

Chapter-II
Historical
and
Geographical Background

CHAPTER – II

HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

II. 1. INTRODUCTION

Koch Bihar, which means 'the land of the Koches' has great historical traditions. Its history goes back into remote antiquity and references to this region occur in our Great Epics. The tract of land now forming the district of Koch Bihar was a part of a much bigger kingdom of Kamrup, Khens and Koches. There have been a series of dynastic history under the patronage of the rulers of Cooch Behar. The Koch king had come into power in the beginning of the 16th century after the Buddhists influences. The early history of the district legitimately belongs to the wider history of Kamrupa. . The name Kamrupa, which now designates only one district of Assam, was formerly applied to the whole of the eastern province of the ancient Bharatbarsha. In the Ramayana and the Mahabharata the country was called Pragjyotisa and its ruler, the Pragjyotiswara. The term Kamrupa was first mentioned in some Puranas and Tantras. In very early times Pragjyotisa did not perhaps include the whole of Kamrupa of later date. The ancient kingdoms of Sonitapura, Jayantia, Kachhar and probably also the country of Kundin, which were in existence in the Mahabharata period, seems to have subsequently gone, under the control of Pragjyotispura, and the united territories were named Kamrupa. . The ancient Kamarupa was divided into four *Pithas*, the Kamapitha, the Ratnapitha, the Subarnapitha and the Saumarapitha. The Kamapitha was the tract of country lying between the Karatoya in the west and the Swarnakosh or Sankosh in the east. The Ratnapitha lay on the east of the Swarnakosh and extended as far as the river Rupika. The Subarnapitha was the name of the tract lying between the Rupika and Bhairabi, while the country beyond, to the north-east, was called the Saumarapitha. Modern Koch Bihar evidently forms part of the ancient Kamapitha. E. A. Gait refers to the earliest recorded king of Kamrupa as Mahiranga Danaba. Mahiranga was succeeded by an unknown king who was in his turn succeeded by Ratnasura. The Danaba line was here terminated by Ghataka of the Kirata line. The Kiratas had a rough exterior and fair complexion, and addicted to flesh and liquor. The chief Kirata king was named Ghataka, who possessed much physical power. He was defeated and slain by Naraka who set up the lined of Asura kings of Kamarupa.

Naraka is described as a contemporary of Rama, and is said to have lived to a very great age. Naraka had four sons; Bhagadatta, Madaharsh, Madabana and Sumali. After Naraka's death, Bhagadatta, the eldest son ascend the throne of Kamrupa. During his reign the country was invaded by the third Pandava, Arjuna. Bhagadatta gathered up an army of Chinas and Kiratas and offered battle to Arjuna, but was defeated. He took an important part in the war of the Kurukshetra. It is said that his *kabacha* or amulet is still preserved in the temple of Gosanimari in Koch Bihar. It is not clear who succeeded Bhagadatta. It appears from the Tezpur copper plate, discovered in 1840 by Jenkins, that Bhagadatta had

lineal descendants as kings. One of them, Pralambha's ancestors were named Salasthambha and Sriharisha, with a number of kings intervening in between. Pralambha was succeeded by his son Hazara, born of his queen Jipada. Banamala was the son of Hazara by his wife Tara. He succeeded his father to the throne of Kamrupa. A powerful king, who took the title of Barman, his territories extended up to the woodlined sea-coast. A transcription of the Tezpur copper plate will be found in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. IX, Pt. II, pp. 767-8. The next king, who bore the title of Barman and claimed his descent from Vishnu, and whom this book regarded as lineal descendant of Bhagadatta or Naraka, was Bhaskarabarna, mentioned by General Cunningham in his *Ancient Geography of India (1871)*. It is not known if Bhagadatta's line continued in sovereignty of Kamrupa after Bhaskara. The next historic lines of kings are the Palas, who preceded the Khens of Gosanimari, and were perhaps contemporaries of the Sena kings of Bengal. The founder of the line seems to have been Dharmapala, whose seat was in Dimla in Rangpur. He governed a large country, extending as far as Tezpur in modern Assam. He was preceded by his brother Manikchandra, on whose death Dharmapala overthrew his son and himself became king. Dharmapala was succeeded by Gopichandra, his nephew. Gopichandra was succeeded by his son Bhabachandra, who is mentioned as a pillar of stupidity. Bhabachandra apparently lived in great splendour and built his capital at Bagduar in the Pargana of the same name in Rangpur. The last of the line was Pala raja. The remains of his house and fort, called Balagarh, are still to be seen in Bagduar. He is said to have been overthrown by the first king of the Khen dynasty. It is likely that a period of anarchy intervened between the two dynasties. During the rule of Pala kings Rangpur formed a part of Kamrupa.

It is not known how the rule of the Pala kings of Kamrupa came to an end, or how Pala Raja had no lineal successor to the throne of the country. It is probable that the last of the Pala kings having died without an heir, the part of Kamrupa west of Bhahmaputra remained in a state of anarchy for some time and was overrun by several tribes of Koch, Mech, Garo, Kachari and Hoar. The Kamrupa disaster broke the spell of the invincibility of Turkish arms with the Mongoloid tribes of Koch and Mech, and started them on a new career of political greatness that affected the history of Medieval Bengal very deeply for the next three centuries.

This period of disturbance and disintegration of power was most favourable for the rise of upstarts, and thus a person of humble birth acquired power, and, proclaiming himself king of Kamrupa, assumed the title of Bilwadhwaajs. He was called Kantana. The king belonged to the Khen tribe, and was raised to the dignity of pure Hindu for the meritorious act of having brought some Brahmans from Mithila or Tirhut for reestablishment of the worship of the Vedic gods. Niladhwaaja built his capital at Kamatapur on the west bank of the Dharla about 14 miles south-west of modern Koch Bihar, and enclosed on three sides with a gigantic rampart with an inner and outer ditch, while the Dharla protected the east. The citadel was erected in the middle with a double line of fortifications with the outer one being of earth and the inner one being of bricks, with a moat between the two. A temple was erected within the brick wall for his worship

of the family deity, which was called Kamateswar or the guardian goddess of Kamatapur. The general title of this line of kings was Kanteswara or Kamateswara, the lord of Kama.

Niladhwaya was succeeded by his son, Chakradhwaja. During the reign of this line of kings, the shrine of Gosanimari is said to have been discovered.. Chakradhwaja was succeeded by his son, Nilambara, who was the third and the last king of the line. His dominions included the greater part of Goalpara and Kamrupa, the whole of Rangpur and Koch Bihar and portions of Jalpaiguri and Dinajpur. Ghoraghat was the southernmost district of this territory, where Nilambara built a fort which still goes by the name of Nilambara's fort. After the overthrow of king Nilambar the Khen dynasty came to an end.

