of the urban occupations with their rural roots was far from perfect. The society was more mobile than in the past, while the urban societies, almost by definition, more mobile and less rigid than their rural counterparts. Many prominent citizens of Calcutta were not from one of the top three castes; what mattered more than caste qualifications at the birth, were his accomplishments and ability to earn money in later years [Ray, Rajat Kanta, 1984: 52].

Over time, by way of migration, a large number of the rural rich families, *jotedars* as also under tenure holders of all sorts, reached the towns. This movement was in response to both powerful demand and supply factors. On the demand side, creation of many new urban opportunities provided the necessary stimulus. On the supply side, there was now a steady flow of out-migrants from the villages.

Most of the out-migrants belonged to the top three castes, who were among the first to quickly seize the new opportunities. They were the first wave to become lawyers, doctors, professors, and accountants in the towns (Table 11). In the second wave, those who belonged to the 'intermediate' or 'dominant' castes, using the terminology of social anthropology, joined in large number. As it is always the case, in the villages, the other caste groups followed the cultural norms and modes of the dominant category, *grihasta.* Since, the family members of *grihasthas*

manually did not participate in agriculture, following their cultural norms involved withdrawal of family members from active agriculture. By undertaking this action, a particular caste group approximated the *grihasthas*, and later claimed their comparable ritual status.

Table 11: Percentage figures for selected castes: 1872-1911

	1872	*1881*	*1891*	*1901*	*1911*
Brahman	6.29	6.21	5.98	6.10	6.71
Baidya	0.41	0.41	0.42	0.50	0.51
Kayastha	5.90	5.07	5.31	6.35	7.22
Mahisya	11.80	10.07	10.20	10.82	11.03
Rajbansi	5.21	9.79	8.63	8.45	8.38
Namasudra	9.67	9.81	9.11	9.82	9.71

Source: Chakrabarty, Bidyut, 1993:170

Peasants originally, over time the rich peasants had become prosperous and wealthy in various ways[27], producing a surplus over and above their consumption needs, and continuously interacting with the market. Emulating the life style of the three top castes, to become recognised as *bhadrolok,* they withdrew their family labour from cultivation, and often took them to the towns. They engaged sharecroppers or agricultural labourers to get their land cultivated [Mishra, B B, 1961: 84-87]. As they were claiming *grihasta* status in the villages, they made similar claim, to be recognised as *bhadralok* in the towns. The aspiring *bhadralok*s, former cultivators who divorced themselves and their family members from agriculture to gain *grihastha* status, now became a major source of the middle-class in the towns. It was easier for them to be recognised as *bhadralok*s, the urban society being less rigid and more mobile.

The peasant differentiation that initially led to the formation of *jotedar*s, now also led to substantial caste differentiation by splitting up the existing castes. The countryside was dominated by intermediate castes, such as Namasudras, Kaivartas, Gopes, Rajbanshis and Pods. Muslims were also taken, for most purposes, as agricultural castes. All of them aspired for *grihathas-bhadralok* status. We have seen elsewhere how various caste groups, established their origin in Aryan gods,

like Shiva, and for this purpose they had no difficulty in finding suitable Brahmans. The local population of North Bengal claimed, after capturing a large part of the North, as a part of their Kingdom, that they were comparable in status to Rajputs. And because they had a Kingdom at some time in history, they described themselves as belonging to the royal family. This was how the name Rajbansi came, which literally meant royal family, in place of the name, *koch*, or such other names by which they were described in the past. The *Aguris* of Bardhaman, who were taller and better built than other Bengalis, claimed themselves to be Ugra Kshatriyas, mentioned in some of the recent *purans*.

The Chandals were supposed to be among the lowest category of the caste groups, who were expected to live away from the localities, either at the fringe or near the place where dead were burnt. By early twentieth century, an English knowing elite had been formed amongst them.[28] Later on, the Chandals proved to be very good agriculturists too, as they took to it. The demand grew that Chandal was a derogatory expression, and should be replaced by one, which sounded better. In 1891, in Jessore, the Chandals claimed to be described as Namasudras. They argued that they were descendants of Brahman mother and Sudra father [Bandopadhyay, Sekhar, 1997:5-27]. They organised a strike in Faridpur in 1873 seeking social elevation [Sinha, Pradip, 1965: 5; Ray, Rajat Kanta, 1984: 78-79; Bandopadhyay, Sekhar, 1997: 239-245]. The Namasudras held a conference in 1908 at Narail led by Mukundabehari Mallick, and began a movement against Montagu-Chelmsford reform, because it denied, as in the case of the Muslims, a separate electorate [Broomfield, J.H, 1968: 159]. Many of the Namasudras wanted a separate electorate for them, as was given by the government in case of Muslims [Ray, Rajat Kanti, 1984:233-4]. We have seen that latter was awarded, under Communal Award, separate electorate.

However, gaining the status of *bhadralok* in this way, had their implications for their own caste identity. Many of these new middle-classes, belonged to large caste categories-such as Kaibartyas, Gopes and Kalus, for example. Some of the members of these caste groups, who were supposed to specialise as fishermen, herdsmen or processor of oil, according to their caste affiliation, had taken to cultivation, and had been doing well as cultivators. Since cultivation of crops had a higher social ranking than most of the other occupations,

those amongst them who were engaged in agriculture, now claimed that they had branched out into a new caste group, specialising in agriculture, and had nothing to do with whatever they were doing before. They formed associations and campaigned hard for a higher social status, and eventually gained it. They were now known as Mahisyas, Sadgopes and Tilis, whereas earlier they were known as Kaibartyas, Gopes and Kalus in their original caste occupations. The Mahisyas were a numerically dominant community in two sub-divisions of Medinipur district -Tamluk and Contai- and they colonised a large part of Sundarban. The Mahisya movement started in 1897 and the community was split into agriculturists and non-agriculturists in 1901 [Ray, Rajat, Kanti, 1984: 75-78].

In 1900, a Sadgope Samity was formed, with this purpose by Dwarkanath Ghosh of Dwarkin & Sons. By 1906, it was extinct, because of factional struggles. But by then the main objective of the Samity had been fulfilled; the agriculturists among Gopes were taken as Sadgopes [Ray, Rajat Kanta, 1984: 44].

In 1911, Bauri Samiti registered as a limited company at Jessore, and issued shares of 12 rupees each. Similarly, Purba Banga Vaishya Samity, the organisation of Sahas, was formed [Sinha, Pradip, 1965:877].

In other words, over time, we observe an important transformation in cast system. From its role as a weapon in the hands of upper castes, used for social oppression, there was a tendency for it to become a political mobiliser in the hands of the active elements within the caste. In the traditional caste system the lower castes were repeatedly asked to conform to caste rules, and not to aspire for things bigger and outside their castes, the new elite amongst them now aspired for middle class jobs and adopted middle class values. They were no longer happy to work within the traditional caste norms. This tendency became increasingly pronounced as education spread amongst them.

Obviously, the political interests of the lower castes were always promoted by the colonial government. In division and segmentation of castes they found yet another opportunity to divide and rule the subjugated population. On almost every policy issue the argument arose whether it benefited, more or less, the *bhadralokes* vis-à-vis the lower castes [Broomfield, J.H, 1968: 108].

This growing caste consciousness among the lower castes was reflected partly in the rise of Birendra Krishna Sansmal, some one who belonged to a low

caste - Mahisya- jotedar family of Medinipur. He always had the feeling of being discriminated against by the upper castes in Congress. Once he talked about the "abhorrence of Calcutta upper caste elite for a mofassal Mahisya" [Chakrabarty, Bidyut, 1993:190].

At the same time, the attitude of the leading lights of Bengal towards Caste was ambivalent at its best. Whether formally disowning it or not, they followed many of the upper caste practices. A typical representative of that period was Bhudeb Mukherjee, an important thinker and writer of that time. Otherwise a liberal, he thought caste system had reduced social conflicts. Bankim accepted the intellectual superiority of the British and was not keen about dharmasastras. He too did not condemn social abuses. Not only that he supported joint family and opposed Vidyasagar's movement on *kulin* issue, he thought that it was not important enough as an issue and maintained Victorian passivity in matters of social reform. Dwarakanath appreciated Komt who took caste system as essential for stability, and recognisdd Manu's greatness. On the other hand, it should be said that the Younger Brahmo's encouraged inter-caste marriage. Some one pointed out that, despite the respect Vidyasagar enjoyed, and the abhorrence expressed against this practice, how few were widow remarriages? [Sinha, Pradip, 1975:113-15, 127].

It was not accidental that so many caste associations flourished under the colonial regime. There was a great deal of truth in the observations, made by Rajat Kanti Ray, on the report of Risley, a famous anthropologist: "It reflected the official ideology of British rule in India, formulated by intellectual bureaucrats like Risley, who sought to rationalize the position of the British in India as arbitrators between innumerable antagonistic groups inhabiting the subcontinent." [Ray, Rajat Kanta, 1984: 43].

The choice as an umpire in conflicts between various groups, was taken as between Europeans, who had no axes to grind, and Bengali middle class Hindu having vested interests of all types. Lord Duffrin, who talked about the latter as 'a small Bengali clique' with 'bastard disloyalty', obviously rejected the second alternative. [Ray, Rajat Kanta, 1984: 117].

