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Preface

Most third world countries are becoming increasingly urban in recent years and their proliferating slums constitute the most important and persistent problem of their urban life. The condition of the slums which represent focal points of urban poverty, have direct impact on the living condition of not only their residents but also on residents of the cities by deteriorating the urban environment. In India, slums are increasing at a rapid pace with the spread of urbanisation over the last few decades. While no Indian City today is free from slums owing to a heavy exodus of population from rural areas, the problem seems to be more acute in the metropolitan and larger cities. Although the huge slum population to a great extent influences the social and economic environment of the city, the below – dignity level of existence of the slum dwellers has not been treated adequately in the literature. While the existing studies in this area fail to explain the complex socio-economic process causing the genesis and growth of urban slums, the information on slums and squatter settlements that is found at present is also felt to be inadequate for the purpose of urban planning. The kind of data that is available does not give a clear idea about the intensity of the problem in the city.

However, slums and squatter settlements, which until now carried with them a stereotype image with a negative bias, have started being recognised as significant contributors in shaping the growth of the urban economy. The hutment dwellers of the city not only represent the physical and human adjustment to poverty, they also provide a substantial part of the low wage labour force mainly to the tertiary sector of the urban economy.

Thus looking at the positive contribution of the slum dwellers in the cities and towns, one can realise that, these people constitute an integral part of the city economy. Unfortunately neither the state cares much about the poor who live in the slums nor does it make any genuine effort to
eradicate the causes of slums. Hence realising the seriousness of the problem of slum dwellers, a modest attempt has been made to study the economic condition of slum dwellers in the national capital (New Delhi) and a provincial capital (Bhubaneswar). The study attempts to highlight the economic condition of this underprivileged societal group who gets so little in return inspite of their significant contribution to the urban economy.

The study begins with a historical background of the growth of urban centres in India by comparing them with the urban centres in the European countries in the medieval period in order to establish the similarities and the contrast between the two. In the first chapter the development of the cities and towns in the colonial period as well as in the post independence period has been discussed at some length. The discussion extends to the second chapter where the efforts made by the government for the further development of the urban centres through the successive five years plans have been studied, with emphasis on the plan outlays particularly for the urban housing sector.

In the third chapter we look at the existing literature on slums both in the western countries as well as in the developing countries including India. The different theories regarding the origin of slums and the social characteristics of slum dwellers are also dealt with briefly in this chapter.

A field study of slum dwellers was conducted in 1995-96 at New Delhi and Bhubaneswar. The socio-economic background of the slum dwellers of our sample households in the two cities has been discussed in the fourth chapter in which the causes of migration of slum dwellers are also studied at length. The economic activities of the slum dwellers and their occupational characteristics are discussed in the fifth chapter. On the basis of the nature of their occupation the workers have been divided into three categories in order to understand their working conditions in detail. The study provides us the terms and conditions under which the workers have to work in the informal sector of the city economy. In this chapter an
attempt has been made to see the applicability of the existing relationship between the consumer worker ratio and the family labour force in the context of the slum dwellers.

Chapter six reflects the economic condition of slum dwellers by taking into consideration the income and expenditure pattern of the sample households. The environmental condition of the slums under study at New Delhi and Bhubaneswar gets reflected in chapter seven, which depicts the distressing features of habitation of the poor in a city environment. The study ends with a concluding note that shows the similarities and the dissimilarities existing in the standard of living of the slum dwellers in New Delhi and Bhubaneswar. We argue that there is little reason for comfort when it comes to the prevailing economic condition of the slum dwellers irrespective of the city size.
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Chapter 1

Growth of Cities and Town: A Historical Background

1.1 Introduction

The history of urbanisation in India is almost as old as the history of human civilisation. The ancient cities of this country truly reflect the development of each civilisation, their prosperity and ultimate decline. The form and structure of the city reveal the manner in which the challenges posed by the growth demands of society were responded to by the city at each stage, and how the city was made to serve the economic, social, cultural and political interest of the society. While these cities served as market places for the agrarian society, the feudal society looked upon them as bastions of defence, protecting its population and their activities in trade, craft and architecture. The cities emerged as centres for administration, collection of revenues, location of armies and places for the production of manufactured goods, including textiles, pottery, arts and crafts. Thus, in each period of history the urban centres have responded to the needs of the contemporary society and challenges of the times. However, the process of urbanisation in India has been distinctly different from that of European countries in the sense that in the case of the former, we come across cities and towns which were important in the medieval period but which lost their identity with the fall of the kingdom or empire. In the case of the European countries on the other hand, many of the cities and towns which arose within feudal societies as trade centres survived in the main even after the disintegration of feudalism from the 14th century, perhaps because they had become largely politically autonomous and self-governing with their own charters, drawn up by their merchant gilds.


2 Ibid
Regarding the origins of towns and urban centres in Europe, it has been suggested that "some were the survivals of ancient Roman cities. These cities having declined in the days of anarchy rose again to prominence when some measures of order brought a respite and return to prosperity". The second argument relates the origin of European cities to the consequence of growing population in the countryside in the 13th century. The towns grew within a feudal society and the qualification for town citizenship remained for those who had an ownership of land within the boundary walls of the town. In a later period, trade and manufacture became the main occupation of the citizens. In parts of Europe, where feudal authority was weak, towns are believed to "have grown out of village communities of more or less free peasants and developed as free communities of artisans and petty traders who banded together to resist the encroachment of an overlord". The older cities like Kiev and Pskov in Russia are the examples of cities, which originated from tribal settlements. With the growth of population they were gradually converted into cities.

