CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE WORK
1.1. INTRODUCING THE WORK

The city has always been Janus-faced: one profile radiates opportunity, encounters, vitality, culture, innovation, creativity and all the advantages of citizenship; the other scowls at massive poverty, violence and conflated solitude. The difficulties of present-day urban life, especially in the Third World cities like Calcutta (now Kolkata) are real and multifarious: unemployment, social exclusion, inter-community tension, criminality, insecurity, pollution, accumulations of garbage, inadequate housing and services, drug addiction and numerous such other problems. An overwhelming proportion of the urban population in Third World lives and will probably continue living in such conditions where life itself is in jeopardy. These people make their homes on land which is most unsuitable for human occupation, heavily polluted and exposed to water submerging, flooding, landslides, natural hazards such as earthquakes and the dangers attaching to technological development. Enormous inequalities in the Third World cities separate this marginalised section from the middle and privileged section of the population, and this is reflected in infant mortality, illness, life expectancy and the non-satisfaction of the most elementary needs like adequate housing, food, clothing, health care and education. The economy of most of the Third World cities is dominated by the non-structured, so-called ‘informal sector’. This sector, characterised by the precariousness of its activities and sources of income, is expanding at a rate, which matches that of urban growth, itself and exacerbates its problems. Child labourers from the poor and marginalised section of the population in the Third World cities constitute a large proportion of this informal sector of the economy.

Furthermore, cities now play the most important role in promoting globalisation as the global forces are concentrated in the cities. At the same time, Third World cities have been the hardest hit by the effects of SAP and the other negative consequences of globalisation. There is little indication that in the coming years the situation is going to be any different than what it is now as according to the basic philosophy of globalisation the state can no longer act as a buffer against the world economy, but can only play an integral role in facilitating globalisation. The forces of globalisation are likely to continue creating havoc particularly among the poor and marginalised in the Third World cities. These aspects of present-day urbanisation especially in the Third World have variously been termed as exclusion in France and erstwhile French colonies, underclass in the United States and England and in some erstwhile English colonies, marginalidad in Latin America and reflect different representations of social space (inside/outside, high/low, centre/periphery) which in extreme cases may lead to an institutionalisation of social apartheid as social and spatial segregation are interrelated.

Present worker started working on the issues of urban marginalisation and child labour in Calcutta (now Kolkata) more than ten years ago, when a severe balance of payments crisis in 1991 compelled India to embrace a SAP regime which required it to open up its economy. The economic reform policies were predicated on a possibility of enhanced growth, efficiency and a rise in living standard. But from the experiences of other nations in Latin America and Africa where the SAP regime had been in practice from the 1980s showed that behind the promises of
"good life" for all there exist the grim realities of increased inequality, deprivation, threat to livelihood, disintegration of social order, displacement and landlessness, alienation and violence as well as a growing fear of the future. Thus a huge number of people in the cities as well as in the rural areas of these countries had already been marginalised due to SAP when the Indian government embraced the SAP regime during the early 1990s. Therefore, it was quite natural to apprehend during that time (in fact envisaged by some leading Indian observers at that time) that a similar, if not more aggravated picture, would appear after a few years. The apprehension was found to be a just one.

Thus the present worker began working on urban marginalisation in Third World focussing on a city like Calcutta (now Kolkata) under the SAP regime. As an anthropologist he found it absolutely imperative to study an issue which would in all probability appear as one of the biggest challenge to the survival of the largest part of mankind living in urban areas in the Third World. The phenomenon of urban marginalisation has been defined in the present study as the inability of the market economy or of the state policies to provide adequate shelter and urban basic services (explained here as collective consumption) to an increasing proportion of urban population. Urban marginalisation is viewed here as the result of a struggle over the urban space among the different sections of the population. Present work shows that this struggle has been exacerbated by different SAP-induced measures, which include withdrawal of state subsidies in different key sectors like education, health, basic services like water supply, sanitation, sewage etc., undertaken by the local and the national government. Another factor, as evident from the present work, which has accelerated urban marginalisation is the pressure on the authorities to undertake different city development or city beautification projects even at the cost of displacing some so-called illegal settlements as the cities have been reinvented as destinations of global capital. In Third World cities like Calcutta (now Kolkata), a huge proportion of population do not have any security of tenure of the land they live on and therefore their settlements are frequently subjected to forced evictions by the civic authorities citing various reasons like road building, city beautification, implementing development projects etc. These evictions, as observed in the present study, often cause a breakdown of key relationships which provide a survival network of protection to these people. In most cases living conditions, which were far from ideal in the first place, deteriorate after the evictions.

The present research which has spanned over ten years and is based on some intensive fieldwork in the city of Calcutta (now Kolkata) particularly among the marginalised people as well as on some important secondary sources on different issues of global concern. Present study reveals that poverty and marginalisation of population in a Third World city form integral parts in the present model based on the neo-liberal paradigm as it has not only widened existing social and economic disparities but also forced new groups of people into poverty and dislocated local communities and traditional support systems. An increasing proportion of population in a Third World city like Calcutta (now Kolkata) are being marginalised both in terms of urban space, as they do not have any security of tenure of the land on which they live or their housing structure and in terms of
their living conditions, as in this SAP regime local or other authorities are indifferent to their basic necessities. These marginalised people in a Third World city like Calcutta (now Kolkata) are not only joining in huge numbers in the informal sector as low-paid, less-profitable irregular workers; these people are also releasing their children to this labour force at a very tender age. This thesis views the problem of child labour as a survival strategy of the marginalised people under which they are compelled to engage their children at a tender age in underpaid work in the informal sector (and also occasionally in the formal sector) of economy in conditions that are harmful or potentially harmful to the child.

