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**CHAPTER – II**  
**PHYSICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC**  
**BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA**

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## **Chapter - II**

### **Physical and Socio-Economic Background of the Study Area**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

India became independent on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 and was divided and given birth to Pakistan as a new country. A major part of undivided Dinajpur District falls under this bifurcation and approximately two third of the undivided Dinajpur District included under erstwhile East Pakistan presently Bangladesh and one third came in India. The Indian part of divided Dinajpur District was named as West Dinajpur. But the District was so long stretched from Chopra to Hili and the administration had to face various difficulties for smooth functioning of the administrative activities. To overcome this difficulty, the then West Dinajpur District was further sub-divided into Uttar Dinajpur and Dakshin Dinajpur District with Head Quarters at Raiganj and Balurghat respectively on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1992.

#### **2.2 Historical Background**

The existence of undivided Dinajpur District in history records some two thousand years back. The then Dinajpur District was very much rich in historical, archeological, mythological, religious, and cultural heritages. The District experienced various dynasties like Maurya, the Gupta, the Pal and Sen etc. Several Muslim rulers also attacked the District various times and District also observed the glory of Jainism and Buddhism. The District was under Pundra Kingdom in ancient times. It was said that the origin of the state of Pundra was from Aitareya Brahmana and the community of this kingdom was known as Pundras. It was also belief that the Pundras are from the first chapter of Mahabharata and Haribangsha. The archeological ruins of Pundrabardhan could be seen in the Bagura District now in Bangladesh. Gourpur and Kotibarsha were also to important towns of this dynasty. Now, Bangarh is situated beside Punarbhaba river in Gangarampur which once named as Kotibarsha. In Hindu mythology we can find the description of Kotibarsha which was under the kingdom of Birat which he got after the assassination of king Bana by Lord Krishna. The present place Bairhatta in Harirampur C.D Block was the capital of the king Birat.

In this district Jainism was spread with the establishment of Maurya empire in fourth century B.C and Bhadrabahu was the Guru of Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of Maurya empire. Bhadrabahu was born in Kotikpur that is now in Gangarampur. The archeological evidences of Bangarh also established the fact. The Gupta dynasty was continued in the district of Dakshin Dinajpur till the middle of sixth century. The various inscriptions found in the district proved that the impact of Guptas over Pundrabardhana. This inscription and the presence of gold and silver coins witnessed the prosperity of Gupta dynasty. From the historical evidence it is found that after Gupta dynasty, Gopal, the founder of Pal dynasty, ruled the district approximately twenty years (750 to 770 A.D). It is said that during Gopal's reign numerous ponds, water bodies were formed in various places of the district and these are still in places as evidence of those great Pal rulers. Mahi Pal II Dug a huge tank in Kushmandi C.D Block which is still famous as Mahi Pal Dighi in the local people.

The Dakshin Dinajpur district is bounded on three sides by the Indo-Bangladesh international border (approx. 252 km). Six of the district's eight Blocks have borders with Bangladesh. Before Independence of India the district was a part of Dinajpur district, biggest district in undivided Bengal. The partition has taken its toll and the major portion of the district is now in Bangladesh. After partition and Independence, the western part of the undivided district came in India and named as West Dinajpur. The district had borders with Bangladesh in the north and eastern side. Malda district was in the south and Bihar bordered the district's western fringe. Areas from Bihar were added to the district in 1956. Again the West Dinajpur district was bifurcated into two districts, the northern part was renamed as Uttar Dinajpur with its headquarter at Raiganj and southern part as Dakshin Dinajpur with its headquarter at Balurghat on 01.04.1992.

The district has a long experience of administrative management. The administrative structure was nurtured and strengthened under successive dynasties. The Pals and the Sens, the great ruling dynasties of Bengal, ruled this region. During the Mughal period, Dinajpur was one of their Pargana and since then zamindary system of administration was flourished. The British Rulers first introduced modern and structured administrative system in the district. As stated earlier the Dinajpur was the biggest administrative district of undivided Bengal and Balurghat, the present headquarter of Dakshin Dinajpur, was a sub-divisional headquarter during pre-

Independence days. Thus, the district is a part of long administrative traditions. The people of the district are in general identified as peaceful with this administrative tradition. This is one of the main reasons that the residents of the district are law-abiding and in spite of being a bordering district, it is generally free from any major border related law and order problem.

