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**SPATIAL VARIATION IN DEMOGRAPHIC AND
SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SLUM POPULATION:
A CASE STUDY OF BARASAT MUNICIPALITY, WEST BENGAL**



Subrata Guha¹, Nilkamal Laskar² and Prasenjit Ghosh³

1. INTRODUCTION

The most important challenge of modern urban world is the “challenge of slum”. Perhaps no cities in the world is avoid of it. But what is called “slum”? According to an Expert Group of the United Nations, a slum is an area that combines to various extents the following characteristics namely; (i) inadequate access to safe water, (ii) inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure; (iii) poor structural quality of housing; (iv) overcrowding and (v) insecure residential status. In India almost all urban settlements face the unpleasant scenario of ‘Slums’. Often, this has remained a vaguely defined phenomenon. Slum areas illustrate high rates of poverty, illiteracy and bad health status. Slum dwellers have low earning. Urban areas do not provide them proper job. They do not have any formal education facilities. Dwellers of slums engaged in informal labor through which they cannot earn

Abstract

Spatial variation in the demographic and socio-economic aspect is a common phenomena, which has been well analyzed in geography. Geographers has always tried to reach the root of the actual event and reason behind it. In this paper an instance is given of the Barasat Municipality, which contains thirty two wards among these, nineteen wards contain slam population. There are spatial variation in demographic and socio-economic aspects among the nineteen wards. These wards have unique and highly variable demographic and socio-economic parameters like population distribution, distribution of infant population, sex composition, caste composition, level of literacy, work participation ratio etc.

Keywords : Caste composition , Demography, Informal Economy, Literacy, Slum, Social Development, Main Worker, Marginal Worker.

Short Profile

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much. They work in environment which is harmful to them. This fact force them to work in informal sector (Alamgir, Jabbar et al. 2009). People living in these settlements experience the most deplorable living and environmental conditions, which are characterized by inadequate water supply, squalid conditions of environmental sanitation, breakdown or non-existence of waste disposal arrangements, overcrowded and dilapidated habitation, hazardous location, insecurity of tenure, and vulnerability to serious health risks. Slum residents are

also excluded from participating in the economic social, political and cultural spheres of the city— all of which create and nurture capabilities (Arimah, B.C, 2010). The global assessment of slums undertaken by the UN-HABITAT (2010) shows that 828 million or 33% of the urban population of developing countries

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resides in slums. These settlements are also known for their atmosphere of fear and violence (Bloom et.al, 2008).

2.OBJECIVES

The present study is aimed at conducting a survey research to find out and analyze the demographic and socio-economic attributes of slum population and also to explore the spatial variability of the afforesaid attributes.

The major objectives of the research work are as follows:

- i)To identify nature of variability of different demographic and socio-economic attributes of slum population across the wards of Barasat municipality.
- ii)To find out existing pattern of the demographic, social and economic structure of the slum population.
- iii)To find out causes of spatial variability in the slum population.

3.STUDY AREA

For conducting the present research work on slum population, Barasat Municipality of the District North- 24 pgs of West Bengal has been selected. As an urban setup in the vicinity of the Kolkata, the town is within the area of Greater Kolkata. Several significant roads like National Highway 34, Jessore Road; road leading to Basirhat etc. cross through the town. The geographical coordinates of Barasat are 22°43' 0" north and 88°31' 0" east. Barasat Municipality was born on 1 April 1869 but up to 1882, it did not have any independent existence. Like other offices it was controlled by Magistrate Office, during that time there was no Chairman of the municipality; Magistrate was the Controller of municipality. Later on after 1882 Barasat Municipality had got its own formation as an autonomous body and became local government.

Total Barasat municipal area was divided into 29 nos. of Mouzas. Previously, there were 4

nos. of Wards and after that 18 nos. of Wards under Barasat Municipality. Later on after amalgamating surrounding Panchayets within Barasat Municipality in 1995 and then after, at present Barasat Municipality has 32 nos. of Wards among which 19 wards contains slum population.

As per the census 2001, the total number of slum household in Barasat Municipality is 7857 and total number of slum population is 36554. Among which the number of male population is 18804 and the number of female population is 17750.

