

Urbanization of West Bengal: A Study of Inter-District Variation in Level of Urbanization

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Abstract:

The present investigation has been made to analyse the spatio-temporal and inter district variation of urbanization in West Bengal, using the census data of different years specially 2001 and 2011. This study may help in understanding various level and pattern, size class distribution, growth of urbanization of West Bengal as well as district level urban growth. Though the rate of urbanization of West Bengal is higher compare as national average of India, but the level of urbanization is not uniform over the district of West Bengal. According to 2011 census higher rate of urbanization is found in Kolkata (100%), where the lowest rate is found in Bankura district (8.36%).

Key Words: Urbanization, Natural Increase, Decadal Growth, Regional-Variation, Size Class Distribution.

Introduction:

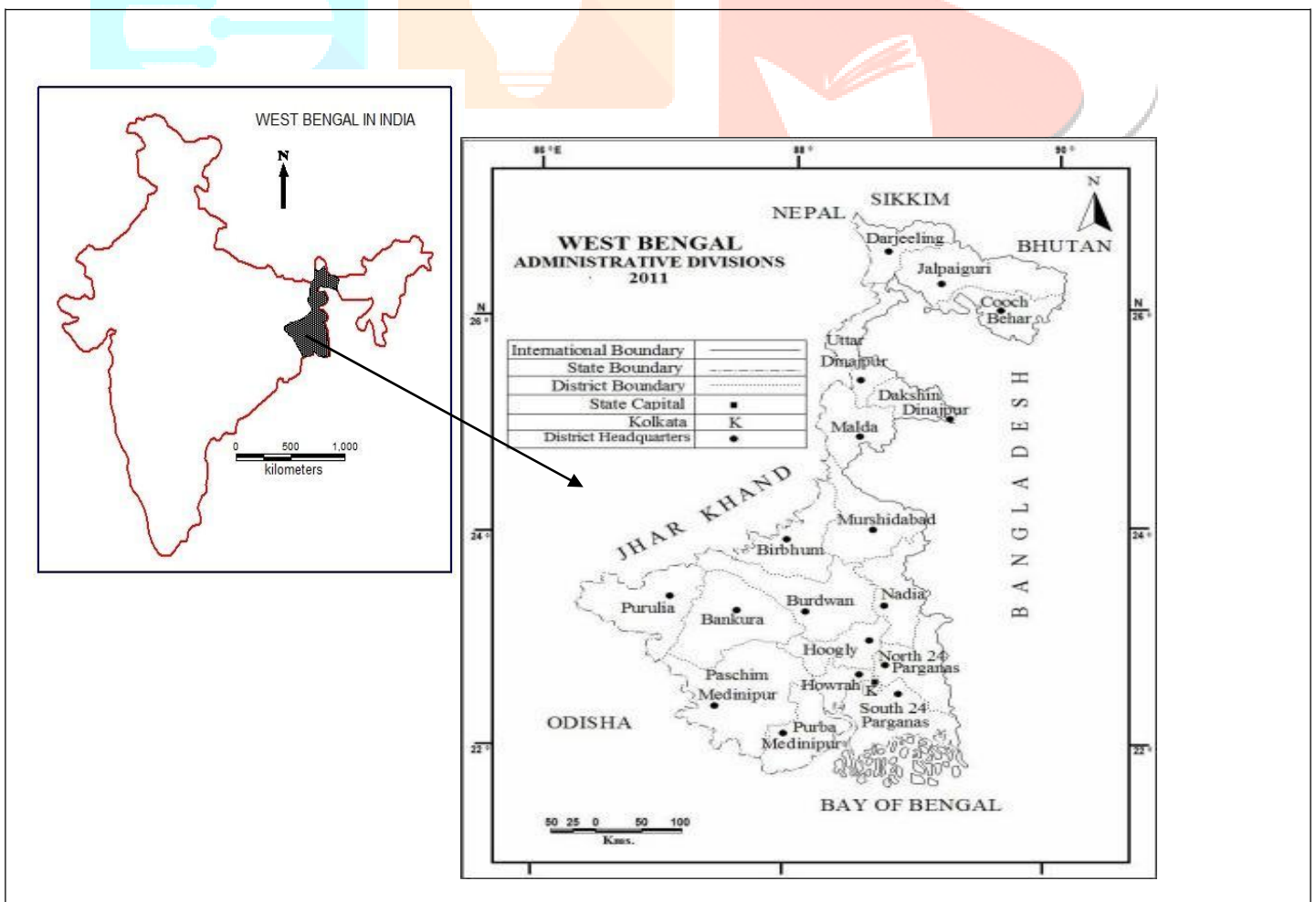
Urbanism as a way of life (Wirth Louis, 1930). Urbanization is a demographic process whereby an increasing proportion of the population of a region or a country lives in urban areas. In general urbanization is associated with concentrated of population in towns and cities. Twenty-first century is regarded as the Century of urbanization. According to most conservative demographic analysis, sixty percent of the world population will live in cities by another quarter of a century.

