

EMERGENCE OF BALURGHAT AS A CLASS-I CITY: DEMOGRAPHIC IMPACT OF PARTITION AND BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR

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ABSTRACT

Crisis of existence never maintains any boundary. From time immemorial, mankind has witnessed migration due to hunger, poverty, security threat throughout the world. Issue of illegal migration is a burning question of today's world. In terms of volume and rapidity, the partition of India made perhaps the largest instance of voluntary and involuntary movement of mass population in modern history. Dakshin Dinajpur, one of the backward districts of West Bengal, demarcated by international border with Bangladesh on its three sides has experienced huge migration of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan since independence and the flow drastically got mileage during and after Bangladesh liberation war. In this connection, Balurghat, the headquarter of the District of Dakshin Dinajpur which even 60 years ago had been a mere village, in the historical context of the partition of India, overnight made its appearance as a town and has been turned into a Class-I urban centre (1981). Thus, Balurghat town is the proximate result of this migration. It was only a tiny hamlet with less than 5000 population during 1947. It got the status of a Class-I town only within three decades through a phenomenal growth rate. So, background of partition was the principal driver behind the conversion of this village to an urban centre. Heavy influx of immigrants in the recent past and later shifting of people from the vast rural tract of this District into this town due to its pull factor as an administrative headquarter made it possible to get the status of a Class-I town within a short span of time. Based on mainly secondary data, the present paper highlights some motivating factors like political turmoil, hostile religious persecutions which resulted rapid increase in population due to heavy influx of immigrants from erstwhile East Pakistan and the town Balurghat experienced several unplanned phases of urban expansion over the decades. The findings of the article reveal that the partition of Bengal has led to the emergence of Balurghat town, later boosted by rural depopulation in the surroundings which reflected in the trend of population growth as well as changes in land use pattern.

Keywords: Migration, partition, refugee, liberation war, hamlet, influx of immigrants, class-I town, urban expansion, population growth.

Introduction

Settlement is perhaps the generic term for villages, towns, cities etc.; it is a collection of man-made structures put up with an intention of habitation or its socio-economic use. Such a settlement forms fundamental spatial unit for human interaction. However, there are many factors which are responsible for the growing up of any settlement like, geographical, historical, political, commercial, defense, administrative, religious factors etc. Today's Balurghat town has formed mainly due to the political reason i.e. for the partition of the country in 1947 and later in 1971 due to the Bangladesh Liberation War. Practically, it has developed as an administrative town to fulfill the wants of the huge influx of immigrants came from erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) by night and permanently settled here. The growth of the townscape can broadly be divided into four stages mentioned later.

Objectives

The following objectives are taken into account for the progress of the present paper:

- To study the impact of partition of India that overnight made the appearance of Balurghat from a tiny hamlet to a town.
- To assess the role of Bangladesh liberation war that made the conversion of a Class-IV town into a Class-I city.
- To analyse how this sudden demographic impact made a crucial role in the haphazard urbanization of Balurghat and side by side made its flourishing as an administrative town.
- To examine inverse relationship between the existing municipal infrastructures with its growing population as well as to focus on the need of urban renewal.

Data base and methodology

The data base of the present study was carried out mainly on secondary levels. The description about the evolution of the township have been gathered by consultation of several books, journals, magazines,

records, reports, literature etc. published both at personal levels and government levels and also by the municipal authority itself. However, several personal interviews are conducted by the author with the elderly, learned and knowledgeable persons of the town to know about the past. The collected data and information have been assessed, analyzed, tabulated, interpreted and presented by GIS mapping.

Study area

The name of the town has probably been derived from 'BALUKAKIRNAGHAT' meaning 'ghat (river bank) full of sand' (Roy, 2000). The Balurghat municipal area is comprised of mouza Chakhabani, Khadimpur, Bongi, Narayanpur, Balurghat, Bararaghunathpur, part of Hosseinpur and part of Dakra. It is situated on the eastern bank of River Atreyee and is spread over an area of 10.56 sq. km. with a population of 151,299 (2011) distributed among the 25 wards. The geographical location of Balurghat is $25^{\circ} 12'27''$ N to $25^{\circ}15'04''$ N latitude and $88^{\circ}45'41''$ E to $88^{\circ}47'43''$ E longitude.

