

CHAPTER TWO

NORTH 24-PARGANAS DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL  
(Venue of the Present Study)

## 2.1. Ecology :

North 24-Parganas District is very close to the City of Calcutta and is situated in the northern side of this City. It is located at 89° latitude and 23° longitude in the easternmost part of the State of West Bengal. It is adjacent to the International Border of Bangladesh, the Western part of which is on the river Ganges. It covers an area of 4,094 sq.kms (Fig. 2.1) and its total population is 72,80,261 (District Census Report, 1991).

The 1991 Census Report reveals that out of the total population, 37,00,545 persons live in the urban areas while 35,79,716 inhabitants reside in the rural areas. In terms of percentage, the urban population of the district is 51.23% and rural population is 48.77%. Thus the urban areas of the district is more thickly populated than the rural areas. The district consists of four subdivisions, viz., Barrackpore, Barasat, Bangaon and Basirhat. The district has 59 towns (including 4 subdivisional towns) of which 24 are statutory towns administered by the board of municipal commissioners and the rest 35 towns are nonmunicipal census towns. The four subdivisional towns are of the status of class 1 towns. The total number of villages in the district are 1,613 administered by 218 Gram Panchayats (GPS).

Sex ratio of the district is 879 females per 1,000 males. These ratios in the rural and urban areas are 879 and 907 females per thousand males respectively.

The district has recently been declared as fully literate district (80%) according to the National Literacy Mission (NLM), Government of India. A person who can read, write and communicate in any language has only been considered literate according to the Census terminology. A person who can only read but is unable to write or who can only sign his name somehow is not qualified as literate. It is not necessary, however, that a person to be qualified as literate should have any formal education or should have passed any minimum standard of education. According to Census terminology, all the children about 6 years old attending a school or who somehow picked up reading and writing were considered as illiterate.

Spread over all along the river Ganges the district has one of the major industrial belts of the State.

