

CHAPTER - III

Population and Poverty of Cooch Behar.

Problems of Economic Development:

The study of human resource is vital in any discussion on either economic development or rural poverty. It is important because man is not only the creator of resource but also its user. ⁽¹⁾ The fruits of economic development are enjoyed by the population of a particular region or by a particular country. There is a close relationship between the growth of population and economic development. If the rate of growth of population of a particular region is greater than the rate of growth of income, then the economy of that region will be caught into a "low level equilibrium trap." ⁽²⁾ A rapid growth of population hinders economic development and aggravates poverty, if the increased manpower is not properly utilised into the development process. In sparsely populated areas, any rise in population is a positive sign for economic development because it increases exploitation of natural resources. On the otherhand, in thickly populated areas, any rise in population hinders economic development if they are not properly utilised for development process. As development process involves both the individual and society, the growth of population as well as distribution of

population of our research area naturally comes into discussion.

a) A study of the population of the District.

It will be interesting to trace the growth of population in the district since 1872 when the first census was taken. The settlement department took the first census in the district over a period extending over three months and it counted 532565 heads (males 278585, females 253980) in 1872. The next census in 1881 registered a substantial increase of 13.2 percent. This increase was chiefly due to more accurate counting but it is also certain that the State of Cooch Behar at that time was considered to be prosperous and could therefore, easily attract more immigrants.

But between 1881 and 1891 there were decreases in every police station except Tufanganj which continued to grow on account of immigrants. There were two outbreaks of Cholera in 1883 and a severe epidemic in 1887-88 and emigration to the Duars of Jalpaiguri. But Cooch Behar is intersected by several large rivers flowing from the Himalayas in unobstructed channels, and yields a water supply which is ordinarily pure but liable to be easily contaminated. It is a low lying water logged plain, and the unhealthiness of the climate, and to a smaller extent, emigration, robbed the state of a proportion of its population

in 1891-1901. There was a severe epidemic of Cholera in 1891. But the condition of the people in other respects was satisfactory. They got three crops a year, and if one fell short, they had the others to fall back upon. There was a scarcity in 1892 and 1897, but it did not amount to famine and in other years the out-turn was usually good. The Gitaldaha - Manshahi railway line (3' 3½" gauge) opened in 1893, followed by the Manshahi - Cooch Behar extension in 1898 and another extension from Cooch Behar to Alipurduar in 1900. This railway which in 1913-14 became the Cooch Behar State railway and the Bengal - Duars State railway did much to develop the resources of the country and greatly facilitated the disposal of produce of all kinds. But unhealthiness of the climate of this part of the country had all the retarding effects in the decline of population in some periods.

(3)

Conditions during the decade ending in 1911 were more favourable. During the decade (1901-11), population increased by 4.6 percent. This increase was mainly due to immigration. Cultivation during this period expanded to a considerable extent. Cultivators were benefitted by the rise in the prices of agricultural produce and there was an increasing demand for labour which was met by the import of Coolies from up-country.

During 1911-21 there was no event of great importance except the influenza epidemic and immigration. During 1921-31, the state of West Bengal as a whole showed a good sign of recovery of registering an increase of population to the tune of 8.14%. But Cooch Behar still had declining population. In no other part of the entire State of West Bengal was seen such a peculiar phenomenon as was observed in the district of Cooch Behar, which still suffered a loss of population to the extent of 0.26%. The rural areas of the district registered a loss of 0.40%. This loss of population was caused by heavy cholera and small pox epidemics.

During 1931-41 there was no major event affecting the population. During 1941-51, the famine and epidemics of 1943-44 did not trouble the state to any degree. There was a severe flood in Mekhliganj in June 1950 followed by an earthquake in August, the same year. In 1950-51, there was a big spate of immigration of displaced persons from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).⁽⁴⁾

In the census of 1961, 1019806 persons have been counted in the district of Cooch Behar of which 539694 are males and 480112 females⁽⁵⁾. Ten years back, the district was inhabited by 668949 number of people. During these last ten years, the population of the district increased by

350857 i.e. 52.45 percent over its population of 1951, the highest rate of growth in the district in any one of the past census decades. The rural population of the district increased by 53.27 percent during the last decade while the urban population had gone up by 42.38 percent. In the state of West Bengal as a whole the population increased by 32.80 percent during the decade 1951-61. The rural population had gone up by only 31.81 percent in the state while the urban population had shown an increase of 35.97 percent during the last decade.

During the decade i.e. 1951-61, Cooch Behar's growth of population had been phenomenal. In fact, Cooch Behar recorded the highest rate of growth of population as compared to any other parts of the state of West Bengal.

Settlement of displaced persons in different parts of the district had a great bearing on the growth of population during the decade 1951-61. In the census of 1961 as many as 297879 persons came from outside the district. During the ten - year period of 1951-61, a number of 201953 persons immigrated to this district. In other words, it may be said that every fifth person of Cooch Behar has come to this place as immigrant. Out of the total migrants cited above as many

as 252753 persons have come from the then East Pakistan. Of them 171077 persons have come during the ten-year period of 1951-61. They comprise about 17 percent of the total population of the district. On further analysis it appears that as many as 11470 persons came within one year preceding March of 1961, and 73204 between 1955 and 1960. Between 1951 and 1955 as many as 86403 persons came from erstwhile East Pakistan to this district.

The Bengal Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1873 was extended to the district of Cooch Behar only after May 31, 1953. Hence the absence of relevant data on the vital statistics of the district renders it impossible to make out the trend of natural growth vis-a-vis the effect of migration on the growth of population in Cooch Behar.

The district was inhabited by a population of 1414183 of which 737931 were males and 676252 were females as per 1971 Census. ⁽⁶⁾ Total rural population was 1317531 of which 685303 were males and 632228 were females. Total urban population was 96652 of which 52628 were males and 44024 were females. The degree of urbanisation or the proportion of urban to total population was very low in the district. It was recorded 6.83% which was much lower than the State percentage of 24.75. The decennial population growth rate for the district

(38.67) was fairly impressive and considerably above the decennial population growth rate for the State of West Bengal (26.87%).

An important feature of the district Cooch Behar is the border which it has with Bangladesh. In-migration from across the international borders had been an important component of the growth of population in the district. Somehow, the role of such in-migrants had been predominant in the case of Cooch Behar either in 1961-71 or in preceding decades. However, there is no denying the fact that it had an important role in pushing up the rate of growth during the decades. But the growth rate of population in the decade 1951-61 was much lower than the growth rate of the decade 1961-71.

As per 1981 census, the population of Cooch Behar was 1771643 of which 915461 were males and 856182 were females. ⁽⁷⁾ The district has registered a growth rate of 25.28 percent during this decade (1971-81) which is higher than the state figure of 23.17 percent. The growth rate of 1961-71 for the district was recorded as 38.67 percent against the state average of 26.87%. The decadal growth rate is higher for urban areas than rural areas of the district. In terms of percentage, they are 26.50 and 26.19 respectively. The position in 1961-71 was 38.93 percent for rural areas and 35.28 percent for urban areas. The police stationwise highest growth rate is observed in Sitai Police

Station which is recorded as 34.04 percent. Likewise, Haldibari Police Station shows the highest growth rate of 39.86 percent among the urban areas in the district. On the otherhand, Tufan-ganj Police Station accounts for 19.34 percent growth during the decade 1971-81 which happens to be lowest growth rate in the district.

