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Large Scale Out-migration of Huge Labour Force from West Bengal to Other States: A Study of Profit and Loss With Reference to Uttar Dinajpur District

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Abstract:

The large scale out-migration of rural labour force from West Bengal is emerging as a conspicuous socio-economic phenomenon. The intrusion of service sector economy into agricultural economy in developing India causes agriculture unprofitable and a burden on family income also. In spite of implementation of Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and West Bengal Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (WBREGS) in rural sector, the question arises whether the poverty which causes out migration has been completely eradicated. The answer is 'No'. Because the accelerating rate of out-migration of huge labour force displays the case blatantly. This paper attempts to relocate and re-visualize case in the context of Uttar Dinajpur (UD), one of the backward districts of West Bengal.

Keywords: NREGA, WBREGS, Source Region, Receiving Region, Out-migrants, In-migrants, Village Planning, Village Complex, Government Collection Centre (GCC).

Introduction:

Migration and consequent changes in socio-economic characteristics are the matters of constant discussion in contemporary periods. Especially, while planning the economic focal points or metropolitan, sometimes issues are generated regarding rapidly increasing in-migration of working class people, establishing new slums as well as crowded hubs around metropolians. Such working or labour class population are attracted by the employment opportunities of alarmingly growing urban centres, away from their original home which lacking such facilities. This extra human force adds new bricks in the construction of new economically developed empire while their source region remains deficit of such resources. Every year a large number of job seeking labours from villages and small towns cross West Bengal to join works of comparatively high wages in north, middle and south Indian states. This huge labour force which should be invested in west Bengal to drive its economic engine faster, has been expending in the progress of other states. It is just like "the lamp of my own house enlightening the neighbour's house".

The UD is one of the country's 250 backward districts. It bestows 87.93 per cent (Table 1 & Figure 1, Srl-14) villagers of total population and is also essentially depended on agriculture. Being a backward region up to date technology has unexercised and agriculture is still driven by man power. So the legacy remains pervasive that the more man means the more labour. The overwhelming effect results 22.90 per cent (Table 1 & Figure 2, Srl-14) the highest decennial population growth rate in West Bengal. Population pressure on limited

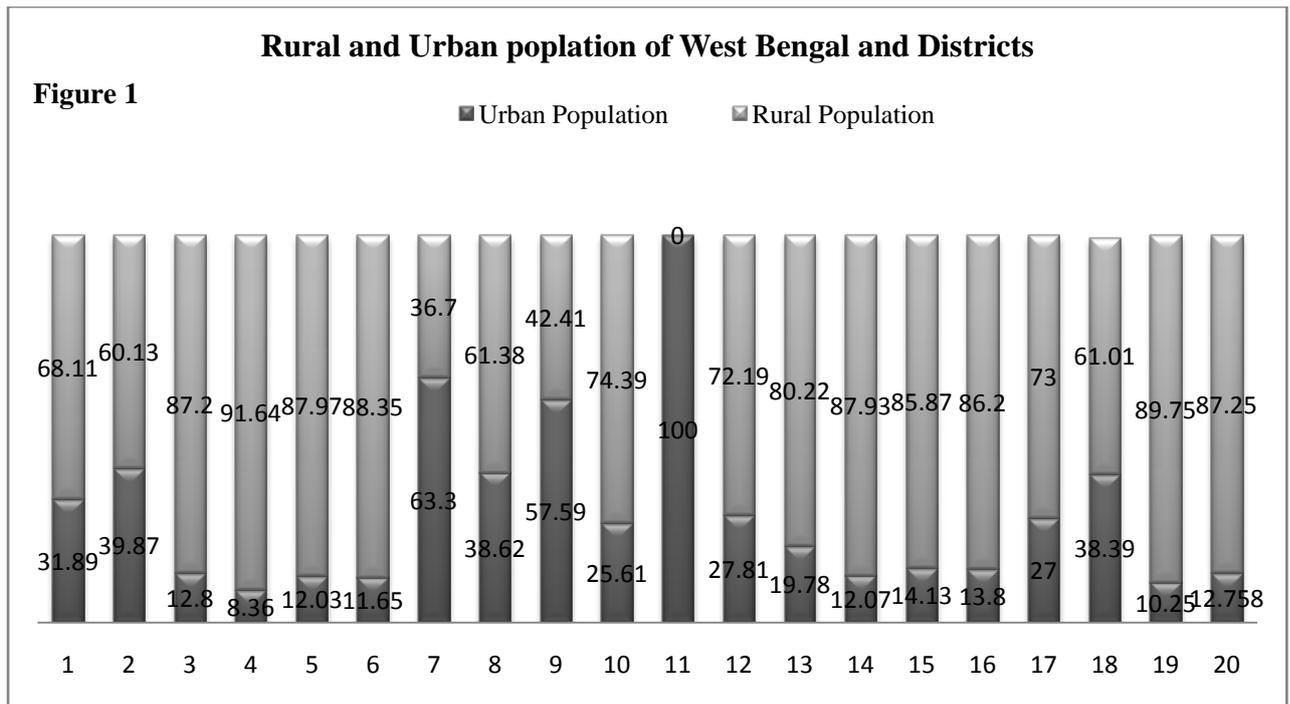
agricultural field, seasonal nature of yield, under employment have limited demands and it pushes labour force to migrate towards more developed states. But the question comes up how much a place can intake and how long people out-migrate leaving their own land. The source region and receiving region both are confronting problems of over and under population of labour respectively. Therefore there is required to rethink about the future anxiety and also the possible way to get out of the problem. Because solution by no means lie in helping immigrants of foreign states by facilitating house, sustainable living environment and well funded jobs. Instead of this if a milieu is constructed that possibly either lock up emigrants within their home states or they unlike to go out, the problem would be tackled. This paper will rethink those contentious issues and try to provide the possible and alternative effective way to solve the problem.

