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**THE SCENARIO OF POPULATION GROWTH IN SOUTH 24 PARGANAS  
DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL, INDIA**

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**Abstract**

The South 24 Parganas is the largest and the second populated district is originated on 1<sup>st</sup> March in 1986 in West Bengal state in India. The paper primarily explains about the history of population growth and gives an overview of the trends of population growth over hundred years of the district and patterns of population growth has been discussed in block level for last three decades. It explains the differential population growth for both rural and urban areas. It also suggests that the rural unemployment and diminishing agricultural productivity are responsible for the rural urban migration and resultant very high population growth in urban areas than rural areas. This paper attempts to identify the accelerating population growth in the northern part of the study area which is contiguous to Kolkata due to the urbanisation, industrialization and commercialization etc. whereas declining trends of population growth has been observed in the rural agrarian littoral deltaic southern part which is contiguous to the Sundarbans mangrove forest.

**Keywords:**

Population Growth;  
growth rate;  
fertility;  
mortality;  
migration;

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**1. Introduction**

Population growth is one of the fundamental demographic processes which directly or indirectly influence all other demographic attributes. With the evolution of modern world, the dramatic change of population draws attention to the scholars of several social disciplines. It would seem obvious that the geographical study of population growth could explain to some extent for the overall progress of any region. Almost every country has its own particular rhythm of population growth which due solely to the natural factors of births and deaths [15]. The growth of the human population represents emerging issues and challenges for the present and future generations. Human population growth exhibited important fluctuations during the last 2000 years. Human population exhibited dramatic changes during the 20<sup>th</sup> century; the world population grew from almost 2 billion people in 1930 up to 6 billion in 2000. In 1960, almost 2 billion people lived in rural areas, while only 1 billion lived in cities [5]. The growth of population in India from the ancient times

up to 1900 was discussed in the scholarly work of Kingsley Davis [20]. In quantitative term, the number of populations at a particular time and its growth play a significant role in all aspects of any region. The demographic history of South 24 Parganas is a history of continuous growth from the eighteenth century, in which the growth of trade, commerce, industry, transport and employment potential have always played a significant role for the attraction of in-migrants especially in the north western part of the district and along the Hooghly river.

## **2. Study Area**

South 24 Parganas district, the largest and 2<sup>nd</sup> most populated district in West Bengal is located in the southernmost part of the deltaic plains of Bengal. The district is situated between 21° 29' 00" North to 22° 33' 45" North latitude and 88 ° 03' 45" East to 89° 04' 50" East longitude. On the 1st of March, 1986, the southern part of erstwhile 24 Parganas was carved out separately to form a new district named South 24 Parganas. The largest district in West Bengal resembles an irregular triangle in shape. It has artificial land frontier as well as natural water boundaries. Kolkata and North 24-Parganas lies to its north and north east and Bay of Bengal to its south. The study area is constituted by twenty nine blocks, bounded by an International boundary with Bangladesh to the east. On the west, the river Hooghly has demarcated the boundary proceeding from north to south separates it from the district of Howrah and East Midnapore. The sensitive border district commands a vital strategic area not only for West Bengal but also for the entire country.

## **3. Objectives**

- To observe the trend of population growth over the century.
- To analyze the decadal variation of population from 1981 to 2011 Censuses.
- To find out the changing patterns of population growth in inter-decadal periods.
- To examine the trends and patterns of both rural and urban population growth.

## **4. Data Sources and Methodology:**

The present study is based entirely on the secondary sources of data which have been obtained from District Census Hand Book of 24 Parganas: 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1981; District Census Hand Book of South 24 Parganas: 1991, 2001, and 2011; Primary Census Abstract and many other relevant published reports and documents.

The data so obtained have been analyzed through some simple but meaningful statistical techniques including decadal growth and annual exponential growth rate have been used to

show the trends, patterns and variation of population growth in consecutive decades in blocks as well as in the district. Some cartographic techniques have been used to show the patterns and changes of population growth and few maps have been prepared with the help of Arc info GIS software.

