

# **ABSTRACT**

## **TITLE OF THE THESIS:**

“A STUDY ON THE PROBLEMS OF URBANIZATION IN  
COOCH BEHAR TOWN, WEST BENGAL, INDIA”

## **Introduction:**

The present study involves of the problems of urbanization and their effects of the people in the Cooch Behar town. Rapid increase in population due to heavy influx of immigrants, rural population in the surroundings of the town, changes in the trend of population growth as well as land use pattern and related problems. The Cooch Behar town has been associated with unplanned growth at the present time. The Cooch Behar is the oldest urbanized area in the North Bengal and even it is the oldest one in the West Bengal also. The princely state was transformed into Cooch Behar District, with Cooch Behar town as its headquarters.

Although the metropolitan and big cities are always getting the priority at the town planners to formulate planning policies for the betterment of their environment which suits for an ideal place to live in the small and medium towns are becoming always neglected in terms of proper planning and developments. So, the planners should have a new look upon the growing needs of the small and medium towns to reduce the pressure from the big cities on one hand, and on the other hand to create a balance urbanization over the whole country. Keeping in mind such conditions, the present research is going to discuss the problems of urban setting in the Cooch Behar town and strategies for developing in future.

The term 'urbanization' may put before us an idea of a modern humanization, but its presence dates back to the pages in the history since the ancient civilization. Due to different social, economic, cultural, historical or even political reformations, we have been well acquainted about the city's origin, its development, evolution, and its decay several times. In this connection, Cooch Behar, the headquarter in the District of Cooch Behar, which even 300 years ago had been a Koch kingdom, was a planned urban centre. Though this settlement has been greatly developed and progressed by rapid urbanization, still different problems and gaps related to the development in this town are also undeniable facts. It has also been a proven truth that urbanization brings in its

wake a number of unwanted situations which are inseparably and organically related to each other and thus, unfortunately, hard to avoid. The present research work thus tries to aim at the appearance of Cooch Behar from a princely state capital to a town, its growth, evolution, and development as well as highlights the problems that have been originated due to the proximate result of urbanization. To, fill the research gap, an attempt has been made here to study the problems of urbanization in the Cooch Behar town.

**Area of study:**

Cooch Behar town is the part of Cooch Behar block no.-II. The town lies between the latitudes of 26°17'57"N to 26°21'00"N and longitudes of 89°25'49"E to 89°28'30"E. The Cooch Behar town is located on the side of NH-31B at 153 Km from Siliguri and 771 km from Kolkata. The River Torsa flows by the western side of town. It is the largest town and districts headquarter in the Cooch Behar District with an area of 8.29 sq. km. The 20 wards in the town are densely populated within 2.5 sq.km of its central periphery. The main feature in this town is the existence of ponds, Parks, Ground and heritage buildings. A major portion of the land of this town is under the settlement and commercial area.

**Objectives of the study:**

The study basically deals to determine by degree and causes of environmental impact due to urban growth and development in the Cooch Behar town based on following objectives.

- i) To find out the factors leading to the urbanization in Cooch Behar town.
- ii) To study the land use characteristics of the town.
- iii) To highlight the major environmental issues created due to urbanization in Cooch Behar town.
- iv) To identify the major problems of Cooch Behar town.
- v) To suggest proposals to overcome the problems.

**Hypothesis:**

In the present study, the Research will carry out the work with the helping of following hypotheses

- i) There is a mutual relationship among physical, cultural and societal landscape with the urbanization in the study area.

- ii) Urbanization of Cooch Behar town encounters many environmental issues which are by nature anthropogenic.
- iii) Growing urbanization has resulted many negative impacts in Cooch Behar town.

### **Methodology:**

The study is based on a combination of historical, analytical and empirical methods of enquiry. Accordingly, three sources of data have been explored: (i) primary sources; (ii) secondary sources and (iii) field investigation. Primary sources include materials and information which have been collected from the reports of the committees and commissions, set up by the government, municipal and government records and documents. Secondary sources have been examined to explore the relevant issues covered by the study. These include books, journals, and periodicals which are relevant to the study. Apart from collecting information from primary and secondary sources, the survey method through the administration of questionnaire and interview has been applied for the collection of relevant data and enquiry in to the research questions. Field investigation has been conducted to obtain perceptive data from personal interviews, structured and non-structured questionnaire.

Data obtained from field survey have been processed normally. After the completion of the survey, these have been modified, processed and tabulated. In the case of non-structured and open-ended questions, the response has been categorized, processed and tabulated. Shortage of fund has prevented the adaptation of more sophisticated means for the analysis of data.

The methods adopted for this study has a rationalistic one being associated with various statistical and quantitative techniques. The data and information has been processed, analysed and the results derived from statistical and quantitative methods have been presented by suitable cartographic diagrams and methods. Physical and thematic maps prepared on GIS platform.

### **Discussion and findings:**

Study is significant in understanding the problems in Cooch Behar as a medium size town, attention by the government to its problems and also the policies and

management of civic affairs. Further, the study is significant for examining the problems and prospect of the evolving pattern of the decentralised development.

- I. In the context of Hypothesis-I “*There is mutual relationship among physical, cultural and societal landscape with the urbanisation in the study area*” which is describe in chapter II, III and IV. The function of the town as a district head quarter will gradually increase its importance. So, the physical and social linkage infrastructural facilities are necessary not only for the dwellers of the town area but also for requirements of the whole district. Different census year showing that the population growth rate within Cooch Behar municipality is declining. The trend of decadal growth rate from 1971 it was 28.06%, 1981 it was 15.60%, in 1991 it was 14.665, in 2001 it was 7.385 and in 2011 it becomes to 1.38% which has been shown in table 2.6. But with the outgrowth of Cooch Behar town in 1971 index of growth was 1.78 and in 2011 it reach to the index of growth as 3.72, which has been shown in table 3.5. The exponential growth of Cooch Behar town is absent towards south (Table 3.6) for river barrier in the south, which explain the mutual relationship of physical, social and cultural landscape of urbanization is true and thus the hypothesis I is accepted. The land use survey reveals that, the land use under residential area was 43% of the total area. In 2006 the residential land use becomes 62% of the total area and it reach to 66% of the town area in 2016. Moreover, 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 town limit. Now according to 2011 census there are five census-towns emerge beside municipal boundary and it is the sign of urban expansion.

