



Balanced Demographic Transition In West Bengal Of India: A Roadmap For A Developed Economy

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ABSTRACT

*West Bengal's religion is made up of a variety of beliefs. It is a home to the religions: Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Judaism, Animism, and Zoroastrianism. Hinduism has the greatest population, followed by Islam in second place. **Objective:** The study aims to examine the demographic transition in West Bengal of India. **Materials and Methods:** The main source of population data is the censuses. The analysis makes use of the decadal population growth rate (PGR) and the compound population growth formula. Hindu and Muslim decadal growth percentages are computed and displayed along with a graphic presentation. The percentage of Muslims' relative increase in comparison to Hindus is displayed separately. The compound population growth rate for Muslims and Hindus is computed independently and displayed diagrammatically. **Results and Discussion:** The curve of census-wise percentage share for Hindus in the total population is downward sloping, but that for Muslims is upward sloping. As a result, both curves are getting closer to one another and will eventually intersect in the near future, when the share of the Muslim population is equal to or greater than that of the Hindu population. The compound population growth formula shows that the Muslims and Hindus will be equal after 130 years, normally. But the present situation tells that this will happen very early. **Conclusion:** Balanced demographic transition of the population is essential for promoting sustainable economic development.*

INTRODUCTION

West Bengal state of India shares its eastern boundary with Bangladesh and its northern frontiers with Nepal and Bhutan. It shares an international border of 2,217 kilometers with Bangladesh, 100 kilometers with Nepal, and 183 kilometers with Bhutan. Furthermore, it is adjacent to the Indian states of Jharkhand, Odisha, Bihar, Sikkim, and Assam. Kolkata, recognised as the third-largest metropolis and the seventh-most populous city in India, functions as the administrative capital of the state. The region is a home to a Muslim immigrant minority, comprising approximately 2.6 million individuals who predominantly speak Urdu; this demographic constitutes 2.9% of the total population of the state. Consequently, the 2011 census indicates that Islam ranks

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as the second-largest minority religion in the state, whereas Hinduism remains the predominant faith among the native Bengali population. The religious landscape of West Bengal encompasses a diverse array of practices and beliefs. The following religions are represented in West Bengal: Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Judaism, Animism, and Zoroastrianism. Hinduism boasts the largest number of adherents, followed by Islam in the second position. The populations of Buddhism, Christianity, Sikhism, Jainism, Animism, Zoroastrianism, and Judaism are comparatively smaller¹⁻³. West Bengal state has a population density of 1,028 persons per square kilometre, compared to 382 across India (Census of India, 2011)⁴

Following the 1961 census, the Muslim proportion continued to increase at a rapid rate. From 20.00 percent in 1961 to 27.01 percent in 2011, their proportion in the state has grown. Although the population transfer in this region of India (near East Pakistan, now Bangladesh) was far less severe than in the northwest (near West Pakistan, now Pakistan) at the time of Partition, the state's Muslim population had decreased by around 10.02 percent in the 1951 census. However, in the decades that followed, the number of Muslims in the state has returned to its pre-Partition level. The ensuing growth can be ascribed to causes such as greater fertility rates among Muslims and migration from Bangladesh and Myanmar (Bajaj, 2016 & Bajaj, 2018)⁵⁻⁶. India is currently a parliamentary-controlled Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic. Despite religion's lack of legal status in India, family religious practices, festivals, pilgrimages, temple rites, and other events have made religion a part of everyday life. According to its Constitution, India is a secular country with no official religion. The Indian Constitution does not give any religion a special place. All individuals and groups are granted under the Constitution the freedom to profess, practice, and propagate any religion, or to practice none at all. Apostasy is permitted by the Constitution's protection of religious freedom. However, in India, atheists are protected under the right of free expression. The Muslims currently make up over 30% of the population, and they will shortly surpass 50% of West Bengal's overall population. As what is happening in Bangladesh, also the current scenario of West Bengal indicates that Hindus must leave West Bengal, their birthplace, as soon as possible or risk being massacred by Muslims. The situation in Bangladesh, where Muslims predominate, is mirrored in certain areas of West Bengal as well⁷⁻¹⁰.