## **5. Results and Discussion**

### **5.1. Historical Background of Population Growth of the District**

Wilbur Zelinsky suggested that population phenomena are too dynamic to be studied advantageously at any given instant in time, so that one must usually consult the full historic range of records [30]. In the first half of the nineteenth century, when the Sundarbans area of the southern part of the district were being deforested and brought under cultivation, the landless laborers and fishermen from the neighboring areas of Jessore, Khulna (now in Bangladesh) and Nadia settled down there. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the landless agricultural laborers and marginal cultivators from Midnapore and other comparatively arid parts of southwestern Rarha regions of West Bengal and the plateau regions of south Bihar started migrating to Sundarbans. W.W. Hunter argued that the principal immigrants to the 24 Parganas Sundarbans are Uriyas from Cattaek and other parts of Orissa and Bunas from Chota Nagpur or Western Bengal [18]. Opening up of units of various kinds of manufacturing and servicing industries and infrastructural facilities and servicing industries and infrastructural facilities along the Hugli river attracted immigrants from Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and other districts of West Bengal from around the seventies of the nineteenth century which was double of what Sundarbans attracted at the height of influx of immigrants. Hauser and Duncan stated that most of the populations are affected by gains and losses through migration [17]. From 1965 onward, the influx of new migrants from other states of India to the industrial belt of the district showed some signs of tapering off, due to closing down of new manufacturing units and non-expansion of other existing units.

In 1872, the first census was taken in the district and after that population has grown steadily and uninterruptedly [26]. In 1881, there was a decline in north and east owing to the prevalence of Malaria, though 1891-1901 showed riparian population growth due to the development of industrial towns along the Hooghly River and the programme of reclamation in Sundarbans attracted numerous settlers [26] resulting further population

growth in 1901-1911. Table 1 show that the study area has been adding more or less one million people in every decade.

**Table 1: Population Growth of South 24 Parganas District, 1901-2011**

Year	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Population (Millions)	1.05	1.19	1.27	1.38	1.71	2.09	2.73	3.66	4.39	5.71	6.91	8.16

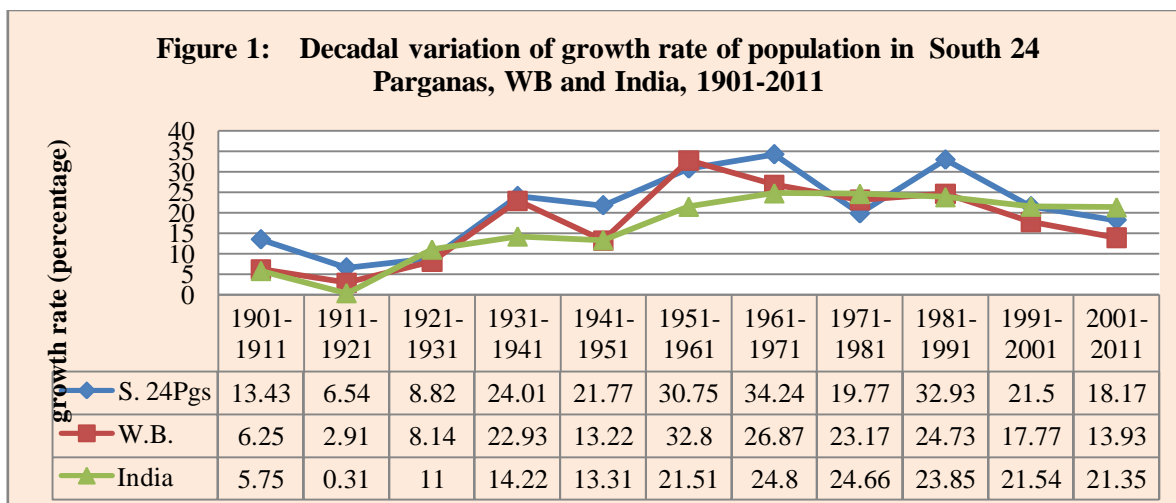
*Source:* District Census Hand Book, 24 Parganas, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981 and District Census Hand Book, South 24 Parganas 1991, 2001, and 2011, Primary Census Abstract, computed by the author.

The average annual exponential growth in the district were 1.37 percent during 1901-1951 (Pre-independence period) and 2.39 per cent during 1951-2001 (Post independence period). An influenza epidemic ravaged the district in between 1911-1921 and coupled with endemic malaria it tended to slow down the rate of growth of population in this decade. It was found that the district contained only 2.28 per cent more growth rate in the decade of 1921-1931 than the earlier decade. Nothing really very significant happened between 1931 and 1941 to warrant 15.19 per cent point increase in population of the district in 1941 over the population of 1931. In 1942, a severe cyclone storm ravaged the southern part of the district, followed by a flood which damaged much of the standing crop, assets and cattle wealth. Several hundreds of lives were lost. Famine is always a factor to be reckoned with in the growth of populations [21]. The most severe of famines since the famine of 1770, visited Bengal in 1943 and ravaged the country for a full year. Millions of starving peasants from rural areas began migrating to the urban areas in search of food and died of hunger and malnutrition in the streets of the urban areas in the country. A terrible communal riot broke out on 16 August 1946 and continued intermittently till the partition of the country and gaining of Independence on 15 August 1947. Such manmade as well as natural disaster slowed down the growth rate of population by 2.24 per cent point in 1941-51. In the 1951-61 decade, the inflow of refugees from erstwhile East Pakistan not only continued unabated, but actually had sudden increase just before the introduction of passport for travel between India and Pakistan in 1952. The huge population explosion of 1951-1961 and 1961-1971 decade cannot be explained only in terms of immigration of refugees from the erstwhile East Pakistan. The other contributory factors were possibly adoption of preventive measures, improvement in public health conditions and improvement in curative measures through extension of medical facilities which slowed the natural decline of population through deaths. United Nations suggested that the improving medical knowledge and increasingly effective public health methods have contributed for the reduction of mortality in twentieth century [28].