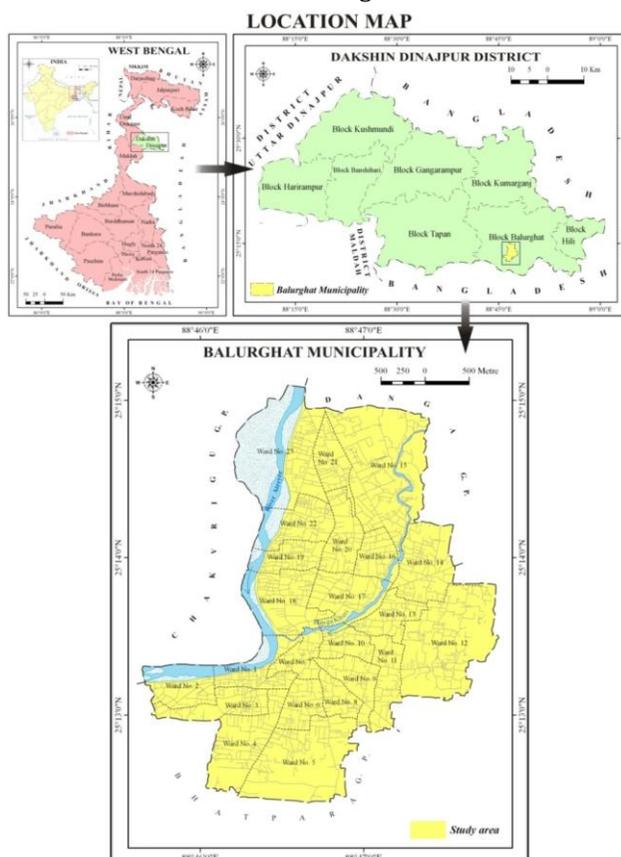


Figure 1 Location map of the study area.

Early stage (Upto 1947)

It is the fact that there is no reliable description in the past history regarding the name and origin of the village Balurghat. Whether its name has been taken from the name of old 'Balurghat' mouza or derived due to the presence of huge sand on the banks of river Atreyee – is a debatable question. Another interpretation is that long before there was a river *ghat* (presently *ghatkali*) on the left bank of river Atreyee near the existing *Burakali* temple. The old *ghat* was called as '*Bairakalitala*'. *Bairakalitala* in course of time is renowned as *Burakali*, an awakened temple of Goddess *Kali* of Balurghat. Some of the ancient historical sources demand that the past *Balharghatta* or *Balurghatganj* was a very small village in between the two royal places *Mohisantosh* and *Mohinagar* of King Mohipal of the Pal Dynasty (Kar, 2000, p. 19). After that there is no acceptable information available regarding this settlement during Muslim period. Even it is a matter of surprise that there is no trace of village Balurghat during the first stage of East India Company's reign.

After acquiring the *Dewani* grant of *SubehBanglah* in 1765, the Company constituted the Dinajpur district in 1786 (Ref. Census 1951, West Bengal, District Handbooks, West Dinajpur: *An Account of the District of Dinajpur in 1808-9* by Dr. Francis Buchanan Hamilton, pp. x1iii-x1vii). According to historian Nalinikanta Bhattashali, present Balurghat was previously known as *Kantanagar* under the zamindari of

Krishnakanta Nandi of Kashimbazar as described by his *dewan* Manulla Mondal in his book *Kantanama* in 1843-'44 (Roy, 2000, p. 12). W. W. Hunter (1871) in his *Statistical Account of Dinajpur* (Ref. Census 1951, West Bengal, District Handbooks, West Dinajpur, p. xxxviii) described that prior to the dreadful famine of 1770, only few family of zamindars, royal officers, traders, potters, farmers and blacksmith were lived in this village and then it was a place covered by jungles and marshy lands. But after the famine, it became almost depopulated. Then Balurghat was under Patiram police station.

However, Balurghat became under regular observation in the deeds of the British Govt. since the year 1886, the centenary of Dinajpur District when a *munsiff's* (judicial) court was established in the Chakhabani area of Balurghat. At that time Balurghat became a police station and later revealed itself as a sub-division of Dinajpur District in 1904. During this time the settlement began to populate densely and for this reason there a Local Board at Balurghat was formed in 1905 for local self-government. The Board was constituted with both of the elected and nominated members. The first nominated president of Balurghat Union Board was Mr. Suren Bagchi. At that period Balurghat was an example of communal harmony and combination of culture. It needs to mention that Balurghat had a remarkable role in the sphere of Independence Movement.