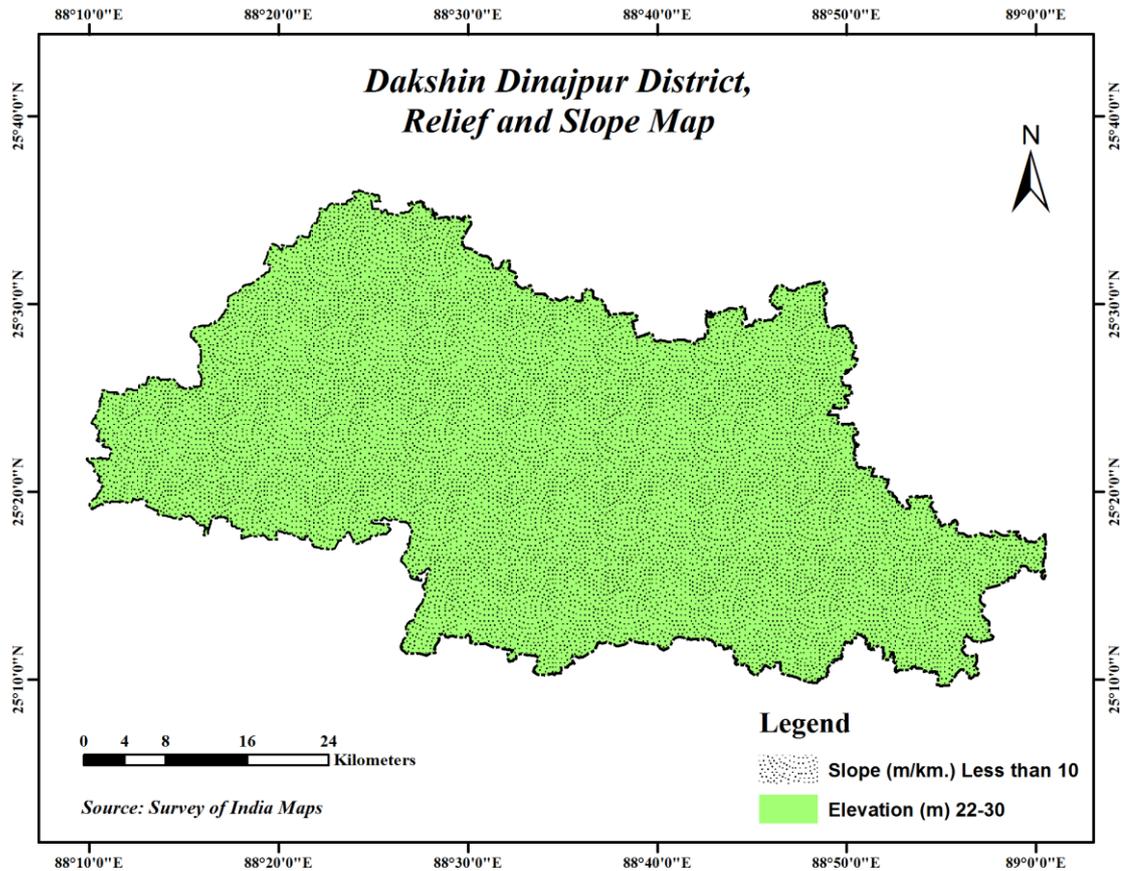
The district is located in a far corner of the state- approximately 440 km from the state capital Kolkata. The other large consumption center, Siliguri is situated at about 305 km from the district headquarter Balurghat. Road connectivity is the only form of access till this day but railway service is limited. The State Highway length of about 110 km. emerging from Gazole in Malda district on National Highway, to Hili is the only link. Hili, a bordering block headquarter town, was a flourishing town before partition. The major part of the town is now in Bangladesh. Hili was an important railway junction in pre-Independence India. The journey to Kolkata from Hili (25 km from Balurghat, the district head quarter of Dakshin Dinajpur) was only 8 (eight) hours prior to 1947. The railway station along with the railway line now falls within Bangladesh. The partition has economically paralyzed the district. New railway link from Eklakhi (on Malda-New Jalpaiguri railway route) to Balurghat has been laid in the district after 57 years of Independence and started service on and from 30/12/2004. The commercial operations of trains have improved connectivity with the capital city i.e. Kolkata and the other large city i.e. Siliguri. The further extension of the railway link to Hili will lead to further economic growth of the district. Hili is already the second largest land custom station / land port in the state. Railway connectivity to Hili will help in increase in exports volumes through this land port. Dakshin Dinajpur district is considered to be a backward district in the State of West Bengal. No National Highway passes through the district excepting a stretch of approximately 3 Kilometers' in Harirampur Block. There is also an airstrip in Balurghat and air services between Balurghat and Kolkata was in commission till the early nineteen eighties. Since then, the air strip has not been used.