Like other developing countries, urbanization is also fast increasing in India. Urban residents are expected to account for nearly 40 per cent of the total population by 2021 and much of the urban population reside in the large cities. West Bengal also provides quite similar picture. Since independence, the state of West Bengal has witnessed a steady rate of urbanisation. Since independence, the percentage of urban population in West Bengal has always been higher than the national average. According to census 2011, 31.89% people lives in urban

areas. However, in spite of the burgeoning trend of urbanization, 91.64 per cent of Bankura district's population, 89.75 per cent of Cooch Behar district's population and 88.35 per cent of Purba Medinipur district's population are still live in rural areas.

Study area:

The state of West Bengal has been selected as a study area which is located between 21°25' north to 26°50' North latitudes and 86°30' east to 89°58' East longitudes with three international boundaries such as Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. It occupies a geographical area of about 88,752 sq. km. and extending from the Himalayas in the north to the Bay of Bengal in the south. It is surrounded by Sikkim and Bhutan in the north, Assam and Bangladesh in the east, the Bay of Bengal in the south and Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar and Nepal in the west. The total population of the state is 91347736 and density of population is 1029 in 2011 census. According to 2011 census 68.11 per cent of the State's population resides in rural areas and 31.89 percent lives in urban areas.



Objectives

1. To analyse the trend of urbanization of West Bengal
2. To study size-class distribution of towns in west Bengal.
3. To study inter-district variation of urbanization of West Bengal

Data Base and Methodology

The present investigation is based on secondary data sources. The data are mainly collected from directorate of Census operation of West Bengal, Census of India, Statistical Handbook, and Human Development report of West Bengal. The methods adopted to determine the trend and level of urbanisation of West Bengal are-

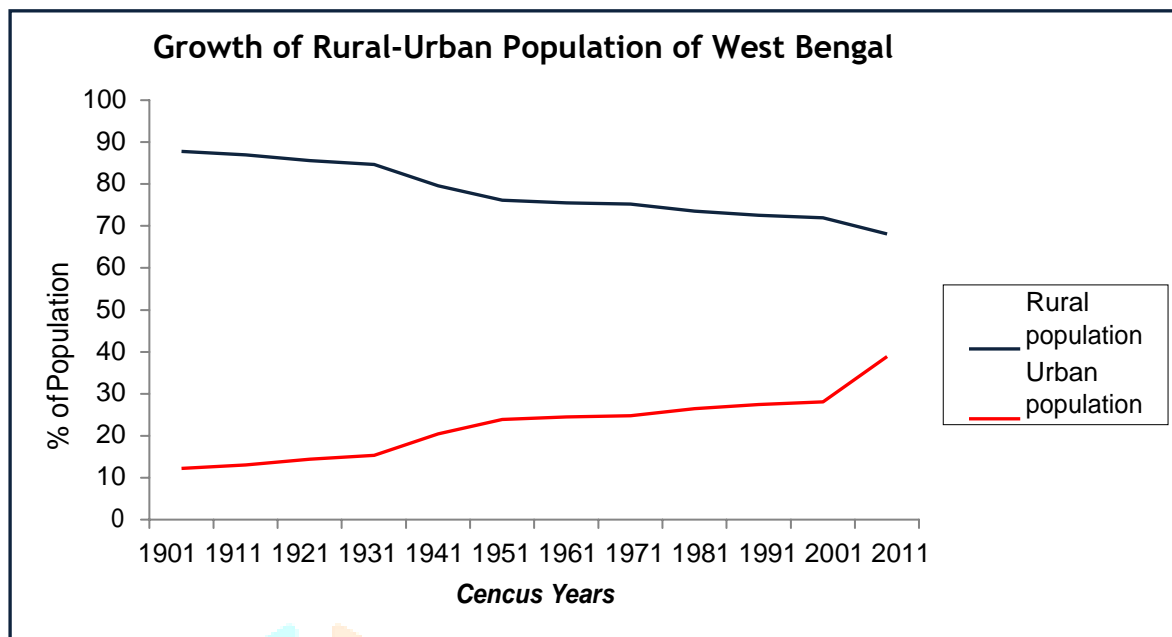
1. Level of urbanization = (urban population / total population) x 100.
2. Decadal Growth rate (say) between 2001 and 2011 = (Urban population in 2011- urban population in 2001) ×100/ urban population in 2001
3. Rate of urbanization (say) between 2001 and 2011= (% of urban people in 2011- % of urban population in 2001) ×100/ % of Urban population in 2001