OBJECTIVE

The study has tried to explore the demographic transition of Hindus and Muslims in West Bengal State of India.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area

The study is conducted in West Bengal State of India and data on human population are obtained from the 1951 Census to the 2011 Census. The principal origin



of demographic data is the population census. In the context of India, census publications have emerged as indispensable resources for demographic researchers amidst the plethora of secondary data sources that are accessible. Predominantly in the censuses, the sub-discipline of population studies in India has experienced significant expansion and development (Gosal, 1984:204)¹¹. The fundamental source of demographic information within the country is indeed the census (Hassan, M.I., 2009:17)¹². The numerous materials obtained from the many sources have been evaluated, processed, sorted, and tabulated logically and systematically under the relevant heads of rows and columns of statistical tables. Graphical representations have been complemented with basic numerical computations. The analysis uses the compound population growth formula and the decadal population growth rate (DPGR). The DPGR formula can be written as:

$$DPGR = \frac{P(t_2) - P(t_1)}{P(t_1)}$$

Where $P(t_2)$ stands for the current census year population, and $P(t_1)$ for the previous census year population (Chandna, 2016)¹³. When the long time period of six decades, from 1951 to 2011, is taken into account, it is clear that the average rate of growth can be computed using the following mathematical formula, which is a fundamental tool in demographic research.

$$P_t = P_0 (1+r\%)^n$$

The variables t and 0 in this equation stand for the years 2011 and 1951, respectively. P stands for population, r for compound population growth rate, and n for the total number of years included in this research period. This specific equation, which has important ramifications for comprehending demographic shifts over time, is commonly known as the geometric law of population expansion. According to Pathak and Ram (1998:2)¹⁴ and Mandal (2021 & 2024)¹⁵⁻¹⁶, the famous researcher Thomas Robert Malthus postulated the theory that populations tend to grow geometrically in his seminal work on population dynamics published in 1798. As a result, populations that display such growth patterns are categorised as Malthusian Populations. In the sections that follow, the Compound Population Growth rate for the Muslim and Hindu populations will be determined and examined independently, providing a more detailed view of the demographic differences among these two different religious groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Rise of Muslims in West Bengal: West Bengal's Muslim population is growing faster than anticipated. In the near future, the number of Muslims will surpass that of Hindus. The first question is how long it will take for the Hindu and Muslim populations to equal one another. We must rely on the compound population growth formula to

determine the precise moment based on the census data. Before Partition, i.e., in 1941, Muslims made up about 29.48 per cent of the population in West Bengal. Unlike the northwest, this region did not experience as significant a population transfer during Partition. However, in the 1951 census, there were 19.46 per cent. Since then, the Muslim population has nearly recovered to pre-Partition levels. In the 2011 census, they were 27.01 per cent, and most probably they have now crossed more than 30 per cent, i.e., more than the pre-Partition level. According to the 2011 census, West Bengal's total population was 9.13 crore, with 6.44 crore Hindus, 2.47 crore Muslims, 6.6 lakh Christians, 2.83 lakh Buddhists, 63.5 thousand Sikhs, and 60 thousand Jains. Additionally, 9.4 lakh people were categorised under "Other Religions and Persuasions" (ORP), mainly from tribal communities in Bankura, Purulia, and Paschim Medinipur, many of whom follow Sari Dharma, similar to Jharkhand's Sarna Dharma. Most Buddhists reside in northern districts like Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri, and 2.28 lakh individuals did not declare their religion ¹⁷⁻²⁷. It is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Religion-wise Population of West Bengal since the 1951 Census

