A brief review of the findings and the conclusions arrived at

In the previous Chapters we have traced the different changes that occurred in the three towns — Berhampore, Jiaganj and Jangipur in the course of the period 1951-70. This final Chapter is devoted to a brief review of the preceding analysis.

We have already noticed that population in all these three towns increased during this period. But an interesting feature revealed by the study is that the rate of population growth declined over the decade 1961-61 in Berhampur and Jangipur, while it declined continuously over the entire period 1951-71 in Jiaganj.

So far as the growth of educational facilities is concerned, a marked expansion is noticeable in all these towns. The attitude of the local people towards education, particularly female education, has changed favourably over the years and the percentages of both school-going children and of male and female students taking school and higher education have increased to a considerable degree, (as compared to the level prevailing in 1951) along with an increase in the percentage of general literacy. Moreover, students of the surrounding villages upto about 15 miles radius are now coming to these towns to take advantage of the educational facilities available there. This was beyond imagination before 1951 due to the lack of adequate transport facilities.
This rapid spread of educational facilities has contributed in changing the outlook of the local people towards choice of occupations in general and women's participation in non-household work in particular. Social barriers in the way of occupational mobility have been reduced. Before 1961, the people belonging to lower castes were often discriminated against in matters of employment. But now all persons irrespective of caste are assured of equal treatment in respect of occupational opportunities. These changes along with the creation of additional employment through the establishment of new shops, banks and Govt. offices and the expansion of the old ones, brought about several changes in the occupational set-up of these towns. Labour participation ratio, the percentage of male workers to the total population and the ratio of female workers to all workers increased in all of these three towns during the period under review. Besides there took place a redistribution of labour force leading in favour of the so called tertiary sector such as trade, transport and other services.

At the beginning of the First Five-year plan the business communities in each of these towns were suffering from two common problems: (a) market limitation and (b) lack of adequate transport facilities. Since 1961 large-scale development of road transport has been achieved in this district through the construction of new roads connecting these towns not only with one another
but also with other places including Calcutta. Regular bus services have also been introduced from these towns on several different routes. These developments have reduced the limitation from which the markets of these towns suffered, by widening their respective hinterlands. The growth of population and the general rise in incomes must have also contributed to the expansion of demand in these towns.

As a consequence of these changes many new shops and other commercial establishments were set up during this period, the maximum increase being recorded at Jangipur. There was also an appreciable change in the nature of goods traded which led to the availability of certain non-traditional products such as scientific manures, agricultural machinery, up-to-date cosmetics, electrical goods etc. which were previously not available in these markets. The majority of the sample shops in these towns were found to have made considerable progress during this period in terms of sale-proceeds, employment, capital assets etc., suggesting an improvement in the condition of trade and business there, particularly in the case of Aratdari business (wholesale trade in agricultural crops) as well as retail sales of stationery, manures, agricultural tools, automobile spares etc.* Such improvement was more pronounced in the case of the shops established before 1951. But three traditional domestic industries — silk, bellmetal and ivory — did not achieve

* except in the case of Jiaganj.
much progress over this period although their position definitely improved as compared to the situation obtaining before 1951. They are however still suffering from the shortage of capital and raw-materials. Two more changes are worthy of note. Establishment of new shops etc. and increased Govt. expenditure for plan projects stepped up the volume of employment and the level of income. This additional income along with the gradually rising agricultural prices pushed up the buying power of the consumers. Secondly, there occurred a significant change in the tastes and preferences of the consumers as reflected in an increased demand for modern and sophisticated consumer goods, particularly high-grade stationery, shoes, cloth, garments, ornaments, hardware, furniture and similar semi-luxury products.

A majority of the sample households in these towns reported increase in the level of their total as well as per capita incomes over this period. The number and volume of both saving and fixed deposits in different banks and post offices of these towns were found to have increased. Similarly there was increase in the total and per capita expenditure of all the sample households in each of these towns. A majority of them also reported growth in the level of expenditure on education, food, clothing, conveyance, travelling, amusement and luxury articles as compared to the conditions existing before 1951.
At the same time, consumers' tastes and preferences have also been remoulded over this period resulting in a change in the household's consumption pattern. Thus the achievement of a higher standard of living has become possible for a majority of the households in our sample. Due to increased availability of different varieties of consumer goods in the market (made possible by the improvement of transport system), people's tastes have changed. Higher levels of activity have raised their ability to spend more. Hence the total expenditure on luxury and semi-luxury products inevitably went up. Besides, the influx of outsiders (such as Govt. officials, college-teachers, etc.) from Calcutta and the advent of cinema also contributed to this change in the tastes and preferences of the consumers through the "so-called demonstration effect."

Last but not least, the volume of trade between these towns increased over the period under consideration as compared to the level existing before 1951. Yet the degree of commercial interdependence among the three neighbouring towns was found to remain rather insignificant. Almost none of the manufactured goods traded in these towns are locally produced. Instead, they are usually collected from wholesalers in Calcutta. Dealership or Agency system for distribution of goods in this district has not been sufficiently developed also. As Calcutta is well connected with each of these towns by rail and roadways, it seems economically
advantageous on the part of the traders of Jiaganj and Jangipur to secure goods from Calcutta than from Berhampore, the central place in the region, on the basis of comparative-cost. For the same reason, the change in consumption-pattern could not exert necessary influence in bringing commercial integration among these towns.