The Koch chiefs were already gradually rising into power. One of the chiefs Hazo, king of Kamrupa, had two daughters named Jira and Hira. Both of them were married to a Mech of the name Haria, otherwise known as Haridas, who lived in Mount Chikna. Jira gave birth to a son called Chandan and Hira to a son called Biswasinha. On the defeat and death of the last Governor of Chikna, Chandan was proclaimed king and ascended the throne. The era of the Koch Bihar family is reckoned from the assumption of Chandan to the throne of Chikna and begins with 1432 Sakabda or 1510 A. D. Chandan after a short reign of 13 years, in the course of which he subjugated the petty kings of Kamrupa, fell ill and died in his fortieth year. After the death of Chandan, Biswasinha ascended the throne in 1522 A. D. Biswa Singha had founded the present dynasty of Koch Bihar and assumed the title of Kamateswar, as if he continued the traditions of the lately destroyed ancient dynasty of Kamatapur. He extended his kingdom right and left, but took care to be on good terms with the Bengal Sultans on his south and the Ahom Rajahs on his east. His second son Nara Narayan and third son Shukladhwaja (surnamed Chila Rai or "the Kite Prince") spread his conquests far and wide.

On Biswasinha's retirement his eldest son Nrisinha or Barasinha, after a reign of about two years abdicated the throne in favour of his younger brother Naranarayan, in fulfillment of a pledge made to Naranarayan's wife at her marriage. Naranarayan ascended the throne in 1555 A. D. Maharaja Naranarayan made Koch Bihar a very extensive kingdom, which included almost the whole of northern Bengal, Bhutan and Assam, and the modern states of Kachhar, Jaintia, Manipur and extended up to the coast of the Bay of Bengal. With the help of his brother Sukladhwaja or Chila Rai, he repaired and added to the great temple Kamakshya, situated near the ancient city of Pragiyotisa (modern Gauhati) which had been destroyed by Kalapahar.

Maharaja Naranarayan reigned over the portions of Kamrupa west of the Sankos, but his brother Sukladhwaja took the country east of the Sankos and thereafter became the ruler of Assam or Eastern Kamrupa. Naranarayan was thus the last of the Koch kings who ruled over the vast territories comprised by the old kingdom of Kamrupa. Before Sukladhwaja removed to his newly founded kingdom of Assam, he had his residence in taluk Fulbari within Pargana Tufanganj, which forms the easternmost tract of Koch Bihar, where remains of embankments, fortifications and tanks ascribed to him are still in existence named after Chila Rai, his popular name. He was called Chila Rai because he was reputed to be as swift in his manœuvres as a *chila* or Kite or hawk. Naranarayan

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reigned for 33 years, assuming his ascension in 1555 A. D, and died in 1587 A. D. On his death his only son Lakshmi Narayan succeeded to the throne. Lakshmi Narayan reigned for 35 years and died in 1621 A. D. He was succeeded by his son Birnarayan. Birnarayan remove his captital to Atharokotha. He reigned for 5 years and died in 1625 A. D. after he had appointed his son Pranarayan as his heir apparent. Maharaja Pranarayan came to the throne in 1625 A.D. He ruled for 40 years up to 1665 A.D.

Maharaja Pranarayan's great-grandson, an infant of the name of Mahindranarayan, son of Mononarayan (son of Bishnunarayan), who had escaped the massacre of Jagnarayan, was now made king in 1682 A.D.

For nearly half a century since the death of Raja Prana Nrayan, this little kingdom was convulsed by civil wars, royal tyranny, and internal disorder. Mahindranarayan was only 5 years old when he ascended the throne of Koch Bihar faced with this crisis Jagnarayan was made Chhatra Nazir. He succeeded in raising an army to oppose the Mughals, but was not very successful. Jagnarayan died in 1691 A.D. and Mahindranarayan in 1693 A.D. After Mahindranarayan's death Santanarayan, Mahindranarayan's grandson, made Chhatra Nazir after Jagnarayan's death, aspired to be king. But the army was opposed to it and Santanarayan remained Chhatra Nazir or Commander-in-Chief. Santanarayan's brother's son Rupnarayan was made Dewan or Chief Minister of civil affairs. This took place in 1693 A.D. with Mahindranarayan the Mech line of kings had become extinct, and a new line started, descended from the first Nazir Deo Mahindranarayan . Mahindranarayan was the first Nazir Deo and his son Jagnarayan was the second Nazir Deo. Rupnarayan son of Jagatnarayan (who was brother of Jagnarayan) became king in 1693 A. D. and started a new line three kings in linear succession.

Maharaja Rupnarayan was thus the last of the Koch kings who held sway over Western Kamrupa. From his time the extent of the kingdom was virtually confined to the present district of Koch Bihar. Rupnarayan removed his capital from Atharokotha near Gosanimari to Guriahati on the east bank of the Torsa. Rupnarayan's capital still forms part of the present town of Cooch Behar. The Nazir Deo, Santanarayan founded a city, 10 miles south-east of the capital at Balarampur on the road to Dinhat and took up his residence there. Nazir deo, Santanarayan died in the year 1700. On his death, Lalitnarayan was appointed Nezir Deo. Lalitnarayan happened to be the second son of Biswanarayan, Maharaja Rupnarayan's brother. Maharaja Rupnarayan died in 1714 A.D. He was succeeded by his eldest son Upendranarayan . The Musalman Fauzdar of Rangpur, at the instigation of Dinanarayan, son of Satyanarayan, the Dewan Deo, who had aspired to the throne, invaded the western portion of the district. The king engaged in a battle with him at Singheswar Jhar, a place on the west bank of the modern Tista, and was defeated. Upendranarayan had the shrewdness to make a treaty with the Bhutanese, and with their assistance he drove back the Musalman General later in Rangpur. In the year 1737-37, Upendranarayan discovered Satyendranarayan's duplicity, deposed him from office and appointed his own younger brother Kharganarayan, who became the second Dewan Deo. The senior queen placed Debendranarayan, son of the second queen

on the throne and became *suttee*. On hearing of the death of the king, the Nazir Deo Khagendranarayan hastened to the capital and elected Dhairyendranarayan's son Harendranarayan, king, who was duly installed to the Raj.

Cooch Behar became a feudatory State to the East India Company by virtue of the treaty of 1773. In this emergency the king's party headed by the Nazir Deo applied to the Government of India for aid which was promised on certain conditions. This led to the conclusion of the following treaty, on the 5th April 1773, between the East India Company and Koch Bihar, in which the young Maharaja was represented by Khagendranarayan, the Nazir Deo.

Dharendra Narayan, Raja of Cooch Behar, having represented to the Honourable the President and Council of Calcutta the present distressed state of the country, owing to its being harassed by the independent Rajas, who are in league to depose him, the Honourable the President and Council, from a love of justice and desire of assisting the distressed, have agreed to send a force, consisting of four companies of *sipahies*, and a field-piece, for the protection of the said Raja and his country against his enemies.

This treaty signed, and sealed, and concluded, by the Honourable the President and Council at Fort William, the fifth day of April 1773, on the one part, and by Dharendranarayan Raja of Cooch Behar, at Behar Fort, the 6th Magh 1179, Bengal Style, on the other part.