Census year	Total population	Hindu	Muslim	Christian	Buddhist	Sikh	Jain	Other religions	Not Stated
1951	26,299,980	20,751,412	5,118,269	181,775	81,665	30,623	19,607	116,629	
1961	34,926,279	27,523,358	6,985,287	204,530	112,253	34,184	26,940	38,610	1,117
1971	44,312,011	34,611,864	9,064,338	251,782	121,504	35,084	32,203	194,126	1,140
1981	54,580,647	42,007,159	11,743,259	319,670	156,296	49,054	38,663	263,414	3,132
1991	68,077,965	50,866,624	16,075,836	383,477	203,578	55,392	34,355	452,403	6,300
2001	80,176,197	58,104,835	20,240,543	515,150	243,364	66,391	55,223	895,796	54,895
2011	91,276,115	64,385,546	24,654,825	658,618	282,898	63,523	60,141	942,297	228,267

Source: Various Census Reports from 1951 to 2011, Govt. of India, Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India. (1951-2011)²⁸.

Decadal Growth Rate of Population from 1951-61 to 2001-11 in West Bengal: Now, we construct the decadal growth rate in Table 2 from Table 1.

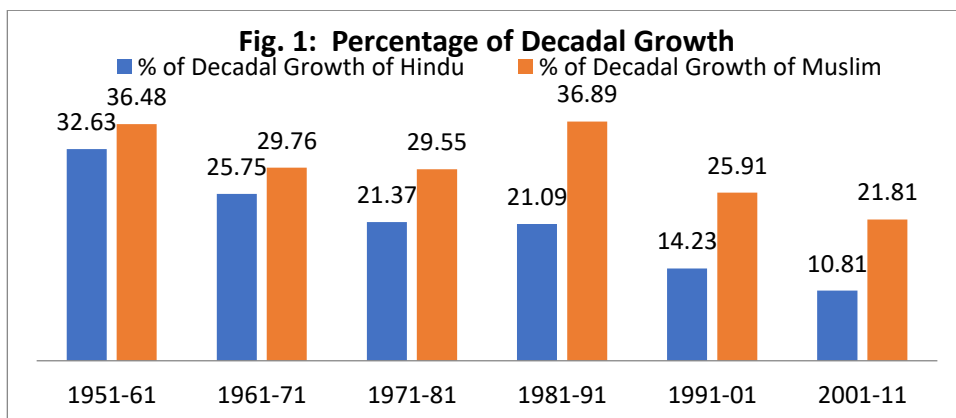
Table 2: Decadal Growth and Growth Gap in Hindus and Muslims in West Bengal

Census Year	Percentage of Decadal Growth of Hindu	Percentage of Decadal Growth of Muslim	Gap between Hindu and Muslim in Percentage of Decadal Growth	Percentage of Relative Growth of Muslim with respect to Hindu
1	2	3	4= 3-2	5 = (4÷2) × 100