Present worker concentrated on three different settlements in the city of Calcutta (now Kolkata) and carried out a long-term, intensive anthropological fieldwork among the people of those settlements. The selection of these three different populations was made primarily on the basis of their differential positions in the condition of urban marginalisation in the city of Calcutta (now Kolkata). Population I and Population II are the so-called ‘illegal’ squatter settlements and Population III is a recognised slum settlement in the city of Calcutta (now Kolkata). In the first two settlements residents did not have any security of tenure and during the course of study present worker witnessed the eviction of both the settlements; Population I was evicted for widening the existing flyover in Park Circus and Population II for the implementation of Ganga Action Plan under which the Beliaghata-Circular Canal (besides which Population II was situated) was to be dredged and made navigable. Population III, on the other hand, is a recognised slum where the residents have a kind of security of tenure as they have got pattas from the government, which confers a right to live on but not sell the land one is residing on, and obtained the status of Thika Tenant from the government. Thus the Population I as well as Population II², in a combined way, has been considered here as the Control Group with no security of tenure. Population III was observed as Programme Group with the residents enjoying some sort of security of tenure in the form of Thika tenancy for the last two decades. Within this framework present worker hopes to introduce the rationale of the present work on the problems of urban marginalisation in a Third World urban situation like Calcutta (now Kolkata). It becomes imperative now to study the background to the present issue including previous studies on related issues on comparable urban situations in the Third World.

1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE WORK

Like the other anthropological studies in urban areas the present study on the marginalisation of population and child labour in a Third World city like Calcutta (now Kolkata) has to address the problem of foregrounding the forms and principles of the subject under study in a complex urban scenario as anthropology by tradition has been studying societies where kinship relationships are predominant and all the alliances of the informant(s) can be placed on cognitive grids of kin, clan and affine. However, as the present chapter indicates, anthropological studies on urban issues are not that uncommon. These studies include the micro-terrains of urban life i.e. studies on migration, social networks, street-corner cliques, neighbourhoods, political processes, traders and
entrepreneurs, careers, patron-client relations, voluntary associations, religious congregations, 
public ceremonies, urban festivals, bureaucratic encounters and social movements. More holistic 
approaches have also been made in anthropology to elaborate forms and qualities of urbanism, rural-
urban continuum, diverse heterogenetic and traditional orthogenetic urban centres, regional and 
transnational social orders, marketing networks, dimensions of scale and specialisation, spatial 
symbolism, and cross-cultural domains of urban life.

As a discipline urban anthropology remained in backwater until the late 1960s and early 1970s. Its 
roots lie rather in sociology as the study of industrial societies. Therefore, early sociologists were 
the first to turn their attention towards urban life. From the 1930’s to the 1950’s, there was a 
growth of cultural anthropologists’ interests in the study of peasants and the impact of cities on 
their lives (Redfield, 1947). By the 1950s already a number of anthropologists and sociologists 
were conducting research on urban phenomena (Childe, 1950; Bott, 1957; Sjoberg, 1960). The 
expansion of urban anthropology in the 1960s reflects the recognition that traditional target 
groups, such as tribal and peasants people became increasingly integrated in an urbanised world. 
Particular attention was given to rural-urban migration, urban adaptation, ethnicity, and poverty 
(Lewis, 1966a, 1966b, 1970; Hannerz, 1969). By the 1970s, urban anthropology was already 
being defined as a distinctive field within cultural anthropology and the result was a significant 
growth in textbooks, readers and reviews (Chrisman and Friedl, 1975; Gulick, 1973; Soutall, 
1961; 1973). Then the first integrated textbook appeared. Fox (1977) identifies five different 
types of cities (Regal-Ritual cities, Administrative cities, Mercantile cities, Colonial cities and 
Industrial cities), and discusses the relationship between cities and the wider society they are 
embedded in. Basham (1978) offers a discussion of the study of urban societies and various 
related topics. During the 1980’s, a second generation of textbooks and studies emerged (Collins, 
1980; Gmelch and Zenner, 1980; Hannerz 1980; Press and Smith, 1980). However, fieldworks by 
anthropologists in urban locales began in the 1930s and 1940s, with its theoretical direction being 
set mainly by the social anthropology of A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski. 
Prominent among the works where participant observation were employed included W. Lloyd 
Warner and his students in 'Yankee City', Chicago and Natchez, Mississippi; Robert Redfield and 
associates in Yucatan; William F. Whyte in Boston, Edward Spicer among the Yaqui in Tucson, 
Arizona, Horace Miner in Timbuctoo, William Bascom in Ife, Godfrey Wilson in Zambia and 
Ellen Hellmann and Bengt Sundkler in South Africa. These works shared inspiration with 
contemporaneous studies of peasant and rural communities in Europe, North America, Japan and 
China and of acculturation to colonialism among kin-ordered 'tribal' peoples. These researches in 
towns and cities also had many non-anthropological roots.

During 1980s urban ethnographies were found to be responsive more to wider theoretical cur-ents in the discipline than to earlier themes in 1970s filled the gaps in urban anthropology (Sanjek, 
1990). Accordingly, by 1990 concern with the poor and migrants was balanced by studies of 
established working and middle classes, elites, and policy makers; and urban anthropology of 
work complemented attention to residential settings; gender, sexuality, life cycle stages, and
learning processes received ethnographic scrutiny; and urban politics, religion, health care and popular culture became issues for intensive fieldwork. In addition, the earlier attention to urban order and connectedness was complemented in studies of ephemeral and tangential relationships, particularly in the researches on urban marginality with particular references to the Third World urban situations as in the present work.

In the following few paragraphs present worker would try to explain briefly some relevant concepts and approaches associated with the study of urban socio-cultural issues and many of these studies have non-anthropological roots.

1.2.1. Urbanism and Urban Community Approach

Initiated by Georg Simmel ([1905] 1950) and Louis Wirth (1938) this approach principally addresses the metropolis and urbanism where theoretical and empirical re-examination of the uprooted and neighbourhood versions of urban community are made like subculture, social network, ethnic dimension of urban community, ethnic migration etc. It also raises new questions on urban community, relates local analysis to political economy as well as informal sector and global economic change.

