

Chapter– 7

State of Muslim Women Education in West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh Villages

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**STATE OF MUSLIM WOMEN EDUCATION IN
WEST BENGAL (INDIA) AND BANGLADESH**

7.1: Literacy Status and Educational Standards

Comprehensive data from the study villages relating to literacy status and standard of the villagers have been gathered through field investigation. The major findings are:

Table-7.1.10: Rates of literacy of Muslim population by sex in the study villages.

Age and Sex of Literate Population	Literacy in West Bengal Villages (%)			Literacy in Bangladesh Villages (%)		
	GHOSHPARA	NALPUR	TOTAL	GANGACHARA	BETUAIL	TOTAL
a. Rate of Literacy (7 ⁺ years)						
i. Male	60.8	86.68	80.12	68.33	74.2	70.7
ii. Female	41.4	75	66.72	53.77	57.72	55.3
iii. Total	51.56	81.06	73.7	61.37	66.54	63.42
b. Adult Literacy (15 ⁺ years)						
i. Male	45.9	80.99	72.87	58.99	67.1	62.41
ii. Female	23	65.75	55.58	41.75	46.15	43.54
iii. Total	34.89	73.79	64.67	50.83	57.51	53.6

Table-7.1.10 shows that among the study villages Nalpur holds the topmost position for both the boys and girls regarding rates of literacy for 7⁺ years' population as well as adult population (15⁺ years). It further discloses that Betuail holds the second position while Gangachara and Ghoshpara occupy the third and fourth positions respectively under similar consideration. So, with regard literacy status West Bengal villages occupy both the highest and lowest places while the Bangladeshi villages that are placed at the middle positions. The above table also discloses that the literacy status of the villagers of Ghoshpara is characterized by higher gender discrimination. Because, they attain 52 per cent of literacy rates for 7⁺ years' population comprising 61 per cent for males and 41 per cent for females and 35 per cent literacy rates for the adult population comprising 46 per cent for males and 35 per cent for females.

Hence, Ghoshpara executes 20 per cent gender gap in literacy rate for the population of 7⁺ years and 23 per cent gender gap in literacy rate for the adult population. As a matter of fact, among the study villages under investigation, Ghoshpara not only holds the lowest place in literacy status but also records the highest gender gap with regard to literacy rates. Whereas the situation of Nalpur is totally different as it shows a reverse trend in terms of literacy rates. For instances, with regard to literacy rates for the population of 7⁺ years this village attains 87 per cent for males, 75 per cent for females and 81 per cent for persons. Similarly it exposes quite encouraging state of literacy rates for the adult population that is recorded 81 per cent for males, 66 per cent for females and 74 per cent for persons. So, Nalpur records 12 per cent gender gap in terms of literacy rate for 7⁺ years' population and 15 per cent for adult (15⁺ years) population. Thus the village records the highest rates of literacy both for males and females and exhibits the lowest gender discrimination.

Considering the national level literacy rates we may think that the existing situation is satisfactory for Nalpur but quite awful for Ghoshpara. But the overall literacy abstract with reference to Bangladeshi villages is not awful like Ghoshpara, because the Bangladeshi villages unitedly records 63 per cent of literacy rates for the population of 7⁺ years comprising 71 per cent for males and 55 per cent for females. And with regards to adult population the said villages combinedly attain 62 per cent literacy rate for males, 44 per cent literacy rate for females and 54 per cent literacy rate for total persons. Hence, we may assume that there is consistency between the two study villages of Bangladesh with regard to their literacy status.

As a matter of fact, the overall literacy status of the villagers belonging to the study villages of Bangladesh is significantly higher than Ghoshpara, but distinctly lower in comparison with Nalpur. But statistically it is evident that the study villages of West Bengal combinedly records higher rates of literacy than those of Bangladeshi villages with regard to 7+ years' population as well as adult population. Thus the combined statistics as revealed in the above table shows a comparative upward position for both the Muslim males and females of West Bengal with regard to their literacy rates. But this numerical presentation does not expose the real implications of relative educational status of the common Muslim girls of West Bengal. Because, we have seen that among the two study villages of West Bengal the greater one (named Nalpur) is situated in a semi-urban area and characterized with extraordinarily greater percentage of literacy that is also significantly higher than the national standard. Hence, in view of reality we can say that the Bangladeshi girls are standing one step forward than the girls of Ghoshpara while they are lagging one step behind than the girls of Nalpur.