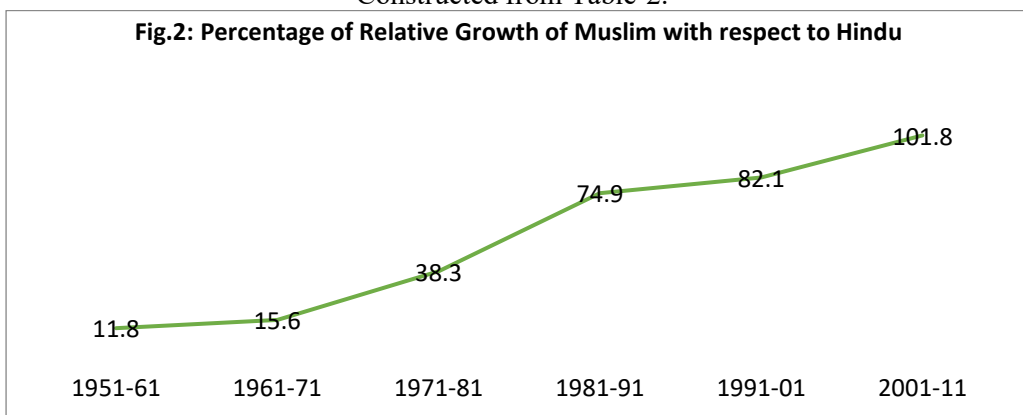


1951-61	32.63	36.48	3.85	11.8
1961-71	25.75	29.76	4.01	15.6
1971-81	21.37	29.55	8.18	38.3
1981-91	21.09	36.89	15.8	74.9
1991-01	14.23	25.91	11.68	82.1
2001-11	10.81	21.81	11	101.8

Source: Calculated on the basis of various Census reports from Table-1.



Constructed from Table-2.



Constructed from Table-2.

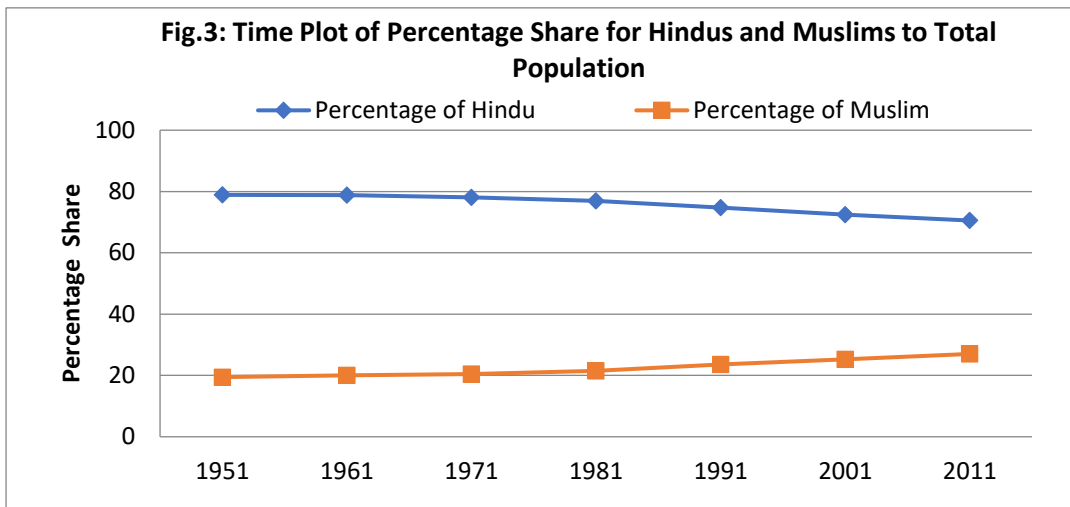
Explanation of Table 2, Fig.1 and Fig. 2: As seen in the Table 2, Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 above, the percentages of Decadal Growth of Hindu are 32.63 in 1951-61, 25.75 in 1961-71, 21.37 in 1971-81, 21.09 in 1981-91, 14.23 in 1991-2001 and 10.81 in 2001-2011 while the percentages of Decadal Growth of Muslim are 36.48 in 1951-61, 29.76 in 1961-71, 29.55 in 1971-81, 36.89 in 1981-91, 25.91 in 1991-2001 and 21.81 in 2001-2011. The percentages of Decadal Growth of Muslim are always higher than that of Hindu in every