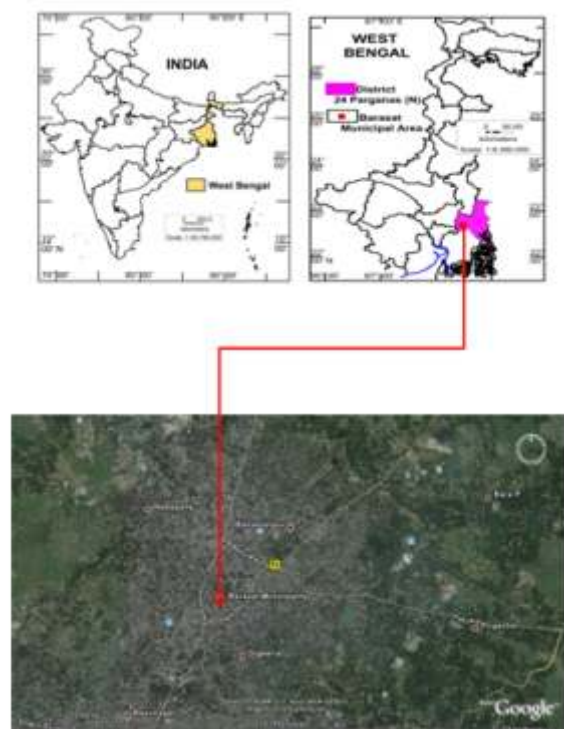


Figure :1 Location Of The Study Area

Barasat Municipality

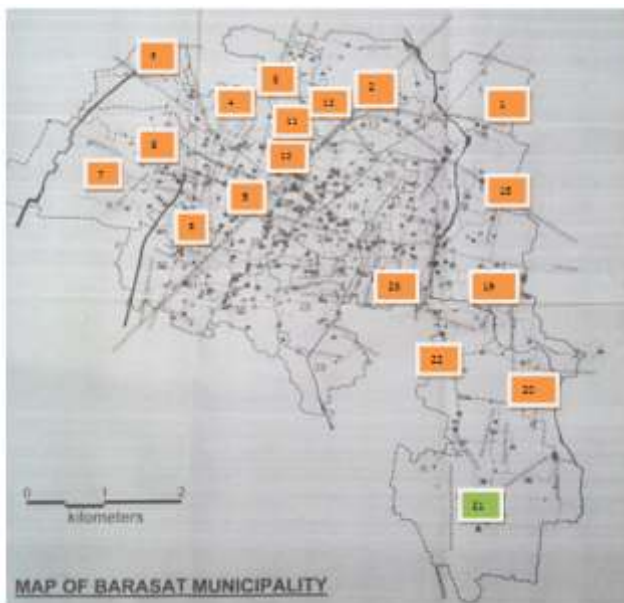


Figure :2 Ward Map of Barasat Municipality

4.Data base and Methodology

For carrying out the present research work census data has been taken. For well analyzing the slum of the barasat municipality demographic and socio- economic quantitative data has been used from District census handbook 2001. Qualitative data has been collected from the interview process in the slum area of barasat Municipality.

The collected data has been processed by following a systematic methodology. The data has been tabulated and calculated in percentage figure for each indicator and each ward individually. Secondly, the same percentage figures for each indicators have been calculated by means of the Z-Score. Then finally the processed data has been presented by the help of different kind of softwares like M.S Exel, M.S Word, Adobe photoshop, and Map info.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Demographic development

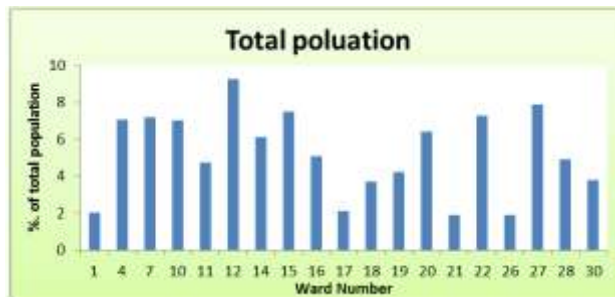


Figure: 3 Ward wise distribution of Slum population 2001

The total number of slum population of Barasat Municipality is 36554, but this population is not equally distributed among the wards. Nine wards i.e. ward no. 4,7,10,12,14, 15, 20, 22, 27 contains high concentration of slum population which is more than 6% share of the total slum population. While ward nos. 1,17, 21, 26 contains relatively low concentration of slum population i.e. less than 3% of the total slum population. The rest of the wards stands in a moderate position by containing 3% - 6% of total slum population. The mximum concentration of slum population is seen in ward no. 12 which is 3379 (9.22%) of the total slum population and the mimimum concentration is seen in ward no. 21 and 26 coniderably which is 694 (1.89%).

Number of infants is an important attribute to have an overview of the demographic features of a region, because in one side it indicates the fertility scenario and on the other side it helps to understand the overall demography. Like the distribution pattern of the total population, ward nos. 12, 22, 27 has high concentration of under six population among which ward no. 12 has the highest concentration of 519 (11.84%). Contrarily ward nos. 1, 17, 26 has low concentration of under six population among which ward no. 1 has the lowest concentration i.e. only 67 (1.41%) of the total under six population.