Finally using the statistical and cartographic techniques a thematic map has produced to show the level of urbanization and classify high, moderate, low urbanization districts.

Trend of urbanization in West Bengal

As per details from Census 2011, West Bengal has population of 9.13 Crore. Out of total population of West Bengal, 31.89% people lives in urban areas. The total figure of population living in urban areas is 29,134,060. Total population of rural areas of West Bengal state was 62,213,676(68.11%). In census of 2001, total population was 80176197 of which 57748946 persons lived in rural areas while the remaining 22427251 persons lived in urban areas.

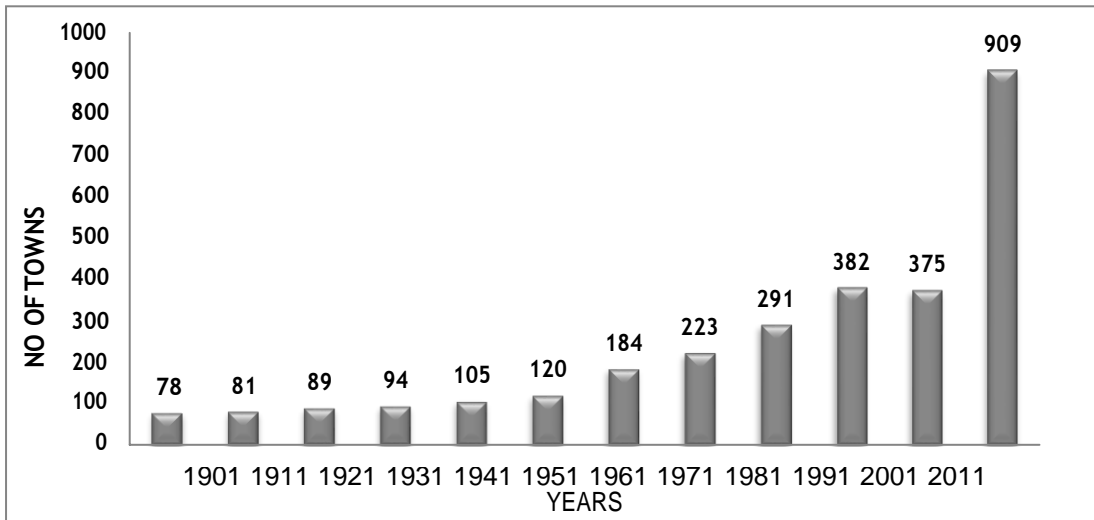
It is seen from the graph below that till 1931 the extent of urbanization was very much limited in West Bengal. In between 1901 and 1931 the percentage of people living in urban areas increased only by three, from 12.20 % to 15.32 %. However, between 1931 and 1941 there was a rapid improvement in urbanization in this state as during this inter-censal period there was more than five percentage increase in the rate of urbanization.



The first post- independent census taking place in 1951 reveals that about 24 percent of total population of West Bengal lived in urban areas. This percentage improved nominally in the subsequent two censuses and became 26.47 and 27.48 respectively in the censuses of 1981 and 1991. In fine, according to the census of 2001, more than 28 percent of total population of West Bengal lived in the urban areas.

