Chapter VII

Conclusion
Most of the people in these slums inhabited by the Hindu castes are living under poverty line. Normal life of the slum people is vitiated by extreme shortage of accommodation, abject poverty, causing serious unhealthy physical and social environment. Such a condition has contributed to erosion of normal ethical standards, erosion of established age-old Hindu family values and norms.

Most of the huts in Beliaghata slums are low dilapidated structures of brick wall and corrugated iron sheets or tile roofs. Huts are built in close proximity to each other in a haphazard manner, ill-ventilated. There is absence of adequate light and air. Majority of the families live in a single room which serve all the purposes of a household. The same room is used as a kitchen, dinning space and bed room. Basic amenities for living are not available. Municipal tap water supply and the number of latrine are inadequate. Total population of the two slums is 1221. Total number of taps and latrines are 59 and 64 respectively. About 20.69 persons share a single water tap and 19.67 persons use one latrine. Flow of time bound water is low. The community latrines built by State Government are in very unhygienic condition. Out of 227 families 210 families live in a single room along with other cotenants or owner and remaining 17 families live in 2 to 3 rooms. The rooms are quite unifit and unsafe for human habitation. It is found that most of the households 52.2 per cent have 4.6 members and 22.2 households consist of 7.9 members, 19.4 per cent of the households have 1 to 3 members. Only 6.2 are large extended
households each consisting of over ten persons. The average living space per individual is extremely limited and there is hardly any privacy for the married couple. Very few people possess water tap within their homestead. In majority of cases, municipal taps are located considerably away from the homes. Long queues are seen during supply hours in front of every such tap. It is a disturbing spectacle. There are frequent quarrels and mutual abuses. There is no covered bath even for the females. There are two ponds in the two bustees. Although the water of two ponds are highly contaminated, people use them for bathing and washing utensils. Absence of proper drainage and sewerage system, cause dirty water logging, over flowing of drain-water not only floods the lanes but in many cases enter the ground floor living room adding to the general insanitary condition. The low laying areas get water logged especially during the rainy season. Few available dustbins are not properly used. Garbage is dumped here and there. Refuse are thrown into the drains or left on the street. Municipal sweepers dump the refuse into the drains and children usually use them as latrines. Children defecate in the drains just outside their homes. The rotting refuse in the overflowing dustbins remains uncleaned for days and weeks together presenting a horrible sight and smell. Arrangement for cleaning the lanes and streets and removal of garbage is miserably poor. Unhealthy polluted atmosphere prevail in almost all parts of the slum. Lack of elementary amenities cause distressing condition in these bustees. In absence of proper means of livelihood and basic amenities the atmosphere of tension and conflict getting worse day by day. The poor do not find any
improvement in their living conditions. There exist clandestine man and woman relatives in many parts of the slum but a part of it is known as prostitute area. Use of substandard language and abuses are common and a typical features of the slum. There is high incidence of unrestrained deviant behaviour, crime, drunkenness, illegitimacy intra family maladjustment and frictions. Most people suffer from grindling poverty, tension, chaos and persistent animosity. The entire atmosphere of slum presents a sub-human gloomy picture.

It is found that most of the people are in the poor income group. They are always engaged in the struggle for survival. The per-capita income of the population can be categorised into different income groups. The people whose per capita income is Rs. 51-100 constitutes 37.84 per cent of the population, the percentage of people whose per capita income is within 150/- constitutes 31.45, percentage of people whose per capita income varies from Rs. 151/- above is quite insignificant indicating prices of essentials in the market. It seems depth of poverty in the slum. Most of the people in the lower income group with their large families do not get even one square meal a day.

Out of 1221 population 24.82 per cent people are earning members. The earnings is not sufficient for livelihood and have to depend on others they constitute 4.18 per cent. Of the total population most of the people, 71 per cent are wholly dependent.

Illiteracy is higher among the female members of the slum than the males. Out of 16.55 per cent illiterates females constitute
9.75 per cent whereas among the males it is 6.8 per cent. Among the literates 2.13 per cent are males while 4.6 per cent are females. Only 14.41 per cent and 12.04 per cent have received primary education among the male and female members respectively. Only 9.7 per cent and 9.7 per cent have received junior school education among male and female members respectively. People who passed Madhyamik (S. F.) 11.22 per cent, Uchha Madhyamik (H. S.) 3.6 per cent are males. Among females 7.7 per cent passed Madhyamik (S. F.) and 1.66 per cent passed Uccha Madhyamik (H. S.) examination. Only 4.6 per cent are graduates among males and 2.05 per cent are graduates among females. The people who passed post graduation 0.33 per cent is same among the males and females.