## **2.3 Physical Background**

### **2.3.1 Physiography**

The District is a featureless plain consisting entirely of alluvium. The area forms part of the great barind or Pleistocene (older) alluvium, which is the largest of the

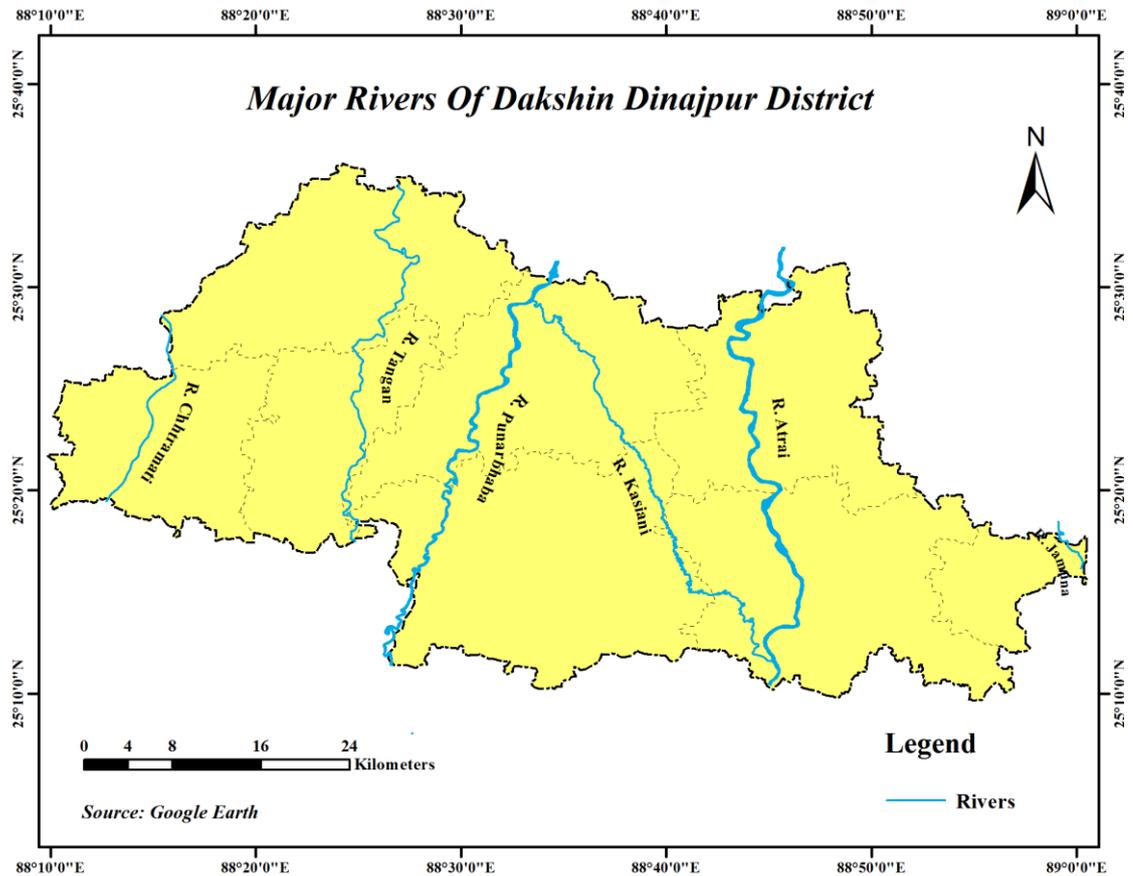
alluvial units of the Bengal basin. At the surface, this older alluvium is covered by the floodplains of the Tangan, Punarbhava, Atrayee and Yamuna rivers which are flowing in a southerly direction.



