5. URBAN GROWTH

5.1. INTRODUCTION

Urban growth may take place in two ways; by means of increase of urban population and by the addition of new urban centres. This chapter makes a detailed study of these two components of urban growth in West Bengal during 1901-81. It may be noted in this context that urban growth in the state has some distinctive characteristics of its own. The urban centres have been increasing progressively during the present century. In 1901, there were only 78 urban centres in the state and this figure rose to 291 by 1981 showing a more than three-fold increase over a span of eight decades. During the same time urban population increased from 2,066550 in 1901 to 14,446,721 in 1981 showing nearly 7-fold increase of the 1901 figure. At the same time, it is seen that both number as well as population of urban centres of the larger size classes have been increasing much faster than that of smaller ones. Finally, the most significant fact of urban growth in West Bengal is the tendency of urban concentration in and around the Calcutta Industrial Region along the Hugli River. High urban growth is generally confined to the Calcutta Urban Agglomeration and the Durgapur-Asansol region. Over the remaining parts of the state, the rate of urbanisation is comparatively low. These factors seem to indicate that urbanisation in West Bengal has been confined to the area of larger urban clusters rather than around the smaller urban centres. This seems to indicate an urbanisation process which "is neither uniformly spread regionally nor indicative of a balanced growth of urban centres of different orders", Kar, 1962.

The following discussion analyses in detail the nature of urban growth both in terms of increase in the number of urban centres and urban population in the state as a whole and in the different size classes of urban centres. For a broad view of the spatial variations in these two components of urban growth in the state a district level analysis has been included. Finally, growth of individual urban centres
has also been studied to obtain a detailed picture of the regional variations of urban growth in the state.

5.2. METHODOLOGY

The trend of growth of urban population and number of urban centres has been analysed by means of exponential curves employing the equation:

\[ Y_t = ab^t \]

Putting the exponential equation in the logarithmic form we have

\[ \log Y_t = \log a + t \log b \]

which is a straight line in terms of \( t \) and \( \log y \)

The normal equations are

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{I} & \quad \sum \log y = N \log a + \log b \sum t \\
\text{II} & \quad \sum t \log y = \log a \sum t + \log \sum t^2
\end{align*}
\]

Since the origin may be taken at the middle of the period \( t = 0 \); so these equations may be written as

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{I} & \quad \sum \log y = N \log a \\
\text{II} & \quad \sum t \log y = \log b \sum t^2
\end{align*}
\]

The \( b \) values obtained from the fitting of the exponential curves have been used to show the unified rate of growth of both these components of urban growth.

Urban population growth during the different decades has also been analysed through a study of percentage variation of urban population in the districts as well as individual urban centres.
Fig 5.1 Growth in the number of urban centres and urban population in West Bengal (1901-81).
5.3. ANALYSIS

5.3.1. Growth in the number of urban centres

The number of urban centres in West Bengal increased very slowly in the earlier decades. There were 78 urban centres in 1901 and by 1951 the figure rose to 120, showing that within a span of 5 decades the number had not even been able to double itself. In 1961, however, the number recorded a tremendous increase with the addition of 64 new urban centres (actually there were 66 new urban centres; two of the towns of 1951 namely, Tollygunge was merged with Calcutta and Kanchrapara Rural Development Colony with Kalyani in 1961) bringing up the total to 184. Since then the state seems to have maintained a steady growth rate during the last two decades (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Progress in the number of towns in West Bengal (1901-81)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1901</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1961</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1981</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of urban centres</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.1.1. Growth of urban centres in different size classes

Exponential curves have been employed to analyse the trend of growth of the number of urban centres in the different size classes. A study of figure 5.2 shows that this component of urban growth has been increasing faster than that predicted by the curve since 1951 in the case of Class I urban centres (population over 100,000). In Class II urban centres (population 50,000 to 99,999) rate of increase has been greater than expected during 1941-71. During 1981, however, the actual number was below the expected value. A somewhat similar trend is seen in case of Class III urban centres (population 20,000 to 49,999) where higher than predicted values are seen in 1911-21, 1941 and 1961-71 but during the last decade, the number has been less than that predicted by the curve. In direct contrast is the class IV category (population 10,000 to 19,999) where numbers were less than expected throughout 1911-61. It is only during the last two decades that a number of new...
Figure 5.2: Growth in the number of urban centres in the six size classes of urban centres in West Bengal 1901-81
WEST BENGAL
GROWTH IN THE NUMBER OF
URBAN CENTRES
1901-81

Figure 5.3
urban centres have been added to this category and the rate of increase has gained momentum. Similarly Class V urban centres (population 5,000 to 9,999) show a distinctively declining trend in the earlier decades. The minimum was reached in 1951 when the number of urban centres in this size class dropped to 18, a number lower than that of 1901. However, in 1961 the number recorded a tremendous increase and the figure rose to 49. Since 1961, number of urban centres in this group has been increasing rapidly and the earlier declining trend appears to have been completely reversed. Finally, the number of Class VI urban centres (population below 5,000) appears to have remained more or less static during 1901-71. There is hardly any variation in the number of these small-sized urban centres throughout this period. It is only during the last decade that there has been a substantial increase of these urban centres, when their number increased from 9 in 1971 to 20 in 1981.

An analysis of the 'b' values obtained from the exponential curves show that there is a direct relationship between population size and the unified rate of increase of the number of urban centres. The highest rate of growth (b = 1.41) is seen in the case of Class I urban centres and the lowest rate (b = 1.05) for Class VI urban centres (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2. Unified rate of growth of urban centres and urban population in different size classes of urban centres, 1901-81

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size class* of urban centres</th>
<th>Unified rate of growth ('b' values)</th>
<th>Number of urban centres</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class I</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class II</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class III</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class IV</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class V</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class VI</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Population size classes: I. 100,000 and above; II. 50,000 to 99,999; III. 20,000 to 49,999, IV. 10,000 to 19,999, V. 5,000 to 9,999 and VI less than 5,000.
WEST BENGAL
UNIFIED RATE OF GROWTH OF
NUMBER OF TOWNS
1901-81

INDEX
(b values)

- above 1.5
- 1.25 to 1.5
- less than 1.25
5.3.1.2. Districtwise growth of urban centres

A districtwise breakup of the growth of urban centres reveals that there is considerable regional variation in the rate of growth over the state, especially during the recent decades (Figure 5.3). In the earlier part of the century increase in the number of urban centres in all the districts was quite slow. But in recent years the number of urban units has been increasing remarkably in some of the districts, as for example in Haora and Barddhaman districts; in others the rate of growth remained almost static as in Bankura and Maldah districts.