The increase in the number of inhabitants of the district in the past three decades (1.33 million during 1981-1991, 1.19 million in 1991-2001, and 1.26 million in 2001-2011) was greater than the district total population at the beginning of the century (1.05 million). The sharp decline in the mortality may be one of the main causes for such explosive growth. Clarke suggested that the declining mortality would probably lead to a reduction in fertility, through the greater survival rate of children [6]. The advanced medical and health technology, significant improvement of food production and distribution system are largely responsible for lowering of mortality. The industrialization as well as urbanisation in the north western part of the district helped in further growth of population.

## 5.2. Comparison of population growth among South 24 Parganas, West Bengal and India 1901- 2011:

In the comparative analysis of the decadal growth of population among the South 24 Parganas, West Bengal and India, it has been found that the district South 24 Parganas has been showing the higher population growth rate than West Bengal and India except 1950s, 1970s and 2010s. The partition of India-Bangladesh in 1947 had resulted political disturbances and forced thousands of people of from erstwhile East Pakistan now Bangladesh to give up their homeland and to cross the border to India. After this Great Demographic Divide, increase in the growth rate was due to more economic, social and nutritional than epidemiological [25].



**Source:** District Census Hand Book, 24 Parganas, 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981 and District Census Hand Book, South 24 Parganas 1991, 2001, and 2011, Primary Census Abstract, computed by the author

During the 1971-81 decade, the district's population growth rate marginally declined than West Bengal and India. Political disturbances and resulted socio economic unrest was one of the vital reasons for such declining growth in this decade. Though, in the period of

1981-1991, the trend of population growth followed the long time earlier trend of higher growth rate than the others. In the decade of 1991-2001 and 2001-2011, India has performed a slightly better rate in population growth than West Bengal and the district average. India recorded 21.54 per cent population growth rate where South 24 Parganas and West Bengal recorded 20.85 per cent and 17.77 per cent respectively during 1991-2001. Such trend has remained unchanged in the last (2001-2011) decade.

### **5.3. The trend of Population Growth of the district, 1901-2011:**

Peter R. Cox stated that the word 'trend' gives an impression of a regular movement in a particular direction [8]. The decadal population growth rate was 13.43 per cent in the period of 1901-2011. The lowest growth rate was observed as 6.54 per cent during 1911-1921. The high mortality in the period of First World War was the principal cause for such slow growth rate. The highest increase of growth rate was observed from 1921-1931 (8.82 per cent) to 1931-1941 (24.01 per cent) due to the high fertility after the First World War. During 1921-1951, the Indian demography has witnessed significant changes due to the increasing control over abnormal deaths caused by epidemics, famines etc. [4]. The constant increasing trend was only found during three decades like 1941-1951 (21.77 per cent), 1951-1961 (30.75 per cent) and 1961-1971 (34.24 per cent) due to increasing fertility after the Second World War as well as influx of refugees from Bangladesh after the partition of India. The population growth has been declined by 19.77 per cent during 1971-1981. The last three decades experienced gradual diminishing growth rate due to holistic health education and socio economic development and resulted low level of fertility and mortality. Such figures are as 32.93 per cent (1981-1991), 21.50 per cent (1991-2001) and 18.17 per cent (2001-2011) respectively.

### **5.4. Decadal Growth of Population in block level, 1981-1991:**

The rapidly falling death rates and not rising birth rates are primarily responsible for a faster increase in numbers [10]. Such pattern has been observed in most part of the district. During 1981-1991, the decadal growth rate of population (Table 2, Map 1) was 32.93 per cent in the district. Among the twenty nine blocks, only two blocks (Namkhana, Jaynagar-II) had the growth rate of above 75 per cent which may be due to higher fertility particularly in the rural areas and in-migration from relatively low developed adjacent blocks. The growth rate of population is depended on both natural increase and significant volume of migration from within and outside the country [27]. The three blocks show a

growth rate ranges from 40 per cent to 50 per cent. Only five blocks had the growth rate below 20 per cent. There is an extraordinary difference of growth rate between the highest and the lowest i.e. the growth rate of Namkhana (81.17 per cent) was 23 times higher than Budge Budge-II block (3.48 per cent). The rapidly growing urbanized Thakurpukur-Maheshtala (43.43 per cent) and Sonarpur blocks (43.52 per cent) had experienced huge share in growth rate due to attraction of rural migrants.