A third explanation, given importance by Pirenne, says that "towns originated in settlements of merchants' caravans". According to him a group of traders in course of their journey settled down at some vacant places owing to their favourable locations. In Germany and England this kind of settlement was seen where the traders gradually constructed protecting walls for themselves and gained a separate identity. After acquiring a patch of land for themselves and some influence over the locality, they started enjoying special privileges from the king. The merchant community assumed the "formal dignity of hansa and gild" and in course of time exercised a control

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4 Dobb, p. 78.
5 Pirenne, *Belgian Democracy*, 15 Seq.
over local trade "which inevitably brought it into sharp conflict with the local lord".

The extent to which feudalism in the medieval period is responsible in the creation of urban centres in the European countries needs careful examination. The towns were an important source of feudal revenue, so in their early stages most of them remained subordinated to the feudal authority. However, in course of time, the towns won their freedom by weakening the strength of the feudal authority. This is evident in the eleventh century European cities where we find the existence of privileged semi-commercial upper class traders and craftsmen who struggled for independence from the feudal lord and achieved a separate entity as 'burg'. They were called the gild merchants and continued their struggle for the right of the gild or of town government. This enabled them to have some control over the local market to their own advantage. Their struggle for town autonomy extended over the next two centuries.

About the population of urban centres, although we do not have very reliable data; it seems that "there was apparently a considerable growth both in England and on the Continent in the 12th and 13th centuries". This rise in population also helped to fulfil the desire of the feudal lords to increase revenue to some extent. So "except in areas where the increase in population was accompanied by an increase in cultivable land available to the peasants, the eventual result was bound to be an increase in peasants burden owing to the increased pressure on available land". By the turn of the 13th century, the population of most of the countries in the Western Europe started declining sharply. This decline in population resulted in a decline in feudal income in the 14th century. "Usually this decline, both in numbers and in feudal revenue has been attributed exclusively to the devastation of wars and

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9 Dobb.47
the plague. War and plague were clearly responsible for a great deal. But since the decline started some decades before the onset of black death, it evidently had economic roots\(^{10}\).

In England during the same period there was a scarcity of labour caused by depopulation in the countryside. This not only caused a serious fall in the feudal income, it also created a tendency to reduce the size of the ‘demesnes’ and lease them to peasant holders. The leasing of demesne has been considered an expression of economic crisis, which was evident even in the 15\(^{th}\) century when “there was a reduction in total cultivated area, more land being withdrawn from demesne than was leased to tenants”\(^{11}\). During this period a further series of events also contributed to a significant extent to a growing economic differentiation among the peasantry themselves and gave rise to a section of relatively ‘well-to-do peasant – farmers’ in the village. The emergence of more prosperous peasants could also be connected with the tendency to consolidation of strips towards the end of the century. By this time the feudal order disintegrated as “merchants were buying land, estates were being mortgaged; and a kulak class of improving peasant farmers were becoming serious competitors in the local markets and as rural employers of labour”\(^{12}\).

However, “an element of feudal society continued to exist in urban society. In some English towns, the distinction between a superior and inferior stratum of burgher is seen at a fairly early date”\(^{13}\). The existence of these aristocratic families owning land inside the city boundaries, thus created in inequality in the economic status of the original residents and the new comers.


\(^{11}\) M. Postan, in *Economic History Review*, May 1939

\(^{12}\) Dobb, p.65

\(^{13}\) Dobb, p.79, p.84
In course of time when the population of towns started increasing the original owners of the urban land started selling and leasing out their land and thus, enriched themselves in the process. According to some writers, in the 13th and 14th centuries this became an important source of capital formation. The growth of towns and spread of commerce during this period also created a privileged class of burghers who were exclusively engaged in wholesale trade.

About the source of income of the burghers it has been argued that it "represented a share in the product of the peasant cultivator or the urban craftsmen – a deduction from the product that would otherwise have accrued to producers themselves or as feudal revenue to the aristocracy". On the one hand due to the lack of development of the local market, the producers at the countryside were unable to effect an exchange of their products and on the other hand, "the class of merchants were quick to acquire powers of monopoly, which fenced its ranks from competition and served to turn the terms of exchange to its own advantage in its dealings with producer and consumer". So as long as the primitive conditions prevailed in the local market, the merchants continued to gain by exploiting the artisans and the producers. Thus, it is found that, monopoly exercised by the merchant gild was 'the essence of economic life' during this period.

With the spread of commerce in the subsequent years the merchant gild gained exclusive control over the town administration and exercised its monopoly in its dealings with the countryside. The towns started exercising their control over their own market when they won the right to levy market dues and tolls. This provided an important source of town revenue. The municipal authority also succeeded in turning the balance of all market

14 Sombart (Der Moderne Kapitalismus, vol.1, 643-50) and following him J.A.Hobson in his "Evolution of Modern Capitalism".