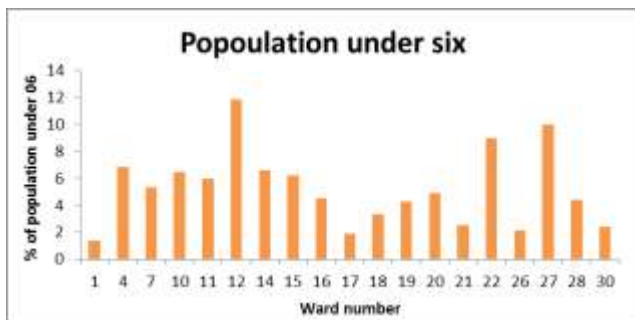


Figure: 4 Ward wise distributions of Under six Sum populations 2001

It has also been seen that some wards like ward no. 1, 17, 21 and 26 stands far behind of the average concentration value of total population and under six population, while ward nos. 12, 22, 27 stands well ahead of average figure. This pattern indicates a proportional relationship between total population and population under six. But surprisingly ward nos. 11 and 20 are showing an inverted relation between the both attributes of population, which indicates unequal distribution of both the populations.

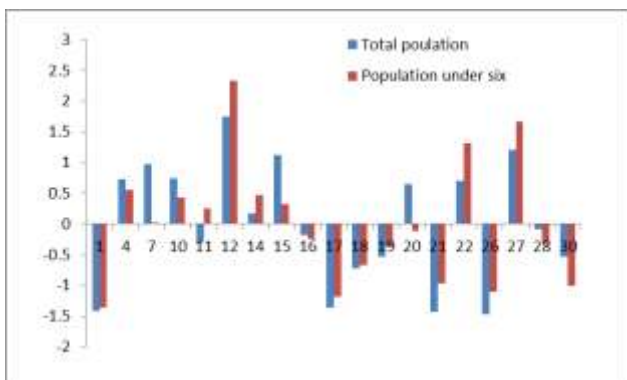


Figure: 5 Composite Z- Score distribution of total population and population under six.

Caste composition is a vital demographic indicator to know about the population structure of a region. It enables us to analyze the cultural, historical aspects of evolution of population composition. It has been seen that there lies a huge variation in spatial distribution of schedule caste and schedule tribe population. As far the

schedule caste population is concern, it has mainly concentrated in ward nos.10, 12, 22, 27 considerable. Among which ward no. 27 contains highest S.C. population i.e. 1484 (19.99%) of total S.C. population. On the other side ward nos. 1, 11, 14, 19, 26 possess low concentration of S.C. population, while ward no. 11 contains the lowest S.C. population of only 24 (0.32%).



Figure: 6 Ward wise distribution of slum S.C. population 2001.

Like the schedule caste population, the spatial distribution pattern of schedule tribe population is varying ward to ward. Total numbers of schedule caste population in Barasat Municipality is not very high; it is only around 391 persons. Several wards like ward nos. 1, 7, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21, 28, 30 are almost devoid of S.T. population. Ward no. 4 possess highest S.T. population, which is 315 (80.52%) of the total S.T. population.

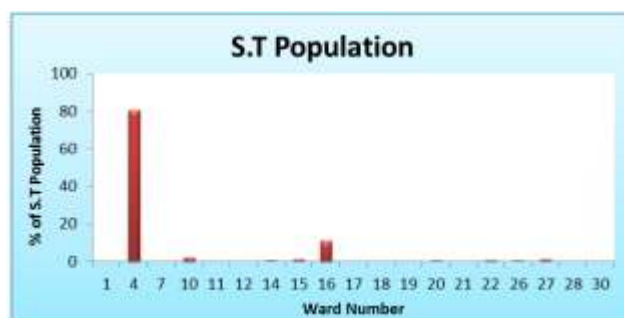


Figure: 7 Ward wise distribution of slum S.T. population 2001.

According to the Z-Score distribution, in most of the wards it is notable that the

distribution of S.C. and S.T. population is proportionate to each other. But in some wards both of the attributes has the inverse stand with each other. Ward like 4, 7, 10, 12, 22 and 27 are expressing such a stand, where the distribution of S.C. and S.T. population is in opposite position.