**Map 2.1 Relief and Slope Map of Dakshin Dinajpur District**

### 2.3.2 Drainage System

The main rivers draining the district are Atrayee, Punarbhava, Tangan and Yamuna. All these rivers flow from North to South following the general slope of the land. These rivers have originated from Bangladesh. Besides, there are three small rivers i.e. Ichhamati, Bramhani and Tulai flow through this district. There are number of streams and canals originating from big, small rivers and merging with others. All these rivers and streams are perennial in nature and generally do not dry up even during the dry seasons. Heavy rains cause the rivers to flood their banks every year and deposit alluvium soil which proves beneficial for cultivation.



**Map 2.2 Major Rivers of Dakshin Dinajpur District**

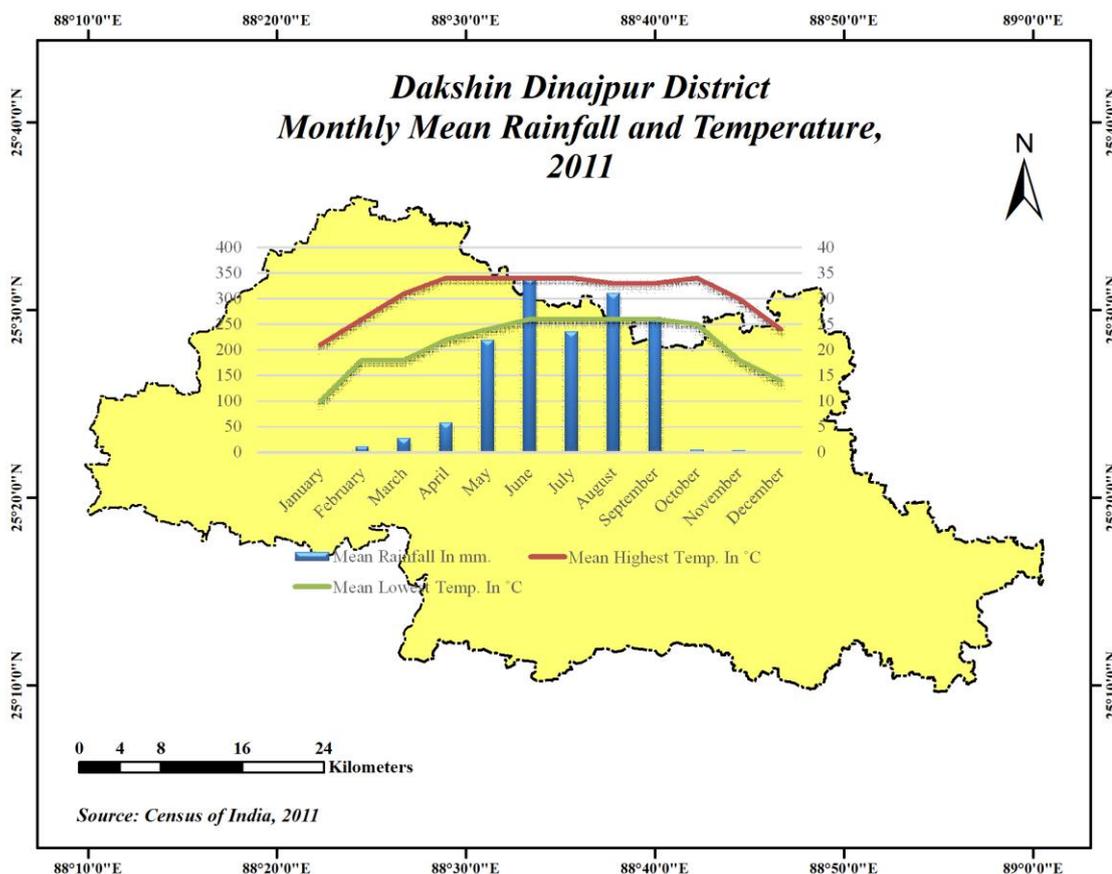
### 2.3.3 Climate

Dakshin Dinajpur experiences an almost extreme sort of climate-very hot summer, heavy rains and cold winters. The district reels under the effect of the hot, strong western wind which sends temperature soaring to around 37°C to 39°C during the summer months of March to June. Monsoons though unpredictable, set in by the second week of June and the onslaught of the heavy rains continues till September causing heavy floods and devastation almost every year. Dakshin Dinajpur experienced an average annual rainfall of 1497 mm in the year 2011. Winter season commences in the months of October-November and February being the coldest month recorded in 2008 (10°C). However, the dominant season of the district remains the hot wet monsoon season with a high degree of humidity.

