CHAPTER - VI

IDENTIFICATION OF
GROWTH CENTRES
IN BIRBHUM DISTRICT

A growth centre may be considered as an effective nucleus for an agro-industrial community in a rural based township. The centre is a nodal point of the dependent surrounding regions in terms of social services, marketing facilities etc. These surrounding regions are considered as hinterlands of the growth centre. The hinterlands are primarily based on agricultural activities and feed the growth centre by way of providing primary sector activities. Hence on the basis of this two way relationship the hinterlands provide agricultural output to the growth centre and in turn derives social, marketing and administrative facilities from it.

1.   In broader sense the Growth Centre Approach for development is based upon the strategy of ubbalanced development in sectoral and geographical spaces even though the balanced development is the desired end. Growth Centre Approach involves concentration of investment in leading sectors and geographic centres which in turn are expected to induce development in the dependent regions and sectors.

2.   The approach has a high relevance for industrial development. It is a well known fact that industries do not disperse uniformly all over the geographic spaces. They are

subject to economies of scale and agglomeration. Hence, they have a tendency to agglomerate at fewer places. Since it is found that excessive concentration would lead to diseconomies and social evils, the concentrations have to be located at selected placed dispersed all over the economy. The concentration of industries at place (growth centre) is intended to develop the regions dependent upon it. Hence the industries developing at the centre should have links (forward, backward and residential) with the regional economy. In other words it means that industries should either use regional products as imputs, employ labour or serve the regional production forces by its output or services.

3. The basic features of a growth centre are :

1) It is an urban core with rural hinterland capable of generating continuous growth.

2) It serves its surroundings with specialised services called "Functions".

3) It has its hinterland which is zone of influence on surrounding dependent villages and settlements.

4) It generates or intensifies the level of employment opportunities in the area under consideration.

5) It minimises the cost of production of industries and also side by side provides greater facilities to the consumers.

Discussions reveal that short supply of certain types of raw materials like M.S. Sections, mutton tallows, paraffin wax etc. and absence of local raw material depot have created a bottleneck in the process of industrial development in the District. However, if WBSIC's latest decision in opening of a raw material depot at Sainthia is implemented it will be highly beneficial to the small scale sector. Absence of industrial accommodation is another problem to the small scale units. To cope with the problem 4 industrial estates have been planned by the District Industries Centre. Majority of small scale enterpreneurs often face problem in marketing their products. Formation of local marketing centres may to some extent help them. Paucity of working capital is another threat to the small scale sector. In order to tackle the problem the District Industries Centre and the Lead Bank should launch a joint effort the first task of which is to assess the actual credit gap in this respect. However, in order to project the requirement of the credit in the District a Second Credit Plan is being drafted by the Lead Bank. To overcome this problem sufficient finance either from the Government source or from the nationalised banks is to be made available at the correct time and in required size to the entrepreneurs at liberal terms. In case of purely cottage artisans the financing on comparatively lesser rate of interest (Differential rates of interest) from every branch of nationalised banks must be enforced upto a certain percentage of their total investment.

Coming back to our discussion in relation to Birbhum

District it is apparent that a major task of this Study

is to identify, rank and describe the growth centres side by

side with the identification of candidate industries since

the growth centres are the places where industrial possi-

bilities may come into reality.

Identification of growth centres :

4.   While identifying the growth centres of Birbhum

District the following factors have been considered :

a) Population size - Small town and big villages

    having viable population size as per 1971 census

    have been taken into consideration. For our Study

    viable size of population has been fixed at 5

    thousand or more.

b) Those centres which fall under the above category

    and showing the fast rate of population growth have

    been taken into consideration. The rate of growth,

    however, has been considered in relation to the

    average growth rate of the District.

c) Availability of economic advantages such as water

    supply, power distribution, industrial accommodation,

    transport and communication have been considered

as important indicators for such purpose.

d) Existence of commercial activities/wholesale market
and agricultural marketing centre have considered
to be essential features in addition to its poten-
tiality as market for finished goods.