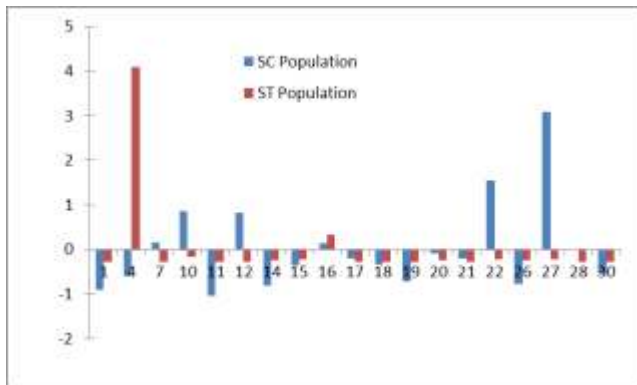


Figure: 8 Composite Z- Score distribution of Slum S.C. population and S.T. population.

5.2 Social Development

The term social development is a broad concept which includes the development in all aspects of society. On the other hand it can be used as a synonym of the term social well-being. A developed society is one in which all the people have desirable level of income, education, basic services and have equal right and dignity. All over the world social backwardness is very common feature of the slum population, they lack basic services, income, education and dignity. That turns the slums into a very soft and fertile breeding ground of social crime.

There are several indicators to measure social development. Literacy is one of the most vital indicators of social status of a region. Considering this importance, literacy has been taken as an essential indicator of social development for the present research work.

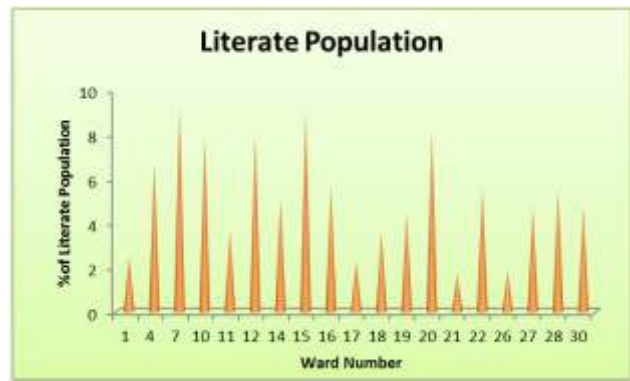


Figure: 9 Ward wise distribution of slum Literate population 2001.

It has been seen that the overall literacy level of slum dwellers of the Barasat Municipality is not so well, which is only around 67%. The female literacy level is worse that is only around 62%. Like the other demographic indicators the spatial variation of literacy has been seen across the wards. The ward nos. 7, 15 and 20 contains relatively high literacy level that is 9.22%, 9.02% and 8.11% considerable. Ward nos. like 1, 11, 17, 18, 21, 26 contains relatively poor literacy level that is less than 4% of the total literate slum population.

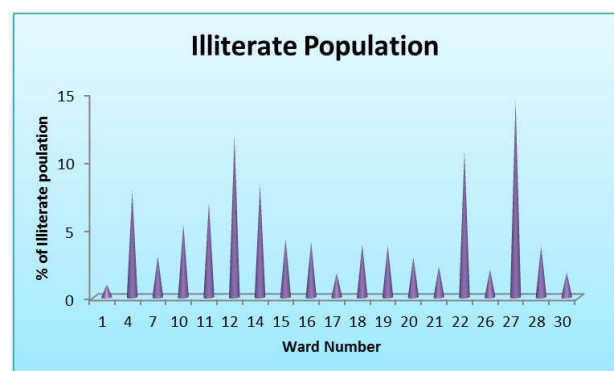


Figure: 10 Ward wise distribution of slum Illiterate population 2001.

In terms of illiteracy ward nos. 12, 22 and 27 stands high, among which ward no. 27 contains highest number or of illiterate slum population, that are 1729 (14.48%). Following the normal trend ward nos. 1, 17, 21, 26 and 30

contains low number of illiterate population. Among them ward no 1 contains the lowest number of illiterate slum population that is, only 113 (0.94%).

It is notable that as per the common trend the will be an inverse relationship between the share of literate and illiterate population. That means the ward contains high literacy share will contain low illiteracy share ,as it is seen in many wards like ward nos. 7, 11, 14, 15, 16, 20, 27 and 28. Unlike the normal trend ward nos. 1, 4, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21, 26 and 30 are showing a reverse trend, where both the literate and illiterate population share is proportionate.