This approach of urban social research has been initiated by the German sociological traditions of Tonnies ([1887] 1963), Durkheim ([1893] 1933) and Weber ([1905] 1958). Louis Wirth incorporated Tonnies, Durkheim, Weber and other elements of this tradition in his famous essay "Urbanism as a Way of Life" (1938). Wirthian theory revolves round the argument that though urban life is marked by impersonal, instrumental contacts which tend to free individuals from the strong controls of such primary groups as the extended family, this freedom of individual action is accompanied by the loss of collective security. Robert Redfield (1947) adapted Wirth’s formulation of these characteristics to his folk-urban continuum concept, by characterising the urban pole in Wirth’s terms, and the folk pole as its opposite (small, homogeneous, isolated, traditional communities which were economically self-sufficient and has only a rudimentary division of labour). He went a step further by elaborating the role of cities as the “Great Tradition” as opposed to the “Little Tradition” of local villages. Both scholars’ influence on the development of the anthropology of complex society was significant. Critiques, however, suggest that the concept of "urbanity" as typically western and "the rural" as non-western are eurocentric ideal-types.

This approach has been widely used to study the urban scenario by urban researchers including Lynd and Lynd (1929, 1949), Davis et al. (1941), Whyte (1943), Lantz (1958), Warner (1963) and others in America; Epstein (1958) Powdemark (1962), van den Berghe (1964), and others in Africa; and Bopegamage (1957), Dollard (1957), D. N. Mazumdar (1960), R. K. Mukherjee (1961), Lynch (1963, 1967); Vidyarthi (1961, 1969) and others in India. Urbanism and urban community research later regrouped around the issued of neighbourhood as an arena of community studies (Wilcock, 1963; Liebow, 1967; Gans, 1984). Some of them worked in Africa (Parkin, 1969; Gutkind, 1974) and a host of others in India (Guha, 1964, 1966; Roy Chowdhury,
Though the present worker's research has been deeply influenced by these approaches they do not have any direct bearing on the present work.

City as a Community: This approach considers city as a community. In the Indian context the works of R.K. Mukherjee (1961) on Lucknow, D.N. Mazumdar (1960) on Kanpur and L.P. Vidyarthi (1969) on Ranchi are regarded as the trend-setters of this approach. This approach has been employed repeatedly in the Indian urban contexts and is regarded by the Indian urban anthropologists as a very important one to explain the Indian urban scenario. Contemporary urban anthropologists in India argue that an Indian city is best explained as a community. This approach is validated by the nature of some Indian cities.

Neighbourhood as Community: According to this approach urban neighbourhoods are considered as communities. Meera Guha (1964, 1966), one of the pioneers of this approach in India, deals with the distribution and concentration of communities in the area what she called Burrabazar. Anjana Roy Chowdhury (1964) in her study of Bhowanipur traces the history and early settlement of the area and marks changes that have occurred among the various communities in terms of shifts from traditional occupations to newer ones. Later trends of this approach embarked on the studies on "community as set of social ties or extraspatial social phenomenon" (Campbell and Lee, 1992; Greenbaum and Greenbaum, 1985; Fischer, 1982), "network studies" (Rogers, 1987; Burt, 1983) and on "the networks and the new ethnic groups" (Fischer, 1975, 1984; Flanagan, 1990; Marshall, 1987; Guldin, 1980; Kwong, 1987).

Study of Smaller Urban Units: This trend is closely related with the two earlier ways of studying urban issues. Here difficulties of studying urban phenomena by using traditional anthropological technique prompted a shift within urban anthropology to studying smaller urban units which are highly visible and amenable to study by traditional anthropological techniques. Some examples of such studies are the essays on occupational groups like that of Gould (1974) on Lucknow rickshawallas, Bhattacharya (1969) on shoe-shiners of Patna, Textor (1956) on Samlor drivers in Bangkok and the like. Other examples are from particular aspects or patterns of urban life like the studies on social stratification or family organisation and marriage patterns, or economic activities, the political dimension or religious activities. Some examples of such studies are Geertz (1963) on the economic development of Indonesia, Cohen (1969) on Hausa migrants in Yoruba town, Wiebe (1975) on migrant caste groups of Kammas and Reddis, Marris (1961) on the importance of kinship groups in Lagos, Abu-Lughod (1962) on the importance of extended family in Cairo, Bruner (1961) on extension of 'adat' i.e. reciprocal rights and obligations between relatives in Sumatra and the like. In Indian scenario, the ideal of joint family remains strong and enhanced by close links, maintenance of kinship ties and the holding of property in common. Examples of such studies are Gore (1968) on the joint family in city, Ames (1973) on the structural adjustment of family life in Jamshedpur, Fox (1967) and Hazlehurst (1966) on the Bania families in northern India how a young man enters the world of commerce. Caste also features prominently in different titles on urban India like Bose (1970) and Lynch (1963) which
describe the residential clustering of traditional Indian cities on the caste basis and Srinivas (1962) and Wiebe (1975) which reveal the influence of caste on politics and the functioning of castes as political groups in different urban situations in India. Other ethnic groups like tribes in city have also been foci of study like Epstein (1964) and Cohen (1969).

Anthropological study on the voluntary associations in city started with the identification of the fact that an urban centre is characterised by lack of integration in comparison with rural or tribal areas. Voluntary associations assist by providing a new organisational basis which facilitates integration through which people cohere together in cities and explore the institutional limbo in the more formal structure of urban society (Little, 1965; Southall, 1973; Wallerstein, 1964).