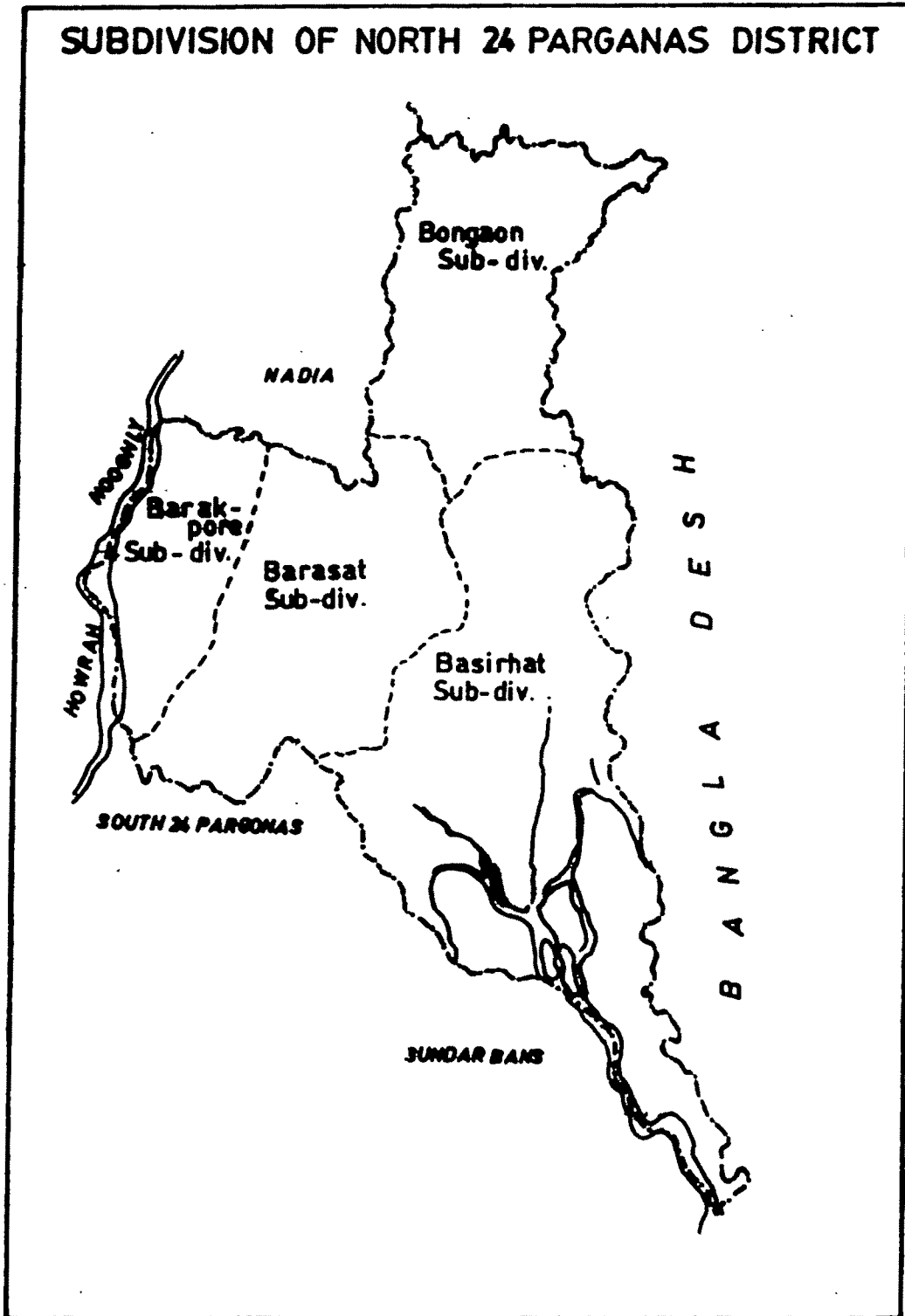


Fig: 2.1; Outline map of North 24- Parganas District.

According to the local administration, those who work for 183 days during the year in economically productive work are major workers. As per Census Report 1991, the percentage of major workers was only 28.20 in the district. Out of this percentage 92.40 per cent were males and only 7.60 per cent were females. Of the main workers 51.11 per cent were of urban areas of which 91.33% were males and 8.67% were females. They were engaged in different types of jobs, e.g., professionals, executives, administrative, clerical, teaching, industrial labours, other urban oriented jobs and business. 48.89% were rural workers. Of them 93.52% were males and 6.48% were females and they were engaged as cultivators, agricultural labourers and employed in cottage industries (Table 2.2). Apart from these workers there were a large percentage of nonworkers usually found in different social strata of the population. They were students, housewives, retired persons, beggars, inmates of institutions and dependents.

Vital facts of demographic statistics revealed in 1991 Census has been reported in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 below.

Table 2.1 : Demographic Statistics of North 24-Parganas

<u>District Vs. West Bengal</u>				
	<u>Area(sq.kms)</u>	<u>No. of Towns</u>	<u>No. of Vill.</u>	<u>Sexr.(Fp10000M)</u>
West Bengal	88,752	291	41,112	917
North 24-Pargs.	409,382	59	1,613	90
<u>Total Population</u>				
	<u>Persons</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	
West Bengal	67,982,732	35,461,898	32,520,834	
North 24-Parganas	7,281,881	3,818,197	3,463,684	
<u>Literate Population</u>				
	<u>Persons</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	
West Bengal	32,719,340	20,053,418	32,665,922	
North 24-Parganas	4,128,693	2,434,721	1,693,972	

Table 2.2 : Other Statistics of North 24-Parganas

	<u>Dist. Eco. Percentage of Population</u>							
	<u>Population</u>			<u>Main Workers</u>			<u>Literacy Rate</u>	
	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>F</u>
Urban	53.22	46.78	51.11	91.33	8.67	62.89	57.18	42.82
Rural	61.61	48.39	48.89	93.52	6.48	37.11	62.01	37.99

Source: Census Handbook - Provisional, Series 26, West Bengal.

## 2.2. Total Literacy Campaign Programme Set-up of North 24-Parganas District :

The 1991 Census revealed the effective literacy rate (not counting the population segment between 0-6 years) to be around 66.81%. Though this figure is apparently quite high in comparison to others districts of the State, the literacy spread was found to be very uneven with significant pockets of illiteracy among the traditionally disadvantaged groups like women, scheduled castes and tribes and religious/linguistic minorities. Unlike many others, this district has non-literates in five major Indian languages, e.g., Bengali, Hindi, Urdu, Oriya and Telegu. The present study is restricted to only the Bengali speaking neo-literates.