15 Dobb, p.87.

16 Dobb, p.88.
transactions in favour of the townsmen. By shifting the terms of exchange to its own advantage through dictating the price of agricultural products, narrowing of alternative sources of exchange of products at the countryside and restricting the ‘stranger merchants’ to deal directly with the producers, the towns enjoyed immense power to control the local market. Thus, right to possess a market in the absence of any rival within certain area and monopoly of the merchant gild resulted in commercial war among the European cities and towns in the subsequent years.

At a more advanced stage of urban monopoly, the European towns extended their authority over the surrounding districts, and put pressure on the producers and craftsmen to deal only with the market of the concerned town. There is enough evidence which shows that the towns had the right to levy tolls at gates and bridges which were constructed to canalise or divert the traffic in the desired direction. The “Scottish towns had the rights of exacting tolls and enforcing the privileges of certain trades and crafts over a large surrounding areas”\(^{17}\). So, on the one hand the wealthy burghers continued to dominate and exploit the rural hinterland and on the other hand with the spread of commerce beyond the city boundaries, a commercial war started among the cities and towns for their own enrichment. It is seen that, “Venice in the 13\(^{th}\) century prohibiting Ragusa from dealing directly with the cities of the north Adriatic (unless this was for the purpose of importing food stuff to Venice), forcing Ravenna to abandon all direct imports from across the sea or even from north Italy and Ancona, and preventing Aquileja from exporting goods to the inland territory which Venice regarded as her special preserve”\(^{18}\).

Along with the spread of commerce and also inter city civil war, another important development of this period was that the rich burghers gained political control of the towns. “In the cities of north Italy, power was

\(^{17}\) Dobb, p.96.

\(^{18}\) Ibid
in the hands of a burgher plutocracy (commonly in alliance with the local nobility). The ruling class that reigned over the city republics of Lambardy, Tuscany and Venetia drew their wealth from rich export trade with the Levant and from the valuable cloth trade across the Alps into western and northern Europe. In Florence the Arti Maggiori of bankers and export merchants controlled the government of the city from the middle of the 13th century, with the exception of a brief victory of the Arti Minori between 1293 and 1295.\(^{19}\)

In East German towns in the 14th century, “aldermen were drawn from a few leading families of merchants, clothiers or land owners and elected their own successors, the craft gilds and the commons having no share in the government of the town”\(^{20}\). Thus, it is evident that in the medieval period, the monopoly of the merchant gild over the trade and consequently over the town government was an important feature of the urbanisation process in the European countries. However, in case of England in the 14th century too we find the eventual monopoly of the merchant gilds over trade. In course of 13th and 14th centuries, there appeared “new mercantile gilds, or misteries composed entirely of traders as distinct from craftsmen and endowed by their charters with exclusive rights over some particular branch of wholesale trade”\(^{21}\). The craftsmen were allowed only to deal with the members of the mercantile gild. So, the subordination of poorer craft gild to the trading gild was a fairly common feature of the 14th century. The concentration of power in the towns during this period represented the rule of merchant capital much to the disadvantage of the craftsmen. “In the Netherlands, the craftsmen were not allowed to sell their clothes wholesale and in the woollen industry they were controlled by the regulations formulated by the merchants”\(^{22}\). In German towns they were “serfs to the

\(^{19}\) Ibid

\(^{20}\) Ibid

\(^{21}\) S. Kramer, Crafts, Gilds and the Government, p.24, quoted in Dobb, p.102

\(^{22}\) Dobb, p.125
patricians'. In a number of towns in Germany, the capitalist elements exercised their dominance over the craftsmen that created increasing dissatisfaction among the latter. In the cities like Paris and Charters in France also the subordination of craftsmen to the trading capitalist class was very common.

In the 16th century the richer craft gilds were allowed to share power and economic privilege along with a mercantile oligarchy. With the expansion of market and the growth of foreign trade in the subsequent years and with the development in industries significant changes took place in the urban centres of the European countries, which were accompanied by equally significant changes in agricultural sector. On the one hand, the city merchants invested a large amount in the purchase of land and on the other hand, “there was a considerable growth of independent peasant farming by tenants who rented land as enclosed holdings outside the open field system”23. Among these there rose an important section of peasants who enriched themselves by buying more and more land. By the end of this century hired labourers were used by this group for cultivation purposes and improved methods of cultivation were introduced in the agricultural sector.

Until the beginning of the 17th century we find that many European countries, essentially remained agricultural and a majority of their populations lived in the countryside. With the investment of capital in land structural changes took place in the agricultural sector. Land was bought and sold as a commodity in the local market and “capital heaped up in the towns spilt over into the countryside”24. People acquired more money in hand and there emerged a new class of farmers called ‘capitalist farmers’ who enriched themselves in the same way as the merchants and industrialists in the cities. The capitalist farmers started responding to technological changes and market forces in the countryside. Until the beginning of the 18th century there

23 Ibid
was no large-scale revolution in agricultural techniques and little changes took place in the countryside. In the course of the 18th century an appreciable change in the production process was achieved especially in England through capitalist enclosures and investment while manufactures developed in the last quarter of the century, as part of accelerating growth later termed the industrial revolution.

In the growth of capitalism in the European countries one comes across two decisive moments. One dates back to the 17th and 18th centuries when political and social transformations took place in England and France following parliamentary struggle against feudal monopoly of power, and the second consists of the industrial revolution of late 18th and early 19th century. The industrial revolution represented “a transition from an early and still immature stage of capitalism, where the pre-capitalist petty mode of production has been penetrated by the influence of capital, to a stage where capitalism, on the basis of technical change had achieved its own specific production process thereby establishing a simple and direct relationship between capitalist and wage earners” 25.