For a detailed analysis, the period under review may be divided into two broad phases.

(i) **1901-51** : This is a period of stagnation, when in most of the districts the number of urban centres either remained constant or showed very slight increase.

(ii) **1951-81** : This phase shows a remarkable rise in the number of urban units in most districts, the growth being marked by a sharp rise in the number of urban centres centres since 1951. In Haora district, for instance the number of urban centres increased from 4 in 1951 to 22 in 1961. Barddhaman district recorded a tremendous increase during the last decade when the number of towns in the district more than doubled itself. There are, however, exceptions; for example, Murshidabad district showed a decline in the number of urban centres during 1951 due to declassification of Beldanga town. Bankura district contained 5 urban centres throughout 1951-81 while Darjiling had only 4 urban centres during 1951-71. Puruliya is another district where the number of towns remained constant during 1951-61.

A picture of regional variations in the unified rate of growth in the number of urban centres is provided by Figure 5.4. The map shows that high growth rates are confined to the districts of Haora and West
Figure 55 Growth of population in the six size classes of urban centres in West Bengal, 1901-81
Dinajpur. In this context it must be mentioned that the high growth rate in the latter district is primarily due to the fact that the period of analysis had to be truncated since this district did not contain any urban centre prior to the 1941 census. Moderate growth rates are noticeable in the districts of Jalpaiguri, Barddhaman and Birbhum. Over the remaining districts very low growth rates are observed.

5.3.2. Growth of urban population

For the state as a whole, urban population increased very slowly during the earlier decades, i.e., 1901-31. Since 1941, urbanisation appears to have gathered momentum and the decade 1931-41 recorded the highest percentage decadal variation of 63.69%. Since then a steady growth rate has been maintained (Figure 5.1).

5.3.2.1. Growth of urban population in different size classes of urban centres

A study of figure 5.5 shows that urban population growth in Class I urban centres has been higher than that predicted by the exponential curve since 1941. The same is true of Class II urban centres during the period 1941-71. During the last decade however, the actual growth of urban population fell below that predicted by the curve. Urban population growth in Class III urban centres appears to show some interesting fluctuations. Above expected growth occurred during 1911-21, 1941 and 1961-71; below expected growth is particularly noticeable during 1931, 1951 and 1981. Low growth rate in 1931 may be a result of the exclusion of the population of Garden Reach from this size class since it was considered a part of Calcutta during that census. In 1951, the number of urban centres in this category shows a slight decline over the 1941 figure so that population growth rate slowed down correspondingly. While there was no actual decline in the number of urban centres in the size class during the last decade, it may be seen that this size class recorded least increase. In direct contrast to this class are the Class IV urban centres which recorded substantial increase in population (59.36%) with a correspondingly high growth in the number
WEST BENGAL
GROWTH OF URBAN POPULATION
1901-81

Population in thousands

Year

1901 21 41 61 81

CALCUTTA*

BARDHAMAN

MURSHIDABAD

NADIA

TWENTYFOUR PARGANAS

MEDINIPUR

HAORA

PURULIA

BANKURA

HUGLI

BIRBHUM

JALPAIGURI

KOCH BIHAR

WEST DINAJPUR

DARJILING

Population in thousands

Km

20 0 20 40 60

Figure 5 6
of urban centres (53.33%) during the last decade. This is a distinct departure from the stagnating trend of the earlier decades; during 1961-71 percentage increase in urban population was only 29.63% in this category. A higher than expected rate of population growth during the recent decades is also noticeable in the Class V urban centres, which is again in direct contrast to the declining trend of the period 1921-51. Class VI urban centres usually show a fluctuating trend of population growth, but here too, growth during 1981 has been above that expected from the exponential curve. This is a result of the inclusion of a number of new urban centres like Digha township, Srimantpur, Lalbazar, Parasia, Nuncha and so on within this category in the 1981 census.

Analysis of 'b' values obtained from the fitting of exponential curves again shows that high rates of growth are seen in the larger size classes. For instance, by far the highest figure of 1.33 is seen in Class I category and the rate of growth declines gradually with decreasing population size (Table 5.2).

5.3.2.2. Districtwise growth of urban population

Figure 5.6 shows that most of the districts recorded a steady increase of urban population during 1901-81. On the basis of the nature of growth, the period under review may be divided into three broad phases:

1) **1901-31**: This is mainly a phase of stagnation, for in most of the districts urban population increased very slowly.

ii) **1931-51**: This is a phase of transition. 1941 appears to be the turning point, for the rate of population growth stepped up during this decade. Most remarkable during this period is the rapid increase of population of Calcutta which showed a tremendous jump during 1931-41.

iii) **1951-81**: It is during this most recent phase that the rate of growth of urban population gained momentum. A sharp rise may be noticed in most districts during 1951-61 and this remarkable growth has been maintained ever
Figure 5.7

WEST BENGAL

DECADAL VARIATION OF URBAN POPULATION

INDEX
(As percent)

- 27.77 to 37.15
- 18.39 to 27.77
- 11.06 to 18.39
- 5.79 to 11.05
- 3.52 to 5.79

1901-11

INDEX
(As percent)

- 95.05 to 154.64
- 36.68 to 95.65
- 5.72 to 36.66
- 2.96 to 5.72
- 0 to 2.96
- -4.9 to 0

1911-21

INDEX
(As percent)

- 36.09 to 51.48
- 22.3 to 36.09
- 12.0 to 22.3
- 5.0 to 12.0
- 3 to 5.0
- -5.2 to 3

1921-31

INDEX
(As percent)

- 136.91 to 189.05
- 88.76 to 136.91
- 57.19 to 88.76
- 44.20 to 57.19
- 31.20 to 44.20
- 6.20 to 31.20

1931-41

INDEX
(As percent)

- 27.77 to 37.15
- 18.39 to 27.77
- 11.06 to 18.39
- 5.79 to 11.05
- 3.52 to 5.79

WEST BENGAL

13.7

7.18

15.01

63.69
since. The most remarkable growth occurred in Twenty-four Parganas, Haora, Barddhaman, Nadia and Jalpaiguri districts. In Calcutta, however, the rate of growth of population has slowed down considerably in recent years, which is not surprising since the city has practically reached the saturation point.