Total number of literate persons in district prior to the launching of the TLC was about 41.29 lakhs. Not including the children (1.5 lakhs) between the age group 0-6 years, the effective literacy rate was around 66.81% (Statistical Database for Literacy, National Institute of Adult Education, New Delhi). A house to house survey was started on July, 1991 for the enumeration of the number of families in a particular Block/Municipality during taking the 1991 Census as bench mark. The results of this survey are summarised in Table 2.3 below & in fig 2.2 below

**Table 2.3 : Showing the Subdivisionwise Break-up of Learners According to the Status and Sex in the North 24-Parganas District**

(Only rounded figures have been indicated)

Name of the Subdivision	N.F.	Male	Female	Total
Barrackpore	21,000	70,000	95,000	1,86,000
Barasat	27,000	1,03,000	1,26,000	2,56,000
Basirhat	52,000	1,45,000	1,83,000	3,80,000
Bongaon	18,000	71,000	89,000	1,78,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,18,000</b>	<b>3,89,000</b>	<b>4,93,000</b>	<b>10,00,000 Lakhs</b>

Of these, Bengali speaking learners numbered about 9,20,000. A sum of Rs.558 lakhs was sanctioned by the National Literacy Mission to the district to cover there 10.05 lakh learners in February, 1991 (Final Report, External Evaluation Committee of TLC, North 24-Parganas District Saksharata Samity, West Bengal).

A five-tier structure was devised for the implementation of the programme and it reached from the district to the booth-level committee which was responsible for maintaining an organic contact with the learners and the volunteers. The committee reported to the Gram Panchayat (GP/Ward Level Committee). The GP/ward Level Committee was answerable to the Block Level/Municipality Level Saksharata Samity, which was under district supervision of the Subdivisional Level Saksharata Samity. The entire structure delineated above, functioned under the overall guidance and supervision of the Zilla Saksharata Samity.

The composition of the Samities at each level was balanced and broad based with an adequate mix of public representatives, government officials, non-governmental organisations, mass organisation and representativeness of all major political parties. This was done in order to facilitate the spirit of collective responsibilities and political voluntarism.