IX. Census and Development

Here we look into the rich census data to trace the development process in Bengal, particualrly the demogaphic changes, and the growth of towns and villages since 1872, the year of the first census of India.

Census and population growth

In Table 12 we are giving the census data for 1891-1941. Census operations began in 1872; by 1891, the Census methods were streamlined, and hence were made even more reliable and covered many variables. Here we find that population hardly grew from 1891 to 1921, it grew from slightly less than 40 to almost 48 million during this period; but from 1921, the growth was substantial. However, we are not sure whether 20% figure for 1931-41 was reliable, this being the period of communal rivalry, when both the major communities used census as a weapon to inflate their numbers.

Table 12 also provides data for all but four Northern districts of present day West Bengal. Figures for most of those are quite low, even negative when the decade concerned was badly bruised by epidemics, until 1921. They are almost uniformly high in 1931, which carried the influence of the medicinal sciences in the twenties. It is also seen from the table that, on the whole, East Bengal had a higher growth rate during the Census years, particularly in Dhaka and Chitttagong divisions, and was probably more healthy.

Although Census did not begin until 1872, we can use the estimates made by experts for previous years. There were probably 200 million people in India in 1750, and very little increase took place until 1800 because of famines and epidemics. During 1800-1850, there was some small growth because of political stability and better famine relief.

Following the episodic 1770 famine, when one-third of life was lost, a succession of droughts took heavy toll in Bengal. Another major factor was the restoration and extension of old canals, that began in 1819 and caused 1.4 million deaths all over the sub-continent. It stimulated malaria, which took epidemic proportions, and halved the population in several districts, in the 1860s and 1870s. Plagues were not unknown in India in the past, but the bubonic plague was brought

to Bombay, in 1896, by ships coming from Europe. The first major cholera outbreak took place in 1817-19; 20-60% of those affected got killed. In 1911-21 influenza took the form of epidemic [Visaria, Leela and Pravin Visaria, 1983: 478-84].

The ban on infanticide and very few widow marriages during this period raised fertility, while migration to various colonies further reduced its population. Taking the population in India in 1872 as 236 million, during 1834-70, 9.8 million left India and 7.8 million returned for India, giving a figure of 2 million net outmigrants. Upto 1870 Calcutta was the main port of embarkation, though labourers came from as far as Chota Nagpur, UP and Bihar, and other parts of North India.

The period until 1921 corresponded to the first phase of demographic transition, when both birth and death rates were high, and population hardly grew. From 1921, began the second phase of demographic transition, when the birth rate remained as high as before, while the death rate declined, thanks to the progress of the mankind world over with inoculations, injections etc. that effectively combated epidemics, particularly those from water-borne diseases. This opened a gap between birth and death rates, leading to population explosion,

While the death rate could be controlled with technology, quickly and over a large part of the globe, birth rates were socially determined, and were designed to combat high death rates, and therefore were slow to change. The beliefs, customs and conventions rewarded women with high fertility and shunned those with few children. This situation was like this, with high birth and death rates, both in the forties, with death rates lower, until the very end of the British rule. The third phase of demographic transition, of both birth and death rates becoming low and close to one another allowing for little growth in population, was nowhere in sight. Nor was there any determined effort to bring down birth rates by way of family planning; which began only after the independence of the country.

The 'son-survivorship' motivation was very strong among people. Sons brought dowries, while daughters had to be married off with handsome dowries. While sons stayed in the family, and worked for the family holding, the daughters were considered as a liability as they had to be married off, often to distant places, at a heavy cost in terms of dowries. In the case of most families, with as many sons

as daughters, things evened out, as what they gained from dowries of their sons more or less matched what they had to pay out during the marriages of their daughters, but this did not deter the pernicious dowry system for becoming almost universal.

This motivation was also very strong at the lower end of the society as well. Sons meant family labourers working for the family farm without wages. For poorest farmers of low caste, at the bottom of the social heap enjoying no respect from any one, whatever little respect they enjoyed was from their own children in the families, which explained preference for children. In a society that lacked old age pensions etc, surviving sons at the time of old age and looking after old parents, provided insurance. That this attitude had a rational basis, in a society ridden with high death rates, was found in various simulation studies, conducted with computer. It was found that, with eight children produced, there was a statistical chance of one son surviving at the time of old age of his father. Thus, population problem could not be seen in isolation, and the birth rates could not be brought down without ending dowry, without women enjoying a high social status, and without providing for pension at low wage [Dasgupta, Biplab, 1970].

Area per town

This particular variable highlights the role of towns in relation to villages. Beyond a certain level of prosperity it is inevitable that towns would be formed to serve villages. Towns provide the villages with economies of scale, by undertaking those activities that villages require but can not afford individually, e.g, hat, repair shop, bank, leasing out agricultural machinery.

Ideally, towns should be sufficient in number to serve the entire countryside. In Table 13, we find that, in 1911, a town covered 679 square miles, and by 1941, it declined to 531 square miles. Still, the figures were frightfully large.

Population per town

Table 14 more or less depicts the same picture. In 1911, there were 373433 people per town. Over time, the number of towns increased-from 124 in 1911 to

156 in 1941- but the population increase was faster: from 46205642 in 1911 to 61460377 in 1941. By 1941, the figures slightly improved to 393977

Villages per town

This variable measures, more or less, the same phenomenon, the role of towns in the development of villages. If the number of towns is not sufficient in relation to the number of villages, this affects, negatively, the development of villages. Conversely, the inadequacy in terms of the number of towns, reflects the lack of development of villages, and hence the failure of towns to emerge in greater number.

In 1911, there were 994 villages for every town, and it declined to 577 in 1941. But here one should consider the movements in both numerator and denominator. Two things are happening at the same time. While the number of towns is increasing over time, so also is declining the number of villages, and the figures given, result from both of these two contrary developments. Furthermore, the decline in the number of villages also results from the consolidation of villages into a small number with a larger average size. As Table 18 indicates, there is a tendency for the average villages becoming larger over time.

The extent of urbanisation

The rate of urbanisation was excruciatingly low, at slightly more than 6% in 1911 (Table 16). The rates improved in later years, but even in 1941 it was less than 10%. The rates were lower in eastern Bengal districts, as low as 2.91% in Chittagong Division districts and 3.85% in Dhaka Division districts, in 1941. Predictably, the urban rates were comparatively higher in Hooghly, Haora and Calcutta.

Table 12: Population, its variation and growth rates in Bengal: 1911-1941

Year	Population	Decadal change	Growth rate	Population	Decadal chnage	Growth rate
	Bengal			*Burdwan Division*		
1891	39813330	-	-	7689352	-	-
1901	42888453	3075123	7.72	8240261	550909	7.16
1911	46313621	3425168	7.99	8467506	227245	2.76
1921	47600628	1287007	2.78	8050642	-416864	-4.92
1931	51088884	3488256	7.33	8647189	596547	11.20
1941	61460377	10371493	20.30	10287369	1640180	18.97
	Bardhaman			*Birbhum*		
1891	1388118	-	-	802398	-	-
1901	1528290	140172	10.10	906891	104493	13.02
1911	1533874	5584	0.37	940162	33271	3.67
1921	1434771	-99103	-6.46	851725	- 88437	-9.41
1931	1575694	140923	9.82	947154	95429	11.20
1941	1890732	315038	19.99	1048317	101163	10.68
	Bankura			*Medinipur*		
1891	1069668	-	-	2631466	-	-
1901	1116411	46743	4.37	2781114	149648	5.69
1911	1138670	22259	1.99	2821201	40087	1.44
1921	1019441	-119229	-10.47	2666660	-154541	-5.48
1931	1111721	92280	9.05	2799093	132433	4.97
1941	1289640	177919	16.00	3190647	391554	13.99
	Hooghly			*Haora*		
1891	1034077	-	-	763625	-	-
1901	1049041	14964	1.45	850514	86889	11.38
1911	1090097	41056	3.91	943502	92988	10.93
1921	1087142	- 2955	- 0.27	997403	53901	5.71
1931	1114255	27113	2.49	1098867	101464	10.17
1941	1377729	263474	23.65	1490304	391437	35.62
	Presidency Division					
	24-Parganas			*Calcutta*		
1891	1829344	-	-	744249	-	-
1901	2004775	175431	9.59	921380	177131	23.80
1911	2317028	312253	15.58	1013149	91769	9.96
1921	2489756	172728	7.45	1048300	35151	3.47
1931	2746837	257081	10.33	1163771	115471	11.02
1941	3536386	789549	28.74	2108891	945120	81.21

Table 12 (continued)