Maharaja Dharendranarayan, on whose behalf the treaty was concluded by the forth Nazir Deo, was the first ruler of the country who acknowledged his allegiance to the East India Company. Maharaja Dhairyendranarayan, who for the second time occupied the throne, after the untimely death of his son, was thus the second feudatory chief of Cooch Behar. After Dhairyendranarayan's death, his son Harendranarayan, who was now 3 years and 9 months old (1783) was made king. Narendranarayan, son of Kumar Bijrendranarayan, whom Sibendranarayan had adopted, became king. Narendranarayan was placed in the hands of his tutor, Mr. Moore, who dabbled a little in politics. He took the young Maharaja to various places including the new college at Krishnagar. Narendranarayan was at one time ward of Raja Rjendralal Mitra. Narendranarayan died in 1863. He was succeeded by his son Nripendranarayan. He was a minor and the East India Company appointed Col. J. C. Haughton, Agent to the Governor General, North-Eastern Frontier, to be Commissioner of Cooch Behar. Haughton was vested by the Government with the full authority of the ruler of the State. But soon he was put in charge of the Second Bhutan War and a Deputy Commissioner was appointed to assist in the administration of Cooch Behar. The first Deputy Commissioner of Cooch Behar was H. Beverage, the celebrated scholar and antiquary. He came in November 1864. He was succeeded by a chain of Deputy Commissioners after 1866. The office of the Dewan was abolished. During his rule all branches of administration were reorganized and public welfare activities were furthered. Nripendranarayan was great builder and laid out the town of Cooch Behar and the smaller townships with great care and built beautiful private and public buildings.

Maharaja Nripendranarayan died in 1911 and was succeeded by his eldest son Rajrajendranarayan who died in 1913. He was succeeded by his younger brother Jitendranarayan who died in 1921. His eldest son Jagaddipendranarayan, then a minor, succeeded to the *gaddi* of Cooch Behar.

Before 20th August 1949, CoochBehar was a princely state ruled by the king of Koch Bihar who had been a feudatory native state under the British government. By an agreement dated 20th August, 1949, the king of CoochBehar ceded full and extensive authority, jurisdiction and power of the state to the Dominion government of India. The transfer of administration of the state to the govt. of India came into force on 12th September, 1949. Eventually, CoochBehar, was transferred and merged with province of West Bengal on 30th January, 1950 and from that date Cooch Behar emerged as a new district in the administrative map of West Bengal.

II.2. ORIGIN OF THE EARLY TOWNS

In the entire globe the capital Cities and the stronghold of emperors. During historical periods are the urban centers of political origin. Because such human settlements have favourable ground for defense, development of commercial activities, transportation node, the facilities fortification and construction of what have immensely helped in political origin of a town. Cooch Behar is no exception. Though it is now, the district Headquarter of this district was the capital of the then Maharaja of Cooch Behar. During historical periods, the Maharajas of Koch Bihar have developed some towns for political and strategic reasons:

During 1949, the state of KochBihar had 8 police stations viz, Kotwali (Cooch Behar), Dinahata, Sitai, Tufanganj, Mathabhanga, Sitalkuchi, Mekhliganj and Haldibari. There were 5 subdivisions. viz, Cooch Behar Sardar with P.S. Kotowali, Dinahata. Sub-division with P.S Dinahata and Sitai, Mathabhanga subdivision with P.S. Mathabhanga and Sitalkuchi; Mekhliganj subdivision with P.S. Mekhliganj and Haldibari, Tufanganj sub-division with P.S. Tufanganj Besides there were 6 paraganas in the district viz, Mekhliganj, Tufanganj Mathabhanga, Lalbazar, Dinahata and Cooch Behar under the then state of KochBihar.

Since 1950 some changes in the jurisdiction of the district have taken place. Some of the enclaves of Cooch Behar have been transferred to the district of Jalpaiguri. 17 *Chhits* of Haldibari Police Station were transferred to the Jalpaiguri Police Station in the district of Jalpaiguri under the Government of West Bengal Home (Police) Department Notification No. 2427 P1. dated the 27th June 1952. A further adjustment between the district boundaries of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri has taken place in the year 1955. Under the Government of West Bengal Home (Police) Department Notification No. 2115 P1. dated 20th May 1955, 34 *Chhits* of Cooch Behar were transferred to Jalpaiguri. 2 *Chhits* belonging to Mekhliganj Police Station were transferred to Maynaguri Police Station of Jalpaiguri, 30 *Chhits* belonging to Mathabhanga were transferred to Dhuburi Police

Station and 2 *Chhits* of Tufanganj Police Station were transferred to Alipur Duars Police Station of Jalpaiguri district.

The District of Cooch Behar is peculiarly situated in respect of certain areas which now form isolated islands so to say in the territory of East Pakistan and has, on the other hand isolated territories belonging to East Pakistan within boundaries of Cooch Behar. One isolated territory of this district is situated in the state of Assam. These isolated pockets or territories are called enclaves or *Chhitmahals*. The enclaves or *Chhitmahals* are scattered all over the border of East Pakistan but the largest cluster is in the south-west of Cooch Behar where the old Dinajpur district digs into Cooch Behar.

After the merger of Cooch Behar with the State of West Bengal since the 1st January 1950, it was included within the formerly Presidency Division. The district is at present under the newly created Jalpaiguri Division. The Government of West Bengal Home (General Administration) Department Notification No. 998 G.A. dated the 4th March 1963 created the Jalpaiguri Division.

The revenue, police and judicial jurisdiction of the district are conterminous with the geographical boundaries of the district. The Deputy Commissioner of Cooch Behar is also the District Magistrate and he is in overall charge of the district administration. He is assisted by an Additional Deputy Commissioner, who is also in immediate charge of the revenue administration of the district. There is a Subdivisional Officer in Charge of each of the subdivisions of Sadar, Tufanganj, Dinhata, Mathabhanga and Mekliganj. The Subdivisional Officer of Sadar has his headquarters at Cooch Behar which is also the headquarters town of the Cooch Behar district. The sanctioned strength of the State Civil Service Officer is five officers belonging West Bengal Civil Service and five belonging to West Bengal Junior Civil Service at Sadar Subdivision, and one officer of the West Bengal Civil Service and two officers of the West Bengal Junior Civil Service at each of the rest of the 4 subdivision. But in August 1965, there were three officers of the West Bengal Civil Service and four of the Junior Civil Service at Sadar Subdivision, to West Bengal Civil Service and one West Bengal Junior Civil Service officers at Mathabhanga, three West Bengal Civil Service officers at Dinhata, two Deputy Magistrates and one Sub-Deputy Magistrate at Tufanganj and two Deputy Magistrate at Mekliganj. There are 15 Development Blocks covering the 8 Police Stations of the district. The Block Development Officers work under the supervision of the Special Officers, Planning and Development, who himself works under the control of the Deputy Commissioner. There is a Superintendent of Police who is assisted by one Additional Superintendent of Police and two Deputy Superintendents of Police. The Deputy Commissioner is in overall charge of the excise administration. There is a Superintendent of Excise belonging to the West Bengal Excise Service who helps the Deputy Commissioner in smooth running of the excise administration. There is a District and Sessions Judge with his Headquarters at Cooch Behar who is also the Judge of the Cooch Behar Special Court.