A study of decadal variation of urban population at district level is necessary for a clear understanding of the spatio-temporal variations of urban growth in the state. A detailed analysis of this parameter in the different districts during 1901-81 (Figures 5.7 and 5.8) reveals the following trends:

1) Calcutta, with its cent per cent urban population has generally recorded the least variation among the districts. This is not surprising since within an entirely urban area population growth is the result of natural increase and immigration whereas in other districts very high rates of growth generally reflect inclusion of new urban areas rather than the effect of the above mentioned factors. For Calcutta, the lowest growth rate of 3.63% throughout the period under review is seen during 1911-21. This is directly related to the fact that this decade experienced cholera and influenza epidemics and the mortality rates shot up so high that most urban centres suffered a decline in their population. However, Calcutta's growth rate also declined due to a fall in port activity during the World War I and shifting of the imperial capital to Delhi in 1912. It is during the 1931-41 decade, that Calcutta experienced a high decadal growth rate of about 86%. During this decade the entire state experienced accelerated urban growth as a result of the combined effect of a rise in the rate of natural increase, progress of industrialisation and increase in rural-urban migration. The beginning of the World War II in 1939 also provided a further impetus to the process of industrialisation and Calcutta was a focal point of industries like jute textiles, engineering goods and transport equipment.
Figure 5 8

WEST BENGAL

DECADAL VARIATION OF URBAN POPULATION

1941-51

INDEX (in percent)
- 314.98 to 303.28
- 126.67 to 314.98
- 26.59 to 126.67
- 14.73 to 26.59
- 2.87 to 14.73

WEST BENGAL 32.52

Km

0 50 100

1951-61

INDEX (in percent)
- 95.98 to 91.98
- 55.97 to 95.98
- 30.47 to 55.97
- 19.48 to 30.47
- 8.48 to 19.48

WEST BENGAL 35.97

Km

0 50 100

1961-71

INDEX (in percent)
- 56.86 to 75.5
- 37.83 to 56.86
- 24.24 to 37.83
- 15.91 to 24.24
- 7.51 to 15.91

WEST BENGAL 28.41

Km

0 50 100

1971-81

INDEX (in percent)
- 63.79 to 85.16
- 42.42 to 63.79
- 26.36 to 42.42
- 15.67 to 26.36
- 4.96 to 15.67

WEST BENGAL 31.72

Km

0 50 100

Figure 5 8
ii) Haora and Hugli districts with their high proportion of urban population show low to moderate decadal variation throughout 1901-81. In contrast, Twentyfour Parganas, another district with a high percentage of urban population, generally shows moderate to high decadal variation even during the last two decades. This is partly due to the fact that this latter district covers a much larger area and includes a much larger stretch of the river Hugli providing scope for further expansion of the Calcutta Urban Agglomeration on the eastern banks of the river than the two other districts. It may also be noted that the highest decadal variations of 49.50% and 64.29% were experienced by this district during the post-partition decades that is, in 1941-51 and 1951-61 respectively. In this context it may be remembered that this is one of the border districts of West Bengal and received a large inflow of refugees after partition. The influence of this factor is further seen in the rapid growth of a number of urban centres along the eastern borders of the district in the later decades. Haora district experienced its highest variation of 68.36% during 1931-41. This can be said to be a result of accelerated industrialisation during this decade as mentioned earlier and Haora city grew in importance as a terminus of transport activities. Decadal growth of urban population in Hooghly district has normally been below that for the state as a whole during the early decades. It is only since 1951 that this trend has been reversed and urban population in this district has been growing faster than the State average.

iii) Barddhaman district, which has characterised by low variations during the two initial decades, has been experiencing a very high percentage of urban growth since the 1931-41 decade. The highest variations of 71.81% and 73.20% are seen during 1931-41 and 1951-61 respectively. The former decade saw the development of industrial and mining activities under the impetus provided by World War II, and this district saw the rapid growth of urban centres like Asansol, Raniganj and Kulti which were important centres of mining and industrial activities. The fast pace of urbanisation in the latter decade was again mostly a result of
planned industrialisation in this region in the post-independence period leading to a rapid growth of urban centres. The high decadal growth rate has continued into the most recent decade and may be said to reflect the emergence of a number of new urban centres in this zone during 1981.

iv) West Dinajpur did not contain any urban centre before 1941 census. As a result high growth rates may be noted in the succeeding decades reflecting the inclusion of new urban areas rather than growth due to natural increase and immigration. It might be noted that the highest variation occurred in 1941-51; this is again an effect of partition and the large influx of displaced persons across the border. Since 1951 percentage decadal growth has been declining steadily even though it remains quite high compared to the state average.

v) Among the northern districts, Darjiling and Jalpaiguri have maintained quite a high decadal growth throughout 1901-81. The 1941-51 decade saw the highest decadal growths in both districts, urban growth being especially high in Jalpaiguri district where the decadal growth shot up to 138.22% and this was again a result of immigration across the borders after partition. In Koch Bihar district, decadal growth rate gained momentum since 1931-41 decade, reaching the highest figure in 1941-51; thereafter however, percentage decadal growth has been declining steadily so that in 1971-81, the district recorded one of the lowest rates of growth in the state.

vi) The remaining district of North Bengal, namely, Maldah has been characterised by very low decadal variation in the earlier decades. This is only to be expected since it is one of the least urbanised districts of the state and contained only two urban centres till as late as 1971. It is only in the recent decades that urban growth in the district has received an impetus from industrial development that is taking place along the northern borders of the adjoining district of Murshidabad.
vii) Murshidabad district, which contains some of the most ancient urban centres of the state is another district which is marked by low to very low variation in the earlier decades. Since 1951-61, however, decadal growth shows some improvement.

viii) Bankura, Medinipur and Puruliya, three of the least urbanised districts of the state as far as percentage of urban population is concerned, show considerable variation in decadal growth. Puruliya district shows moderate decadal growth in the earlier decades and high growth during 1931-41 and 1961-71. During the most recent decade its decadal growth again fell below the state average. Highest growth of 53% may be seen in 1931-41 and it was a result of the emergence of two new urban centres during 1941 census. Medinipur district shows considerable variations in decadal growth during the earlier decades and 1911-21 decade shows negative variation of urban population, while in the following decade, decadal variation increased to 43.06%. Since 1951, this district shows moderate variation. This has been possible inspite of a low proportion of urban population, due to considerable increase in the number of urban centres during 1901-81 and to the development of Kharagpur city as a focus of transport activities in the western region as well as development of Haldia as a port and industrial centre. The third district of this group that is Bankura continues to be characterised by low to very low decadal growth even during the recent decades.

ix) Birbhum which is another district with a very low percentage of urban population also shows considerable fluctuations in decadal growth especially during the earlier decades. It is interesting to note that the 1911-21 decade which experienced very low or even negative decadal variation in the other districts, saw a very high growth of 154.64% in this district. This was, however, a result of the emergence of two new urban centres of Rampurhat and Bolpur during 1921 (prior to which there was only one urban centre in the district) rather than natural increase or migration.

x) Nadia, which is another district with a long history of urbanisation, shows low decadal variation in the earlier decades. In the
post-partition decades however, remarkable growth is noticeable and this may again be linked with the influx of refugees after partition.