**Table 2: Decadal variation of population, 1981-1991, 1991-2001 and 2001-2011**

Sl. No.	Blocks	1981-1991	1991-2001	2001-2011	Sl. No.	Blocks	1981-1991	1991-2001	2001-2011
1	Thakurpukur Maheshtala	43.43	47.01	19.60	16	Gosaba	19.12	11.13	10.67
2	Bishnupur-I	39.65	15.38	12.60	17	Mograhat-I	32.9	16.49	18.03
3	Bishnupur-II	13.04	14.88	12.53	18	Mograhat-II	30.95	17.29	16.27
4	Budge Budge-I	28.37	8.81	8.34	19	Mandirbazar	25.92	14.56	16.88

**Table 2: Continued**

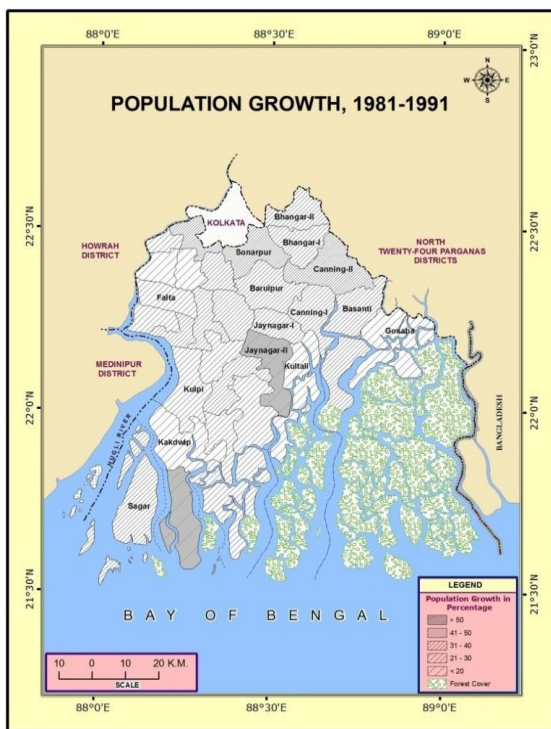
Sl. No.	Blocks	1981-1991	1991-2001	2001-2011	Sl. No.	Blocks	1981-1991	1991-2001	2001-2011
5	Budge Budge-II	3.48	15.22	10.77	20	Kulpi	26.25	14.69	16.66
6	Sonarpur	43.52	45.48	27.79	21	Falta	23.15	11.69	12.57
7	Jaynagar-I	32.26	18.25	31.94	22	Diamond Harbour-I	30.27	17.87	16.04
8	Jaynagar-II	74.05	17.67	8.48	23	Diamond Harbour-II	21.86	14.89	15.47
9	Kultali	6.32	20.16	21.84	24	Mathurapur-I	30.55	16.04	18.50
10	Baruipur	35.54	27.01	22.68	25	Mathurapur-II	27.26	14.63	11.38
11	Bhangar-I	36.21	24.54	21.92	26	Kakdwip	13.98	25.9	17.82
12	Bhangar-II	34.94	24.69	18.85	27	Namkhana	81.17	19.55	13.82
13	Canning-I	38.12	24.62	24.57	28	Sagar	33.82	20.39	14.22
14	Canning-II	42.22	29.24	28.86	29	Patharpratima	24.24	17.42	15.06
15	Basanti	31.69	22.74	20.86		South 24 Parganas	32.93	21.50	18.17

**Source:** District Census Hand Book, 24 Parganas, 1981, District Census Hand Book, 1991, 2001 and 2011, South 24 Parganas; Primary Census Abstract, computed by the author.