II. 3. ORIGIN OF THE MUNICIPAL TOWNS

During the then Maharaja of Koch Bihar, the district had six towns. The town Cooch Behar is in Sadar or Cooch Behar Thana. The towns of Tufanganj, Dinhata, Mathabhanga and Mekhliganj were in the police station of their respective names. The town Haldibari was in Mekhliganj police station and each was administered by a town committee which looks after the public wealth and sanitation of each locality. Besides Cooch Behar, the capital town other five towns of Koch Bihar were more or less large villages, called towns by courtesy before the partition. The first towns committee was established in the year 1885 under the president Ivans Gordon of the then state of Koch Bihar Maharaja. After that the town committee of Cooch Behar was converted into the municipality in 1946. Other towns viz, Dinhata and Mathabhanga got urban recognition as town committee under the then Maharajaas in year 1896, Tufanganj, Mekhliganj and Haldibari in 1929. After a long time, Dinhata promoted to the status of Municipality in the year 1973, Mathabhanga and Tufanganj in 1983, Mekhliganj and Haldibari in the year 1986.

II.4. ORIGIN OF THE CENSUS TOWNS

By definition of the Indian census relating to the various aspects of urbanization which has been discussed in the earlier chapter I, some villages of this district were treated as urban or the census town during different census year. In 1971, the village Guriahati of Cooch Behar thana, in 1981 Kharimala Khagrabari of Cooch Behar thana , in 1991 Bhangri Pratham Khanda of Dinhata thana and in 2001 Khagrabari of Cooch Behar thana were treated as urban unit called 'census town'.

II. 5. LOCATION AND SITING OF TOWNS

COOCH BEHAR : Situated in between $26^{\circ}4'12''$ north latitude and $89^{\circ}7'01''$ east longitude, the town of Cooch Behar stands on the left bank of the eastern channel of Torsa, at a distance of about 7 miles (11.2 Kms) from the point of bifurcation below the taluk Kaljani. On the west of the town is the old, deserted loop of the Torsa called 'Mara Torsa'. On the east is the channel of old or Bura Torsa which flows from north-west to south east. The irregular shaped tract enclosed within these two beds contains the town of Cooch Behar. It is about two miles (3.2 Kms) long from South to north and a little over a mile (1.6 Kms) broad from west to east. It is a situation on the Alipurduars-Gitaldaha section of the N.F. Railway and the new broad gauge Railway line connecting New Jalpaiguri with Alipurduars passes close by the town where a station has been made with the name of New Cooch Behar. The National Highway 31 passes through the town. The

town was well linked not only to the important urban areas of eastern India but also to the metropolis Calcutta by road rail and of late through air ways.

DINHATA : This town is located in between $25^{\circ}06'11''$ north latitude and $89^{\circ}20'25''$ east longitude, on the Cooch Behar-Gitaldaha Road, 16 miles (25.6 kms.) to the South of Cooch Behar. The Dharla which is the Southern channel of the Torsa and is about a mile (1.6 kms) distant passes by the west of the towns. The metre gauge railway passes by the east of the town and has a station at the place named 'chawratat. The town is built on both sides of the Rangpur Road.

MATHABHANGA : Standing in between $26^{\circ}05'01''$ north latitude and $89^{\circ}02'46''$ east longitude on the right bank of Mansai river, it is the Headquarters of the sub-division of same name. It is situated within a loop of the Sutanga flowing by the south and west of the town. The Mansai has eroded a great part of the town and in 1880 the civil station had to be shifted to its present site near to the emigration road. In 1952 and in 1954, there were further erosions of the town and the neck of land in between Sutanga and the Mansai was narrowed still further.

TUFANGANJ : It is situated in between $26^{\circ}04'01''$ north latitude and $89^{\circ}20'25''$ east longitude on the right bank of the Dipa. Raidak and was made the Headquarters of the Tufanganj sub-division since 1896. A new town was built on the South east of the Ranirhat bunder in Taluk Kamat Fulbari. The bunder and the civil station are closed to another. In addition to that the Lawkuthi road and chikliguri tract form its southern and western boundaries. It is the most eastern boarder town, situated close to Assam and Bangladesh. National High way no. 31 passes by the east to Assam of the town.

MEKHLIGANJ : This town is situated in between $26^{\circ}05'45''$ latitude and $88^{\circ}13'16''$ east longitude and stands on the left bank of the Tista. The town has got its place in the history of modern India because of the International Indo-Bangladesh corridor called 'TINBIGHA CORRIDOR' which is 5 km way from Mekhliganj town.

Other four census towns are Haldibari: This town is situated in between $26^{\circ}05'45''$ latitude and $88^{\circ}11'03''$ east longitude at a distance of 150 km. east from the district Headquarter Cooch Behar. The town is well connected with Jalpaiguri and Calcutta through a broad gauge rail line and National Highway. This town is very close (5 Kms) to Indo-Bangladesh Boarder in the eastern part of this district. The town built on two sides of the emigration road which is intersected by the rail road at right angles from north to south. Guriahati: This census town is situated in between $26^{\circ}03'23''$ north latitude and $89^{\circ}07'16''$ east longitude in the South and South eastern part of Cooch Behar municipal town. Cooch Behar Gitaldaha Road, the meter gauge railway and Torsa River passes by the south of the town. Kharimala Khagrabari: This census town is situated in between $26^{\circ}04'36''$ north latitude and $89^{\circ}07'24''$ east longitude in the Eastern part of Cooch Behar Municipal town. The National Highway no 31 and the meter gauge railway pass through the town. The quarters of the administrative officers, forest officers, one blind school, one I.T.I college, one central school, post office, primary teachers training school, one cold storage, airport, industrial complex, market Government housing, police

barrack petrol pump and other private and public buildings are situated on that town. Bhangri Parham Kaunda: This census town is situated in between $25^{\circ}16'13''$ north latitude and $89^{\circ}06'00''$ in the South eastern part of the Dinhata Municipal town. A meter gauge railway along with a station passes on the northern part of the town. Bala Rampur road and Dhebganj road passes through this town. KHAGRABARI: This town is situated in between $26^{\circ}04'26''$ north latitude and $89^{\circ}08'08''$ east longitude, in the northern part of Cooch Behar Municipal town. National Highway 31 and state Highway 12A passes through crossing of the town. The broad gauge railway line connecting new Jalpaiguri with Alipurduar passes close to the north of the town. The loop of Mara Torsa passes in the western part of the town. Khagrabari is now the most developed census town of KochBihar urban agglomeration.