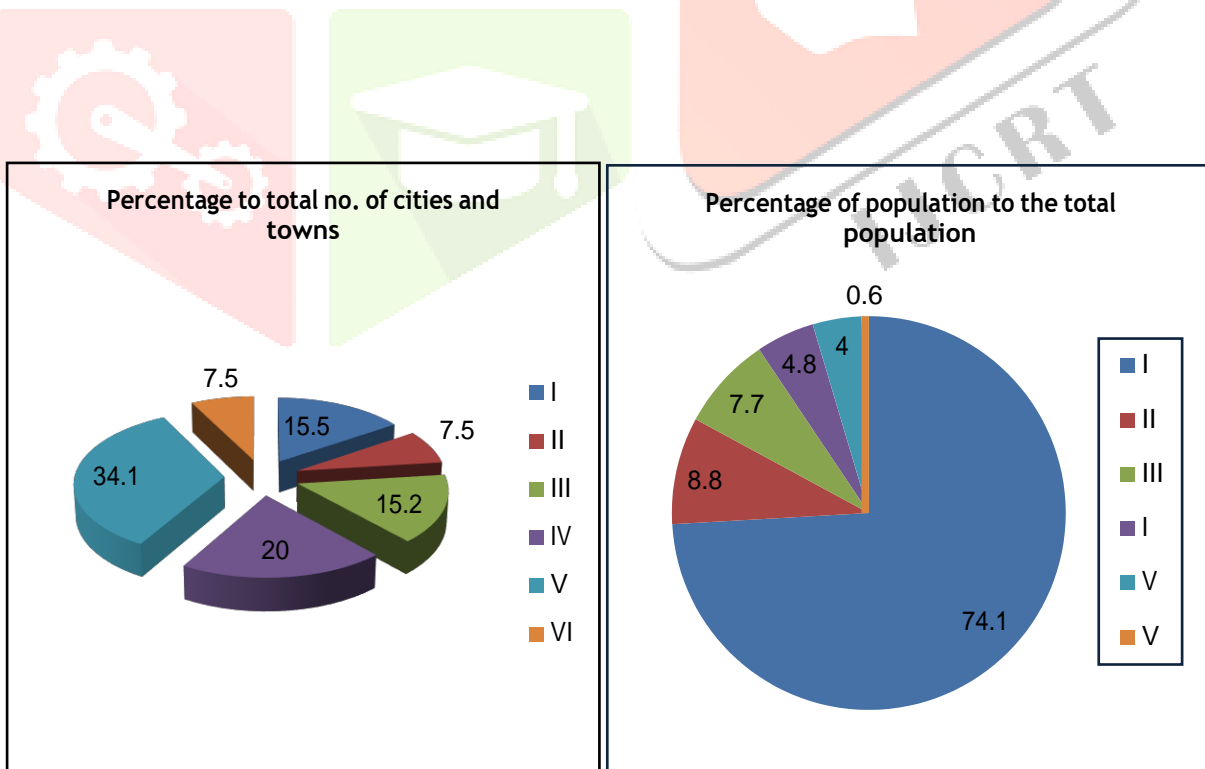
Growth of towns in West Bengal

The diagram below shows that the rate of growth of towns is relatively slow in between 1901-1951. After 1951, there was rapid steep growth of towns up to 1991. In 1901, total number of town was only 78 where it was 375 in 2001 census. The growth rate was higher in between 1951-61, it was 53.33 %. In 2001, however, there was a declining trend in number of towns from 382 to 375. In 2011 the number of town increase rapidly by 909 and the growth rate is 142%



Size class distribution of towns

According to 2001 census total number of towns were 375. The number of towns are higher in class v category. Total number of towns are 128 but it only comprises 4.0 % of total urban population of West Bengal. Total number of class I town are 58 and it occupies 74.1% of urban population to the total urban population. Total number of class III, II, IV, VI towns are 57, 29, 75, 28 and percentage of urban population to the total urban population is 7.7%, 8.8%, 4.8% and 0.6%, respectively.



Growth Rate of Urban Population in District Level (2001-2011)

West Bengal has recorded a positive rate of urbanisation during 2001-2011. For grasping the growth pattern of urban population in the districts has been calculated in the table. The growth in between 2001 and 2011 shows that highest growth in Malda district 129.06% where Kolkata has negative growth rate -1.88%. Growth also high in East Mednipur (62.09%) Birbhum (73.75%). The rate of urbanisation is lower than the national average in Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, Barddhaman and Purba Medinipur districts due to lower growth in percentage of urban population in 2001-2011. Urban growth rate of Dakshin Dinajpur (19.82%), West Mednipur (15.73%).