However, the overall literacy situation of the Muslim girls and women in comparison with their male counterparts may be treated quite disheartening. Because, all the villages under investigation are characterized with remarkable gender discrimination in respect to literacy rate. Another important point to note that among the study-villages Nalpur holds the topmost position followed by Betuail, Gangachara and Ghoshpara with regards to per capita yearly income of their inhabitants. Hence, considering the ambient facts we can sum up that the rate of literacy among the Muslims is quite harmonious with their overall economic solvency.

However, a clear-cut manifestation on the levels of literacy standard attained by the study-villagers is very much essential for realizing the real implications of their educational status. Hence the following table is presented.

Table-7.1.11: Educational attainment of Muslim females (5⁺) at different levels.

Level of Attainment	Muslim Girls in West Bengal Villages (%)			Muslim Girls in Bangladesh Villages (%)		
	GHOSHPARA	NALPUR	TOTAL	GANGACHARA	BETUAIL	TOTAL
i. Primary Level	31.8	35.2	34.3	22.7	42.5	30.5
ii. Secondary Level	10.2	26.0	21.9	20.4	12.7	17.4
iii. SF/SSC/HS Level	3.4	10.6	8.7	9.3	3.0	6.8
iv. Graduation/ PG Level	0.6	3.0	2.4	1.5	1.1	1.3
v. Combined	46.0	74.8	67.3	53.9	59.3	56.0

The table shows that on an average 67 per cent Muslim girls of schooling age (5⁺ years) under the study villages of West Bengal comprising 46 per cent for Ghoshpara and 75 per cent for Nalpur have attained formal education at various levels. But 56 per cent of Muslim girls of the same age group under the study villages of Bangladesh comprising 54 per cent for Gangachara and 59 per cent for Betuail are found educated up to different levels of education. So, regarding combined attainment in formal education for the age group 5⁺ years, the Bangladeshi girls are lagging behind the girls of West Bengal by 11 per cent.

The above table further discloses that the Muslim girls in the study villages of West Bengal jointly record 34.3 per cent attainment at primary level, 22.9 per cent attainment at secondary level, 8.7 per cent attainment at higher secondary level and 2.4 per cent attainments at upper levels. But the Bangladeshi Muslim girls unitedly record 30.5 per cent, 17.4 per cent, 6.8 per cent and 1.3 per cent attainments at primary, secondary, higher secondary and higher levels respectively.

So, it is statistically revealed that the Bangladeshi Muslim girls are lagging behind the Muslim girls of West Bengal by 3.8 per cent at primary level, 4.5 per cent at secondary level, 1.9 at higher secondary level and 1.1 per cent at upper level. But again we can assume that the said statistics do not indicate the real implication of educational status of the Muslim girls in general. Because, the study villages of West Bengal are characterized with severe inconsistency regarding girls' attainment percentages while in same aspect we observe agreeable consistency between the study villages of Bangladesh.

For instances 26 per cent Muslim girls of Nalpur have attained secondary level of education which is 2.5 times higher than that of Ghoshpara. Similarly 10.6 per cent of them have attained the higher secondary level of education which is 3 times higher than that of Ghoshpara. We further notice that 3 per cent Muslim girls from Nalpur have attained post higher secondary or upper level of education which is 5 times higher than that of Ghoshpara. Thus Nalpur shows a large-scale difference in comparison with Ghoshpara regarding educational attainment of girls at upper levels. Contextually it may be noted that discrepancies are also disclosed between the study villages of Bangladesh regarding Muslim girls' educational attainment at different levels, but such discrepancies are seemed insignificant in comparison with the study villages of West Bengal.

Hence, considering the above facts we may conclude that in respect of formal educational attainment the Bangladeshi girls are standing one step forward than the girls of Ghoshpara while they are lagging one step behind the girls of Nalpur.

7.2: Rates of Enrolment

The enrolment situation of any population may be considered an important determinant to judge its state of education. So, attention has been focussed on this issue to perceive a comparative state of overall enrolment scenario of the entire population belonging to the study-villages. The findings are furnished below:

Table-7.2.12: Sex-wise enrolment in formal education by the Muslim villagers.