TABLE 1

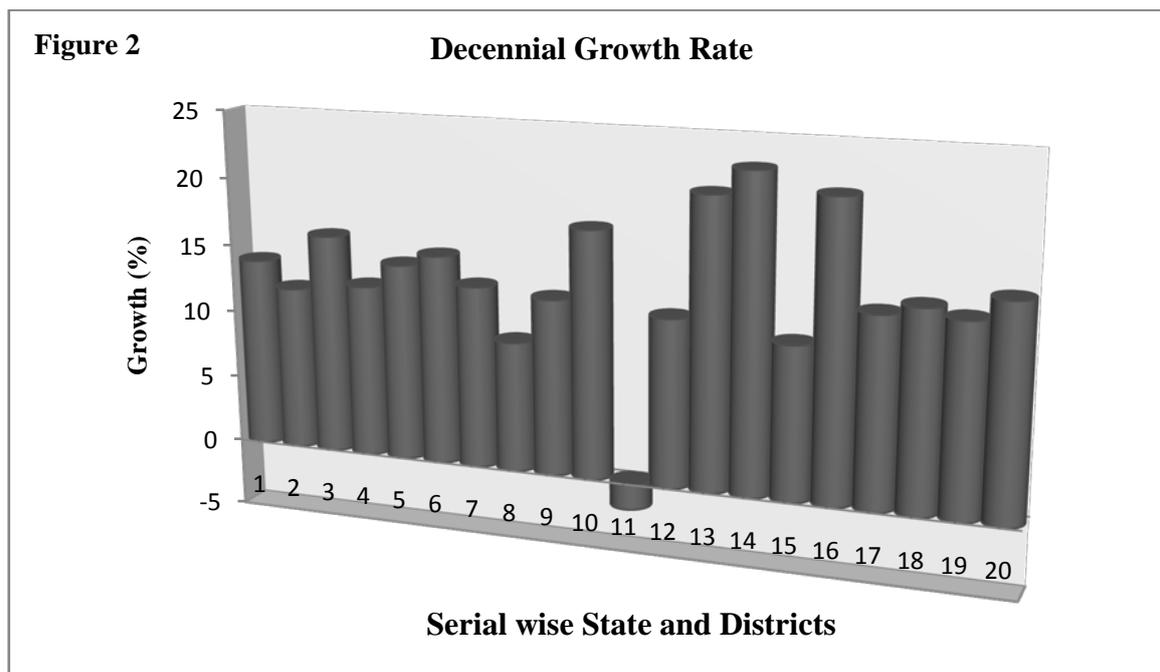
Percentage of Rural and Urban Population to Total Population of West Bengal and Districts

Serial No	Districts	Percentage of Rural Population to Total	Percentage of Urban Population to Total	Decennial Growth Rate
1	West Bengal	68.11	31.89	13.93
2	Bardhaman	60.13	39.87	12.01
3	Birbhum	87.20	12.80	16.15
4	Bakura	91.64	8.36	12.64
5	Paschim Medinipur	87.97	12.03	14.44
6	Purba Medinipur	88.35	11.65	15.32
7	Howra	36.70	63.30	13.31
8	Hoogly	61.38	38.62	9.49
9	North 24 -Porgana	42.41	57.59	12.86
10	South 24-Porgana	74.39	25.61	18.05
11	Kolkata	0.00	100.00	-1.88
12	Nadia	72.19	27.81	12.24
13	Murshidabad	80.22	19.78	21.07
14	Uttar Dinajpur	87.93	12.07	22.90
15	Dakshin Dinajpur	85.87	14.13	11.16
16	Malda	86.20	13.80	21.50
17	Jalpaiguri	73.00	27.00	13.77
18	Darjeeling	61.01	38.99	14.47
19	Cooch Bihar	89.75	10.25	13.86
20	Purulia	87.25	12.75	15.43

Source: Census of India 2011



Serial wise State and Districts



Serial wise State and Districts

Contextual Background:

