

CHAPTER – III

EVOLUTION OF COOCH BEHAR TOWN

3.1 Introduction:

The main exercise of this chapter is to analyze the evolution of Cooch Behar town since it was a royal kingdom. This chapter is to identify major historical issues along with social and economic conditions in Cooch Behar town and also fulfilment the research objective to highlight the major factors of urbanization in Cooch Behar town. This information could also help researchers' direct efforts towards the information needs of new strategies for the better urban environment in advance society. Additionally, this information may help policymakers to set priorities on how to guide urban planners as they transition to modern urban ecology. The information has been collected from different historical books, magazine, gazetteer, government report etc. with interviewing historians and old urban dwellers in Cooch Behar town on suitable requirements.

The relevant information presented in this chapter is based on historical and archaeological reports, various inscriptions, which have already been documented and contemporary literary work which describe the town in some detail.

The name Cooch Behar is a compound of two words. 'Coach' came from the word 'Coch' and 'Bihar', the name of an ethnic gathering of individuals living in the North-Eastern piece of Bengal. 'Behar' or all the more legitimately 'Bihar' then again, indicates a house spot. In the past the land relating to the present district of Cooch Behar was a piece of a substantially greater Kingdom which incorporated a huge tract of Assam when it passed by the name Kamrup and simply after the Cooch Behar Kings had come into power in the start of the sixteenth century, it was called Cooch Behar (Chaudhuri, 1903).

3.2. A Review of Cooch Behar Kingdom:

As the early capital of the Cooch Behar Kingdom, Cooch Behar's area was not static and drawn in noticeably stable just when moved in Cooch Behar town. Maharaja Rup

Narayan, on the guidance of an infamous holy person, exchanged the capital from Attharokotha to Guriahati (Now called Cooch Behar town) on the banks of the Torsa River in the vicinity of 1693 and 1714. After this, the capital was dependably in or close to its present area (Chakraborty, 1988).

Before twentieth August 1949, Cooch Behar was a regal state managed by the king of Cooch Behar, who had been a feudatory local state under the British government. By an assertion dated twentieth August; 1949, the king of Cooch Behar surrendered full and broad' specialist, purview and energy of the state to the Dominion legislature of India. The exchange of organization of the state to the government of India came into gripping on twelfth September 1949. Certainly Cooch Behar was exchanged and surged with the territory of West Bengal on 30th January 1950 and from that date; Cooch Behar form as another district in the administrative map of West Bengal. Subsequently, the urbanization of the district is simply district headquarter i.e. Cooch Behar based (Chaudhury, 1988).

Cooch Behar is the main arranged town in the whole North Bengal having the recollections of the imperial legacy. The landmarks and royal residences represent the lives of the brilliant ages. Cooch Behar was an autonomous kingdom before converging up with India. The land of heavenly past with rich legacy and culture-lies on the eastern state of West Bengal flanking Assam in the east and neighbouring nation Bangladesh in the south. Cooch Behar is the most established urbanized range in North Bengal and even it is the most established one in West Bengal too. The regal state was changed into Cooch Behar District, with Cooch Behar town as its central command. Cooch Behar town is additionally the biggest the town in the district (Ghoshal, 1942).

3.2.1 Past urban management of Cooch Behar:

The land of glorious past with rich heritage and culture lies on the eastern part of West Bengal bordering Assam in the east and neighbouring country Bangladesh in the south. Cooch Behar is the only planned town in the entire North Bengal having the memories of the royal heritage. The town is responsible for providing basic services. The water is supplied by the town using its groundwater resources. The surface drains, mostly earthen, drain into the Torsa River. Most of the roads are metalled, and street lighting is available in the town. The Public Works Department is responsible for road maintenance in the town and on the roads connecting Cooch Behar with other towns in

the region (CPWD, 2013). Health services in Cooch Behar include a government district hospital and few private nursing homes.

Cooch Behar town is situated in the northern plains region of West Bengal which is Cooch Behar district headquarter. The municipal activities of this town are directed by the Cooch Behar town, which is established in 1946. Cooch Behar State was a tributary state under the British government. King Nripendra Narayan Roy was called the creator of beautification of Cooch Behar town. Planning of the road, administrative building, and big ponds were planned by the foreign engineer and artist for the beautification of the town. There was an attempt to develop the heart of the state. Though there was a lack of persistence to develop the town as a productive town on that time. Western type of royal palace and other beautification of the town were not benefited for the rural agricultural state of Cooch Behar. It helped only for educated and upper-class people. As a state capital, Cooch Behar town was a great possibility to make it as a productive town, which was not in the other refugee middling town (Debnath, 2007).

Cooch Behar town is situated beside a perennial river Torsha of north Bengal. The distance between Cooch Behar town to Siliguri town of north Bengal is 170 km and 120 km from the divisional Sadar town Jalpaiguri. The town is connected by railway and by road with all over India. 31 No. National Highways are going through in northern side of the town, so the town is well connected with the other town of eastern India. This communication system is the contingency for transport and tourism industry. This town is also maintaining means of communication to Kolkata by railway by road and irregularly by air.

From the brief view in Cooch Behar town, it is clear that neighbour rural settlements and peri-urban areas are dependent gradually on this town. Gathering of refugee is increasing problem day by day in this town. Push factor from the poor rural economy and pull factor from the urban economy are increasing population at Cooch Behar town. At the same time, many problems are creating the facilities and amenities for the inhabitant of the town.

The wealth in Cooch Behar town can be classified into three parts. Firstly, profitable part like tourist lodge, go-down and market, from the town can earn revenue. Secondly, non-profitable part like the connecting road, from here town has no chance to earn revenue. Thirdly, social services part like low-cost toilets, which provide service to people and protect the environment.

Sustainable small and medium town development project in Cooch Behar town has not kept any impact in the rural economy. It was not sure that central government loan with interest will be repaid by the earning from the newly created resources by the town. The main reason for the failure of this project is that there was no well planned and perception was not taken from the municipal authority. Only one communicating road and market were insufficient for village surrounded Cooch Behar town. Tourist lodge and market renovation are not sufficient to indicate the Cooch Behar town as a growth pole of the total region and it cannot control the increasing number of population in largely growing Siliguri town and Kolkata metropolitan. Generally, sustainable development is called total activities and geographical adjustment of a region. Sustainable development project of Cooch Behar town is not able to keep any adjustment in town development.

3.2.2 Cooch Behar town in early stage:

On the whole, the urban growth could be recognized in four stages. In the first stage, the place started as a capital of Koch Dynasty Since 1707 A.D., Cooch Behar became a developed and mechanized capital town (Debnath, 2007). From 1707 to 1887 Cooch Behar town was the only nucleus and all the activities were confined to the town.

In the second stage, Cooch Behar royal palace was established in the reign of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan, approximately after 1887. Maharaja Nripendra Narayan is known as the engineer of present-day Cooch Behar town. The palace brought various nudes of functions. Still, Cooch Behar palace centre continued to the nucleus for all activities (Hunter, 2012).

In the third stage, the aggregation by migration took place by filling in the vacant lands. In 1950 merge of Cooch Behar State with India and partition of India in 1947, the pressure of refugee helps to increase the population in Cooch Behar town. The main migration was by seeking the job. This has given rise to more area being occupied by housing zones.

