

Prospect Of Urbanisation In East Barddhaman District, West Bengal, India

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Abstract

Urbanisation of the new-born district East Barddhaman in West Bengal is facing a challenge after being separated from mining and industry-based West Barddhaman. In East Barddhaman there are only six municipal towns and 21 census towns in 2011. Among the four old towns of nineteenth century only Barddhaman, is a class-I town, but in Kalna, Katwa and Dainhat towns urbanisation is almost stagnant as they have lost their past glory of trade and commerce. Basic urban amenities are poor in towns other than Barddhaman. All the towns and villages of the district therefore depend on Barddhaman to avail better educational, medical and marketing facilities and makes it overcongested. Agricultural prosperity on the one hand and urban shadow effect of Kolkata and Barddhaman hinder urbanisation in East Barddhaman district. Therefore to activate urbanisation process in the district improvement in transport system, basic urban amenities and socio-economic facilities as well as materializing the prospect of agro-based industry and tourism can be emphasised.

Key words: urbanisation, small towns, basic amenities, socio-economic facilities,

1. Introduction

Urbanisation is a long continued process of development in the form of social transformation from traditional rural society to modern urban community. In India earlier urbanisation was based on administrative centres, commercial centres and centres of historical importance. Later industrialisation and better transport facilities gear up the process. But two vital characteristics of Indian urbanisation is overdependence on mega cities and rural character of small and medium towns. Therefore many primate cities coexist in India and small and medium towns get less importance. Similarly urbanisation in West Bengal has mainly taken place pivoting on Kolkata. The people of entire state largely depend on this single city for administrative needs as well as better socio-economic facilities and consequently, immigration to the city results into problems of over-population, urban congestion, atmospheric pollution etc. So a planned urban development with decentralisation of urban amenities in other class-I towns (>100000) outside Kolkata and provision of minimum urban infrastructure in small and medium towns (20000-99999) are necessary to minimise regional inequality in urban development in the state.

The urban scenario of new born district, East Barddhaman of West Bengal is also facing similar problem at local level. In spite of her historical importance and past glory of trade and commerce centres, East Barddhaman district has only a class –I town and few small and medium towns dotted over vast rural tract. Western part of erstwhile Barddhaman district was urbanized based on mining and industrial activities. But the eastern part was entirely rural agricultural tract except the district head quarter town. So it's a challenge in front of East Barddhaman to encourage urbanisation for the sake of economic development of this new born district (April, 2017).

2. Problem and Study Area

East Barddhaman comprises of four sub-divisions, Kalna, Katwa, Barddhaman Sadar North and Barddhaman Sadar South containing 23 blocks, Kalna-I,II, Purbasthali-I,II, Manteswar, Katwa-I,II, Ketugram-I,II, Mangolkote, Bhatar, Memari-I,II, Burdwan-I,II, Jamalpur, Raina-I,II, Khandaghosh, Galsi-I, II and Ausgram-I,II. All these blocks are dominated by agriculture. East Barddhaman had four municipal towns in 1860s and after almost 150 years there are now only 6 municipal towns and 21 census towns (2011). Urban activities are mainly concentrated in the district head quarter, Barddhaman. To unfold the reason behind slow pace of urbanisation in East Barddhaman and to propose a projected urban growth there, this district has been selected for present study.

3. Objectives

The objectives of this research article are to find out:

- i) the actual urban scenario of East Bardhaman,
- ii) the causes of slow pace of urbanisation in East Bardhaman and
- iii) the priority issues for the spread of urbanisation in this district.

4. Data Source and Methodology

To conduct this research work first, secondary data have been collected from District Census Handbooks of Bardhaman (1961-2011) and from municipality offices to find out the actual urban scenario of East Bardhaman district and its change over space and time. Secondly, field survey has been conducted to have an idea of existing urban amenities and to understand the perception of people regarding urbanisation. Finally from their perception priority issues for the spread of urbanisation in East Bardhaman have been identified. For field survey only the municipal towns, both old and new have been taken into account.