Before independence, it was a non-municipal flourishing settlement with an area of 2.46 sq. km. as established by the description of F. W. Strong (1912) – *Head-quarters village of the Sub-division of the same name, situated in 25°13'N and 88°47'E, on the banks of the Atrai river, containing a population of 3,220. It lies 32 miles to the south of Dinajpur town and is connected with it by a main road. It contains the Sub-divisional offices, civil and criminal courts, a registration office, and a high school. The latter has some 200 pupils and is a promising institution. There is a large and well found hospital-dispensary maintained principally by private subscriptions, the local zamindar, Babu Rajendra Nath Sanyal, being a liberal subscriber. This gentleman, who lives in the immediate vicinity, was not long since a ward under the Court of Wards and still maintains the former European Manager's bungalow as a guest-house, at which Government officials on tour are made welcome. There is little worth describing in the village of Balurghat itself. It is a very ordinary Bengali village in appearance, though, being situated on the high banks of a fairly large river, it is well drained and healthier than many of the villages in the district. The view from both banks of the river is picturesque enough, especially in the rains.* There was only a Sanitation Board at this over grown village for the purpose of serving its people but its services were very negligible. Basically, in the pre-independence scenario, Balurghat (figure 2) was an important grain market centre engaged with the trade of mainly agricultural products along the river Atrayee waterway with its neighbouring villages and towns because of its poor road network excepting the most important 16 miles long *pucca* Balurghat-Hili bus route to communicate with the Hili rail station, just inside the Bogura District, now in Bangladesh.

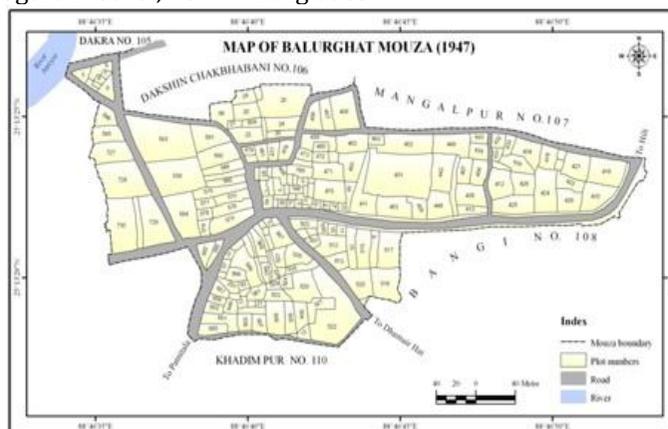


Figure 2 Map showing mouza boundary of Balurghat Mouza.

Post-independence stage (1947-1971)

On 15th August, 1947 when the whole India was experiencing the outburst of the long expected Independence, then the people of Balurghat spent their days with an unknown fear – whether Balurghat would go in India or Pakistan. British lawyer Sir Radcliff first included this settlement in East Pakistan. Later due to the constant effort of Dr. Sushil Ranjan Chatterjee and Mr. Satindranath Basu, Radcliff compelled to change his decision. Then the 1/3rd part of Dinajpur District (the western side of Hili rail line) was included in India. Therefore, Balurghat tasted the flavour of Independence just after three days i.e. on 18th August,

1947 and became the head quarter of erstwhile West Dinajpur District. With the establishment of district head quarter, Balurghat experienced phenomenal growth due to the large number of settlers from various spheres of activities like govt. servants, doctors, traders, lawyers, etc. from different parts of the state and the country.

Balurghat, formerly a tiny hamlet, received the status of a municipality only after the independence in 1951 at a small room of the '1928 Club' by Notification No. M1M-40/50 (1) dt. 24th May, 1951 started with an area of 6.37 sq. km. and a population of 18,121. The Municipality officially started its work from the 18th June, 1951 with 5 wards (figure3) under a nominated authority. A over grown village was endeavouring to take the shape of a town. But Hili rail station the '*gate way*' of Balurghat, as shared into the East Pakistan, Balurghat skidded back into greater isolation in relation to the rest of West Bengal as well as India since independence. On the other side, the international border failed to deter the population movement across the border in the subsequent years due to instability and uncertainty in the socio-political situation of East Pakistan. As a result, the population increased to 26,999 in 1961 with a growth rate of 48.99% (1951-61). But the town was not ready to serve this sudden growth. In the meantime, there was already the first elected body in municipal administration during 01-3-54 to 23-4-58. But the authority was helpless for developmental works because of huge imbalance in income-expenditure sheet and due to bad debt of 70% tax, and the govt. grant was almost nil during that period. The same picture was continued during the subsequent phases of both the nominated and elected municipal administrations up to the first part of 1970. It is the fact that upper caste people migrated to this town from East Bengal mainly from the districts of Dacca, Mymensingh and Rajshahi long before the partition probably because of push factor at their origin during and after the *Movement of Bangabhanga* around 1911. But at the time of partition almost all kinds of people poured in en masse mostly from the districts of Pabna, Khulna and Jessore of the then East Pakistan came to here. The situation really became more difficult due to the continuous flow of people particularly after 1950 because of different riots in East Pakistan. These people constructed their houses, shops, markets in an unplanned and haphazard manner. Most of the roads and drains were *kutchas* and unhygienic. They were supposed to use service privy. No underground sewerage was existence and the night-soil was removed by the scavengers due to lack of proper sanitary system. Only very few electric connections and few tube-wells were scattered here and there. On the other hand, a continual flow of rural people since 1960s had also added to the urban population from the surrounding villages. The municipal authority realized the necessity of urban development.