### 5.5 Decadal Growth of population in block level, 1991-2001

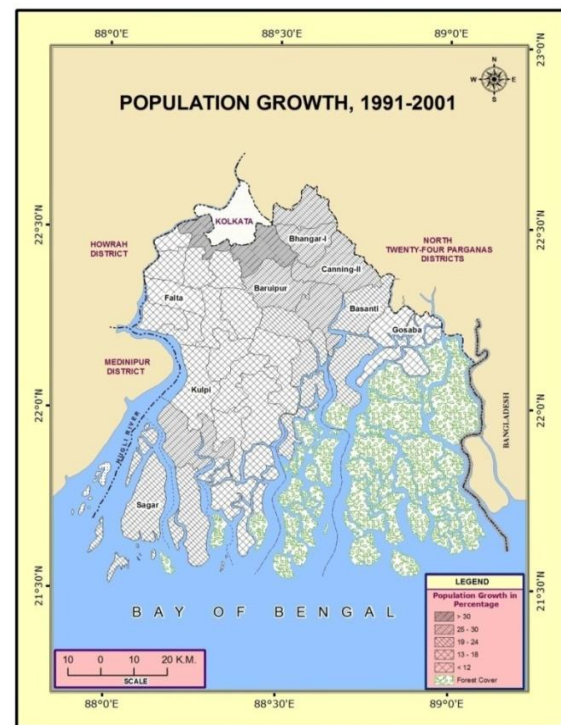
Population growth may be positive or negative in a particular area during a specific period of time [16]. Maintaining its declining trend, the district's growth rate has been declined by 11.43 per cent points from 1981-1991(32.93 per cent) to 1991-2001 (21.50 per cent). The highest and the lowest population growths are observed in industrialized

Thakurpukur-Maheshtala (47.01 per cent) and Budge Budge-I (8.81 per cent) respectively (Map 2). Coale and Hoover argued that the transformation from largely agrarian to a primarily industrial country leads to the consequential decline in fertility rate [7]. A number of jute mills along the Hooghly River were closed due to the scarcity of raw materials as well as declining demand of jute byproducts which influences the declining population growth of Budge Budge-I. Only Thakurpukur Maheshtala (47.01 per cent) and Sonarpur (45.48 per cent) have the growth rate above 30 per cent (Table 2). About twenty-two blocks have the growth rate between 14 per cent and 25 per cent. Canning-II is a Muslim dominated and is one of the backward southeastern blocks presents relatively high growth rate (29.24 per cent). K. L. Bhowmik found the incidence of higher fertility among Muslims women in this particular area where women were significantly associated with earlier marriage, lesser education, lower education of husband, lower income of family, lower tenure status, lower degree of home innovativeness of family, lower level of family education etc. [1].



SOURCE : CENSUS OF INDIA

Map 1 Population growth, 1981-1991



SOURCE : CENSUS OF INDIA

Map 2: Population growth, 1991-2001





**Source:** District Census Hand Book, 24 Parganas, 1981, District Census Hand Book, 1991, 2001, and 2011, South 24 Parganas; Primary Census Abstract, computed by the author

Though, educational development, growing awareness of family planning and increasing interest towards nuclear family in other communities have influenced for the declining population growth rate.

### 5.6 Decadal Growth of population in block level, 2001-2011:

Map 3: Population growth, 2001-2011

During this decade (2001-2011), the growth rate (Map 3) of the district recorded 18.17 per cent. It was declined by 3.33 per cent point in comparison to the preceding decade where the corresponding figure of West Bengal and India was declined by 3.84 per cent point and 0.19 per cent point respectively.

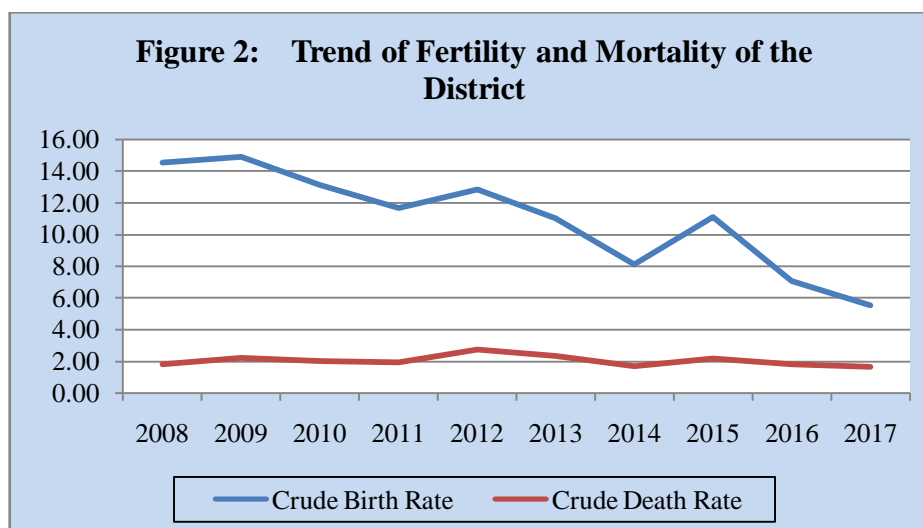
Jaynagar-I had occupied the highest growth rate with 31.94 per cent (Table 2). A lot of people from Kultali and Jaynagar-II block migrated to this adjacent block due to the conveniences of communication, education and occupation. And other two blocks like Canning-II (28.86 per cent) and Sonarpur (27.79 per cent) presented the growth rate above 25 per cent. Also, there are 18 blocks where the growth rate is below the district average growth rate (18.17 per cent) out of 29 blocks. Matthews states that the reductions in growth rates is a result of unexpected fertility decline [24]. The explanation of long trend of fertility and mortality of the district has become impossible due to unavailability of data regarding vital statistics. In spite of having a lot of challenges, Government has tried to publish the vital statistical data recently with which we can find a striking cause of declining population growth is declining fertility and less fluctuating mortality (Table 3 and Figure 2).