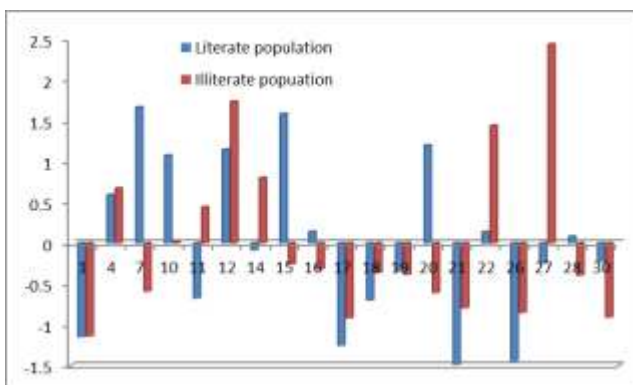


Figure: 11 Composite Z- Score distribution of Slum Literate and Illiterate population.

5.3 Economic development

Economy is a vital part of society and culture. The nature and trend of development of a society is highly depends on its economy. Economic development ensures the development in other sectors of society directly or indirectly. So, economy of any society is its soul, without that soul no prosperity could be achieved. As far the slum dwellers are concern, Most of them are normally getting involve in urban informal sector with low working skill and improper training. The slum dwellers are entitled by poor income, high level of risk. These ultimately results into poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, poor health etc. In this present paper two economic attributes has been used i.e.

total number of workers and nature of workers (main worker and marginal workers).



Figure: 12 Ward wise distribution of total Slum working population population 2001.

The number of total workers in slum population of Barasat Municipality is 12047. Among which the number of main workers are 10991 (91%) and the number of marginal workers are 1056 (9%). It has been found that the numbers of total workers varies from ward to ward. Ward nos. 12, 22 and 27 bears high working population. That is 9.90%, 8.41% and 8.74% of the total working slum population. Contrarily ward nos. 1, 17, 21 and 26 bears low working population that is 1.18%, 2.30%, 2.39% and 2.0% of total working slum population considerably.

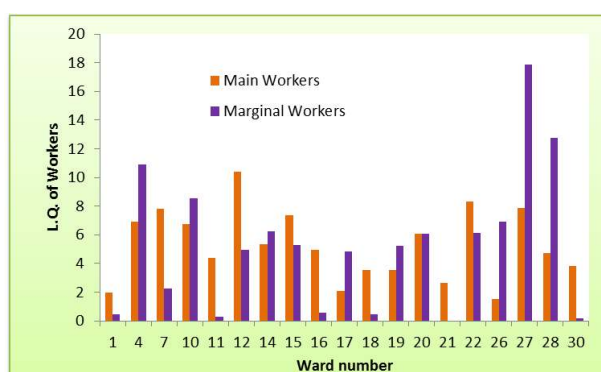


Figure:13 Ward wise distribution of total Slum Main worker and Marginal worker 2001.

In terms of main and marginal worker there is a huge spatial variation across the words. As far the main worker is concern, ward

nos. 7, 12, 15, 22 and 27 are the dominating figures, among which ward no. 12 contains highest number of main workers i.e. 10.38% of the total slum main workers. Ward no. 26 contains lowest main worker concentration i.e. only 1.53% of the total slum main workers. But in case of the marginal workers ward no. 27 contains the highest figure i.e. 17.89% of the total slum marginal workers. Ward no. 21 contains almost 0% marginal workers. Similarly ward nos. 1, 11, 16, 18 and 30 contains very low concentration of marginal workers.

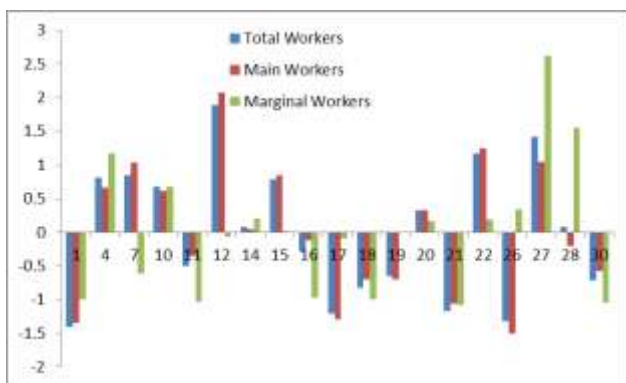


Figure: 14 Composite Z- Score distribution of Total worker, Main worker and Marginal worker

6.CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it may be concluded that, there is a very interesting spatial variability in both demographic and socio-economic aspects of development in slum population in Barasat municipality. Total population and total population under six are not always proportionate, some wards having total population well ahead of the average but surprisingly have under six population well behind of the average. In respect of caste composition S.C. population is distributed more or less equally throughout the wards, but the S.T. population is distributed unequally. It is mainly concentrated in ward no. 4. In terms of literacy some wards have high level of literacy and illiteracy both and vice versa. It has also been seen that, some wards having poor level of total worker and main worker have low level of marginal worker, which is an

opposite to common trends.

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