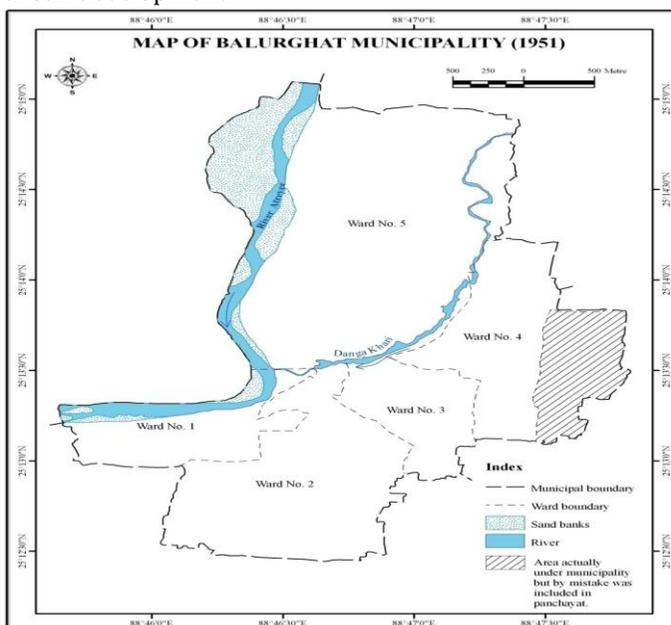


Figure 3 Map showing the area of Balurghat Municipality in the year 1951.

Practically there was nothing to do for the authority without waiting only to submit some developmental proposals to the government. However, despite of this hostile situation, some efforts had been made by arranging a dumping ground, extension of electrification and supply of drinking water in some parts, use of few dustbins and washing of some roads for cleanness, rickshaw stand and traffic police in some spots, particular slaughter house etc. The first attempt was made in 1954 by forming a power house in *Bara Raghunathpur mouza* to electrify the electric less town. In 1962, there were 29 km. road in the town

out of which only 3.22 km. was *pucca*. Then most of the Balurghat town was full of holes and pits, roads were dusty during summer and muddy during monsoon and many parts were covered by bushy jungles. Only a wooden bridge maintained the connectivity in between the two banks of *Danga Khari* (a small stream in the heart of Balurghat). There were three weekly markets (*hat*) in the town viz. *SahebKachari* hat (Tuesday), *Futaniganj* hat (Thursday) and the largest hat to present-day *Barabazar* (Saturday). However, due to the continuous increase in population figure, the town became bulgy day by day. Therefore, Balurghat itself needed an expansion of its area. During the time of 3rd term municipal election in 1964, the municipality was splitted up into 15 wards with an area of 8.56 sq. km. But the development was almost disregarded till 1970.

Post Bangladesh war stage (1971-2000)

The emergence and growth of the towns of West Dinajpur District make an interesting study. It was overwhelmingly a rural district in nature with over 90% of people living in its villages. If urbanization is an indicator of development, then the district was regarded as a typical example of an underdeveloped area with only 9.34% of urban population in 1971 in contrast to the state had 24.75% while the growth rate of the urban areas in the district was, however, pretty high (75.5%) during the period. The urban population in 1961 of the district was 98,969 increased to 173,690 in 1971. It has to be noted that, the district head quarter Balurghat alone accounted for more than half of this addition to its urban population and became the most populous town of West Dinajpur with a population of 67,088 (1971) by relegating Raiganj town in the second position. During 1961-71, Balurghat experienced a fabulous growth of 148.48% followed by Bangladesh liberation war. A close look at the pattern of urbanization of the town reveal that it was in the same way like other towns of North Bengal and in most other areas of the state.