census year. In Figure 1, the red Bars for Muslim are always bigger than green Bars for Hindu. It is seen that the gap between the Hindu and Muslim was 3.85 in 1951-61. These gaps are widening, it is 4.01 in 1961-71, 8.18 in 1971-81, 15.8 in 1981-91, 11.68 in 1991-01 and 11 in 2001-11 while their percentages of relative growth between Hindu and Muslim with respect to Hindu are 11.8 in 1951-61, 15.6 in 1961-71, 38.3 in 1971-81, 74.9 in 1981-91, 82.1 in 1991-2001 and 101.8 in 2001-2011 respectively. The Gaps between Hindu and Muslim in percentage of Decadal Growth are increasing gradually excepting 2001-11, where it is slightly decreasing. The highest percentage of Decadal Growth of Muslim is 36.89 in 1981-91, where the gap between Hindu and Muslim in percentage of Decadal Growth is 15.8. The percentages of decadal growth for both Hindu and Muslim are decreasing but that of Hindu is decreasing more than that of Muslim, though it is more in 1981-91 than 1971-1981 in respect of Muslim. Again, Percentage of Relative Growth between Hindu and Muslim with respect to Hindu is widening more and more on account of which its curve is upward rising sharply seen in Fig. 3.

Table-3: Percentage Shares of Hindus and Muslims in West Bengal Since 1951

Census	Total population	Hindu	Muslim	Percentage of Hindu	Percentage of Muslim
1951	26,299,980	20,751,412	5,118,269	78.902767	19.46111366
1961	34,926,279	27,523,358	6,985,287	78.804152	20.00008933
1971	44,312,011	34,611,864	9,064,338	78.109441	20.45571346
1981	54,580,647	42,007,159	11,743,259	76.963468	21.51542652
1991	68,077,965	50,866,624	16,075,836	74.718191	23.61386096
2001	80,176,197	58,104,835	20,240,543	72.471428	25.24507741
2011	91,276,115	64,385,546	24,654,825	70.539315	27.0112559

Source: Calculated from Table-1. It may be Subject to human error.



Constructed from Table 3.

From the above Table 3 and Fig. 3, it is evident that the curve of census-wise percentage share for Hindus in total population is downward sloping, indicating that it has been reducing gradually, though the State's total population is increasing. But the curve of census-wise percentage share for Muslims of the total population is upward sloping. It indicates that the percentage share of Muslims of total population has been increasing gradually. As a result, both curves are getting closer and closer to one another and will eventually intersect in the near future. Stated differently, census data indicates that the percentage of Muslims is increasing while the percentage of Hindus is decreasing. This means that both curves will pass through each other in future censuses, with the Muslim curve cutting the Hindu curve and moving higher (Mandal, 2024)¹⁵.

Question arises after how many years; the Hindu population will be equal to the Muslim Population.

To find out the exact point of time on the basis of the census data, we have to depend on compound population growth formula.

Mathematical Explanations

If it is considered the span of 60 years from 1951 to 2011, the average growth rate can be calculated first with the following formula.

$$P_t = P_0 (1+r\%)^n$$

Where $t = 2011$, $0 = 1951$, $r =$ Compound Population Growth rate and $n =$ number of years. The equation is also known as geometric law of population growth. Malthus, in his classic treatise on population in 1798, had postulated that population grows geometrically, and therefore, population following such pattern of growth is sometimes called the Malthusian Population (Pathak and Ram,

1998)¹⁴. Now, the Compound Population Growth rate of Hindus and Muslims is calculated separately below.