**Table 3 Crude Birth Rate and Crude Death Rate, South 24 Parganas, 2008-2017**

CBR and CDR	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Crude Birth Rate	14.55	14.92	13.15	11.67	12.834	11.03	8.11	11.12	7.05	5.52
Crude Death Rate	1.82	2.22	2.02	1.92	2.72	2.32	1.68	2.18	1.82	1.66

Source: Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dy-II, South 24 Parganas, Annul Vital Statistics, 2008-2017

District Human Development Reports observed spectacular improvement of literacy among rural female in consecutive decades i.e. 36.89 per cent, 56.15 per cent and 68.90 percent in 1991, 2001 and 2011 respectively [11]. Such improvement might encourage lower fertility performances. Jungho Kim's empirical findings showed that as women's education level increases they tend to have fewer children [19].



Source: Source: Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dy-II, South 24 Parganas, Annual Vital Statistics, 2008-2017

### 5.7 Inter-decadal Change of population growth from 1981-1991 to 1991-2001:

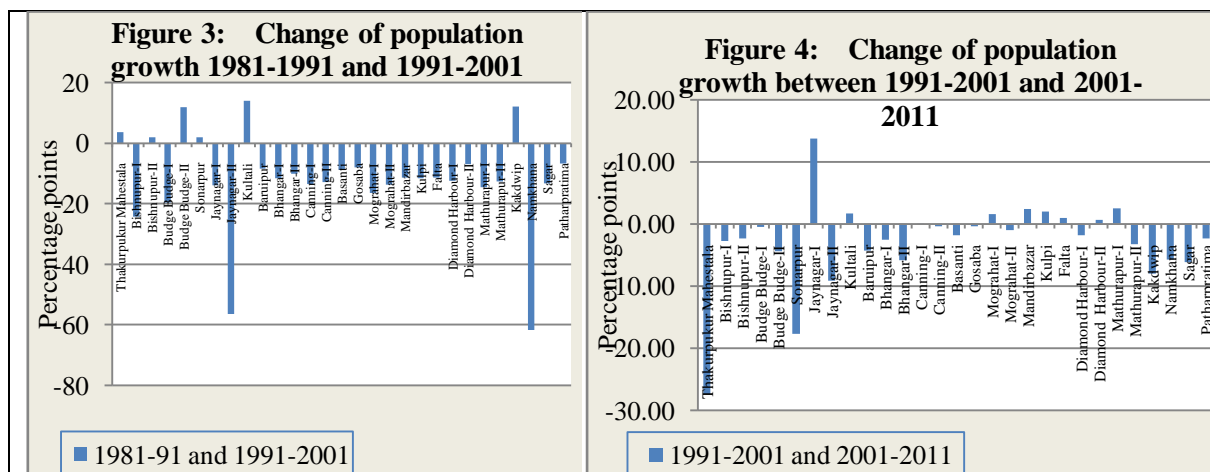
It is very interesting to mention that 23 blocks experienced a declining growth rate whereas only 6 blocks presents an increasing tendency. Kultali block has recorded the maximum increase of growth rate (13.84 per cent point) followed by Kakdwip (11.92 per cent point), Budge Budge-II (11.74 per cent point), Thakurpukur-Maheshtala (3.58 per cent point) etc (Table 4). The increasing trend of two southern blocks (Kultali and Kakdwip) may be due to the lower educational attainment and lower age at marriage which may result in comparatively a higher rate of fertility. The Sonarpur (1.96 per cent points) and Bishnupur-II (1.84 per cent points) show a very marginal increase of population growth above the district average (11.43 per cent points).

