

## PREFACE

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The process of urbanization is gaining more and more attention of different disciplines, particularly belonging to social sciences. However, 'The historians and sociologists have given much more attention to the urban effects of the Industrial Revolution than have geographers. It results ... that the environment factors in this interesting development have been to a large extent ignored, or at least submerged in the discussion of the sociological conditions' (Taylor , 1968). During the second world war and immediately after that the devastation of cities in Europe and elsewhere posed a new challenge to the students of urban problems. Along with the planners, engineers, sociologists, economists and administrators, the geographers also had to take important and positive role for judging and manipulating the relation between man and environment (Sinha and Rao , 1968). Today it has been observed that in all human societies (except in some primitive societies which are very small in number)

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the process of urbanization is present as a natural one. Whether one likes it or not, one cannot restrict the human settlements from undergoing the process of urbanization. According to L.F. Thomas, "Urbanism has become so powerful an influence in human life that the very term which we use to express larger social loyalties is citizenship" (Taylor, 1968). But, like in many other natural processes here also an unplanned urbanization may lead to harm instead of good to human life. In such cases a city may be over flooded with population and central functions. This kind of situation is not inherent in the process of urbanization. Different factors like geographical location, natural calamities, political reformulation, industrialization etc. make all those differences. Thus, the general preference is for the continuous process of planning. These days it is the belief of many scholars that a good planning may lead to an urbanization of higher speed and better health so far as humanity is concerned.

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The scope of the study of the process of urbanization has been outlined in a very precise way in the Demographic Year Book as follows : 'The process of urbanization has long been recognised as a concomitant of social and economic development. It is desirable to follow the process of urbanization in the various countries and to relate it with -

1. economic indices that reflect the progress of industrial development in terms of increased production, trade, national income, etc.
  2. indices of social and political change in such fields of education, health, standards of living, political participation and governmental organisation and
  3. demographic trends as indicated by rates of population growth, family characteristics, mobility of the population, age structure, size and composition of the economically active population, and the like.
- The results of such a study should be a valuable guide to plan economic and social development

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( United Nations Demographic Year Book 1963). The present study is primarily motivated by a similar idea.

Work on this particular theme is hard to find in our country though peripheral instances may be drawn from quite a number as mentioned here. The early developments of urban geography have been dealt with in detail by Berry and Horton (1970) and Carter (1974). The emergence of urban studies can be considered from the time of Greek scholars. The subject was studied by them only as a sub discipline. The present day status of urban geography has been achieved only in the past 30 to 40 years. Still, as has been observed by Berry and Horton (1970), " the formative years of the social science in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century were also the years in which urban studies first developed".

Examples of early 20th century studies are those of Hassert (1907) and Bhancharad (1911). The findings were strongly subjective, descriptive and

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dependent more on observations. Later, among others Auroousseau (1924) and Crowe (1938) tried to establish that the cities were not inanimate objects in landscape, but also organic elements which involved people and their movements. Park (1925) of the Chicago School of Urban Ecology developed the idea of order and analysis of towns. Considerable insight was obtained from the work of Central Place Theory of Christaller (1933). Morphologists came into picture after 1950. Examples are those of Conzone (1960) and Smailes (1946). The development of morphological studies depended more on concepts derived from economic theories of Cooley (1894) Weber (1899), and Hurd (1903). Such studies investigated chiefly into the land values and rents, and the concept of nodality and accessibility.

Introduction of statistical methods gave the study of urban geography another impetus. By virtue of quantification it could be possible to test hypothesis, pronouncing new theories and remodelling old theories.

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Smith (1965) evaluated the classification of settlements; Berry and Garrison (1956) examined the utility of rank-size rule for urban population. The models of Park and Burgess (1925), Harris and Ullman (1954) and Homer Hoyt (1939) were reviewed by many geographers.

Some of the recent contributions which stresses social and behavioural factors are of Lynch (1960), Berry (1971), Herbert (1972), Dowson and Stea (1973), Johnston (1974) and Gould and White (1974). However, full achievement in this direction is yet to be obtained.

Some of the other interesting references are 'perspectives in Urban Geography' edited by C.S. Yadav (1987), 'Towns and Cities' (Jones; 1970), 'Urban Development' (Henderson, 1988), 'Urbanization in a Developing Country' (Henderson, 1986), 'National Urbanization Policies in Developing Countries', (Renaud, 1979) 'The Urban Hierarchy and Urban Area Production Functions' (Schaeffer, 1977), 'Urbanization in India' (Rao, 1983)

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## Objective and Methodology

The major objective of our study is to indentify and analyse the overall impact of urban development on the emergence of the present economic character of a region, called 'The region of North Bengal'. The study has largely been based on field data collected through personal investigations of both public and private sources, supplemented by data available from various secondary sources - both public and private, supplemented by data available from various other sources. Besides, maps prepared by the agencies like the Survey of India, the Settlement Survey, the Municipalities, the Public Works Departments, etc. have been used as the base for further investigation. Application of mathematical principles have been made for the processing of data and preparation of maps, diagrams and tables.

The entire study has been structured in the following manner.

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In Chapter I the geographical perspective of the region of North Bengal and its relation with the economy has been discussed.

In Chapter II the growth of towns and cities have been discussed from temporal and spatial perspective, thus giving an idea about the history of the process of urbanization in the region of North Bengal.

In Chapter III deals with the functional character of the urban centres, tracing the evolution and the present trend. A detailed analysis of the retail and wholesale markets, industries, financing agencies like banks, health centres. etc. with special emphasis on the urban centres has been made.

In Chapter IV the hierarchical order of the urban centres of North Bengal has been determined with help of an analysis of the central functions offered by the different urban centres.

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Chapter V throws light on the factors contributing to the development of linkages and their definite roles and for this purpose the passenger and goods flow by surface transport has been taken up for thorough investigation. After that a proper assessment of the nature of linkages and their impact on the regional economy has been made on the basis of connectivity developed by transport and communication agencies.

Chapter VI gives the details of selective case studies of three urban centres of the region, which represent three important characteristics of the region.

In Chapter VII a conclusion has been drawn basing on the major findings.

In the most cases the spelling of place names are according to that given in Census of India, 1981.