When we look at the history of the growth of the towns and cities in the European countries again we come across two important features of urbanisation. In the first place the cities and towns derived their economic strength from long distance trade. The merchant gilds which had monopoly over the urban market were able to shift the terms of trade in favour of the townspeople against rural producers. By controlling the local trade and gradually extending it beyond the city boundaries they also succeeded in augmenting the revenue of the town to a great extent. Through the enactment of independent charters of town government the dominant merchant gilds managed to get autonomy at a fairly early date. The domination of mercantile

25 Ibid.
wealth reached its pinnacle in the Italian city-states such as Venice and Genoa.

Further, the commercial wars over internal trade roots among the cities and towns strengthened the urban economy. By guarding their own trade from external aggression and restricting the stranger merchants to trade directly with the producers, the cities were able to accumulate more money and enriched themselves. These two factors enabled the cities to maintain their identity in the subsequent years. However great the mercantile wealth which underlay their expansion these cities were still late-medieval in character.

In the second place, the overseas expansion to the Americas, colonisation of other countries and the slave trade gave a new impetus to urban growth which especially in England reached its pinnacle only in the later part of the 18th and 19th century. It is evident that with the discovery of America in 1492, there was a sudden spurt in European trade in the subsequent centuries. In fact one of the important turning points of urbanisation was occasioned by the European exploration and discoveries in the late 15th and 16th centuries and the ultimate colonisation of America, Asia and later the African subcontinent. By the middle of the 16th century, British merchants had ventured sufficiently far a field, both across the North Sea and into the Mediterranean. Following the Cromwellian victory against feudal rule; the enactment of the Navigation Acts in the 1650’s brought prosperity to the port cities. “At Bristol when a ship came to port the town-traders assembled to decide ‘what is to be done in that behalf for the weal of the said fellowship’, that is they prevented competition by a pre concerted arrangement as to the prices at which the cargoes should be bought”26. In Liverpool “all imports were first had to be offered to the Mayor for purchase on behalf of the town before they were exposed for sale”27. The Netherlands.

26 Lipson, op.cit, p.245.
27 Cunningham, Progress of Capitalism, p.67.
Portugal and Spain also saw vast colonial expansion. In Lisbon the profits of overseas trading venture was astounding "Vasco da Gama returned to the city with a cargo which repaid sixty times the cost of the expedition". Thus, the superiority in navigation of the seas and consequent trade relations with the colonial countries resulted in the growth of a new kind of urbanisation mainly in the port cities in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The Table 1.1.1 illustrates the parallel course of industrialisation and urbanisation in Britain in the 19th century. The figures are subject to a number of qualification-those for the town population relate to England and Wales, and those for the occupational distributions to Great Britain. "It has been true since the beginning of industrial revolution and is still true today that Britain is exceptional as regards to low proportion of its population in agriculture".

Since the 19th century, while the rural population of Britain continued to fall, reaching 8% in 1921, 5% in 1945 and less than 3% in 1970, the population in towns of 20,000 plus continued to increase. Therefore, by the 1950s and 1960s it could be said that Britain was almost a completely urbanised society.

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28 Dobb, p.192.

29 The city as an Economic system, The Open University, Social Sciences: A Second Level Course: Underdevelopment, Units 10 – 14, p.15
Table 1.1.1
Industrialisation and Urbanisation in Britain in 19th century

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% of total population living in towns of 20,000+</th>
<th>% of working population in ag., forestry &amp; fishing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1801</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1821</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.2 Urbanisation in India: A Historical Perspective

There is one element of obvious contrast in the history of urbanisation in Asia, particularly India compared to Europe. There was no assertion of autonomy by the towns from feudal authority, no domination of merchant gilds over the town governments which then distanced itself from the central feudal power and developed its own charter as was the case in Europe. Hence there were also no trade wars between towns. Although in the medieval period a large number of towns grew into prominence in India, we are told, "the basis of this urban growth remained largely parasitic: provisioning of the needs of the large number of troops and attendants of the nobles, and fashioning of luxuries needed by the potentates". "The noble authorities often used their administrative authority to monopolise trade or even requisition the labour of artisans". There was a one-way transfer of surplus from villages to towns, but the countryside bought little of town products in return. Hence with the fall of the noble authority many urban centres failed to survive. However in order to understand the growth of modern cities and towns in the Indian subcontinent, it is necessary to study it in a historical perspective, starting with a discussion of pre-colonial economy.

"The medieval economy of India was essentially feudal" in nature and consisted of a checkerboard of semi-closed, rural based economies. The circuits of interaction between spatial units were formed primarily on the basis of the appropriation of agricultural surplus or of trade. "The pre-colonial town evolved, expanded or declined in terms of their relationship with these circuits". Among the factors that contributed to this process

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31 Athar A., Mughal Nobility, pp.154-160.


33 Ibid
must be mentioned the political circumstances favourable to expanding economic activity. The expansion of both long distance trade within India itself and India’s international trade with a network of Asian and European markets, and, finally, in response to the latter an enormous expansion of all aspects of textiles manufacturing and marketing also largely contributed to the growth of towns and cities in the medieval period.