Sex of the Enrollees	Enrolment in West Bengal Villages (%)			Enrolment in Bangladesh Villages (%)		
	GHOSHPARA	NALPUR	TOTAL	GANGACHARA	BETUAIL	TOTAL
i. Male	53.42	76.8	70.33	58.4	67.58	61.93
ii. Female	38.21	66.9	59.01	47.12	52.65	49.29
iii. Total (all ages)	46.19	72.08	64.94	53.07	60.41	55.92

The percentages of the above table have been computed on the basis of total enrollees comprised of continuing students and drop-outs. From the table it is clearly evident that in an average 65 per cent of total population comprising 70 per cent male and 59 per cent female belonging to the study-villages of West Bengal are enrolled into educational institutions. With regard to the combined enrolment for the study villages of Bangladesh the percentages are 62 per cent for males, 49 per cent for females and 56 per cent for total persons. Thus the villagers of the study-villages of Bangladesh are standing aback in overall enrolment situation in comparison with that of West Bengal. It may be further noted that the above table sets Nalpur, Betuail, Gangachara and Ghoshpara in the first, second, third and fourth places respectively as per enrolment hierarchy of their population into formal institutions. So, West Bengal villages have secured both the highest and lowest places while villages of Bangladesh have attained the middle positions.

7.3: Net and Gross Enrolment Ratios

In terms of net primary enrolment ratios we notice an opposite scenario that may be fitted in the following table.

Table-7.3.13: Primary school enrolment ratios of Muslims by sex in the study villages.

Mode of Enrolment and Sex of Enrollees	Enrolment Ratios in West Bengal Villages			Enrolment Ratios in Bangladesh Villages		
	GHOSHPARA	NALPUR	TOTAL	GANGACHARA	BETUAIL	TOTAL
a. Net Primary Enrolment						
i. Boy	94.0	80.72	85.71	75.86	85.29	78.51
ii. Girl	87.8	87.01	87.29	65.63	88.89	75.23
iii. Both	91.21	83.75	86.45	71.52	87.34	76.96
b. Gross Primary Enrolment						
i. Boy	110	100	103.76	88.6	135.29	101.65
ii. Girl	100	114.29	109.32	90.63	120	102.75
iii. Both	105.5	106.86	106.37	89.5	126.58	102.17

The above table shows that Ghoshpara occupies an encouraging position regarding net primary enrolment ratio which is recorded 94 per cent for boys, 88 per cent for girls and 91 per cent for total persons. Thus Ghoshpara, among the villages under study are held at the topmost place for the boys and second top position for the girls in respect to their net primary enrolment ratios. The table also shows that under similar consideration Betuail occupies the second top position while Nalpur occupies the third and Gangachara occupies the fourth. It is interesting to note that the net primary enrolment ratio for girls are found significantly higher than those of boys at Nalpur and Betuail. For instance, with regard to net primary enrolment ratios Betuail has recorded 85 per cent for boys, 89 per cent for girls while at Nalpur it is 81 per cent for boys and 87 per cent for girls. So, Betuail holds the topmost position with regard to net primary enrolment for girls. In contrary the other study village of Bangladesh i.e. Gangachara, has shown a sorrow figure concerning net primary school enrolment ratios which is recorded 76 per cent for males, 66 per cent for girls and 72 per cent for persons.

The table further discloses that as regards the gross primary enrolment Ghoshpara records 110 per cent for boys, 100 per cent for girls and 106 per cent for persons. For Nalpur it is 100 per cent for boys, 114 per cent for girls and 107 per cent for total persons. We found that Gangachara records the lowest gross primary enrolment ratio of 90 per cent for its total persons comprising 89 per cent for boys and 91 per cent for girls. In contrary Betuail records the highest ratios of gross primary school enrolment which is 135 per cent for boys, 120 per cent for girls and 127 per cent for total persons. As a result the above table sets Betuail, Nalpur, Ghoshpara and Gangachara in first, second, third and fourth positions respectively in terms of gross primary enrolment ratios for the girls. So, it is clearly manifested that Bangladeshi villages have secured both the highest and lowest positions while the West Bengal villages have attained the middle positions in respect of girls' enrolment ratios.

It is obviously a reverse scenario in comparison with the rates of literacy and enrolment stated earlier (tables-7.1.10. and 7.2.12.). Another interesting point may be explained in connection with the overall enrolment scenarios of the study-villages. Because, we observe that different NGOs are working in all the study villages except Ghoshpara. Those NGOs usually render services for promoting girls' enrolment at all levels. Here it is evident that Nalpur has recorded higher percentages for girls than boys with regard to both net and gross primary enrolment ratios. Similarly higher percentages of girls than boys are evident in Betuail and Gangachara concerning net primary enrolment ratio and gross primary enrolment ratio respectively. These are may be the positive impact of working NGOs.