1.2.2. Urban Ecology Approach

This approach of study, also known as the Chicago School of Urban Ecology, was pioneered by Robert E. Park, Ernest Burgess, R. D. Mckenzie, G. H. Mead and the like. This school studies urban structure, race relations, social problems and crime and deviance empirically by using a variety of observational, documentary, historical and statistical methods with the help of the framework of ecological theory. Here the urban environment is broken down into a mosaic of social worlds that are each in some measure offset, structurally and culturally, from adjacent ones (Park, 1915). This school contributed much to the origins of social psychology and symbolic interactionism. However, ecologists like Harris and Ullman (1945) abandoned efforts in this aspect on the ground that the earlier models of urban land use had assumed the cities growing around a single commercial and industrial centre but cities had sprawled outward by the mid-1940s and had become less focussed. The major premise of the school i.e. the segmentation of the city into "natural areas" (for example slums, neighbourhoods, and vice areas) according to laws of residential succession continued to inspire the scholars to analyse the changing residential patterns; e.g. the development of ghettos for the African Americans who moved to Chicago in search for jobs (Duncan and Duncan, 1957). This approach has been criticised for its lifeless empiricism and has lost much of its relevance in present day urban context where most of the events are explicable only when both the local and the global issues are taken into considerations.

1.2.3. Interactionism

This movement is also a response to the lifeless empiricism of the later Chicago School. Its most important work was Erving Goffman's microstudy of human interaction "The presentation of self in everyday life" (1959) whose influence transcended urban anthropology. He defined human interaction in terms of dramaturgical metaphor, by analysing human behaviour as a series of performances of parts. The value of this research for urban anthropology lies in its emphasis upon the subtle role played by human interaction in the urban setting. Though it offers a workable tool for the understanding of urban social structure, present worker did not use this approach for this work as it proved to be somewhat inadequate in explaining the contemporary urban complexities especially in Third World.
1.2.4. Study of Social Network

Network analysis is rooted in the study of rural communities and came to the city with Elizabeth Bott's "Family and social network" (1957). The "Bott hypothesis" is based on the assumption that the degree of segregation in the role-relationship of husband and wife varies directly with the connectedness of the family's networks. Other important works in this field include Mayer (1962), Mitchell (1971), Pauw (1963), Srinivas and Beteille (1964) and others. The study of migrants in a city, who retain both ideological and structural links like extended family, kinship ties with their rural origins and often maintain land and other holdings in the village form another major continuation of the network analysis (Rao, 1974; Weaver and White, 1972). Network analysis is also geared to the study of ego's manipulation of his social network for his own ends (Mayer, 1963; 1966). Though network analysis, both in the rural and urban areas, has been one of the mainstays in anthropological studies and has influenced the present worker immensely in various ways, this approach has not shaped any of the key conclusions of this thesis.

1.2.5. Study of Cultural Pluralism

Originally introduced by Furnivall (1948) to analyse the colonial policy and practice in Burma (Myanmar) and Indonesia, a plural society is one in which racially distinct peoples met only in the market place, a feature of colonial political economy. Cultural pluralism, in its more extreme form (Smith, 1965), underscored the polyethnic character of most Third World societies but it did not significantly influence the trend in either post-colonial or ethnic studies. It must be mentioned here that the model of cultural pluralism utilised by the anthropologists probes how various cultural groups existing within the same politico-economic order, maintain their distinctive identities in the city i.e. the interplay of detribalisation (ethnic groups rapidly losing their cultural distinctiveness) and retribalisation (ethnic groups not only relating but also emphasising and exaggerating their cultural identity and exclusiveness) (Banton, 1957; Mayer, 1961; Wilson and Majee, 1963; Bruner, 1961; Depres, 1968; Cohen, 1969). According to the present worker, cultural pluralism has its limitations in explaining the phenomenon of urban marginalisation in a Third World situation.

1.2.6. Urban Poverty Approach in Anthropology

Western anthropologists' ventures to explain the concepts of urban poverty have frequently distinguished the 'deserving' from the 'undeserving' poor. The former accepts dominant values of their society. They aspire to better themselves or, at least, to achieve respectability in fulfilling social norms. The latter reject these values. In the eyes of the 'middle classes' the former merit assistance, the latter punishment. This dichotomy is paralleled by the classification by Stokes (1962) of 'slums of hope' and 'slums of despair'. The formers are peopled by the upwardly mobile, the latter by the downwardly mobile. In each case a subdivision is made reflecting the degree of mobility actually possible rather than expected. The slums of hope will become integrated into the mass of the working populations; the slums of despair will remain the homes of the dregs of society - the dropouts. Another major concept in anthropology was 'culture of poverty' (Lewis,
1961, 1966a, 1966b) where the lack of effective participation and integration of the poor in the major institutions is one of the crucial characteristics. Anthropologists have now ceased to use these conceptualisations and have gone beyond these formulations (Wiebe, 1975; Woodruff, 1960; Leeds, 1973). It must be stressed that the poor (both in rural and urban areas) certainly have an understanding of themselves and the world in which they live. The present research pertains to the phenomenon of urban marginalisation and it will subsequently be made clear that urban poverty is one of the major components of analysis of urban marginalisation. It must be stated here that though some of the observations on urban poverty were sometimes present during various analyses of the present work the approach on urban poverty in anthropology has not exerted any significant influences on the present work.

1.2.7. Urban Political Economy Approach

Several features of classical and political economy have been assimilated into anthropology in varied degrees and with various ramifications (Roseberry, 1988; Vincent, 1990; Moore, 1993). The assimilations started particularly during the late 1960s and the early 1970s or more precisely during the Vietnam War (1965-73). The work that most influenced anthropology was that of Samir Amin, Arrighi and Rodney in Africa; Andre Gunder Frank and Cordoso in Latin America and Eric Wolf’s Peasant Wars which appeared in 1969. At almost the same period the critiques of structural anthropology’s representation of African societies, with its emphasis on kinship and its neglect of political economy, appeared in re-evaluations by Kathleen Gough, Peter Worsley and Talat Asad of classic ethnographies. These studies stimulated more explicit discussion of the theories of political economy and their application in Third World countries, by Joel Migdon in Indonesia, Keith Hart in Africa and more recently Kahn in Southeast Asia (Minangkabau) as well as Smith in the Peruvian Andes in Highland South America. French Marxist anthropologists and Africanists - among them Althusser, Godelier, Millansoux, Terray and Coquery-Vidrovitch – also became prominent exponents of political economy in anthropology. Two more events marked the development of political economy in anthropology; one is the publication of special edition of American Ethnologist on political economy in 1978 and the Wolf’s book named Europe and the People without History in 1982.