In the fourth stage, the growth and spatial expansion could be noted. It starts with further expansion by the origin of census town 1971, in the suburban areas of Cooch Behar town. The inflow of people was from the rural area and from Assam. All these have resulted in the spatial expansion of the town. These factors have influenced each other and acted as an increase in the growth rate and give the change in the dimension

of the town. By 2021 it will become a city if six census towns of sub-urban areas include town unit. Thus the development could be easily understood.

3.2.3 Heritage characteristics of the town:

Heritage largely defines the identity of a society and it is passed down one generation to another. As being of cultural significance today, conservation practices for the heritage buildings in order to prevent them from deterioration and extend the life and basic functions of these buildings (CPWD, 2013). Cooch Behar Town is notable for its good design building whole of those got the legacy status. Most of the fine structures were worked during the Royal time and conveys extraordinary compositional work and drags the consideration of the vacationers going to this Cooch Behar Town. A significant number of those structures were constructed encompassing the Sagardighi and the others on the different corner of this archaic town (Table 3.1). In these days a large portion of those structures has been turned as the administration workplaces and homes of the high government authorities (Cooch Behar Municipality, 2013).

Some of those are truly incredible and significant one. Among those structures, the popular one is:-

- ❖ D.M. office,
- ❖ Moti Mahal now named and work as Kalyan Bhawan,
- ❖ Head Post Office (GPO) Building now named and work as district post office,
- ❖ Carmichael Ward now named and work at MJN hospital,
- ❖ Ananda Ashram now utilized the private cottage of DSP crime,
- ❖ Bhola Ashram now utilized the private lodge of the Executive Engineer of PWD,
- ❖ Parijat Villa private home of the district and session judge,
- ❖ Circuit House,
- ❖ Chilarai Barac

Cooch Behar is a town of numerous prominent structures (Figure 3.1). The heritage buildings constructed in the past, that have high historical, architectural, spiritual, social, political and economic values. It differs from the modern buildings in the sense that they are anticipated to the last permanently and for various factors society has decided that they shall be preserved for as long as possible.

Table 3.1: Important establishments of Cooch Behar town up to 1950

| Year | Important establishment |
|------|--------------------------------------|
| 1807 | Sagardighi |
| 1861 | Jenkins school |
| 1881 | Sunity Academy |
| 1885 | Town committee |
| 1888 | Victoria College |
| 1889 | Madanmohan temple |
| 1894 | Lansdown hall, Narendra Narayan park |
| 1945 | Cooch Behar municipality |

Source: Land Revenue Settlements, Cooch Behar State.

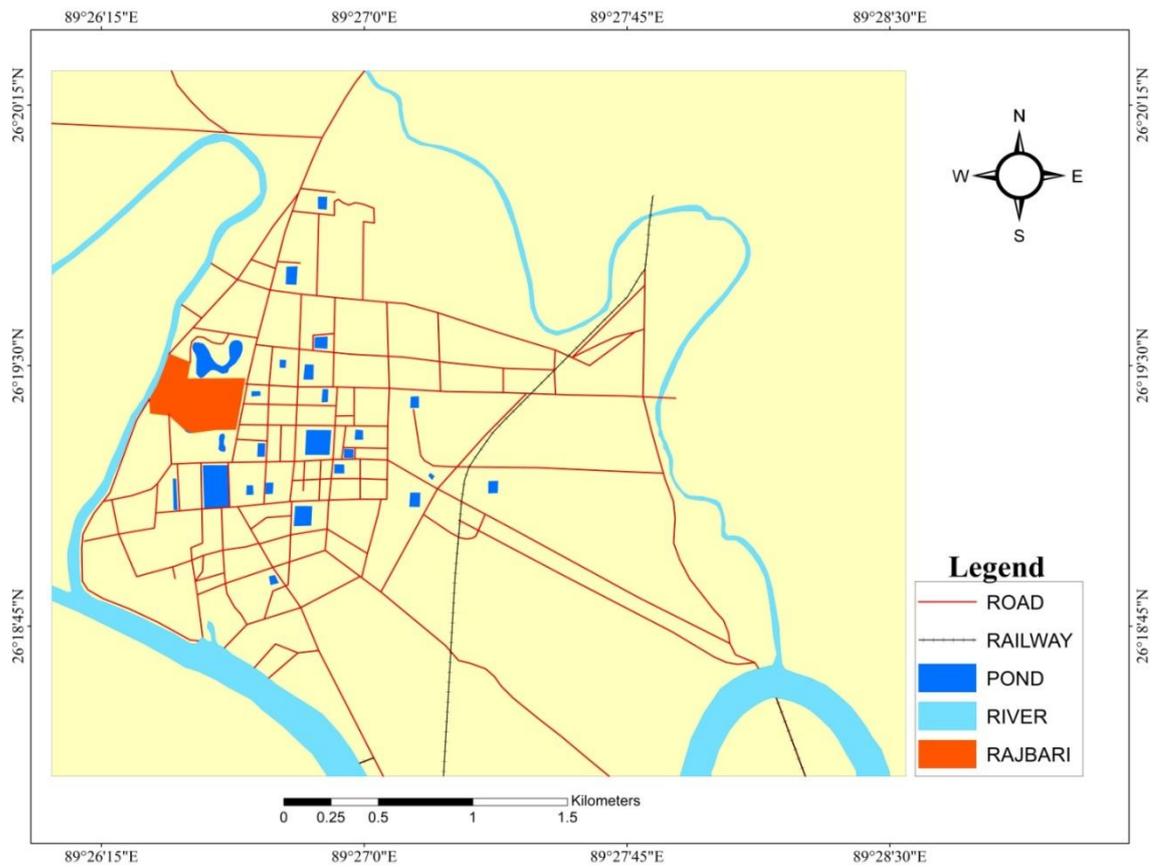


Figure 3.1: Cooch Behar town in 1900.

The existence of heritage buildings in our environment has believe that people came from somewhere this offers the people the self-confidence to face the future. The entirety of those important structures is Ben fish Community Hall, Cooch Behar Atithi Niwas building these are one of a kind in their own and demands consideration of the guests. As the Cooch Behar palace, is noted for its style and decoration, it is currently secured by the Archaeological Survey of India. This royal residence at Cooch Behar has been assumed control by the Archaeological Survey of India in 1982 for assurance and protection. The present Museum was built up in 2002 with the relics and items gathered by the Kolkata located of the Archaeological Survey of India and in addition the state government. The displays are organized in seven exhibitions.

3.3 Urban development of Cooch Behar town since independence:

According to the provisional census, 2011 Cooch Behar town has 77935 populations which were 76874 in 2001 census. In this decades population growth is very low comparing to the other decades. The lack of economic activities in the town impact over the population growth and lack of infrastructural facilities and amenities within the town does not create pull factor in surrounding rural people. The decadal urban growth rate was at its peak in 1971 but afterwards, it shows a declining trend till 2011 (Figure3.2).

Table 3.2: Population growth since 1961

| Year | Population | The decadal growth rate in% |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1961 | 41922 | - |
| 1971 | 53684 | 28.06 |
| 1981 | 62112 | 15.60 |
| 1991 | 71215 | 14.66 |
| 2001 | 76874 | 7.95 |
| 2011 | 77935 | 1.38 |

Source: Different Census Report of Koch Bihar district 1961to 2011.