7.4: Age of Entry and Tenure of Schooling

Age of entry and tenure of schooling with regard to enrolled populations (continuing students and dropped-outs) render very critical role in determining overall educational situation of any specific region or state. So, comprehensive information on these events have been gathered which is presented in the following table:

Table-7.4.14: Age of Entry and Tenure of Schooling (in respect of enrolled population)

Sex of Enrollees	Study Villages of West Bengal			Study Villages of Bangladesh		
	GHOSHPARA	NALPUR	TOTAL	GANGACHARA	BETUAIL	TOTAL
a. Age of Entry (months)						
i. Boy	75	67	69	69	66	68
ii. Girl	78	72	73	71	71	71
iii. Both	76	69	71	70	68	69
b. Tenure of Schooling (years)						
i. Male	4.7	6.7	6.3	6.5	6.7	6.6
ii. Female	3.8	6.9	6.3	6.0	4.0	5.2
iii. Total	4.3	6.8	6.3	6.3	5.6	6.0

The above table indicates that on average Muslim girls at Ghoshpara enter the school at the age of 78 months while it is 72 months for the girls of Nalpur and 71 months for the rest. So, Muslim girls in the study villages enter into formal education from 11 months to 18 months later than the internationally recognized age (5 years). The table also shows that Muslim girls of the study villages of West Bengal enter 4 months later than their male counterparts. The same trend is also prevalent in the study villages of Bangladesh where the girls are found 2 months delayed in comparison with the boys in entering into formal education. With regard to mean age of entry at formal educational institutions we found that on an average Bangladeshi boys and girls are advanced by 1 month and 2 months respectively than the boys and girls belonging to the study villages of West Bengal. Yet we may think the whole situation is disheartening for the entire study villages.

As regards the average tenure of schooling we notice that the females are lagging behind their male counterparts in all the study villages except in Nalpur. But it is interesting fact to note that the existing gender gaps are not wide in the study villages except in Betuail. For instances, Ghoshpara records 4.3 years of average schooling tenure for its total enrolled population comprising 4.7 years for males and 3.8 years for females. But average tenure of schooling stands 6.8 years in Nalpur comprising 6.7 years for males and 6.9 years for females. Thus the West Bengal villages jointly records an average schooling tenure of 6.3 years both for males and females.

On the other hand Gangachara records 6.3 years of average schooling tenure for its total persons comprising 6.5 years for males and 6 years for females. We also notice that the average schooling tenure at Betuail is 6.7 years for males against only 4 years for females and 5.6 years for total persons. Thus unequal scenes relating to tenure of schooling are exposed in the study villages of Bangladesh as we find minimal gender gap at Gangachara while the same is distinct at Betuail. However, the study villages of Bangladesh jointly records 6 years of average schooling tenure for total persons comprising 6.6 years for males and 5.2 years for females. So, with regard to tenure of schooling the collated statistics divulges that Muslim girls of West Bengal are running ahead than Bangladeshi Muslim girls. It further shows that with regard to tenure of schooling Muslim girls are lagging behind the boys in Bangladesh while in West Bengal they are keeping pace with their counterparts. However, we may assume that the situation of Nalpur is quite exceptional regarding tenure of schooling as it discloses inconsistent facts with the national findings.

7.5: Drop-out and Stagnation

Continuation of women's education in the Muslim society depends largely on the kind of role they are likely to play in the family and society. In maximum cases we have noticed that parents educate their daughter with an end to make her good housewife and mother. As Muslim parents in the rural areas are apprehensive of sending their grown-up daughters to schools for various reasons, their daughters are often withdrawn from school at an early age. To examine the stages of drop-out in the study villages a table is furnished below.

Table-7.5.15: Muslim girls' stage of drop-out in the study villages.

Stage of Drop-outs	Drop-out Girls in West Bengal Villages (%)			Drop-out Girls in Bangladesh Villages (%)		
	GHOSHPARA	NALPUR	TOTAL	GANGACHARA	BETUAIL	TOTAL
i. Primary	53.57	42.85	44.11	34.66	66.66	49.74
ii. Secondary	39.28	46.20	45.38	51.49	31.1	41.88
iii. Tertiary	7.15	10.95	10.51	13.85	2.24	8.38
iv. Combined	100	100	100	100	100	100

The figures of the above table are based on the number of drop-outs at different levels of education. It shows that the Muslim girls belonging to the study-villages of West Bengal jointly record 44.11 per cent drop-out cases at primary level of education. At secondary level of education they record 45.38 per cent drop-out cases while at tertiary level it is only 10.51 per cent. Thus we find that the dropout cases are mainly happened at primary and secondary levels. We also notice a similar trend in the study villages of Bangladesh where the Muslim girls unitedly record 49.74 per cent drop-out cases at primary level, 41.88 per cent cases at secondary level and rest 8.38 per cent cases at tertiary level. The major difference between the two region is that in West Bengal the highest percentage of drop-out cases have occurred at secondary level while in Bangladesh it is happened at primary level.