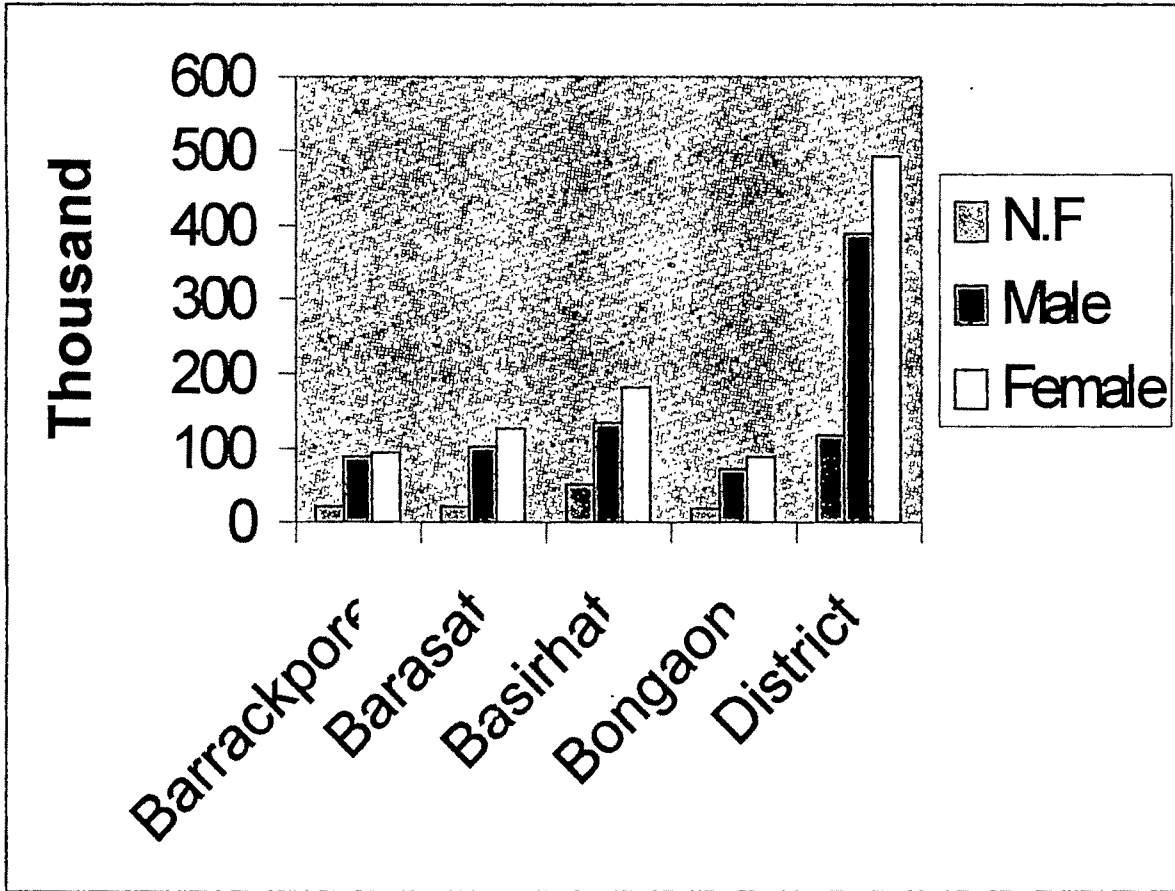


Figure:2.2 Showing The Number Of learners (Adult Male, Female, Non- Formal) According To The Subdivisions And District As A Whole

After setting up the five-tier structure, venues were made identified where about 10-12 learners could be imparted the basic literacy skills under reasonable conditions. School rooms, Clubs, Union offices, Municipality buildings, G.P. offices, all possible venues were explored and used. In addition, number of socially conscious people came forward to offer parts of their dwelling houses for these purposes. During the peak implementation period, around 8.92 lakh learners were covered in about 51,000 learning centres spread over the entire district. Before that 70 key persons (KP) were trained by the State Resource Centre (SRC). The KPs thereafter built up a cadre of 3,085 Master Trainers (MT), 97,468 Voluntary Trainers (VT) and 9,747 Voluntary Supervisors (VS) throughout the district with proper training. About 10 learners were tagged to each LC under a particular VT.

As the present study deals only with the objective evaluation of the learning gains of the learners in the learning centre on vernacular (Bengali), reading and writing and numeracy (Arithmetic), a careful scrutiny of these subjects and their component areas each of which has been prescribed to develop certain minimum abilities in the learners which can be easily measured by suitable devices. The findings of the said scrutiny have been incorporated in Table 2.4.



**Table 2.4 :** Major Subjects, Component Areas and Minimum Abilities Expected from the Learners (National Literacy Mission Syllabus, as scrutinised)

Subjects	Component Areas	Minimum Abilities Expected
Bengali (Writing)	<p>Personal identification : covering learner's own name, occupation, name of the learning centres, gram panchayats/municipality etc.</p> <p>Understanding comprehension : Ability of reading (silently) and understanding of the matter.</p> <p>Identifications of objects : Recognising different types of animals, fruits, vegetables, birds, flowers, etc.</p>	<p>Can write learner's own name, age, sex, occupation, etc.</p> <p>Can read silently and understand the matter.</p> <p>Recognition of different types of animals, fruits, vegetables, birds, flowers, etc.</p>
Reading (Loud)	<p>Writing ability : Dictation, writing letters (only for age group 15 and above).</p> <p>Reading aloud with comprehension, simple sentences at a speed of 30 words per minute.</p>	<p>Can write dictation, letters, etc.</p> <p>Can read comprehensions, simple sentences.</p>
Numeracy	<p>Counting numbers : Covering numerals 1 to 100.</p> <p>Computational ability: Working out simple addition, subtraction, multiplication and divisions (Sums upto two digits).</p> <p>Solving of mathematical problems: Working knowledge of weights, measures, currency, distance, time, proportion interest as appropriate to the life style of learners.</p>	<p>Can count numbers from 1 to 100.</p> <p>Work out simple addition, subtraction, multiplication and divisions.</p> <p>Work out knowledge of weights, measures, currency, distance, time, proportion.</p>