**Table 2.1 Mean Monthly Temperature-Rainfall data of Dakshin Dinajpur District, 2011**

Month	Temperature ( °C)		Rainfall (mm)
	Mean		
	Max	Min	
January	23	12	-
February	25	13	45
March	31	20	1
April	36	26	5
May	36	27	138
June	34	26	388
July	34	26	238
August	34	26	239
September	32	26	256
October	33	25	18
November	28	19	-
December	27	13	-

Source: District Statistical Hand Book, 2011



**Figure 2.1 Mean Monthly Rainfall and Temperature, Dakshin Dinajpur District, 2011**

### **2.3.4 Soil**

The soil texture of the district can be broadly divided into two main groups- i) alluvium and ii) laterite. The soil type is of 4 kinds - i) Sandy, ii) Sandy loam, iii) Clay and iii) Clay loam. The Blocks of Balurghat, Hili, Kumarganj, Gangarampur, Banshihari, Kushmandi and Harirampur predominantly have alluvium soil. The rich alluvium soil has enabled double cropping and even multiple cropping in the district. As the rivers overflow their banks every year, the soil is further enriched, which allows the farmers to reap a bumper harvest. The district is nearly flat with a gentle slope from North to South.

### **2.3.5 Natural Vegetation**

Forest Resource of Dakshin Dinajpur district are inconspicuous. Geographically 1097 hectares of land is covered by various types of forests. Among those areas covered by reserved forest, protected forest, unclassed state forest and forest owned by corporate bodies are 549.34 hectares, 157.31 hectares, 145.11 hectares and 245.25 hectares respectively. Apart from these the trees usually found in the district are the Mango, Jam, Banana, Simul, and Palas. The most abundant vegetation is Bamboo. Almost the whole of the district having been brought under cultivation it is not possible to specify particular areas containing some definite type of vegetation. The trees found in the natural forests are usually Sal of a typical variety, Eucalyptus, Hijal, Sisu, Simul, Teak etc. Due to widespread pressure of human habitation there is hardly any wild animal worth mentioning in the district. However, Jackals and wildcats are still found.

## **2.4 Socio-Economic Background**

### **2.4.1 Demography**

The 2011 Population Census records the district population of Dakshin Dinajpur as 16,76,276 of which male population was 8,57,199 (51.14%) and female population was 8,19,077 (48.86%). The rural population is 14,39,981 (85.90%) and the urban population is only 2,36,295 (14.10%). This huge population of 16.76 lakh resides over an area of about 2219 sq.km giving a density of population of 755 persons per sq.km. The sex ratio of the district is 956 females per thousand males, out of which 952 is rural sex ratio and 979 is the urban sex ratio. The decadal growth of population was 11.92 % (2001-2011), whereas the state average is 13.84%. The male population growth is

11.67% in the District, whereas female population growth is 12.18% of the District and the female population growth i.e. 12.18% is below the states average female population growth by 2.69%.

The state average density of population is 1028 persons per Sq. km. which is also higher than 123 persons of the District average i.e. 755 persons per sq. km. If we consider another cross-section of the population in terms of rural urban subdivision, 85.90% of the total population in the district lives in the rural area and only 14.10% lives in the urban belt. Thus, the district has a predominantly rural population and hence, a distinctive rural character. The modern concept of urbanization and consumerism in the district are still relatively new.

#### **2.4.2 Literacy**

It is well established fact that a literate population serves as the driving force of economy and development. The literacy figure of Dakshin Dinajpur is not very impressive at 72.82% (as per 2011 census) in comparison with state average 76.26%. Out of which the male literacy rate in the District is 78.37% which is also lower than state average i.e. 81.69%. In case of female literacy, the rate is also not satisfactory i.e. 67.01%, which is also lower than state average female literacy rate i.e. 70.54%.