According to the 2011 census, of total population 913.48 lakhs of West Bengal 622 lakhs reside in village and 291 lakhs are urban dwellers (Table 2 & Figure 3). Thus it is confirmed that people dwelling in the villages is more than double of people living in urban areas. But the question arises why development is limited to urban areas only. It is also true that from last few decades West Bengal has achieved remarkable progress in both consumption and

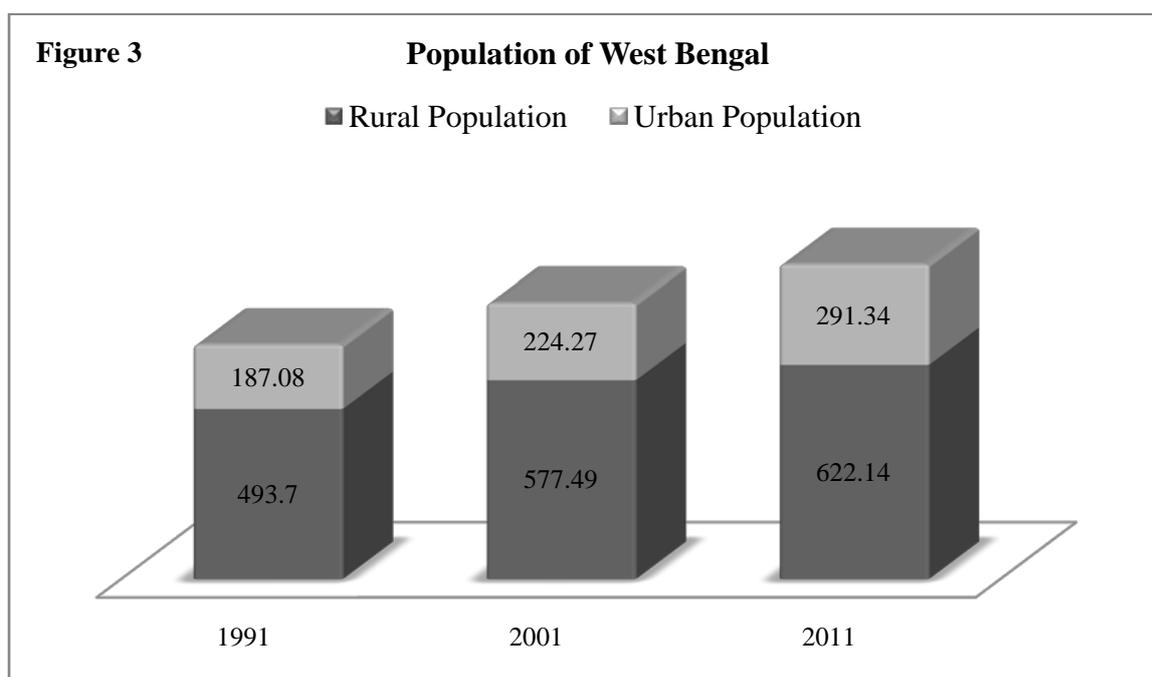
service sectors. But the portions of population who fulfil job requirements are fairly educated. So what for the mostly illiterate and semi-literate working class inhabiting in villages?

TABLE 2

Population of West Bengal In different Census Year

Population (In Lakh)	1991		2001		2011	
	680.78		801.76		913.48	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
	493.70	187.08	577.49	224.27	622.14	291.34

Source: Census of India



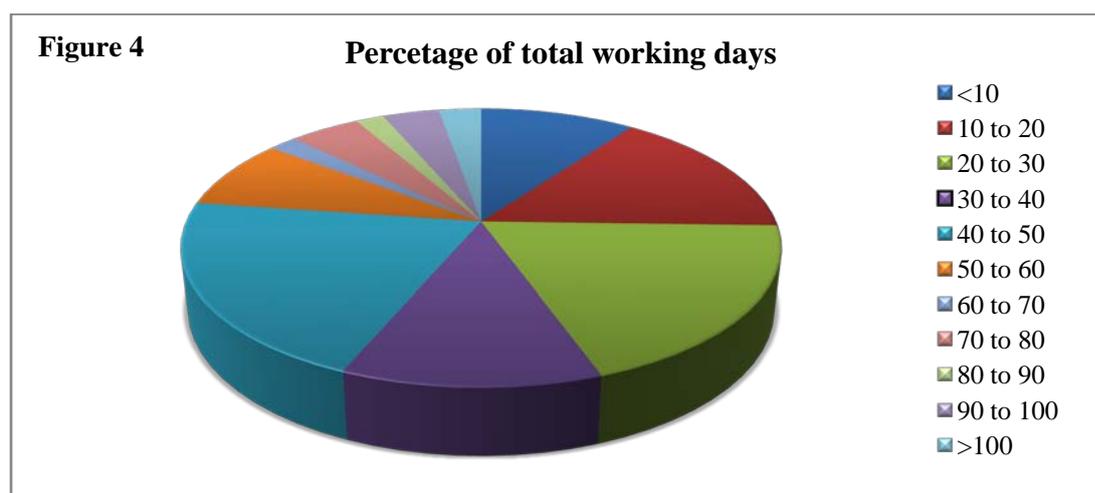
To fulfil employment requirement, restrict out-migration and to purge amplifying poverty the West Bengal Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (WBREGS) came into force in February, 2006 under National Rural Employment guarantee act (NREGA), September, 2005 in different districts of West Bengal. It was implemented in West Bengal in three phases. In UD it was enforced in the first phase along with other nine districts together. Household survey organised during 2009-10 depicts 0.72 lakh household has been benefitted in UD and it remains lower than other districts (Household Survey under MGNREGA during 2009-10). Current Government published report states that West Bengal has ranked top in 2012-13 financial year with implementation of 4475.80 crore, which is the highest in the country, and guaranteed employment for 57.76 lakh families (India Today, May 25, 2013). However, the national statistics portray West Bengal ranked 24th on the chart. Hence it is clear there is marked difference between ground reality and the picture, shown. Household survey by author himself reviews the fact (Table 3 & Figure 4).