**Table 4 Inter decadal change of population growth from 1981-1991 to 1991-2001 and 1991-2001 to 2001-2011**

Sl. No.	Blocks	1981-1991 and 1991-2001	1991-2001 and 2001-2011	Sl. No.	Blocks	1981-1991 and 1991-2001	1991-2001 and 2001-2011
1	Thakurpukur Maheshtala	3.58	-27.41	16	Gosaba	-7.99	-0.46
2	Bishnupur-I	-24.27	-2.78	17	Mograhat-I	-16.41	1.54
3	Bishnupur-II	1.84	-2.35	18	Mograhat-II	-13.66	-1.02
4	Budge Budge-I	-19.56	-0.47	19	Mandirbazar	-11.36	2.32
5	Budge Budge-II	11.74	-4.45	20	Kulpi	-11.56	1.97
6	Sonarpur	1.96	-17.69	21	Falta	-11.46	0.88
7	Jaynagar-I	-14.01	13.69	22	Diamond Harbour-I	-12.4	-1.83
8	Jaynagar-II	-56.38	-9.19	23	Diamond Harbour-II	-6.97	0.58
9	Kultali	13.84	1.68	24	Mathurapur-I	-14.51	2.46
10	Baruipur	-8.53	-4.33	25	Mathurapur-II	-12.63	-3.25
11	Bhangar-I	-11.67	-2.62	26	Kakdwip	11.92	-8.08
12	Bhangar-II	-10.25	-5.84	27	Namkhana	-61.62	-5.73
13	Canning-I	-13.5	-0.05	28	Sagar	-13.43	-6.17
14	Canning-II	-12.98	-0.38	29	Patharpratima	-6.82	-2.36
15	Basanti	-8.95	-1.88		South 24 Parganas	-11.43	-3.33

**Source:** District Census Hand Book, 24 Parganas, 1981, District Census Hand Book, 1991, 2001, and 2011, South 24 Parganas; Primary Census Abstract, computed by the author.

The largest decline of population growth is recorded in Namkhana (61.62 per cent points) followed by Jaynagar-II (56.38 per cent points), Bishnupur-I (24.27 per cent), Budge Budge-I (19.56 per cent points) etc (Figure 3). The decline of population growth rate has become very rapid due to the influence of larger educational attainment, increasing age at marriage, changing socio-economic behavior etc. The three blocks like Budge Budge-II, Thakurpukur-Maheshtala and Sonarpur where the occupational advantages are higher shows increasing growth rate mainly due to rural in-migration from the neighboring blocks.



**Source:** District Census Hand Book, 24 Parganas, 1981, District Census Hand Book, 1991, 2001, and 2011, South 24 Parganas; Primary Census Abstract, computed by the author.

### 5.8 Inter-decadal change of population growth from 1991-2001 to 2001-2011:

Robert Woods argued that world population has increased in a series of cycles and that at times there has been actual decline [29]. Similar trends is being observed by the district that experiences only 3.33 per cent point decline of population growth rate from 1991-2001 to 2001-2011 decade where 20 blocks are above the district average and 9 blocks are below it. Only 8 blocks experienced positive change whereas 21 blocks presents negative change (Figure 4). The Jaynagar-I contributes the maximum increase (13.69 per cent point) of population growth from 1991-2001 to 2001-2011 among eight blocks (Table 4). Due to the effect of super cyclone Aila in the southern part of the district, Jaynagar-I has received a large influx of in-migrants from the nearer Aila (A Tropical Cyclone) effected Kulti blocks during the decade of 2001 to 2011.

### 5.9 Rural and Urban population growth rate of South 24 Parganas from 1901-2011

The total rural and urban population of the district was recorded 6.07 million (74.42 per cent) and 2.09 million (25.58 per cent) respectively in 2011 Census. The absolute number of rural and urban population has been increased by 5.74 and 29.52 times in the last century (from 1901 to 2001).

Labor force of rural areas is reluctant to stay in their native for substantially low income [9]. The trend of rural population growth has gradually been declining whereas the urban population growth has been accelerating. The declining rural population growth is due to out-migration induced by lack of employment opportunities, the fall in birth rate which is the result of rising age at marriage of girls and increasing awareness about small sized