The emergence of political economy as the major axis of analysis in anthropology coincided with the emergence of two major paradigms which dominated different fields in social sciences and to a lesser degree in anthropology: the development and underdevelopment paradigm that emerged to challenge modernisation theory, particularly in its focus on newly independent Third World nations; and the modern world system model of sociologist political economy which defined itself in contradistinction to both.

The development and underdevelopment paradigm which has redirected attention from local arenas of action to global economic structures in urban studies resulted from the observation that the restructuring of national and international economic policy of Europe and US has spatial dimensions which has led to changes in local economies. According to this approach, the urban
space is an arena within which the reproduction of labour is concentrated i.e. the urban consists of (among other things) a system within which individuals reproduce their labour power (rest, recreate, procreate, learn etc.) through private (self-provided) and collective (state-mediated) consumption. Thus, in urban space two related aspects of the social order are worked out: the accumulation of capital and class conflict (Castells, 1977). Later versions of this theory argue that social class is just one of the bases for urban coalition, along with many other bases for the formation of interest groups that struggle to impart a particular "meaning" to a given city or part thereof or compete to control that urban space. The autonomous role that gender relationships, ethnic and national movements and movements that are located within civil society are among other alternative sources of urban social change (Castells, 1983; Gordon, 1984; Harvey, 1985a, 1985b; Gottdiener, 1985). However, urban (social) movements are totally dependent upon the success of other social movements to create the conditions in which changes of 'urban meaning' can be carried through (Lowe, 1986).

This approach is coterminous with and had a strong bearing on the proliferation of urban studies in the Third World. The dependency argument links the First World and the Third World within a common system of development and underdevelopment (Wallerstein, 1974; 1979). This also gave rise to various forms of world-system theory (Wallerstein, 1974; Amin, 1976; Frank, 1978) addressing the centre and periphery debate which attempts to explain how capitalism is able to affect the economic and political structure of 'underdeveloped' or 'developing' societies. This view assumes that in the central capitalist countries, there is a high organic composition of capital, and wage levels approximate the cost of reproducing labour. By contrast, in the peripheral countries, there is a low organic composition of capital, and wages are likely to be low, hardly meeting the cost of reproducing labour. This happens because in peripheral areas, reproduction of labour is often dependent on some degree of non-capitalist production, and the wages paid to workers are subsidised by subsistence production. In the centre, wages are determined largely by market processes, whereas at the periphery nonmarket forces, such as political repression or traditional relations of super- and subordination, are important in determining the wage rate. A clear formulation of the issues involved in such peripheral situations is provided by key texts like Michael Taussig's The Devil and Commodity Fetishism (1980) and Jacques Chevalier's Civilisation and the Stolen Gift (1982). Both provided ethnographies of communities in highland South America. Chevalier found non-capitalist modes of production to be subsumed within the dominant framework of capitalism. Taussig described a cultural system that had internalised the contradictions of capitalism in several different ways but most notably through beliefs in 'the devil' as an indigenous critique of commodity forms of exchange and wage relations. On the other hand, while appreciating that the periphery of capitalism is but the furthest extension of the core (Nugent, 1988) it is not unrelated to the growing corpus of political economic research carried out in modern Western cities and within the apparatus of the modern state. Urban primacy (productivity reconceptualised as international rather than domestic issues in the context of high rates of urban growth in the Third World where the largest city in a nation is several times the size
of the next largest), informalisation of the economy, urban bias in social and economic policies and the like are some of the key issues addressed by this approach in the Third World. Urban marginalisation in terms of urban is the mainstay of the present work has also been one of the key formulations of this approach. But, as it will be made clear subsequently, present worker did not take the said approach in its entirety and only a part of it has been in use to explain certain phenomena in this research.

1.2.8. Postmodernism and Urban Studies

During the early 1980s postmodernism which is characterised by fragmentation, indeterminacy, and intense distrust of all universal or ‘totalising’ discourses (to use the favoured phrase) provided a major tool for analysis in our discipline. It all started with the rediscovery of pragmatism in philosophy (Rorty, 1979), the shift of ideas about the philosophy of science wrought by Kuhn (1962) and Feyerabend (1975), Foucoult’s emphasis upon discontinuity and difference in history and his privileging of ‘polymorphous correlations in place of simple or complex causality,’ new developments in mathematics emphasizing indeterminacy (catastrophe and chaos theory, fractal geometry), and most importantly for us the reemergence of concern in anthropology along with ethics, politics for the validity and dignity of ‘the other’. All indicate a widespread and profound shift in ‘the structure of feeling.’ What all these examples have in common is a rejection of ‘metanarratives’ (large-scale theoretical interpretations purported to be of universal application).

Postmodernism, as a result, inculcates a conception of the urban fabric as necessarily fragmented, a ‘palimpsest’ of past forms superimposed upon each other, and a ‘collage’ of current uses, many of which may be ephemeral. As the metropolis is impossible to command except in bits and pieces, urban design (postmodernists design rather than plan) simply aims to sensitive to vernacular traditions, local histories, particular wants, needs, and fancies, thus generating specialised, even highly customised architectural forms that may range from intimate, personalised spaces, through traditional monumentality, to the gaiety of spectacle.

Postmodernists depart radically from modernist conceptions of how to regard urban space. Whereas the modernists see urban pace as something to be shaped for social purposes and therefore always subservient to the construction of a social project, the postmodernists see urban space as something independent and autonomous, to be shaped according to aesthetic aims and principles which have nothing necessarily to do with any overarching social objective, save, perhaps, the achievement of timeless and 'disinterested' beauty as an objective in itself.

