

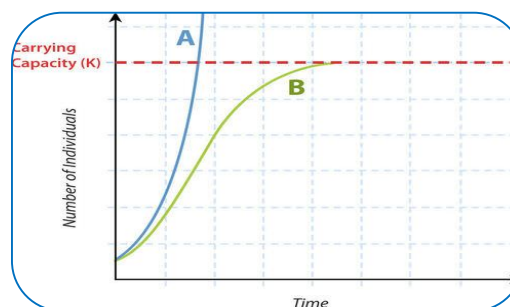


## PATTERN OF POPULATION GROWTH IN MURSHIDABAD DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL IN THE LAST TWO DECADES AND ITS IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY OF THE DISTRICT

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### ABSTRACT:

*This study encompasses the growth pattern of population and its impact on the economic structure of Murshidabad district of West Bengal. A meticulous study through time-series analysis has been done to explore both positive and negative impact of population growth on the economy and the pattern of change of the economic system. Both secondary and primary data base have been employed to conduct the study. Secondary data has been collected from the Government and Non-government offices and institutions, while the primary data has been generated through questionnaire survey in the field. Personal contact with the local people was made and perceptions of the people have been recorded. Some selected villages were taken into account to generate field data.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Economic structure, meticulous study, economic system, primary and secondary data, questionnaire survey.*

### INTRODUCTION

Population growth plays a distinct role in the development process of the countries, particularly the third world countries like India. In one way it can help economic development and in other way it can also retards economic development. The relationship between population growth and economic development may be understood from the words of Robert McNamara, the past president of the World Bank in the 1960s. He described it as 'the most delicate and difficult issue of our era. It is immeasurably complex. Economic development is very much related to the pattern of population growth of the society (Ray & Ray and Aditya. 2011). The three basic demographic factors of population changes are birth, death and migration. According to the 2011 census (District Census Handbook of Murshidabad, 2014) Murshidabad district ranks 5th (1384 sq/km) in West Bengal with the 3rd highest decadal population growth of 21.1% (state average 13.8%). This study attempts to find out the pattern of population growth in Murshidabad District. Rapid population growth adversely affects the natural resources. For economic development it needs policy implementation in sustainable manner.

### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of this study are the following:

- To examine the pattern of population growth in Murshidabad district during the last two decades.
- To find out the general impact of population growth on the societal system of the district
- To evaluate the impact of population growth on the socio-economy of the district, and
- To suggest remedial measures for the economic improvement of the district.

## Database

Both secondary and primary data have been used in this paper. Secondary data have been taken from the Census reports and primary data has been generated using questionnaire survey.

## METHODOLOGY

Methodology used during the three successive stages was as follows:

- **Pre-field method:** At the outset relevant literature were studied and a pilot survey was done through the areas of Murshidabad district
- **Field Method:** Selected areas of the field were surveyed for acquiring data. For Primary data generation door-to-door study was conducted and the outcome was recorded in the questionnaire and the secondary data was collected from various sources. These are Census Book of India (2011), Report of the Ministry of Environment and Forest (West Bengal) Department, Irrigation Department, Survey of India, District Statistical Hand Book and Annual Reports. Photographs were taken where it was found necessary.
- **Post-field Method:** Data collected and generated in the field have been processed using appropriate statistical method. The report in the form of a scientific paper is then prepared by analyzing and interpreting the processed data.

**The Study Area:** Murshidabad district, being located in South Bengal is the northern most district of Presidency Division of West Bengal. The geographical extension of the district is from 24°50'20" to 23°43'30"N Latitudes and from 88°46'00" to 87°49'17"E Longitudes with a total area of 5,324 km<sup>2</sup>. It is a very densely populated district in the state. This district is separated from Malda on the by the River Ganga.

