CHAPTER - I

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The city of Calcutta is more than three hundred years old. It was Job Charnak, the Agent of the English East India Company who by setting his feet on Sutanuti on the eastern bank of the river Hooghly founded Calcutta on the fateful day of August 24, 1690. Calcutta was nothing but a little village, full of dense jungles and marshylands. This was only the beginning, as Calcutta slowly became the largest metropolis of the sub-continent.

"On the unpromising site, pent narrowly between the river and salt water lake there rose a city of palaces and a far larger city of hovels" (Spate 1972, p.593)

Calcutta is located on the Bengal delta which is responsible for many of its problems. This Bengal delta on which the city is located, is probably the largest of its kind in the World. Munshi (1975) and Chatterjee (1972) compared such deltaic location of Calcutta with only that of Shanghai of China. Shanghai is located on the Yangtse river delta and is even a bigger city than Calcutta. Calcutta is neither an ancient nor a modern city. Various circumstances of its birth set a definite pattern for its development that ensured the multi-ethnic character of its population and its heterogenetic growth. Great diversity of population makes it not only a cosmopolis but also a miniature India - a large heterogenous group of varying regional,
linguistic, occupational background characterise the population of cosmopolitan Calcutta.

The boundaries of the city have been constantly expanding.

"The advent of the Christian powers in India created new circumstances for the origin and growth of cities. The first phase of industrialisation (1854-1914), an indirect outcome of the British exploitation of Indian resources through the cities, specially the port cities, provided an impetus to urbanisation. The development of Calcutta from the rural district into a commercial city gained momentum after 1860. The period subsequent to World War-I was one of extensive development in respect of industrial growth and communication expansion and built-up areas. The remarkable progress as seen between, the years 1870 - 1900. The population increased in Calcutta with the flow of immigrants and it gradually became a cosmopolitan city. During the 1961-71, there was an increase of urban settlement. The Calcutta urban agglomeration was expanding owing to influx of migrants from Pakistan during war in 1965-66 and from Bangladesh in 1970-71". (Sarkar 1990, p.7, 8)

In early British period Calcutta was the capital city of the Indian British Empire. For the vast hinterland in the Eastern Region containing therein the industrial heart of India, Calcutta acted as the main producer and distributor of goods and services. It was the gateway to international tourist traffic from South - East Asia including the international tourists to different centres in Eastern Region.
Calcutta Port played a vital role in the development of industrial activities in the Eastern part of India in general and in and around the city in particular. The vast hinterland of Calcutta, rich in agricultural and the mineral resources inspired its development. The various industries that developed in Calcutta and its hinterlands had been fostered by Port of Calcutta. The factories occupied the best homestead lands and the residential areas are highly congested. So Calcutta was the main centre of industrial and economic activities in pre-independence India. After World War - II influx of migrants caused rapid increase of population. Since then migrants moved towards the metropolis in waves and immigrants from rural areas and other states moved in millions.

For the last two centuries or so Calcutta may be considered to be the centre of population explosion due to rapid and continuous migration.

"Since the very dawn of this century West Bengal has been experiencing a very rapid pace of urbanisation both in terms of volume of urban population and number of urban settlements. The urban growth has been mainly caused by migration. The famine in 1896-97, 1899-1900 and 1943, the cholera, malaria, plague epidemics, the partition of Bengal, Pakistan war in 1965-66 and Bangladesh War in 1970-71 are the major events in the socio-political history of the region which drove people to the urban areas where living condition are relatively and far better and secured". (Sarkar, 1990, p. 10).
So every day Calcutta is expanding both in area and population. But industrial development was not proportionate, rather it declined and this has made the economy of the city worsen. At the time of independence of India in 1947 West Bengal with industries in and around Calcutta was the first industrialised state but the position has now been declining every year. Thus, from over population without commensurate economic growth there have emerged multi-dimensional problems in the city life and it is loosing its past glory.

1.2 Calcutta - A City of Migrants

Most of the cities in the World have grown by large scale migration than by natural increase. This was true for the city of London, New York, Chicago, Tokyo and also for Bombay, Madras, Delhi and Calcutta.