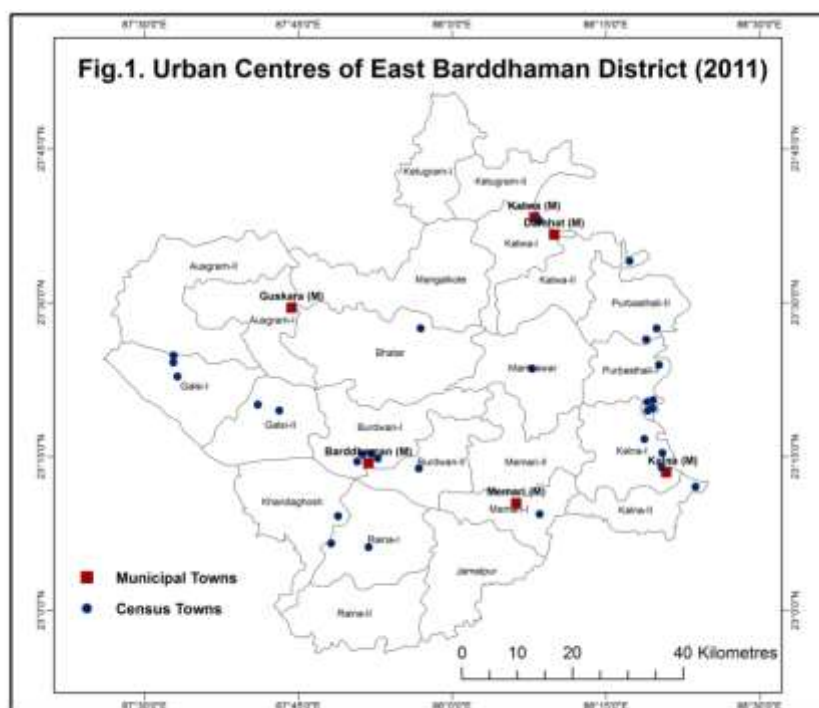
5. Discussion

5.1. Urban Scenario of East Bardhaman

5.1.1. Urban centres and Population growth

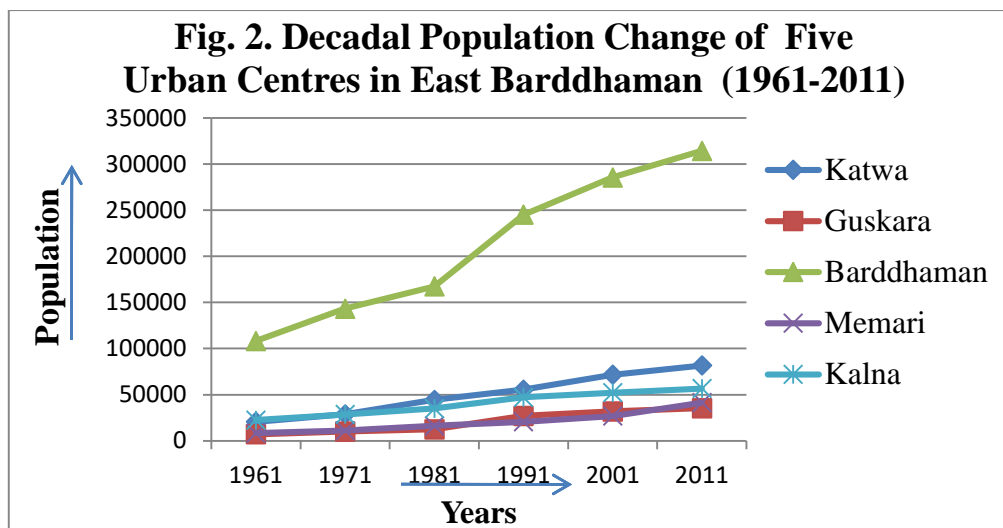
Urbanisation started in erstwhile Bardhaman district during second half of nineteenth century. Initially there were two urban centres, Asansol and Raniganj municipalities in the west and four urban centres, Burdwan, Kalna, Katwa and Dainhat municipalities in the east. In 1961 there were 10 urban centres in the west and 6 in the east with 18.1% urban population of the district. Over the decades urban population of erstwhile Bardhaman district increased to 22.78% (1971), 29.39% (1981), 35.09% (1991), 36.94% (2001) and 39.89% in 2011. According to 2011 census there are 99 urban centres in this district, of which 72 urban centres are in West Bardhaman including two municipal corporations (Asansol, Durgapur) and 27 in East Bardhaman without any municipal corporation.