Year	Population	Decadal change	Growth rate	Population	Decadal chnage	Growth rate
	Nadia			*Murshidabad*		
1891	1641410	-	-	1240852	-	-
1901	1665322	23912	1.46	1322486	81634	6.58
1911	1624861	- 40461	- 2.43	1345073	22587	1.71
1921	149698	- 1475163	-90.79	1224181	-120892	- 8.99
1931	1529632	1379934	921.81	1370677	146496	11.97
1941	1759846	230214	15.05	1640530	269853	19.69
	Jassore			*Khulna*		
1891	1872803	-	-	1188562	-	-
1901	1797794	-75009	-4.01	1264669	76107	6.40
1911	1743371	-54423	-3.03	1379160	114491	9.05
1921	1722214	-21157	-1.21	1470963	91803	6.66
1931	1671164	-51050	-2.96	1628352	157389	10.70
1941	1828216	157052	9.40	1943218	314866	19.34
	Rajshai Division			*Malda*		
1891	8840487	-	-	824390	-	-
1901	9388107	547620	6.19	893943	69553	8.44
1911	10169805	781698	8.33	1026739	132796	14.86
1921	10388350	218545	2.15	1013471	- 13268	- 1.29
1931	10669512	281162	2.71	1055643	42172	4.16
1941	12040465	1370953	12.85	1232618	176975	16.76
	Dhaka Division			*Chittagong Division*		
1891	9840936	-	-	4209028	-	-
1901	10784772	943836	9.59	4579588	370560	8.80
1911	12010661	1225889	11.37	5420448	840860	18.36
1921	12863440	852779	7.10	5953153	532705	9.83
1931	13915435	1051995	8.18	6772979	819826	13.77
1941	16683714	2768279	19.89	8477890	1704911	25.17

Source: Census of India (relevant years)

Table 13: Area Covered Per Town in Bengal and its districts: 1911-1941

(Area in square mles)

	1911 Area	Towns	Area/town	1921 Area	Towns	Area/town
Bengal	84092	124	678.2	82277	135	609.5
British Teritory	78699	119	661.3	76843	130	591.1
Burdwan Division	13948	28	498.1	13854	23	602.3
Burdwan	2691	6	448.5	2703	6	450.5
Birbhum	1752	1	1752.0	1753	3	584.3
Bankura	2621	3	873.7	2625	4	656.3
Midnapur	5186	8	648.3	5055	8	631.9
Hoogly	1188	8	148.5	1188	10	118.8
Howrah	510	2	255.0	530	2	265.0
Presidency Division	17499	48	364.6	17410	51	341.4
24-parganas	4844	26	186.3	4856	28	173.4
Calcutta	32	1	32.0	21	1	21.0
Nadia	2790	9	310.0	2778	9	308.7
Murshidabad	2143	6	357.2	2121	7	303.0
Jessore	2925	3	975.0	2904	3	968.0
Khulna	4765	3	1588.3	4730	3	1576.7
Rajshahi Division	19235	20	961.8	19047	20	952.4
Malda	1899	3	633.0	1833	3	611.0
Dacca Division	16244	17	955.5	14822	20	741.1
Chittogong Division	11773	6	1962.2	11710	6	1951.7

	1931 Area	Towns	Area/town	1941 Area	Towns	Area/town
Bengal	82955	143	580.1	82876	156	531.3
British Teritory	77521	138	561.7	77442	149	519.7
Burdwan Division	13984	36	388.4	14135	40	353.4
Burdwan	2705	9	300.6	2705	10	270.5
Birbhum	1699	2	849.5	1743	5	348.6
Bankura	2625	4	656.3	2646	4	661.5
Midnapur	5245	9	582.8	5274	9	586.0
Hoogly	1188	10	118.8	1206	10	120.6
Howrah	522	2	261.0	561	2	280.5
Presidency Division	17583	50	351.7	16402	53	309.5
24-parganas	5257	27	194.7	3690	28	131.8
Calcutta	33	1	33.0	34	1	34.0
Nadia	2881	9	320.1	2879	9	319.9
Murshidabad	2091	7	298.7	2063	7	294.7
Jessore	2902	3	967.3	2925	4	731.3
Khulna	4689	3	1563.0	4805	4	1201.3
Rajshahi Division	19163	25	766.5	19642	27	727.5
Malda	1764	3	588.0	2004	3	668.0
Dacca Division	14829	20	741.5	15498	22	704.5
Chittogong Division	11692	7	1670.3	11765	7	1680.7

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol. VI, Part 1A-Report; and other Census of India (for relevant years).

Table 14: Population Per Town in Bengal: 1911-1941

Area	1911 Population	1911 Towns	1911 Population per town	1921 Population	1921 Towns	1921 Population per town
Bengal	46305642	124	373433	47592462	135	352537
British Teritory	45483077	119	382211	46695545	130	359197
Burdwan Division	8467314	28	302404	8050642	23	350028
Burdwan	1538371	6	256395	1438926	6	239821
Birbhum	935473	1	935473	847570	3	282523
Bankura	1138670	3	379557	1019941	4	254985
Midnapur	2821201	8	352650	2666655	8	333332
Hoogly	1090097	8	136262	1080142	10	108014
Howrah	943502	2	471751	997403	2	498702
Presidency Division	9445321	48	196778	9461395	51	185518
24-parganas	2434104	26	93619	2628205	28	93864
Calcutta	896067	1	896067	907851	1	907851
Nadia	1617846	9	179761	1487572	9	165286
Murshidabad	1372274	6	228712	1262514	7	180359
Jessore	1758264	3	586088	1722219	3	574073
Khulna	1366766	3	455589	1453034	3	484345
Rajshahi Division	10138302	20	506915	10345664	20	517283
Malda	1004159	3	334720	985665	3	328555
Dacca Division	12037649	17	708097	12837311	20	641866
Chittogong Division	5394491	6	899082	6000524	6	1000087

Area	1931 Population	1931 Towns	1931 Population per town	1941 Population	1941 Towns	1941 Population per town
Bengal	51087338	143	357254	61460377	156	393977
British Teritory	50114002	138	363145	60306525	149	404742
Burswan Division	8647184	36	240200	10287358	40	257184
Burdwan	2737699	9	304189	1890732	10	189073
Birbhum	947554	2	473777	1048317	5	209663
Bankura	1111721	4	277930	1289640	4	322410
Midnapur	2799093	9	311010	3190641	9	354516
Hoogly	1114255	10	111426	1377729	10	137773
Howrah	1098867	2	549434	1490304	2	745152
Presidency Division	10108229	50	202165	12817087	53	241832
24-parganas	2713868	27	100514	3536386	28	126300
Calcutta	1196734	1	1196734	2108891	1	2108891
Nadia	1529632	9	169959	1759846	9	195538
Murshidabad	1370677	7	195811	1640530	7	234361
Jessore	1671164	3	557055	1828216	4	457054
Khulna	1586148	3	528716	1903218	4	475805
Rajshahi Division	10668066	25	426723	12040465	27	445943
Malda	1053766	3	351255	1232618	3	410873
Dacca Division	13564054	20	678203	16683714	22	758351
Chittogong Division	6826414	7	975202	8477892	7	1211127

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol. VI, Part 1A-Report; and other Census of India (for relevant years).

Table 15: Villages per town in Bengal: 1911-1941

Area	1911 Towns	1911 Villages	1911 Villages per town	1921 Towns	1921 Villages	1921 Villages per town
Bengal	124	123245	994	135	89525	663
British Teritory	119	119732	1006	130	84981	654
Burdwan Division	28	24104	861	23	22500	978
Burdwan	6	2769	462	6	2811	469
Birbhum	1	2216	2216	3	2299	766
Bankura	3	4634	1545	4	3999	1000
Midnapur	8	11316	1415	8	10343	1293
Hoogly	8	2202	275	10	2187	219
Howrah	2	967	484	2	861	431
Presidency Division	48	13341	278	51	13328	261
24-parganas	26	3385	130	28	3399	121
Calcutta	1	entirely urban		1	entirely urban	
Nadia	9	2367	263	9	2344	260
Murshidabad	6	1879	313	7	1967	281
Jessore	3	3758	1253	3	3610	1203
Khulna	3	1952	651	3	2008	669
Rajshahi Division	20	39081	1954	20	23765	1188
Malda	3	4683	1561	3	2236	745
Dacca Division	17	31780	1869	20	18424	921
Chittogong Division	6	11426	1904	6	6964	1161

Area	1931 Towns	1931 Villages	1931 Villages per town	1941 Towns	1941 Villages	1941 Villages per town
Bengal	143	91200	638	156	90000	577
British Teritory	138	86618	628	149	84213	565
Burdwan Division	36	22383	622	40	22883	572
Burdwan	9	2631	292	10	2703	270
Birbhum	2	2402	1201	5	2211	442
Bankura	4	3476	869	4	3522	881
Midnapur	9	10583	1176	9	10711	1190
Hoogly	10	2180	218	10	1908	191
Howrah	2	1111	556	2	828	414
Presidency Division	50	13238	265	53	13835	261
24-parganas	27	3266	121	28	3670	131
Calcutta	1	entirely urban		1	entirely urban	
Nadia	9	2401	267	9	2376	264
Murshidabad	7	1829	261	7	1847	264
Jessore	3	3593	1198	4	3600	900
Khulna	3	2149	716	4	2292	573
Rajshahi Division	25	23527	941	27	22348	828
Malda	3	2323	774	3	1944	648
Dacca Division	20	20166	1008	22	19030	865
Chittogong Division	7	7304	1043	7	7717	1102

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol. VI, Part 1A-Report; and other Census of India (for relevant years).