Now that an idea of urban growth in the districts during individual decades has been obtained, it becomes necessary to study the districtwise breakup of the unified rate of growth of urban population so as to get an overall view of growth during the entire period under review. A glance at figure 59 shows that a three fold classification of the districts is possible on the basis of this parameter. High growth rates of over 1.45 may be seen in the districts of Jalpaiguri, West Dinajpur, Birbhum and Barddhaman. As seen in the earlier section the rate of growth of urban population in Jalpaiguri district has generally been above the state average. Urbanisation in this district has always been linked with its economy which is based on plantations and other allied plantation-based industries. The towns of this district have generally grown up as trade centres or as centres of transport activities.

West Dinajpur was a late comer to the field of urbanisation but it soon began to catch up with the other northern districts of West Bengal in this respect. There was only one urban centre in the district in 1941. This figure has risen to 8 in 1981. During the same time urban population increased from 6952 to 268,726. In fact West Dinajpur is an exception in the entire northern tract. In the other northern districts most of the urban population is generally concentrated in centres of district and subdivisional administration, while in this district a number of urban centres based solely on trade and commerce (Hili, Kaliaganj, Gangarampur, Dalkhola and others) have come up besides administrative centres like Balurghat, Rayganj and Islampur. However, it must be noted here that the high growth rate in this district is partly a result of the truncated period of analysis.

Urbanisation in Barddhaman district has been linked primarily with industrial and mining activities and a high urban growth in the district might be said to be the direct result of the establishment of heavy industries. Most of the urban centres of the district are typically industrial or mining towns built around large industrial under-
takings, as for example, Chittaranjan with its locomotive works, Hindusthan Cables Town with its cable factory, Kulti with iron and steel and mining, Dishergarh and Niamatpur with coal mining, Burnpur and Outer Burnpur with iron and steel and engineering and so on.

A high urban growth rate is rather surprising for the district of Birbhum since it is primarily an agricultural district and here urban growth may be linked with administrative functions or with the marketing of produce of the agricultural hinterland. The two principal towns of the district (Suri and Rampurhat) are centres of administration. The remaining towns have generally come up around rice mills and are important trading centres. It may be noted that in this district urban population increased from 8692 in 1901 to 173533 in 1981 showing an increase of 1896.47% over a span of eight decades.

Low growth rates are seen in the two districts of Murshidabad and Bankura. Murshidabad district with its long history of urbanisation which goes back to the 17th century shown urban stagnation since the later part of the 18th century. Urban decay in the district began after the decline of Murshidabad town after the shift of Diwani Offices from Murshidabad to Calcutta in 1772 and a change in the course of the Bhagirathi in 1813 brought about the ruin of Kasimbazar. The decay of Murshidabad and Kasimbazar was partly offset by the growth of the new urban centre of Baharampur. However Baharampur originally grew as a garrison town and administrative centre, as a result its growth rate cannot be compared with Murshidabad's earlier growth and its growth was thus unable to check the process of de-urbanisation of the district as a whole. It is only during the last three decades that a number of new smaller sized urban centres have come up at the northern extremity of the district following the alignment of the river Bhagirathi.

The other district with a low urban population growth rate, namely Bankura, has primarily an agricultural economy. There are only five urban centres in this district out of which two, Bishnupur and Bankura function mainly as administrative centres while the other three are mainly overgrown villages serving as market centres for surrounding rural areas.
Among the northern districts moderate growth rates are seen in Darjiling, Koch Bihar and Maldah. It may be noted here that the percentage of urban population has generally been high in Darjiling district compared to the other northern districts. However, urban growth in the district has been somewhat limited by the mountainous nature of the greater part of the district. Out of a total of 7 urban centres in the district, three - Darjiling, Kalimpong and Kurseong - are hill stations which derive their importance chiefly from being seats of administration and centres of trade and tourism. Siliguri, located in the Terai region with a population of 154378 in 1981 has emerged as the most important urban centre of North Bengal. The three remaining urban centres of Cart Road, Uttar Bagdogra and Jaldhaka Hydel Power Project Town have been added during the 1981 census and each of them have populations below 5000. The first two are located close to existing urban centres (Cart Road near Kurseong and Uttar Bagdogra near Siliguri) and the third has grown up around the hydel power project as the name implies. Thus except for Siliguri urban growth has not been high in the district.

Koch Bihar is primarily a rural district with an agricultural economy. Here urbanisation is usually concentrated in the district and subdivisional headquarters. Except for Koch Bihar (district headquarters) most of the towns are small in population size and belong to the Class V or Class VI categories. In fact, the moderate growth rate shown by this district is linked primarily with the influx of refugees after partitation.

The only urban centres in Maldah district until 1971 were the twin towns of Old Maldah and English Bazar. Here again the moderate growth rate may be linked with factors like flow of displaced persons after partition of the country in 1947 and with the locational advantage of these urban centres lying halfway between Calcutta and Siliguri. This advantage has been further enhanced by the construction of the Farakka Bridge as well as the thermal power station at Farakka.

A moderate rate of growth is noticeable also in the case of the western district of Puruliya. This district is one of the most backward
areas of West Bengal; even agriculture which is the mainstay of its economy remains quite primitive and industrial activity is conspicuous by its absence. Urbanisation here, has been confined mainly to the centres of administration and Puruliya, the district headquarters is the principal urban centre of the district. However, in recent years, in the northern part of the district an urban agglomeration is slowly emerging around the two urban centres of Adra and Arra. It might be noted that these two centres have grown up around railway settlements and the comparatively high growth rate of urban centres in this zone have probably raised the urban growth rate of this otherwise backward district to a moderate level.