From table 3.2 of the decadal growth rate in Cooch Behar town in different census year it will found a declining trend of decadal growth rate from every census year, in1961 to 1971 it was 28.06%, it decline next census year and reaches 15.60%, then 14.66%, then 7.95% in the 2001 census and in 2011 it reaches 1.38%. The causes of

high decadal growth in 1971 are a lot number of immigrants from Bangladesh to India, which impact over the population growth (Census of India, 2011).

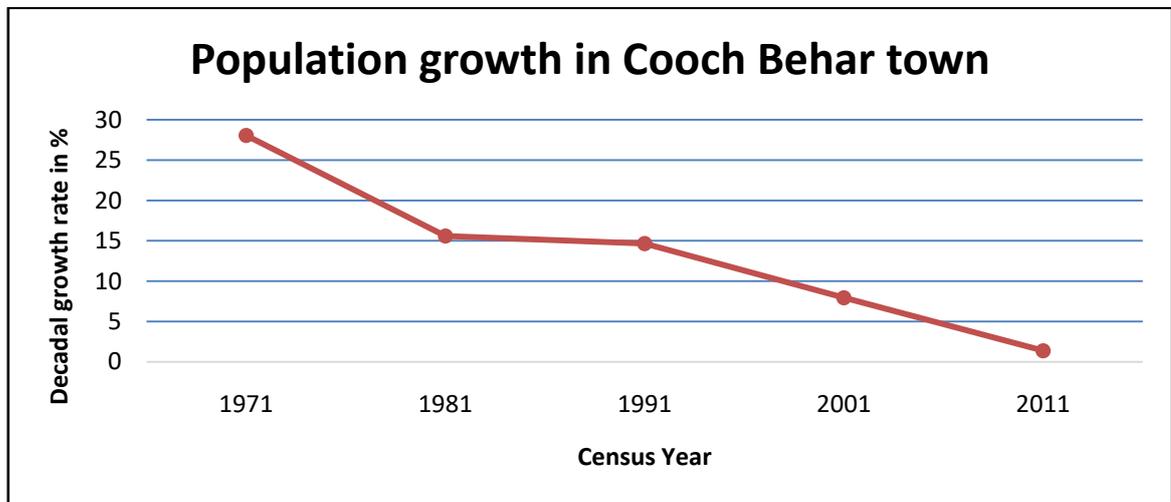


Figure 3.2: Showing decadal growth rate (1961-2011).

3.3.1 The present rate of urbanization:

At present, above 77,000 people live in Cooch Behar town. Present figures showing that Cooch Behar town is in the process of urbanization. Despite its smaller area, it has been facing environmental problems related to the urban growth. Though Cooch Behar was a planned town, unplanned growth of urban areas, lack of infrastructure etc. are associated with urbanization. The rapid growth of population puts heavy pressure on public utilities like housing, sanitation, transport, water, electricity, health and so on.

The high rate of demand, increasing number of traffic, population, congestion, lack of transport routes etc. often block the areas like Harish Paul Chowpathi, Minibus Stand Road, Bazar area and adjacent to railway station releasing huge dust in the atmosphere during office hours. The main cause of such jam within office time is due to dependent only single road through the middle of the town toward the bus stand and low width of the road in an average. Heavy congestion within the settlement creates water pollution through the sewage of domestic solid and liquid waste passing through the drainage system of the town. Most of the drainage is open and not deep enough. Water overflows and enters into the localities during the rainy season. In addition, rapid urbanization has resulted in the concentration of both high to poor class settlement and

interestingly both of the groups of society have been contaminating the environmental by emitting harmful gases through throwing of domestic waste and burning of fossil fuels. Pungent smell emitted from perishable materials of the vegetable market area of the town contaminates the true character of the surroundings. Urbanization does not only increase the number of establishments and people but also reduce the normal tune and rhythm of nature hampering its sustainability through unwanted traffic horn and harsh sound of the study area.

Table 3.3: Ward wise decadal growth rate of Cooch Behar town 2001–2011

| Ward number | Population in 2001 | Population in 2011 | The decadal growth rate in % | Ward number | Population in 2001 | Population in 2011 | The decadal growth rate in % |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | 4655 | 4684 | 0.62 | 11 | 3885 | 4291 | 10.45 |
| 2 | 1800 | 1833 | 1.83 | 12 | 4454 | 4501 | 1.12 |
| 3 | 3788 | 3799 | 0.29 | 13 | 3220 | 3336 | 3.60 |
| 4 | 3487 | 3553 | 1.89 | 14 | 2508 | 2580 | 2.87 |
| 5 | 3592 | 3705 | 3.15 | 15 | 3732 | 3962 | 6.16 |
| 6 | 3469 | 3216 | -7.29 | 16 | 4339 | 4512 | 3.99 |
| 7 | 1807 | 3693 | 104.37 | 17 | 2419 | 2009 | -16.95 |
| 8 | 5643 | 3781 | -33.00 | 18 | 4655 | 5890 | 26.53 |
| 9 | 4775 | 3416 | -28.46 | 19 | 5232 | 4346 | -16.93 |
| 10 | 4407 | 5261 | 18.36 | 20 | 5007 | 5567 | 11.18 |

Source: Census of India, 2001 and 2011.

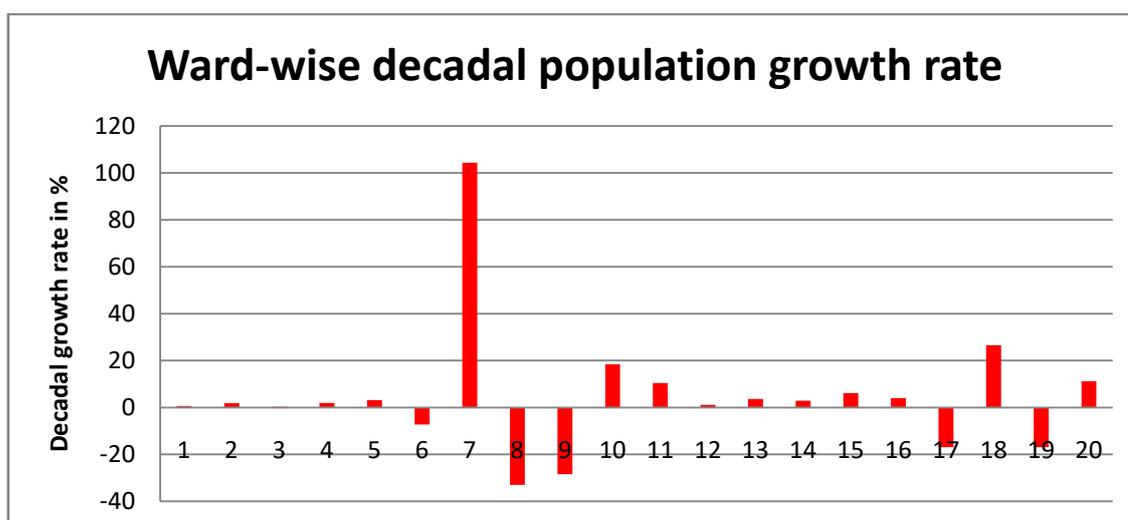


Figure 3.3: Ward-wise decadal growth rate of population.