Table 16: Urbanisation level in various parts of Bengal: 1911-1941

Area	1911			1921		
	Population	Urban population	Urbanisation (%)	Population	Urban population	Urbanisation (%)
Bengal	46305642	2968247	6.41	47592462	3211304	6.75
British Teritory	45483077	2945622	6.48	46695545	3186309	6.82
Burdwan Division	8467314	615260	7.27	8050642	674600	8.38
Burdwan	1538371	94186	6.12	1438926	95741	6.65
Birbhum	935473	9131	0.98	847570	23251	2.74
Bankura	1138670	57206	5.02	1019941	60889	5.97
Midnapur	2821201	101855	3.61	2666655	96864	3.63
Hoogly	1090097	151482	13.90	1080142	179340	16.60
Howrah	943502	201400	21.35	997403	218510	21.91
Presidency Division	9445321	1674331	17.73	9461395	1775704	18.77
24-parganas	2434104	548514	22.53	2628205	629887	23.97
Calcutta	896067	896067	100.00	907851	907851	100.00
Nadia	1617846	95918	5.93	1487572	96868	6.51
Murshidabad	1372274	83483	6.08	1262514	87885	6.96
Jessore	1758264	21198	1.21	1722219	21295	1.24
Khulna	1366766	29151	2.13	1453034	31918	2.20
Rajshahi Division	10138302	218856	2.16	10345664	235600	2.28
Malda	1004159	41394	4.12	985665	29835	3.03
Dacca Division	12037649	339318	2.82	12837311	387573	3.02
Chittogong Division	5394491	97857	1.81	6000524	112823	1.88

Area	1931			1941		
	Population	Urban population	Urbanisation (%)	Population	Urban population	Urbanisation (%)
Bengal	51087338	3711940	7.27	61460377	5983300	9.74
British Teritory	50114002	3684330	7.35	60306525	5938786	9.85
Burdwan Division	8647184	815401	9.43	10287358	1276124	12.40
Burdwan	2737699	129885	4.74	1890732	223166	11.80
Birbhum	947554	20877	2.20	1048317	60350	5.76
Bankura	1111721	67242	6.05	1289640	91983	7.13
Midnapur	2799093	138584	4.95	3190641	188053	5.89
Hoogly	1114255	203593	18.27	1377729	282923	20.54
Howrah	1098867	255220	23.23	1490304	429718	28.83
Presidency Division	10108229	1988089	19.67	12817087	3338978	26.05
24-parganas	2713868	538603	19.85	3536386	863095	24.41
Calcutta	1196734	1196734	100.00	2108891	2108991	100.00
Nadia	1529632	104831	6.85	1759846	143446	8.15
Murshidabad	1370677	91808	6.70	1640530	120456	7.34
Jessore	1671164	20792	1.24	1828216	37605	2.06
Khulna	1586148	35315	2.23	1903218	65503	3.44
Rajshahi Division	10668066	294830	2.76	12040465	434327	3.61
Malda	1053766	35512	3.37	1232618	50346	4.08
Dacca Division	13564054	429033	3.16	16683714	642368	3.85
Chittogong Division	6826414	156977	2.30	8477892	247030	2.91

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol. VI, Part 1A-Report; and other Census of India (for relevant years).

Table 17: Female population and gender ratio in Bengal, 1911-1941

Area	1911 Total	1911 Female	1911 Gender ratio	1921 Total	1921 Female	1921 Gender ratio
Bengal	46305642	22504049	945	47592462	22964097	932
British Teritory	45483077	22117852	947	46695545	22544314	933
Burdwan Division	8467314	4205389	987	8050642	3949882	963
Burdwan	1538371	768047	997	1438926	706557	965
Birbhum	935473	471635	1017	847570	424584	1004
Bankura	1138670	576085	1024	1019941	510607	1002
Midnapur	2821201	1410487	1000	2666655	1327008	991
Hoogly	1090097	534274	961	1080142	518874	924
Howrah	943502	444861	892	997403	462252	864
Presidency Division	9445321	4430404	883	9461395	4371884	859
24-parganas	2434104	1128404	864	2628205	1197487	837
Calcutta	896067	288393	475	907851	290261	470
Nadia	1617846	805266	991	1487572	726227	954
Murshidabad	1372274	693982	1023	1262514	633772	1008
Jessore	1758264	857172	951	1722219	828627	927
Khulna	1366766	657187	926	1453034	695510	918
Rajshahi Division	10138302	4881517	929	10345664	4974312	926
Malda	1004159	505612	1014	985665	492843	1000
Dacca Division	12037649	5900562	961	12837311	6263736	953
Chittogong Division	5394491	2699980	1002	6000524	2984500	990

Area	1931 Total	1931 Female	1931 Gender ratio	1941 Total	1941 Female	1941 Gender ratio
Bengal	51087338	24529478	924	61460377	29099976	899
British Teritory	50114002	24072304	924	60306525	28559130	900
Burdwan Division	8647184	4194307	942	10287358	4908475	913
Burdwan	2737699	760808	385	1890732	891907	893
Birbhum	947554	474867	1005	1048317	523800	999
Bankura	1111721	554647	996	1289640	637759	978
Midnapur	2799093	1382068	975	3190641	1558968	955
Hoogly	1114255	522125	882	1377729	639168	865
Howrah	1098867	499792	834	1490304	656873	788
Presidency Division	10108229	4632863	846	12817087	5711176	804
24-parganas	2713868	1248921	853	3536386	1593021	820
Calcutta	1196734	381786	468	2108891	656529	452
Nadia	1529632	740747	939	1759846	850713	936
Murshidabad	1370677	687194	1005	1640530	816047	990
Jessore	1671164	799718	918	1828216	870340	909
Khulna	1586148	774497	954	1903218	884526	868
Rajshahi Division	10668066	5068629	905	12040465	5757126	916
Malda	1053766	526461	998	1232618	613346	990
Dacca Division	13564054	6741707	988	13915435	8071862	1381
Chittogong Division	6826414	3384798	983	8477892	4110487	941

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol. VI, Part 1A-Report; and other Census of India (for relevant years).

Table 18: Gender ratio across distrtits of Bengal in 1872

Divison/Districts	Male	Female	Total	Gender Ratio
Burdwan Division	*2323578*	*2712304*	*5035882*	*1167*
Burdwan	661104	774895	1435999	1172
Bankura	166124	183722	349846	1106
Birbhum	218730	258815	477545	1183
Midnapur	799461	919157	1718618	1150
Hugly-Howrah	478159	575715	1053874	1204
Presidency Division	*2261172*	*2269117*	*4530289*	*1004*
24-parganas	777679	748582	1526261	963
Calcutta	262077	118974	381051	454
Nadia	546109	670213	1216322	1227
Jessore	675307	731348	1406655	1083
Rajshahi Division	*2773891*	*3092245*	*5866136*	*1115*
Murshidabad	408615	510149	918764	1248
Dinajpur	482736	492367	975103	1020
Maldha	203749	238480	442229	1170
Rajshahi	388571	449533	838104	1157
Rungpur	703602	750440	1454042	1067
Bogra	216700	235822	452522	1088
Pabna	369918	415454	785372	1123
Cochbehar Division	*346565*	*340943*	*687508*	*984*
Darjeeling	36585	27873	64458	762
Jalpaiguri	133584	134457	268041	1007
Cochbehar	176396	178613	355009	1013
Eastern Division	*2929637*	*3209622*	*6139259*	*1096*

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol. VI, Part 1A - Report.

Table 19: Average size of villages in Bengal and its districts, 1911-1941

Area	1911 No of villages	1911 Rural population	1911 Average village size	1921 No of villages	1921 Rural population	1921 Average village size
Bengal	123245	43337395	352	89525	44381158	496
British Teritory	119732	42537455	355	84981	43509236	512
Burdwan Division	24104	7852054	326	22500	7376042	328
Burdwan	2769	1444185	522	2811	1343185	478
Birbhum	2216	926342	418	2299	824319	359
Bankura	4634	1081464	233	3999	959052	240
Midnapur	11316	2719346	240	10343	2569791	248
Hoogly	2202	938615	426	2187	900802	412
Howrah	967	742102	767	861	778893	905
Presidency Division	13341	7770990	582	13328	7685691	577
24-parganas	3385	1885590	557	3399	1998318	588
Calcutta		entirely urban				
Nadia	2367	1521928	643	2344	1390704	593
Murshidabad	1879	1288791	686	1967	1174629	597
Jessore	3758	1737066	462	3610	1700924	471
Khulna	1952	1337615	685	2008	1421116	708
Rajshahi Division	39081	9919446	254	23765	10110064	425
Malda	4683	962765	206	2236	955830	427
Dacca Division	31780	11698331	368	18424	12449738	676
Chittogong Division	11426	5296634	464	6964	5887701	845

Area	1931 No of villages	1931 Rural population	1931 Average village size	1941 No of villages	1941 Rural population	1941 Average village size
Bengal	91200	47375398	519	90000	55477087	616
British Teritory	86618	46429672	536	84213	54367749	646
Burdwan Division	22383	7831783	350	22883	9011246	394
Burdwan	2631	1445814	550	2703	1667578	617
Birbhum	2402	926677	386	2211	987973	447
Bankura	3476	1044479	300	3522	1197664	340
Midnapur	10583	2660509	251	10711	3002594	280
Hoogly	2180	910662	418	1908	1094827	574
Howrah	1111	843647	759	828	1060615	1281
Presidency Division	13238	8120140	613	13835	9478135	685
24-parganas	3266	2175265	666	3670	2673315	728
Calcutta		entirely urban				
Nadia	2401	1424801	593	2376	1616408	680
Murshidabad	1829	1278869	699	1847	1520081	823
Jessore	3593	1650372	459	3600	1790613	497
Khulna	2149	1550833	722	2292	1837718	802
Rajshahi Division	23527	10373236	441	22348	11606142	519
Malda	2323	1018254	438	1944	1182276	608
Dacca Division	20166	13135021	651	19030	16041350	843
Chittogong Division	7304	6669437	913	7717	8230865	1067

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol. VI, Part 1A-Report; and other Census of India (for relevant years).