A close look at the 1981 population figures of the Northern-most region of the State of West Bengal will show that the decadal percentage growth of population during 1971-81 had fallen everywhere except in the district Darjeeling against the decadal percentage growth of population of 1961-71. This^{is} shown in table 3.1.

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Table - 3.1

Decadal variation of Population in Percentages.

Districts	1961-71	1971-81
Cooch Behar	+ 38.17	+ 25.27
Jalpaiguri	+ 28.76	+ 26.11
Darjeeling	+ 25.16	+ 28.74
West Dinajpur	+ 40.50	+ 29.10
Malda	+ 31.98	+ 26.19
West Bengal	+ 26.87	+ 22.97

The rate of growth of population in Cooch Bqhar District as explained earlier, depends to a large extent on the immigrants from erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

Table - 3.2

Population of Administrative divisions of Cooch Behar with variations and percentages of variations 1881-1981.

District & Police Station.	1881			1891			1901		
	Population 1881	Variation 1872-81	Percentage variation 1872-81	Population 1891	Variation 1881-91	Percentage variation 1881-91	Population 1901	Variation 1891-1901	P.C. variation 1891-1901
Cooch Behar District.	602624	+ 70059	+ 13.2	578868	- 23756	- 3.9	566974	- 11894	- 2.1
1. Tufanganj	65877	+ 15009	+ 29.5	73106	+ 7229	+11.0	73438	+ 332	+ 0.5
2. Dinhata	127924	+ 12022	+ 10.4	120721	- 7203	- 5.6	118317	- 2404	- 2.0
3. Sitai	27660	+ 2600	+ 10.4	26103	- 1557	- 5.6	25583	- 520	- 2.0
4. Cooch Behar	139294	+ 14234	+ 11.4	129243	- 10051	- 7.2	121609	- 7634	- 5.9
5. Sitalkuchi	48439	+ 4553	+ 10.4	45187	- 3252	- 6.7	44009	- 1178	- 2.6
6. Mathabhanga	105853	+ 9948	+ 10.4	98747	- 7106	- 6.7	96174	- 2573	- 2.6
7. Mekliganj	52166	+ 6965	+ 15.4	51004	- 1162	- 2.2	50203	- 801	- 1.6
8. Haldibari	35411	+ 4728	+ 15.5	34757	- 665	- 1.8	37641	+ 2884	+ 8.3

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District & Police Station	1911			1921			1931		
	Population 1911	Variation 1901-11	P.C.Variation 1901-11	Population 1921	Variation 1911-21	P.C.Variation 1911-21	Population 1931	Variation 1921-31	P.C.Variation 1921-31
Cooch Behar District.	592952	+ 25978	+ 4.6	592489	- 463	- 0.1	590886	-1603	- 0.3
1.Tufan-ganj	80147	+ 6709	+ 9.1	82963	+ 2816	+ 3.5	85147	+2184	+ 2.6
2.Dinhata	122123	+ 3806	+ 3.2	121838	- 285	- 0.2	122370	+ 532	+ 0.4
3.Sitai	26406	+ 823	+ 3.2	26345	- 61	- 0.2	26460	+ 115	+ 0.4
4.Cooch Behar	130602	+ 8993	+ 7.4	132334	+ 1732	+ 1.3	132622	+ 288	+ 0.2
5.Sital-kuchi	44769	+ 760	+ 1.7	45323	+ 554	+ 1.2	44071	-1252	- 2.8
6.Matha-bhanga	97835	+ 1661	+ 1.7	96044	- 1791	- 1.8	95529	- 515	- 0.5
7.Mekli-ganj	51545	+ 1342	+ 2.7	48976	- 2569	- 5.0	47406	-1570	- 3.2
8.Haldi-bari	39525	+ 1884	+ 5.0	38666	- 859	- 2.2	37281	-1385	- 3.6

Table Contd.....

Table Contd.....3.2

District & Police Station	1941			1951			1961		
	Popula- tion 1941	Vari- ation 1931-41	P.C. Varia- tion 1931-41	Popula- tion 1951	Vari- ation 1941-51	P.C. Varia- tion 1941-51	Popula- tion 1961	Vari- ation 1951-61	P.C. of Varia- tion 1951-61
Cooch Behar	640842	+49956	+ 8.5	671158	+ 30316	+ 4.7	1019806	+ 350857	+ 52.27
1.Tufan- ganj	94702	+ 9555	+11.2	97713	+ 3011	+ 3.2	173637	+ 75924	+ 77.70
2.Dinhata	131874	+ 9505	+ 7.8	137000	+ 5126	+ 3.9	211295	+ 74295	+ 54.22
3.Sitai	28160	+ 1700	+ 6.4	24054	- 4106	-14.6	36664	+ 12610	+ 52.42
4.Cooch Behar	149974	+17352	+13.1	171865	+21891	+14.6	272484	+100619	+ 58.54
5.Sital- kuchi	46837	+ 2766	+ 6.3	45755	-1082	- 2.3	67720	+21965	+ 48.00
6.Mathabha- nga	100156	+ 4627	+ 4.8	102936	+2780	+ 2.8	150445	+47509	+ 46.15
7.Mekliganj	45523	+ 1883	- 4.0	45255	- 268	- 0.6	60057	+14802	+ 32.70
8.Haldibari	43616	+ 6335	+17.0	46580	+2964	+ 6.8	47504	+3133	+ 6.72

Table Contd.....