The town was almost a village in the beginning. It has undergone modifications even from 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 fledge development on the other sections have been increased the congestion at the core area. Rapid structural change in the urban landscape has been created pressure on land and urban amenities. This has given to rise to urban environmental problems such as reduction of vacant space, demand for

transport facilities and insufficient provision of other necessities like better sanitation, protected water supply etc.

- II. In the context of Hypothesis-II “*Urbanization of Cooch Behar town encounters many environmental issues which are by nature anthropogenic*” this is discussed in the chapter V. The discussion highlights many environmental issues like physical as well as social environmental issues also. At present urban dwellers facing many environmental changes which moving toward the environmental degradation of the town. The water quality, air condition, drainage condition and social infrastructural condition is not satisfactory level which creating environmental issues. Hence, the hypothesis two is accepted. Rapid structural change in the urban landscape has created pressure on land and urban amenities. This has given rise to urban environmental problems such as reduction of vacant space, demand for transport facilities and insufficient provision of other necessities like better sanitation, protected water supply etc. In Cooch Behar, the growth of population has simultaneously increased the number of vehicles on roads which create not only the traffic hazards but also damage to environment through the noise pollution.

It is admitted that this micro level study on the problems of urban development would not be able to highlight all the problems of small and medium cities and towns. Yet, the study seeks to make an in-depth analysis in order to analysis the major issues of developing and their management in a medium size city in the backward part of the state of West Bengal. The increasing rate of urbanization has been generating lots of environmental issues in Cooch Behar town. There has been found a changing pattern of environmental quality and sustainability in recent years due to increasing urbanization. It is to be emphasized here that the importance of urbanization is not in the growth and development of the urban centres and urban population alone, but in its overall impact on the contiguous areas.

- III. In the context of Hypothesis-III i.e., “*Growing urbanization has resulted many negatives impacts in Cooch Behar town*”, this is analysed by the chapter VI. The results revealed that urban dwellers faced many problems due to rapid urbanization such as drinking water problem (above 64% of respondents), garbage problem (above 77% of respondents), sewerage problem (above 88% of respondents), institutional problem (above 68% of respondents), natural calamities problems (above 80% of respondents), and electricity problem (above 80% of respondents). Therefore,

Hypothesis three is also accepted. As the most of the residents in Cooch Behar Town are not satisfied with the existing system, they want improvement. Therefore, they are willing to pay something to get better facilities to manage their household wastes. But there should be an adjustment of paying structure with economic conditions of the households. It can be said that is an education and awareness of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Nirmal Bangla play significant role, government should increase its involvement in education and awareness campaign.

Here the gap between available urban infrastructure and their demand among the public has been increasing continuously due to resource constraints. The town under study has many such problems, of which some are very acute and need attention for identification. Maintenance of purity and safety of the environment in the face of increasing urbanization and mechanisation of daily life is emerging as the most challenging problem facing the Cooch Behar town today. The growing of people together in confined space has always produce discomfort, risk of disease, problems of food and water supply and difficulties in arranging for the disposal of waste. As cities have grown, these environmental problems have become so severe that the liberation the cities provided appears to be reduced by the restrictions imposed by the urban environment.

### **Conclusion and suggestions:**

Unplanned urban growth on old planned urban area hampering the proper development in Cooch Behar town. Increased demand for urban service fails to keep pace with the available infrastructure and thereby a gap between the demand and availability of urban service due to resource constraint. Constraint of Space for physical and social barrier, resultant discomfort in living, the risk of disease, insufficiency in water supply and difficulties in the disposal of the waste in the town. The slum pockets in the town are one of the important sources of environmental pollution and sanitation problems. The increase of anti-social activities in such slums along the fringe areas causes socio-cultural imbalance.

Cooch Behar is a peaceful residential town, where not much is developed and is facing the problems of insufficient and uneven distribution of urban amenities. The municipal authority failed to promote the Modern urban facilities to its residents. The present socio-economic condition has been discussed along with the identifications of problem in the town. The high growth rate of population creates immense pressure on

existing land and other resources, which affects the urban environment and living standard on the people of the town. The job opportunity and the economic growth can be achieved through installation of industrial units in the outskirts. Cooch Behar town has a potentiality to develop tourism, but needs proper planning and initiatives by the authorities. The morphology of the town has been changing as old buildings are replaced by new structures and rural land is converted to urban uses. Cooch Behar town is expanding towards the North and the Eastern Directions. For the all round development, the town needs proper planning and effective implementation of those plans. Along with this the residents of the town should take initiative in making the town economically efficient, socially equitable and environmentally sustainable in future.

The planning should begin at the people's level by conducting opinion surveys and investigative studies regarding how people live, what they want and what problems they have and where they want to live. For a proper framing of urban planning policies it is essential to have an idea of the city's demographic, economic, social and regional character.

Cooch Behar is one of the important towns of the region. The population of the town and adjoining area are growing sharply without considering the existing infrastructure. So, a large number of people and economy of the region depend on it. So, an all round development plan is urgently required not only for the development of the town but also development of the region. Thus, the economy and living condition of the people will rise with the development of the town in future.