CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

I

Object of this study

Development of a nation through economic planning implies that sooner or later the impacts of planned development are felt over the entire economy. As a general rule, any attempt to achieve economic growth is likely to usher in a series of changes in the socio-economic sphere of a country. One of the objects of economic planning is to diffuse these changes all over the economy — from the big urban clusters to remote, isolated villages.\(^1\) In this process of transition in a particular region, small and market towns are assigned the task of transmitting the waves of new changes.\(^2\) They may be looked upon as the agents for initiating growth-oriented activities in the region with the help of transport and other infrastructural developments.\(^3\) As a result of improvement in transport system, towns within a region become more connected with one another. Naturally trade and business activities are likely to increase among them. In particular, relatively small towns are expected to depend more, for sale and purchase of commodities on the relatively big town in the region because of the latter's privileged position in the urban hierarchy.\(^4\) The main object of this thesis is to find out to what extent such interdependence has developed among three small towns of different sizes and

2. (a) Market-towns : A Definition by Prof. Loknathan as quoted in "Regional Planning - an Areal Exercise" by Dattaray Sathe (P.90).
   (b) Article by D.Lambert in "India's Urban Future", Ed.by R. Turner.
3. Gerald Breese : "Urbanisation in newly developing countries" Ch.2 (pp. 40-43).
4. Article by Erich E.Lampard in "Issues in Urban Econ. Development" Ed. by Henry S.Pairoff and Lowdon Wingo (Jr.).
importance, in a particular, compact region of West Bengal in course of the first three five-year plans.

Secondly, as a consequence of economic development through planning, some far-reaching changes are likely to come about in the fields of demography, education, consumption and occupational pattern etc. of the region in general and the towns in particular. According to Prof. Hoselitz, "we may witness two opposing trends associated with the development of towns and cities one affecting chiefly the very large metropolitan centre ...... and the second affecting smaller cities which tend to develop new forms of specialised functions". The impact on small towns is manifested by the construction of small factories and service-centres, by increased commercial activities, expansion of Governmental functions, enlargement of social infrastructure, rapid expansion of motor transport and in several other ways. Hence, this thesis is also an attempt to reveal the changes which took place in the three selected towns during the period of the first three five year plans.

To put it in a more precise manner, we shall try in the first place to examine, in the light of regional analysis, whether any economic integration has developed (so far as trade and business is concerned) among the selected towns in course of the first three five-year plans. Secondly, an attempt will be made to determine the degree

5. Emrys Jones : "Towns and Cities" Ch.6.
7. Article by Ellefsen in "India's Urban Future",Ed.by Roy Turner.
and direction in which these towns have reacted to the growth of economic opportunities brought about in the region as a whole. Although the latter is a secondary objective of our study, we shall deal with this problem first, so that we can have a better understanding of the former aspect.

The urban sector represents a very wide segment of the economy covering large cities as well as small localities possessing some required urban amenities. While a number of works are available to assess the impact of economic growth on certain metropolitan centres like Calcutta, Bombay etc., the small market towns of a quasi-urban nature have so far received very little attention, from research workers. There is no exact definition of the term "small Town." But, for our purpose, the term will be used here to indicate those towns which have relatively small area and population as compared with large urban agglomerations like Calcutta etc., and which, therefore, are poorly equipped in respect of availability of social overheads as well as in respect of the trade, business and industry which have developed there. Moreover, the towns taken up for our study have a common characteristics that no substantial investment was directly made on their development. Whatever changes occurred in these towns may be regarded as an indirect consequence of plan investment in general. To this extent the towns taken up for our study are different from new townships like Durgapur where a substantial amount of direct public investment was the factor behind their development.

(b) Emrys Jones — "Towns and Cities", Ch.1.
The region which we have chosen is Murshidabad, a district belonging to the Central heartland of West Bengal. We may justify this selection by referring to the past fame of Murshidabad as the capital and the chief centre of commerce of the Province of Bengal in the 18th and 19th centuries. Besides, not being far away from Calcutta and lying almost midway between Darjeeling and Calcutta the towns of Murshidabad are important links in the chain connecting the Northern part of the state with the Southern part.