Table- 3

Distribution of working days Under National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in Raiganj Block in 2012-13

Days of employment	Number of Household	Percentage of Total
Below 10	11	10
10 To 20	17	15.45
20 To 30	21	19.09
30 To 40	13	11.82
40 To 50	23	20.91
50 To 60	09	8.18
60 To 70	02	1.82
70 To 80	05	4.55
80 To 90	02	1.82
90 to 100	04	3.64
100 And more	03	2.73
Total	110	100

Source: Sample Survey by Author



About 21 per cent people have confirmed of having employment between 40 and 50 days under NREGA (Table-3). When asked if they are being benefitted by 100 days employment act, most of them accused the flawed government system. To get job they have to wait for a long time and most of the jobs are offered to kith and kin of political leaders within rural campus. A report has hold that of the Rs 31.10 crore of NREGA's allotted fund, only Rs 16.57 crore was utilized in UD ('North Dinajpur thirsts for development' by Jayanta Gupta & Subhro Maitra, The Times of India, Apr 11, 2011)

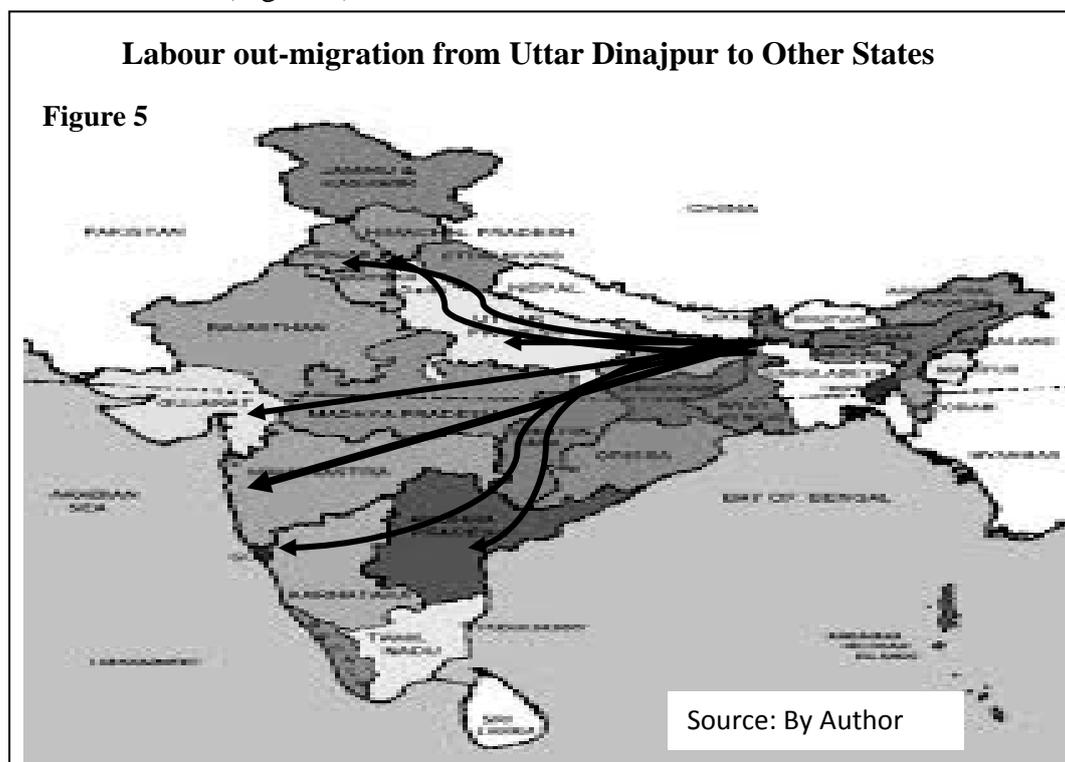
A sample household survey has slightly explored the picture. Out of 110 households 31 have out migrants (Table 4); working as Mason (Rajmistri), labour in Construction work, Textile mills, Shoe and Electric companies. When asked why they go out leaving their family behind, they told the wage rate is good enough there. In UD they are paid 150 to 220 Rs daily and no overtime. But in those States they can get wages up to 350 Rs daily with PF and overtime also.