After the Bangladesh war in 1971, most of the evacuees particularly from the districts of Bogura, Dinajpur (both now in Bangladesh) took shelter in this town never returned back to their homeland. Simultaneously, rural people from surrounding countryside poured into the town for both in search of security and better economic opportunity. Even, in absence of industrial sector, it grew in size and attracted the people only as service town because of its administrative importance. The in-migrants from beyond the international border and their marked preference for settlement in and around Balurghat had played a crucial role in the growing and development of the town. The international border could be freely crossed over either way. This caused the problem of socio-economic security in the rural areas along the border, making it impossible to retrieve the property. The landed people started moving into the town with a house in the town and another in the village, their occupation remaining agriculture away from the field or from the store of the agriculturists. Agriculture thus became a non-lucrative occupation that followed by a gradual shift to other occupation mainly to trade & commerce, teaching profession and job at govt. offices. Thus the political turmoil both at the national and international level made certain changes in social control and economic condition that in turn, forced people to move into the urban areas and also into the non-traditional occupations. A steady transformation of the town observed from agrarian look to urban look during this period.

As stated earlier, the partition of the country caused fatal to Balurghat as it lost its vital communication advantage. The inhabited economy of the town is due, not only to its proximity to the international border, but also to its peculiar land-locked terminal position. Really in the truest sense, Balurghat was the *interior remote* place. However, the urban people for the first time witnessed some real heartiest efforts of development during 1969-73. There was no particular bus stand at the town. The authority made a bus stand in the place of *Futaniganj* hat. With the help of 'Test Relief fund', many important mud roads and embankments were made mainly to save the inundated areas. Again under the CSRE scheme, 6 km. of brick soling road and the most important *Motor Kali* Bridge were constructed to make it easy the connectivity of the town. For the purpose of drinking water, the authority purchased land in *SahebKacharihatkhola* and *Shibtoli* and transferred it to the PHE Department for making two big water tanks. Not only that, the Municipality made two new primary schools and acquired four others, it established a sanitary office and denominated the main roads for convenience. In the meantime, the Municipal authority shifted from the rented house to its own office building at present place. But after 1973, this wave of development was obstructed up to 1981 as the municipal administration transferred to the government administrators and they have no particular liabilities to the people. Only a Mini Market near bus stand and very few street lighting had been made during this period.

After 1971, numerous busty and colony settlements were made mainly along the low lying parts of the town. The population increased to 104,646 in 1981 Census with a growth rate of 55.98% and thus a

Class-IV town achieved the status of a Class-I town only within three decades (1951-'81). Practically during 1981-93, the phase of development actually started. Some well-determined and specific new plans had been taken into considerations to mitigate the pressure of enhanced population. The authority not only thought on the solution of the existing problems, also tried to self-dependent by turning out the huge financial crisis. The mentionable works in this period were — widening and expansion of roads by removing illegal occupancy, pitching and soling of almost all roads, construction of bridges and culverts, street lighting by powerful lamps, outstanding development in slum areas, arrangement of traffic islands and traffic police near important crossings, sweeper's quarters, extension of municipal building, equipments for internal infrastructure and vehicles for sanitary purpose, making of some alternative roads, construction of hygienic *pucca* sewerage etc.

In the meantime, Balurghat was included in the IDSMT Scheme under 6th plan along with the 20 towns of West Bengal. Under this project, numerous developmental activities made like — conversions of municipal bus stand to a beautiful modern Central Bus Terminus, building of three municipal markets at *Tahabazar*, *SahebKachari* and *Chakbhabani* areas, construction of godown cum stack yard, municipal guest house *Kshanika*, removal of all service privy by low-cost latrine, purchase of cesspool emptier, widening of the main PWD road from Raghunathpur to bus stand, supplying of dustbins and drinking water by tank during occasion, making of toilets along some roads, to avoid the traffic jam and make the traffic flow one way – a by-pass was formed near the Street Corner, beautification of town, starting of construction of the 'Town Hall' (*Satyajit Mancha*) near DPSC office and '*Balurghat Bhawan*' in Salt Lake, Kolkata. Experiencing the devastating floods in 1987, 1988 and 1991, the authority made three flood-shelters for the affected people during flood. In 1989, the Central Valuation Board implemented the household tax on a scientific basis. The municipal authority was careful about the proper maintenance of existing resources and infrastructure.