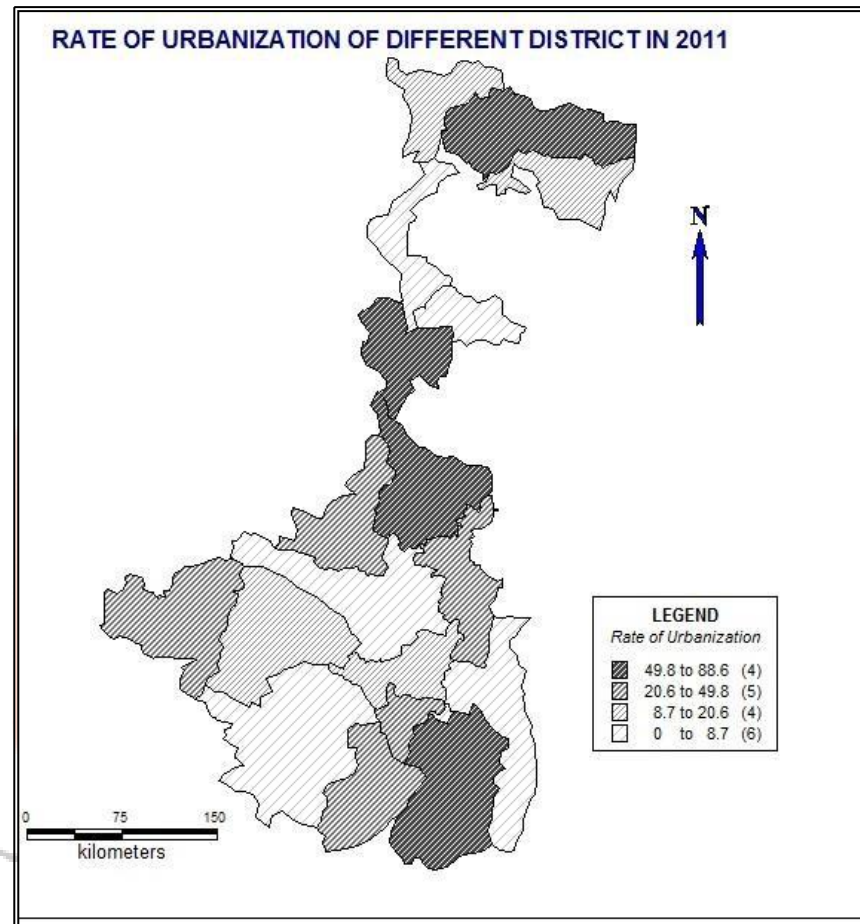
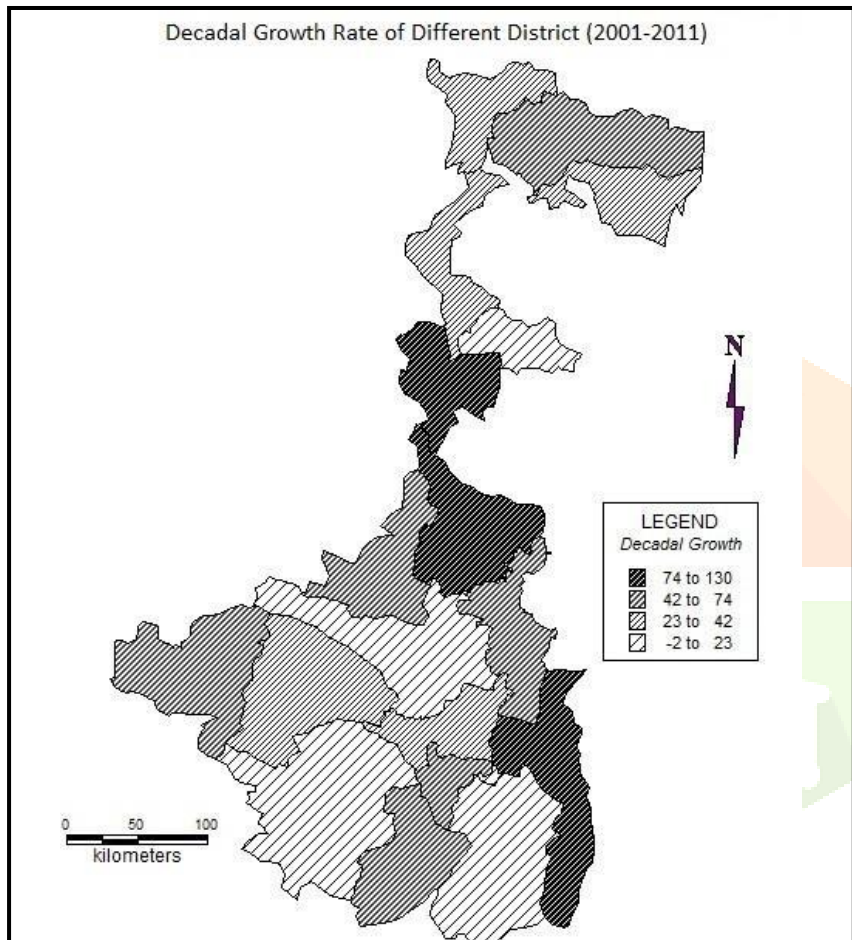
Rate of Urbanization in District Level