It is a huge shift of position from the modernists to the postmodernist and it would be useful to consider the meaning of such a shift for a variety of reasons. To begin with, the built environment constitutes one element in a complex of urban experience that has long been a vital crucible for the forging of new cultural sensibilities. How a city looks and how its spaces are organised forms a material base upon which range of possible sensations and social practices can be thought about, evaluated, and achieved. At the same time a considerable debate goes around the ways in which aesthetic judgements can or should be incorporated in spatially fixed form, and with what effects
on daily life. If we experience urban space as a medium of communication, if, as Barthes (1975, 92) insists, 'the city is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language,' then according to the postmodernists, we ought to pay close attention to what is being said, particularly since we typically absorb such messages in the midst of all the other manifold distractions of urban life.

Paying attention to the needs of the 'heterogeneity of urban villagers and taste cultures,' however, takes the urban space away from the ideal of some unified meta-language and breaks it down into highly differentiated discourses. The "langue" (total set of communicational sources) is so heterogeneous and diverse that any singular "parole" (individual selection) will reflect this. The result is fragmentation, often consciously embraced. The metropolis is conceived of as 'a system of anarchic and archaic signs and symbols that is constantly and independently self-renewing' (Klotz, 1985). Other postmodernists strive to cultivate the labyrinthine qualities of urban environments by interweaving interiors and exteriors.... Postmodern built environments typically seek out and deliberately replicate themes that Raban so strongly emphasised in *Soft city*: 'an emporium of styles, an encyclopaedia, a maniacal scrap-book filled with colourful entries' (Raban, 1974).

According to the postmodernists, by surrendering to an abstract entity called 'the people,' the populists cannot recognise how manifold the people happen to be and consequently 'how much in need of protection from each other its components happen to stand.' The problems of minorities, the underprivileged, marginalised or of the diverse counter-cultural elements get virtually swept under the rug unless some very democratic and egalitarian system of community-based planning can be devised that meets the needs of rich and poor alike. Though present work in its search for the problems of urban marginalised people in a Third World context has tried to validate the legitimacy of 'the other', it must be made clear here that the postmodernism has not contributed any strong theoretical underpinning to the present work.

1.3. MAJOR RESEARCH TRENDS IN THE LITERATURE ON URBAN INDIA

In reality, all such approaches merge together and no strict distinctions between them could be maintained. This becomes even more obvious when Indian cities, where urban anthropology made a late arrival and is yet to claim proper identity for itself as a separate sub-discipline within anthropology, becomes the unit of observation. Present worker came to this realisation when he searched for an appropriate approach to form the background of the present study. Thus it becomes essential now to glean briefly the major trends of research in Indian urban scenario even if many of them are not of anthropological nature in strict sense of term.

1.3.1. Urban Space Studies

This tradition could be traced back to the insights of Durkheim ([1893] 1933) where in explaining the transformation from simple (rural) society to complex (urban-industrial) society - i.e. from mechanical to organic solidarity - emphasis was led on three factors, viz., a large number of individuals in society (the physical size of population), the material (physical) density, and the
'dynamic density' of society i.e., the frequency of contacts between a large number of individuals in society. This 'objective' trend of study of urban situation laid special emphasis on such factors as the growth of size and density of population in India (Singh, 1955; Bopegamege, 1957; A. Bose, 1965, 1970a, 1970b, 1970c; Ghurya, 1962; Davis, 1962; Bogue and Zachariah, 1962; Brush, 1962, 1970; Rajagopalan, 1962; Taneja, 1971). This tradition has also slipped into urban ecological tradition of studying the growth of the city in terms of its physical expansion and differentiation in space.

N. K. Bose's social survey of Calcutta (1968) contains sufficient reflections on the indigenous urban tradition of India with the Western pattern of growth viewed more like a cultural accretion upon it. According to available information, both Bengali as well as non-Bengali speakers tend to concentrate in certain areas of Calcutta. Although the correspondence between caste and hereditary occupations seems to have been somewhat weakened, the intermediate castes (Subrana Banik, Kansaris, etc.) still cling to their traditional caste occupations and tend to concentrate in certain areas of the city. Similarly, linguistic groups such as Gujaratis, Punjabis and Sindhis generally engage in specialised occupations and constitute discrete clusters in certain areas of Calcutta. Moreover, each linguistic group in Calcutta has also built its own voluntary organisations to cater to its specific social and cultural need (Kuppuswamy, 1975). The study of Berry and Rees (1969) has revealed the interpenetration of traditional and modern elements in the social geography of Calcutta. Gist in his study of the ecology of Bangalore (1968) discovered that the internal differentiations of Indian cities, in terms of the positioning of Central Market, residential segregations on the basis of caste, religion and the like, resembled that of American cities as described in urban ecological theories. All these differences are due to Bangalore's historical past, socio-economic organisation, and cultural interest.

The city of Poona has been a rewarding field for exploring the intricacies of India's urban ecology; rich dividends are likely to be obtained by the analysis of patterns of residence of Indian cities by income, education, caste, and religion (Gadgil, 1945, 1952; Sovani et al. 1956; Mehta, 1968). Hazlehurst's (1970) observations of the organisation and activities in urban space yields three categories of urban space, viz., economic, ritually pure, and ritually polluting. He finds that in a North Indian town, caste-occupational distinctions are sustained by an 'economic' urban space: similarly, ritually pure residential space is occupied by the high castes and honoured by outsiders; but, ritually polluting space is occupied by low castes and avoided by outsiders.

Thus, the study of the so-called 'objective aspect' of Indian urban situation- its spatio-temporal organisation-becomes relevant only when we take into account historical, social psychological, structural and cultural characteristics of Indian cities. The identity of an Indian urbanite is not simply coterminous with the urban space; it is also shaped by his caste-status, kingroup, language, neighbourhood, religion and region (particularly important are the works of Bose, Gist, Mehta, and Hazlehurst). But one cannot infer the direction of change on the basis of what happened in the West. Present research shows that globalisation and its resultant changes do interfere with the ecology of urban India and bring about discontinuities and change in its ecological structure. On
the contrary, these changes in the Third World cities have quite different manifestations from the cities of the developed countries.