The term family can not be used in true and complete sense in every case in these slums and many of the socalled families in this slum are not founded on the basis of formal marriage. In most of the cases the male and female live together as husband and wife without any religious and social ceremony without being ritually married. In view of this the Beliaghata slum is commonly known as the abode of "Half family" (Half Grihasta or Adha Grihasta). About 40-45 years back prostitution was the only means of living of most females residing there. All these females are middle aged and widows. The widows are in profound distress. They do not hesitate to join in flesh trade for earning subsistence. In these days it is not possible for them to get any job anywhere. They are looked down upon in society at large.

Inspite of social stigma circumstances compelled them to resort to prostitution to save themselves from ruination. Instead of
growing through the traditional marriage rituals some of the Hindu couples make offerings to Goddess Kali at the famous Kalighat temple in South Calcutta and women put on vermillion mark on the forehead to indicate her marital status. Such an inexpensive union is not recognised in the society and has no legal approval whatsoever. Such half families are still there in modern societies though not to the extent as before. There are men who keep woman in the slum for comforts and spend a major portion of their time with them. The wives of such men do not have proper family life and they are in distressing condition and extremely unhappy. Neither they get the company of their husbands nor they could enjoy proper family life. They also suffer from frustration and social stigma. They can not restrain their husbands and prevent them from having such illicit contacts. Such households are seen also inside the slums. Some men from neighbouring parts of Calcutta also have such connection. Males are known as Babus means a client of a prostitute Women who pay money for enjoying sex. Generally 'Babu' means a 'Bhadralok' or gentleman. The Babus are affluent family men. Many widows in the slum have such a relationship with men who do not reside in the slum. The widows live in the Beliaghata slums are extremely poor.

Some of the inhabitants, however, who are not so impoverished and are better off economically and educationally do not like to have contact with families indulging in illicit practices. They try to remain away from these families having social stigma. So, it is not that the entire slum is inhabited by people having such clandestine unsocial practices. As and when means permit they
leave the slum for a place which has a cleaner social milieu. Such people consider the poor without moral scruples as "Chotoloks" or men of lower class. A cleavage between "Bhadralok" or gentlemen and "Chotalok" is quite apparent in this slum area.

Most of the boys and girls of the slum area are not educated enough mainly due to economic condition and proper guidance. These youngsters avail opportunity of making love among themselves and select their life partners at their early ages according to their personal desires.

It is observed from many of the conflict cases that male members of the impoverished families remain outside their homes most part of the day to earn bare subsistence. They find little time to look after their wife and children and take care of their health and education, teach them what is good and what is bad or evil. The women in the house and the children live in, so to say, an air of freedom throughout the day and find enough opportunity to have company with members of opposite sex when they reach adolescent stage. The male members come home tired and even exhausted after day's hard work. They are left with very little energy to enquire anything about family, difficulties in running a normal life and desire to co-habit with wife and discuss about welfare of the family, economic needs. The wife also feels uncared and neglected. Many complained about lack of proper sexual relation with husband.

The male members again sometimes come in contact with the members of other sex outside or at the place of work and their
long association there bring them closer. Intimacy grows day by day as found in case no. 40. This is the condition of many families in the slum which vitiate the family and community's social environment. Children growing considerably independently under such a social environment come to know and see the behaviour of erratic parents and people of the neighbourhood. They also become a victims of such a kind of permissive environment and particularly in the adolescent stage when they need attention and guidance of the parents. The parents get shocked and cannot adjust when it becomes too late for changing the mind of the adolescent. Boys and girls can not always overcome the physiological or biological urges and sentiments. Rift develops in the way between parents and grown up sons and daughters. Frequent brawls errupt adversely affecting the community life. Tension and frustration perpetuates.

The two kinds of maladjustments become apparent in the social environs of the slum; one is social and other is dearth of material needs. Just as the extreme scarcity of the later generate tension and frictions and conflicts, similarly the prevailing social environment characterised by laxity and high incidence of illicit relationships common in many families affect adversely the community's social life. Affairs of the neighbours are tolerated and there is hardly any system of social control. Many of the families have one or other weakness for which they themselves are responsible too for the erosion of established norms in the community.
There are very few illustrations when the people of the neighbourhood with a reasonable degree of social creditibility can interfere in the breach of peace in the neighbourhood. Thus social environment in the slum society has certain degree of permissiveness so far as relationship between man and woman is concerned. There is quite a number of instances of premarital and extramarital relationship in this slum environment. There are more than are reasons for such a situation.