Contd.....Table 3.2

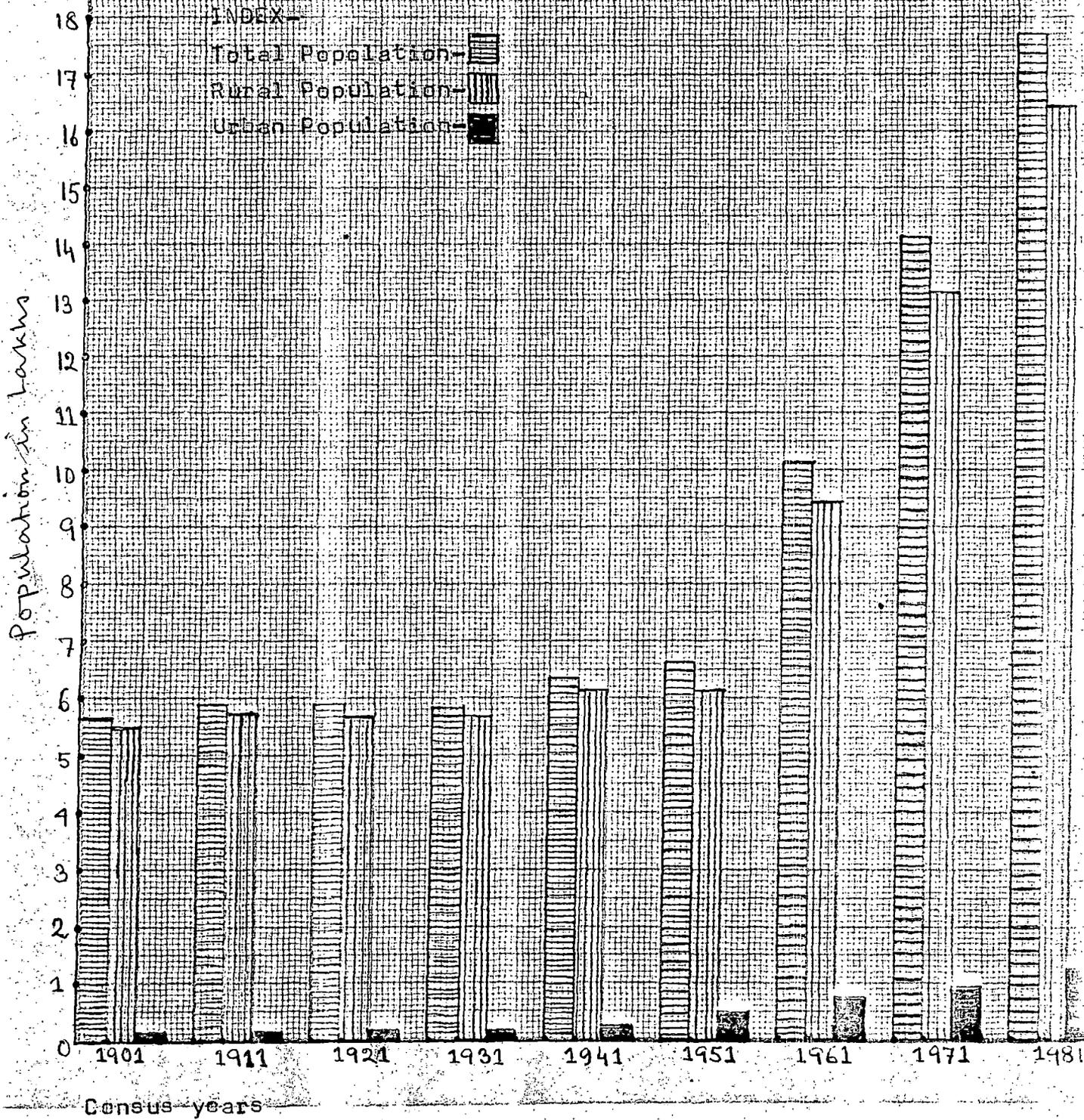
District & Police Station.	1971			1981		
	Population 1971	Variation 1961-71	P.C. of variation 1961-71	Population 1981	Variation 1971-81	P.C. of Variation 1971-81
Cooch Behar	1414183	+ 394377	+ 38.67	1771643	+ 357460	+ 25.28
1. Tufanganj	241633	+ 67996	+ 39.15	288270	+ 46737	+ 19.34
2. Dinhata	288801	+ 77506	+ 36.68	253149	+ 64348	+ 22.28
3. Sitai	51755	+ 15091	+ 41.16	69372	+ 17617	+ 34.04
4. Cooch Behar	372487	+ 100003	+ 36.70	467419	+ 94932	+ 25.49
5. Satalkuchi	95128	+ 27408	+ 40.47	125710	+ 30582	+ 32.15
6. Mathabhanga	226797	+ 76352	+ 50.75	290380	+ 63583	+ 28.04
7. Mekliganj	81067	+ 21010	+ 34.98	103268	+ 22201	+ 27.39
8. Haldibari	56515	+ 9010	+ 18.96	73975	+ 17460	+ 30.89

Source: Census of India 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981.

(b) Urban-Rural composition.

The Census Reports reveal a heavy concentration of population in rural areas of the district Cooch Behar. According to Census Report of 1961, 93% of population in Cooch Behar lived in villages as against 75% in the state of West Bengal as a whole. In 1951, this percentage of rural population to total population for the district was recorded 92.50%. During ten years (1951-61), the rural population increased by 52.26% in Cooch Behar while the urban population went up by 42.38%. In the state of West Bengal as a whole the rural population had gone up by only 31.81% while the urban population had shown an increase of 35.97% during this decade. In 1971 the percentage of rural population to total population again increased to 93.16 as against 75.25% in the State of West Bengal as a whole. During this ten years (1961-71), the rural population increased by 38.93% while the urban population had gone up by 35.28%. In the State of West Bengal as a whole the rural population went up by only 26.38% while the urban population had shown an increase of 28.41%. Similarly, in 1981 Census, the percentage of rural population to total population was recorded as 93.10 which was much higher than the percentage of the State as a whole (73.53). During the decade (1971-81), the rural population increased by 25.19% in Cooch Behar while the urban population had gone up by 26.50%. In the State as a whole the percentages were recorded

Diagram 3.1 - Growth of population and its rural-urban composition, in the District of Cooch Behar for the period 1901-1981



20.36 and 31.73 respectively. Thus, it was seen that during the period (1951-81), the percentage of rural population to total population as well as percentage increase in the rural population of the district was much higher than the state of West Bengal as a whole. The table 3.3 shows the rural/urban ratio in different years.

Table - 3.3

Rural - urban ratio of the district Cooch Behar during 1901-1981

Year	Total Population.	Urban Population.	Rural Population.	% of rural population to total population.
1901	565116	14060	551056	97.51%
1911	591012	15794	575218	97.33%
1921	590599	17261	573338	97.08%
1931	589053	18030	571023	96.94%
1941	638703	26821	611882	95.80%
1951	668949	50180	618769	92.50%
1961	1019806	71446	948360	92.99%
1971	1414183	96652	1317531	93.16%
1981	1771643	122260	1649383	93.10%

Source: District Census Handbook Cooch Behar, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981.

The above table shows that the district is almost entirely rural. The degree of urbanisation or the proportion of urban population to total population is very low (6.90 in 1981). It is in fact much lower than the state percentage of 26.47 (as per 1981 Census). Unlike other districts, no new town has come up during all the decades. This is an indication of the state of the economy of the district which has remained almost entirely dependent on agriculture. The rural population derives its livelihood mainly from agriculture.

Police station-wise total rural and urban population, percentage of urban population and number of towns in the district Cooch Behar according to 1981 census is shown in table 3.4.

Table - 3.4

Police Stationwise total, rural-urban population, percentage of urban population and number of towns in the district Cooch Behar as per 1981 Census.

Name of the police Station.	Total Population	Rural Population.	Urban Population.	% of urban Population to total Population	Number of Towns.
Haldibari	73975	66845	7130	9.63%	1
Mekliganj	103268	98734	4534	4.39%	1
Mathabhanga	290380	279327	11053	3.80%	1
Sitalkuchi	125710	125710	-	-	-
Koch Bihar	467419	387318	80101	17.13%	2
Tufanganj	288370	283464	4906	1.70%	1
Dinhata	353149	338613	14536	4.11%	1
Sitai	69372	69372	-	-	-

Source : 1981 Census

Now the district has seven towns of which two are administered by municipality, four by town committee and remaining one is a non-municipal town. Of the municipalities, the district head-quarters Koch Bihar is a class II town with a population of 80101 and sub-divisional head-quarters Dinhat with a population of 14536 has acquired the size class IV status. Two of the four town committees Mekliganj and Tufanganj cater the needs of towns of size class VI whereas one each for the size classes IV & V viz. Mathabhanga Town Committee for size class IV and Haldibari in size class V. The solitary non-municipal town Gurihati has the status of a class IV town. Among the statutory towns of state of West Bengal, Mekliganj with the population of 4534 happens to be smallest urban unit according to 1981 census.