On the whole, we can say that the implementation of plan-projects (under the Five Year plans) in these towns, in the district or in the State as a whole, affected the growth of these towns in several ways. The favourable impact of economic development had reached these towns by the time we carried out this survey.

On the basis of the above findings, we may draw certain tentative conclusions.

1. In the first place, there took place a considerable amount of infrastructural development in the region as a whole and in the towns in particular, through the extension of educational facilities, medical amenities, construction of new roads, availability of better transport system etc.

2. Improved transport system, growth in population, change in taste and preference, etc., created favourable conditions for the progress of trade and business and hence the pace of economic
activity was accelerated in all these towns during the period under review.

3. A considerable number of new shops, other commercial establishments, Govt. offices etc. came to be set up in these towns. Additional employment opportunities were created leading to a rise in the labour-participation ratio as well as in the percentage of workers in the tertiary activities. At the same time, a notable upward trend was found in the level of household’s income, expenditure and consumption-pattern.

4. As all such changes are commonly accepted as the indicators of economic growth, we may say that in the period concerned these towns attained some degree of economic growth and that condition of trade and business registered an improvement in all those towns. There were several factors which might have brought about this development:

   (a) It appears to us that the most important contribution was made by the improvement of road-transport system. We may very well say that the development of the communication system acted as a key-factor in developing the small towns under survey by widening their hinterland and markets for goods traded.

   (b) Besides that, the markets of these agro-based towns being dependent largely on agricultural income, the gradually rising prices of agricultural produce in this period led to the
emergence of brisk business activities in these towns by enlarging the demand for goods and services there. In fact, the growth of agriculture can be regarded as a sine qua non of the development of such agro-based townships.

(c) Moreover, additional income generated by increased Govt. expenditure also contributed to the economic growth of these towns.

5. Although each of these towns experienced some favourable impacts, in a relative sense, the growth was more pronounced in Berhampur and Jangipur than in Jiaganj, as suggested by the changes in population, density, number of shops and establishments, condition of trade (whether better-off) etc. One probable reason for such relatively slow growth of Jiaganj might be the fact that it is only a market-town whereas in Berhampur and Jangipur some manufacturing activities are carried on in addition to the administrative functions. Moreover, the improvement in road transport affected adversely some of the traditional trades in Jiaganj, particularly the whole-sale trade in cash-crops (Aratdari) by diverting the flow of certain agricultural produce from entering into this market to Calcutta or Berhampur, directly from the field. Consequently the volume of transaction fell relatively in such trade in comparison to the condition before 1951, being followed by a relative decline in the number of flying customers who used to visit this town frequently being associated with this particular trade. Naturally, the demand for goods in other business fell to
that extent and the economic activities of this town could not flourish as would have been otherwise possible. Of course similar problem had to be faced by the traders in Jangipur or Berhampur. But this depressive effect was perhaps more than compensated through the generation of additional demand by the manufacturing and administrative activities performed in these two towns. Alternatively, we may say that improvement of transport system may in some cases, pose problem in the growth of a purely market-town.

6. Improvement of Transport system, increased money income, change in outlook, demonstration effect, etc. caused a significant change in the household's consumption pattern.

7. Next comes the more important as well as the basic aspect of this study — the growth of interdependence among these towns. As pointed out earlier, the volume of inter-town trade and business did not grow sufficiently over the period concerned, inspite of a large expansion in transport facilities, business activities and a desirable change in consumption pattern of the households. Instead, these towns were found to be more dependent on Calcutta than on one another (both as a source of procuring manufactured goods and as a market for selling the locally-grown agricultural produce) for various advantages arising mainly from the easy-accessibility to Calcutta from each of these towns. It is evident that the failure in developing local manufacturing capacity as well as the proximity of a big metropolis like
Calcutta acted as barriers to the growth of commercial interdependence among these three towns in this region. Thus Berhampur, as the central place in this region, could not exert the necessary influence on other two towns so far as trade and business are concerned.

This brings us to our final point, which may sound as a note of warning. During the period under consideration, there has been very little industrialisation in these towns. The existing industries are mostly cottage-industries and run on a domestic basis. There is no large-scale industry in any of these three towns. The use of electricity for industrial purposes has also been found to be very meagre. This slow progress of industrialisation has apparently retarded the growth of economic opportunities necessary to absorb the gradually increasing labour force in these towns. As a result, in spite of the fact that these towns have made considerable progress over this period, the number of registered unemployed persons has been swelling year after year. In fact, this lack of locally available economic opportunities may have been partly responsible for a diminishing rate of population-growth as observed in Jiaganj and Jangipur through

* Compare a similar observation by Emrys Jones while discussing the impact of the city of London as the Primate City, on other smaller cities in its proximity.
See "Towns and Cities", p.102.
inducing the local people to migrate to other places. We have also noticed the emergence of some amount of unhealthy competition among the traders of these towns. This may have come about, because the markets are being overcrowded by petty sellers. People failing to avail of other economic opportunities naturally tend to set up a shop in the local market by drawing upon their meagre resources. Many of these shortcomings of the growth process in these towns can be attributed to the insignificant development of local manufacturing activity.

We may conclude this analysis by saying that the implementation of the five-year plans has brought about directly or indirectly some amount of favourable impact on the conditions of social overheads, trade and business, household's consumption pattern and commercial interdependence among the towns. Consequently these towns have made some amount of progress during this period. Yet for attaining a more stable and satisfactory rate of progress and for a more rapid absorption of the swelling labour force, a reasonably adequate dose of industrialisation appears to be needed and this remains yet to be provided.