Our study covers three small towns in this district, namely, Berhampur, Jiganj and Jangipur. There are substantial grounds behind the selection of these three towns. All these towns have a historic past and they have always had a good tradition in trade and business. Secondly, Berhampur, apart from being the administrative Headquarters, is the largest town in the district in terms of area, population etc. Jangipur and Jiganj, which have been classified in the Census as Manufacturing and Business towns respectively, are relatively small towns in the vicinity of Berhampur. Thirdly, all of them are closely linked with one another through rail and roadways.

II

Geographical location and historic background of Murshidabad District and the towns selected

Murshidabad, the northern-most district of the Presidency Division of West Bengal, is bounded by Santthal Parganas of Bihar and the district of Birbhum on the West, by the districts of Malda, Rajshahi (Bangladesh) and Nadia on the North and East
and by the districts of Nadia and Burdwan on the South. There is no physical barrier between this district and different places in Birbhum, Burdwan or the Santhal Parganas. But the river Ganges or the Padma separates it from Malda and Rajshahi while the river Jalangi constitutes the border between Nadia and Murshidabad.

Murshidabad is connected with Calcutta and the neighbouring districts through a well-developed network of rail and roadways. Previously the Bhagirathi, the Jalangi etc., were navigable. But their navigability started to decline about a century ago and now they have been almost abandoned.

The district, so named after the historic city of Murshidabad, is famous for its glorious history and tradition. It earned its repute as early as in the 17th century A.D., when Karnasuvarna, an ancient city of this district was the metropolis of Bengal's first sovereign monarch Sasanka. Thereafter it once again came to the limelight from 1702-03, when Murshid Kuli Khan, the then Dewan of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa under the Mughal Emperor of Delhi, transferred the capital of Bengal from Dacca to Murshidabad, an old town of the district, situated on the eastern bank of the Bhagirathi. Although commercial activities had already started to concentrate in some places of the district, such as Cossimbazar (suburb of the present administrative town Berhampur) well before this shift of capital, the emergence of Murshidabad as the Capital of Bengal helped to expedite the growth of trade and business there. British, French, Dutch and American settlements were established in Cossimbazar and Saidabad and very soon Murshidabad developed not only as a Chief resort of trade and
commerce but also as a seat of culture and civilisation of the eastern region. But the turning point in the history of Murshidabad appeared with the fall of Nawab Sirajudaula in the battle of Plassey (1757). The British rulers removed their capital from Murshidabad to Calcutta and the importance of the region as a centre of trade and commerce began to decline day by day. 10 Although since then Murshidabad has lost its past status and glory its rich tradition in trade and commerce perhaps continues to nurture growth-potentialities which may pay dividends if properly explored. It was this aspect of growth-orientation which tempted us to select particularly this region for our study.

Of the three towns chosen, Berhampur and Jiganj were classified by the census of 1961 as service towns while Jangipur was declared as a manufacturing town. In addition, Jangipur and Berhampur are also important as the sub-divisional and district headquarters respectively. 11 All of them are municipal towns.

Berhampur, situated on the eastern bank of the Bhagirathi, is 187.2 Km. north of Calcutta (by rail-road) and is connected with Calcutta and different places of this district and of the neighbouring ones through rail and road communications. It is being served by three railway stations - Berhampur Court and Cossimbazar on Sealdah-Lalgola Section and Khagraghat Road.

on Howrah - Berharwa section of the Eastern Railway. So far as road communication is concerned, among other routes, National Highway 34, which connects Calcutta with North Bengal, passes through this town. Regular buses ply between Berhampur and towns like Kandi, Jiaganj, Jangipur, Dhulian, Lalgola, Labagh, Farakka, Aurangabad and Beldanga (of the same district), Krishnanagar(Nadia), Durgapur (Burdwan), Sainthia, Suri, Rampurhat (Birbhum) etc. At first, this town was established by the Britishers as a Military cantonment in the year 1767 but subsequently it was converted to an administrative head-quarter. At present the main trades of the town are bell-metal, ivory, cloth, grocery, stationery products etc. Recently the business of fertiliser, seeds etc. and automobile service centres have been added to the list. Extending over an area of 6.25 square miles, the town is inhabited by 72605 persons as per the Final census figures of 1971.\textsuperscript{12}