Another district which shows a moderate growth rate is Medinipur. Since this is one of the largest districts of the state, here the number of urban centres is also fairly high though nowhere as high as in districts like 24 Parganas or Barddhaman. In this context it may be remembered that like Murshidabad and Nadia, this is another district with a history of urbanisation that goes back to the pre-colonial days. This district however showed evidences of urban decay in the group of urban centres located in its north eastern part during 1901-51. However, decline in this zone was offset by the growth of Kharagpur city which soon became an important urban focus as a major centre of trade and transport in the southwestern part of the state. Except for Kharagpur and a few of the newly recognised urban centres like Haldia, most of the towns of the district are mainly centres of administrative functions and normally show low to moderate growth.

The moderate urban growth rate in Nadia district may be attributed entirely to its location as a border district of the state and enormous influx of displaced persons it received in the post-partition period. This becomes very clear if the decennial variation figures are studied. Maximum decadal growth of 78.96% and 51.53% occurred during 1941-51 and 1951-61 respectively.

The entirely urban district of Calcutta also shows a moderate rate of growth over the period under review. As has been mentioned earlier, this is not surprising since the city may be said to have reached a saturation point as far as population size is concerned and
WEST BENGAL
DECADAL VARIATION OF POPULATION
IN THE URBAN CENTRES
1901-11

INDEX
(in percent)
- Above 100
- 50 to 100
- 25 to 50
- 0 to 25
- -25 to 0

Figure 5 10
during the last few decades growth rate has slowed down considerably.

Finally, an interesting feature that emerges from this analysis is that the three highly urban districts of Twentyfour Parganas, Haora and Hugli exhibit an overall moderate growth rate during the period. This may be explained by the fact that the rate of urbanisation has stabilised in these districts and high growth rates experienced during 1931-61 period has somewhat slowed down compared to that of the districts like Jalpaiguri, Barddhaman etc. where urbanisation gained momentum at a much later period.

5.3.2.3. Decadal variation of population in the urban centres

Figures 5.10 to 5.17 give an urban-centrewise breakup of decadal variation of urban population so as to provide a more detailed picture of the spatial variation of this variable over the state.

1901-11

During this decade a greater part of the urban centres were characterised by either a decline in population or by low decadal growth. This is only to be expected since the state was still recovering from the ravages suffered during the 'Burdwan Fever' which spread towards the end of the previous century. The only part of the state which did not show any urban depopulation is the north where population increased in all the urban centres. Declining population is noticeable even within the Hooghly Industrial Zone, which had already emerged as the most urbanised area of the state.

High decadal growth appears to be confined to the towns located on the banks of the River Hugli. The busy industrial town of Titagarh, an important centre of jute and paper industry, recorded the highest growth during this decade. High growth may also be observed in Bhadreswar, a centre of jute and other industries, and in Garden Reach, an industrial suburb of Calcutta with jute and cotton mills as well as dockyards. Outside this zone, high to moderate growth may be observed in North Bengal where moderate growth is seen in small urban centres like Kurseong (which began to be developed as a supplementary
WEST BENGAL
DECADAL VARIATION OF POPULATION
IN THE URBAN CENTRES
1911-21

INDEX (in percent)

Above 100
50 to 100
25 to 50
0 to 25
-25 to 0
less than -25

Figure 5 11
hill station owing to scarcity of building sites in Darjiling town) Haldibari and Dinhsata which were both centres of jute trade.

A moderate decadal growth is also found in two urban centres, Asansol and Bankura, both located outside the two regions mentioned above. Among these, growth of Asansol may be associated with its importance as a centre of coal mining industry in the Raniganj region and also with its location as a railway junction. Bankura is the seat of administration of the district of the same name and its growth is a result of its dry, healthy climate and its importance as a trade centre as well as a centre of silk industry.

1911-21

The picture of decadal growth in the urban centres of West Bengal during the next decade, i.e., 1911-21 remained more or less the same. Again a large number of urban centres suffered from depopulation and the remaining ones generally showed a low level of decadal growth.

The low level of decadal growth may be attributed to the 'influenza epidemic' which spread rapidly after June, 1918. The effect of the disease was felt most severely in Barddhaman, Birbhum, Bankura, Nadia and Murshidabad districts. While the other districts suffered comparatively less, they too recorded considerable losses of population. The greatest mortality occurred in towns like Ramjibanpur, Khirpai, Chandrakona, Arambag and others.

Once again, urban centres with moderate to high growth rates were confined to the Hugli Industrial Belt. With a few exceptions, most of the towns within this zone show positive growth during this decade and this growth was primarily a result of development of the jute industry which grew as a result of the increased demand for jute bags created by World War I. Such growing industrial towns include Bhatpara, Baranagar, Kamarhati, Serampore, Budge Budge and others. North Dum Dum, inclined to be unhealthy, lost population during this decade. So did the town of Panihati which was more residential than industrial.
WEST BENGAL
DECADAL VARIATION OF POPULATION
IN THE URBAN CENTRES
1921-31

INDEX
(in percent)

□ Above 100
□ 50 to 100
□ 25 to 50
□ 0 to 25
□ -25 to 0
□ less than -25

Figure 5.12
Outside this zone the growth of Kharagpur, a railway centre on the Bengal Nagpur Railway is particularly noticeable.

1921-31

During 1921-31 the state did not suffer from any major natural calamity and urban growth showed considerable improvement during this decade and the number of urban centres showing losses of population declined considerably.

However, the pace of urbanisation was still slow, since most urban centres still recorded low levels of decadal growth. Moderate to high levels of growth are seen within the Hugli Industrial Belt where once again industrial towns recorded the highest levels of growth mainly due to expansion of industry and especially of jute trade. Outside this zone high decadal growth is again noticeable in Kharagpur in Medinipur district, which continued to grow in importance as a railway centre.

Urban depopulation was still continuing in the urban centres located in the northwestern part of Medinipur district. It may be noted here that this part of the district suffered from recurrent floods, the effects of which were felt in the urban areas as well.

1931-41

As already mentioned, this decade shows that growth improved considerably in the urban centres as a result of the interaction of various factors like natural increase, increased rural-urban migration as well as the impetus provided by further industrialisation caused by the demand for various commodities created by World War II. During this decade growth of over 25% is noticeable in a majority of urban centres. While high growth rates were as usual confined to Calcutta and the Hugli Industrial Belt, it may be seen that even higher growth rates were noticeable in the coal mining zone of the Asansol subdivision of Barddhaman district. In this zone highest decadal growth was seen in Burnpur and Ondal, the former being an industrial town containing a steel plant while the latter was an important railway junction. The
remaining urban centres of this zone, Kulti, Asansol and Raniganj are primarily mining-cum-industrial towns and showed considerable growth during this decade.