#### **2.4.3 Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Population**

The District of Dakshin Dinajpur is recorded higher number of Scheduled Caste population i.e. 482754 persons as per 2011 Census i.e. 28.80% of the total population of the District, which is higher than states average SC population i.e. 23.51%. In case ST Population this District has also higher percentage of ST population i.e. 16.43% of total population which is also remarkably higher than states average 5.80% of the total population of the state.

#### **2.4.4 Occupational Pattern of Population**

Occupational pattern of the population largely depends on the rural urban character of the district, availability of resources, literacy rate and skill of the population and other Socio-Economic factors. The major economic activities in turn depend on the occupational pattern of population. Since, the district is primarily a rural one, the occupational structure is heavily balanced on the agricultural side, nearly 70% of the population being dependent on agriculture as their major means of livelihood. Heavy

dependence on agriculture has mainly resulted from lack of proper development of alternative and suitable dimensions of employment, expanding population, low literacy level and very low levels of industrial growth.

As per Census of India 2011 record, Dakshin Dinajpur has a total of 7,02,987 total workers i.e. 41.94% of the total population out of which male worker is 58.28% and female workers are 24.84%. Out of this total worker 526470 i.e. 31.41% population are main worker. In the District 176517 i.e. 10.53% of total worker are marginal worker which is higher than state average i.e. 9.94%. In case of non-worker, the District has a very high rate of population i.e. 58.06% or 973289 persons as per 2011 Census report.

Out of total worker 27.49% are cultivators which is much higher than state average is 14.72%. In case of agricultural labourers the District has a high record percent i.e. 39.82% whereas the state average is 29.32%. In case of workers in household industry the District has an average low status i.e. 4.59% which is lower than state average 7.09%. Regarding other workers, the District has also a low growth rate i.e. 28.09%, whereas the state figure is 48.87%. Thus, the district has an alarming high percentage of non-workers who cannot make any significant contribution to the process of growth.

#### **2.4.5 Agriculture**

Agriculture can be said to be one of the most vital sectors of growth in the district of Dakshin Dinajpur. Growth in this sector will have a definite and positive impact on the growth of the other sectors dependent on this sector. Besides, agriculture is the pre-dominant sector providing employment to the vast rural masses. With no major industrial activities pursued in the district, this sector absorbs those who cannot find suitable employment elsewhere. Thus, underemployment is another basic feature of agriculture in Dakshin Dinajpur.

The predominance of agriculture in the field of agriculture become clear if we consider the statistics i.e. Out of total workers' cultivators constitute 27.49%, out of which male cultivators are 33.62% and female cultivators are 12.44%. Agricultural labourers constitute 39.82% as per Census of India 2011 report and interestingly the male agricultural labourers are 34.35% than states average 27.90% and female labourers has broken the highest record scoring 53.26% than states average of our states

west Bengal 34.03%. Thus majority of workers are engaged in agriculture and its related activities.