## Discussion:

### The Pattern of Population Growth

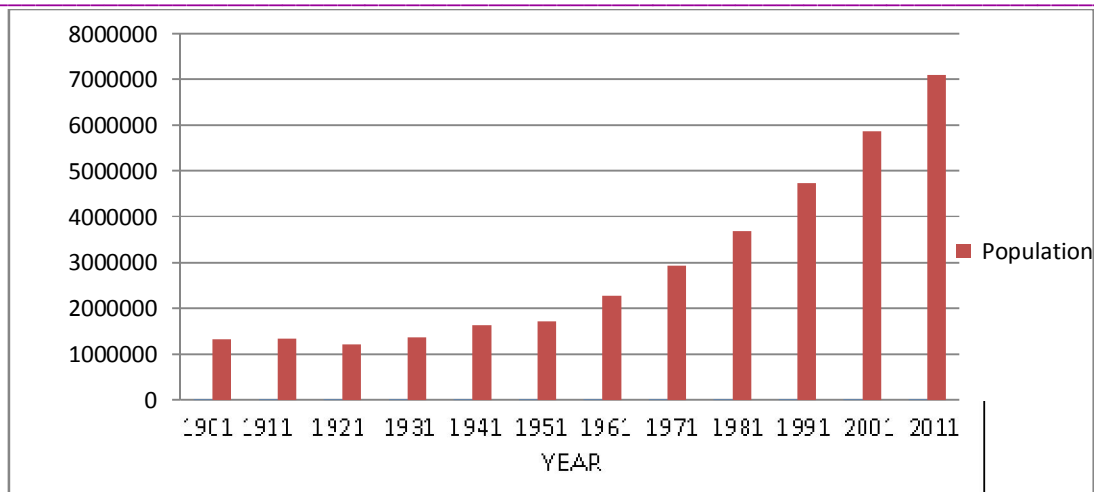
As has been mentioned earlier the rate of population growth in Murshidabad district, particularly in the recent decades, has been very high. The following table (Table - 1) shows the pattern of population growth in this district from 1901 onwards.

**Table:1 Growth of Population in Murshidabad district on Different Census years from 1901 onwards in the District of Murshidabad**

Year	Total Population	Index with 1901 as base
1901	13,22,486	100
1911	13,45,073	102
1921	12,24,181	93
1931	13,70,677	104
1941	16,40,530	124
1951	17,15,759	130
1961	22,90,010	173
1971	29,40,204	222
1981	36,97,552	280
1891	47,40,149	358
2001	58,66,569	444
2011	71,03,807	537

*Source: Census of India*

The above data as has been shown diagrammatically below clearly demonstrates the trend of population grown over the last one hundred years.



Source: Census of India

**Fig. - 1: Growth of Population in Murshidabad district on Different Census years from 1901 onwards in the District of Murshidabad**

In the above graph it can be seen that the growth of population in this district was normal from 1901 to 1951 and thereafter the growth rate has been very high which continues till date.

Population growth pattern has been studied in the selected village namely Chuapukur using the method of Primary survey. The table as generated is given below.

**Table 2: Length of time the people living in the area under Lalgola block. (Murshidabad)  
Sample size - 50 persons**

Length of time	Nos. of Respondents	% of the total
Since independence	3	6
Since 1971	8	16
Since 1981	8	16
Since 1991	7	14
Since 2001	11	22
Since 2011	13	26

Source: Data generated in the field

Although the data size is not large enough still it can be seen that influx of population in this village has been very large since the beginning of this century. It is the common picture of almost all the villages of Murshidabad particularly those located closed to the Bangladesh border.



**Plate 1: An infield door-to-door questionnaire survey by the author**

### Impact of population growth on economy

The impact of population growth on economy causes several economic problems (Ray & Ray and Aditya. 2011).The economic impacts observed are of two types: negative and positive. These impacts include change in land-use pattern, increasing pressure on land, growth of poverty, growth of urbanization, Increasing rate of unemployment, escalation of crimes etc.

**1)Change in land-use pattern:**In the study area agriculture is the main occupation of most of the people and thus most of the land is used for cultivation. With the growth of population and rising demand have been causing marked socio-economic problem. Cultivation,with crop rotation,has increased over the years to keep pace with growing population but not kept pace with the rapidly growing population. That is why the cultivators resort to toiling land 3 to 4 times a year for growing more crops to feed.