Over the remaining parts of the state, the railway centre of Kharagpur showed moderate growth. The urban centres of Baharampur in Murshidabad district and Bardhaman in Bardhaman district both of which functioned mainly as centres of administration also showed high growth during 1931-41. Nabadwip in Nadia district, showed high growth during this decade. This district otherwise showed low to moderate levels of urban growth during this decade and depopulation during the earlier decades. A comparatively high level of growth in Nabadwip may be explained partly by its importance as a centre of Hindu Pilgrimage and partly by its proximity to the agriculturally prosperous rural areas of the adjoining district of Bardhaman.

Among the urban centres of North Bengal, Siliguri showed the highest decadal growth.

Urban centres experiencing a decline in population were found to be localised in Medinipur district. There were also a few such urban centres in other parts of the state, as for example the tiny urban centres of Birnagar in Nadia district which has been declining since 1901-11.

1941-51

This is a crucial decade in the history of India as well as West Bengal. It is during this decade that the second world war came to an end, India was partitioned and subsequently achieved Independence from British rule. These events especially the partition of the country, had far reaching consequences on the rate of urbanisation in West Bengal. Partition resulted in a huge influx of population across the border into West Bengal and these displaced persons normally showed a tendency to settle in urban areas. As a result formerly decaying or stagnant urban centres located on or close to the eastern borders of the state began to show phenomenal decadal growth. This is especially true of the urban centres in the district of Nadia. Such examples in this
WEST BENGAL
DECADAL VARIATION OF POPULATION IN THE URBAN CENTRES 1941-51

INDEX (in percent)
- Above 100
- 50 to 100
- 25 to 50
- 0 to 25
- -25 to 0
- Less than -25

Figure 5.14
district include Chakdaha, Ranaghat as well as the small town of Birnagar which had been showing a steady decline of population during the earlier decades but suddenly increased its population by as much as 114.73%. Bangaon in Twentyfour Parganas, located on the international border is another such example and increased its population by 159.89%. Thus this decade saw an overall acceleration in the pace of urban growth especially in the eastern half of the state.

In North Bengal, Siliguri increased its population by 209.72%. This town started as a centre of administration but its growth began after partition due to a combination of factors such as strategic importance of its location, the access it provides to the northeastern states of the country, large scale refugee inflow as well as its association with the hill economy and its three major activities, tea, timber and tourism.

Among the western districts moderate to high decadal growth was primarily confined to the western part of Barddhaman district. Declining population is noticeable in urban centres of Bankura and Medinipur districts.

1951–61

This decade saw a further improvement in the pace of urbanisation in most of the urban centres in the state. Considerable decadal growth may be noticed in the constituents of the Calcutta Urban Agglomeration. It may be noted that high decadal growth also occurred in primarily residential towns like Barasat and Rajpur situated on the fringe of the conurbation. Within the Asansol region, highest rates were seen in the industrial township of Chittaranjan and the transport centre of Ondal.

In North Bengal, Siliguri continued its growth uninterrupted and small urban centres of the border districts of Koch Bihar also showed considerable growth.

The two districts of Medinipur and Bankura showed improved growth rates in most of their urban centres, in direct contrast to the
WEST BENGAL
DECADAL VARIATION OF POPULATION
IN THE URBAN CENTRES
1951–61

INDEX
(in percent)

Above 100
50 to 100
25 to 50
0 to 25
-25 to 0
less than -25

Kilometers

Figure 5 15
urban decay experienced by them in the earlier decades.

Depopulation may be seen in a few isolated urban centres. Hili in West Dinajpur is one such example. This small town was an important centre of rice trade before partition and located on the Assam railway line. After partition, the town lost a part of its area to East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, and denial of the railway link and decline of the boat traffic diminished the importance of the town.

Bhadreswar in Hugli district is another urban centre which showed decline of population during this decade. This might be related to the fact that a major part of the working population of the town are workers in jute mills and during 1951-61 a number of mill workers were retrenched due to rationalisation and this resulted in some out migration.

1961-71

During this decade urban centres with high and very high growth rates are primarily confined to the Hugli Industrial Belt especially in the comparatively newer urban centres located in the peripheral areas of the Calcutta Urban Agglomeration. In the western part of Barddhaman district similar decadal growth is noticeable in the two urban centres of Durgapur and Asansol. In this context Durgapur deserves special mention as its population increased by as much as 395.58% during the decade. This tremendous growth is associated with the establishment of the public sector steel plant and other heavy and allied industries in this urban centre. Another urban centre which shows very high growth during this decade is Balurghat, located on the border of West Dinajpur district. Here urban growth is the result of a combination of various factors such as administrative functions performed by this urban centre as the district headquarters, development of trade and commerce and influx of refugees, from across the borders.

Urban centres with moderate decadal growth appear to be most numerous and are distributed throughout the state. Many of these are located in the Hugli Industrial Belt and most of them (Bansberia, Hugli
WEST BENGAL
DECADAL VARIATION OF POPULATION
IN THE URBAN CENTRES
1961-71

INDEX
(in percent)

Above 100
50 to 100
25 to 50
0 to 25
-25 to 0
Less than -25

Figure 5.16
Chinsura, Bhadreswar, Baranagar, Bhatpara, Naihati, Budge Budge and others) are older urban centres belonging to the Classes I and II where urban growth has become more or less stable.

Moderate levels of growth are also noticeable in some of the urban centres of North Bengal like Siliguri, Mainaguri, Alipur Duar, Raiganj, Kaliaganj and others. Among these, Siliguri which had been growing at a tremendous rate in the three earlier decades shows that growth has slowed down comparatively. Raiganj and Kaliaganj have been growing as centres of administration as well as trade and commerce.

The twin towns of Maldah district also show moderate levels of growth. Growth in these towns may be associated partly with the large influx of refugees from East Pakistan in the post-independence period and partly to the fact that both English Bazar and old Maldah have been important centres of commerce over a long period of time. As already mentioned another factor contributing to the growth of these towns has been the construction of the Farakka bridge which has not only improved communication with South Bengal but has also created a demand for commodities as well as services in the town as a result of the steady growth of population of Farakka Barrage Township.