East Bardhaman had four urban centres Bardhaman, Katwa, Kalna and Dainhat by 1869. After eighty years in 1951 the fifth town Memari came up followed by Guskara in 1961. Two more census towns Sukdal (Galsi-I) and Dhatrigram (Kalna-I) were added by 1991. By 2011 19 more census towns have come up (Fig.1). Among all these urban centres Bardhaman shows a steady population growth over the years and it's to be noted that five census towns of 2011 are the adjacent parts of Bardhaman municipality and they belong to the Bardhaman Planning Area as delineated by Bardhaman Development Authority.



Data Source: DCH, Bardhaman, 2011

Barddhaman is the only class-I town of East Barddhaman since 1961 (Fig.2). Two other old towns Katwa and Kalna became class-II towns much later during 1991 and 2001 respectively. Dainhat is still a class-IV town (24397) which is facing almost stagnant urbanisation. Both Memari (41451) and Guskara (35388) are class-III towns though they developed much later. The population growth of five municipal towns, Barddhaman, Katwa, Kalna, Memari and Guskara over last fifty years (1961-2011) shows that urban population of Barddhaman has increased sharply over the years and it has reached 3,14,265 population in 2011 with a very high population density (11,950 persons/km²). But it's yet to be a municipal corporation. Among the six municipalities of the district Barddhaman ('51-'61 and '81-'91), Katwa ('71-'81), Memari ('71-'81 And 2001-2011) and Guskara ('61-'71) towns experienced 40%-50% urban population growth at least in one decade since 1961 to 2011, but Kalna and Dainhat experience 20%-30% decadal growth rate in general.



5.1.2. Water supply system in Municipalities

Among the municipal towns of East Barddhaman Barddhaman municipality covers almost entire municipal area with piped water supply. Presently Barddhaman supplies 72 lakh gallons of water per day through 57 pumps (2018) and 34438 (2017) tap connections in her 35 wards. Tubewells are also there in water crisis areas. The municipality has undertaken a plan of extracting sub-surface water through infiltration gallery system from Damodar riverbed during 2016-17 under AMRUT scheme. It aims at extracting 12 lakh gallons of water per day to meet growing demand for water.

Other municipal towns of the district supply 5-15 lakh gallons of water per day covering the demand of 60%-70% population of the respective municipality. It's a failure no doubt in parts of Kalna and Katwa municipalities which started water supply system much earlier. In Kalna and Dainhat municipalities recently surface water sources have been thought to be used for drinking water supply to avoid arsenic pollution in groundwater. In Katwa municipality surface water supply from the river Bhagirathi has already been materialized in 2018 and the town now supplies nearly 20 lakh gallons of water per day. In case of Memari and Guskara before their municipal status water supply system was under Public Health Engineering Department and since 2000s the municipalities are taking active role in this respect. Guskara municipality has received financial help of Rs.8.30crore from JNNURM scheme to enrich water supply system in the town (2009). A parallel household water supply system runs privately in the towns, specially in Barddhaman and Memari municipalities because of shallow water table and rich groundwater reserve in this area (Laha, 2012). Besides, non-household sector e.g., rice mills (24), hospital, nursing homes, Rail, schools, colleges and university in Barddhaman municipality also have their own system of pumping groundwater daily from their own campuses. This may lead to water crisis in this town in future as groundwater irrigation is also being practised in surrounding agricultural tract.

5.1.3. Socio-economic Facilities of Barddhaman Municipality, the district headquarter

Barddhaman acts as a primate city of the district. It receives much better educational, medical and other socio-economic facilities than other towns of East Barddhaman. The town is well connected with entire district by frequent road or rail network services. It's also located between Kolkata and Asansol urban industrial regions. Presence of a university, four degree colleges, engineering college, cheap private boarding facility, a medical college hospital, 38 nursing homes, 80 pathological centres, 335 dispensaries (CMOH, Burdwan, 2018 and Field Survey, 2018), shopping malls and most of the administrative offices of the district altogether pull the semi-migrants and commuters to Barddhaman town from surrounding villages and towns. All these have led to fast vertical expansion of Barddhaman town in last fifteen years. Now there are more than 200 multistoried dwelling apartments in this town. Burgeoning population has also given rise to as many as 141 slums in this town and many of them are encroaching the Banka River bed. It has a negatively impact on the fluvial ecology. In spite of the absence of any heavy industry, Barddhaman has

been continuing the process of urbanisation capitalizing her administrative and socio-economic facilities, but pace of urbanisation is very slow in other parts of the district.