II. 6. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TOWNS:

Having discussed the origin of towns and the transformation of village to town formation, their location and sitting, now we examine the characteristics of the earliest of agglomerations of people that might be called towns. Towns in each region were expressions of the cutter of the region and of the people forming them and as might be expected, they had similarities in the manner in which the culture was expressed. Also, there were difficulties between towns in the same culture region, but more striking were the differences between towns in different culture areas. The factors of similarity or difference considered here include population, area included in the town, pattern or layout of the town, sites occupied, social order, and special features of a particular town.

The earliest towns of Cooch Behar grew within a section that included the temples characteristic. Special attention was given to construction of temples and palaces because of the worshiped to different God and Goddess of the Maharaja of KochBihar, and it was likely that thousands of laborers who were first captive and themselves worked on building them. The temples were the prominent elements of the towns in which they were built. The section containing the temple palace complex was surrounded by a wall to afford protection. The wall, like the palace, temples and houses were built of fired or unfired mud brick. Houses were interrupted by open space in the vicinity of temples and other public building streets were narrow lanes without surfacing drainage. Near the outer margin of the town was a zone where the poorest elements of the population lived in mud and reed huts. An interesting point concerning of early towns of Cooch Behar is the existence of so many tanks and pounds for water supply within towns near to palace, temples, public buildings houses etc. Another is the existence of a large member of agriculturists within or on the periphery of the town. The cultivation of corps within the periphery or near the margin of these towns was beneficial in that it facilitated the movement of produce to markets in the heart of the town.

Besides, one of the most important structural elements of the characteristic of the towns is the grid iron plan with major roads crossing at right angles in the middle of the

town. The roads are nearly straight parallel, wide and are easier to move from one place to another.

II.7. MORPHOLOGY OF THE TOWNS

COOCH BEHAR: The town is picturesquely laid out by means of straight and broad roads which intersect each other generally at right angles. A venue of Sissoo, Kadam, Mango and Talli trees and other evergreens border the big roads. The blocks formed by the intersection of the roads are filled with tanks, gardens or parks and houses. The town is neat and orderly and presents a charming view to an observer from a high station. Domes and minarets with white outlines seem to peep out from among the surrounding luxuriant verdure, while the Torsa is seen in the background, winding its silvery length through forests, fields and green orchards.

A most attractive and remarkable feature of the town is its tanks. These are deep reservoirs of clear, sweet and wholesome water and are largely used by the citizens for washing and drinking purposes. The three most important are the Sagardighi, the Bairagidighi and the Laldighi. The Sagardighi is by far the largest and most important of all. Standing as it does in the middle of a square lined with the court houses and other public buildings; it presents the best view in the whole town. This Bairagidighi square contains the Madan Mohan Thakurbari and the Ananda Mayi Dharmashala on the north, the Victoria college on the east and the Brahma Samaj and the club on the South, the west side being occupied by private houses. Laldighi is situated in the market place on the north in front of which stands four storied octagonal shapes with a dome the Victoria Jubilee Tower. A comprehensive view of the town may be had from the tower. On the east side of the square is the Artisans school. On the South of the tank are Sadar police station and the tent godown on the south of the police station across the Hospital road, is the Hospital. The market place is a corrugated iron shed in double rows with ornamental cornices and gable fronts, and occupies the three sides of a quadrangle.

From the north of the Sagar Dighi Square commence the palace grounds and extended northward along the West side of the Puranabash road for a little less than a mile (1.6 Kms) the Torsa embankment marking the limits. On the west all the while they are nicely laid out and ornamented with tanks, jhils and parks. The palace stands more in the South than in the middle, and faces the east. It is a large and magnificent edifice, beautiful in design and nice in execution. The exterior of a uniform brick colour, agreeably broken by the buff of the terracotta moulding and keystones, and the ash hue of the numerous pilasters, towers and turrets, seen over the ornamental lakes through the dark foliage of the park trees, presents a view at once grand and effective.

