CHAPTER - 5

A PROFICE OF THE STUDY AREA
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5.1 A PROFILE OF BURDWAN DISTRICT

(A) History

The term Burdwan or Bardhaman means growing. It is one of the oldest districts of West Bengal. From the very beginning the district is prosperous and rich in both agriculture and industry. The eastern part of this district is famous for agriculture and hence called the ‘granary’ of West Bengal whereas the western part is famous for industry. The district is also rich in natural resources. The famous Raniganj coalfield is situated in this district.

(B) Geographic Location

It lies between $22^\circ56'$ and $25^\circ53'$ North latitude and $86^\circ48'$ and $88^\circ25'$ East longitude.

(C) Boundary

The district of Burdwan is situated in the middle most part of West Bengal. It is surrounded on the north by the district Nadia, Murshidabad and Birbhum, on the south Purulia, Bankura and Hooghly, on the east Hooghly, Nadia and the river Bhagirathi and on the West the river Barakar, Santhal Parganas and Manbhum districts of the state of Jharkhand. The length from the western part of the river Bhagirathi to the eastern part of the river Barakar is 208 km. and from the southern part of the river Ajoy to the northern part of the river Damodar is 20 km.

(D) Area and Population Characteristics

The total geographical area of this district is 7024 sq. km. According to the Census Report of 1991, the total population of this district was 6050605 of which 3186833 were males and 2863772 were females. The density of population was 861 per sq. km. The percentage of rural population to total population was 64.91% (among which 51.73% male and 48.27% female) and the urban population was 35.09% (among which 54.40% male and 45.60% female). The total population of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes was 2036526 (i.e. 33.68%). The percentage of scheduled castes population in total population was 27.44% and that of scheduled tribes was
6.24%. The sex ratio in this district was 898 females per 1000 males. The literacy rate was 61.88% (71.12% among males and 51.46% among females). The rural literacy rate was 56.83% and urban literacy rate 70.86%. During the period 1911 to 1991, the growth rate of population was 2.94% per annum.

(E) Occupation Structure

As per 1991 Census Report, the cultivators and agricultural labourers consist of 392123 and 551937 persons respectively. The data on occupation structure is given in Table 5.1

Table 5.1

Occupation Structure of the Population of Burdwan District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Population (No.)</th>
<th>% to total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Total main workers</td>
<td>1798130</td>
<td>29.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Cultivators</td>
<td>392123</td>
<td>6.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Agricultural labourers</td>
<td>551937</td>
<td>9.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Household workers</td>
<td>52750</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv) Other workers</td>
<td>801320</td>
<td>13.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Marginal workers</td>
<td>56716</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Non-workers</td>
<td>4195759</td>
<td>69.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population (a+b+c)</td>
<td>60,50,605</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census Report, 1991

At the end of 1997, the number of registered factories in this district was 679 and these factories employed 109335 workers. At the same time, the number of employees in the state govt. offices was 32100. Number of registered small scale industrial units in this district was 44778 and those units employed 254937 persons. At that time, total number of unemployed according to the live register of different employment exchanges was 615926 and the number of new registration was 53465: vacanecies notified was 1301 and placement effected was 832.

(F) Climate

Almost the whole area of this district is plain except the colliery belt in the west. The climate of this district is hot and dry excepting the monsoon period. The district is well drained with huge amount of water areas like rivers, ponds, tanks.
dams, beels, baors, ditches, streams etc. The principal rivers of this district are the Ajoy, Damodar, Kunur etc. But most of these rivers are dried up during hot summer days as these are rain fed rivers. The water from the river Damodar is mainly used for irrigation in agriculture through D.V.C. canals. The river Ajoy divides the districts of Burdwan and Birbhum. Almost all rivers flow from the west to the east. The predominant soil type on the river belt is alluvial. The temperature varies from 11.4°C to 27.3°C in winter and from 23.6°C to 36.5°C in summer. On an average the annual rainfall is 1496 m.m.

(G) Natural Resources

The coal is the most important source of energy in India. The district is very rich in this natural resource. The famous Ranijanj coalfield is situated in the western part of this district. The area of this coalfield is about 500 sq. mile. At the end of 1997 it produced 166.09 lakh tonnes of coal. It supplies cheap but standard quality coal to this district and also to the neighbouring districts. Surrounding this coalfield the main industrial units of this district are located at Durgapur-Asansol belt. The sand of the river beds of this district is of high quality and is used for construction purposes.

(H) Principal crops

The district of Burdwan is mainly an agricultural district. It is covered with well fertile productive land. Almost all crops are produced in this district. The major varieties of paddy are Aus, Aman and Boro. To raise the productivity there is a trend to cultivate the H.Y.V. of paddy. The other main crops are wheat, potato, oilseeds, sugarcane, maize, jute, vegetables etc.