1.3.2. Study of Continuity and Change in the Historical Past of Indian Cities

So it becomes clear now that even the 'objective aspect' of Indian cities could not be fully comprehended without taking into account their historical past. Some studies (Weber, 1905 [1958a]; Singh, 1973; Sjoberg, 1960, 1964) on the continuity and change in the historical past of the Indian cities will further exemplify this postulation. Gillion's (1968) study on the urban history of Ahmedabad challenges the common assumptions about the impact of industrialisation on the structure of an Indian city. The early industrialisation of Ahmedabad was achieved within a society that remained socially and politically conservative. Modern Ahmedabad was the creation of Ahmedabadis, not the outsiders. I.P. Desai in his studies of the city of Poona (1953) and Mahuva (1964), a town in Saurashtra, makes similar observations regarding the continuity of traditional structures. Apparent status distinctions find their explanation in the political and economic history of the castes in Poona which is in turn based upon the traditional caste hierarchy in India.

However, present worker is of the opinion that it would be a mistake to over-emphasise the continuities in many other cities of India like Calcutta (now Kolkata), Bombay (now Mumbai), Madras (now Chennai), and Kanpur which because they were the creation of the British, could be characterised as colonial cities which the latter created for their own purpose and exploitation. According to the observers British rulers did not hesitate to destroy traditional cities like Dacca, Murshidabad, Surat and the like whenever the economy of these traditional cities hindered colonial economic expansion (Dutt, 1947; Ray, 1974; Gupta, 1970; Moris, 1967; Bagchi, 1970). But when we look at the economic institutions of the industrial cities of colonial India, we must recognise the break in the continuity of its mode and the process of production, despite the British policy of deliberately favouring the British and Europeans as entrepreneurs and capitalists. However, this resulted in retarding the qualitative change in Indian cities as well as the persistence of indigenous traditional institutions such as caste.

1.3.3. Study of Social Institutions of Indian Cities

Such institutions in the Indian cities as marriage, kinship, family, caste, and religion can be conceptualised as the occurrences of complex sets of social interactions. In traditional Indian cities, the institutional complex of the marriage-kinship-family-caste-religion is the best strategic site for the analysis and understanding of the socio-cultural life of the city.

Studies on Marriage in Urban India: Though the institution of marriage in urban India mainly operates within the paradigm of caste, for analytical purposes the two need to be separated. When we examine the practices related to marriage, such as age at marriage, conjugal relationship, etc. we do find certain rural-urban differences. But we do not know whether the differences are solely attributable to heterogeneity caused by caste, language or religion in the cities of India. Even if
such differences do exist, we do not know if they could be attributed to the effects of urbanism. An intensive study of the rituals associated with Hindu marriage, and the degree to which they are affected by the process of secularisation in urban India could be very rewarding. It would be interesting to observe if the marriage ceremonies have changed both in form as well as content. Some of the important studies on marriages in urban India include Ross (1961), Shah (1964), Gore (1968), Vatuk (1972), Conklin (1973) and Kapadia (1968).

**Studies on the Patterns of Kinship in Urban India:** Theoretical perspectives derived from Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft or Wirth's urbanism seems to suggest that urbanisation weakens the bonds of kinship and diminishes the salience of family and neighbourhood. Nevertheless, when we think in terms of change in the patterns of kinship in urban India, we observe a strange anomaly between continuity and change. Thus the Western theory induced hypothesisations like that of Goode (1963) of exclusion of a wide range of affinal and blood relatives from the everyday affairs of the urbanites does not hold good in Indian urban situations due to the close interconnections between family, kingroup and caste/sub-caste in the Indian situation. Famous studies on the patterns of kinship in urban India (Chatterjee, 1947; Vatuk, 1972; Gandhi, 1976; Conklin, 1973b; Chekki, 1974) indicate that often urban neighbourhood tend to coincide with kin organisation. In large industrial cities such as Bombay (now Mumbai), Calcutta (now Kolkata) and Madras where kin and caste networks are often widely dispersed, frequent and close contacts with the help of modern means of communication and transportation helps to hold these networks together.

**Studies on Family in Urban India:** The literatures on family in Indian cities often collapse the household dimension with the problems of 'nuclearity' and 'jointness.' In addition, the behaviour and attitude toward joint family (as a cultural object) are not uniformly consistent. And the studies of attitudes themselves report inconsistent findings. They may further conceal theoretical, conceptual, and methodological problems. However, in cities where the so called 'participant observation' method may be difficult to apply, more rigorous theoretical conceptualisation and methodological design is required for the study of family. The assumption that the Indian urbanites live in simple or nuclear households and urbanisation in India is 'breaking up' joint families may prove to be premature and the studies (Kapadia, 1956; B. V. Shah, 1964; Desai, 1964; Mukherjee, 1964; Kapoor, 1965; Gore, 1968; A. M. Shah, 1974; Srinivas, 1974; Conklin, 1976) suggest that there is no correlation between urbanisation and 'separate' simple or nuclear households.

**Studies on Caste in Urban India:** Two opinions emerge while studying caste in urban India. One, those who believe (Ghurya, 1969; Kothari, 1970) in the enormous power of resistance of closed status communities think of their continuity in urban India, and whatever change they observe is assumed to be the change in degree and not in kind. Others (Beteille, 1971; Bhatt, 1975; Anant, 1972; Saberwal, 1973; Bailey, 1963) who subscribe to the view that the processes of change have overcome the resistance to change believe that qualitative change has occurred and
hence the fusion of major hierarchies of value-class, status and power - as it was uniquely found in a status community like caste, have now become diffused and restructured, leaving it more as an 'open' rather than the 'closed' status group. Srinivas (1969) examines Sanskritisation, Westernisation and secularisation as the main forces of change in modern India. Westernisation also gave rise to the new elite in India which although was initially dominated by the Brahmans has recently exhibited a tendency to cut across the boundaries of caste, region and religion (Shils, 1961; Srinivas, 1969; Singh, 1973). But according to the observers the new elites of urban India are 'self-critical' and qualitatively different from the traditional elites in India (Doblin, 1970; Johnson, 1970).