The textile industries during this period displayed the most varied form of labour organisation. “The cotton-carder was probably one who hawked or hired out his services”34. Spinning was done by women at home and weavers, too, usually worked at home, on their looms, weaving cloth (out of cotton purchased by themselves) for sale35. They also accepted wages to weave yarn supplied to them by customers36. Where the materials were expensive (e.g. silk, gold or silver wires) and the products were luxury garments, the work was done in karkhanas. In Muhammad Tughluq’s karkhanas at Delhi, there were four thousand silk workers who wove and embroidered different kinds of cloth for robes of honour and garments37.

A second major sector of urban employment was the building industry. The arrival of ‘Saracenic’ architecture represented something more than a change of appearance and design of buildings. With lime mortar as the cementing material and arch, dome and vault providing new devices for roofing, there was in the 14th century a remarkable spurt in the brick construction in the towns. The extensive ruins of Delhi speak for themselves. It is during this period a large number of forts; mosques, palaces and other public buildings were also built in a large scale. The increase in urban employment in the medieval period is also evident in the writings of the great

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34 Shaiikh Nizamuddin’s mother bought raw cotton, and gave it to a carder to be cleaned. Nizami ed [4]. 191
36 Nizami, op.cit, 191
historian Barani, who asserts that, Sultan Alau’ddin Khalji employed as many as 70,000 craftsmen for the construction of his buildings. When Babur (1526-30) established his dominion in India, he was able to employ nearly 1,500 stone cutters daily on his own buildings.

By the mid 18th century, the development of market forces had made deep inroads into the subsistence character of Indian agriculture and the poorer agriculturists depended on traders and money lenders for the supply of seeds and food grains six months in a year. The involvement of the farmers with the traders and the traders with farming, the extensive dependence on market oriented production on advances from buyers and wide prevalence of local markets led to the commercialisation of agriculture and simultaneously resulted in the growth of small towns in the pre colonial period. “The qasbas or townships, of which in Akbar’s time there were said to be 3,200”, also seem to have grown in this period. It has been established that “there has been a large increase both in the inter-regional and external trade during the Mughal period.” Inter-regional trade, which was far larger than external trade gave birth to regional markets and in case of certain products - such as cotton, silk and metal - even national markets were created with trading activities. In the process of long distance trade, some of the towns were able to reap large profits and there was a considerable development of merchant capital, which led to further expansion of trade and handicraft production. This led to the expansion of several old trading

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38 Barani [140], 341
39 Babur [168], 11, 520
42 Habib I., The Agrarian System of Moghul India, Bombay, 1962, p. 190
towns and the emergence of new towns. Thus, we can say, urbanism was a distinctive feature of the economic history of medieval India, and urbanisation may well have been the most significant historical process of the period from 13th to the 18th century.

It has been plausibly postulated that, during the above period, four distinct types of urban centres can be identified at least in northern India. First there were those cities whose prime function was administrative and where other roles, manufacturing or sacral, were of secondary importance. Such were Agra, Delhi, Lahore and Hyderabad. These cities also served as imperial residences for an extended period. Secondly, there were those cities enjoying a predominantly commercial and manufacturing character, to which might have been attached administrative functions which, nevertheless remained subordinate to their economic functions. Both Patna and Ahmadabad in the Mughal period fall into this category. Thirdly, there were the pilgrimage centres like Benaras and Mathura, where trade and craft activities were drawn to as there was already a concentration of both permanently settled or transient population. Apart from these cities, there were centres that developed and flourished because of some distinct manufacturing techniques, craft skill and local commodity, which ensured their ongoing prosperity. Thus, the first part of the Mughal period appears to have been a veritable golden age of urbanisation as there was both the expansion in the size of pre-existing cities and towns and the proliferation of new foundations.

It has been found that the great expansion of commerce during the Mughal period inevitably brought increased wealth to the major urban centres of the country, especially to those cities whose location made them natural entrepots whether by land or sea. It is during this time, "the ports of Surat, Broach and Cambay on the West Coast and Masulipatnam on the east,

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44 Hambly, p.435
as well as Patna and Benaras on the Ganges entered upon the period of
greatest prosperity"\textsuperscript{45}. Since most of the urban centres for their prosperity
depended on the political conditions favourable to the steady pursuit of their
particular trades and specialised craft industries, they were disastrously
affected by the political instability in the later period. In the urban history of
India one can witness that "the flowering of the urban based economy and
the urban culture during the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir, and Shajahan, and for
much of the reign of Aurangzeb, derived largely from the establishment of
political conditions highly advantageous to commerce and to the trading and
artisan classes of the cities"\textsuperscript{46}. In fact the urban centres flourished where the
political instability could be held at bay. A most striking feature of India's
urbanisation in the subsequent period shows that "in the port cities which
came under the control of foreigners and were relatively immune to disorder
consequent upon the Mughal political decline (e.g. Calcutta, Madras,
Pondichery and Bombay), urban growth in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century was most
conspicuous. Thus, in general, evidence suggests that so long the Mughal
regime flourished, so also did the towns and the cities"\textsuperscript{47}.