Due to various natural calamities, epidemics and wars migrants from neighbouring countries moved towards the metropolis in waves and as such the city of Calcutta became infested with the problem of over population and others related to it.

Due to this population explosion Calcutta grew in a haphazard fashion without any well laid out plan. The very composition of the migrated population has made Calcutta a cosmopolitan city. This migration in the city may be seasonal, permanent temporary and transitional. Working class people from Bihar, Orissa, U.P., Rajasthan, Punjab, South India usually migrate to Calcutta for earning livelihood.
"As regards the non-Bengali non-local workers, two features deserve particular notice. First, the vast majority of them perhaps never intended to settle permanently in the industrial area. From the very beginning or throughout their career the most of them had the aim of living here for a short period. Secondly, they usually moved between the country at periodic intervals. They took leave for looking after their land and cultivation". (Dasgupta, 1994, p. 216).

A majority of them are illiterate unskilled manual labourers. They form heterogeneous population as they belong to various religious groups speaking different languages and of different cultural and racial originality. So Calcutta is a city of migrants, a large portion of which reside in the slums. With its multi-religious and multilingual population it is said to be an India in miniature form.

1.3 Calcutta - A City of Slums

Due to massive migration slums developed in the city of Calcutta. In the industrial belt of Calcutta migrants gravitated into the slums. There was mushroom growth of sub-standard settlements and proliferation of slums all over the metropolis. It is found that the patterns of slums differ in the each city due to various political, economic, social and ecological factors. Yet more or less major cities are characterised by the emergence of sprawling industrial slums, service slums near residential area, refugee slums etc. (Majumdar 1977).
"Every great city has one or more slum where the working class crowded together. Poverty often dwells in hidden alleys close to the palaces of the rich, but in general a separate territory has been assigned to it, where removed from the sight of the happier classes, it may struggle along as it can". (Desai & Pillai, 1990; p.56).

Environmentally, the slums are substandard locations, exhibiting externally suboptimal utilization of land. In those slums the people, though living within the urban territories, are untouched with urban facilities and requisites.

Large scale of immigration into the conurbation in general and the city of Calcutta in particular and at the same time unplanned development of settlements have given rise to slums.

Demographically, it is revealed that almost all 141 Wards in Calcutta have slums of varying dimension. Calcutta is now the most dense city in the World with a population density of 31800/sq.km. in developed area and 162800/sq.m. in slum areas (Civic Affairs 1990).

In the slums of Calcutta the living condition is miserable. Slum dwellers huddle together in small damp rooms, a family almost in a single room. Poor sanitation and absence of proper latrines enhance the pollution of air and soil.

Those poorer people in slums have to obtain unfiltered water. The unsewered areas mostly have services latrine which help flies and
and mosquitoes breeding. In most of the slums there is absence of lighting arrangements. There is absence of sunshine in those "death traps" and the cramping effect upon the physical and mental development of the workers living in those dens and of their families. In the slums 92.3 percent families occupy only a single room. (The Labour Investigation Committee).

In Calcutta in every ward of Corporation there developed slums. So it is a city of slums.

1.4 Calcutta - A City of Contradictions

Calcutta is a city of contradictions, Sky Scrapers with tall heads and tube railways on one hand and shanties on the other; the first modern university in India with hundreds of English medium schools on one hand and wide spread illiteracy on the other. There are on one hand, schools where hundreds of parents through for admission of their wards, while on the other side there are schools without required number students with modern productive machines including automation on one hand and extensive child labour on the other. There are highly rich people with maximum comfort and luxury on one hand and totally wretched poor section of people deprived of all the civic amenities on the other. Rustic values and life style survive in low lying shacks just behind a thick straggle of pucca houses.

Calcutta has its great diversity of population. Different languages are spoken by different religious and racial people. There
are beautiful modern roadways with gardens and tall trees on both sides of roads with narrow winding pathways, open manholes and drainage on the other. So life here is enjoyable to some while it is simply miserable to the others. Highly intellectual cultured people with a large percentage of ignorant illiterate uncultured population living side by side in Calcutta. So Calcutta is really a city of contradiction.