From the ward-wise decadal growth rate in Cooch Behar town it is found that ward number 6,8,9,17,19 has negative growth rate, ward number 8 had highest negative growth rate -33.00%, then ward number 09 (-28.46%), 17 (-16.95), 19 (-16.93%), 06 (-7.29%). Highest positive growth rate found at the ward number 7 which is 104.37% (Table 3.3 and Figure 3.3).

3.3.2 Characteristics of the town and its fringe:

The demographics of Cooch Behar town inspired to the researchers. Although Cooch Behar town was a capital of a state before 1950, then yearly increase of population was limited. Mainly two causes behind of that. Firstly, there was a lack of production without cultivation under the rule of the king; as a result, it never attracts the rural people to the capital. Secondly, some hard and fast rule to live in the town is demotivated to the rural people and in the same way lack of intention to live in the town of rural people creates a negative impact. In 1950 merge of Cooch Behar State with India and partition of India in 1947, the pressure of refugee helps to increase the population in Cooch Behar town. It is concerned that there was a direct impact of urbanization in the eastern part of the town which is under the Guriahati Gram Panchayet. In the census of 1971 had indicated an urban agglomeration in Cooch Behar town with Guriahati Gram Panchayet. In the year of 1931, the population of this town was 10458. In 1951, the populations were increased to 33244 and in the year of 1981 total population of the town were reached to 64506 (District Statistical Handbook, Koch Bihar, 2008).

In 1971, the census town Guriahati in the East of Cooch Behar town, in 1981 Kharimala Khagrabari in the North-East of Cooch Behar town and in 2001 Khagrabari in the North of Cooch Behar town were dealt with as urban unit called Census town. Moreover, in 2011 census three panchayet areas in the fringe of Cooch Behar town emerge as census town. These are Chakchaka in the East, Baisguri in the North-East and Takagach in the West side of Cooch Behar town (Figure 3.4).

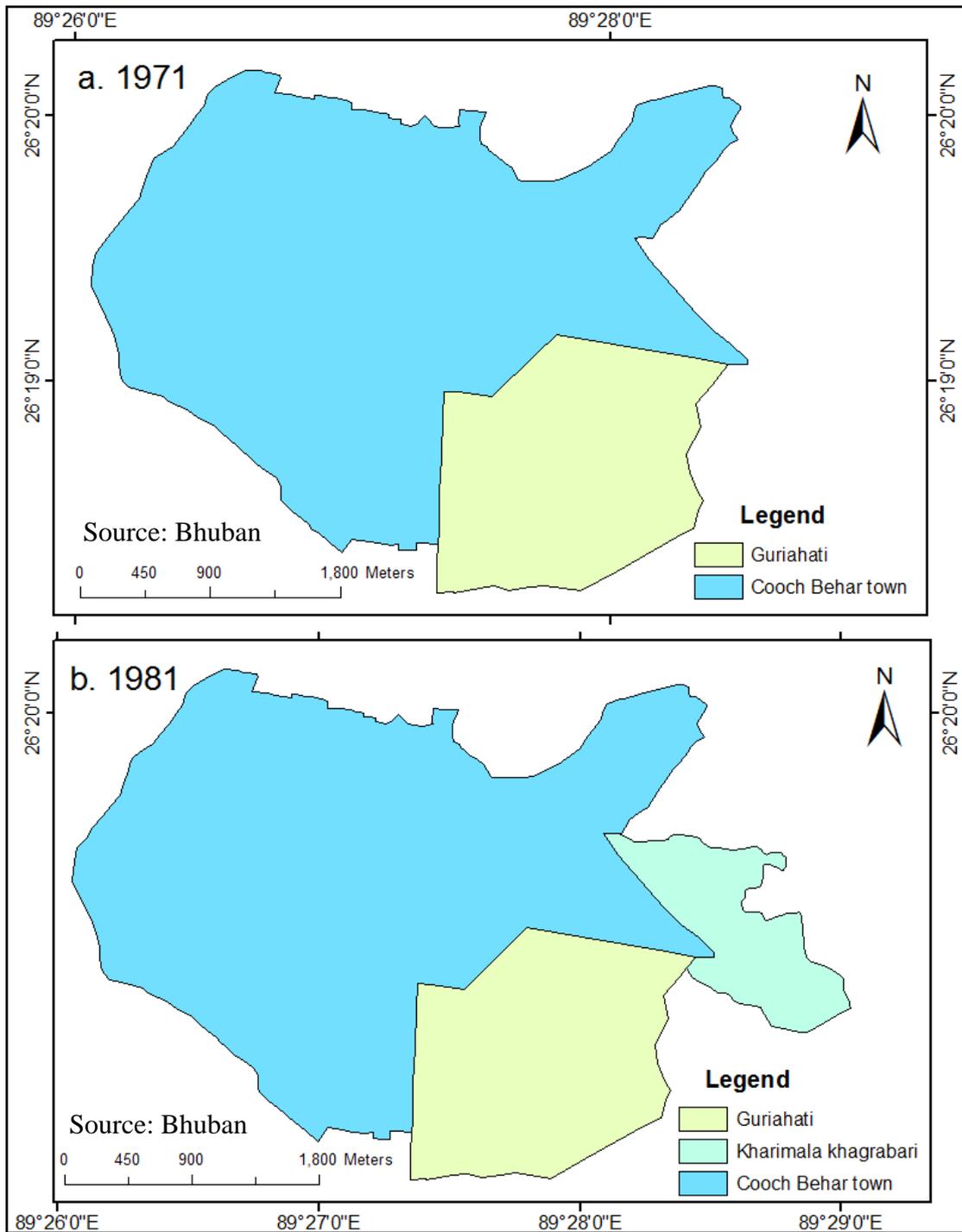


Figure 3.4: Cooch Behar town and its outgrowth a. 1971 and b. 1981.