Table-4

No of Members Out-migrate	No of Household	Percentage
One	11	35.48
Two	09	29.03
Three	07	22.58
Four	03	9.68
Above Four	01	3.23
Total	31	100.00

Source: Household Survey by Author

Despite high growth recorded in agricultural production there is permanent problems in villages. Surveys have revealed that the natural growth of population is more in villages than the urban areas. So those who have small land to plough cannot hope for daily necessities and minimum facilities. To get rid of these frustrating situation agricultural workers, land labours, marginal workers are heading towards more developed states. Partition of land holdings, low govt rate of agricultural product, increasing price of daily amenities, growing unemployment, darkness of poverty, proximity of high wages in other states are some of many causes which compel people to leave their homes. The out migrants get settled mostly in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Maharashtra, Gujarat where they find well funded jobs in industries, mills, construction work etc (Figure 5).



Analyze of the Issue in Source Region:

The effects of migration on rural employment are highly contextual. The context can be unambiguously incorporated into following issues in UD.

1. Outmigration generates vacancy and ‘Brain Drain’:

In densely populated areas outmigration may be a result of alleviation of poverty and underemployment. A great number of jobs seeking people especially teenagers are observed to go out from this district to other more developed states. These new bloods have maximum capacity to work and also have desire of high remittances. ‘The Laws of Migration’ of Ravenstein depicts *‘Migrants going long distances generally go by preference to one of the great centres of commerce or industry’*. It happens in UD when countrymen are heading towards the commercial and industrial centres of Mumbai, Delhi, Kanpur, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, and Pune in streams. As investigated by the author himself in Raiganj block Abor, Bajitpur, Bindole, Ital, Nuripur, Bhati, and Bhitihar and in Itahar block Balijol, Bariol, Kapasia, Keotal, Kotar, Ujani are few out of 1508 villages of UD that provide outmigrants to aforesaid regions. People coming out of their homeland create vacant places and they are unable to take part in flourishing state economy. In this way huge labour force, skilled or semi-skilled workers create ‘Brain Drain’ in the source region.

2. Outmigration paves the path for future outmigrants:

In the receiving region they are being well paid and they can send remittances home for the subsistence of other depended family members. This changing hospitable condition comes in the sight of other relatives and neighbours and they also follow the same path. Accordingly villages unable to facilitate are going to launch in big cities with young countrymen and in this way outmigrants are common in every second door.

UD secures third position after Murshidabad and Malda with 47.36 per cent Muslims which remain as the most backward community. Also it must be noted that their concentration is very high in Goalpokhar- II, Islampur, Goalpokhar- I and in Chopra blocks where mark economic imbalances are found. Almost 80 per cent population live at the bottom of society. Very high birth rate, prevailing illiteracy, old aged mentality, taboo, strong religious belief, distribution of parental landholding have predominated this community. Agriculture on small landholdings no longer being profitable job and only done for family consumption. To get rid of the situation youths are interested to go out and subsequently they are followed by others.

3. ‘De-agrarianization’ and increasing price of agriculture production:

Many rural areas are undergoing a process of de-agrarianization, with younger workers go out of agriculture. The role of agriculture in total GDP is quite low because much of production is used for self consumption. The surplus which goes to market cannot gain so much profit. In very recent years increasing rate of diesel, fertilizers, and HYV seeds and also Govt policies have discouraged farmers in cultivation. On the other hand owners of Rice Mills, Cold Storages, and Stockists have gained plenty by the same production.

In the district whenever farmers yield Potatoes, Jute, Paddy, Wheat and Vegetables in great quantity they could not intensify their profit at the same rate. Rather the market rate does not decline according to the production because it is controlled by middlemen and brokers and most of the profit goes to their pocket.

4. Changes in rural landscape

The significant outflow of workers and consequent remittances has changed the rural landscape economically, socially and demographically. In more developed states remittances are not used for consumption purpose. It also takes part in other farm or nonfarm activities by male members who are left at home. Therefore a village has opened its door by continuous exchange of goods, ideas and cultural values which the migrants take into. Subsequently the rural space is replaced by small town where non-agricultural economic activities like trade, transport and other service based activities tend to be swarming.

The UD has scored top on the board in showing backwardness. Out of 1508 villages 760 villages are registered as backward by Panchayat and Rural Development Department of West Bengal (Table 4 & Figure-6, Srl.-18). It means that 50.53 per cent of total villages where 54.05 per cent of total village populations live remain under darkness of poverty. The survey has adopted two criteria to meet the development of villages.