Firstly, extreme poverty compelled some women to earn subsistence through prostitution;

Secondly, illiteracy, adequate understanding of the need for maintenance of a moral order partly help in development of anomie.

Thirdly, there is hardly any scope for healthy recreation in the congested slum environment.

Fourthly, poverty generates some kind of estrained relationship among the married couples so in some instances lack of harmonious relationship between husband and wife cause diversion for satisfying the basic instincts of sex. Long bitter relation dulls the instinct of sex between a woman and man and the rift widens.

Fifthly, owing to lack of sufficient accommodation married couples and children shares the same room together at night. There is hardly any scope of privacy. Sexual acts become exposed to the grown up children who tend to emulate such acts of parents and other elders.
Socio-economic conditions characterised by poverty of slum generates a special kind of material habits among the inhabitants. Social atmosphere become changed with an undercurrent of heightened tension leading to frequent tension, friction, brawls and even outburst of violence, more than other non-slum Bengali societies.

The trifle issue leads to serious outbreak of violence at times. A person with the best intension and deeply weded to peace and harmony became misfit in such a social environment. Such people averse to live near about the vicinity of the slum.

Inter family animosity is very common in the slum. Animosity is due to non-availability of civic amenities, poverty and illegitimate relation, conflicts occur between owner and tenant as tenants suffer from lack of basic amenities. Due to economic constraint tenants can not shift anywhere else for better accommodation by paying higher rent.

In almost all cases the tenants were deprived of basic civic amenities like adequate water, electricity, toilet facilities and living space. Conflicts occur frequently between owner and tenant for a number of reasons such as for supply of water, electricity, use of toilet, bathroom, common passage, suitable and adequate accommodation, non-repair of rooms, non-payment of rent etc. Conflicts occur between owner and tenant for owner'sdisliking of intimacy among tenant's. The owner tried to generate friction between old and new tenants, between castes and between Bangladeshi and non-Bangladeshi, owner wants to divide the
tenants by creating different problems for tenants e.g. by deployment of antisocials.

Lack of privacy and social control caused problems in the slum society resulting in friction between owner's and owner's families regarding growing intimacy between their son and daughter. Inter caste tension also prevail in the slum society. Inter caste marriage is not approved by the parents resulting in conflict between owner's and tenant's families. The owner tried to evict the tenants with the help of antisocials. But the poor tenants could not shift elsewhere due to severe economic constraint. Intervention by neighbours, local leaders, club members and solidarity of the tenants founded an common interest prevented violent confrontation. But simmering tension continue.

Parents could hardly restrain their children particularly adolescents to stay away from free mixing and clandestine relation with the other sex. Relation between grown-up children lead to continuous friction between the concerned families. Parents after quarrel among themselves indulging in abuse and substandard language, children grown up under such vicious family environment.

Extreme poverty force the slum people to indulge in unsocial practices. Slum is the centre of unsocial activities. Menfolk had to perform hard work to maintain the family. In such a situation extra marital relation of husband or wife or both of them and premarital relation of children is found in most of the cases. Out of 21 cases of intra household social conflict extramaintal
relation of husband and wife and premarital relation of children found in 71.43 per cent cases. Extramanital relation of husband was found in 40 per cent cases and extramanital relation of wife found in 33.33 per cent cases and in 13.33 per cent cases both husband and wife indulge in illicit relationship seperately. And premarital relation of children found in 13.33 per cent cases.

After day's hard work husbands were totally exhausted and persistent simmering tension does not allow love relation satisfy the sexual urges. Due to non-fulfilment of sexual gratification women were forced to develop illegal intimate love relation with other males. Conjugal relation between husband and wife is disturbed and quarrels occur between them more frequently as found (case nos. 33 to 37).

The husband could not meet the requirement of his wife with his poor income. His clandestine illegal relationship and also addiction to alcoholic drinks result in frequent clashes between husband and wife as evident (case no. 27 to 32).

Husband's addiction to alcoholism found in 53.33 per cent cases, torture of wife/daughter-in-law, beating and abusing of children and women is most common in slum society. Female torture is found in 60 per cent cases, frequent quarrels between husband and wife, between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law and with other inmates of the family occured in 53.33 per cent cases. Quarrels between husband and wife and between daughter-in-law and other inmates of the family occur for a number of reasons such as wife has no issue after couple of years absence of a male progeny.
birth of female child, difference in age between husband and wife, lack of understanding between husband and wife, frequent pregnancy, no voice of wife in family matters, lack of care and negligence of husband towards wife and children, illicit relationship either of husband or of wife, lack of privacy, large family, share of domestic chores, affection of husband towards mother and brother, neglecting wife, control over common family fund, beating and abusing, children's quarrels, non-co-operation of wage working daughter-in-law in family matters, difference in caste ranking either of husband or wife, difference in economic status, non-acceptance of son or daughter's love marriage by elders, economic dependence on wife, brother-in-law, brother.