1.3 Urbanisation and Colonial Rule in India

The structure of urbanisation of medieval India underwent certain
fundamental changes with the advent of British rule in India during the early
19\textsuperscript{th} century. The British conquest of India through the agency of East India
Company led to the most drastic changes in the village way of life\textsuperscript{48}. The
most fundamental of these changes was the destruction of the older structure
of the village community, partly because of the new land revenue system
introduced by the British Government and partly as a result of the spread of
commercial agriculture in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The British government was
mainly concerned with securing the largest possible revenue. Hence, "By the

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid
\textsuperscript{47} Op. cit. Hambly, p.451
\textsuperscript{48} Thorner D. and Thorner A., \textit{Land and Labour in India}, Asia Publishing house, 1962, p. 52
middle of the 19th century three basic land revenue systems had been gradually introduced in the provinces of British India namely the Zamindari, Ryotwary and Mahalwari—all serving the same ends, namely, to conserve for the British colonialist, the feudal exploitation of the Indian peasantry.  

The Zamindary land revenue system instituted by confirming the right of private ownership of land to individuals, generally from the upper strata of the feudal class was introduced in Bengal and adjacent areas in 1793. This was done on condition that the new landlords would raise greatly enhanced revenues from the cultivating peasants and pass the bulk of the revenue to the state.

An entirely different land revenue system called Ryotwari was devised for large parts of Bombay and Madras, and later applied to areas in north eastern and north western India. Here the British instead of creating private land lords, dealt directly with individual peasants on the land, for thereby they hoped to be able to obtain more revenue than under Zamindari system. Each peasant was recognised as holding the particular plot or plots he occupied, but his right on land depended upon annual payment in full of a heavy money rent to the state. Where the farmer cultivated through customary tenants, the farmer and not the tenant was to pay the revenue. A good part of ryot peasants, crushed by the colonial exploitation, lost their land, which gradually became concentrated in the hands of the land lords, money lenders and traders. In fact, “where as Zamindari system made the landlords masters of the village communities, the Ryotwari system cut through the heart of the village communities by making separate arrangements between each peasant cultivator and the state”.


50 Kotovsky, p.2.

51 Thorner, p.53.
The Mahalwari land revenue system on the other hand endowed full and equal rights of private proprietorship to the members of the upper crust of the society. This system was mostly prevalent in Punjab. However as in Madras or Bombay, there too a process of dispossession of the peasantry and concentration of land partly in the hands of the landlords and partly in the hands of the upper stratum of the peasantry continued. In actual practice, the Mahalwari system differed little from the Ryotwari system.

In reality all the three forms of land revenue systems introduced by the colonial rulers carried some features that shook the backbone of the cultivating peasant class. The land revenue systems with a number of variants introduced in course of the 19th century, were dominant from 1793 to 1947. The introduction of some of the rights of private property in land, the purchase and sale of Zamindar’s holdings, were explicitly sanctioned by the laws that went against the peasants. Besides this, contrary to the Mughal land revenue system under which land taxes could be paid in crops, now there was rigorous insistence upon prompt and complete payment of the stipulated sums in cash on stipulated dates. In cases of default, the peasants could be evicted. “The new land system made mobile both the land and the peasants, and left the way open for the growth of money lenders and absentee land lords.”

A common source of the peasants’ miseries for long during the colonial rule was their unidentified rent relations with the zamindars who abused their legal powers towards increasing their rental income. Throughout the first half of the 20th century a rise on the scale of rent could be observed

53 Kotovsky, p. 12
55 Thorner, p. 54.
which shows the increasing rate of semi feudal exploitation of the Indian peasantry under imperialism. Other developments reducing the peasants' income from cultivation contributed to the increase in their debt.

"The land and taxation policy of the British government ruined the agricultural economy of the country and its commercial policy thwarted efforts at industrial development". The older rural framework of India weakened and commercial agriculture grew. By the end of the 18th century, Britain itself passed through industrial revolution which was consolidated in the first half of the 19th century. British manufacturers clamoured for raw materials and sought anxiously for good markets to dispose of their finished products. Hence the coastal towns of India were linked with Britain and later in the 1850's, railways were opened up. The railways facilitated the siphoning out the raw materials from India to the world market. Wheat poured out of Punjab, cotton from Bombay, and jute out of Bengal. As commercial agriculture and money economy spread, the older practices associated with self subsisting economy declined. The same railroads that carried away the commercial crops brought back machine made industrial products to the villages.

The British imposed a policy of one way free trade on India after 1813 to help the British manufacturers to invade the Indian markets particularly in cotton textiles. Earlier the Indian handicrafts lost their market in England where laws had been passed by 1720 against the use of Indian textiles. Now they lost their markets in the Continent and finally were threatened in India itself. The flooding of Indian markets by cheap machine made goods from the metropolitan country from the 1820's led to the collapse of indigenous handicrafts production and the destruction of Indian artisans and craftsmen. The village weavers and handicraft servants had to compete with the cheaper Lancashire cloths.

56 Habib A., p.33.
57 Thorner, p.55.
Thus, the union of agriculture and hand industry which had been the basis of village life was disrupted. The village potter, tanner, dyer, oilmen, and jeweller all faced strong competition from machine products, whether made in Britain or in the new industrial centres that grew up in India at the end of the 19th century. Several cities important for their commerce and manufacturing declined because they could not compete with the cheap European manufactured goods dumped in India by the British Government decayed.