Hindu Population	Muslim Population
$P_{2011} = P_{1951} (1+r_H\%)^n$ Here, $P_{1951} = 20,751,412$, $P_{2011} = 64,385,546$, $n = 60$ [Where, P_{2011} = Hindu Population of 2011 census, P_{1951} = Hindu Population of 1951 census and r_H = Compound Population Growth Rate for Hindu] or, $64,385,546 = 20,751,412 (1 + r_H\%)^{60}$ or, $3.102706746 = (1 + r_H\%)^{60}$ or, $1.019050435 = 1 + r_H\%$ or, $r_H/100 = 0.019050435$ $\therefore r_H = 1.9050435\%$ Therefore, the continuous compound growth rate of 60 years from 1951 to 2011 for Hindu = 1.9050435 %.	$P_{2011} = P_{1951} (1+r_M\%)^n$ Here, $P_0 = 5,118,269$, $P_t = 24,654,825$, $n = 60$ [Where, P_{2011} = Muslim Population of 2011 census, P_{1951} = Muslim Population of 1951 census and r_M = Compound Population Growth Rate for Muslim] or, $24,654,825 = 5,118,269 (1 + r_M\%)^{60}$ or, $4.817024076 = (1 + r_M\%)^{60}$ or, $1.026548912 = 1 + r_M\%$ or, $r_M/100 = 0.026548912$ $\therefore r_M = 2.6548912\%$ Therefore, the continuous compound growth rate of 60 years from 1951 to 2011 for Muslim = 2.6548912 %.
Simple annual general growth rate from 1951 to 2011 for Hindu Population is 3.50% while that for Muslim Population is 6.36%. But Simple annual general growths rate for all Population from 1951 to 2011 is 4.12%. Therefore, simple annual general growth rate from 1951 to 2011 for Hindu Population is much less than that of Muslim Population .	
It is seen from the calculation that $r_{Hindu} < r_{Muslim}$.	

As $r_{Hindu} < r_{Muslim}$, question arises after how many years, the Hindu population equals to Muslim population in West Bengal, i.e. $P_{Hindu} = P_{Muslim}$. Let us now calculate with the help of following formula.

$P_{Hindu} = P_{Muslim}$ at what value of n
Here, $P_{nH} = P_{0H} (1 + r_H\%)^n$ and $P_{nM} = P_{0M} (1 + r_M\%)^n$

$$\text{If } P_{\text{Hindu}} (P_{nH}) = P_{\text{Muslim}} (P_{nM})$$

$$\therefore P_{0H} (1 + r_H\%)^n = P_{0M} (1 + r_M\%)^n$$

$$\text{or, } P_{0H} (1 + r_H/100)^n = P_{0M} (1 + r_M/100)^n$$

Where, $P_{0H} = 64,385,546$ (Hindu Population of 2011 Census), $P_{0M} = 24,654,825$ (Muslim Population of 2011 Census), $r_H/100 = 0.019050435$, $r_M/100 = 0.026548912$, $P_{nH} = \text{Hindu Population at } n \text{ year}$, $P_{nM} = \text{Muslim Population at } n \text{ year}$, and $n = ?$

Therefore,

$$64,385,546 (1.019050435)^n = 24,654,825 (1.026548912)^n$$

$$\text{Or, } 2.611478524 = (1.0073582982)^n$$

$$\text{Or, } n = \log_{1.0073582982} 2.611478524$$

$$\therefore n = 130.9329793 \text{ years.}$$

Therefore, $n = 130 \text{ years } 11 \text{ months } 6 \text{ days.}$

It proves on the basis of census data that after these time periods, the population of Hindus will be equal to the population of Muslims in West Bengal (Self Calculation may be subject to error).

FINDINGS

1. The mathematical calculation proves that the populations of the Hindus and the Muslims will be equal after 130 years, 11 months. But on the basis of the recent trend of an increase in the Muslim population, it can be predicted that the Muslim population will be equal to the Hindu population within 60 years in West Bengal.
2. In 1941, Bengal's Muslim population was 29.48%; it dropped down to 19.46% in 1951, and after that, it kept increasing. In 2011, it rose to 27.01%, and as of today, it is more than 30 or 35%.
3. There are continued migrations of Muslims from Bangladesh and Myanmar into West Bengal, as claimed by many politicians. These migrated people spread out throughout the country. Due to migration of Muslims, the population of Muslims in some districts of the State is significantly greater than that of the Hindus. This suggests that the supposed large-scale Muslims 'infiltration' from Bangladesh and Myanmar to West Bengal is supported by the local politicians, local Muslims, or previously migrated Muslims.
4. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that marginalized or economically disadvantaged, as well as poorly educated or less educated Muslims, tend to have a higher



number of offspring, perpetuating an unending cycle that remains uninterrupted. In certain localized areas, properties belonging to Hindus have been incinerated, compelling them to evacuate regions such as the recent Beldanga incident in the Murshidabad District of West Bengal.