It is one kind of pressure on land. People also use insecticide and pesticide for increasing cultivated production (Singh, 2011). To justify the above concept land use of Murshidabad district data is represented below-

**Table 3: Year-wise Land-use Statistics of Murshidabad  
(inThousand hectares)**

Year	Reporting Area	Forest area	Area under Non-agricultural land use	Barren and unculturable land	Permanent Pastures and others grazing land	Cultivable Waste land	Fallow Land other Than current fallow	Current fallow	Net area shown
2009-10	532.5	0.77	129.41	0.1	1.19	1.02	0.16	0.51	397.47
2010-11	532.5	0.77	130.76	0.1	1.08	1.37	0.24	0.33	395.96
2011-12	532.5	0.77	130.94	0.1	1.16	1.53	0.20	0.94	395.27
2012-13	532.5	0.77	131.02	-	1.08	1.32	0.11	0.50	396.12
2013-14	532.5	0.77	131.34	-	1.13	0.81	0.11	0.84	395.98

Source: Directorate of Agriculture(Evaluation). Govt. of W.B

The above table shows the changing pattern of land use of Murshidabad overtime (year-wise – District Census Handbook of Murshidabad, 2011).The quantity of forest area (0.77 thousand hectares) remains unchanged from 2009 to 2014, The land of non-agricultural use was high with time (in 2009-10: 129.41thousand hectares, in 2011-12: 130.94 thousand hectares and in 2013-14: 131.34 thousand hectares) and quantity of cultivable waste land fluctuated time to time (in 2009-10; 1.02 thousand hectares, in 2011-12; 1.53 thousand hectares and in 2013-14; 0.81 thousand hectares). The area of current fallow increased slightly. Due to rapid growth of population agricultural land area diminished over time for settlement and industrial needs. Wastelands category of the study area is shown in the following table.

**Table 4: Wastelands Category of the study area (Area in sq.km.2008-2009)**

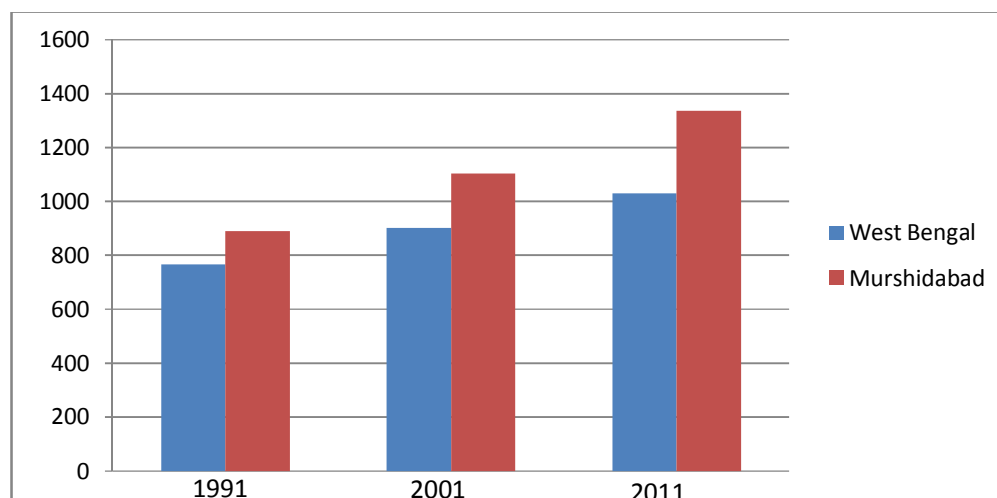
SL no.	Category	Statistics
1	Land with dense scrub	0.11
2	Land with open scrub	0.40
3	Degraded Forest	0.14
4	Sands-riverine	0.39
Total		2.04

Source: West Bengal, District Fact book; January, 2017

**2) Environmental degradation:** Growth of population certainly brings forth environmental degradation and pollution (Chopra, 2016). With rising number of people the greeneries gradually disappear. Solid and liquid wastes are generated in growing amounts and other problems start in the societal environment.

**3) Increasing Pressure on Land:**

Population density indicates how much pressure on land has been exerted by human population (Chandna, 2016). Population density of the study area versus the state West Bengal is shown in the figure below.



Source: Census of India (various years)

**Fig. 2: Population Density of the Murshidabad District and West Bengal as a whole (1991-2011) Persons per sq.km**

Large number of population with high density of population causes shortage of water, deterioration of air quality, insecurity of food, shelter and clothes. Employment crisis is another problem created with it. It affects economic condition. High density of population also indirectly causes high dependency level.