Table 20: Average town size in Bengal 1911-1941

Area	1911 No of towns	1911 Urban population	1911 Average town size	1921 No of towns	1921 Urban population	1921 Average town size
Bengal	124	2968247	23937	135	3211304	23787
British Teritory	119	2945622	24753	130	3186309	24510
Burdwan Division	28	615260	21974	23	674600	29330
Burdwan	6	94186	15698	6	95741	15957
Birbhum	1	9131	9131	3	23251	7750
Bankura	3	57206	19069	4	60889	15222
Midnapur	8	101855	12732	8	96864	12108
Hoogly	8	151482	18935	10	179340	17934
Howrah	2	201400	100700	2	218510	109255
Presidency Division	48	1674331	34882	51	1775704	34818
24-parganas	26	548514	21097	28	629887	22496
Calcutta	1	896067	896067	1	907851	907851
Nadia	9	95918	10658	9	96868	10763
Murshidabad	6	83483	13914	7	87885	12555
Jessore	3	21198	7066	3	21295	7098
Khulna	3	29151	9717	3	31918	10639
Rajshahi Division	20	218856	10943	20	235600	11780
Malda	3	41394	13798	3	29835	9945
Dacca Division	17	339318	19960	20	387573	19379
Chittogong Division	6	97857	16310	6	112823	18804

Area	1931 No of towns	1931 Urban population	1931 Average town size	1941 No of towns	1941 Urban population	1941 Average town size
Bengal	143	3711940	25958	156	5983290	38354
British Teritory	138	3684330	26698	149	5938776	39858
Burdwan Division	36	815401	22650	40	1276112	31903
Burdwan	9	129885	14432	10	223154	22315
Birbhum	2	20877	10439	5	60344	12069
Bankura	4	67242	16811	4	91976	22994
Midnapur	9	138584	15398	9	188047	20894
Hoogly	10	203593	20359	10	282902	28290
Howrah	2	255220	127610	2	429689	214845
Presidency Division	50	1988089	39762	53	3338952	62999
24-parganas	27	538603	19948	28	863071	30824
Calcutta	1	1196734	1196734	1	2108891	2108891
Nadia	9	104831	11648	9	143438	15938
Murshidabad	7	91808	13115	7	120449	17207
Jessore	3	20792	6931	4	37603	9401
Khulna	3	35315	11772	4	65500	16375
Rajshahi Division	25	294830	11793	27	434323	16086
Malda	3	35512	11837	3	50342	16781
Dacca Division	20	429033	21452	22	642364	29198
Chittogong Division	7	156977	22425	7	247027	35290

Source: Census of India 1951, Vol. VI, Part 1A-Report; and other Census of India (for relevant years).

The gender ratio

The gender ratio (females per 1000 males) is a major indicator of the nature of urbanisation in a country. Generally speaking, old towns and those based on the overflow of the prosperity of a rural area are usually those with a high ratio of females to males. On the contrary, industrial towns usually have an adverse gender ratio. But even in the case of the industrial towns, the tendency is for the gender ratio to improve over time. The explanation for this is quite simple. When the industrial town is initially established, usually its workers leave their families behind or come as unmarried, and as a consequence the town life is dominated by adult males. However, over time, the work force becomes settled. Those who are unmarried become married in due course and those leaving their families behind in the villages bring them over to the towns. The women and children, thus coming to the towns, improve the gender ratio in the towns in another way. Their demand for goods and services is translated into the demand for a large non-industrial work force, with a more balanced gender ratio. Furthermore, as the life goes on, the tertiary sector asserts itself. Taking all these together, the gender ratio improves.

Therefore, by looking at the gender ratio, we can roughly ascertain whether an urban territory is loaded in favour of industry or not, or for how long the town had been in existence. Table 17 shows gender ratios for various districts of Bengal in four census years in early 20th century starting with 1911. The gender ratios in Calcutta (as low as 452 in one of these years) and Howrah are lower than the average for Bengal. But even in those places there was a tendency for this ratio to fall. The gender ratio is quite high in rural areas, particularly those in eastern Bengal districts.

If we compare this table with that for 1872 [Table 18] several interesting features emerge. In the table for subsequent years we find that the average gender ratio is around 899-945, whereas it should be around 1000. But in the table for 1872 almost all the districts, excluding Calcutta, and 24-Parganas have figures above 1000. This decline in gender ratio is not explained everywhere, but it is the reflection of the neglect and indifference shown to the female child, if not infanticide itself.

Average village and town size

A number of interesting tendencies appear from Tables 19 and 20, on average sizes of villages and towns. First to notice is the very small size of the villages, accounting for less than 400 in 1911. The second tendency is that of the villages to expand in size and to be less in number. It suggests that some kind of consolidation took place; the people through merger and abandonment of small villages raised the average size of the villages. Thirdly, no less interesting was the increase in the average size of villages in eastern Bengal, compared to western villages. Further, fourthly, we notice that the villages were bigger in the vicinity of Calcutta. The districts near Calcutta, such as Howrah and Hoogly, for this reason, show higher figures for average village size. Similarly, over time, towns grow in size and in number, but the pattern is uneven over the whole territory of Bengal. Those in the eastern region are smaller.

The impact of urbanisation on the rural areas

We have already noted that, apart from their interest in commercial crops, the colonial regime was not basically interested in traditional agriculture. The pattern of urbanisation which evolved during this period was largely an outcome of the two sets of policies it pursued - their export-orientation, which explains the importance of Calcutta and its port and its rail-road links with other urban centres, and the zamindari system established through the permanent settlement of 1793 which helped to concentrate purchasing power in the towns, as the zamidars were mostly absentees. Yet, the growth of towns and metropolis, their location and economic activities could not fail to profoundly influence the agrarian structure in the rural Bengal.

First, both export-orientation of the pattern of urbanisation and the establishment of absentee landlordism had the effect of drawing resources away from the countryside and impoverishing its population. Secondly, the countryside was now seen as the reservoir of raw materials for the industries in the towns in India and Britain; in the new division of labour there was no place for industries in the rural areas. The villages now became more agricultural than before, and dependent

on the towns and ports for the supply of many of their necessities, including clothing. Thirdly, as we have already noted, the expansion of the urban areas stimulated grain trade, with disastrous consequences for the village population in the years of bad harvest. Fourthly, the towns provided the village population with alternative sources of employment and income and encouraged migratory flows towards the major urban centres; but, as we have already noted, as far as industrial employment is concerned, the employers were compelled to recruit labourers from outside the province, as the local agriculturists were reluctant to leave the field. But even though the industrial employment was not taken up by the local agriculturists, the very fact that such an option existed could not but influence relations within the village. Fifthly, as noted above, the towns influenced the production pattern in the neighbouring villages which suited to the consumption needs of the urban population (e.g. the cultivation of vegetables) and also created opportunities for the expansion of poultry, dairy, and similar other activities.

The impact of the urban areas on the rural areas, as one would expect, unevenly spread across the province. The rural areas nearer the larger urban centres were subjected to greater change than those located at the distance from these centres. A large part of the migratory movement was intra-rural, that is from the backward to richer rural areas. Migratory movements towards 24 Parganas, Howrah, Hooghly and Burdwan were actually towards the rural parts of those districts which were more prosperous than the rural areas from which the migrants came. These were more densely populated and had larger villages than elsewhere. These were also generally the areas where the level of irrigation and the application of fertilisers were higher. In other words, not only the urban population, and industrial employment tended to be concentrated in these districts, but their rural areas also became relatively more prosperous with higher production, more diversified agriculture and a more intensive cultivation of land both in terms of input application and cropping intensity. In, contrast, the rural areas on the west and on the north remained poorer, and several of them became net out-migrating areas. The uneven agricultural development wee see in West Bengal today, is partly a consequence of the cumulative impact of these movements over almost two centuries of colonial rule.

Size distribution of villages

All these changes were reflected as much in the economic and social life in the villages as in the average size and distribution of villages. The traditional villages were small and widely dispersed, but the tendency now was for them to become bigger and for their total number to decline. In place of a large number of small villages, the tendency was towards a smaller number of compact larger villages. To examine the magnitude of such changes, let us consider, for example, the following comments from W W Hunter's monumental study, with reference to North Bengal, where he observed that except for Darjeeling, Kurseong (both of whom were villages) and the coolie lines of the tea plantations, in Darjeeling "there are no villages in the proper sense of the term. The people live in their separate enclosures near their patches of cleared cultivation, but often at a considerable distance from each other." [Hunter, W.W, 1876, Vol. X: 40].