In 1991 Census, the population increased to 119,829. After constituting as a municipality, a portion of the delimited municipal area was continuously attached with panchayat area by mistake up to the mid-1980s. During 1993 municipal election, it was included in the municipal area. As a result, the area increased to 10.56 sq. km. with 23 wards (figure 4). However, the developmental activities continue uninterruptedly till 2000 as the municipality made more earning sources, on the other side the govt. grants increased for urban development. For civic facileness, the authority introduced more services like – ambulance, mortuary van, pathological laboratory, diagnostic centre, swimming pool at *Suresh Ranjan* Park, two well- constructed crematoriums at Khidirpur and Chakbhabani, street lighting by sodium vapour, many parks, a stadium, one gymnasium, four *Utsav Bhawan* for different purpose of occasions, a taxi terminus and a truck terminus, many *sulabh toilet complexes*, more development of drains and slum areas, construction of highly decorated Municipal Conference Room (*Subarnatat*) etc. Balurghat is the place of culture, particularly for drama, art and music. The municipality always played a positive role for cultural expansion by making different cultural hall, art gallery etc.

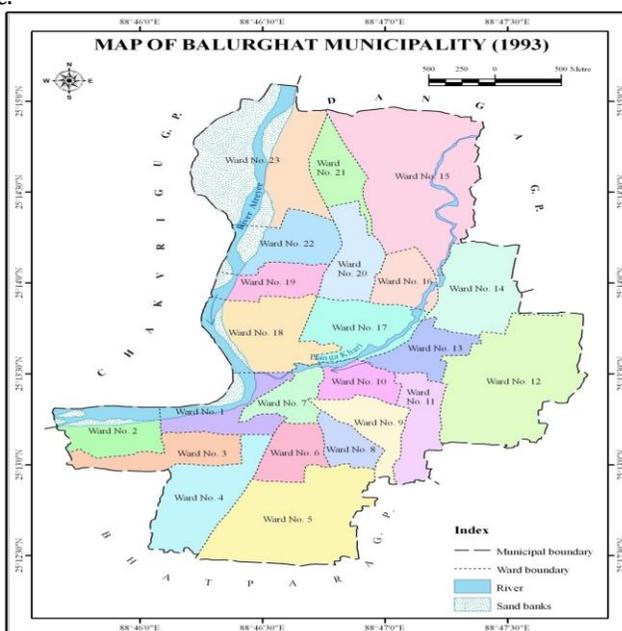


Figure 4 Map showing the present area of Balurghat Municipality

Table 1 Decadal growth of population in Balurghat Municipality.

Year	Area (sq.km.)	No. of Wards	Total Population	Decadal Growth (%)
1951	6.37	5	18,121	---
1961	8.50	5	26,999	48.99
1971	8.50	15	67,088	148.48
1981	8.50	15	1,04,646	55.98
1991	8.50	15	1,19,829	14.48
2001	10.56	23	1,35,737	13.31
2011	10.56	23	1,51,299	11.46

Source: Balurghat Municipality.

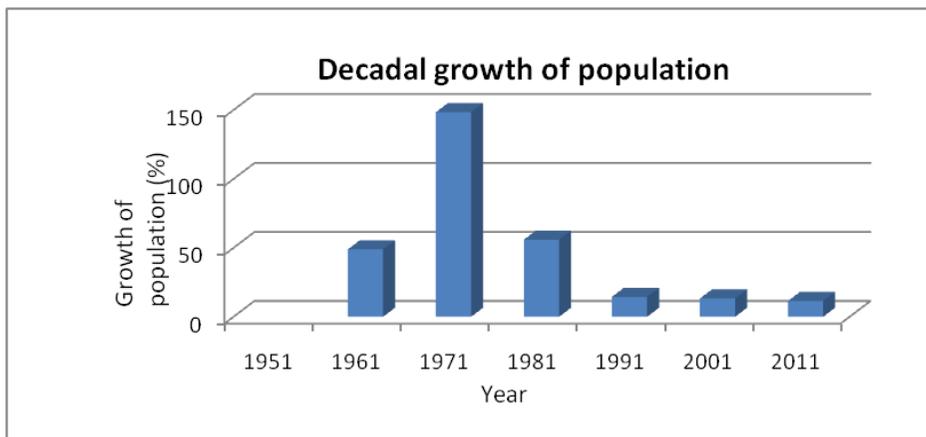


Figure 5 Diagram showing decadal growth of population of Balurghat Municipality.

Urban renewal stage (Upto present-day)

‘Urban renewal’ a term of American origin, is the attempt to reinvigorate a run-down urban area through a process of replanning and comprehensive redevelopment of land structures, physical and social infrastructure as well as conservation and rehabilitation of areas which have been or are being threatened by decline and blight associated with a city or a town (Ansari, 2000, p. 11). Basically, it is a good and comprehensive concept. In 1965, the committee on ‘Urban Land Policy’ made by Govt. of India considered three alternatives viz.—(1) wholesale demolition and thorough redevelopment, (2) a programme of selective urban renewal and (3) a programme of gradual improvement. The first was rejected for its impracticability; the third one seeming suitable especially for Metropolitan cities; while the second alternative was taken into consideration for fruitful urban renewal of small and medium towns.