The import of manufactured products hindered the economic development of the country. The colonial exploitative economy also did not allow technological changes in the field of agriculture. It was precisely the export requirements that primarily determined the changes in the structure of agricultural production during this period and led to elements of commercial/capitalist development in the country. “Concomitant with the growth of commercial agriculture was the stratification of the peasantry according to property owned and the emergence from among them of a small stratum of well to do peasants on the one hand and a mass of agricultural labourers on the other. Thus, the degeneration of agricultural productivity and export of raw materials for foreign markets and import of goods produced in Britain became the salient features of Indian economy at the beginning of the 20th century.”

The destruction of indigenous industries and the pauperisation of the peasant class created a situation of falling land-man ratio in the colonial period gave rise to acute underemployment in the rural areas. Thus, millions of rural unemployed and under employed were forced to go to the cities in looking for job. It was found that “during the course of six decades from

58 Ibid., p.55.
59 Kotovsky, p.31.
1871 to 1931, the proportion of agricultural labourers to total agricultural population increased from a meagre one seventh to more than one third.\(^{60}\)

The following data give the proportion of agricultural labourers to the total agricultural populations in percents:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>25.1</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Quoted from *Agricultural Labourers in Modern India and Pakistan*, by S. J Patel, p.4.

With the increased pressure on land and rise in the number of land less labourers, "India had become by the end of 19th century and probably even earlier an integrated economy as far as mobility of labour was concerned."\(^{61}\) The movement was caused at the source by the precarious condition of existence, partly among the land less labourers. Since 1850, a dwindling proportion of the village artisans also had to migrate to the urban centres to find other ways to gain a livelihood. "In spite of the of the barriers erected by the influence of religious or social taboos, by local magnates who tried to prevent migration to other regions, vast masses of population did move from one part of the country to the other."\(^{62}\) The main flow of population during this period were from north and central India to Bengal and Assam, and to the canal colonies of Punjab, from central and western India to Bombay and from north to south.\(^{63}\) Of these flows, the east west one was the most significant in terms of numbers of men involved.


\(^{62}\) Ibid

\(^{63}\) Davis K., *Population of India and Pakistan*, p. (109-110)
New employment opportunities in plantations, mines and factories stimulated the movement towards the eastern provinces. The Royal Commission on agriculture noted that 75% of the labour employed in 15 sugar mills in Bihar and Orissa during this period was composed of such migratory labour\textsuperscript{64}. The agricultural movement towards Bombay also seems to have been stimulated by the growth of factories. "In India though the mobility of labour was the most important contributing factor in the process of urbanisation, the level of urbanisation however remained low till 1921"\textsuperscript{65}. The Table 1.3.1 reveals that, the total population of the country living in urban areas was 10% in 1901 and the reason is attributed to famine that occurred in several parts of the country in 1900 thus driving many persons from the rural areas to the towns and cities. The slow growth of urban population in the subsequent decade was due to the ravages of plague, which led to massive exodus of population from the urban areas.

With the decade 1921-31, urbanisation became a noticeable phenomenon in India and the urban population growth rate accelerated with each decade since then. The Second World War further accentuated the process of urbanisation in India. Many industries did brisk business during the war period due to the unprecedented demand for goods from England and foreign markets. The rapid industrialisation during this period also led to massive migration of people from rural areas to work in the secondary and tertiary sectors of economy. Partition of the country in the following decade again brought mass migration of displaced persons that had a phenomenal impact on India's urban growth. The migrants from Pakistan mostly settled in the urban areas.

The low level of urbanisation process that never showed any tendency to accelerate during the colonial period is also evident from the

\textsuperscript{64} Royal Commission on Agriculture, Report, p.576.

\textsuperscript{65} Habib A., p.37.
degree of urbanisation in British districts and feudatory states in India as shown in the Table 1.3.2.

In spite of the low level of urbanisation, the mobility of labour from the rural sector continued even in the post colonial period as the agrarian reform policy which was formulated by the Congress Agrarian Reforms committee with the objective of ‘land to the tiller’ was not implemented fully and failed to pave the way for a rapid agricultural development. “The legal provisions did not aim so much at abolishing the intermediary as at preserving his dominant landholding position, provided he undertook to change his form of domination from indirect cultivation through tenants to direct cultivation through ‘hired labour’”66. This played a most crucial role in speeding up the process of eviction of small peasants and simultaneously increasing the concentration of more and more land in the hand of the landlords.

When India attained independence, the Zamindari land revenue system covered 57% of the area of private holdings in nine states (former states of British India), the Ryotwari system 38% and the Mahalwari system 5%67. By the beginning of the land reform in the country, the zamindary land revenue system had completely covered the states (provinces) of U.B, Bihar and U.P in independent India68. Thus, before the implementation of land reforms, roughly two-thirds of all the land in India belonged to the landlords and some three quarters of the peasants were land less tenants or agricultural labourers. A large part of the arable land was concentrated in the hands of the small upper crust of the peasantry and the bulk of the peasant families were bankrupt69. The evolution of this inequality can be traced from the data in the

69 Kotovsky, p. 19.
An analysis of data contained in the census of population and sample survey of 104,000 families in 812 villages conducted in 1951-52 by the ministry of labour also shows that agricultural labourers and members of their families comprised 13% of total agricultural population in 1891 and 36% in 1951. The survey showed the class of wage labourers in agriculture and their families in villages numbered 82.7 million of whom 47.5 million were working. On the eve of agrarian reforms in India, due to the land lords monopoly of land, a relative agrarian over population and industrial under development, the agricultural labourers were compelled to sell their labour at a lesser price. “Land reforms undertook to eliminate the intermediaries but the intermediaries of one sort or the other continued to remain very much present in the economy.”