In his report on Jalpaiguri he talked about treeless grasslands in the Duars and of the "village sites situated few and far between" marked by "trees and cultivation fields" [Hunter, W.W, 1876, Vol. X: 224]. As for Cooch Bihar, he commented, "there are few compact villages of the Bengali type in the State, as the husbands men generally live apart, each on his own little holding" [Hunter, W.W., 1876, Vol X: 346]. In case of Sundarban, his observation was that villages in the proper sense had not been formed, what are called villages were no more than homesteads doted on a sea of paddy field [Hunter, W.W, 1876, Vol 1: 333].

W. H. Thompson, Superintendent of the Census, 1921, observed that villages in West Bengal were not compact areas, and practically the entire countryside was under cultivation: "In these circumstances it is not surprising to find the homesteads scattered over the whole face of the countryside" [Quoted in Census of India 1951, Vol. VI, part 1A, p.387]. However, one should distinguish between the northern and western-most districts, which corresponded more closely to this picture of scattered homesteads over the whole countryside, and the more compact villages of the southern part of the present-day West Bengal. One fails to find comparable comments by Hunter on the southern districts, excepting in case of Sunderbans.

Table 21 shows that even in 1872, in the five districts for which data were available, in all excepting one (Nadia), more than four-fifths of the villages had a population of less than 500, while on the other hand, one in twenty settlements

(villages or towns) had a population exceeding 1000. By 1891, (see Table 22) the proportion of the population living in villages with a population of less than 500 was less than half, while one-quarter of the population lived in villages where the population exceeded 1000. This trend was even more pronounced in Cooch Bihar and Darjeeling, while the distribution in Jalpaiguri showed that four-fifths of the population lived in villages with a population smaller than 500. However, the figures on villages for both Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling are suspect since the homesteads in those districts were scattered over large areas and, therefore, these were not comparable with the compact villages of the South. Besides, these two tables do not cover a common set of districts and are not exactly comparable - one giving the percentage distribution of villages by village (population) size, and the other giving the percentage distribution of population by village size. But, on the whole, these indicate how, over time, the population had tended to concentrate in larger villages.

Table 23 shows, for nine districts which were not affected by the partition of Bengal in 1947, that, between 1901 and 1951, the number of villages declined in six, and in one (Cooch Bihar) remained virtually the same, and showed increase only in two (Medinipur and Darjeeling, but the figure for the latter might indicate no more than boundary changes). Table 24, giving the distribution of rural population, according to village size, between 1901 and 1951, shows that the proportion of the population in villages with less than 500 people declined in the case of every district, and in almost all cases drastically. The proportion of population living in villages with a population between 500 and 2000, increased for all the districts except four - Howrah, Nadia, Murshidabad and Darjeeling. In cases of these four districts, population in these villages did not decline, but the villages previously in those categories had moved to the higher ones. Similarly the proportion of population in villages of 2000 - 5000 and 5000 plus had increased in all districts except three in this period. These three were Bankura, Cooch Bihar (only the 5000 plus category) and Jalpaiguri. Generally speaking, these tables confirm that, over time, the number of villages declined, along with increase in village size, due to both population increase and the increasing concentration of population in more compact areas.

Table 21: Distribution of villages by settlement size, 1872

(District / No.of villages)

Settlement size (population)	*Darjeeling*	*Cooch Bihar*	*Murshidabad*	*Nadia*	*Jalpaiguri*
Less than 200	1009 (48.04)	499 (41.62)	1654 (44.07)	973 (26.36)	1968 (29.53)
200—500	776 (36.95)	579 (48.29)	1373 (36.58)	1526 (41.34)	2085 (41.88)
500—1000	225 (10.71)	95 (7.92)	547 (14.58)	866 (23.46)	731 (14.68)
1000—2000	67 (3.19)	16 (1.33)	148 (3.94)	265 (7.18)	159 (3.19)
2000—3000	14 (0.67)	4 (0.33)	15 (0.40)	44 (1.19)	12 (0.24)
3000—4000	4 (0.19)	1 (0.08)	9 (0.24)	--	---
4000—5000	3 (0.14)	1 (0.08)	1 (0.03)	10 (0.27)	7 (0.14)
5000—6000	1 (0.05)	3 (0.25)	1 (0.03)	--	--
6000—10000	--	1 (0.08)	1 (0.03)	5 (0.14)	9 (0.18)
10000—10000	1 (0.05)	--	2 (0.05)	--	2 (0.04)
18000—20000	--	--	--	--	2 (0.04)
More than 2000	--	--	2 (0.05)	2 (0.05)	3 (0.06)
Total	2100	1199	3735	3691	4978

Note: Percentages are given in parentthesis.

Source: Census of Bengal, 1872.

Table 22: Percentage distribution of population by village size, 1891

Village size	Burdwan, Birbhum & Bankura	Cooch Bihar	Jalpaiguri	Darjeeling
Less than 200	16.79	8.01	59.94	8.01
200 - 500	29.95	20.02	22.47	20.02
500 - 1000	25.38	27.93	6.37	27.93
1000 - 2000	12.08	25.87	2.36	25.87
2000 - 3000	3.73	8.69	0.92	8.69
3000 - 5000	0.57	2.27	1.57	2.27
Above 5000	11.50	7.21	6.37	7.20
	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Census of India, 1951, Vol. VI, West Bengal, Sikkim and Chnadannagore, Part 1 A- Report, Calcutta, 1953, Statement D-2 (p.390)

Table 23: Number of occupied villages in some districts of West Bengal (which had been unaffected by the 1947 Partition) 1901-1951

District	*1951*	*1941*	*1941*	*1921*	*1911*	*1901*
Burdwan	2649	2703	2631	2811	2769	3662
Birbhum	2207	2211	2402	2299	2216	3317
Bankura	3525	3522	3476	3999	4634	2292
Medinipur	10517	10711	10583	10342	11316	8464
Hoogly	1906	1908	2180	2187	2202	2383
Howrah	815	828	1111	861	967	1451
Murshidabad	1901	1897	829	1967	1879	3668
Darjeeling	605	578	531	302	504	569
Cooch Bihar	1198	1400	1200	1171	1197	1192

Source: Census of India, 1951, op.cit, p.389.

Table 24: Distribution of rural population by size class of villages (persons per 1000 rural population)

	1951				*1911*			
Village size /Distrtict	5000+	2000 to 5000	500 to 2000	less than 500	5000+	2000 to 5000	500 to 2000	less than 500
Burdwan	63	182	558	197	4	140	561	295
Birbhum	22	102	508	368	20	102	485	393
Bankura	4	39	439	518	7	48	338	607
Midnapur	6	76	430	488	..	50	390	560
Hooghly	15	193	552	240	6	113	508	373
Howrah	138	321	497	44	..	258	580	162
24-Parganas	59	225	576	140	65	146	500	289
Nadia	96	187	530	187	17	140	616	227
Murshidabad	84	307	457	152	44	228	526	202
Malda	40	238	473	249	..	24	292	684
Jalpaiguri	121	296	513	70	25	228	284	463
Darjeeling	175	155	424	246	45	196	454	305
Cooch Behar	28	155	563	254	38	92	587	283

Sources: Census of India, 1951, Vol. 6 (West Bengal, Sikkim, Chandernagore) Part 1C, Report, p.104.
Census of India 1911, Vol. 5 (Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and Sikkim) Part 1, Report, p.56.

Table 25: Change in density (person per square mile) in districts of West Bengal

	1951	*1941*	*1931*	*1921*	*1911*	*1901*	*1891*	*1881*	*1872*
West Bengal	799	703	569	528	541	510	472	446	438
Burdwan	810	699	582	530	567	565	514	514	548
Birbhum	612	601	544	489	530	520	458	456	400
Bankura	498	487	420	385	430	422	404	394	366
Midnapur	639	607	533	508	537	531	501	479	485
Hooghly	1286	1140	922	894	902	868	856	838	958
Howrah	2877	2661	1962	1781	1685	1519	1363	1134	1064
24-Parganas	817	651	512	468	439	382	353	321	301
Calcutta	78858	65250	35299	31921	30879	28494	22954	20065	20712
Nadia	759	557	478	472	514	512	512	536	495
Murshidabad	828	792	661	591	649	638	604	592	586
Malda	674	607	518	493	502	434	393	338	323
West Dinajpur	520	421	378	354	368	329	306	294	290
Jalpaiguri	385	356	311	292	279	229	183	133	85
Darjeeling	371	314	266	236	221	208	186	129	79
Cooch Behar	507	485	447	448	448	429	438	456	403

Source: Census of India, 1951, Vol. 6 (West Bengal, Sikkim, Chandernagore) Part 1A -Report, pp.163-4

Table 26: Access to urban areas for village groups

Variable	*Type A*	*Type B*
Distance of the main road (kilometers)	1.67	5.32
Distance from the railway station (kilometers)	7.38	27.88
Distance from the nearest town (kilometers)	11.76	14.25
Population size of the nearest town	82267	45304

Source: Biplab Dasgupta, 1977, *Village Society and Labour Use*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, Table 5.15, p 188.