5.2. Causes of Slow pace of Urbanisation

5.2.1. Agricultural Prosperity of East Bardhaman

East Bardhaman is rich in fertile alluvial soil and water resource. Three rivers- the Ajay, the Damodar and the Bhagirathi-Hooghly along with their tributaries, DVC canals, thick aquifer with shallow water table and adequate annual rainfall (150 cm) comprise the physical base of agricultural development. Again presence of the agricultural castes the Aguris, the Sadgops and patronage from Burdwan Rajas have triggered the socio-economic platform for agricultural prosperity.

In East Bardhaman paddy and/potato grow in canal-served areas of Bhatar, Ausgram-I,II, Galsi-I,II, Burdwan-I,II, Manteswar, Mangolkote, Ketugram-I,II, Raina-I,II, Khandaghosh and Jamalpur and diversified crop culture are found in groundwater irrigation-dependent areas of Purbasthali-I,II, Kalna-I,II, Katwa-I,II and Memari-I,II blocks. Floriculture (rose, marigold, lily) and fruit culture (mango, papaya, guava) have been adopted in Purbasthali, Kalna and Katwa police stations (Laha, 2011). Cash crop like onion occupies around 5% of gross cropped area in Kalna-I block (PAO, Bardhaman, 2018). Bardhaman is always dynamic in marketising her agricultural harvest. Due to this agricultural development people don't have an urge for searching other occupations. As a result landuse of this agriculture-dominated district is largely rural. It's noticeable that paddy-dominated Khandaghosh, Jamalpur blocks in South Damodar region and Manteswar, Bhatar, Mangolkote, Ketugram-I,II, Katwa-II blocks to the north don't have any census town also (Table.1).

5.2.2. Declining Commercial activities along the Ganges.

Kalna, Katwa and Dainhat- these three old towns developed as commercial towns along the river Ganges (Bhagirathi-Hooghly). Katwa and Dainhat are famous for bell metal utensils. Kalna had a powerful naval-base during the period of King Shasanka. Hat Kalna and Gram Kalna were staple business centres and even in first half of 19th century Kalna used to carry her fame in trade and commerce involving different items like foodgrains, jute, bell metals, gold ornaments etc.

In 19th century the tributaries of the Bhagirathi-Hooghly (Khari, Banka, Behula etc.) were also voluminous (Choudhury, 1991; Petterson, 1997). Later, with the siltation in Bhagirathi-Hooghly river trade and commerce of these old towns started declining. So urbanisation process got obstructed due to depressed economic activities. Still after 150years of their municipality status these towns cover only 6km² -10km² of area.

5.2.3. Lack of Transport development

In spite of an early appearance in urban scenario Kalna, Katwa and Dainhat are devoid of adequate rail and road networks. Katwa-Bandel broad gauge rail line connects Kalna and Katwa subdivisions with Kolkata urban area. Earlier there was a metre gauge rail line between Katwa and Bardhaman towns. It has been replaced by broad gauge rail line in 2018 only. But only one pair of trains up- and-down connect Bardhaman and Katwa towns once a day. So people in general depend on bus service only. There is no direct rail network between Bardhaman and Kalna towns.

However both Kalna and Katwa towns are well connected with Bardhaman town by frequent bus services. Daily up- and- down 80 bus trips connect each of these towns with Bardhaman. But roads are dusty, narrow and often get damaged with big holes. The village roads are even poorer, and in many cases muddy in monsoon.

5.2.4. Lack of urban Socio-economic facilities

Bardhaman town can well be called an 'educational town' and a 'medical town' also for the services from university, various colleges, medical college hospital and large number of nursing homes and dispensaries within the town. Among the other municipalities each has a degree college and at least one nursing home. Outside the municipalities there are only 9 degree colleges, a few private engineering colleges and only 17 nursing homes of 5-20 beds each and 10 day-care centres of 5-15 beds each. Among them 11 nursing homes are located within 1-2 km distance from Bardhaman municipality boundary and belong to Bardhaman Planning Area. So the educational and medical centres outside the municipality areas are very meager in number. Bed-patient ratio of the nursing homes is also very low and therefore they are unable to meet the local needs. Shopping malls, multiplexes are also found only in Bardhaman municipality. So the people of entire district, both from municipal and non-

municipal areas are compelled to come to Barddhaman to avail better educational, medical and marketing facilities and for urban recreation also.