Table 2 Ward-wise population density of Balurghat Municipality.

Ward No.	Area (Sq. Km.)	Population		Population Density	
		2001	2011	2001	2011
1	0.42	5534	6024	13176	14343
2	0.53	7677	7819	14485	14753
3	0.48	5160	5265	10750	10969
4	0.47	7167	9752	15249	20749
5	0.48	8054	6671	16779	13898
6	0.36	6875	7505	19097	20847
7	0.41	5132	5516	12517	13454
8	0.38	3993	5176	10508	13621
9	0.45	7635	7685	16967	17078

10	0.48	4545	5681	9469	11835
11	0.34	5910	5534	17382	16276
12	0.52	6178	8522	11881	16388
13	0.46	6383	6251	13876	13589
14	0.48	7612	8856	15858	18450
15	0.53	7366	6926	13898	13068
16	0.44	4030	6259	9159	14225
17	0.43	7003	7669	1628	1783
18	0.46	4562	4986	9917	1083
19	0.45	4431	6181	9847	1373
20	0.43	4842	5267	1126	1224
21	0.52	5049	6183	9710	1189
22	0.51	5951	6392	1166	1253
23	0.53	4648	5179	8770	9772
Total	10.56	135737	151299	1285	1445

Source: Balurghat Municipality Census data, 2011.

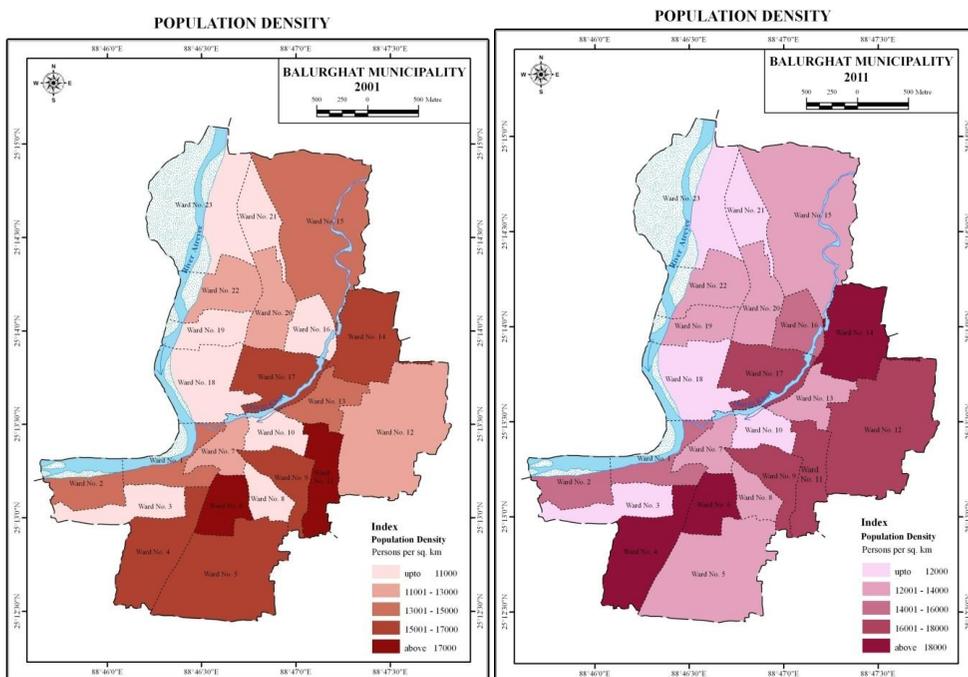


Figure 6 Comparison of population density of Balurghat Municipality (2001 & 2011).

The importance of urban renewal is being realized in India just in recent years. The city is a living organism and, therefore, it has its lifecycle of birth, growth and decline. If cities are places of tensions and strain, they are also the centres of civilization and culture. The decline of a city warrants action by the policy-makers and planners to provide a living environment to the humans.