In North Bengal there are considerable variations in the urbanisation process. Some districts are more urbanised than the average of West Bengal and some districts are very poor in respect of urbanisation process. A comparative study is made to show the nature of variation in table 3.5.

Table - 3.5

Percentage of urban population in different Districts of North Bengal According to 1981 Census.

District	P.C. of urban population to total population in the district.
1. Cooch Behar	6.30
2. Jalpaiguri	14.96
3. Darjeeling	27.86
4. West Dinajpur	11.19
5. Malda	4.78
6. West Bengal (Average)	26.49

It appears that Darjeeling District among other districts has the highest percentage of urban population and the percentage is higher than that of the average of West Bengal. But in Malda and Cooch Behar, the process of urbanisation is very slow and proportion of urban people in these two districts is lower than the average of North Bengal and the average of West Bengal. The comparative low growth of urbanisation of some of the districts reflects the nature of slow development in the area. This is because economic development is very often historically speaking, related to urbanisation process.

(c) Male - Female ratio.

In the Indian sub-continent males outnumber

females. The same is also true with the state of West Bengal. In West Bengal males have always outnumbered females since 1901 when the sex ratio was 945. Upto 1941 it was gradually going down in each census year. But from 1951 census there had been a considerable recovery in the sex ratio in the State of West Bengal as a whole. In 1981 Census, there were 911 females for every thousand male population in the State. But in the district of Cooch Behar, the proportion of sexes improved, though ~~six~~ slightly, during the last sixty-year period. The proportion of female population here had always been less as compared to most other areas of the state. At the turn of present century, for every one thousand male population there were only 881 females in this district. This proportion went down slightly during the next two decades. In 1931 a slight improvement was observed in the number of female population in the district. During the next two decades again the sex ratio was gradually going down. From 1961 there had been a considerable recovery and the proportion of sexes in the district was even better than that of West Bengal as a whole. There had been 935 females per one thousand male population in this district as per 1981 census. The following statement gives an account of the variations in the proportion of sexes between the last eighty years for the district of Cooch Behar as compared to those for the entire state of West Bengal.

Table - 3.6

Variations in the proportion of sexes during 1901-1981
for the district of Cooch Behar.

Census year	Number of Females per 1000 males	
	Cooch Behar	West Bengal
1901	881	945
1911	873	925
1921	877	905
1931	886	890
1941	879	852
1951	855	865
1961	890	878
1971	916	891
1981	935	911

Source : Cooch Behar District Census Handbook
1951, 1961, 1971, 1981.

(d) Composition of Scheduled Castes and Tribes Population.

Scheduled caste and Tribe population are very important to understand the structure of population. There is a high concentration of Scheduled caste population in the district of Cooch Behar. On the otherhand, scheduled tribe population is very negligible in this district. The Tribe

population are mainly found in Tea Gardens. As per 1961 Census, 47 percent of the population of the district of Cooch Behar belonged to scheduled caste. But in the State of West Bengal as a whole, the scheduled caste population comprised only 19.7 percent of its total population. In the rural sector of the district, every alternate person is a scheduled caste whereas in the state the scheduled castes in the rural areas were only 23.6 percent of the state's rural population. In the urban sector, the proportion of scheduled caste population in the district was a little less than that of the state. In the state, only 7.9 percent of the urban population were member of the scheduled castes, whereas they make 7.2 percent of the urban population of Cooch Behar. Among the male population of the district, 46.62 percent were scheduled caste whereas among the females, a little more than 46.22 percent belonged to the scheduled castes.

In 1971 census, the percentage of scheduled castes population to total population of the district rose to 47.02 percent. This percentage was much higher than the percentage of scheduled caste population to total population of the state as a whole (19.90). Among the male population of the district, 46.94 percent were scheduled caste whereas among females, a little more than 47.12 percent belonged to scheduled castes.

But, for the state as a whole it was marked that among the male population of the state 19.52 were scheduled caste whereas among the females, a little more than 20.31 percent belonged to the scheduled castes.

In 1981 census again, the percentage of scheduled castes population to total population of the district rose to 49.84. This percentage was also much higher than the percentage of the state as a whole (21.99). In the rural sector of the district, the proportion of scheduled caste population to total rural population accounted for 52.60 and in urban sector the percentage was 12.74. Among the male population of the district, 49.79 percent were scheduled caste whereas among the females, a little more than 49.89 percent belonged to scheduled castes. The Census Reports (1961, 1971, 1981) also revealed that a small fraction of the total population of the district Cooch Behar was scheduled tribes. From census Reports, it was observed that the percentage of scheduled tribe population to total population of the district, was gradually declining. In 1961, the percentage of scheduled tribe population to total population of the district was 0.86. This percentage was reduced to 0.75 in 1971 and 0.57 in 1981. But the percentage of scheduled tribe population to total population of West Bengal as a whole shows a higher figure over the district in Census Reports of 1961, 1971 and 1981. The composition of scheduled caste

and tribe population of the district Cooch Behar for the Census years of 1961, 1971 and 1981 is shown in table 3.7.

Table - 3.7

Composition of Scheduled Caste and Tribe population of the district of Cooch Behar during 1961-1981.

District	Year	Total Population.	S. C. Population.	S.T. Population.	% of S.C. Population to total population.	% of S.T. Population to total population.
Cooch Behar.	1961	1019806	478340	8809	46.90	.86
	1971	1414183	665020	10611	47.02	.75
	1981	1771643	883084	10105	49.84	.57

Source: District Census Reports : 1961, 1971, 1981.

Police stationwise, scheduled castes of this district mostly live in Mekliganj, Mathabhanga, Sitai, Haldibari and Sitalkuchi. On the other hand, scheduled tribes mostly live in Cooch Behar and Tufanganj police Stations. This is shown in the table 3.8.

Table - 3.8

Name of the Police Station.	Total population.	Total S.C. population.	Total S. T. population	% of S.C. population to total population.	% of S. T. population to total population.
1. Haldibari	73975	43344	249	58.59	.34
2. Mekliganj	103268	73744	730	71.41	.74
3. Mathabhanga	290380	186670	1972	64.28	.68
4. Sitalkuchi	125710	72374	38	57.57	.03
5. Kotch Behar	467419	187170	2901	40.04	2.31
6. Tufanganj	288370	124766	2833	43.27	1.91
7. Dinhata	353149	147286	1380	41.71	.39
8. Sitai	69372	47730	2	68.80	Negligible.
Cooch Behar District.	1771643	883084	10105	49.85	.57

Source : District Census Handbook (Cooch Behar) 1981.

As per 1981 Census, North Bengal contributes about 17.31% of total population of West Bengal; but its population mix is somewhat different from that of West Bengal as a whole because the proportion of scheduled castes as well as scheduled tribes population is much higher than the West Bengal average. Thus, whereas percentage of scheduled castes population to total population for the state is nearly 22%, it is about 30% for the North Bengal (in 1981).

