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Simultaneous with the growth and development of science, technology, trade and commerce there has also been an enormous explosion of human population in modern Indian society. Such a high growth in population vis-à-vis the changes in the life styles of human beings have turned people to be city oriented and agriculture which was previously the main engagement of people has gradually given way to occupations in the fields of industry, trade and commerce. All these factors have made a large section of the populace rushing to the cities creating thereby tremendous and unmanageable space problems. Dwelling space getting scarcer, there is little possibility for horizontal expansion in the cities to facilitate accommodation of such perennial flow of people. As remedial measures, a two-fold planning has been contemplated and is being acted upon. The first way out has been the expansion of city limits and inclusion of the contiguous suburbs within the ambits of the cities. The other remedial measure has been the vertical expansion of the available spaces providing maximum possible accommodation to as many numbers of people as possible through the construction of high-rise buildings. In the developed countries of the world like the United States, Canada, The United Kingdom, France, Germany, China, Japan and others construction of high-rise buildings started from the early twentieth century while in a developing country like India it began in the later half of that century.

High-rise development has had a strong impact on space as a symbol of the modern city. Over and above the aesthetic effect, its functional economic achievement has been to multiply urban space. High-rise buildings have been praised for their functional beauty, for rapidly overcoming differences in height by means of lifts, and for providing wide views and accommodation above the urban chaos. However, the opponents of high-
rise development objected primarily to the destruction of the unified cityscape through functional monumentality and the resulting visual chaos. There were also fears about unmanageably heavy traffic at peak hours and inadequate light and ventilation in the inner city: "The higher the vertical wall of a building is, the smaller is the insolated area of the street, the greater the shadows and the more unpleasant the appearance of the shaded street frontage" (Gruber, 1918). Their arguments included the enlivening effects on the cityscape produced by the "dynamic combination of vertical structures" and low buildings and by the large open spaces for recreational purposes provided between buildings. They were also anxious about the impact of these buildings on lifestyles.

Concern about relations between the housing conditions of people and their ill-health has been recorded over several centuries by architects, medical practitioners, novelists, and social reformers. Today, following the results of many studies in a range of disciplines, the residential environment is known to be an important determinant of quality of life and well-being (Lawrence, 2000). A large number of research findings in several disciplines confirm that the multiple components of housing units and outdoor areas must be considered in terms of both their potential and their effective contribution to physical health and to social and mental well-being.

Therefore, the important question whether "living in high-rise housing or living in overcrowded condition is harmful" is now being asked by social scientists in various fields including environmental psychology. Answer to this question is of far-reaching implications in understanding the environmental vicissitudes of human species in its constant struggle for survival and further evolution into higher and more creative level of existence. If highly dense or overcrowded environments are inflicting irreparable psychic
damage to a large portion of existing group of human beings then there is sufficient reason for the social scientists to be deeply concerned about the problem.

In line of the above, effects of high-rise living on human behaviour have been the topics of interest to researchers in various fields like criminology, sociology, anthropology, geography and psychology. Besides these, professionals like designers and city planners, social workers and journalists have found the issue quite relevant to their respective fields of practice. Consequently, researches in the field of various aspects of the living conditions of high-rise dwellers were started in the developed countries which highlighted the beneficial aspects as well as the physical, psychological and social problems of the habitants of high-rise buildings. High-rise buildings were sometimes accused of being associated with lowered physical activity, behavioral problems, respiratory troubles, exaggerated feelings of fear, suspicion and isolation, poor social relations and neighbourhood feelings, decreased sense of identity and so on. Such buildings were even criticized assuming to have detrimental effects on the creativity and physical development of young children due to the constraints of play activities and facilities. High-rise apartment housings were also accused of causing increases in crime, delinquency, suicide and neurosis among the residents.

However, such reportings were not conclusive as they lack well-exhaustive scientific probes involving methodological precision. Furthermore, such endeavour is comparatively new in India, particularly in the city of Kolkata where inconsequential progress has been made in this direction till date.

In such context the present investigation is only an initial exploration into the vast and mostly untrodden field of “psychological dynamics of adaptation” to high-rise living.
conditions. A comparative study has been made here in terms of social and psychological effects on the inhabitants who are living in high-rise and non-high-rise households of Kolkata at least for the last five years. For the purpose of the present study multi-storied buildings from different areas of Kolkata, namely, south, central, north and east were selected keeping a yardstick of a building being nine-storied and above. Non-high-rise buildings located in the concerned areas were also selected keeping the yardstick in that case as not above three storeys for the sake of a comparative assessment. Accordingly a group of 256 adults and 86 adolescents were selected from each type of dwelling units fulfilling certain a priori selection criteria along with the stipulation that the high-rise occupants must be from fifth floor and above. A number of questionnaires were administered on both groups of subjects with a view to assessing them along certain parameters, namely, housing environment perception, physical health, general mental health, social interaction, depression, loneliness and life environment integration.

Details relating to the probe and the results obtained thereof are presented in the chapters to follow. It may be briefly stated, however, that regarding the above referred parameters significant differences have been observed between the two groups of subjects, namely, high-rise dwellers and non-high-rise dwellers wherein the former group has expressed their negative views in a large number of situations which have been considered to be indicative of their be facing substantial social and psychological problems associated with their living in high-rise structures.

Admittedly the study could have been more elaborate, extensive and in-depth but due to constraints relating to time, availability of larger number of subjects and comparative newness of the endeavour in our country that could not be accomplished to the entire satisfaction of the present investigator.