**4) Escalation of Poverty:**

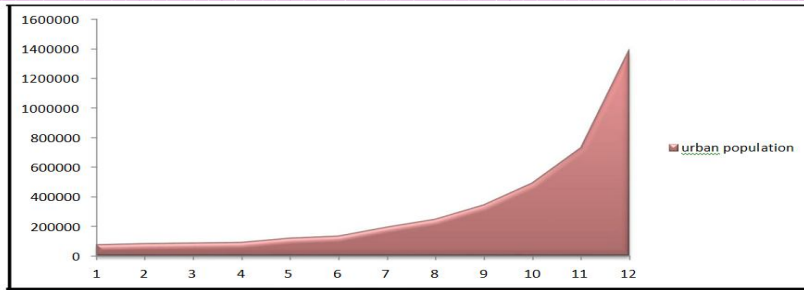
Poverty is multifaceted concept, which may include social, economic and political elements. In the study area the contributory factors for poverty are.

- Economic backwardness
- Lower level of education or illiteracy
- Lack of control in local food.

Most of the people of the study area are dependent on Beedi making work and they live below poverty level (BPL). Undoubtedly rapid population growth is the main cause of poverty. It affects the economy as well.

**5) Growth of Urbanization:**

Urbanization means the gradual increase in the proportion of people living in urban areas leaving agriculture-oriented livelihood. Urbanization also affects the economy to a certain extent. It is associated with rapid population growth, pressure on land etc. The rate of urbanization in the study area over the various census years is shown diagrammatically below.



Source: Census of India (various years)

**Fig. 3: Distribution of Urban Population in Murshidabad District (1901-2011) (Population in number)**

The graph above shows the growing rate of urban population in Murshidabad district. It can be mentioned that with the growth of population the district has become industrially developed as well in recent years.

**6) Problem of Unemployment:**

Unemployment is another issue which affects economy to a great extent and it has a direct relationship with rapid population growth. It is also interrelated with level of education. Literacy is the reflection of status of the society, economy and culture. Total literacy rate of the study area is 68%, according to 2011 census (male literacy 71%, female literacy 64%). Determinants of literacy in the study area are:

- (1) Low standard of living,
- (2) Low status of women in the society,
- (3) Slow rate of technological advancement, and
- (4) Unplanned growth of urbanization.

Depending on the above conditions literacy rate could not have been improved. Also the level of education affects the standard of living. Unemployment is a serious problem of the area. Most of the people are engaged in agricultural work (as agricultural labour), household work, labour in industry and work in the brick fields. As a result the family dependency ratio is also high.

**7) Crimes:**

In the study area riots and crimes are recorded in the Murshidabad Crime Report through the year 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively. The following table displays the data about crimes and riots in the district.

**Table 5: Persons Convicted and acquitted for different classes of offence in Murshidabad district**

Class of offence	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Murder	160	119	136	117	105
Dacoity	48	36	67	6	2
Robbery	52	71	57	22	19
Burglary	41	77	601	6	3
Rioting	534	378	262	309	84
Theft	1118	1298	1542	936	947
Offences against women	4320	4237	5167	4964	5286
Minor offence	1295	1419	2322	9857	10188
Others	6324	6774	3340	-	-
Total	13892	14409	13494	16217	16634

Source: District Statistical Handbook, 2014

Among all the crimes, offences against women and minor offence are higher than all other types of offence. It also causes a negative impact on the economy and hampers the economic stability and social development of the study area.

#### **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Based on the above findings and assessment made thereby the following policy recommendations can be made.

- Educated sections of the society as well as the local leaders may take initiative to campaign programme to convince people at large about the ill effects of rapid population growth on the economy.
- Spread education and promote societal communication activities.
- Promote sustainable development to reduce natural resource depletion and sustain them for future generations.
- Preserve existing forests; promote afforestation as well as social and agro-forestry.
- Reduce wastage of material and apply system for recycling of left out materials.
- Make compulsory the environmental education at the school level.
- Arrange for awareness camps on a regular basis.

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