Though the steady growth rate (table 1 and figure 5) declines since 1991, yet Balurghat is becoming congested and overcrowded day by day with a limited urban infrastructure. Introduction of rail network as well as improvement in road connectivity bring socio-economic prosperity to some extent while vast rural hinterland in Dakshin Dinajpur district also helped the town to have a considerable opportunity of trade and commerce. According to the Census 2001, it has a population of 135,737 living in 26,417 households, now in 2011 increased to 151,299 persons with 38,041 households (table 2 and figure 6) i.e. more than eight fold

increase in 60 years. Distribution of population along with household concentration is found highly uneven and unplanned, lead to improper urbanization revealed by crisis of land, unscientific drainage and water-logging, illegal filling up of river and khari beds, creation of new slums causing further environmental and social pollution, excessive pressure on roads, poor health-care etc. in connection with shortening of existing urban services. Keeping in mind such situations, the municipal authority has already taken some renewal steps and seeking for further renovation programme to maintain the dynamic character of the town. These are as follows —

- (1) 'Comprehensive Development Plan' (1995) and 'Financial and Management Plan' (1999) has been made respectively by the municipal authority itself and through the private concern. Though the amenities provided are qualitatively good but found inadequate due to its consistent expansion. The first one target to contemplate the uplift of essential and civic services for better quality of life following the proper financial operating plans and policies depicted by the second one.
- (2) To solve the enormity and complexity of the age-old drainage problem of the town, the authority prepared 'A Master Plan for the Drainage System' (2007) in collaboration with Centre for Development Studies, North Bengal University which almost mitigate the problem.
- (3) Since, the river Atreyee restricted the urban growth towards the western side; the town is now expanding particularly towards east and north-east which were previously low marshy land, paddy field and palaeo-channel of Atreyee. Municipality makes it possible to convert such areas as homestead of the new settlers by establishing improved roads, street lights, sources of drinking water etc.
- (4) Under JNNURM Project, municipality provides 'Housing Schemes' to the economically weaker sections. With the introduction of this scheme, the environmental problems become very less. Another achievement in very recent time is the sanctioning of Rs. 42 crores also under JNNURM Project for water treatment plant to supply purified water to the citizens. The work is in progress.
- (5) For solving the scarcity of health-care services, municipality made a 'Poua Matrisadan and Hospital' under PPP Model, a joint venture with 'Sonoscan Health-Care Pvt. Ltd', Malda.
- (6) To reduce the traffic congestion, widening of old roads, formation of many new roads, Foot Bridge, Pile Bridge and introduction of automatic traffic signal have been done. Most of the roads are asphalted by improved technology. The financial assistance of ADB (Asian Development Bank) makes it possible to convert the old PWD road into a beautiful one-way traffic maintaining divider with attractive street lighting.
- (7) It becomes more convenient when the municipal authority introduced several computerized tax collection centres at various places of the town. It also provides modern street lighting almost in the whole town with few exceptional using of solar lamps in some parts.
- (8) To maintain the socio-cultural cordiality, it arrange ward-wise cultural programme in every year. Numerous female self-help groups are assisted by the authority under different schemes. Development of several parks and play grounds made not only for recreation but also for pollution control.
- (9) Arrangement of a big dumping yard— 4 km. away from the heart of the town. For the purpose of drinking water, municipality maintains 152 tube wells located at various parts the town along with PHE road-taps. Stony embankment along the banks of *Danga Khari* is under process—which not only save the town during incessant rain, but also for beautification.
- (10) The authority trying to continue earn by internal resource generation through pay hire of different *utsav bhawans*, community halls, water tanks & dustbins, municipal markets and shops, municipal guest house '*Kshanika*' at Balurghat and '*Balurghat Bhawan*' in Kolkata and from many other properties.

Conclusion

Balurghat, a Class-I urban centre of North Bengal witnessed rapid urbanization without the proper sense of 'urbanism'. The population of the town has grown very rapidly particularly in two phases—during post-independence and during Bangladesh liberation war. But the urban fabric of the town is predominantly rural in nature. Economically it is not a generative town as it is neither an industrial nor a large scale trade based urban centre. Socio-political relations are of a pre-industrial nature there. The conduction of municipal administration and management was followed mainly by the 1930's 'Bengal Municipal Act' till the end of the mid 1990's. Envisaging the needs of urban development from the angle of a new outlook, the then

State Govt. imposed new 'Bengal Municipal Act' in 1993 with several plans, policies and enhancement of grants in urban development. It increased the flow of development activities in many towns particularly from the starting of the new century. Balurghat is no exception of that.

There is no denying that in comparison to other towns of North Bengal, Balurghat experiences a rapid growth of population which provides various opportunities for the town to develop, though accompanying problems of urbanization are observed simultaneously. Other towns of North Bengal have been given more attention and priority during policy making while Balurghat being over-crowded and over-burdened, always neglected due to its typical geographical location. However, the municipal authority has tried their best with their limitations. This untiring and heartiest effort has made possible the municipality to stand first in terms of 'revenue collection' and 'cleanness and beautification' in 2008 declared by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Urban Development, Govt. of West Bengal.

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