

## Preface and Acknowledgement

The process of urbanisation has led to some serious problems in India as well as in West Bengal. Large influx of rural migrants to the towns and cities have created problems of social maladjustment for the last few decades. The fundamental necessity of urban government is to create the conditions of healthy community life for the urban citizens by providing adequate civil and welfare services. Many scholars have initiated studies in regard to the extent to which the big city governments like Calcutta, Delhi, Kanpur, Ahmedabad, Cuttack and others are structurally and financially equipped to fulfil the above-mentioned civic goals. But yet no comprehensive, indepth study in this field has been carried out in respect of the urban areas of North Bengal, especially in the district towns of erstwhile West Dinajpur and Malda. This was the reason which prompted the author to take up a study of the problems of urban development and urban governance in the towns of Balurghat (presently included in the Dakshin Dinajpur district), Raiganj (presently included in the Uttar Dinajpur district), Englishbazar and Old Malda.

The functioning of municipal government in West Bengal has led to certain problems concerning their successful operation and achievements in relation to developmental goals. This demands a systematic probe into the working of the urban governments and

identification of the factors behind the problems that stand in the way of providing efficient civil services and the benefits of development to the citizens. The present study aims at explaining what role the civic bodies play to cope with such problems in the context of the general pattern of municipal government and administration in West Bengal.

To make the study more comprehensive, an attempt has also been made to focus on the problems of municipal finance in the aforesaid towns for a period of five years, starting with the emergence and installation of the Left Front Government, from 1979-80 to 1983-84 and other phenomena like leadership, citizen opinion, political environment within which civic bodies function, and organizational climate etc. This is sought to be done on the basis of data and information collected from field work.

This research universe was undertaken in 1989, prior to the bifurcation of the then West Dinajpur district. The district has been bifurcated into Uttar (North) and Dakshin (South) Dinajpur districts by a Government Order on April 11, 1992. So, the data used in regard to this district upto 1991 are prior to bifurcation. Another important phenomenon is that according to the New Municipal Act 1993, members of the civic body are known as Councillors (Government Order No. 393/C-4/MIA-5/9 dated 13.7.94) previously, they were known as Commissioners. In the present study, the term Councillor has been used instead of Commissioner for the members of the civic bodies.

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