Moderate decadal growth is particularly noticeable in urban centres which have grown up as centres of district administration or as market centres serving the agricultural economy of the rural hinterland, as for example, Bankura, Suri, Sainthia, Kalna, Kandi and others.

Within the Asansol-Durgapur zone, moderate levels of growth are particularly noticeable in urban centres like Chittaranjan, Burnpur, Outer Burnpur, Raniganj and Ukhra. In all of these towns, growth has been associated with the establishment of heavy industries or with mining activities.

Low levels of decadal growth may be observed in urban centres of the three western districts of Puruliya, Bankura and Medinipur with their primarily agriculture-based economy. Low decadal growth is also noticeable in the agricultural district of Birbhum. Similar growth is seen in Murshidabad and Nadia districts and in urban centres located along the eastern borders of Twentyfour Paarganas. A number of urban
WEST BENGAL

DECADAL VARIATION OF POPULATION 
IN THE URBAN CENTRES 
1971-81

INDEX
in percent

Above 100
50 to 100
25 to 50
0 to 25
-25 to 0
Less than -25

Figure 5.17
centres of North Bengal also show low decadal growth. It may be noted here that most of these low growth urban centres are residential-cum-commercial towns and industrial functions are insignificant.

During this decade, some urban centres also show decline of population. A number of such urban centres are located in Haora district and mostly include small industrial towns with a migrant character of population and a low sex ratio as for example Burikhali, Sankrail and Jhorhat. Similarly the industrial town of Kulti and the mining town of Jamuria in the Asansol-Durgapur region also show losses of population during this decade. Other such declining towns include older project townships where decline may be due to the fact that scope for expansion is limited in the particular spheres which form the core of economic activities in that urban centre. This latter category includes examples like Ichhapur Defence Estate, Dum Dum Aerodrome Area and Batanagar in Twentyfour Parganas district.

1971-81

Before going into the details of decadal growth of urban centres during this decade there is one point that should be clarified. In the 1981 census, the concept of an 'urban outgrowth' has been introduced. The census definition of urban outgrowth has been given earlier (Chapter 1, Section 1.6.11). An urban centre with outgrowth has been treated as an integrated unit in this analysis and decadal variation of an urban centre has been given on the basis of its 1981 population including that of its outgrowth. This has been done because it was felt that such an inclusion would give a truer picture of urban growth during the decade. However, a result of this has been to increase the decadal growth rate in a few cases because of increase of urban area rather than increase of population.

In 1971-81 there are eight towns where urban population increased by more than 100%. Three of these are located outside the Hugli Industrial belt, they are Kaliaganj (West Dinajpur), Phulia (Nadia) and Haldia (Medinipur District). In the first case this spectacular growth of urban population may be related to the influx of refugees across the
UNIFIED RATE OF GROWTH OF POPULATION
OF SELECTED URBAN CENTRES
1901-81

KEY TO INSET
1 North Barrockpur
2 Panhati
3 North Dum Dum
4 Kamrhati
5 Baranagar
6 South Dum Dum
7 Barasat
8 Garden Reach
international borders after the Bangladesh War of 1971. In Phulia this growth is primarily a result of the increase of urban area from 3.50 sq.km in 1971 to 15.02 sq.km in 1981. Growth of Haldia during this decade is entirely a result of the development of this urban centre as a subsidiary port to Calcutta and subsequent industrial expansion. The remaining five towns are located within the Hugli Industrial Belt. These include the planned town of Kalyani, a Class III urban centre in Nadia district and two Class IV urban centres in Twentyfour Parganas, namely Gurdaha and Kanyanagar. High growth in these towns may be related to the economic activity of Calcutta Metropolitan Area and partly to the fact that these are mostly well connected to the city of Calcutta where congestion has forced people to settle in suburban areas. Panchla and Jhorhat towns of Haora district also show very high decadal growth. Here urban growth may be related to increase in industrial activities. It might be noted here that percentage of industrial workers for the district as a whole increased from 27.49% to 42.60% for large and medium scale industries during 1971-81.

Urban centres recording high growth (50 to 100% decadal growth) are mostly constituents of the Calcutta Urban Agglomeration located in the districts of Haora and Twentyfour Parganas. This may again be linked partly to an increase in industrial and commercial activities during the last decade and partly to a spill over of congestion in Calcutta city. It is noticeable that high growth is particularly characteristic of residential urban centres like Barasat, Madhyamgram, Jadabpur etc. which are either on the fringes of Calcutta or within commuting distance from it.

Urban centres showing high decadal growth are also found within the Asansol-Durgapur region and high decadal growth here is obviously related to further industrial development in this zone.

Some high growth centres are also found in the northern districts. The most noticeable of these is Siliguri in Darjiling districts, which, as already seen, has been emerging as the centre of urbanisation in North Bengal during the last few decades.
West Dinajpur contains as many as three high growth urban centres (Islampur, Gangarampur and Balurghat), but here urban growth is primarily a result of the concentration of displaced persons across the borders in the urban areas of the district. Growth of Farakka Barrage township in Murshidabad district is related to industrial development. The city of Kharagpur including the large railway settlement, is a major centre of trade and transport in the southwestern part of the state. It has a good potential for industrial development and shows high growth during this decade. Growth of commercial activities may be related to the high growth of urban centres like Nalhati and Santhia in Birbhum district.

High growth of Taherpur and Bagula in Nadia, a border district can be said to be a result of the influx of refugees from across the border.

Urban centres with moderate decadal growth are seen to occur throughout the state, both within as well as outside the two major zones of urban concentration. It is interesting to note that eight out of a total of 24 Class I urban centres in 1981 exhibited such moderate growth rate. Again out of these, six are located within the Calcutta Urban Agglomeration in the district of Twentyfour Parganas. Most of these urban centres (Naihati, Panhiati, Bhatpara, Kamarhati, South Dum Dum and South Suburban) are the older urban centres of the zone and here urban growth may be said to have stabilized so that very high growth rates are generally not found.

Moderate growth rates are also noticeable in the Asansol-Durgapur zone in industrial and mining towns like Kulti, Dishergarh, Hindusthan Cables Town, Raniganj and Jemari.

Similar growth rates may be seen in a large number of small urban centres of Hoora district where urbanisation has been traditionally based on the development of small and ancillary industries among which machine tools, engineering and tailoring are important.

Moderate growth rates are also particularly noticeable in urban centres like Khirpai, Kharar, Garbetta and Amlagora in Medinipur.
district which exhibited low levels of decadal growth in 1961-71 decade. Similarly, towns along the eastern borders of Twentyfour Parganas like Basirhat, Bangaon and others also show moderate levels of growth probably due to migration across the borders.