Table 27: Urban influence on villages: selected variables

Variable	*Unit*	*Type A*	*Type B*
Yield of the main subsistence crop	Rs per hectare	440.84	220.76
Yield of the main subsistence crop	Maunds per hectare	32.29	18.65
Irrigated cultivated land	Per cent	52.20	20.25
Cultivated land under cash cop	Per cent	37.24	21.16
Cultivated land under double croppng	Per cent (operated)	19.53	12.91
Cultivated land under double croppng	Per cent (owned)	15.01	10.40
Households with iron plough	Percent (agriculturists)	25. 97	2.33
Agricultural implements owned	Value per household (Rs)	736.69	140.00
Chemical fertilisers used	Value per hectare (Rs)	0.07	0.01
New seed varieties used	Per cent of households	2.61	0.09
Village production sold	Per cent	49.42	24.83
Landless households	Per cent	60.32	19.92
Crude literacy rate	Per cent	31.03	13.28
Out-migrating households	Per cent	7.63	2.40
Population size	Total	1194.50	546.60
Household size	Average	5.17	5.55
Nucleated families	Per cent	62.02	50.84

Source: Biplab Dasgupta, 1977, *Village Society and Labour Use*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, Tables 5.4, 5.7, 5.10, 5.11, 5.13, pp 167-183.

Table 25 also shows that, in 1872, the population density was highest in the Hooghly, Howrah, 24-Parganas, Nadia and Burdwan, followed by Murshidabad and Medinipur. It was lowest in the districts of north Bengal (except Cooch Bihar) and Bankura. Furthermore, there appears to be a close correspondence between overall population density in a district and the average village population size, except in the case of Medinipur. The fact that villages tended to be larger in more urbanised - industrial districts, is a point to which we will return in another section.

Village growth and urbanisation

Why did some villages grow, and not others? Generally speaking, such growth could be due to both internal and external factors. Improvement of

agriculture or development of some rural industries would create demand for labour from other, less privileged areas, while the external factors were more varied and generally related to the location of the village in relation to certain infrastructure facilities, e.g. railways, roads, plantations, mines, large markets or urban centres. Construction of roads and railway stations had often been the polarising factor, while, as the above tables indicate, villages nearer the developed urban-industrial centres grew faster than others.

The location of a town nearby influenced agricultural and rural life in a number of ways. First, the demand generated for feeding the urban population, not only encouraged the production of surplus foodgrains and their supply to the market, but also induced a change in the production pattern in the village in order to cater to the specific demands of the high-income urban areas, e.g. for vegetables, eggs, milk and superior cereals. Thus, agriculture in the nearby villages became more varied. The second was the raw material demand induced by the urban industries. In many cases the growth of an industry in a particular locality was often linked to the local availability of raw materials, though in case of many others the industries drew their supplies from distant villages. More important than the supply to the nearby town was the increased orientation towards market which was brought about by the proximity to the towns; which led to greater emphasis on production for sale, and hence also on production of commercial crops for urban industries in general. Third, was the demand generated for manpower needed to work in the industries and various establishments, and also to provide a variety of services to the urban consumers, as domestic service, laundering, peddling and so on.

The growth of a town also helped to diversify the social life in the village. This was partly because it encouraged both in-migration and out-migration. While those in the villages located near the towns migrated to towns, their place was often filled by people coming from poorer rural areas. Further, the very availability of the option to work in the town, augmented the bargaining power of the poor and weak and, thereby, influenced their attitudes towards themselves and the society. Consequently, the patron-client dependent relationship between the rich peasants and the poor came under pressure.

A typology of villages based on access to urban areas

We are now using a study undertaken by the author, many years back, to further explore the relationship between the urban areas and villages. This study was not on Bengal, although some of the villages were from Bengal. Its data base were the village studies conducted by the Agro-economic Research Centres (AERCs) in villages, throughout the country. We are not going to describe the methodology we followed, including the use of multivariate statistical techniques such as principal component and discriminate analyses; those interested can consult the book itself. Let us say that, after following a tortuous path of figures and methodologies, we arrived at a classification of villages, A and B, type A corresponding to the more modern ones, and type B consisting of the backward villages. What is very significant from the view point of the present study, in terms of their accessibility by road or rail, was that the Type A villages were fairly accessible, whereas Type B villages were distant, as those figures, taken from Table 5.4 of the original study indicate (here Table 26).

Taking these figures into account, Type A villages can be identified as those under strong urban influence, while the influence of the urban areas on Type B villages is minimal. Table 27 gives figures for some of the variables covered by the study; for others one would have to look into the original study itself. This shows a vast difference between the two types; in terms of yield, commercialisation, and production for the market and so on.

From this difference in accessibility, various things followed in a correlated way. No matter how it is measured, yield is higher in Type A villages. And yield is higher because inputs such as irrigation, new yielding varieties, chemical fertilisers are higher, Variables that augment human development, such as literacy, are higher, as also the tendency to produce for the market. These observations are corroborated by more recent studies. Nandita Basak's study on the influence zone of the steel towns indicates that, beyond 20 kilometers, roughly the commuting distance, the influence of the steel town on its hinterland becomes weak and almost unrecognisable [Basak, Nandita, 2000: 183].

The importance of these, more current and post-colonial, studies lie in indicating the importance of urbanisation to rural development. In the colonial period, the towns were few in number and thinly spread over the territory. Most

villages, nearly two-thirds, belonged to Type B or Type AB, which, even two decades after the country's independence, were located at a distance of 14 kilometres from the nearby small town. Even for the privileged Type A villages, the distance was 11 kilometres.

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Notes

[1] A cluster of villages in the early part of the 19th century, Howrah was known for its docks (1796) and roperies (1742). The first iron works was started in 1811, the first cotton sinnong mils in 1796, and the first oilmill in 1830, while the jute nills made their place in the city in the 1870s. By 1901, its population was 1.6 lakhs, and the city boasted of 12 jute mills and 7 cotton mills by 1909 [O'Malley, L SS, 1909: 17, 104-5, 110-111].

[2] Bipradas Piplai, in his Manasa Mangal, written around 15th century, gives a complete list of towns from the western part of Bengal to the Sea, while describing the voyage of Chand Saudagar, the villain merchant of that epic. Bipradas (15th century) mentions Chand Saudagar's journey to the sea mentions Katwa, Indraghat, Nadia, Fulia, Guptipara, Mirjapur, Tribeni, Saptagram, Kumarhat, Hooghly, Bhatpara, Boro, Kankinara, Mulajora, Garulia, Paikpara, Bhadreswar, Champdani, Ichapur, Banibazar, Nemaitirtha (Baidyabati), Chanak, Mahesh, Khardah, Sreepat, Rishra, Sukhchar, Konnagar, Kotrang, Kamarhati, Ariadaha, Ghusuri, Chitrapur, Kalikata, Bator, Kalighat, Churaghat, Baruipur, Chatrabhog, and Sagar, among others. His account was the first among the Mangalkabyas that mentioned Kalikata and Hooghly [Ray, Nihar Ranjan, 1993: 75-76]. The difficulty with this list is that, given the time of writing, it was more appropriate for the next period. Further, there is no way of knowing how many of these towns existed even during the early period after European entry; there is suspicion that quite a few of the names had been added latter.

[3] Based on the 1737 records of the Dhaka Factory of the East India Company, Karim has found the following that give some idea about the way the trade was conducted. The Company made advances for Khassas and Malmals in January. The brokers (dalals) usually took four months to make the delivery of goods to the Company. In six months they brought the brown (unbleached) from the weavers. The brown pieces were delivered after their prices were agreed upon. The names of the brokers - Ramnarain, Netoo, Sunamony, Muktagolab, Hafizullah, Bishnudas, Joykissen, Conul - were mostly Bengalis, but they played a subservient role vis-à-vis the Company [Karim, 1964: 77-78]. The brokers usually received a 3% commission on all transactions [Wilson, C.R, 1895:63].

[4] You cannot maintain a network of railways over an immemse country without introducing all those industrial processes necessary to meet the immediate and current wants of railway locomotion, and out of which there must grow the application of machinery to those branches of industry not immediately connected with railways. The railway system will therefore, become, in India, truly the forerunner of modern industry [Sen, Sukomal, 1979: 22].

[5] Almost all the materials came from outside the country. Though in 1865 Indian railway workshop constructed a locomotive in Bombay Byculla works, on the whole, it allowed British firms to make profit. By 1900 railways were using 30% of coal produced [Hurd, John, M, 1983: 749-750].

[6] Railways started in India in 1853, with a line connecting Bombay with Thana. By 1904, it became the fourth largest in the world. After 1869 government also built a few railway lines. In 1897 government purchased the largest railway company, East India Railway, but the management was left in private hands. After 1925, the government also took over management. In other words, some lines were private, some owned by the government, some managed privately though owned by the government [Hurd, John, M, 1983: 737-743].

[7] Lord Thomas Babbington Macaulay, a well read man, whose reading of Asian literature was far from extensive, is also known for the folllowing quote "A single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." Coming from some one, who, by his own admission, had never read oriental literature, this was an extraordinary statement. This was preceded by the following: "I have no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could do form a correct estimate of their values. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanskrit works. I have conversed both here and at home with men distinguished by their proficiency in Eastern languages I am quite ready to take the Orientalist learning at the valuation of the Orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them, who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia." [Sastri, Sibnath, 1955: 94-95].