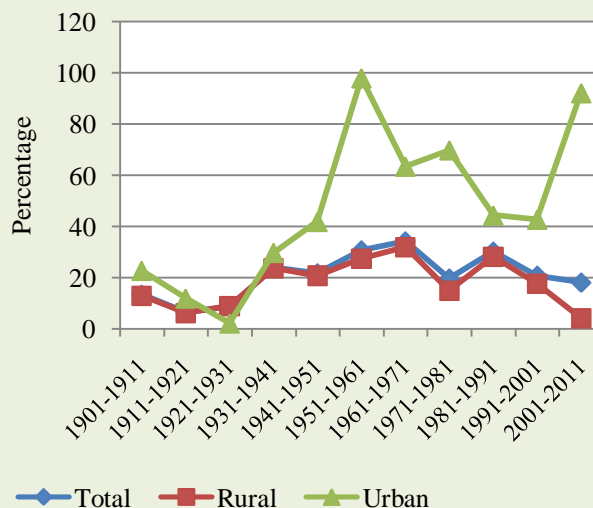
families and the improved level of educational attainment. Rural people are trying to intensify the agriculture through multiple cropping for their livelihood [14]. The decadal growth rate of rural Population was 17.81 per cent and 4.36 per cent in 1991-2001 and 2001-2011 respectively which is 2.41 times and 21.15 times lower than the urban growth rate (Table 5).

Urban population has been increasing gradually in all decades. Such growth leads to a declining man-land ratio and further additions of labour force results disguised unemployment [23]. The district's urban population growth rate (92.21 per cent) has become 3 times higher than West Bengal average of 29.72 per cent during the decade 2001-2011. The number of towns had only four (Budge Budge, Rajpur, Baruipur and Jaynagar-Majilpur) during the period from 1901 to 1941. The numbers of towns were recorded as 14, 21 and 118 in 1991, 2001 2011 respectively and the growth rate was 22.88 per cent in the first decade of the last century (1901-1911). Due to the influence of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War the growth rate came down to 12.05 per cent during 1911-1921 and such declining trend continued to the next decade. The district recorded the lowest urban growth rate with 2.36 per cent during 1921-1931 (Table 5). Then the growth rate was accelerated from 1931 to 1961 and the maximum urban growth rate was recorded as 98.03 per cent during the first decade (1951-1961) after the independence of India. Such increase was largely owing to the influx of the migrants from erstwhile East Pakistan now Bangladesh and relatively higher fertility rate. The urban annual growth rate declined during 1961-1971. After the 1971, the population growth rate was not only increased during 1971-1981 but after that the trend of growth rate consistently declined (Figure 5).

**Table 5 Decadal Growth rate of rural and urban population of South 24 Parganas in percentage, 1901-2011**

Years	Total	Rural	Urban
1901-1911	13.43	13.09	22.88
1911-1921	6.54	6.32	12.05
1921-1931	8.82	9.09	2.36
1931-1941	24.01	23.78	29.89
1941-1951	21.77	20.95	41.98
1951-1961	30.75	27.52	98.03
1961-1971	34.24	32.06	63.55
1971-1981	19.77	15.14	69.92
1981-1991	30.24	28.30	44.48
1991-2001	20.85	17.81	42.85
2001-2011	18.17	4.36	92.21

**Figure 5: Decadal Growth rate of rural and urban population of South 24 Parganas in percentage, 1901-2011**



*Source:* District Census Hand Book, 24 Parganas, 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1981, District Census Hand Book, 1991, 2001, and 2011, South 24 Parganas; Primary Census Abstract, computed by the author.

As for example the growth rates are 44.48 per cent (1981-1991), 42.84 per cent (1991-2001). But the last decade (2001-2011) has broken the previous trend having growth rate of 92.21 per cent. High population growth in different parts of the district puts enormous burden on cultivable land and existing infrastructure and thus adversely affects the quality of life [12]

## 6. Findings

- The decadal growth rate of population of the district has been between the state and the nation.
- The present decadal growth rate of the district is 18.17 per cent which is higher than West Bengal (13.93 per cent) and lower than India (21.35 per cent) during 2001-2011.
- Urban population growth rate (92.21 per cent) is extremely high than rural growth rate (4.36 per cent) during 2001-2011.

## 7. Suggestions

- Proper employment opportunities should be arranged for better rural employment so that rural- urban migration can be reduced and population pressure in urban areas can be reduced so that a proper balance between rural and urban areas can be establishment.
- Frequent family planning programmes should be organized particularly among Muslim community to encourage about the benefit of small family size.
- Population growth rate should be reduced below the national level in order to maintain a balance between population and resource.

## 8. Conclusion

The growth rate of population of the district has somewhat higher than West Bengal and lowers than India in most of the decades in the last century. Urban population growth rate is twenty-one times higher than the rural growth rate, recorded in the last Census. Northern blocks of the district experienced higher growth rate than southern blocks, which may be the result of urbanisation. The extreme decline of rural growth rate and tremendous increase of urban population growth rate may be the explanation of rural urban migration. The Muslims, recorded more than double population growth rate than Hindus, has contributed a considerable proportion for the growth of district's population. So, the overall declining growth rate of the district's population states about the better demographic transition.

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