(I) Administrative Divisions

The district comprises of 5 Sub-divisions namely Burdwan (Sadar), Kalna, Katwa, Durgapur and Asansol. There are 32 police stations, 31 development blocks, 31 panchayet samities, 278 gram panchayets, 2588 mouzas, 2488 inhabited villages, 7 municipal towns, 1 municipal corporation and 49 non-municipal towns in this district. There are 759 post offices, 48 telegraph offices and one T.V. relay centre in this district. There are 26 constituencies in Bidhan Sabha and 4 constituencies in Lok Sabha in this district.
(J) Educational and Medical Facilities

The district is well advanced in educational and medical facilities. There are 3766 primary schools, 205 middle school, 449 secondary schools, 127 higher secondary schools, 27 degree colleges, one medical college and one university in this district. Moreover, there are 4200 literacy centers with a literacy rate of 82.2%. The district has 40 hospitals, 134 health centres, 32 clinics, 31 dispensaries, 62 veterinary hospitals with 231 veterinary dispensaries.

(K) Irrigation

The total irrigated area in this district is 328405 hectares. The areas irrigated by Govt. canals, private tanks, deep and shallow tubewells and by other sources are 302330 Ha., 4830 Ha., 17065 Ha. and 4180 Ha. respectively. Some river valley projects in this district have been adopted for better utilization of irrigation water, generation of hydel power, controlling flood and checking of soil erosion. The main barrage is the Durgapur barrage of Damodar Valley Corporation (D.V.C.) which was completed in 1955 on Damodar river. Durgapur barrage is a concrete dam, 12m high and 672 m. long, which has been built across the river Damodar about 1.6 km. from the Durgapur railway station. It receives water from the storage dams and distributes it for irrigation through a network of canals and drainage channels of about 2,500 km in length. Two canals take-off from the barrage. The right bank canal is 89 km. long and it irrigates about 420000 Ha. area of the districts of Bankura and Hooghly. The left bank canal is 137 km long and is used mainly for irrigation in the districts of Burdwan and Hooghly.

(L) Trend of Progress in Agriculture

The district Burdwan is mainly an agricultural district. It is called the 'granary' of West Bengal. It is an important district of West Bengal in every sphere of production. The district has attained self sufficiency in food production and a steady progress in comparison with the past (i.e. before independence). It is covered with well-fertile productive land. The effect of 'Green Revolution' is found in this district. This district has achieved surplus in rice production. This is possible only with the extension of irrigation facilities through D.V.C. canals, with the introduction of high-yielding varieties (HYV) and various agricultural programmes including training and visit. Not only in rice but also in potato production this district has attained the highest
level in West Bengal. Since potato is a perishable commodity, 75 cold storages with a capacity of 760 m.t. have been set up in this district for storing potatoes. It also supplies potato to the neighbouring states. The production of jute, pulses and oilseeds, sugarcane etc. has also increased considerably.

(M) Bank and Finance

As on 30th June 1997, there were 365 commercial bank branches and average population served per office was 19000 in this district. The main banks operating in this district are Bardhaman Gramin Bank, State Bank of India, Allahabad Bank, Syndicate Bank, Burdwan District Central Co-operative Bank, Indian Overseas Bank etc. The number of co-operative societies in this district is 2628 with a membership of 814000 persons.

(N) Industry

At the end of 1997, there were 679 registered working factories with 109335 workers employed. Upto the end of 1997 the total number of registered small industrial units was 44778 and the number of workers was 254937. The district is well-advanced in every sphere of production. Though agriculture is the main occupation of the masses, the district gains high priority in industrial production. The eastern part of this district is famous for agricultural production while the western part is famous for industrial production. The main industrial units are located at Durgapur-Raniganj-Asansol belt on the northern bank of the river Damodar. This industrial belt has developed due to various factors like plentiful local supply of raw materials, the cheap but standard quality coal from the Raniganj coalfield and well connected transport system. The important industries of Asansol-Raniganj belt are iron and steel at Kulti-Burnpur region, aluminum factory of Anupnagar, the rail engine factory of Chittaranjan, electric and telephone wire factory of Rupnarayanpur.