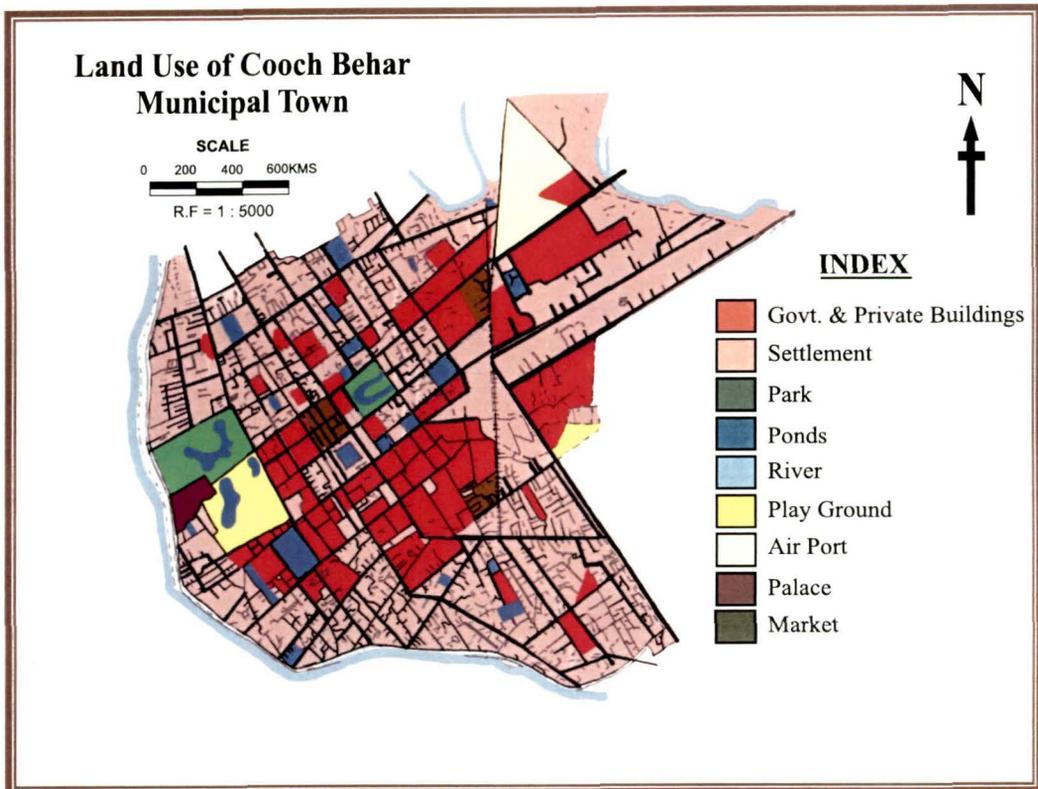


Fig. No. II.1

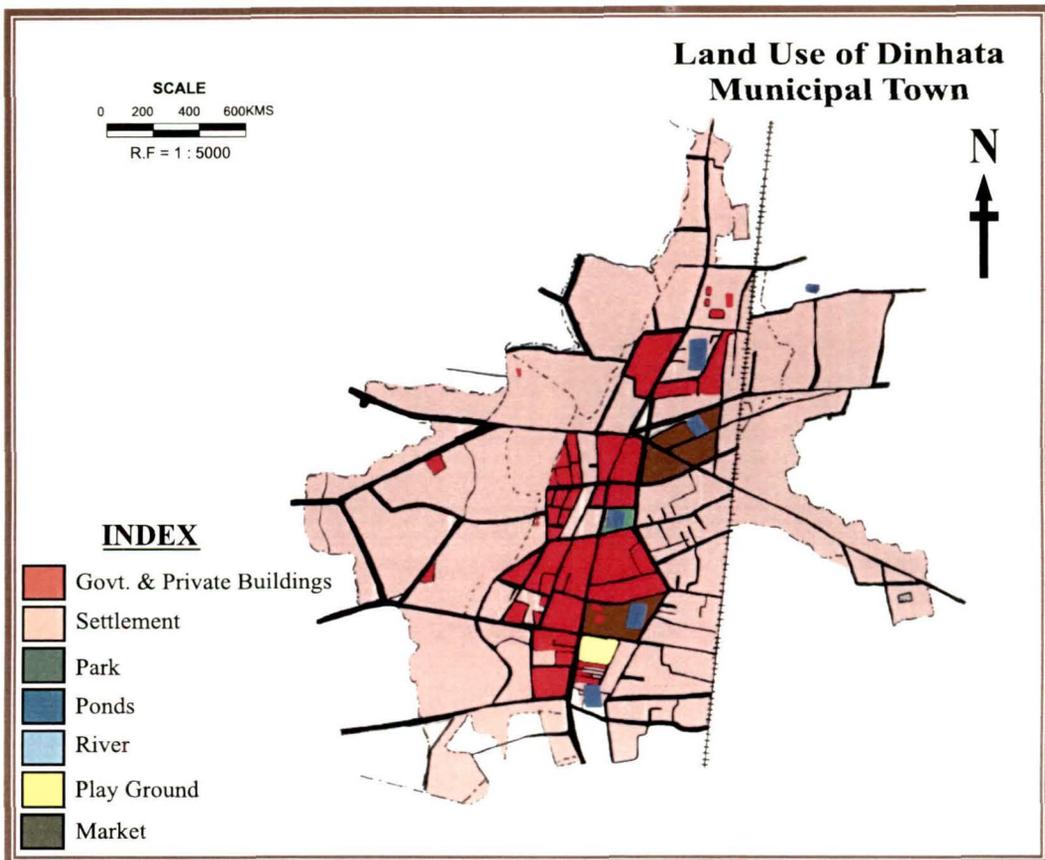


Fig. No. II.2

There are numerous roads and lanes in the town Maharaja Jitendra Narayan Road, Maharaja Harendra Narayan Road, Maharaja Prana Naryan road, Maharaja Biswhsingha Road, Rupnaryan Road, Silver Jublee Road, Sunity Road, Prince victor Nithendra Narayan Road, Raj Mata Road, Maharaja Nripendra Narayan Road, Debibari Road etc. for cross communication, all partaking of the character of the road or street in respect of straight ness and neatness. The railway passes by the east of the town. The KochBihar station and the Dak bungalow lie by the side of the Sunity Road not very far from the Jail.

DINHATA: The town is built on both sides of the Rangpur Road. Two roads lead through it to the Dharala, one by the north of the court-house compound, and the other by the South of the sub-divisional officers' quarters. Besides there are some important roads serving as means of communication within the station. The Bunder lies apart in the South of the civil station and is called Chawrahat. The Shahebganj Road and the Gosanimari Road start from the Rangpur Road in its north, the one going eastward, and the other west ward. A short way South from the Junction is the large market ground taking up a considerable space on both sides of the Rangpur road.

MATHABHANGA: This town is not so well arranged. The civil station formerly lay on the bank of the Mansai (Jaldhaka) owing to an encroachment of the river. It had to be removed to the present site in 1880. The bundar which then stood apart has got partially mixed up with it. The Bundar takes up the northern, and by far the largest portion of the town, on the north of the old emigration Road. It contains several firms of Marwari and Bengali merchants. It contains one of the biggest hats of the district which is held in the specious market place twice a week. There is a daily bazaar on a plot of land on the south of the Madan Mohan Thakurbari. Sub divisional office, court, police station, municipal office, rest house, P.W.D Banglow, municipal market complex, cinema houses, community hall, children park, playground, subdivisonal libray, hospital, schools and other private and public buildings are the main features of the landuses of this town.

TUFANGANJ : The bandar and the civil station lied close to each other. The private houses were mostly kucha with thatched roofs and mat walls; the public buildings and the shops have corrugated iron roofing and situated on both side, of the roods crossing at right angles. The public building in the town are the sub-divisional courts and offices, the police station, a post office, municipal office, jail, playground, community hall, market complex, marriage hall, children park, market, nursing home, a rest house, P.W.D Banglow, a charitable dispensary and hospital, four high schools and state Giridhari lal Madan Mohan Thankurbari and other private and public buildings etc.