According to some researchers (Bose, 1951; Mukherjee, 1970) if one wants to discern the direction of change in the social stratification of urban India, the most logical step is to think in terms of change from caste to class. Dumont (1974) contends, caste system may not only consist of solidarities but also consist of interdependence and hierarchy that have weakened. Rudolph and Rudolph (1972) and Khare (1970) maintain that the caste organisations enable members of castes to pursue social mobility, political power, and economic advantage.

That Brahminical stroke of genius which ingeniously fused together all three major hierarchical values, viz., class, status and power and created world's most unique stratification system is slowly being attenuated by the urban-industrial forces of change. While participating in a variety of political processes and activities, some elites made use of caste whenever and wherever possible and turned caste itself into an instrument of upward mobility. In sum, caste in urban India reflects contradictions and conflicts, cooperation and competition, and dramatic social processes as parts of a changing social reality of urban India.

Studies on Religion in Urban India: Even though the religious identity of an Indian urbanite is clear-cut, and Hinduism has sometimes shown extreme flexibility in adapting to urban conditions, one also observes a secular attitude with respect to external rituals and ceremonies. One of the most fruitful investigations in this area is found in Redfield and Singer's (1969) theory of interaction between the Little Tradition of village and the Great Tradition of city. But the increasing secularisation of social institutions such as marriage, family and caste may be followed by the revival of religious movement in Hinduism. It is a well-known fact that traditionally the urban centres of India (e.g. Banaras, Madras) have remained a source of Sanskritic Hinduism (Singer, 1972). Even in ancient times certain religious movements such as Jainism had attracted the urban groups like the Jain Vaishyas; more recent reform movements such as the Prarthana Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj etc. have had their roots in the cities. Therefore, paradoxically, Indian cities have always attracted the pundits who reinterpreted the sacred literature and the reformers like Vivekananda who infused new life in old scriptures.

These studies on the social institutions of Indian cities have enhanced our awareness of the social identity of Indian cities - especially traditional cities - as understanding the institutional complex of the marriage-kinship-family-caste-religion is absolutely indispensable for any credible
explanation of the socio-cultural life of those cities. But as indicated earlier the socio-cultural life of urban marginals of Calcutta (now Kolkata) cannot be explained fully as the rationale of the creation of these urban marginals as well as the city of Calcutta (now Kolkata) itself does not conform to the background of such explanations.

1.3.4. Studies on Neighbourhood in Urban India

The available few studies of urban neighbourhood in India indicate that the Indian neighbourhoods may consist of the members of one's caste (Lynch, 1967; Doshi, 1968), one's kin (as evident from the works of Chatterjee, 1947; Gore, 1970; Vatuk, 1972; Gandhi, 1976), and one's friends. Neighbourhoods may even be coterminous with a regional or linguistic group (Punekar, 1962). Such studies on the neighbourhood in urban India have also been instrumental in understanding the dynamics of the socio-cultural life in some Indian cities as many neighbourhoods in the Indian cities are based on castes, kin-groups, regional or linguistic groups. But, as the present study shows, in a cosmopolitan city like Calcutta (now Kolkata) the urban marginals very rarely form settlements on any of such basis.

1.3.5. Studies on the Middle Class in Urban India

The phenomenon of the formation of middle classes in urban India began to receive enough attention only after Beteille's (1969) study on Calcutta (now Kolkata). There has since been a proliferation of studies on the middle class in urban India. But as the present study is on the urban marginals extensive research on the urban middle class in India is outside the direct purview of the present work. However, it would be worthwhile to mention briefly some of the important studies on the urban Indian middle classes (Chibbar, 1968; Rao; Panchanadikars, 1970; Lambert, 1963) to have an idea of the interplay of traditional values with modern ones and how the castes survived through the classes. These observations will have only an indirect bearing on the present study.

1.3.6. Studies on Sacred Complex in India

This approach was pioneered by L.P. Vidyarthi who introduced concepts like 'sacred geography', 'sacred performances' and 'sacred performances' in his book *The Sacred Complex of Hindu Gaya* (1961). Here Vidyarthi has also shown that the sacred complex is undergoing a secondary urbanisation that remains to be studied in future. Other major studies in the tradition of sacred complex study are Saraswati's (1975) study on Benaras, Jha's studies on Janakpur (1971), Mohapatra's study of Lingaraj Temple (1900-1962); Morab and Goswami's study on Chamundeshwari Temple in Mysore (1975) and P. Chakraborty's (1974) study on Tarkeshwar Temple in West Bengal.

All the above reviews would suggest that focus of these studies was urban life throughout the world. Many of these studies that are categorised as an urban anthropological have made serious contributions to anthropological research on urban life, but rarely explain the characteristics of cities themselves. In order to avoid this confusion, Kemper distinguished between the anthropology in cities, and the anthropology of cities: although both are interrelated there is a
marked distinction between "anthropologists who do research in a particular city, but without much, if any concern for the urban context; those concerned with the structure of city life and its impact on human behaviour locally or cross-culturally; and those concerned with the development of international urban systems through time and space as distinctive social-cultural and political-economic domains" (1991b). Now urban anthropology is fast emerging as a distinctive sub-discipline within anthropology and if the accelerated urbanisation throughout the world bears any indication then the major fields of anthropology may eventually flow into urban anthropology with its holistic approach (see Ansari and Nas, 1983). The above reviews show that through an emphasis on the dynamics of urban marginalisation and child labour present worker endeavours to give an insight to one such field in anthropology which has become salient in urban anthropology rather lately. After these introductory discourses on the present work and reviews of its background, including the related literatures on the studies in urban areas in general and in urban India in particular, present worker would like to go to the next chapter which deals with actual theoretical issues (which is divided in four sections and each section related to a particular theoretical problem related to this thesis) related to the present thesis.

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1 Read Third World state as most of the Western countries continue to work as buffer and doles out huge subsidies in some key sectors like agriculture, health, education etc.
2 The data obtained from the Population I and Population II are almost similar in many ways and have been treated here in combination as Population I and II.