5. The influx of Muslims into the State is obtaining essential documents such as Aadhar and Voter ID cards through covert means, thereby they are undermining the intended implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the State.
6. At the same time, the illegally migrated Muslims change their names and take a Hindu name and enter into a matrimony relation with non-Muslim females. They possess extensive tracts of land, thereby breaking the social disorder and disharmony. The illegally migrated Muslims are not friends of India. This unbalanced demographic transition in **WEST BENGAL** invites so many problems. The State as well as the Central Governments have to spend a major part of the National Income to solve the problems, and thereby it hinders the expected development of the State as well as of India.

PREDICTION

1. The equilibrium between Hindu and Muslim communities will be projected to be disrupted in the near future. Current demographic trends suggest that Hindus may be compelled to vacate their residences within the next five decades, when the Muslim population surpasses the 50% threshold in the State.
2. The foreboding prediction, extending over a time frame of 130 years, is anticipated to materialize imminently within 50 years if the illegal migration of Muslims from Bangladesh and Myanmar is going so.
3. But the question arises, where will the Hindu go? There is no single Hindu country in the world, whereas 57 Muslim countries exist in the world, having so many Muslim organisations.
4. For the measurable conditions of the Hindu, who is responsible? Who will look after this matter? The author is not against Muslims. The Muslims are our good friends. I am against those who mislead our Muslim brothers, favour illegal migrations, and the illiterate people who believe in growing the population.
5. As per Pareto optimality theory, resources are allocated efficiently and cannot be reallocated to make one person better off without making another person worse off. The State of West Bengal is approaching in the opposite direction to the Pareto optimality theory.



6. If proper protection is not taken, West Bengal will be the second Jammu and Kashmir State, where the Hindus were once in number, but now the Hindus are very nominal in number.

SUGGESTIONS

1. The State and Central Governments should take necessary steps against the unfavourable and unbalanced demographic transition and illegal migration on a priority basis, otherwise the development of India will not be achieved up to the expectations. Demographic transition in due course is going naturally, but it should be balanced, otherwise, it hampers the development of India.
2. Strategic point of view, West Bengal is more sensitive. Central Government should give special attention in time, otherwise China and Bangladesh will take opportunity to create disturbance through the illegal migration as China and Bangladesh will never be our friends.
3. Population Control Bill should be passed as early as possible for balanced demographic transition as a roadmap of developed economy and to make 'New India 2047'. The population policy should aim not only to address the population challenge but also to improve the lives of the poor in meaningful ways. West Bengal's population dynamics are complex and require thoughtful and effective policy interventions.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

Mathematical studies indicate that the number of Muslims and Hindus will equal one another in 130 years and eleven months. But with the current rate of Muslim population increase, this equality will come earlier or within 60 years or less. To raise the awareness of the rapidly growing Muslim population, including their illegal migration from Bangladesh and Myanmar with its detrimental effects on the state's development, policymakers, planners, bureaucrats, academicians, and scholars can find suitable solutions in this research findings and conclusions. The study can help to develop new strategies for managing the balanced expansion of the Muslim and Hindu populations.

CONCLUSION

West Bengal has historically embraced a syncretic and secular culture with Hindus and Muslims living peacefully together for many decades. The marginalised Muslims in certain areas should be addressed through positive government initiatives, rather than demonizing them for narrow electoral gains. However, the problems are often traced to the issue of illegal migration, especially from Bangladesh and Myanmar. It should be solved. Balanced demographic transition of the population is essential for promoting



sustainable economic development, as rapid global population growth puts immense pressure on natural resources like arable land, water, energy, and biodiversity. Population matter advocates for an optimal balance that ensures a good quality of life, focusing on reasonable living standards free from hunger or insecurity.

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