In the total population for each of the five districts, the proportion of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes population (in percentages) is as below:-

<u>Districts</u>	<u>S. C.</u>	<u>S.T.</u>
Cooch Behar	49.85%	0.57%
Jalpaiguri	34.61%	22.20%
Darjeeling	14.25%	14.75%
West Dinajpur	28.57%	10.82%
Malda	16.89%	7.54%

Concentration of S.C. population is highest in Cooch Behar and lowest in Darjeeling. On the otherhand, S. T. population is highest in Jalpaiguri and lowest in Cooch Behar. Rajbansis form the major scheduled caste in the districts of North Bengal. Next come the Kami (Nepali), Bagdi, Sarki (Nepali), Namasudra, Kaibarta etc. On the otherhand, Mundas, Santals,

Oraons constitute the major tribal population of the tea gardens of Terai and Duars of North Bengal. Lepchas constitute the major tribal group in hill areas.

The scheduled tribe population is mainly concentrated in Duras and Terai area of North Bengal. They are mostly tea garden labourers. But scheduled caste population (10) is mainly found in Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri Districts .

(e) Variations in the Density of Population.

The five North Bengal districts of the Jalpai-guri division form the low density zone in the state of West Bengal. The presidency division comprises the high density zone, all the districts in this division being above the state average. Barring the western tracts of Bankura and Purulia, the Burdwan division can be said to lie in the border line of high and medium density zones. The pressure on soil is maximum in Malda among the North Bengal districts and next to it is Cooch Behar. The following table shows the variation in density of population of this district for 80 years:

Table - 3.9

Variation in density of population (persons per square mile) between 1901 - 1981.

Census Year	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981
Cooch Behar District.	430	450	450	448	486	509	776	418	523
Sadar Sub-division.	427	459	465	466	527	603	957	505	NA
Cooch Behar Tufanganj Sub-division	427	459	465	466	527	603	957	505	NA
Tufanganj	328	358	370	380	423	436	775	413	NA
Dinhata Sub-division	328	358	370	380	423	436	775	413	NA
Dinhata	529	546	545	547	589	592	912	484	NA
Sitai	561	579	578	580	625	650	1002	529	NA
Mathabhanga Sub-division	419	438	432	434	462	394	601	328	NA
Mathabhanga Sitalkuchi	409	416	412	407	429	434	636	362	NA
Mekliganj Sub-division	397	404	397	395	414	425	622	362	NA
Mekliganj Haldibari	436	443	449	436	464	453	670	364	NA
	452	469	451	436	457	471	566	276	NA
	445	457	435	421	404	402	533	273	NA
	462	485	475	457	535	573	513	282	NA

Source: Census of India, 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1981.

Note : N.A. - Not available.

The table shows that in the district of Cooch Behar 523 persons on an average density were found to be occupying one square mile of area against the state density figure of 615. Cooch Behar was all along a thinly populated area. In 1972, when the first census was taken the density was as low as 403 persons per square mile. Upto 1941, its density was below 500 and fluctuated within a narrow range from decade to decade. In 1951, the density figure became a little more than 500. Still it did not go much beyond that narrow range of density fluctuations. In 1961, the density of the district had shot up considerably to a high point in comparison to its densities in earlier decades. In 1971, again the density of the district had fallen considerably to a low point in comparison to 1961. Again in 1981, the density rose to 523 but it was much lower than in 1961. The density figure of 523 in 1981 was much lower than the density figure of the state (615). The district still contains some area of waste, uncultivable land and the pressure of population on the cultivated portion is therefore all the greater. But the overall density per square mile of area is not a good index of "Agricultural Crowding." The highest density in the district was observed in Dinhata police station. This police station had always been supporting maximum persons. Next to Dinhata was Cooch Behar police station. Pressure of population on the soil here was also no less. The lowest density was observed in Mekliganj police station which was proverbially an unhealthy

place.

Mainly because of the difficult terrain and lack of communication facility, the districts of North Bengal have a lower density of population in comparison to the average of West Bengal.

(11)

Table - 3.10

Density of population in different districts in North Bengal per sq. km in 1971 and 1981.

District	1971	1981
Cooch Behar	418	523
Jalpaiguri	280	353
Darjeeling	254	327
West Dinajpur	354	462
Malda	434	548
West Bengal	499	614

There are considerable variations of density of population in different areas of North Bengal. To a certain extent, it influences the nature of occupation. For example, in Darjeeling hill area only 14.2% of land is available for cultivation. This is in sharp contrast to other parts of North Bengal and West Bengal. For example, in Nadia district

about 80% of land is meant for cultivation. It has been estimated that in Darjeeling hill area 24% of land is under permanent waste, 40% of land is under forest and about 20% of land is under tea cultivation. Hence, the land available for cultivation is a meagre 14.2% and therefore, density of population as such does not reflect the nature of overcrowding on the land. The same is true for Jalpaiguri where only 30% of land is available for cultivation.

(f) Literacy level.

The quality of human resources is judged from the levels of literacy and skilled training attained by the people in a particular area. A modicum literacy is an absolute necessity for the purpose of meaningful participation of the rural people in development programmes such as adoption of better farming techniques, use of fertilisers and family planning practices. (12) Mahatma Gandhi once remarked "Man's illiteracy is India's shame and sin and must be liquidated". Illiteracy gives rise to orthodoxy in Indian society and it leads to the problem of social poverty. Again, illiteracy produces unskilled workers who can be engaged in primary sectors. High level of illiteracy is an important factor in the maintenance and accentuation of the poverty status in a

(13)

particular area.

The progress of education in the district of Cooch Behar can be viewed more rationally from a study of the census figures in respect of attainment of literacy by the people of the district. In the census of 1951, the percentage of literates in this district was only 15 against the State's literacy percentage of 21.5 in that year. At that time literacy was mainly concentrated among the menfolk. Every tenth man of Cooch Behar in 1901 knew how to read and write. Women's education was a far cry at that time. Only 4 out of every thousand women population of the district in 1901 were literates. Virtually there was not much headway in respect of literacy amongst women in Cooch Behar upto 1941. Literacy progressed at a snail's pace among the women. In 1931, the percentage of female literates became only 1.2. Among male population literacy improved, though slightly, during the first ten years since 1901. But it became almost static during the next decade and what is worse, male literacy marked a slight fall in the decade that followed 1921, resulting ultimately in decreasing the percentage of literates from 7.8 in 1921 to 6.6 in 1931 in the district. In 1951, a healthy sign was observed in the gradual improvement of literacy both amongst males and females of the district. In 1961, the

advancement was more marked than the previous period. ~~Progress~~
In 1971, the literacy rate rose to 21.92 percent for the district as against 33.20 percent for the state as a whole. The literacy rate improved among the females in comparison to 1961. In Census year 1981, the literacy rate for the district again rose to 30.10 percent against the state literacy rate of 40.94. In comparison to Census year 1971, literacy rate both among males and females rose for the district. The statement below will show the percentage of literates among total population and separately for males and females in the district of Cooch Behar for each of the Census decades during the last 80 years.

Table - 3.11

Percentage of literacy of the district Cooch Behar during 80 years (1901-1981)

Census Year	P.C. of total Literacy (Persons).	P.C. of Male Literacy	P.C. of female Literacy.
1901	5.9	10.7	0.4
1911	7.4	13.4	0.6
1921	7.8	13.9	0.9
1931	6.6	11.3	1.2
1941	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1951	15.0	23.2	5.3
1961	21.0	31.4	9.3
1971	21.92	31.08	11.93
1981	30.10	40.09	19.43

Source : Census of India, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981.

The literacy rates of the villages and towns as per 1981 census, are shown in more details in table 3.12.

Table - 3.12.

Literacy rates by population ranges of villages.