- 1) Over 60 per cent of the population belonging to the working age group are either with no work or are marginal workers.
- 2) Over 70 per cent of the females are illiterate.

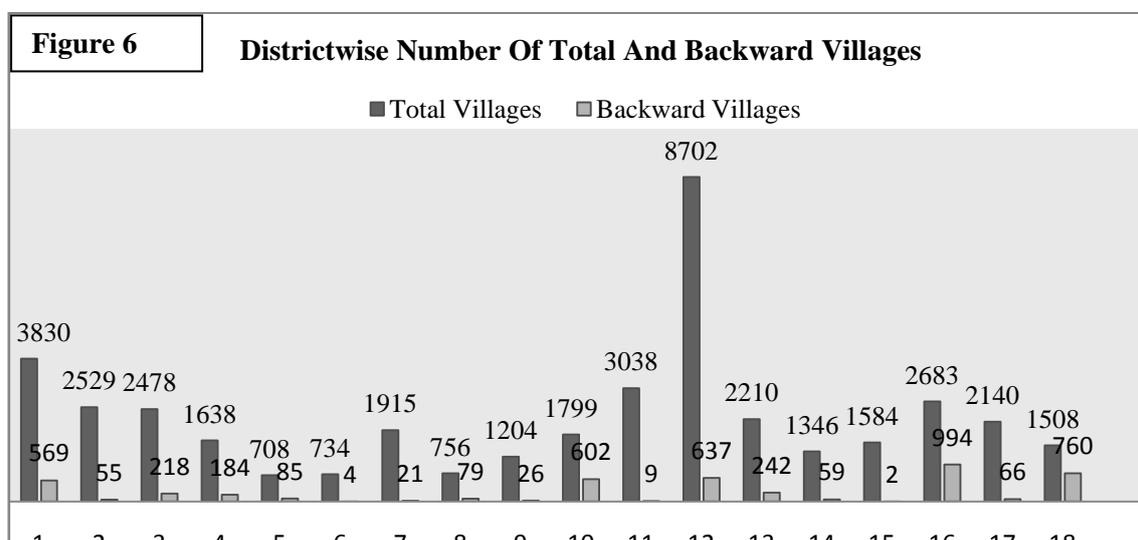
Therefore, the picture is clear enough that rural development is almost stagnant here. The remittances reaching to family is a mean of survival strategy and development is far away.

Table-5

Sl. No.	District	Total No. of Villages as per Census 2001	No. of villages identified as Backward by P & RD DEPTT.	% of Backward villages	Total Population in Rural area	Population of Backward Villages	% of population in Backward Villages
1	Bankura	3830	569	14.86	2957447	280692	9.49
2	Burdwan	2529	55	2.17	4348466	28160	0.65
3	Birbhum	2478	218	8.8	2757002	165990	6.02
4	Dakshin Dinajpur	1638	184	11.23	1306324	93874	7.19
5	Darjeeling	708	85	12.01	1088740	90214	8.29
6	Haora	734	4	0.54	2121109	4560	0.21
7	Hugli	1915	21	1.1	3354227	8136	0.24
8	Jalpaiguri	756	79	10.45	2794291	230939	8.26
9	Cooch Bihar	1204	26	2.16	2253537	18861	0.84

10	Malda	1799	602	33.46	3049528	782132	25.65
11	Purba Medinipur	3038	9	0.3	4053924	1735	0.04
12	Paschim Medinipur	8702	637	7.32	4573595	210407	4.60
13	Murshidab ad	2210	242	10.95	5133835	459873	8.96
14	Nadia	1346	59	4.38	3625308	98672	2.72
15	North 24 Parganas	1584	2	0.13	4083339	964	0.02
16	Puruliya	2683	994	37.05	2281090	852062	37.35
17	South 24 Parganas	2140	66	3.08	5820469	78355	1.35
18	Uttar Dinajpur	1508	760	50.53	2147351	1160647	54.05
	TOTAL	40802	4612	11.30	57749582	4566273	7.91

Source: Panchayat & Rural Development, Govt. Of West Bengal



Analysis of the Issue in Receiving Regions:

The magnet action of receiving region pulls migrants from comparatively less developed regions. It becomes a place where great labour forces are going to assimilate and the receiving region achieves 'Brain Gain' along with some painful situation in long-term. The context may be analysed under following points.

1. Ever mounting immigrants and growing slums:

Migration tends to be selective not only in terms of age or sex but also in terms of religion, caste, colour, region, language. Normally a single adult male moves towards town and finds his friends, relatives. In this way the settlement based on culture, language, religion, comes into being. These out-migrants provide security and shelter to other belongings of home place. Therefore, a community tends to build up with their own cultural identity and community life. Such favourable living condition in the place of destination attracts cohort on one hand and makes the flow of migrant population more stable on the other hand. This condition also enhances chances of inter-community conflict between immigrants and permanent city dwellers.