Rate of urbanization among the district also varies. Highest rate of urbanization found in Malda district (88.52%) and lowest in Kolkata district as Kolkata is 100% urban area, there is no change in total percentage of urban population. Lowest rate of urbanization is also found in North Dinajpur (0.16%), South Dinajpur (8.69%). Rate of urbanization is also high in South 24 Pargana (62.91%), Murshidabad (58.57%).

Trends of urbanization of West Bengal 2011

Districts	Urban population	Percentage of Urban Population	Decadal growth	Rate of urbanization
Bankura	300679	8.36	27.41	13.58
Barddhaman	3079584	39.87	20.29	7.96
Birbhum	448368	12.8	73.75	49.76
Kolkata	4486679	100	-1.88	0.00
Darjiling	718175	38.99	37.00	20.56
Haora	3064668	63.3	42.41	26.40
Hugli	2131994	38.62	36.32	15.38
Jalpaiguri	1044674	27	72.13	51.54
Cooch Bihar	289300	10.25	28.22	12.63
Malda	551914	13.8	129.06	88.52
Purba Medinipur	593468	11.65	62.17	40.70
Paschim Medinipur	714992	12.03	15.73	1.17
Murshidabad	1405206	19.78	91.77	58.57
Nadia	1437591	27.81	46.76	30.74
North 24 Parganas	5807128	57.59	19.71	6.07
Puruliya	373381	12.75	92.22	26.73
South 24 Parganas	2087997	25.61	46.17	62.91
Uttar Dinajpur	362187	12.07	23.00	0.16
Dakshin Dinajpur	236075	14.13	19.82	8.69
West Bengal	29134060	31.89	29.90	14.01

Source: Calculated by author from census of India 2011



Level of Urbanization across districts:

District wise pattern of urbanization depicted that out of 19 districts of West Bengal kolkata recorded the highest degree of urbanization, where 100 per cent of total population lived in urban areas. On the basis of levels of urbanization, the state can be divided into four broad categories, as following:

Level of urbanization across the district level 2011

Nature	Value	Number of Districts	Districts
High	39.9 to 100	3	Kolkata, North 24 Pargana, Howrah
Moderate	25.6 to 39.9	6	Hoogly, Nadia, Burdwan, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, South 24 Pargana
Low	12.8 to 25.6	4	Birbhum, Murshidabad. Malda, South Dinajpur
Very low	8.3 to 12.80	6	East-Mednipur, West Mednipore, Purulia, Bankura, north Dinajpur, Cooch Bihar

Areas with High Level of Urbanization

In all 19 districts, there are Three districts are in this category namely, Kolkata North 24 parganas, and Howrah. It is observed that Kolkata has the highest degree of urbanization among all the district of West Bengal as it is metropolitan town of West Bengal. All the district which are under the high degree of urbanization having the facility of roadway, railways. High concentration of urban population may be attributed to a very high level of industrial development, their strategic location along the well-developed roads and railway lines and high level so social awakening due to high level of male and female literacy rates.