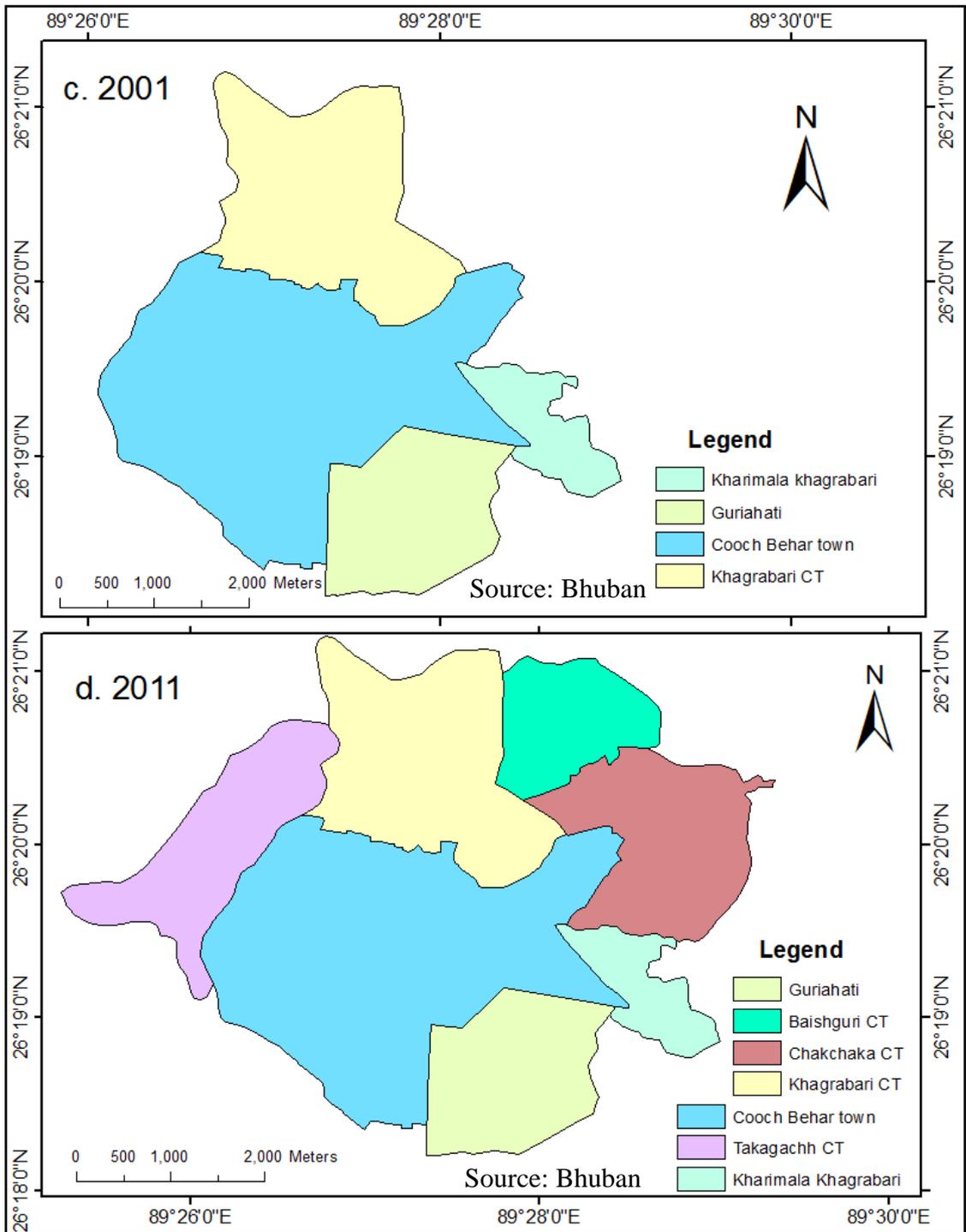


Figure 3.4: Cooch Behar town and its outgrowth c. 2001 and d. 2011

Commonly urbanization considered as the population shifting from rural to urban areas. Consequently, there are demographic changes of places, but along with the demographic changes, urbanization is driven by socio-economic, structural and behavioural changes also and most recently, it is the product of modernization and commercial development (Chaudhury, 2008). Like other towns and cities of West Bengal and India, Cooch Behar has also undergone changes related to urbanization by shifting itself from an agricultural based settlement to service based settlement. There are changes also found in size, density and composition of the population in the urban centre of Cooch Behar along with their expanding physical growth. There is also occupational differentiation and specialization found in the urban places.

3.4 Factors of urbanization in the study area:

It may now discuss some of the important factors which are responsible for bringing about a growing trend of urbanization in Cooch Behar in particular. Urbanization is considered as an important determinant of economic development because of the amenities it provides to its inhabitants. Various facilities, higher standards of living, higher opportunities and different lifestyle are attracting people of villages towards urban areas (Chaudhury, 1988). Alternatively, we can say that the lack of proper facilities of education, employment, new technologies etc. have been forcing rural inhabitants to migrate to urban areas. For this reason, it will not be wrong if it is call this age as the ‘Age of Urbanization’. In fact, increasing urbanization is regarded as an indicator of economic development. It may be termed both a cause and an effect of the process of economic development (Roy and Saha, 2011).

Table 3.4: Population growth since 1961 of Cooch Behar town

| Year | Population | The decadal growth rate in% |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1961 | 41922 | - |
| 1971 | 53684 | 28.06 |
| 1981 | 62112 | 15.6 |
| 1991 | 71215 | 14.66 |
| 2001 | 76874 | 7.95 |
| 2011 | 77935 | 1.38 |

Source: District census handbook, Koch Bihar (1961 to 2011)

3.4.1 Population Growth:

The first and foremost reason of urban growth is increase in urban population (Jhingan et al., 2016). Rapid growth of urban areas is the result of two population growth factors: (i) natural increase in population, and (ii) migration to urban areas. Increasing scenario of population of the town are follows in table No. 3.4. The table showing that decadal growth rate was high in 1971, but after that decadal growth rate slowly decreases.

3.4.2 Outgrowth of Cooch Behar town:

After independence, urbanization in Cooch Behar witnessed higher rate due to the post-war demographic changes across the world. In general, a host of factors is associated with the process of urbanization. A number of causes of urbanization have been identified so far like migration or rural labour, industrial job opportunities, volume and pattern of migration, unplanned demographic profile, the proliferation of shanty town, mounting social problem, poor investment, and fall in living standard and so on (Hasan, 2005).

Table 3.5: Showing urban population with outgrowth of Cooch Behar town

| Year | Population | Index of Growth |
|------|------------|-----------------|
| 1961 | 41922 | - |
| 1971 | 74748 | 1.78 |
| 1981 | 91020 | 2.17 |
| 1991 | 100123 | 2.38 |
| 2001 | 128904 | 3.07 |
| 2011 | 155986 | 3.72 |

Source: Census of India.

It is also found that the rate of increase in the urban population within the town was not so high than that of the post-independence period (Konar, 2010). Since the initiation of urbanization process, census town and extension fringe have been playing the remarkable role in urbanization and Cooch Behar is one of the least industrial district of the state even after independence despite having necessary requirements for industrial growth. This is highly responsible for slow decadal urban growth as well as annual urban exponential growth in the town area. In 1961, where the whole urban population in Cooch Behar town was 41922, it becomes to 155986 by accumulates with census town adjoining with Cooch Behar town in the year 2011. Similarly, in 1971, the

annual urban exponential growth rate was 1.78% which comes to 3.72% in the year 2011 (Table 3.5).