e) Minium availability of 'Functions' like hospital
facilities, post & telegraph facilities, adminis-
trative facilities, banking facilities etc. in
clustered form have been taken into account.

f) Proximity to large industrial centre and/or closer
tie with Metropolitan or large towns have also been
examined since the growth centres act as inter-
mediating points between rural areas and cities in
some respect.

g) Convenient location from the point of transport
and communication to serve as a focal point for
surrounding rural areas, is considered as essential
factor for identification.

h) Intensity of agricultural development in its zone
of influence (hinterland) particularly the produc-
tion of crops and other agricultural raw materials
have been considered favourable.

i) Availability of surplus resources for industrial
purpose has been considered advantageous.

j) Existing occupational orientation in terms of level
of employment in commercial and industrial sphere
have been considered as complementary criteria of
identification. The level of such employment, however,
have been fixed arbitrarily after computing the ratio
of industrial and commercial workers together with
the total workers in these areas.

5. Considering the above static and dynamic factors
the following urban cores of Birbhum District have been
identified as growth centres.

1. Bolepur
2. Sainthia
3. Suri
4. Rampurhat
5. Nalhati
6. Dubrajpur
7. Patelnagar

6. It is to be noted here that in case of selection of
Patelnagar as growth centre the principal criteria is the
availability of mineral resources.

In addition to the above there are other two centres viz. Ahmadpur and Illambazar which partially satisfy our criterian for selecting growth centres. These centres have been put under lower order of preference and are termed as growth points. In case of Ahmadpur it has been observed that the place is situated in between the hinterlands of Bolpur and Sainthia grow centres. It is difficult to assess the growth elasticity.of Ahmadpur when these two major growth centres will grow at faster rate. However, considering the hierarchy of the central places there exists immediate growth potential of Ahmadpur at least upto a certain point. In case of Illambazar one cannot deny the strong influence of Bolpur and absence of sufficient industrial instructure. However, the centre appears to be potent as a sub-regional market having capacity to absorb a sizable part of rural population. So we observe that Ahmadpur and Illambazar as growth paints at least in the initial stage of industriali- zation of the district.

Identification of growth centres it is noticed that all types of industrial activities cannot be developed at any growth centres. They are of different levels and can be viably introduced only at specific hierarchic level. Hence, ranking of growth centres is the essential exercise for allocation of investment of various order and scales. For ranking of growth centres we have mainly concentrated on

the secondary data. We have chosen five variables for the purpose, viz., (1) Population size, (2) workers engaged in manufacturing sector other than household industries, (3) workers engaged in construction,(4) workers engaged in trade and commerce, (5) workers engaged in transport and communication. These variables reflect the market area, entrepreneural resources, transport and communication facilities and overall dynamism of a place which are some of the fundamental pre-requisite of industrialisation of an area. Population census of 1971 was used as the source of empirical data for each of the variables.

At the initial stage all the growth centres are ranked in respect of each variable. Then, a score value is given to each settlement in relation to its rank. Highest ranked centre in respect of a variable is given the highest score equivalent to the number of growth centres identified (n). The score of the next highest ranked growth centre is given one less (n-1) and so on. The lowest ranked growth centre is given as score one (1). After getting the rank score each of the growth centre for all the viables, rank score are added and a total score is obtained for each growth centre. The maximum score in this case will be (5xN) where n is the total number of growth centres. The least score will be five (5). The total score value of each of the growth centres will lie in between the above range. In order to get

relative rank of each growth centre, the rank score of each

of the growth centres is divided by the rank score of the

lowest score growth centre and the hierarchy of growth

centre is obtained by this process. Table 5.1 indicates

the ranking of growth centres identified in Birbhum District

by the above-mentioned technique.

It is to be noted here that the above method assumes

homogeneity of growth centres in terms of geographic and

socio-economic structure. In case of heterogeneity amongst

the growth centres it is always preferable to have strati-

fied analysis. That is why we have isolated Patelnagore while

ranking the growth centre of Birbhum District since identi-

fication of Patelnagore growth centre has been done pri-

marily on the basis of its endowment of mineral resources

than any other variable. Hence, the importance of Patel-

nagore does not arise out of the Central Functions existing

there but on the level of exploitation of the natural

resources.