#### **2.4.6 Industry**

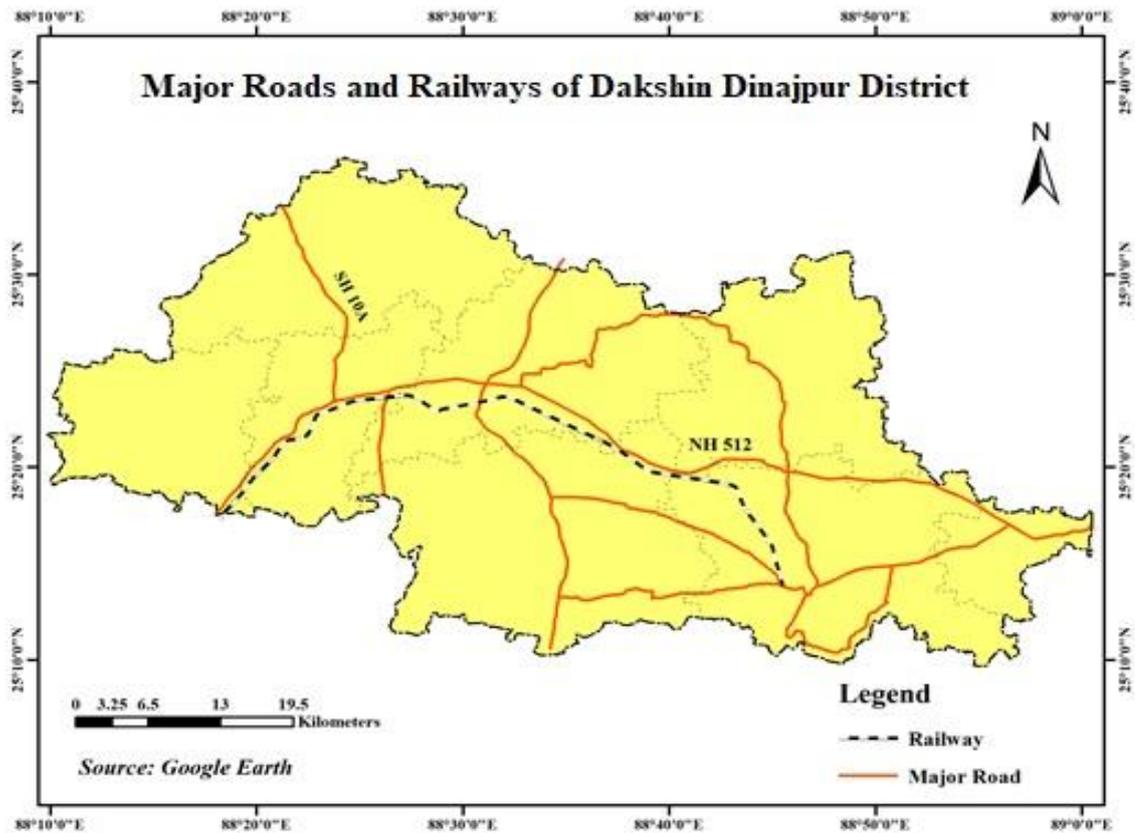
Industry plays a crucial role in nourishing the seeds of development. The predominantly agricultural district of Dakshin Dinajpur has no major industrial projects. Lack of proper infrastructure, locational disadvantage and dearth of proper transport and communication facilities have pushed the district to an industrially backward corner. There are no large and medium scale industries in the district but few small scale units exist. As per the record of 2011 the district has 1220 registered small industrial establishments where 15011 persons are employed.

#### **2.4.7 Power**

The Power requirement of Dakshin Dinajpur district is met by The West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd. (WBSEDCL). The mode of distribution is through overhead wires. The supply of electricity for the district comes from a) The North Bengal Unit via Raiganj and b) The unit at Malda via Gazole. Total consumption of electricity in Dakshin Dinajpur for the period 2001-2011 was 58682950 K.W.H.

#### **2.4.8 Transport and Communication**

The most common means of transport in the district is road transport. Road transport in the district consists of a network of roads and highways traversing the length and breadth of the district which are maintained by the PWD and the local bodies. Earlier in the year 2001 there was only 3 km length of National Highway No 34 passing through this district and four State Highways covering the total distance of 125 km. Now, the Gazole-Hili Sate highway has been upgraded to National Highway No. 512 with a total length of 77 K.M. and this road is working as the connecting lifeline of the District with the outer world. The NH 512 has been upgraded by the fund given by the Asian Development Bank under the Backward Area Development Project. Since independence, there was no railway transport in the district. Few years back railway lines have been laid down between Eklakhi and Balurghat (the district headquarter) and the district first experience the railway journey on 30.12.2004.



**Map 2.3 Major Roads and Railways of Dakshin Dinajpur District**

#### **2.4.9 Conclusion**

Dakshin Dinajpur District is basically a rural district with very low rate of urbanization and is based on agrarian nature of economy. The people are very much peace loving with no significant social and any other disturbance prevailing throughout the District. The social structure as well as economic conditions basically based on Agricultural activities and the minimum percentage of Small Scale Industries are present in the District. People in general are very much dependent on the various services provided by the Government departments and Government Sector. No significant large scale private initiatives have been taken place till date. The social and economic conditions of various C.D. Blocks as well as the District is of immense importance to the policy makers, Planners, academicians and Government Departments for the future planning process of the District. This study may help to some extent in this regard.

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