A substantial increase of migrants in receiving region opens up new scope to create new slums on vacant places around the city where housing rents are cheap. But in most cases immigrants are likely to settle over vacant public or non-public lands. The world's largest slum (Dharavi) in Mumbai has grown up between two main railway lines, the Western and the Central railways. Similarly in Delhi about 60000 migrants pour into Delhi every year (N.R. Pravakara, 'Internal Migration and Population Redistribution in India', page 9).

2. Jeopardizing environment:

Exponential growth of migrants around industrial and commercial hubs is resulted into densely growing slums and squatter settlements. These areas get overcrowded in no time and also come into the sight of administration. The local authority overlooks the incident and does not take responsibility to provide water, electricity, drainage and sanitation services. Due to lack of basic amenities the environment becomes worse day by day. The life grows in slums and squatters are ultimately found over garbage and on sewerage. The slum of Mumbai is characterised by poor drainage facilities resulting into flood in wet season.

3. Centre of crime and illegal activities:

The non official public residing in slums tries to sustain their regional culture on the one hand and also wants to flow along with attractive and modern culture of the urban areas. But the generation next becomes fumbled and confused to choose the right way. Ultimately they found themselves in the mid- ocean and live their rest of life in frustration. That is why these settlements often become places of criminal activities, prostitution and other illegal activities of urban areas.

Probable Solutions:

Sometime geographers, planners, social activists express their worries regarding increasing population pressure, deteriorating environmental condition prevailing in urban areas and also blame the slum- squatter and unauthorized settlement as their main culprit. They thought if these settlements are pulled away and necessary planning are employed the endanger situation could be tackled. But the original fact is as much the city decorates itself the migrants would come rapidly to get settled in new slums.

If we have our own problems we have solutions too. But the fact is that there must be a will to solve it. The UD is full of natural and agricultural resources. As the district is backward, development must start with industries based on agriculture. Most of developed

countries in the world industries based on agriculture are blooming. The author after having thorough study of the district has propounded a model plan that may be helpful in progress of the region through this paper.

Figure 7

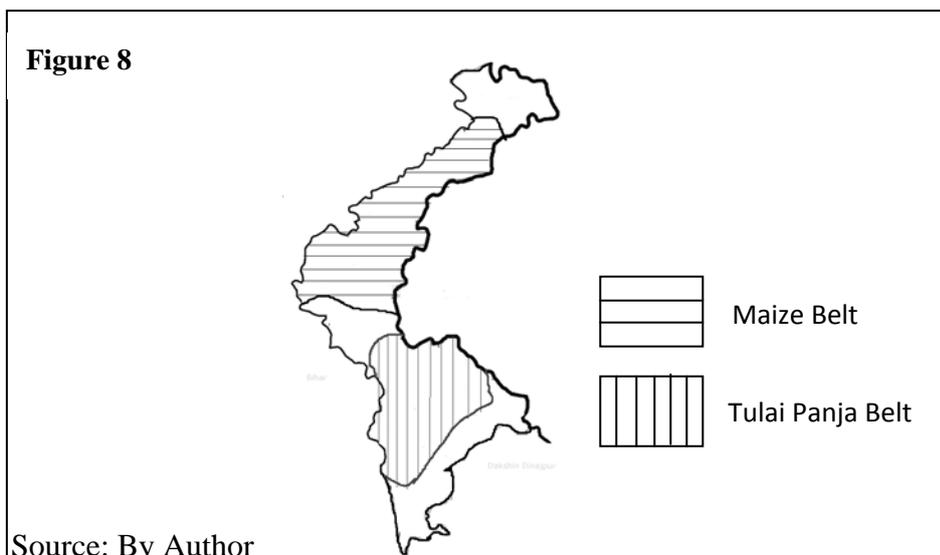


Uttar Dinajpur with Communication Lines

If the location of UD is explored, it can be said communication is good either through rail or by road. National Highway (NH) 34 connects the district from Itahar block in the south to Chopra block in the north and merges with NH31. On the other hand rail communicates the district with Kolkata and Delhi. Except these there is a dense network of State Highways (SH) and village roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yajana (PMGSY). Uttar Dinajpur is very rich in agriculture. Large amount of crops like Wheat, Paddy, Maize, Jute and different kinds of fruits and vegetables also yield in enormous quantity. Instead of substantial growth in agriculture and development in communication the district is belonged to backward region and labour force is compelled to out-migrate. If proper steps are taken to meet potentiality and demand, development is no longer away.