Urban centres with low decadal growth are particularly noticeable in the two backward and primarily agricultural districts of Puruliya and Bankura. Another district where a large number of urban centres registering low growth are seen to occur, is Murshidabad, where it seems that the industrial development around Farakka has not yet been able to arrest the process of urban stagnation that began in the district since the end of the last century. Another interesting feature that emerges is the low decadal growth rate of urban centres, in the agricultural eastern part of the Barddhaman district.

During this decade, six urban centres show decline of population, out of which four are located in the Calcutta Urban Agglomeration. These again include older project towns like Ichhapur Defence Estate, Dum Dum Aerodrome Area and Barrackpur Cantonment. The industrial town of Panchur also shows a decline of population during 1971-81. Ondal, an important railway junction on the Eastern Railways in Barddhaman district also shows decline of population which may be related to movement of population in the railway settlement which forms the core of the town. The remaining declining town is Hill, reasons for whose decay have been discussed earlier.

5.3.2.4. Unified rate of growth of population of selected urban centres

Exponential curves have also been used to analyse the overall rate of population growth of urban centres which existed prior to 1901. The unified rate of growth during 1901-81, obtained from the 'b' values have been used to make a threefold classification of these urban centres (Figure 5.18). The three classes recognised are

1) Urban centres with high growth rates
2) Urban centres with moderate growth rates and
3) Stagnating urban centres.
A glance at the figure shows that among the urban centres considered in this analysis only 6 show high rates of growth. It may be further noted that except for Chakdaha, all the others are located within the Calcutta Urban Agglomeration and include either industrial towns like Bansberia, Kamarhati, Panihati and South Dum Dum or residential towns like South Suburban located on the periphery of Calcutta city. In Chakdaha the high growth rate has already been related with the inflow of displaced persons across the borders after the partition and other subsequent political disturbances.

A large number of urban centres appear to fall in the moderate growth category. Again out of a total of 39 such urban centres, 17 are found to be actually located within the Calcutta Urban Agglomeration, while another five are located within the district of Twentyfour Parganas in close proximity to it.

A number of such urban centres are also found in Nadia district where the earlier trend of decay or stagnation has been reversed as a result of partition. Barddhaman district, too, shows moderate growth rate in most of its older urban centres.

In North Bengal, all the urban centres of Koch Bihar district show moderate growth rates for the period as a whole. This is a result of development of commercial functions as well as influx of refugees after partition.

Jalpaiguri town, which is located close to Siliguri, the nerve centre of urbanisation in North Bengal, owes its moderate growth partly to its proximity to Siliguri and partly to the development of administrative and trade functions.

In the remaining districts, there is generally at least one urban centre with a moderate rate of growth and it is interesting to note that most of these urban centres happen to be the administrative headquarters of the districts, as for example, Puruliya, Bankura, Baharampur and others.

This analysis shows as many as 27 stagnating urban centres in the
state. Such urban centres are most noticeable in the districts of Medimpur, Puruliya, Bankura and Murshidabad.

The north eastern part of Medimpur district is remarkable for a group of urban centres including Khirpai, Ramjibanpur and Chandrakona which have earlier been named 'towns of retrogressive urban growth', (Kar, 1962) because they showed a tendency to decay during the earlier decades. This decline may be related to recurrent floods in this zone and a decay of the traditional cottage industries like handloom weaving and manufacture of brass and bell metal wares as a result of British policy in the colonial days.

The two urban centres of Darjiling district which existed since 1901 also show low growth rate for the period as a whole. This is not surprising since both these urban centres are hill stations where scope for rapid urban expansion is quite limited.

5.4. CONCLUSION

From the above analysis of the growth of urban centres and urban population in West Bengal during 1901-81, the following conclusions may be drawn:

i) The curves that have been fitted to show trends of growth in the number of urban centres as well as urban population indicate that in most of the districts both these parameters of urban growth are increasing at a rate faster than that predicted, especially since 1951.

ii) While many of the districts of the state experienced this improved pace of urbanisation in the post independence period, the reasons behind this improvement are not the same in all the cases. In the border districts of the eastern half of the state such as Nadia, Murshidabad and West Dinajpur, this impetus was primarily provided by partition of the country is 1947 and subsequent political disturbances such as the Bangladesh War in 1971, development of commercial and other functions occupied a
secondary place. A direct contrast to this type of urban growth is provided by the districts of Haora and Barddhaman where urban growth can be said to be a direct result of industrial development.

iii) While districts like Murshidabad and Medinipur which showed urban decay or stagnation during the earlier decades, show considerable improvements in recent decades, due partly to planned industrialisation in both these districts (examples being Farakka Barrage Township and Haldia), the two western districts of Puruliya and Bankura still appear to be lagging behind others.

iv) As far as the growth in the number of urban centres and urban population in the different size categories of towns are concerned, it is found that in the earlier decades both these components were usually increasing faster than that predicted in the larger sized urban centres, while the smaller size classes were either stagnating or declining. Interestingly enough, this trend seems to have been reversed during the last decade so that both number and population show higher than expected increase in the smaller size categories while Class II and III urban centres show less than expected growth. This appears to be a healthy trend since it indicates the emergence of a number of new urban centres. However it must be pointed out that the rapid growth of Class I cities in both respects has continued uninterrupted.

v) Even though the urban scene of West Bengal is still dominated by Calcutta, the rate of growth of population of the city proper has slowed down during the last three decades. On the other hand, constituents of the Calcutta Urban Agglomeration continue to show quite a high rate of growth. This is particularly true of the residential towns on the fringe of Calcutta city or within commuting distance from it. Thus particularly rapid urban growth may be noticed in the eastern and north eastern periphery of Calcutta Urban Agglomeration where a number of new urban centres have come into existence.

vi) A most noticeable feature of urban growth in West Bengal during
the last few decades has been the emergence of a subsidiary urban complex in the Asansol-Durgapur region. The growth of urban centres in this zone has received a fresh impetus in the post independence period with the establishment of the public sector steel plant and allied industries in Durgapur city. This region has been growing at a much faster rate both in terms of urban population and number of urban centres and this fast pace of urbanisation will probably be maintained in the near future.

vii) In addition to these two zones of urban concentration, some urban growth centres have emerged in the recent decades. Siliguri in Darjiling district is one such growth centre while Kharagpur in Medinipur district is another.

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