The famous Durgapur industrial belt is also situated in this district. If we consider the iron and steel industry as the “backbone of modern industry” and coal as the “mother of modern industry” then we shall get a complete association of these two at Durgapur belt. That is why Durgapur is called the “Rurh of India.” The main industrial units of this region are Durgapur Steel Plant (DSP), Alloy Steel Plant (ASP), Mining and Allied Machinery Corporation (MAMC), units producing cement, Fertiliser Industry etc.
5.2 A PROFILE OF BIRBHUM DISTRICT

(A) History: Birbhum is a part of Rarh area, the social system and landscape being much akin to the Rarh areas of Murshidabad, Bankura, Burdwan and Midnapore districts of West Bengal. In the introduction of “The Annals of Rural Bengal”, Hunter states that the name of the district ‘Birbhum’ comes from ‘Vir-Bhumi’, i.e. the ‘land of the heroes’. From the historical records it is fairly clear that the district included in Rarh was mainly under different Hindu rulers. The district was named ‘Birbhum’ to indicate simply the territory of the ‘Bir Rajas.’

(B) Geographic Location

The district lies between 23°32′30″ and 24°35′00″ North Latitudes and 88°01′40″ and 87°05′25″ East Longitudes.

(C) Boundary

The district Birbhum is situated in the western-most part of West Bengal and on the northern part of the Burdwan Division of West Bengal. In shape it looks like an isosceles triangle. Birbhum is bounded on the North and West by the district of Santhal Parganas of Jharkhand State, on the East by the districts Murshidabad and Burdwan and on the South by Burdwan district of West Bengal, from which it is separated by the river Ajoy.

(D) Area and Population Characteristics

The total area of the district is 4514 sq. km. According to census report of 1991, the total population of this district was 2555664 of which 131328 were males and 1242379 were females. The density of population was 566 per sq.km. The percentage of rural population to total population was 91.01% (among which 51.34% were males and 48.66% were female) and that of urban population to total population was 8.99% (among which 51.92% were males and 48.02% were females). The total population of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes was 911563 (i.e. 35.67%). The percentage of scheduled castes population was 28.72% and that of scheduled tribes was 6.95%. The sex ratio in this district was 946 females per 1000 males. The literacy rate was 48.56% (male 59.26% and female 37.17%). The rural literacy rate was 46.60% and urban literacy rate was 67.42%. During the period 1911 to 1991 the growth rate of population was 1.72% per annum.
(E) Occupation Structure

As per 1991 census data, the cultivators and agricultural labourers consist of 2,68,575 and 2,90,722 respectively. The data on occupation structure have been presented in Table 5.2

Table 5.2

Occupation Structure of the Population of Birbhum District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Population (No.)</th>
<th>% to total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Total main workers</td>
<td>777482</td>
<td>30.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i) Cultivators</td>
<td>268575</td>
<td>10.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ii) Agricultural labour</td>
<td>290722</td>
<td>11.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Household workers</td>
<td>27970</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv) Other workers</td>
<td>190215</td>
<td>7.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Marginal workers</td>
<td>69666</td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Non-workers</td>
<td>1708516</td>
<td>66.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total population (a+b+c)</td>
<td>2555664</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


During 1977, the number of registered factories in this district was 134 and these factories employed 4818 workers. At the same time, the number of employees in the state govt. offices was 14500. The number of registered small industrial units in this district was 16375 and those units employed 114694 workers. At the end of 1997, the total number of unemployed persons as per live registers of different employment exchanges was 237403. In the same year the number of new registration was 16710, number of vacancies notified was 1268 and number of placement effected was 483.

(F) Climate

Almost throughout the whole area of this district, the surface is broken by a succession of undulations and the soil colour is red. The climate of this district is hot and dry excepting the monsoon period. Agriculture is the primary occupation of the masses. There are three agricultural sub-divisions namely, Suri, Rampurhat and Bolpur in this district. The district is well-drained by a number of rivers and rivulets which influence the agro-climatic condition of this district. The main rivers are the Ajoy, Mayurakshi, Dwarka, Kopai, Bakreswar, Brahmani etc.
The main dams and barrages are Mayurakshi Project, Hinglo Project, Dwarka Project and Brahmani Project. The temperature varies from 12.7°C to 28.6°C in winter and from 25.5°C to 39.4°C in summer. On an average the annual rainfall is 1289 m.m.

The river Ajoy divides the districts of Burdwan and Birbhum. Almost all the rivers flow from the west to the east. The predominant soil type is alluvial on the river belt and red laterite on the western part of the district.

(G) Natural Resources

The district is poor in natural resources. There is some inferior quality coal at Kankarlata in the Khairasole Block and at Deucha belt in the Md. Bazar Block. Other than coal there are some claymines at Patelnagar in the Md. Bazar Block under private ownership. There is high quality black stone in Panchami at Md. Bazar Block and also at Rampurhat and Nalhati Blocks. The red laterite soil of the western part of this district is used for construction of metalled roads. The sand of the river-beds of the district is of high quality and is used for construction purposes.