5.2.5. Absence of industries

Agriculture is the main occupation in East Barddhaman district. It shares on an average 70% -85% workers. Only in Purbasthali-I,II blocks weaving and dyeing industries share 15% -20% workers and in Katwa-I,II and Kalna-I,II blocks they share 5%-10% of total workers due to concentration of landless Bangladeshi refugees in this area. Poor people are also engaged in unorganized/informal sector. Factory-based industrial activities are absent from East Barddhaman. Only 5%-20% villages of different blocks have weekly or daily markets which ensure market-centric business activities.

5.2.6. Urban shadow effect of Barddhaman and Kolkata.

During 2001–11 29.5% of urban population growth in India fundamentally owed to the process of rural to urban classification and the number of census towns (CTs) increased from 1362 to 3894 during 2001- 2011 (Chakraborty, et.al, 2017). According to this classification, villages in 2001 having more than 4000 population, more than 400 persons/km² population density and at least 75% male main workforce engaged in non-farm occupation will be upgraded to urban status (CT) in 2011. Throughout entire 20th century Eastern part of erstwhile Barddhaman district added two municipal towns and two census towns. Due to growing population pressure in East Barddhaman 19 CTs have been added during 2001 and 2011 census. Some of these census towns possess 10000-20000 population. They are Srirampur (19830) and Nasaratpur (17044) in Purbasthali-I, Sukdal (13093) in Galsi-I, Sashpur (10100) in Kalna-II, Dhatrigram (9951) in Kalna-I and Bahir Sarbamangala (12819) and Nari (13072) in Burdwan-I blocks. These CTs only fulfill the census criteria of urban status, but bear a rural landscape and fully depend on Barddhaman or nearby towns for urban socio-economic facilities. This stagnation in urban process of East Barddhaman district is due to the urban shadow effect of Kolkata and Barddhaman urban areas which paralyse the prospect of emerging local growth pole centres.

5.3. Priority Issues to enhance Urbanisation Process in East Barddhaman

To eradicate the disparity in urbanisation priority should be given to ensure the basic urban infrastructure in the existing municipalities and census towns.

5.3.1 Widening Roads and Improving Civic amenities of old towns.

Once the hub of trade and commerce, Kalna, Katwa and Dainhat towns have now lost their past glory. To rejuvenate their urbanisation process importance should be given on the followings:

- i. Transport network needs modernisation to reduce the time distance from Kolkata and Barddhaman urban areas. Rail network and frequent train and bus services should be ensured.
- ii. The old towns still possess narrow, winding and unmetalled roads. Emphasis should be given on the widening of roads. Existing narrow main roads should be replaced by bi-lane trunk roads. Besides, metalled approach roads, durable road surface material are needed to speed up transport system within the town. It will help to reduce traffic congestion also.
- iii. Towns require fast, cheap and comfortable mode of transport system like auto rickshaw, toto-rickshaw, town-service bus etc. A spacious bus terminus adjacent to or well connected to the rail station is needed.
- iv. Further the waterway of Bhagirathi-Hooghly river is still used all day long for flow of goods and passengers between Kalna, Katwa of East Barddhaman and towns and villages of Nadia district. For this both the towns need a permanent jetty as ferry becomes risky when it rains.

5.3.2. Provision of Better Civic amenities to Old towns

Health of old towns can be improved by providing better civic amenities. For this, provision of underground sewerage system, proper drainage, concrete sewer lines, connecting household drains to municipal sewer lines, regular garbage disposal facilities

should be there. No urban centre of this district experiences underground sewerage system. Provision of sufficient street taps and street lighting should also be ensured.

5.3.3. Provision of potable drinking water in urban centres

Supply of potable drinking water is a must for the emergence of a new urban centre. Swajaldhara Drinking Water Project in West Bengal (2011) has already successfully provided adequate drinking water supply in many villages. But in spite of having rich groundwater resource base existing municipalities other than Bardhaman town cannot meet the required water demand of entire municipality area. Again it is to be remembered that much of Purbasthali police station and parts of Kalna, Katwa police stations are contaminated by arsenic pollution. So supply of arsenic free water through installation of arsenic treatment plant is to be ensured for urban centres in this area.

5.3.4. Financial Support from Government Schemes

Important government schemes for urban development in India are Jawaharlal Nehru national Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM, December 2005), Atal Mission for Rejuvenation Urban Transformation (AMRUT, June 2015) and Smart cities Mission (2015). For the development of old city areas special focuses of JNNURM scheme are upgradation of existing transport system, reducing urban congestion and improving civic amenities of old towns. The JNNURM also aimed at building social infrastructure in slums and low-income settlements (Vaidya and Kundu, 2010) and its tenure has been completed in 2014. The approach of AMRUT scheme is to ensure basic urban infrastructure services related to water supply, sewerage, storm water drain, transport and development of green space for children etc. and 500 cities have been selected for this. Smart cities Mission is meant for limited important cities only (Times of India, 28.6.2015).