Jiaganj-Azimganj, being situated in Lalbagh Sub-Division, extends over an area of 4.50 sq.miles on both banks of the river Bhagirathi. According to the Final census data of the last census (1972), its population was estimated at 26,535. The eastern side of the river is known as Jiaganj and the Western part of the town is called Azimganj. The town is about 19.2 Km. north of Berhampur and 204.0 Km. from Calcutta by rail. It has link with Calcutta and with other places of this district and of the neighbouring districts through the Jiaganj station on Sealdah-Lalgola Section and the Azimganj station on Howrah-Barharwa section. Azimganj is an

\(\text{(b) Old Government records.}\)
\(\text{(c) Hunter : "(A) Statistical Account of Bengal."}\)
important railway junction and the terminus of the Andal Ajimganj branch line of the Eastern Railway. In addition, Jiaganj is also connected with Berhampur, Jangipur, Lalgola etc. by road. There are regular bus-services between these towns. This town which was once a mere rural suburb of Murshidabad town has now developed into a big centre of trade and commerce. One of the factors contributing to its growth was the influx of capital from outside, through banyas who came there from different parts of the country. Commenting on this point, the District Hand-book 1961 says: "During the latter half of the 18th century Jiaganj-Ajimganj attracted a large number of Jain merchants. They are said to have migrated from Bikaner (Rajasthan) in search of fortune. The growth of Jiaganj also owes much to the Mihaliha Rajput family, popularly known as Bundela." Jiaganj is now an important trade centre for wholesale trade in Jute, rice, bellmetal etc.

Jangipur is situated about 64 Km. north of Berhampur and 244.8 Km. from Calcutta. The nearest railway station is Jangipur Road (one and a half mile from the town) on the Howrah-Berharwa section, which connects it directly with Calcutta, Berhampur, Jiaganj, Farakka and other important places. Besides, the town is connected with Krishnapur station on Sealdah-Lalgola section by a 22 Km. link road. On the other hand a well developed road communication system has brought this town in closer touch with the main places of this district and the districts of Santhal Parganas and Birbhum. The town was originally known as Jahangirpur, named after the Mughal Emperor Jahangir, who, according to a proverb, founded the town. It is however known from historical records that

Sir Ashley Eden, the Lt. Governor of Bengal (1871-82) transferred the Sub-Divisional headquarter from Aurangabad to Jangipur in 1856. The river Bhagirathi flowing almost through the centre of the town bisects it into two parts—Raghunathganj on the West and Jangipur on the eastern bank of the river. Originally administrative offices were situated in the Jangipur-portion and this portion of the town was the nucleus of all administrative and commercial activities. Later, the Sub-divisional courts and offices were removed to the Western bank of the river following the encroachment of the Bhagirathi. As a consequence of this transfer, the erosion by the Padma and the Bhagirathi and the creation of Pakistan, the hinterland of Jangipur was contracted and the business activities started to concentrate on the Western bank with the inevitable result that the economic condition of Jangipur-portion has been deteriorating and that of Raghunathganj improving day after day particularly since the inception of the five-year plans.

In 1802 Lord Valentine described Jangipur "as the greatest silk station of the East India Company with 600 furnaces and giving employment to 3000 persons." Another important old industry of the town is that of Bellmetal. But both of these two industries are now sick and actually stand on the ruins of their past glories. At present its chief industries are bidi-making and cotton-weaving. In addition, there are now a number of shops and commercial establishments catering to the needs of the local people and a hinterland encircling an area of about 32 km. radius. According to the census of 1971 the population of Jangipur was 29,872.