Range of population	No. of villages in each range.	Literacy rate.
-200	132	25.69
200 - 499	234	25.69
500 - 1999	528	25.36
2000 - 4999	198	27.30
5000 - 9999	42	31.55
10,000 +	5	31.72
Total	1139	27.44

Source : Census 1981.

The table 3.12 shows that the literacy in the rural areas of the district of Koch Bihar is 27.44 percent. The rural areas of the state of West Bengal as a whole on the other hand, record the percentages as 33.12 in this connection. Highest percentage of literates (i.e. 31.72) has been registered in villages with population size of 10000 and plus. It is significant to note that all the villages belonging to

different population size have literacy rates below the state levels in this respect.

The literacy rate in respect of each town of the district can be seen from the following table 3.13.

Table - 3.13

Literacy Rates for Towns.

Sl. No.	Name of the Towns	Literacy rate.
1.	Dinhata	71.36
2.	Guriahati	56.04
3.	Haldibari	58.91
4.	Koch Bihar	67.85
5.	Mathabhanga	68.12
6.	Mekliganj	52.73
7.	Tufanganj	70.87
	All Towns	66.10

Source : Census 1981.

The average percentage of literates of all the Towns works out to 66.10 which is above the state average of 62.66 percent. Townwise, Dinhata has the highest literacy rate with 71.36 percent and Mekliganj the lowest with 52.73 percent. Out

of 7 towns of the district, 3 towns have recorded literacy rates lower than urban state average.

If we compare the literacy rate of the five districts of North Bengal in 1981 with that of the state of West Bengal, it appears that out of five districts of North Bengal, four districts have registered the percentage growth literacy which is lower than the state average.

(14)
Table - 3.14

Literacy level of the Districts of North Bengal in 1981.

District	percentage of total literacy	Percentage of Male literacy	Percentage of Female literacy.
Darjeeling	42.52	51.58	32.38
Cooch Behar	29.99	39.99	20.44
Jalpaiguri	29.88	38.48	19.30
West Dinajpur	26.92	36.13	17.08
Malda	23.06	31.46	14.21
West Bengal	40.88	50.49	30.33

It appears that literacy rate in some of the districts of North Bengal is very poor. In the league table of the literacy rate, Malda and West Dinajpur occupy a very low position. The other backward districts of West Bengal have a

higher literacy rate than those of Malda and West Dinajpur. The Darjeeling District has a higher literacy because of certain tradition of Anglo-Indians schools in the area.

In respect of literacy rate of the females, the districts of North Bengal except Darjeeling compare very unfavourably. The extent of literacy rate is less than the state average for the four districts.

(g) Nature of poverty in Cooch Behar district.

1) Per capita income as an indicator of Poverty.

North Bengal is a backward region of West Bengal and India. Cooch Behar is one of the backward districts of North Bengal. The backwardness can be tentatively understood from the per capita income of a district or districts.

Table - 3.15

Per capita income of North Bengal Districts in 1975-76
(Base year 1966-71)

District	Per Capita Income 1975-76
Jalpaiguri	Rs. 370.00
Cooch Behar	Rs. 338.00
Darjeeling	Rs. 268.00
West Dinajpur	Rs. 304.00
Malda	Rs. 198.00
West Bengal (Average)	Rs. 339.00

Source : Development of North Bengal - A background Report - p. 90.

It appears that except the district of Jalpaiguri, none of the four districts have a comparable per capita income with the state average. However, per capita income is always not the true index of quality of life. Even if we take the other criteria like irrigated area, use of fertilisers, number of schools, per thousand population, number of doctors per thousand population, drinking water facility etc., the district Cooch Behar should be considered as a very backward district of West Bengal and India.

II) Transport infrastructure as an indicator of backwardness or poverty.

Transport facilities constitute one of the major infrastructures for economic, particularly industrial development of a region. Cooch Behar district is not well developed from the view point of transport facilities. Existence of low level of transport facilities is another indicator of the backwardness or poverty status of the area.

The district of Cooch Behar is interwoven with innumerable streams and rivers. Presence of these streams and rivers has made it difficult to bridge them all wherever roads run across them. Excepting some main roads, the district has no good all-weather roads. Many of the villages are not well connected throughout the year. The National Highway 31 covers a short distance through the police stations of Cooch Behar and Tufanganj. The Jalpaiguri - Siliguri State Highway is extended upto Haldibari and Dewanganj hat which only serves the western section of the district. These apart, there are district and rural roads which cover comparatively a larger distance to cater intra-district transportation. The chief district roads are (a) the Emigration Road West : this joins the town of Cooch Behar with the sub-divisional town of Mathabhanga and then proceeds to Patgram (now in

Bangladesh) on the Dharla (b) The Emigration Road East connecting Cooch Behar with Dhubri in the district of Goalpara; (c) the Buxa road connecting Cooch Behar with Buxa via Alipurduar; (c) the Lawkuthi road, passing through the northwest of the district and connecting Cooch Behar with Fulbari, Buxiganj and Mahishkuchi (e) the Dinhata-Mogalhat Road, formerly called the Rangpur Road, connecting Cooch Behar with Dinhata; (f) the Gosanimari and Sitai Road, joining the town of Cooch Behar with Gosanimari and Sitai. All these types of roads mentioned above, are maintained by P.W.D. and Local Bodies. The road transport services in the district and also in other districts of North Bengal, are provided largely by North Bengal State Transport Corporation (NBSTC) with Head quarters at Cooch Behar town. The total length of roads in the district is shown in table below:

Table - 3.16

Roads maintained by P.W.D. and Local Bodies in the district of Cooch Behar.

Year	Kilometre.				Total
	P.W.D.		Local Bodies		
	Surfaced	Unsurfaced	Surfaced	Unsurfaced	
1971-72	429.92	871.70	-	-	1301.62
1975-76	567.00	816.00	-	-	1383.00
1980-81	649.78	795.49	27.00	19.79	1492.06
1983-84	661.74	783.53	30.67	43.10	1519.04

Source: 1. District Statistical Handbook Cooch Behar (1975 and 1976 combined).

2. Key Statistics of the district of Cooch Behar : 1982, 1984

The district had a total length of 1519.04 kms of surfaced and unsurfaced roads in 1983-84 which represented only 1.5 fold increase since 1971-72. Total length of surfaced road was 692.41 km in 1983-84 which also recorded only 1.5 fold increase since 1971-72. Railways are also quite inadequate for the district. The Broad Gauge line of N. F. Railway touches the district to cover the main town while Metre-Gauge line runs from Alipurduar in Jalpaiguri district southward, covering Cooch Behar and Dinhata police stations and ends near the Indo-Bangladesh border. Previously this Metre Gauge line was extended upto Parbatipur, now in Bangladesh. Total length of Railway tract is only 127 kms. There are 15 railway stations in the district (15) .

There are a number of bottlenecks in the existing network of transport in the district of Cooch Behar and also in other districts of North Bengal hindering the pace of economic development of the whole region (16) . Some of the deficiencies may be noted.

(i) Inadequate road infrastructure.

The road infrastructure in Cooch Behar and also in other districts of North Bengal is grossly inadequate. Per Kilometer surfaced road in Cooch Behar is required to serve

more than 25000 persons. Taking North Bengal as a whole, per kilometre surfaced road is required to serve 21000 persons as against the state average of 6500 persons.

ii) Lack of rural urban integration.