Already Guskara and Bardhaman towns have received financial helps from these JNNURM and AMRUT schemes for water supply in the municipality areas. Therefore the municipality Chairmans can also seek for financial help from these urban renewal Government schemes of India to curb down the embedded urban problems of poor transportation, slums, poor sanitation and inadequate water supply system etc, both in small, medium towns and large towns of East Bardhaman district.

5.3.5. Extending better urban socio-economic facilities to small and medium towns

Towns and villages of entire East Bardhaman depend on Bardhaman town for better educational, medical and marketing facilities. Such facilities need to be extended in other towns.

i. First of all at least one college, one nursing home with modern medical facilities and some public health centres and poly-clinics are necessary for every block. Patient intake capacity and overall medical infrastructure of existing hospitals and nursing homes should be strengthened.

ii. Market complexes with both wholesale and retail markets at census towns and super markets, shopping malls in other municipal towns are to be set up. Remote villages then could be able to avail these facilities from local market centres. It will reduce the pressure of overdependence on Bardhaman town.

5.3.6. Providing better transport facility between villages and nearby market centres.

Villages need to be well connected with nearby towns or market centres by frequent bus, trekker, auto-rickshaw and van-rickshaw services. It will strengthen both-way flow of services between rural and urban centres. Approaching road from agricultural field to main village road should be motorable ones. Improved rural road condition and cheap and modern mode of transport will reduce both cost distance and time distance from agricultural fields to cold-storages, go-downs or agro-markets. An effective marketisation of surplus agricultural harvests will be then possible and a combination of demand and required technology may encourage opening up agro-based industries in market centres of good transport network. This may favour regional urbanisation later. Otherwise siphoning of resource of this fertile agricultural tract to other states of India (Punjab, Haryana) will hinder the prospect of urbanisation and economic growth of this area.

5.4. Prospect of urbanisation

East Bardhaman has some inherent and acquired prospects for spreading urbanisation there.

5.4.1. The board of state-run power producer NTPC has proposed a thermal power project at Srikhanda, Katwa. The board has approved Rs 8,000-crore project of 1,320-MW thermal power plant at Katwa clearing the last hurdle for the long-delayed project. (Sengupta, 2014). Recently completed Barddhaman- Katwa rail line connects the rural areas of Barddhaman-I, II, Bhatar, Mangolkote and Katwa-I blocks. Industrialisation and infrastructural improvement in near future must activate the process of urbanisation in Katwa and her surrounding rural tract.

5.4.2. Only agro-based industries of East Barddhaman are rice mills and oil mills. But industries of rice-bran oil, potato chips, fruit and vegetable pulp and dairy etc. can be opened up as paddy and potato are two main crops of the district and vegetables, flowers and fruits are grown well in Kalna and Purbasthali police stations and also in riverine chars of Ajay and Damodar (Bhattarchaya, 2011 and Laha, 2011). Market places like Shyamsundar in Raina-I and Sagrai in Khandaghosh blocks in the south, Parulia and Purbasthali in Purbasthali-I,II blocks in the east, Mankar and Galsi in Galsi-I, II blocks in the west and Balgona in Bhatar and Kusumgram in Manteswar blocks in the central part of the district can be selected as centres of agro-based industries for their better transport network facilities. However more east-west road network is needed to transfer today's market centres into tomorrow's urban centres.

5.4.3. The old town Kalna is a site of temples of historical and sculptural importance. The temples of Kalna were built up during 18th century and they variety of cultures: the culture of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, Muths and Asramic culture, folk culture, family-centric culture and culture of Barddhaman Rajas. Important among the temples are 108 Shiva temple, Lalji Temple, Sri Gauranga Temple, Krishna Chandra Temple, Siddheswari Kali Temple, Anantabasudev Temple, Maijir Bari, Projapoti Bari, Gopalbari Mandir, etc, (Das, 1999). The sculpture and religious significance of the temples, related fairs and festivals, Mahishardini Puja etc, all together attract many local tourists because the Hindus have a religious bent of mind. But proper transport, better food and lodging facilities in the town, maintenance of temples and propagation of tourism prospect of Kalna are required to enhance soft tourism in Kalna.