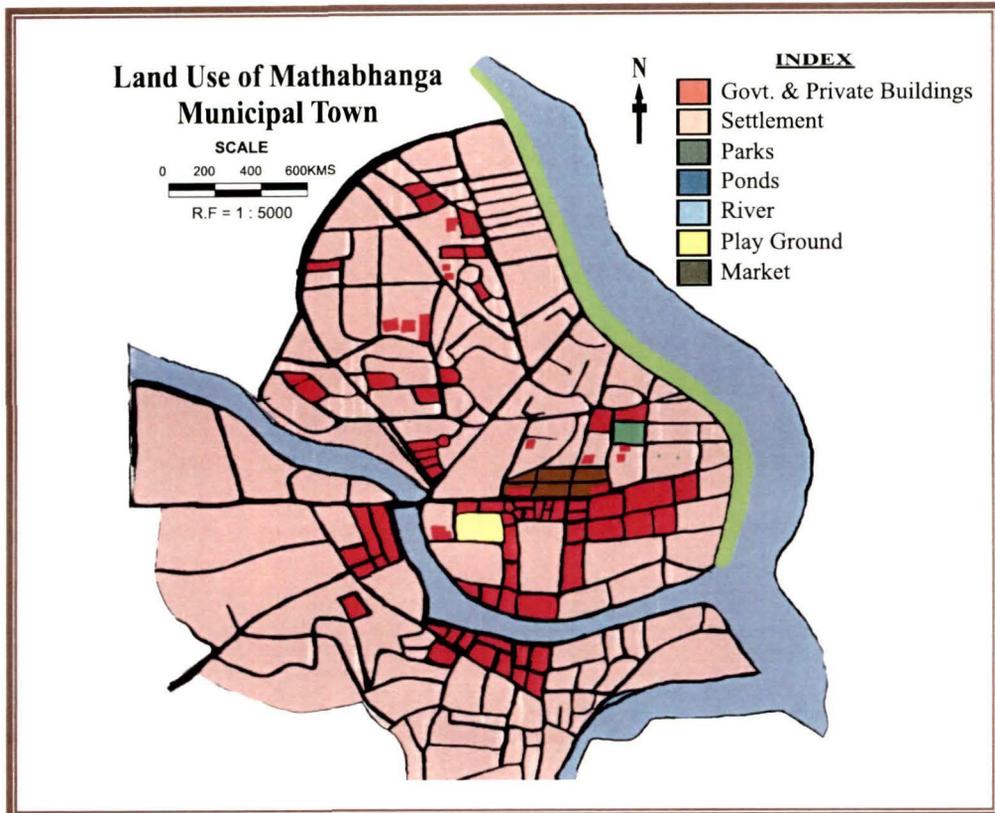


Fig. No. II.3

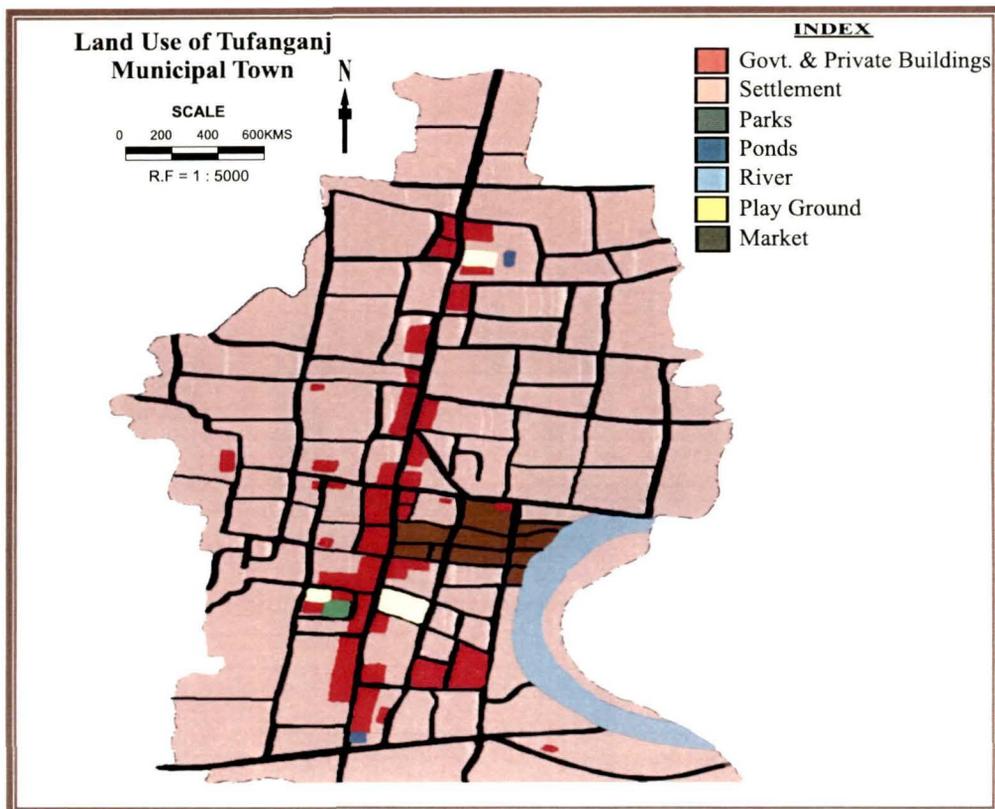


Fig. No. II.4

MEKHLIGANJ : It is made up of the civil station and the bander lied in Just a position of each other, with the emigration road lying in between them. From the South the Dinhata Road, generally following the embankment of the old Kanteswar's Road, passes by the west and goes up to Jalpesh towards the north-west, intersecting the Emigration Road on the South West of the court-house, From the junction a road goes north to changrabardha and thence to the northern frontier; and another goes to west to west and of the town in the east of the town a cross road goes South from the emigration Road, and passing through the Bazar meets the Dinhata road after half a mile(0.8 Kms). There are other several cross roads serving to divide the town into convenient and well arranged blocks for building purposes. The roads are straight and neat and clean. The Bunder' occupies the southern portion of the town. There are several big shops of Marwari and Bengal merchants arranged around the Hat ground and by the side of the Emigration Road. There is a daily Bazar or market.

HALDIBARI: The town is built on two sides of the Emigration Road which is intersected by the railroad at straight angles from northern to South. The bunder lied mostly on the eastside of the Railway line. The extensive market place extends from north to South through the Emigration Road. The Bazar lied in the west with shops erected along the Kasiabari, Emigration and Manikganj Roads. The school stands in the east of the town on the north of the Emigration Road, while the Police station, Dispensary, the post office and the Dakbunglow occupy the south-west corner of the town.

II.8. THE URBAN SCENE OF THE TOWNS

Urbanization as a process involve the multiplication of points of population concentration as well as increase in the size of individual urban concentration, as a consequence of either or both of the elements, means that either the proportion of population living in urban places is increasing or the urban population is increasing at a faster rate than the total population or both.

Two distinct phases of urbanization may be detected in different towns of Koch Bihar district viz. the early phase and present phase.