It is found that children were deprived of their basic needs like affection and security of the parents rather they suffered from anxiety and mental tension. They are neglected by the parents, children also become victim of the environment particularly in the adolescent stage when they require more care and attention of the parents. Lack of social control by the elderly persons give freedom to the children to indulge in wrong pursuits. Rifts develops between parents and adolescent children. Frustration and tension perpetuate as it is evident (Case nos. 39, 40).

Pressure of adverse public opinion has little effect. Most of the inhabitants of the slum has one or other problem, one or other weakness in terms of poverty and unsocial activity.

Lack of established social control and social intervention by elders in the society normlessness prevail. It is hardly possible
to maintain age old custom: values, moral ethics of the family in the slum society. Most of the men and women in most families have extramembetal relations and inter caste unions. But older generation still try to adhere to old Hindu customs and norms and values. This present generation in slum do not follow the old social values and social norms. Beside marriage among the offsprings of parallel cousin is in fragrant violation of the Hindu code. It is not appreciated in anyway by the older generation. This has resulted in bitter relationship between the families and intra family conflicts (Case no. 47).

Gender discrimination is rampant. It has been found that male and female children are treated differently right from the time of birth. For instance, birth of a boy is considered more desirable and is welcomed with greater delight and rejoining than that of a girl. Birth of a daughter is decried. A women's position is lower if she gives birth to a female child and is not liked by others. On the other hand birth of a son is considered to be a great achievement as seen (Case no. 24).

Child marriage is still prevalent in the slum society and women's status in the society is abnormally low. As wife is treated as chattel and her position in the home is quite inferior. Daughter-in-laws are to work hard almost as a maid in her husband's house. She is afraid to protest to her husband and has not any voice in family matters. Sometimes on matters relating her own children. In many instances inspite of severe torture by her husband and other inmates of the family she has to remain silent. Even she could not
say anything even her husband develops illicit relation with another woman. Inspite of severe torture she tried to adjust with her husband and family members. Lack of understanding between husband and wife cause problems in the family. After marriage, women feel insecure and helpless in the family in absence of husband. Other inmates of the family torture her mentally, she has to work hard all the day (Case no. 29).

It appears in some cases that the social values inherent in traditional Hindu life is still seen in some Hindu women and she behaved as a loyal wife inspite of misery, poverty, mental and even physical torture. The women behave in conformity with the established Hindu Social norm tolerance and submission.

The husband could not tolerate his wife and tortured her and developed illicit relations with another woman if the wife is biologically incapable to give birth of a child. Such women have very low status in this slum society (Case no. 41).

Due to poverty and ignorance of the parents the daughter become victim of the social enviroment. As poor parents could not fulfil the demands of son-in-law, the daughter-in-law is sometimes subjected to torture both physically and mentally as evident for instance in (case no. 26).

In slum almost all the people are living below poverty line. The poor parents can not maintain their large family with meagre income and usually engage their wife and daughter as maid servant. The poor daughter fell victim of the social environment and ultimately compelled to flesh trade as found in (case no. 50).
It is also seen that to maintain the minimum subsistence level women choose the profession of prostitution for earning.

In absence of parents daughter become victimised in evil social environment and committed suicide. Misdemeanour of Aunt resulted in the end of young life. Bitter relationship developed between brothers.

There was a psychological conflict between father and daughter. The daughter did not like to share father's love and affection with another women. Psychological conflict reached climax when father was caught having carnal pleasure with the maid highly, embarrassed and father could not bear the shame of his act and committed suicide.

The wife become the victim of jealousy of the people in the poverty ridden slum. Even today female child is considered as burden by most people of the society, wife was tolerant inspite of severe torture and illtreatment by her husband and other inmates of the family. She became worried and frustrated when she found that her daughters were being neglected. And this attitude of the family forced her to commit suicide.

Father's bad conduct and illicit relationship affected peace and harmonious relationship within the family culminating in suicide of mother. Torture and suffering inflicted on mother forced children to develop hatred and hostile attitude towards father. This caused detachment.
Lack of social control and strong caste feeling of husband's family caused split in the family. From childhood daughter lost her mother's affection and looked down her mother with contempt due to her illegal relation with another person and the daughter was greatly shocked when her conjugal life was affected by her mother as mother developed illicit relation with the son-in-law. Frustrated and insulted daughter finding no way out committed suicide.