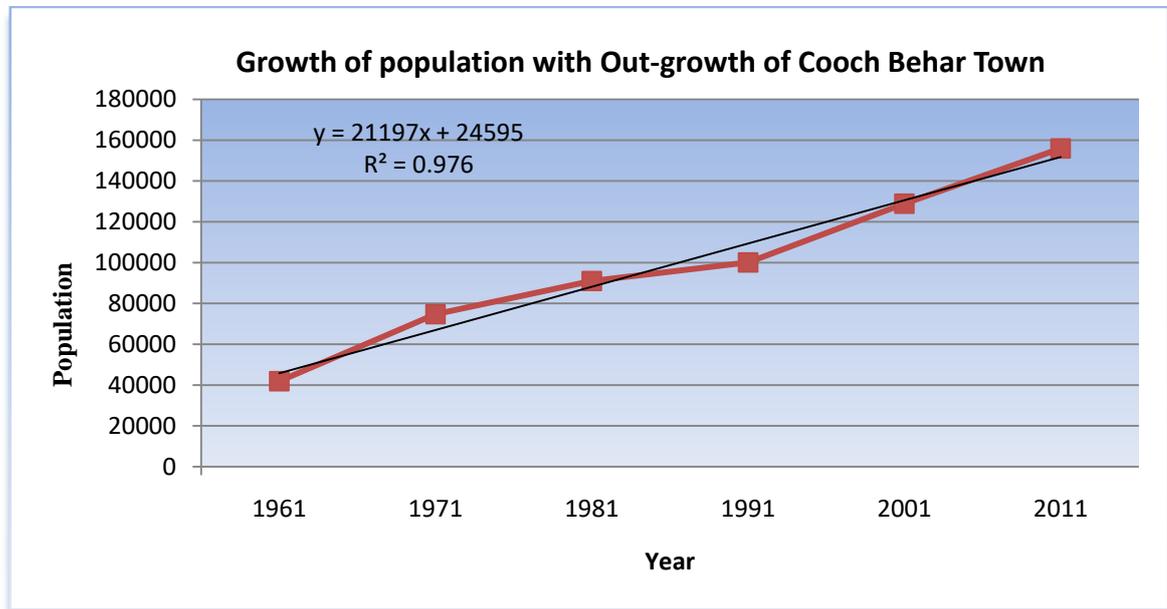


Figure 3.5: Showing growth of population with out-growth of Cooch Behar town (1961 to 2011).

3.4.3. In migration of population from neighbouring areas:

One vital cause for rapid urbanization in West Bengal between 1941 and 1951, when the urban population in West Bengal increased from 20.41 percent to 23.88 percent is the growing refugee population who mostly got settled in urban areas (Kundu, 2011). After our independence on 15th August 1947 when India was divided a huge number of refugee take shelter in West Bengal. So just after 1971, when Bangladesh becomes independent, a large number of people coming continuously from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) came to Cooch Behar and other urban areas. This had a tremendous impact upon urbanization in West Bengal in general and Cooch Behar in particular.

There is, no doubt, that migration plays an important role in the life of rural as well as urban residents, but the causes or factors are more significant. In earlier times migration from rural to urban areas was largely on account of noneconomic factors such as social, physical, demographic, cultural and communication factors.



Plate 3.1: Showing some establishment of Cooch Behar town.

In villages, social organizations are rigid and in the past people who wanted to break away from these organizations used to migrate to cities. Climatic conditions and meteorological disasters like floods and droughts compelled people to leave villages. In recent times with the decline in mortality rates which resulted in rapid population

growth in rural areas, young people have shown a tendency to migrate to urban areas in search of jobs (Konar, 2010).

Urbanization, industrialization and economic development, normally, move together and they are also very closely related. Despite a lot of pollution, environmental and ecological problems, urbanization has now-a-days become an economic and geographical necessity. Cooch Behar is one of the important towns in the district is not an exception to this general trend. It is revealed from table number 3.5 and plate 3.1 that how people migrate to Cooch Behar in the urban area. So a very important factor causing the high growth of urbanization in urban area and also other parts of India lies in the massive migration from rural areas to the urban areas. Similar is the situation of Cooch Behar, the head quarter of the district, where people basically from rural areas move to this town.

3.4.4 Expansion of peri-urban areas:

Urbanization has been playing a vital role in rural development. As people from rural society are migrating to urban regions, they are getting aware of all the amenities of urban areas. Due to the influence of urbanization, rural people are using modern techniques, advanced technologies, thereby improving their standards of living. Developments in various fields and education have changed the shape of the rural world.

During the process of economic development, all countries of the world have to undergo the process of urbanization. It helps in rural development by linking rural areas with urban areas. As a result, various economists have regarded urbanization as a secondary revolution after industrialization. Due to urbanization, the advanced services from the large urban areas have trickled down to villages, which help in rural development. The urban areas are the principal producers of importers and distributors of industrial products and implements that offer the maximum choice of goods and services. Therefore, urbanization helps rural persons to avail themselves of this opportunity and also brings urban market and services close to rural areas (Sing, 1980).

As town expanded, the outlying rural areas have been included in the urban areas. The areas previously designed as rural areas passed into the urban category by satisfying some criteria. It is not that these rural areas suddenly become urban areas. They may even continue to retain most of the characteristics of villages. But their inclusion in the expanding urban put them in the areas classified as towns. Of course, at

the time of reclassification, these areas hold rural population. But they are counted as the urban population by virtue of being classified as urban areas. In future, these are bound to acquire the features of urban life. However, rural population falling in these areas as well the number of urban population. Table No. 3.6 shows the census town adjoining in Cooch Behar town, this census town in future has a chance to agglomeration for urbanization.

Table 3.6: Adjoining census town of Cooch Behar town

| Census town | Status year | No. of population | Direction |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------|------------|
| Khagrabari | 2001 | 23122 | North |
| Guriahati | 1971 | 21064 | East |
| Takagach | 2011 | 12418 | West |
| Chakchaka | 2011 | 8582 | North East |
| Baisguri | 2011 | 5021 | North |
| Khairimala Khagrabari | 1981 | 7844 | East |
| Total | | 78051 | |

Source: District Census Handbook, 2011.

3.4.5 Market oriented location:

Cooch Behar town accommodate a large number of business machineries market and readymade markets for consumers goods mainly consists of wholesalers, dealers' distributors and small scale entrepreneurs which ultimately has led to an increase in urbanization and population concentration. In addition, to fulfil the daily commutation requirement of consumers and others lead to the development of transportation communication facilities with the neighboring area. It is found the market location act as self induced process operating in the area in more intensive manner rather than imposed factors. Cooch Behar is arguably the economic centre of the district. The market of Cooch Behar caters to large rural areas of the district and parts of Assam. It is the location from where the essential commodities must be transferred from one carrier to another. Naturally trading has become the one of important mainstay of business in Cooch Behar. By plate 3.2 it is revealed that, the town exhibits the flow of daily commuting from out skirts of town area.



Plate 3.2: Showing some shopping point of Cooch Behar town.

Since the emergence as an urban centre, Cooch Behar being a centre of trade and commerce in the region, has great prospects for consumer goods industries like bakery and confectionary, biscuits, sports goods, incense sticks, mineral water, soaps, educational materials etc., can have a huge market and even small entrepreneurs can take advantage of this opportunity. There is also a good market for steel utensils, ready-made garments, tin containers, plastic articles, kitchen wares, electrical accessories etc. As a result the surrounding rural is being changed by the urban influence from the centre.

3.4.6 Health factor:

Towns offer hospitals and health centres for people with special medical needs (Hasan, 2005). As per record the number of hospitals in town is greater than those existing in the rural area. Again, in comparison with health services prevailing in Cooch Behar urban area, those services prevailing in rural area are very uncertain. Cooch Behar town is famous for treatment to the lower Assam people. Every day a lot number of patient comes to Cooch Behar town for medical purpose. It has an impression to urban expansion of this region.

Table 3.7: No. of hospitals and beds in Cooch Behar

| No. of Medical Institutions in | | | | Total No. of Beds | Total No. of Doctors |
|--------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|-------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Hospitals | Govt. of India including Central Govt. undertaking | N.G.O/ Private Bodies (Nursing Homes) | Total | | |
| 3 | 1 | 6 | 10 | 736 | 92 |

Source: Dy. C.M.O.H. - I & II, Cooch Behar.