Areas with Moderate Level of urbanization

This category included the entire district having a proportion of between 25.6 to 39.9 per cent of urban population to total population. Out of total districts six districts come under this category. These are Hoogly, Nadia, Burdwan, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, and South 24 Pargana. A moderate degree of urbanization was due to impact of urban shadow, urban to

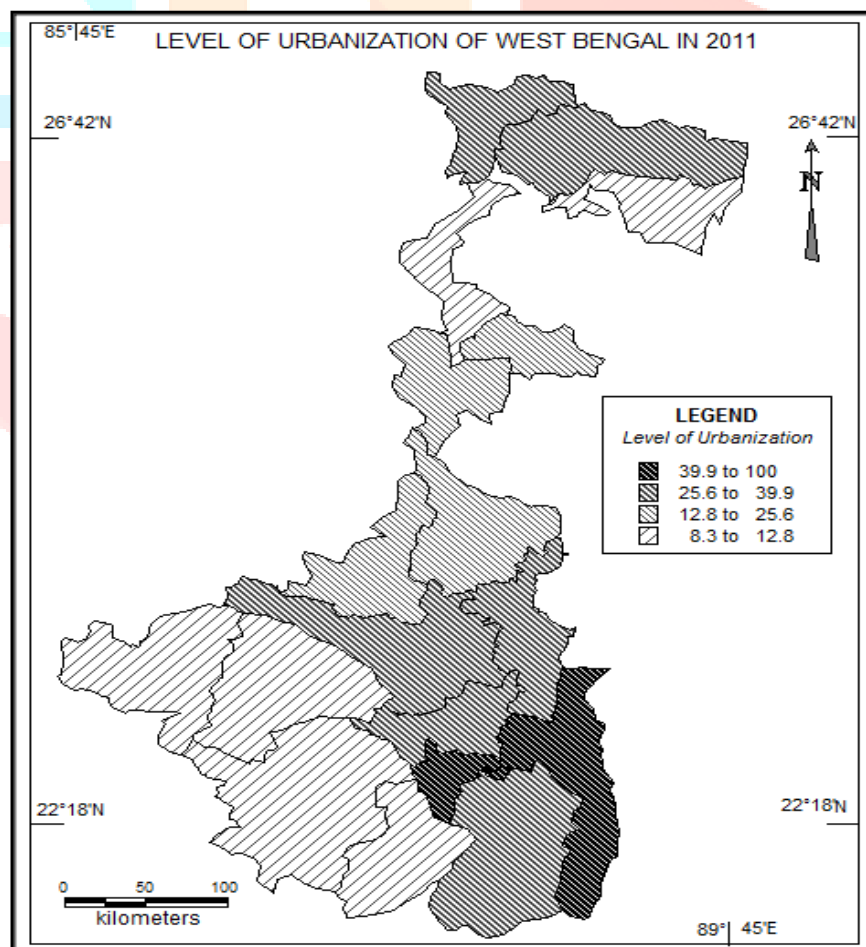
urban migration, moderate level of industrial development, location along the major transportation routes and establishment of some small and medium scale industries.

Areas with Low Level of Urbanization

Four district namely Birbhum, Murshidabad, Malda, South Dinajpur fall under these categories. All these areas are very poor in terms of agricultural and industrial development. Socio-cultural backwardness, low level of diversification.

Areas with Very Low Level of Urbanization

The areas of low degree of urbanization are mainly located in the north central part and western and south western part of the state. Six districts namely East-Mednipur, West Mednipore, Purulia, Bankura, north Dinajpur, Cooch Bihar fall under these categories. These districts are agriculturally under developed, socially backward and poor transport facilities.



Conclusion:

From the above discussion revealed that level of urbanization is not fairly distributed over the state. Urbanization has been cantered basically on Kolkata and on the districts in the neighbourhood of this great city. However, in spite of the burgeoning trend of urbanization, 91.64 per cent of Bankura district's population, 89.75 per cent of Cooch Behar district's population and 88.35 per cent of Purba Medinipur district's population still live in rural areas. As urbanization is considered for the indicator of social and economic development, it is government duty to pay attention to the less urbanized areas of the state through the establishment of infrastructural, transport, communication, and other social and economic functional development.

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