Lack of privacy helped in erosion of family norm, breakdown of morality and development of illicit relationship. They do not try to understand the real values of relationship i.e. between brother and sister and relation with sister-in-law. Lack of privacy also on obstacle in the development of normal conjugal life between husband and wife.

In the male dominating social milieu daughter-in-law has no say in any family matters. They are victimised for evil acts of young male members and this situation also help in development of secret illicit relationship in congested slum society and also overlook prostitution.

It is also noticed that in slum society the gap between old and new generation is very wide in absence of established system of social control as traditional caste Panchayat or village Panchayat. Beside most of the households in the slum have such cases of intercaste unions and illicit relations. The pressure of adverse public opinion can not restrain a instinctive urge of the young hearts to marry loved ones. The new generation of young men and women in this slum breathe and air of freedom. They are also free
from control of older generation. However, most of the households in each neighbourhood of the slum are engaged in internecine frictions and try to avoid involvement in any other's conflict. Only when conflict takes a violent turn affecting the peace of the neighbourhood a few of the neighbours intervene and try to settle the matter amicably.

It is also found that frequent quarrels occur in connection with family income, contribution to the family, marketing, shopping, performance of domestic chores, control over family fund, rift between husband and wife, between daughter-in-laws and other inmates of the family. Frequent physical torture and misbehaviour with daughter-in-law is also found. Children's quarrels led to clashes between the elders. Unsocial activities of husband and wife causes problems in the family and intra family conflicts of occur. Peace and harmony of orthodox joint family gets disturbed when inter caste marriages occur. All these factors had a cumulative effect in breakdown of joint family ties and resulting in split. There are examples of how Hindu joint families split to nuclear ones.

In the slum society an under current simmering tension persist. There is no provision for enforcing Panchayat in slums or any kind of social control as in rural areas.

The forces that work towards checking escalation of conflict are neighbours, local clubs and two influential persons. Neighbours intervened only when violence raise its ugly head. Sometimes neighbour's intervention checks further intensification of conflict and helps in bringing some amount of peace and stop
further escalation.

Intervention by local hoodlums and antisocials sometimes escalate the conflicts. Few older and wiser members of the club members and some younger sensible elements within the clubs restore semblance of peace by convincing the conflicting parties, when the situation deteriorates and take an ugly turn.

Inspite of poverty both economic and cultural, slum society exhibits a kind of social equilibrium. Tension and conflicts are frequent but even then there are some young and old social elements who tenaciously hold residual traditional values and social norms in the face of severe hardship, agony and pain. Although many kinds of social situations develop where tension and conflicts become frequent, there also develop situations when the need of the time is tolerance, patience and social adjustment. And there are a few elements who act with wisdom and try to resolve conflicts. They act as a peace makers, as harmoniser, as custodian of social norms and values.

It is also found that some women behave in conformity with the established Hindu Social norms inspite of ill treatment she receive in her father-in-laws family. She also endeavours to adjust with her husband and other inmates of the family. Social values inherent in traditional Hindu life is still seen and wife behaves as a loyal wife inspite of misery, abject poverty and torture as examplified (Case no. 30).

Evidently, minimum or residual social order maintained within the family and between other families. There is some amount of co-operation inspite of extreme anomie and chaos around
in the slum society. Everyone tries to co-operate with each other and try to combat different problems as they are aware of their common fate. There is a feeling of oneness that prevail in the locality of the slums as evident (Case no. 16).

In the slum society absence of social control system help breed illicit relationship but there is some people who think seriously about what is good for their own society and who are concerned for the future of their own children and society at large. Such illicit relationship is practically tolerated in slum through resented by neighbours when situation takes ugly turn. Intervention help in resolving extreme lawlessness, anomie and human social crisis is averted as exemplified (Case no. 35).

It is also seen that when the daughter or the poor widowed tenant became victimised there was a strong protest against such a heinous crime out of common feeling and sentiment. Evidently, there is some amount of wisdom and a sense of morality among a section of slum dwellers who had maintained a some degree of social control over erring individuals so the society in a slum has not become totally amoral and anomie (Case no. 25).

Inspite of severe tension and chaos in society there is some residual social order which does not permit the situation to become extremely violent. The neighbours and local leaders try to keep the situation drifting to ugly state and that tension checked from going beyond control.

In family set up there are some checks and balances as well. Sometimes time acts as best healer. Ultimate family ties help in maintaining peace and harmony.