The district-wise situation of beds available in rural and urban centre can easily be understood by minutely going through the above table (Table 3.7). Such wide disparity in the number of hospitals and also in the number of beds in urban and rural areas compels many people to leave rural areas and settle in urban areas. Because of the very poor quality of health services existing in rural area, persons having affordable income are bound to leave their shelter in rural areas and move to urban areas for making the permanent residence there. Naturally, people of rural areas are getting more and more urbanized. Plate No. 3.3 showing some pictorial view of private nursing home.



Plate 3.3: Some picture of nursing home of Cooch Behar town.

Name of some hospital, nursing home and health centre in and around the town-

1. M.J.N Hospital (District Hospital),
2. Cooch Behar Medical College and Hospital,
3. J.D. Hospital, Rajarhat, Cooch Behar,
4. Subham Hospital and Diagonostic centre,
5. P.K Saha Hospital (formerly Shila nursing home),
6. Poddar Nursing Home,
7. Joy Lakshmi Nursing Home,
8. Jibandeeep Nursing Home,
9. Maharaja Nursing Home,
10. Ritari Health Care,
11. Cooch Behar Mission Hospital,
12. Metropolitan Nursing Home,
13. Poddar Superspeciality Hospital.

3.4.7 Educational factors:

Educational factors are also very much responsible for the urbanization in the Cooch Behar town. From the time of kingship the town has some renowned educational government institutions entire the district like Jenkins School, Sunity Academy, Indira Devi Balika Vidyalaya, Sadar Govt. High School, Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal College etc. which holds town's educational importance and also enhances the urbanization process in and around the town. Now a day's town has all the modern educational institutes which are backbone of our modern educational society like Cooch Behar govt. Engineering college, Cooch Behar medical college, Cooch Behar Panchanan Barma University, Uttarbanga Krishi Viswavidyalaya, Cooch Behar govt. polytechnic college, lots of training college and also the general degree colleges which influencing the urban population enhancement in the Cooch Behar town. Table No. 3.8 and table No. 3.9 reveals the details of educational institution in Cooch Behar town (Saha, 2012).

Table 3.8: School education in Cooch Behar town, 2013

| Primary School | | | High School | | | Higher Secondary School | | |
|------------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Instituti ons | Stude nts | Teach ers | Instituti ons | Stude nts | Teach ers | Instituti ons | Stude nts | Teach ers |
| 36 | 12352 | 133 | 1 | 878 | 14 | 14 | 15870 | 329 |

Source: District statistical handbook, 2013.

Table 3.9: Higher education in Cooch Behar town, 2013

| General College & University (Excluding Open University) | | | Professional & Technical Schools, Colleges & Universities | | | Special & Non-formal Education | | |
|--|--------------|--------------|---|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Instituti ons | Stude nts | Teach ers | Instituti ons | Stude nts | Teach ers | Instituti ons | Stude nts | Teach ers |
| 4 | 7748 | 131 | 19 | 2396 | 88 | 42 | 4127 | 207 |

Source: District statistical handbook, 2013.

3.4.8 Administrative factor:

According to economic system towns are the centres of services and dominance. This implies that towns arise and grow because they serve the villages and forms that surrounded them (Sing, 1980). Cooch Behar town is the administrative head quarter of the entire Cooch Behar district due to its administrative importance. The people of the district always want to reside at the town permanently or temporarily that is the major cause of urbanization of the town. The list of the service centres (which private and govt. offices) mentioned below-

1. District Magistrate office
2. Sub Divisional Office, Cooch Behar
3. District Judge court
4. Uttarbanga Rastriya Granthagar
5. DLLRO Office
6. NBSTC head office
7. UBKGB head quarter
8. Divisional forest office
9. Cooch Behar Treasury office
10. District Industrial Centre
11. Zilla parishad office

12. Minority Bhawan
13. Anagrasar kalyan Bhawan
14. D.I (SE), Cooch Behar

3.4.9 Unemployment and employment opportunities:

In rural sector people have to depend mainly on agriculture for their livelihood. In Cooch Behar town there are ample job opportunities that continually draw people from the rural areas to seek better livelihood. Therefore, the majority of people frequently migrate into the town to access well paying jobs in all developmental sectors such as public health, education, transport, sports and recreation, industries, and business enterprise etc.

Those who complete their school education are also coming to urban areas for making themselves ready for getting employment through different competitive examinations or for getting the higher education. Employment opportunities generated in the manufacturing sector is the most important determinant of rural-urban migration in India. Cooch Behar is not an exception. There is increasing unemployment and underemployment in different degrees in rural areas in Cooch Behar, in general. Poor and labour class persons are shifting to the towns and metropolitan cities in search of traditional jobs like cobbler, carpenter, barber, factory workers, labour for construction works, tailors, washer man, domestic servants and also odd jobs in organized firms and public establishments while there is a growing demand for labour in all these activities associated with the growth of town. Expanding employment opportunities for skilled and unskilled workers are found in growing urban area. For the last three decades or so the people of rural Bengal are not interested in joining their traditional occupations in which their ancestors were engaged in. Modernity has entered into the mind of young people. Many young people are not looking after their cultivable land and are not also joining their traditional occupations and they are moving to the urban areas in search of jobs at whatever low wage they get (Halder, 1987). It is the central command of the North Bengal State Transport Corporation which keeps up traveller administrations to Kolkata, Assam and Bhutan. In transport system Cooch Behar town located in a nodal point, plate 3.4 focusing some important transport corners of Cooch Behar town.



Plate 3.4: Showing some important transport corners of Cooch Behar town.

3.4.10 Socio cultural factors:

Cooch Behar has now become as much a centre of socio-cultural activities as the town is a cosmopolitan in nature. It is comprised of Marwari, Bengali, Bihari and Sudra people with substantial portion of Rajbanshi, the original inhabitant of the area. The town with a significant amount of social leisure facilities as cinemas, theatres, stadium, and entertainment parks etc. act as magnets to the surrounding population.

Religious factors are also responsible for urbanization. Location of places of worships like Temples, Dargahs, Gurudwar etc. as in many places turn into urban centres in course of time. Cities like Varanasi, Amritsar, Allahabad, Kolkata, Nasik, Rameshwaram etc. have been urbanized due to religious reasons. Though Cooch Behar is not an urbanized on the basis of religious influence, in some manner it keeps importance in urban life. In Cooch Behar town there has also an influence of religious establishment from the rule of the princely state. There are many religious and cultural features in this town, table No. 3.10 and plate 3.5 showing the reality.



Plate 3.5: Some cultural point of Cooch Behar town: a. Shahidbaag b. Rajbansi Bhasa Academy c. Cooch Behar Sahitya Sobhaand d. Sanskritic Sangha.

The earliest towns of Cooch Behar grew within a section that included the temples Characteristic. Special attention was given to the construction of temples and palaces because of the worshipped to different God and Goddess of the Maharaja in Cooch Behar and it was likely that thousands of labourers who were first confined and they 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 locality of temples and other public building streets were narrow lanes without surfacing drainage. An interesting point concerning of early towns in Cooch Behar is the instance of so many tanks and ponds for water supply within towns near to palace, temples, public buildings houses etc. (Mitra, 1953).