1.5 Calcutta - A Problem Ridden City

Due to large scale immigration, slums developed rapidly and change the social, economic and educational lives of Calcutta. Unplanned growth of slums and the heterogenous population have created many problems like sanitation, population, communication, congestion, other social and educational problems.

The problem of sanitation creates health hazards and pollution. The sanitation system of Calcutta which originally developed from its birth time was defective. It is found that Bengal delta abounds with rivers having imperfect drainage and a large number of abandoned swamps and bills. The gradual rise of the river beds above the general levels of the country had made the drainage problem more and more complicated. (Chatterjee 1972).

Increase of population in Calcutta create too much pressure on this defective sanitation system and as a result develops health problem in this city. Moreover, proper sanitation is neglected in the slums as is evident from the heaps of rotting garbage and pools of sewage. The absence of latrines enhance the general pollution of air and soil.
Population explosion creates communication congestion causing traffic jam everyday in almost every important place of the city and makes life miserable.

The slum dwellers affect the socio-economic and educational lives of the city in many ways. It is indicated that, the sex ratio is disturbed by the migration. The male - female rates is 1000; 712 in the city. Again, they differ in their food habit, languages, social outlook and attitudes; all these go to inhibit their social integration (CSDS 1974).

The great disproportion in the sex ratio clearly indicated that the bulk of male workers making wages earnings in industrial towns kept their families in the village homes. Most of the workers returned to their homes at regular intervals and retained some sort of connection with country side. (Das Gupta, 1994, p.212).

It is further indicated that, in all the major cities, the migrants are predominantly from lower castes and disadvantages communities. The urban poor are the same as those in rural area i.e. both are lying at the bottom of social structure and suffering from cumulative inequalities. Various religious, racial and linguistic groups cannot integrate themselves with the city's population and then create tension and problems (Shivaram Krishna, 1977).

Some of the slum areas of Calcutta are infested with racial, linguistic and religious problems which occasionally lead to communal
strifes endangering the total gamut of social, intellectual and religious lives. Extreme poverty, absence of moral and social values among elders, unsatisfied vital needs and above all illiteracy may seem to be the causes of anti-social criminal activities among those slum-dwellers. As a result of their low social, economic and educational backgrounds the multi-religious and multi-lingual slum-dwellers are sometimes found to be indulged in anti-social criminal activities of various types. Almost every day such strifes are reported in the dailies published in Calcutta.

"Poverty, illiteracy and lack of knowledge in health, hygiene added with bad sanitary living conditions have been marked as a main factor with the continuation of unsatisfactory condition in the lower strata of population - marked with high crude death rate, infant and material mortality rate, at the same time high birth rate adding daily increase in population" (ILGUS Sep. 1991 - p. 24).

"To-quote the WHO REPORT"

'There is hardly any aspect of community development that is keeping space with the growth of Calcutta's population or with the requirements of its hinterland. Over crowding, degradation of housing, health hazards, primitive water supplies, lack of space for new industries, traffic bottlenecks, a still unsolved refugee problem all are increasing the cost of moving goods and of providing the many services that a growing industrial region demands of its metropolis". (CMPO 1966-86).
So Calcutta is now suffering from those multidimensional problems and as such is really a problem ridden city.

Calcutta like other cities is also infested with many problems affecting the socio-economic and educational lives greatly. Though there are numerous schools, colleges and universities a large percentage of children as well as adults are without any education. The slum people are worst sufferers. They suffer from high rates of illiteracy and low educational levels.

"Slum dwellers have exceptionally low educational levels and rates of school attendance as also literacy rates when compared with the urban population as a whole". (Singh 1972, p.118).

1.6 Educational Responsibility of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC)

Calcutta Municipal Corporation has its department of education to provide primary education for slum children.

During National Education Movement in India under British rule there developed an urge for education among the Indian people and the national leaders formed National Council of Education in 1905 to introduce national system of education for the countrymen. In 1906 a proposal had been mooted by Calcutta Corporation to spread primary education in Calcutta.
In 1925 Corporation act had accepted the responsibility to spread free education for the poor children. In 1924, Mayor C.R. Das, Netaji Subhas Bose and Mr. K.P. Chatterjee had improved this primary education. From then the Corporation started imparting primary education for the economically deprived children. It started only with 19 schools. From 1934 it introduced teaching in three languages Bengali, Hindi and Urdu.

