

P R E F A C E

Various research projects have been undertaken on India's urbanisation problems and Scholars have dealt with the problems of large cities in great details. Unfortunately rural and problems of small and medium towns in India have remained virtually unexplored. Given proper attention small and medium towns can play an important role as service and market centres to the rural hinterlands in the context of the balanced development of the district and the region; they can thus lessen the magnetic attraction of the big cities. Importance of the study of small and medium towns has been aptly put by Ruth Gless; "the small and medium towns are quite often seen as the bridge between the urban and rural universe; as the kind of settlements which can offer the best of both worlds". ("Introduction to Urban Rural Differences in Southern Asia"; UNESCO Research Centre on Social Economic Development in Southern Asia, Delhi, 1964, Page 3; Ruth Gless).

Although, Urban problems in big cities are different, but do not defy solutions. The big city governments are administratively and financially competent to grapple with them. The small and medium towns, having weak administrative and financial bases cannot cope with the problems stemming out of calculated indifference. Thus, they have been denied the roles they are expected to perform. It is only in the Sixth Plan an

attempt has been made to explore the potentiality of small and medium towns in the realisation of the objectives of national development. Such a planning process would highlight the needs for the development of small and medium towns.

The present study seeks to analyse the implementation of "Integrated Development of Small and Medium Towns" Programme (IDSMT) in West Bengal. For this purpose, four (4) IDSMT towns of North Bengal (the northern part of West Bengal) namely, Balurghat (West Dinajpur District), Cooch Behar (Cooch Behar District), Darjeeling (Darjeeling District) and Jalpaiguri (Jalpaiguri District) have been selected. In this study an attempt has been made also to examine various approaches to Urban Planning in the context of regional framework.

The terms "small and medium towns" and "the integrated development" deserve some clarifications. Evidently, the development of small and medium towns entails initiative, help and participation of all levels of government - central, state and local; those who are beneficiaries should also participate in the process of implementation. Demographically, settlements having population of less than one lakh and more than five thousand may be termed as small and medium towns. These towns should have an Urban Local Self Government and majority of the population should be engaged in non-agricultural occupation and the density of population should be at least four hundred per

(iii)

square kilometre. More specifically, small and medium towns as concepts are used in a relative sense and generally refer to those settlements which are ranked the middle or lower order of hierarchy in the over-all distribution of towns. The pattern of rank size distribution varies and no definite population size can be taken as universal criterion to classify a town as small medium or large. Following the classification as adopted by the Registrar General of India, it can be viewed that towns with population range in between twenty thousand and one lakh population and five thousand and twenty thousand population have been indentified respectively as 'Medium' and 'Small' towns. The Study Report of the United Nations on Meerut in India (1974) has adopted a standard definition of medium towns. The study observes, "the medium sized towns may be taken to include those towns functioning at sub-national levels and serving the spatial sub-system of the economy."

It would be worthwhile to go into the semantics of the word "integrate". The standard lexical meaning of this word is "to complete (what is imperfect) by the addition of the necessary parts" or "to combine (parts or elements) into whole." The conceptual stance of integrated development as it has been understood is very close to the lexical meaning of the word "integrate". Integrated development means integration of all the economic and

social activities (functional integration) and integration of activities over space (spatial integration).

In this study observation has been made as to how far the small and medium towns do perform both the functional and spatial integrational roles. The study begins with a map of the Municipal Bodies of West Bengal. The introduction sets down the theoretical framework in the context of which the study has been carried out.

The first chapter provides a discussion of the small and medium towns in India's urban scene. It seeks to explore the state of affairs existing in the small and medium towns of West Bengal.

The second chapter provides an analysis of the existing conditions of the towns under study namely, Balurghat, Cooch Behar, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri. Population function and economic base, regional role, existing land use pattern and the IDSMT project of each town have been briefly analysed.

In the third chapter implementation of IDSMT projects undertaken by the towns has been thoroughly discussed highlighting inter-alia, municipal leadership and public participation.

In the fourth chapter, while dealing with urban development finance in India and particularly in West Bengal suggestion has been made for the evolution of the fiscal partnership in the relationship of three sets of government : Union, State and Local.

The fifth chapter deals with municipal personnel administration in India with special reference to West Bengal. It seeks to highlight the measures needed for enhancing the management capability of the municipal bodies in West Bengal.

"The symphony" has been divided into three sections. The first section deals with major issues of urban planning and development. It pleads also for an alternative developmental model. The second examines the state-municipal relationship giving stress on institutional partnership as envisaged in the State of West Bengal for implementation of urban development programmes. The third section deals with the case for a new municipal legislation in West Bengal.

Such a study must have multifarious sources of data, primary and secondary. With a view to exploring the nature of leadership in the municipal authorities responsible for implementation of IDSMP programme, citizens participation in

(vi)

the development process, and other allied issues, the method of interview for selected samples of both municipal leaders and citizens through questionnaires has been adopted. It may be mentioned that before giving ^{final} final shape to the questionnaires, pilot study has been conducted. Besides extended interviews with Shri D. S. Meshram of Town and Country Planning Organisation, Government of India, Shri D. N. Banerjee, Special Secretary, Department of Local Government and Urban Development, Government of West Bengal and Shri T. K. Banerjee, Joint Director-in-Charge, Institute of Local Government and Urban Studies, Calcutta have immensely helped in understanding urban development conceptually and operationally.

Apart from the interviews (formal and informal) data and information were collected from official records and notifications published by the Governments of India and West Bengal.

In Planning and Programming this study I have many debts to acknowledge. My most profound debt is to my supervisor Dr. Dhrubojyoti Bhaumik, Professor of Political Science, University of North Bengal, without whose active guidance and encouragement it would have been impossible to complete this work. No words are adequate to thank him. Mr. D. N. Banerjee, Special Secretary, Urban Development Department, Government of West Bengal, has helped in cutting through red-tapes involved in

(vii)

getting official records and information. The staffs of the Central Library, University of North Bengal, the National Library, Calcutta, Library of the Centre for Urban Studies, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, Library of the Institute of Local Government and Urban Studies, Calcutta have helped me in very many ways.

To my wife Mousumi who has helped me in copying from my untidy handwritten scripts patiently my debt is immeasurable. Shri Jitendra Nath Sarkar who has typed out the scripts neatly deserves my thanks.

Finally, the present study has been carried out with the financial support of the University Grants Commission. I am thankful to the Commission.

(Dilip Kumar Sarkar)