Table 3.10: The religious establishment in Cooch Behar town

| Religious establishment | Year of establishment |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Madanmohan temple | 1890 |
| Bara Devibari | N.A. |
| Ramakrishna mission, Cooch Behar | 2004-2005 |
| Lokenath mission | 1988 |
| Brahmachari kalibari | 1876 |
| Hindu Milan mandir | 1954 |
| Horisova | 1946 |
| Dharma sova | 1909 |
| Nittananda ashram | 1920 |

Source: Cooch Behar municipality.

3.4.11 Agricultural changes and urbanization:

The process of urbanization in Cooch Behar has been also a process of modernization, the spread of literacy and education, diversification and specialization in productive activities, adoption of the higher technology production in agriculture etc. As the towns expanded and the realities grew with the urbanities, the rural people felt the urge for enjoying urban amenities and new goods and services. To materialize these growing demands the rural people had to produce more and sell the surplus to the urban people to earn higher incomes so that they grow to be able to buy new goods and services. Higher productivity per unit of land in agriculture could not be ensured without the adoption of the higher technology production. A very successful land reform policy, irrigation system, adoption of the high yielding variety of seeds, fertilizers etc. have led to a higher productivity of land in agriculture leading to maximum agricultural production (Majumder, 1977).

Agriculture is the prime sector in the economy in Cooch Behar, one of the twenty-three districts of West Bengal. The interdependence of rural-urban growth impulses may be explained in another way also. The growth of urbanization means growth of industries, trade, commerce, communications, administrative and social services. It is known that all these occupations are non-agricultural in nature. The growing demand for manpower for handling these activities can largely, be met by the supply of immigrant labour population that come from rural areas.

Such migration can take place if the technological and structural changes in the productive activities in the rural areas provide a part of the growing agricultural labour force as surplus. Besides, as the population grows and the pressure of population on land rises and the scope for further employment of labour in the rural economy gets exhausted, migration of population from rural to urban areas swells urban population.

Theoretically, urbanization and agricultural change are highly and closely interrelated. Agricultural development generating surplus production supports the growth of urban centres by meeting the increased demand for food of the growing urban population and for agricultural inputs of the urban industries. The growth of the latter is also considerably dependent on the increased demand for their products by the rural population. These people will do so if their incomes go on rising owing to the increased agricultural production. Such a simplified model of balanced rural-urban development is a closed one in the sense that exogenous factors of growth of urbanization have not been taken account of. But, in reality, the forces emanating from outside the region may play a crucial role in pushing up the process of urbanization of the region concerned. Another is the existence of a large member of agriculturists within or on the periphery of the town. The cultivation of crops 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 (Karmakar, 2011).

3.4.12 Psychological factors:

Now, people want to have a calm and peaceful life, So whenever the opportunity comes, people try to leave their land, home and so on and make a shelter in the vicinity of urban areas. There are many instances which reveal that many people after being dishonoured and disrespected in rural areas have moved to urban areas by sacrificing all their belongings in rural areas. Moreover, the people who used to take recourse to

their traditional profession like carpenters, cobblers, barbers, blacksmiths, salesman etc. are not getting interested in these because these, in modern society have become highly irrelevant. So, finding no alternative they proceed towards urban areas in search of getting a continuous source of income (Saha, 2012).

In addition to these the so-called educated young person's do not want to engage in agriculture where a large number of women have been working. These young persons are finding some shelters in the urban areas and by doing a number of jobs at a time they have been supplementing the family income. Diversification of occupational structure in the urban centres is the magnetic force of attracting rural young people. In this way, large numbers of rural people are getting migrated to urban areas.

3.4.13 Rank-Size Rule factor in Cooch Behar district:

Every urban centre, irrespective of the size of the population and the nature of the function, has a region-wise influence. Normally, as the size of the population increases, the town functions increase. As a result, the influence zone is large and small municipalities have small influence zone. Here, Cooch Behar town being the district headquarter holds larger urban influence zone as compared to other municipalities both in the year 2001 and 2011, but the area of influence by the prime town that is Cooch Behar has got expanded.

Table 3.11: Distribution of urban population in Cooch Behar district as per Rank-Size Rule

| Urban centre | Total urban population in 2001 | Rank | EP(p1/r)* | Total urban population in 2011 | Rank | EP(p1/r)* |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| Cooch Behar | 76874 | 1 | 76874 | 77935 | 1 | 77935 |
| Dinhata | 34273 | 2 | 38437 | 36124 | 2 | 38967.5 |
| Mathabhanga | 21107 | 3 | 25624.67 | 23890 | 3 | 25978.33 |
| Tufanganj | 19310 | 4 | 19218.5 | 20998 | 4 | 19483.75 |
| Haldibari | 13185 | 5 | 15374.8 | 14404 | 5 | 15587 |
| Mekhliganj | 10835 | 6 | 12812.33 | 9127 | 6 | 12989.17 |

Source: Calculated by Researcher.

*EP = Estimated Population, p1 = population of 1st ranking city, r = rank

With the help of Rank-Size distribution, an inverse relationship between the total number of population and settlement size in the district of Cooch Behar has been found

out. Among all municipalities of the district, the Cooch Behar town has ranked first. In the table No. 3.11 reveals the rank of other town of the district with Cooch Behar town.

3.5 Conclusion:

It is not easy to reconstruct the stages in the evolution of Cooch Behar town and one thing that is the kingdom of the princely state is certain about the nature of its beginning. Cooch Behar is one of the oldest urban settlements in West Bengal and has had a chequered history since its foundation. The historical periods chosen are not just convenient dates. They represent the landmarks in the history of the evolution of the town in Cooch Behar. They indicate a significant historical event which had left its influence on the form of and function of the town or the entry of a new dynamic political or economic force which shaped the destiny of the urbanization.

Initially, the urbanization in Cooch Behar was taken place due to the settlement of Koch dynasty and its subsequent expansion in next decades. The urbanization of the district was mainly concentrated in Cooch Behar town only, rest of the municipal towns have also witnessed the process of urbanization in a sloth rate and not like the growth of Cooch Behar town. The municipal towns other than Cooch Behar experienced the urbanization process by means of the demographic way and it was only Cooch Behar town and its surrounding areas, where major urban structures and infrastructures are being set up. Consequently, the urbanization of the district is purely district headquarter that is Cooch Behar town based. This has resulted rising land price of the town of Cooch Behar and its adjacent areas. Similarly, most of the urban environmental problems like traffic congestion, air and noise pollution, problems related to solid waste disposal, overcrowding etc. are being faced by Cooch Behar town in compared to other municipal towns of the district. The evolution of urbanization in relating in Cooch Behar town can be grouped into three stages;

- a) The early settlement was developed along with the establishment of princely state and influences by kings of the dynasty. When population expanded further, settlement extended outside the city's inner wall.
- b) As the urban administration and economic functions increased, the settlement grew at the expense of cultivated land within the town.

- c) The areas nearest the strategically located became the places for development of suburbs as census town like Khagrabari, Guriahati, Takagach etc. emerged during the last few censuses.

The town was almost a village in the beginning. It has undergone modifications even from the early historical period. But the town had a separate identity only from 1950. The earlier growth of various sections has taken place by the various dynasties. The palace got established from Maharaja Nripendra Narayan period. But the growth way from the place is so much that the palace has lost its identity. The old town had quicker development. The full fledged development on the other sections has increased the congestion in the core area.

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