Since then Corporation has been engaged in this task. The number of its primary schools is 308. A large amount of money is spent for this purpose every year. In 1993-94 Rs. 926.75 lakhs, had been alloted (Dept. of Edu. CMC report 1995). In both slum and non-slum areas Calcutta Corporation provides primary education for the poor section of people.

In the cities like Delhi, Madras and Bombay there are Municipal Corporations of same status as Calcutta Municipal Corporation. Like Calcutta all these Municipal Corporation run free education to the economically deprived children specially of the slums. In many places there is shift system whenever necessary and School are run in two shifts. (Desai & Pillai, 1972).

In sum, although acity-of-joy-Calcutta be set with many problems. In order to solve the problems action should be taken on
all fronts and to probe into the very nature of the problems associated with each front so that correct measures be initiated. Education is a vital front and its problems should be addressed as effectively as possible.
CONCEPT

1. Slum:

According to the Seminar on Slum Clearance held in Bombay (15 May, 1957), slum is "a chaotically occupied, unsystematically developed and generally neglected area which is over populated by persons and over crowded with ill-repaired and neglected structures. The area has insufficient communication, indifferent sanitary arrangements and inadequate amenities necessary for the maintenance of physical and social health, the minimum needs and comforts of human beings and the community. There is a general absence of social service and welfare agencies to deal with the major social problems of persons and families, in respect of substandard health, inadequate income and low standard of living, who are victims of biological, psychological and social consequences of the physical and social environment" (Mehta 1957).

As observed by Desai & Pillai (1990) Slum has some common characteristics: (1) Appearance - it is the universal mark of the slum.

2. Economic Status - Generally a slum is inhabited by people of lowest economic group and the slum is a poverty area.

3. Over crowded - It is overcrowded always.
4. Population - In a slum of heterogeneous occupancy, many of the inhabitants there are persons not welcomed in other residential areas or they cannot afford to live elsewhere. So it is a poverty area.

5. Health and Sanitation - The slum is characterised by low standard of Sanitation.

6. Morals - The slum may be an area of crime, delinquency, vice and sometimes it is the safe hiding place of criminals.

7. Way of life - Slums inhabited by immigrant groups of firm social organisation.

8. Social isolation - The slum is specially isolated area.

The slums in Western countries are quite different from those of our country.

"The slums in Western countries usually refer to an area in transition near the central business district as a result of the continuous invasion and succession of the impoverished migrants with houses which once were considered adequate but now are in the process of physical deterioration due to low rents and poor maintenance. The ecology of Indian slum is entirely different from that of the Western Slums. Here the slums are "Squatter settlement, hutment colony or Shanty Town". (Singh 1980, P-4)."
So slums differ from state to state, Delhi slums are different from those of Madras or Calcutta, according to the city's own particular types of housing. In 1991 the slum population within the Calcutta Municipal Corporation was 21.35 lakhs (Corporation Year Book, 1991).

2. **Multireligious**

   People composed of different religions or faith. It refers to different religious people who reside in the same slums. Calcutta is a cosmopolitan city where people of any religion can reside. There are some slums in which economically poor people of different religions reside side by side and maintain their own religious rites and rituals. (Oxford Dictionary, 1988).

3. **Multilingual**

   People using or speaking many languages. People of various lingual groups reside in the same slum or bustee and maintain their own language habit, while sharing their livings with others. (Oxford Dictionary, 1988).
4. **Literacy**

Literacy means reading and writing names, address along with a few lines or statements in any language. (Encyclopedia, 1992).

5. **Corporation Ward**

Calcutta Municipal Corporation has divided the total area into different wards. At present it has got 141 wards within its territorial jurisdiction. Each of these wards have slums of different dimension.

The population density are of 31800/sq.m in developed area and 162800/sq.m in slum areas. (Corporation Year Book, 1991).