The present structure of roads in North Bengal reveals that there is very little scope for interaction between the rural and urban economics in North Bengal due to lack of surfaced rural roads. At present there are only 400 kms of surfaced rural roads in entire North Bengal which constitute less than 10 percent of total length of surfaced roads (4921 kms). The network of rural surfaced roads comprises only 13 kilometres in Darjeeling district, 33 kilometres in Jalpaiguri district, 44 kms in Cooch Behar, 101 kms in Malda and 184 kms in West Dinajpur. A large number of villages therefore, are not the accessible by road. In Cooch Behar for instance only 361 villages are provided with roads out of 1144 villages keeping as many as 783 villages in isolation. Absence or inadequacy of roads is responsible for non-utilisation of the agricultural and other resources in rural areas. Besides, the products of rural artisans suffer from lack of demand. For example, the handloom industry of Cooch Behar and West Dinajpur, the eri industry of Jalpaiguri and the handicrafts of Darjeeling could have developed signifi-

cantly if their products could be transported to urban markets.

(iii) In-optimal sub-regional integration.

The present integration between different sub-regions (district units) especially between Siliguri and Cooch Behar, and Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar, is not at all optimal in terms of travel time. Siliguri and Cooch Behar is directly connected by N.H. 31. But it runs through Oodlabari, Mainaguri and Birpara and as such it has to cover a distance of around 225 kilometres. Though there is a short route via Jalpaiguri. During the rainy season, this route is disrupted at several stretches and the vehicles have to ply through the former route resulting an additional distance coverage of around 100 kms. The same is true for the road links between Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar. Hence, the industrial units of Cooch Behar are to bear additional transportation cost.

iv) Poor condition of bridges:

The district Cooch Behar and other districts of North Bengal are interwoven with a number of rivers and rivulates. The existing roads are bridged at frequent intervals. But a major drawback of such bridges is that most of them are of wooden structure. Such bridges can not be expected to cope with the wrath of hilly rivers, especially in the

rainy season. In fact, whenever the hills receive rains above the normal level and the flow of water in the rivers accelerates, a number of bridges in the plains are completely washed out causing total disruption of the transport system of the district with other districts of North Bengal.

v) In-adequate rail infrastructure.

The railway net-work in the district Cooch Behar is quite inadequate. The same is true for North Bengal as a whole. The total length of railway tract is only 127 km in the district. North Bengal as whole is having an aggregate length of 1000 kms. of railway tract.

III) Electricity consumption as an indicator of backwardness or poverty.

Power or energy is the most important developmental infrastructure of a region. The main source of power in the district Cooch Behar and in other districts of North Bengal is the electricity, supplied by the West Bengal State Electricity Board. Since independence upto the Sixth Five Year Plan generation and use of power were very poor in North Bengal, in fact, these were lower than the State and national average. The low consumption of electricity for productive activities indicates the nature of poor development of the

whole area.

The total consumption of electricity in the districts of North Bengal is given in table 3.17.

Table - 3.17

Total consumption of electricity in different districts of North Bengal in 1984-85.

Districts	Total consumption of electricity (in million K. wt.)
Cooch Behar	7.5
Jalpaiguri	52.3
Darjeeling	67.0
Malda	20.5
West Dinajpur	19.9

Source : Economic Review 1988-89.

It is evident from table 3.17 that Darjeeling district has the highest consumption of electricity of 67 million KWH and Cooch Behar has the lowest consumption of electricity of 7.5 million KWH. In 1984-85 North Bengal as a whole consumed 167.2 million KWH of electricity, where as the

corresponding figure for the southern districts of Bengal was about 6625.8 million KWH. Further, the districts of North Bengal consume most of the electricity for domestic purposes and very little for agricultural and industrial activities. This low consumption of electricity ~~and~~ for productive purposes indicates the backwardness of the whole region.

The Central Water Power Commission made a forecast of sales of energy in North Bengal as 200 to 250 million KWH by the end of 1990. But out of this estimated demand the West Bengal State Electricity Board's power network can only satisfy under the existing capacity 15 to 20 percent of the total demand. Hence, there is a shortfall of about 75 to 85 percent of power generation from the existing network, other things remaining the same. Such inadequate power supply acted against the development of the area, (17) inspite of rich resources.

IV) Occupational distribution as an indicator of backwardness or poverty.

The district of Cooch Behar is entirely dependent on agriculture and allied activities. This dependency has been viewed by the Census report of 1981. Near about 80% of the total main workers are engaged in Agricultural sector, but the methods of cultivation are still

orthodox. Farmers are still obliged to pursue subsistence farming which is retarding not only agricultural productivity but also breeding unemployment and poverty. Although tobacco and jute are produced in appreciable quantity, there is no curing factory for tobacco and the little curing that is done is intended for local use. Naturally, the economic condition of the people is backward and their standard of living is low. It has been observed that the proportion of workers engaged in agricultural sector has been reduced during the last intercensal decade (1971-1981) from 81.90% to 79.26%. The table 3.18 shows a comparative picture of the sectoral distribution of workers in the two census years.

Table - 3.18

Number and percentage of workers in Industrial categories in Cooch Behar between 1971 & 1981.

Category	1971		No. of workers	% of workers to total main workers.
	No. of workers	% of workers to total main workers.		
1. Cultivators	261942	67.07	267173	52.02
2. Agricultural Labourer	57915	14.83	139914	27.24
3. Household industry, manufacturing & repairing workers.	14906	3.32	10356	2.01
4. Other workers including services.	64237	16.45	96147	18.73

Source: 1. District Statistical Hand book, Cooch Behar 1975-76 (combined) p. 24.

2. Key statistics of Cooch Behar, district, 1984.

Note: Total main workers were 390502 in 1971 and 513590 in 1981.

Industry plays a very minor role in the economy of Cooch Behar and remained almost stagnant during the decade. (See Appendix III A). It is seen also from the table 3.18 an insignificant percentage i.e. 2.01 only of the workers of the district was engaged in "industries". There was also a decline in the number of workers engaged in industries during the decade 1971-81. The total industrial workers came down to 10356 in 1981 as against 14906 in 1971.

The 1981 census account revealed a sharp rise in the number of agricultural labourers in the district Cooch Behar and in other districts of North Bengal. The growth of agricultural labourers in West Bengal as a whole was 22.66% over the decade 1971-81. But the growth rate of agricultural labourers in each of the five districts surpassed the State average with Cooch Behar showing a rate as high as 141.58% followed by Jalpaiguri with 105.62% during the decade 1971-81. Among the five districts, Darjeeling had the lowest rate of growth of 24.58%, preceded by Malda with 28.31%. The sharp rise in the growth of agricultural labourers is quite indicative of the gradual pauperisation of the agricultural population in the district as well as in other districts of North Bengal.

(18)

(h) Nature of Cottage and Small-Scale Industries in Cooch Behar.

Cooch Behar is a poor district in more senses than one. It is poor in all resources other than land. Forest resources are practically non-existent. Livestock is numerous but underdeveloped, irrigation is marginal. Ore, minerals and coal are absent. But above all, infrastructure facilities on which industrialisation depend, are also in a poor state of development. Therefore, modern industries are non-existent in Cooch Behar.