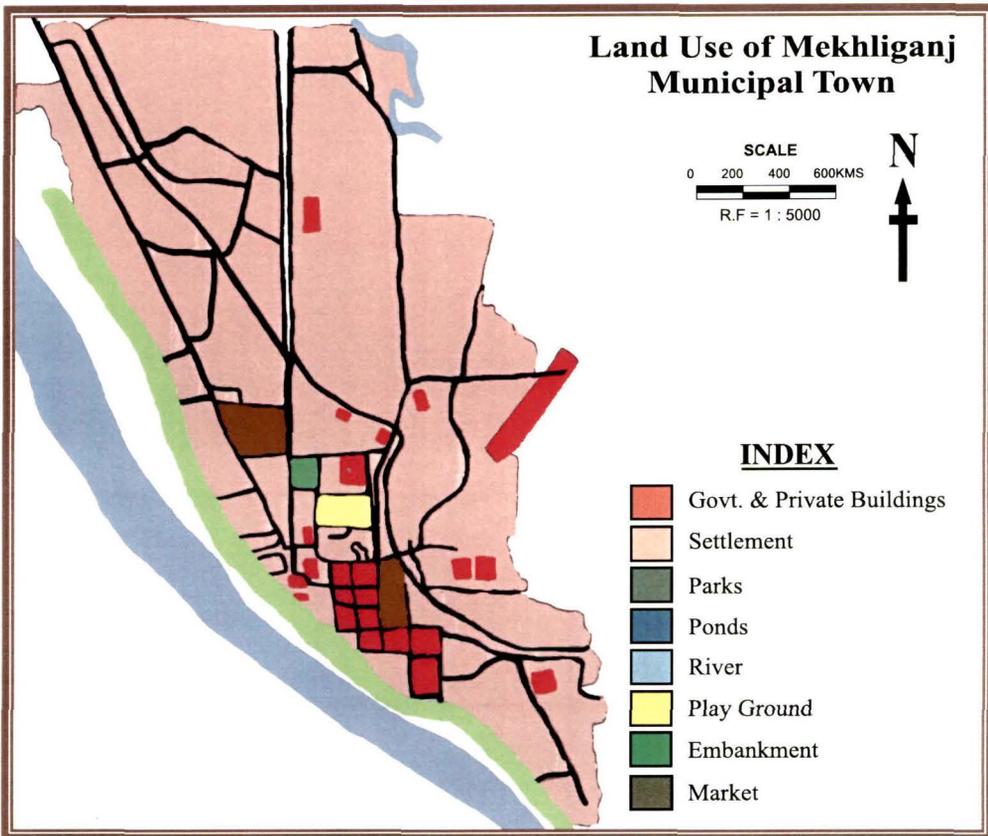


Fig. No. II.5

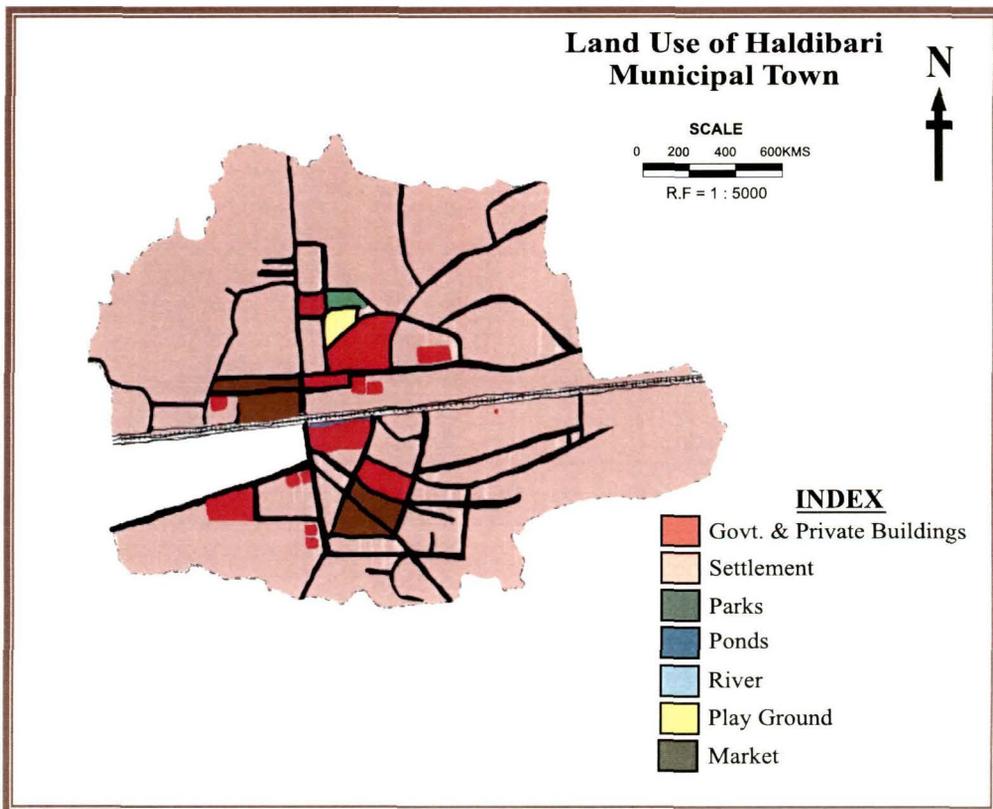


Fig. No. II.6

THE EARLY PHASE : It is interesting to trace the growth of population in the district since 1872 where the first census was taken. The settlement departments took the first census in the district over a period over three months. The next census in 1881 registered a substantial increase which was chiefly due to more accurate counting and the state of Koch Bihar at that time was healthy and prosperous and could, therefore, easily attract more immigrants. The next two censuses of 1881 and 1901 showed the declining population. The persistent unhealthiness of the climate and to a smaller extent emigration during this twenty years period robbed the district of a proportion of its population. Between 1881 and 1891 there was decrease in every police station except Tufanganj which continued to grow on account of immigration. During this period cholera broke out thrice in 1883 and there was another out break of a severe epidemic in 1887 – 1888 and also emigration took place to the Doars of Jalpaiguri . In 1892 also there was severe epidemic of cholera. There was scarcity in 1897 and 1898, though it could be said to have amounted to famine and in other year the outturn was usually good. But unhealthiness of the climate of this part of the country had all the retarding effect in the decline of population.

THE PRESENT PHASE: In 1901, the district had four towns viz, Cooch Behar, Dinhata, Mathabhanga and Haldibari. Two other towns Tufanganj and Mekhliganj were added in 1941. Out of six towns of this district, the district headquarters town of Cooch Behar was a municipality. Other five towns are each administered by a town committee. No new town was added up in 1961. Cooch Behar municipal town only had a population of a little above one thousand only. Thus the progress of urbanization for the individual towns as only little growth of population magnified itself to a considerable extent. The result of the census of 1911 showed in all four towns of this district due to immigration. There was a slight falling of population in Cooch Behar municipal town during 1921. In 1931 Haldibari suffered loss of population heavily from Cholera and Small pox epidemic.

After two census periods in 1961, maximum growth of population has been observed in Mekhliganj town. Its population has become one and a half times greater than what was in 1951- 1961. This town is the smallest town in terms of population size in the district being inhabited only by 3,394 souls. Tufanganj town's population is a little above that of Mekhliganj. This town has grown by about 50 % during this decade.

Dinhata has registered a growth rate of about 93.33 % during 1951–61 which is also quite high. Cooch Behar and Haldibari grew quite favourably during 1941–51. The rate of growth exceeded even cent percent. In this census, these two towns, therefore, have shown an appreciably smaller growth rate, being 26.11 percent in the former case and 38.24 percent in the latter case. Mathabhanga has recorded an increase of 64 percent during 1961.

The pressure of population on the urban soil of Koch Bihar district was not as high as is observed in the case of the state of West Bengal as a whole. But two towns of this district viz. Dinhata and Cooch Behar have a density higher than the state average. In fact, Dinhata town experiences quite a high pressure on land, as many as 18,235 souls

living per each squire mile of area on an average. Cooch Behar's density was 13,101 persons per squire mile.(1951). The smallest town has also a very low density. Only 2,263 persons live in one squire mile of Mekhliganj area on an average. The densities of other three towns are 7,805 in Haldibari, 9,562 in Mathabhanga and 10,215 in Tufanganj.

Preponderance of males is a characteristic feature with almost every urban areas of the country. As has been already seen that there are 774 females for every one thousand males in the urban of the district of Koch Bihar the Proportion of sexes for individual towns varies between 708 in Haldibari to 816 in Mathabhanga. The sex ratio of the children of this group is growing in number. Their proportion has considerably increased over that decade in this district.

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