So far as morphology is concerned, all these towns bear some analogous features. As a matter of fact, the entire urban settlement of the district has some common characteristics which have been described by the District Handbook, Murshidabad (1961) as follows:

"It is interesting to note some general points which are in fact largely applicable to all urban settlements of the districts."  

III

Procedure adopted in the Survey

As this is a case study, it involves an empirical study with a survey of two types of samples—households and trading establishments. In conducting this survey we have adopted the following method. In the first phase we divided the towns into some smaller units such as urban blocks or census enumeration blocks. Following the National Sample Survey, Jangipur and Jiaganj have been classified into 29 and 35 urban blocks respectively. From these blocks we have ultimately chosen 8 sample blocks for Jangipur and 10 sample blocks for Jiaganj. Initially, in the case of Berhampur also, the same process was adopted and we selected 16 sample blocks out of 85 urban blocks, designed by the National Sample Survey. But as we faced a lot of difficulties in obtaining the list of households, we recast our sample design in respect of households (for Berhampur only) in accordance with the procedure used in the latest census operation. The census authority classified Berhampur into 150 census enumeration blocks. To simplify our job, we have broken up the town into 5 zones. Of them, zone No.I (Gorabazar) and II (Berhampur) consist of 30 enumeration blocks each, while...

Zone No. III (Khagra) and IV (Saidabad and Cossimbazar) consist of 40 blocks each. Zone No.V (Cantonment) which consists of 10 enumeration blocks, has been kept out of our sample as the area accommodates mainly the office-buildings and residential flats for Govt. officials.

From the other 4 zones we have then selected by random process, 22 (15\% of the total) sample enumeration blocks as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Total Blocks</th>
<th>Number of Blocks taken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zone I</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone II</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone III</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone IV</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus in the case of Berhampur, we have included two types of sample blocks in our design - one for households, constructed on the basis of census enumeration blocks and the other, for trading establishments, derived from the urban blocks as framed by the N.S.S.

In the second phase, we prepared the list of the head of every household and of the owners of every trading establishment from the selected sample blocks. From these lists we ultimately framed the household sample, consisting of 200 households, for each of the towns. In Jangipur and Jiaganj, the sample households have been distributed proportionately among the sample blocks while in Berhampur we have allotted 50 households to each zone. Households from each block under a zone have been taken in accordance with the proportion of the number of households of the concerned block to the total number of households enumerated for the entire zone. As regards trading establishments, the sample has been drawn with the shops selected from the list but where the number of enlisted shops
was insufficient we have included also shops, situated outside the sample blocks. We have tried our best to collect information from the selected sample units. The response we have received is also satisfactory. Still in some cases when selected households or traders declined to furnish the required data, we had to substitute them by collecting figures from their immediate neighbours. It may be noted that in all the cases, selection has been made on the basis of random sampling procedure.

In course of the interviews we presented two sets of questionnaires (reproduced in the Appendix), one for the households and the other relating to trade. As this is a comparative study, we are more interested in *trend* rather than in absolute figure in respect of the information we require.

Our study covers the 20-year period 1951-70. Although our primary interest lies in following the impact of the first three five-year plans, our survey deliberately covers a longer period. This can be justified on the ground that the impact of the Third Plan was likely to have continued for some years after its completion and a longer period of observation would therefore give more meaningful results. In any case, while the plans furnish the background for our study, our sample study extends beyond the period of the first three plans and is intended to depict the process of development for about two decades in the selected small towns to which our surveys relate.

Before concluding, the chapterwise distribution of contents may be mentioned here. In the next chapter, we have discussed the
demographic changes. Chapter three has dealt with development of agriculture, education, electricity and communication system in Murshidabad district, as a whole, in order to throw some light on the infrastructural development in the region. We have analysed the changes in occupational structure and changing pattern of trade and business in Chapters four and five respectively. The next Chapter (Chapter six) has been devoted to examine specially the changing nature of goods consumed, as this is one of the important factors which influence economic integration. While the interdependence among the towns has been described in Chapter seven, Chapter eight has been kept for an overall review of the outcome of our study.