Historical importance of Barddhaman can also attract tourists. The architecture of Curjon Gate, Baroduari, Barddhaman Rajbari, Nababbari, tomb of Sher Afgan, and also temples like Sarbamangala temple, 108 temple, Bardhamaneswar Shiva temple, Kankaleswari temple etc, attract tourists to the town.

5.4.4. In the era of concretisation vast wetlands or bils along the Bhagirathi-Hooghly in East Barddhaman still attract migratory birds and picnic parties in winter. There are 21 large bils in Purbasthali-I,II blocks of this district e.g., Chander bil, Unir bil of Purbasthali-I, Chupi bil, Beten bil of Purbasthali-II blocks etc, are important ones. (Mukherjee, 2013). These wetlands can attract nature lovers if conservation of these wetlands take place by a joint venture of local community and the Govt. Tourism in this remote area must have an economic impact to the local society provided cheap, comfortable and frequent transport services and also supply of arsenic-free water are there.

If a tourism package of Barddhaman, Kalna and Purbasthali are linked together, it will be more effective to bring East Barddhaman in tourism map of West Bengal.

5.4.5. Government help can be sought for reviving weaving industry of Dhatrigram and Samudragarh in Kalna and Purbasthali police stations. Again, if tourism develops here, local weavers will have an opportunity to sell their products directly to the tourists. The indigenous beauty of saris can be valued more by urban tourists if the time distance to the region from Kolkata or Barddhaman urban areas is minimised by better rail and road networks.

6. Findings

1. Urbanisation in East Barddhaman started in nineteenth century with four municipal towns. Later entire attention has been shifted to Barddhaman, the district head quarter only. Now there are six municipal towns and 21 census towns in East Barddhaman district.

2. Kalna, Katwa and Dainhat municipal towns are as old as Barddhaman, but they are far away from being Class-I town what was reached by Barddhaman in 1961 only.

3. There is no heavy industry and agriculture is the main occupation in the fertile agricultural tract in this district. So pace of urbanisation is very slow.

4. Only Barddhaman, the district head quarter is rich in urban amenities of educational, medical, marketing and transport facilities and entire district depends on this town. It puts both population and infrastructural burden to this town.

5. Decentralisation of educational, medical, marketing facilities from Barddhaman to other municipal towns, upgrading transport facilities and improving basic urban amenities of small and medium towns and census towns can rejuvenate urbanisation process of existing towns.

6. Completion of Katwa thermal power project, setting up agro-based industries, exploring tourism prospect of temple towns Kalna, Barddhaman and wetlands of Purbasthali police stations can open up new avenues for autonomous urbanisation process in East Barddhaman.

7. Conclusion

East Barddhaman had a past glory of urbanisation centring agricultural town and market towns of Barddhaman, Kalna, Katwa and Dainhat. The process of urbanisation keeps on continuing in Barddhaman which is now a well-known centre of education and medical facilities after Kolkata. But urbanisation moves at a snail's pace or is almost stagnant in other three towns. Memari and Guskara other two municipal towns have also developed as agricultural market towns. Urban status of census towns is much inferior as they lack even basic urban amenities and are entirely rural in character. It's the urban shadow effect of Barddhaman and Kolkata and agricultural prosperity of East Barddhaman district which have hindered urbanisation process here. On the contrary, to avail various urban facilities flow of migrants and commuters from surrounding towns and villages to Barddhaman has made the town overcongested. Development of slums and multi-storied buildings has changed the landscape. The project of Barddhaman Planning Area covering 157.62 sq.km may upgrade Barddhaman to municipal corporation and this urban area will have to play the complementary role of Asansol- Durgapur industrial area as it was in erstwhile Barddhaman district. But at the same time decentralisation of urban socio-economic facilities to the existing small towns and searching for new urban centres by capitalizing the prospect of agro-based industries at nodal points and tourism prospect of temples and wetlands in Kalna-Purbasthali area are necessary. East Barddhaman then may undergo a new era of urbanisation. Thus capitalizing the local resource potentiality an endogenous process of subaltern urbanisation independent of metropolis should be the model of urbanisation in East Barddhaman, in West Bengal and in India also to challenge the slow pace of urbanisation. So it's high time to give thrust on urban policy and urban research for the small and medium towns (20000-99999) because they are the future of Indian urbanisation.

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