Table 5.1.   Ranking of Growth Centres of Birbhum District.

Growth Centres	Variable I		Variable II		Variable III		Variable IV		Variable V		Total rank score	Rela-tive rank score
	Popu-la-tion size	Rank score	Wor-kers in non-indus-try	Rank score	Wor-kers in trade & commerce	Rank score	Wor-ker in cons-titu-tion	Rank score	Wor-kers in trans-port & commu-nica-tion	Rank Score		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Suri	30110	6	660	3	1322	5	212	6	707	4	24	4.8
Sainthia	15929	3	806	4	1209	4	100	4	748	5	20	4.0
Bolpur	29636	5	1063	6	1370	6	159	5	626	3	25	5.0
Nalhati	9530	1	265	1	449	1	14	1	148	1	5	1.0
Dubrajpur	15797	2	959	5	918	2	60	2	409	2	13	2.6
Rampurhat	23770	4	497	2	1040	3	83	3	1170	6	18	3.6

(a) **Suri**

Suri is the District Headquarters of Birbhum. The town
is connected by the State Highway having excellent network
of other types of roads leading to every important places of
the District in terms of commercial, industrial and tourists
importance. The Andal-Sainthia broad guage rail link also
passes through the town. The total area of the town is 9.48
sq. km.

As per the table 5.1, the town is identified as 'number
two' growth centre of the District. This is a suitable loca-
tion for higher order investment falling under the category
of resource based, demand based, foot-loose and skilled based
industries. A plan has been drawn up by the DIC to establish
one industrial estate there.

(b) **Sainthia**

Sainthia is located almost on the central point of
the District. The place is connected with other towns of
the District by metal road. Howrah-Sahibgang loop railway
line passed through the town when it is joined with the
Andal-Sainthia branch line forming the town as an important
railway junction. Virtually due to its railway connection,
the town has an excellent link on the one way connection,

the town has an excellent link on the one hand with Calcutta
which is 190 kms away and on the other hand with the indus-
trial complex of Asansol-Durgapur-Raniganj region. Railway
siding facility is also available to a great extent to load
and unload wagons. The town covers an area of 3.37 sq. kms.

As per our ranking of the growth centres Sainthia
is identified as 'number three' growth centre of the Dis-
trict. It is an important trading centre having regular
wholesale and retail markets t r both agricultural as well
as consumer products. The existing industries functioning
in the place are rice mills, oil mills, rice bran oil plant,
bone mill, soap making units, bakery etc. Concentration of
handloom weavers have been observed in the villages around
the centre. The DIC has planned to set up an industrial
estate there. Above all, West Bengal Small Industries Cor-
poration has decided to build a raw material depot in the
town.

(c) Bolpur

Bolpur is a renowned tourist centre due to its
proximity with Santiniketan. Besides, the town is an
important commercial centre and is rated to be the 'number
one' growth centre of the District. The town offers an
excellent location for industrial activities due to its

excellent infrastructure facilities in terms of road,rail, banking service, market etc. The Centre has a vast hinterland compared to other growth centres of the District covering Nanoor, Lavpur, Bolpur-Sriniketan and other nearby places where agricultural resources are available in abundance. The growth centre offers a scope for establishment of backward, forward and residential linkage since it is rich in every respect.

The town is the largest in the District having an area of 13.13 sq. kms. It stands on the Howrah-Sahibganj railway link and is 164 kms away from Calcutta. An industrial estate is planned to be established there by the District Industries Centre.

(d) Rampurhat

Rampurhat is situated on the Howrah-Sahibganj railway link - 218 kms away from Calcutta covering an area of 5.10 sq. kms. It is the Sub-Divisional Headquarters of Rampurhat Sub-Division of the District. Besides the railway link the place is well connected with other towns of the District by roads. A State Highway also passes through the town. Rampurhat is also linked with important commercial centres like Dumka of Bihar State and Kandi of Murshidabad District by virtue of its well road connections.