[8] "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern - a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect." [Mishra, B.B, 1961:157].

[9] Radhakanta Deb, the arch-reactionary, was a pioneer in female education, and was a founder of Hindu College. Unlike Rammohan, he had no intellectual pretension, and looked at it from a practical standpoint; the reason why many Hindus learnt *Farsi* in the precolonial period. Incidentally, it was Jonathan Duncan, the British Resident in Benaras, and a close aide of Warren Hastings, proposed to his superiors, in 1791, that a Hindu College be set up for the preservation and cultivation of the laws of literature and religion. The Hindu College was set up by David Hare, Radhakanta Deb and several other luminaries of that time. Rammohan opted out when he realised that there was opposition to his being one of the founders [Kopf, David, 1969: 30; Ahmed, A.F. Salahuddin, 1963: 20,28-29; Bose, Nemai Sadhan, 1960: 141-43].

[10] "The millionaires of Calcutta among natives are men who have realised their property by trading." [Long, James, 1974: 67-68].

[11] The emergence of these three castes has been discussed in detail elsewhere (in a volume on pre-colonial Bengal by the author), and explains why the three-caste pattern diverged from the all-India pattern. Apart from these three, several intermediate castes played an important role in the formation of the urban middle class. Though initially they were not taken as bhadralokes, eventually they formed an integral part of the middle classs through their education, wealth and cultivation of bhadraloke habits, such as abstaining from manual work of any type including ploughing. These included kamar (blacksmith), kumar (pottter), tili (cultivator and tradesmen among kalu's, processor of oil), sadgope (cultivators among gope), barui (pan-cultivator), sankari (working on conch-shells), kansari (specialsing in brass-work), sonarbanik (goldsmith) and mahisya (cultivators among kaibartyas, fishermen). The following castes were considered to be high among sudras: chasa (agricultrist), dhoba (washermen), tanti (weaver), swarnakar (goldsmith), sonar banik (trading in gold), sutradhar or chhuttor (carpenter), keori and sunri (making liquor).

There were several castes that claimed khastriya or vaishya ancestry: marwaris, goalas, khetris, kaibartyas, moiras (sweetmeat makers), ganrars, aguris and kurmis. These caste groups took a major role in migrating to the towns and forming the middle class [Hunter, W.W, 1876, Vol.1: 61-70]. These were also castes that took a leadership role in villages and transformed themselves into jotedars in many cases. Among Mandals, out of a total of 5818, half were Mahisyas or Kaibartyas, and of the other half, the vast majority were Chandals and other sudras [Hunter, W.W, 1876, Vol.1: 124-126]. The sanskritising tendencies were pronounced among lower castes, while the top three castes constituted 84.7% of the students of Presidency College [Sarkar, Sumit, 1989:54-55,66].

[12] His family has a record of supporting those in power or going to take over soon. One of its ancestors, Bhabanana, helped in all ways Raja Mansingh, when he

moved against Raja Pratapaditya, one of the *baro bhuinyas,* 12 major rebels of Bengal against Mogols, and in exchange it received various zamidaris of Nadia, which helped him to establish this dynasty [Sastri, Sibnath, 2001:9-14].

[13] This section had also emerged by then as a major source of credit in the countryside, and had accumulated land from the debtors who has failed to redeem their mortgage [Chowdhury, Benoy Krishna, 1957: 146-147].

[14] Motilal Seal was a good example of this upward mobility by lower castes. A subarnabanik by birth, he made money by marrying the daughter of a rich man and then entering the bottling business. Then he became the *banian*s of various shipping companies and an authority of Company papers. [Sastri, Sibath, 1955: 48].

[15] C R Das, who hailed from Dhaka, failed ICS, but passed bar examination. After several futile years, he successfully defended Aurobinda during 1907-08 trial. In 1917 he presided over the Bengal provincial conference. He also was in the six men deputation to Governor to protest against the internment of Annie Besant, along with Suremdranath Banerjee, Motilal Ghosh, Rashbehari Ghose, Fazlul Huq, and Byomkesh Chakrabarty. [Broomfield, 1968: 134-135].

[16] Das said that the leaders thought only in terms of England, its history and politics. "We never look to our country, never think of Bengal or the Bengalees, of our past national history, or our present material condition. Hence, our political agitation is unreal and unsubstantial - divorced from all intimate touch with the soul of our people. We boast of being educated, but how many are we? What room do we occupy in our country? What is our relation to the vast masses of our countrymen? Do they think our thoughts or speak our speech? I am bound to confess that our countrymen have little faith in us." (Presidential speech in April, 1917 to Bengal Provincial Conference).

[17] Amrita Bazar Patrika wrote on 18th May 1876, supporting the jotedars (18 May 1976): "The middle class is the backbone of society on earth. Whatever be the case in other countries, in Bengal the origin and growth of the middle class is to be traced to land rights. The Zamindars may be the proprietors of the land, but hitherto it is the middle class which has exercised authority on the land." [Ray, Rajat Kanti, 1984:53].

[18] Sumit Sarkar, however, does not accept that there were two groups of terrorists. For him there was only one - Anushilan, while Jugantar was an artificial construct, a paper in reality [Sarkar, Sumit, 1973:465, 471-472].

[19] This interview was broadcast in London. I heard the interview but did not take down the details of this broadcast. At that moment I had no plan to write this book.

[20] Bhupendranahth began his political career as a nationalist and patriot. He ended as a Marxist [Chattopadhyay, Amal Kumar, 1994: 21-24].

[21] The secret societies have a long history, predating the partition of India. If one has to believe Bipin Chandra Pal, "Calcutta student community was at that time honey-combed with" secret organisations. Surendranath himself was associated with some of those. Rabindranath Tagore refers in a humourous way to a secret society formed by Raj Narayan Bose, Jatindranath Tagore, one of his elder brothers, and the poet himself when he was only 15 years old, in his *Jivan Smriti.*

[22] Little is known of her in the police documents. Even documents found in remote eastern Bengal districts, reveal her terrorist activities. She belonged to the Tagore family and was the daughter of Swarnakumari, an elder sister of the poet, Rabindranath. Later she married one Rambhuj Dutta Choudhuri, and became known as Sarala Debi Choudhurani. Here is another example of life imitating art [Mukherjee, Arun, 1995: 199 (fn 9)].

[23] "The most important class conflict in the poor countries of the world today is not between labour and capital. Nor it is between foreign and national interests. It is between the rural classes and the urban classes. The rural sector contains most of the poverty, and most of the low-cost sources of potential advance; but the urban sector contains most of the articulateness, organisation and power." [Lipton, Michael, 1977: 13].

[24] "Scarce investment, instead of going into water-pumps to grow rice, is wasted on urban motorways. Scarce human skills design and administer, not clean village wells and agricultural extension services, but world boxing championships in showpiece stadia. Resource allocations, within the city and the village as well as between them, reflect urban priorities rather than equity or efficiency. The damage has been increased by mis-guided ideological imports, liberal and Marxian, and by the town's success in buying off part of the rural elite, thus transferring most of the costs of the process to the rural poor.

But is this urban bias really damaging? After all, since 1945 output per person in the poor countries has doubled; and this unprecedented growth has brought genuine development. Production has been made more scientific: in agriculture, by the irrigation of large areas, and more recently by the increasing adoption of fertilizers and of high-yielding varieties of wheat and rice; in industry, by the replacement of fatiguing and repetitive effort by rising levels of technology, specialisation and skills. Consumption has also developed, in ways that at once use and underpin the development of production; for poor countries now consume enormously expanded provisions of health and education, roads and electricity, radios and bicycles." [Lipton, Michael, 1977: 13].

[25] This, paradoxically, explains why the unemployment rates are relatively lower among the migrant labourers. Basu, quoting an unemployment survey undertaken by the government, mentioned that the unemployment rates were 71.3% among Bengalis and only 19.4% among the Hindustanis [Basu, Nirmal Kumar, 1965: 5]. For the latter, mostly industrial workers, the only alternative to employment, in whatever form, is to return from where they came. The local educated youth

subsisted as unemployed over a longer period, because of the support they received from their families [Layard, Richard, et al., 1969: 88].

[26] According to Nirmal Basu, migrant labourers to Calcutta come mainly from two identifiable areas (a) Cuttack- Balasore and Puri in Orissa and (b) the western districts of Bihar and those from the adjoining districts of Eastern U.P. The choice of these two areas is left with the recruiting agents, who mainly bring people from their own home districts [Basu, Nirmal Kumar, 1958:17]. Dhaka population declined form 150000 in 1815 to 66989 in 1830.

[27] This section had also emerged by then as a major source of credit in the countryside, and had accumulated land from the debtors who has failed to redeem their mortgage [Chowdhury, Benoy, Bhusan, 1957: 146-147].

[28] They were not the lowest of the low among caste group. Bagdhi, Muchi, Hadi, Dom and Bhuimali were supposed to be below them in caste hierarchy. The tribal group who joined Hinduism, normally had to join at the very bottom, below the Namasudras. [Bandopadhyay, Sekhar, 1997: 16].

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