(H) Principal crops

This district is primarily an agricultural district. Near about 80% of cultivable land is used for the production of paddy. The major varieties of paddy are Aus, Aman and Boro. To raise the productivity there is a trend to cultivate the HYV of paddy. The other main crops are wheat, potato, oilseeds, sugarcane, maize, Jute, vegetables etc.

(I) Administrative Divisions

There are three sub-divisions, i.e. Suri Sadar, Rampurhat and Bolpur in this district. There are 18 police stations, 19 development blocks, 19 panchayet samities, 169 gram panchayets, and 2467 mouzas in this district. The district comprises of 5 municipal towns and 2232 inhabited villages. There are 12 constituencies in Bidhan Sabha and 2 constituencies in Lok Sabha. There are 465 post offices and 2 telegraph offices in this district.
(J) Educational and Medical facilities

There are 2318 primary schools, 107 middle schools, 218 secondary schools, 54 higher secondary schools, 11 colleges and 1 central university in this district. Moreover, there are 2658 literacy centers in this district. There are 7 hospitals, 74 health centers, 19 clinics and 25 dispensaries, 8 veterinary hospitals with 240 veterinary dispensaries.

(K) Irrigation

The total irrigated area in this district is 2,97,093 Ha. The area irrigated by govt. canal is 1,71,403 Ha., by private tanks is 41000 Ha., by dugwell is 350 Ha., by deep and shallow tubewell is 41340 Ha. and by other sources is 43000 Ha. The number of deep tubwells is 51, river lift irrigation 114, shallow tubwells 7,600, dugwell 720 and tanks 25643. Some river valley projects in this district have been adopted for better utilization of irrigation water, generation of hydel power, control of flood and checking of soil erosion. The main projects are Mayurakshi River Valley Project, Higlo Project, Dwarka Project and Brahmani Project. Across the river Mayurakshi, a reservoir dam has been constructed at Massanjore on Dumka Hill (Jharkhand State) and a barrage has been constructed at Tilpara near Suri. The Tilpara barrage has two canal systems – the north bank canal and the south bank canal which provide irrigation facilities to the district.

(L) Trend of Progress in Agriculture

The district Birbhum is mainly an agricultural district. The district has attained self-sufficiency in agricultural production and a steady progress in comparison with the past. The district is mainly monocropped and has achieved surplus in rice production. This has been possible only with the extension of irrigation facilities through Mayurakshi and Hinglo projects, with the introduction of high-yielding varieties (HYV) and various agricultural programmes including training and visit. The production of pulses and oilseeds has also increased considerably.

(M) Bank and Finance

As on 30th June 1997, there were 174 commercial bank branches with average population served per office being 17,000 in this district. The main banks having branches are Mayurakshi Gramin Bank, United Commercial Bank, State Bank of
India, United Bank of India, Central Bank of India, Allahabad Bank, Land Development Bank and District Central Co-operative Bank. The number of co-operative societies in this district is 1239 with a membership of 6,32,000 persons.

(N) Sericulture

Sericulture plays a vital role to boost up the economy of this district. It generates employment and develops the district economically. Production of cocoons which is used for tasar silk cloth for general consumption and export to other districts of the State is an important feature of this district. Sericulture gained priority in the northern part of this district particularly in the blocks of Nalhati I, Murarai II, Rampurhat I, and Mayureswar I. The total area under mulberry cultivation is 4118.995 acres. Rawsilk obtained from reeling of cocoons is used as basic material for the manufacture of silk cloth.

(O) Industry

The district of Birbhum is industrially backward taking into consideration the availability of raw materials and other infrastructural facilities. There is no large scale industrial units in this district. Only four medium scale industrial units are operating namely Ahmedpur Sugar Mill, Panchra Cotton Mill, Abdarpur Mini Steel and Chinpai Explosive Industry. At the end of the year 1997, there were 134 registered working factories with 4818 workers employed. At the same time, the total number of registered small industrial units was 16375 and the total number of workers employed was 114694. The industrial units at Bolpur and still under construction covering an area of 21.32 acres at Layek Bazar mouza. Some vocational institutions are situated in this district to train the new and small entrepreneurs like Arambag Hatchery unit at Tantipara and Amarkutir at Bolpur. Small Industries Service Institute (SISI) is performing its role to expand the technical manpower of this district by conducting training programmes regularly like (i) One month Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) for women at Illambazar, (ii) EDP cum self Employment Programme (SEP) at Suri (iii) Polytechnic College, Suri etc. Some training programmes are also conducted to train the artisans, painters and handicraftsmen.