The town enjoys an additional importance due to its proximity with Tarapith - the famous pilgrimage.

As per our ranking of growth centres, Rampurhat is identified as 'number four' growth centre of the District. The hinterland is composed of Rampurhat I & II blocks where resources like paddy, potato, minor minerals and black stones are available. The market of Rampurhat is observed to be both wholesale and retail market for both agricultural and consumer goods.

(e) Dubrajpur

Dubrajpur town is situated in the South-Western part of Birbhum District extending over an area of 7.51 sq. kms. The town is connected by the State Highway and stands on the Andal-Sainthia railway link. In addition, the infrastructure net work of the area is sufficiently developed with its road connection with important nerve centres of the District.

The town is identified as the 'number five' growth centre of the District with spread of hinterland over Dubrajpur, Khoirasole and part of Rajnagar blocks. The hinterland produces the resources like paddy, wheat and sugarcane. Besides, livestock resources like raw hides

(f) Nalhati

Nalhati is a railway junction on the Howrah-Sahib-ganj loop line. Being situated in the northern part of the District the town is also connected with Azimganj by branch line. It is also the terminal point of the National Highway which connects Rampurhat, Mollarpur, Suri, Dubrajpur, Illambazar and finally cuts the high linking Calcutta and Asansol. The other infrastructure facilities like banking services, market etc. are also available there. The total area of the town is 6.66 sq. kms.

The town is rated as number six 'growth centre' of the District with hinterland covering Nalhati, Muroroi I and II blocks. The important agricultural resources of the hinterland are paddy, wheat, potato and sugarcane. Minerals like china clay, black stone etc. also occur to some extent. Traditional industries like cotton silk, weaving, shoe making blacksmithy and brass and bell metal utensils making are the existing manufacturing activities of the area. The growth centre offers a location for lower order investment projects.

(q) Patelnagar

Patelnagar is the Headquarters of Muhammad Bazar Block having a population of 2000 as per 1971 census. It extends an area of 2.59 sq. kms. having road connection with Suri and Sainthia. However, the town is not connected with rail. The town is well planned with housing colonies, water supply, roads etc. which offer excellent location for industries.

The most important aspect of Patelnagar is that the mineral deposit like china clay, fire clay, black stone, quartz and felspar occur in its hinterland covering Muhammad-Bazar block in abundance which can be suitably exploited by establishment of mineral based industries. The centre also offers location for second order consumer good industries keeping in view the progress of urbanisation. The existing industrial activities of the area comprises of stone crushing, L.T. insulator, fibre bricks, R.C.C. spun pipes, R.C.C. poles, etc. The District Industries Centre has planned to develop an industrial area in the region for up-coming small scale units.

(h) Ahmadpur

Ahmadpur is the Headquarters of Sainthia block having a population of 4148 as per 1971 census. It stands on the broad guage rail link between Howrah and Shabib-ganj. A metre gauge line starts from this point and leads to Katwa of Burdwan District. The National Sugar Mill is situated in this place. A model blacksmithy unit is also run by the Department of Cottage & S.S.I. Government of West Bengal in the area. Keeping in view the future growth of Bolpur and Sainthia, this centre is identified as the growth point offering a scope for lower order investment decisions.

(i) Illambazar

Illambazar is the gateway of Birbhum district by road. The State Highway originating from Nalhati via Suri meets the Calcutta-Asansol road link after crossing this river. It is also connected with Bolpur by road. As per 1971 census the population size of the centre is 1680. The place has been found important mainly from three angles, viz., its proximity with Durgapur-Asansol

belt which offers scope for ancillary industries, the
agricultural resource of its hinterland covering Illam-
bazar block and its growth as a sub-regional market
for agricultural commodities. However, the insufficiency
of infrastructure facilities and strong influence of
Bolpur growth centre on its region have promoted the
Study Team to identify it as growth point at least at
this stage.