It has been indicated earlier that industry plays a very minor role in the economy of Cooch Behar and remained very primitive during the last decade. Many Cottage industries have died out in the district. For example, one of the oldest village industry was rearing, spinning and weaving of eri (coarse Sikk fabric). This industry has completely died out due to the competition of imported fabrics. Presently, in the handicraft, tiny and cottage sector local

skill is observed in a few trades e.g. 1) Pati II) Bamboo craft including Bamboo matting III) Pottery IV) Dhokra and Fatia V) Bakery VI) Cycle repairing VII) Wool-knitting and VIII) Handloom. Handloom is still an important industry of the district. The number of handlooms and workers were 3955 and 6192 respectively in 1972. The employees in this industry were distributed among co-operative and private sectors respectively to the extent of 1172 and 5020. The number of handloom workers in different areas was as follows: Pesterjhar 1000, Baisguri 200, Chakchaka (Baburhat) 250, Gairguri 160, Guriahati 800, Bharat Colony and Ramkrishnapalli 1200, Maghpala 100, all in Koch Behar subdivision, Dinhata 400, Nigamnagar 150, all in Dinhata subdivision, Tufanganj 300, Baxirhat 125, all in Tufanganj subdivision; Nishiganj 125, Mathabhanga 60, Ghoksadanga 100, all in Mathabhanga sub-division. (19)

The total number of small scale industrial units registered with Directorate of cottage and Small-Scale Industries in the district was 560 as on July 10, 1972. The different categories and their corresponding numbers were :

- 1) Food products - 84,
- 2) Textiles - 225,
- 3) Beverage industries - 8,
- 4) Chemical and chemical products - 22,
- 5) Footwear and other wearing apparels - 12,
- 6) Woodwork other than furniture - 53,
- 7) Furniture - 19,
- 8) Metal products - 18,
- 9) Build-

ding materials - 7, 10) Tobacco products - 24, 11) Clay modelling - 17, 12) Printing and publishing - 10, 13) Miscellaneous - 61.
(20)

That the importance of industry (specially cottage and small-scale industries) has remained almost stagnant is revealed from the report of the census of India 1981 and from Appendix III B. According to 1981 census, only 0.58% of population are engaged in "Household industry, manufacturing and repairing". This shows that only agriculture is important and industry is virtually non-existent.

S U M M A R Y

Cooch Behar district shows steady increase in population from decade to decade except the years 1881-91, 1891-1901, 1911-21 and 1921-31. The opening of Gitaldah - Alipurduar Railway between the period 1893-1900 did much to develop the resources of the district and greatly facilitated the disposal of produce of all kinds. Over the census decades, highest growth rate of population (52.27%) was recorded during the decade 1951-61. In fact, it was highest among all the districts of the state. There was a big spate of immigration of displaced persons from East Bengal (Now Bangladesh) during Post - Independence period.

The district was inhabited by 671158 persons (362879 males and 308279 females) in 1951; 1019806 persons (539694 males and 480112 females) in 1961; 1414183 persons (737931 males and 676252 females) in 1971; 1771643 persons (915461 males and 856182 females) in 1981. From the population figures it was also observed that the decadal percentage growth of population during 1971-81 had fallen everywhere in North Bengal districts except Darjeeling over the decadal percentage growth of population during 1961-71.

The district of Cooch Behar is almost entirely rural. The percentage of rural population to total population of the district was 92.50 in 1951, 92.99 in 1961, 93.16 in 1971 and 93.10 in 1981. The percentage of urban population (6.90) of the district was much lower than the State percentage of 26.47 as per 1981 census. There are seven towns in the district and no new town has come up. The district Headquarter Cooch Behar is a class II town with a population of 80101. There is also marked a considerable variations in the urbanisation process in North Bengal districts. Some districts are more urbanised than the average of West Bengal and some districts are poor in respect of urbanisation process. As per 1981 census, Darjeeling has the highest percentage of urban population (27.86)

among the North Bengal districts. Even the percentage is higher than the average of West Bengal (26.49). But in Malda and Cooch Behar, the process of urbanisation is very slow and the proportion of urban people in these two districts is lower than the average of North Bengal and average of West Bengal. The comparative low growth of urbanisation of the district and some other districts of North Bengal reflects the nature of slow development in the region. During the period 1901-1981, the district had a larger number of males than females. From 1961, there has been a considerable recovery and the sex ratio in the district was better than that of the state of West Bengal as a whole.

There is a high concentration of Scheduled Caste population in the district. The percentage of scheduled caste population was 46.90 in 1961, 47.02 in 1971 and 49.84 in 1981. These percentages were much higher than the percentages of the state as a whole. On the other hand, scheduled tribe population is very negligible in the district. The percentage of scheduled tribe population was .86 in 1961, .75 in 1971 and .57 in 1981. These percentages were lower than the state average. Police stationwise, scheduled caste population of the district mostly live in Mekliganj, Mathabhanga, Sitai, Haldibari and Sitalkuchi. As per 1981 Census, per-

tage of ~~xxx~~ scheduled caste population is highest in Cooch Behar and lowest in Darjeeling in North Bengal districts. On the contrary, scheduled tribe population is highest in Jalpaiguri and lowest in Cooch Behar.

The density of population in Cooch Behar is relatively low in comparison to most of the districts of West Bengal. There has been a continuous increase in density over 80 years with negligible exception in few years. The density of population is highest in Malda and lowest in Darjeeling in North Bengal districts but it is lower than West Bengal average.

The percentage of literacy in the district was 15.0 in 1951, 21.0 in 1961, 21.92 in 1971 and 30.10 in 1981. The comparative picture of the percentage growth of literacy in North Bengal districts in 1981 with the State of West Bengal shows that Darjeeling has registered a higher percentage growth of literacy than the State average. Other four districts have registered the percentage growth of literacy which is lower than the state average. In respect of literacy rate of the females, the districts of North Bengal except Darjeeling compare very unfavourably and their literacy rates are less than the state average.

The district is dependent entirely on agricul-

ture and allied activities and is without any industrial activity of any importance. It has been observed that the proportion of workers engaged in the agricultural sector is nearly 80%. Again, agriculture has been almost primitive with low productivity. The percentage growth of agricultural labourers has been marked highest in the district during the decade (1971-81) among the North Bengal districts. The growth rate of agricultural labourers of the district also surpassed the growth rate of the state over the decade (1971-81). It is quite indicative of the gradual pauperisation of the agricultural population of the district. The per capita income of Cooch Behar is lower than the state average. The road infrastructure in the district is grossly inadequate. Per Kilometre surfaced road of the district serves more than 25000 persons against the state average of 6500 persons.

The total electricity consumption of the district is lowest among the North Bengal districts and is much lower than the state average. This low consumption of electricity for productive activities indicates the nature of poor development of the district.

Industry plays a very minor role in the economy of Cooch Behar and it remained almost stagnant during the last decade. An insignificant percentage of 2.01 only of the

workers of the district was engaged in "industries". There was a sharp decline in the number of workers engaged in industries during the decade 1971-81.

Cooch Behar is a poor district in more senses than one. It is poor in all resources other than land. Forest resources, livestock, irrigation system, minerals etc. are negligible. Above all infrastructure facilities on which industrialisation depends, are also in a poor state of development. It is no wonder, therefore, that modern industries are almost non-existent in Cooch Behar.

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