1. Village Planning and Village Complex

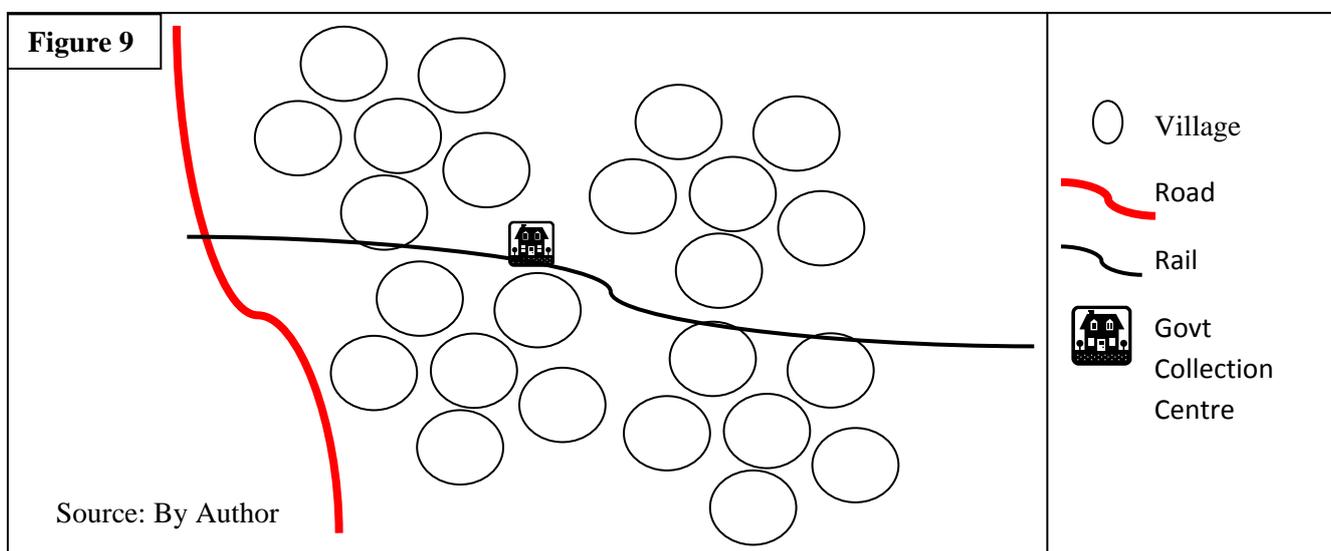
Planning is a device by which a goal may be achieved with a view to mitigate present problematic situation. Therefore, 'Village Planning' is required to get such goals in villages of UD. Although, agro climatically UD lies in Terai-Teesta Alluvial Zone along with Coochbihar and Jalpaiguri (Agropedia) but there are some micro differences in climate. For this reason superb quality rice, 'Tulai Panja' is only grown in a belt between north of Itahar covering Raiganj and Hemtabad block up to south of Karandighi. Maize is predominated in a belt starting from Chakulia in south up to Chopra in north.



This picture exemplifies two very important crops produced in maximum quantity within specified areas. It does not mean that other crops are not yielded in marked regions. The author wants to hold up regions consisting of villages where the most important crop may be produced by farmers not only to consume but also to gain profit. Therefore the term ‘Village Complex’ is used to demarcate a number of villages which are functionally equal in terms of production. Each complex may have villages according to kind of productivity and nearness and the number may range between six and ten. A number of ‘Village Complex’ will be connected with ‘Government Collection Centre’ (GCC) where farmers will be the direct seller. The GCC collects different types of crops and proportionately distribute to Processing Industries and Government’s Food Supply Department. The location of collection centre will be depended either on road or rail, whichever will be the best way for communication. In this way market rate of crops would be controlled during surplus or drought production season. Farmers will be interested in agriculture in one hand and agriculture based industries will provide jobs of sufficient wages to labours.

One thing must be noted a village complex cannot plough same crop throughout the year. Therefore, kinds of cultivation may be varied according to season.

Model of Village Complex



2. Allotment of Funds by State Government

West Bengal Govt has been expending lots of money in the welfare of rural people in form of 'Unemployment Allowance' and in other schemes. But it is not a permanent solution. To find a static solution State must provide funds to get the goal. Initially the expenditure may be huge but in long term it would be profitable for the state. The govt income would be intensified and employment would be generated to large number of youth. In this way we also would be capable of using our full labour force.

3. Social Audit:

During recent time corruption is a serious phenomenon throughout the country. As the whole procedure will be a systematic networking, it involves lots of people from different sectors. There is also a danger of corruption while maintaining the system. So 'Social Audit' is a compulsory prerequisite to keep transparency. This type of audit helps in direct exchange of views between Government Officials and farmers and in this way the root of corruption may be cut off from society.

Conclusion:

Labour migration is always a burning issue globally. In case of backward places, it is a dominating force that is hard to check. Throughout the paper the author has tried to examine the case analytically. But the picture becomes clear that neither the source nor the destination gain the ultimate profit. In short term the incident is good enough. But the long term effects happen to be worse. We have everything but due to the lack of fertile policy the situation remains almost uncontrolled. The Spinning Mill, at Raiganj is nearly dead because of absence of good govt policy. Development cannot be one sided phenomenon. The urban sector and globalization may grow fast but 'Grameen' West Bengal is still untouched to this. Still large number of workforce is out and many on the threshold to go out because their own land is barren enough to produce jobs.

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