According to Utsa Patnaik(1975), “the thrust of the land reforms laws was to turn the rentier landlords into capitalists while allowing them to retain their land monopoly and paying heavy compensation for the minor part of their estates, which was taken over”. So in spite of the implementation of the land reform, the concentration of land holdings altered only to an insignificant degree. “Even in U.P, where land reforms were most publicised, a comprehensive sample survey reported that 10% of the families in the villages continued to own 50% of the land after five years of the implementation of U.P Zamindari Abolition Act of 1950”. Patnaik further noted elsewhere that “The data compiled by NSS and other sources showed

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70 Kotovsky, p. 32.
71 Report on Intensive Survey of Agricultural Labourer (RISAL), vol.1, Delhi, 1955, pp.(19-22)
72 Thorner, p.5.
74 Thorner, p.5.
that in the mid 1950s, the agrarian sector was characterised by a high degree of concentration of not only owned but also operated area and non-land resources, with a minority of cultivators. This concentrated pattern of land holding had led one economist to observe that India has ‘small farmers not small farms’. A rather more accurate if less striking description would be that both small farmers and small farms predominated numerically but large farmers and large farms predominated economically in terms of control over cultivated area and other means of production. The process of economic concentration of land holdings in India continued in the next decade. During this period, the so called ‘Green Revolution’ and the adoption of new production techniques, where it had taken place, is recognised to have been largely confined to the top cultivating strata. The numerous district level studies also show adoption to be positively associated with holding size.

Vaidyanathan also elaborated the fact that there is a deceleration in the growth of agricultural output since mid sixties. According to him “the concern has been further heightened by the stagnation of agricultural output and in turn severely constrained the growth of the rest of the economy”. It was further found that Green Revolution only helped the already better off areas to make their economic position still better by initiating a process of an unbalanced growth in the agricultural sector. The rich farmers became richer leaving the poor farmers in despair. So under such circumstances there was little desire on the part of the small peasants and land less agricultural labourers to remain in the same position for any length of time. In fact they were forced to a position of wandering from place to place in search of work mainly of non-agricultural nature. The migrants also included petty cultivators who could find a job, which is a little, more profitable than

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cultivating his tiny holding. These people generally moved towards city centres where work is easier to find\textsuperscript{77}.

In the colonial situation greater concentration of population occurred in the major colonial port cities (Calcutta, Bombay and Madras).\textsuperscript{78} "The other urban centres developed or patronised by the metropolises often failed to generate economic activities concomitant with their expansion since much of their expansion was often related to specific colonial/military/political and other considerations"\textsuperscript{79}. Even after the decolonisation began, many of the cities continued to be the linking centres thereby delaying the process of industrialisation in the country. In fact these cities were prevented from playing the urbanising role being successfully played by the western cities. So the post independence period witnessed an unbalanced urbanisation process resulting in concentration of population, industries, expertise and economic activities along with massive exodus of population from the countryside\textsuperscript{80}. A number of development economists even argued that because of their colonial heritage or certain accidental factors a large concentration of population in India is seen in a few metropolitan centres. It is believed that where as the spread of urbanisation in India in the 19th century could be attributed to the "large scale emigration of land less agricultural labourers in industrial centres to join industrial pursuits, the modern cities of twentieth century are an extension of the first industrial city of the previous century, albeit with greater sophistication and technical advancement\textsuperscript{81}.

\textsuperscript{77} Patel S.J., p.124.

\textsuperscript{78} Mittar P., 'Architectural Planning and Other Building Activities of the British in Madras and Calcutta, c.1630-c. 1757' in Dilip Babu ed., \textit{The Rise and Growth of Colonial Port Cities in Asia} (Berkeley, 1985), p. 192.


\textsuperscript{80} Habib A., op.cit.

\textsuperscript{81} Ahuja S., 'Urbanisation and Changing Social Order', \textit{Mainstream}, April 29, 1995, p. 22
Table 1.3.1
Decadal Growth of Urban Population of India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% of urban popln to total popln</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881-1901</td>
<td>9.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-1911</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1921</td>
<td>11.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-1931</td>
<td>12.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931-41</td>
<td>13.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-51</td>
<td>17.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hoselitz 1962: 158

Table 1.3.2
Degree (Level) of urbanisation in the hinterland of Calcutta (1872-1921)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>1872</th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>above 25,001</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,001-25,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,001-10,000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,001-5,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,001-2,000</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1,000</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Based on census of India (1872-1921)

Part II, Imperial Tables for population in Towns.

The table indicates that -

1. The level of urbanisation was very low. As many as, 50-65% of the districts had a mean city population size between 0-1,000 during the decade under consideration.

2. The number of districts, which showed a comparatively higher level of urbanisation, was very small. Only 2-4% of the districts has an MC size of 25,000 and more.

3. Most of the feudatory states had a very low level of urbanisation, and

4. The level of urbanisation remained stagnant over the decades under consideration.
Table 1.3.3
Distribution of land among the different group of households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farms</th>
<th>Average size of farms</th>
<th>% of total farms</th>
<th>% of area held</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AIRCS, Vol. 11, p. 22