7.6: Religious Education

Islam imposes some religious injunctions on every Muslim boy and girl when they attain maturity. Due to those injunctions religious education occupies the most important chapter in the life of every Muslim. Hence, it is needless to say that Islam attaches immense importance to acquisition and extension of knowledge. As a matter of fact education has been prescribed as compulsory for every man and woman. The common Muslims are mostly unaware of real injunctions with regard to educational accomplishment, yet as a common precept majority of them receive some sorts of religious education so that they can perform their obligatory prayers. So, the following table is presented to have a glance on the level of religious education of the Muslim girls:

Table-7.6.16: Level of religious erudition of Muslim females (15⁺).

Level of Religious Education	Percentage of Girls in West Bengal Villages			Percentage of Girls in Bangladesh Villages		
	GHOSHPARA	NALPUR	TOTAL	GANGACHARA	BETUAIL	TOTAL
i. Can read alphabets	18.58	31.77	28.63	26.32	25.64	26.04
ii. Studied only Ampara	8.85	22.1	18.95	23.86	20.51	22.5
iii. Fluency in reading Quran	8.85	12.43	11.58	13.33	13.33	13.33
iv. Understanding of Verses	-	0.83	0.63	0.7	-	0.42
v. Total Religious Educated	36.28	67.13	59.79	64.21	59.48	62.29

The above table shows that on an average about 60 per cent Muslim girls of 15 years and above under the study villages of West Bengal comprising 36 per cent for Ghoshpara and 67 per cent for Nalpur have religious education of various levels. But 62 per cent of Muslim girls of same age group under the study villages of Bangladesh comprising 64 per cent for Gangachara and 59 per cent for Betuail have accomplished religious learnings of different levels. So with regard to accomplishment in religious learning by the Muslim females of 15⁺ years, the study villages of West Bengal are lagging behind the Bangladeshi study-villages by 2 per cent.

The table also reveals that the trends of attainment in religious learning by the Muslim girls' are almost similar. Majority of them showed tendency towards studying up to Ampara (the last part of *Al-Quran*) as it is largely used in performing essential prayers. Although a small portion of them has the fluency to read the *AL-Quran*, expert in religious education is rarely found there. It is unpleasing to note that of the four study-villages we have identified only three women from Nalpur and another two from Gangachara who have developed within themselves agreeable expertise in religious erudition. These five women are educated in senior madrashas where they have studied the interpretation of Quranic verses and of some selected Hadiths.

In view of the above table Muslim girls of Ghoshpara may be identified otherwise for embarrassing performance in religious learning. Actually the Muslim population in this village has formed a peculiar mode of religious behaviour. During field study we have observed that the major portion of them normally abstain themselves from performing essential daily prayers. The most interesting fact is that in lieu of imposing proper urge on compulsory prayers they under the coverage of religious sentiment involve in such activities which is contradictory to Islam. As a matter of fact, the most important religious celebration considered by them is a five day programme consisting of *Shirni*, *Mela* and *Darga Darshan* that takes place at Dosh Darga during the *Hijri* month of *Muharram* every year.

However, analysing the above facts we may conclude that in respect of religious education the Bangladeshi girls are significantly forward than the girls of Ghoshpara while they are equally acquainted in religious learning in comparison with the girls of Nalpur.

7.7: *Situation of Girl Children*

The responsible mothers of tomorrow are the daughters of today. The forthcoming advancement of a nation lavishly depends on their present situation. In fact, no society has ever liberated itself economically, politically, or socially without a sound base of educated women. The following table is, therefore, presented to have a glance on the situation of girl children with regard to education:

Table-7.7.17: Education of girls (6-14 years) in the study villages.

Present Situation	Percentage of Girls in West Bengal Villages			Percentage of Girls in Bangladesh Villages		
	GHOSHPARA	NALPUR	TOTAL	GANGACHARA	BETUAIL	TOTAL
i. Girls enrolled into School	82.54	90.58	88.06	77.6	93.15	83.33
ii. Continuing Girls	77.78	79.71	79.1	75.2	83.56	78.28
iii. Drop-out Girls	4.76	10.87	8.96	2.4	9.59	5.05
iv. Non-enrolling Girls	17.46	9.42	11.94	22.4	6.85	16.67
v. Girls out of School	22.22	20.29	20.9	24.8	16.44	21.72

The above table shows that 88.06 per cent Muslim girls of age group 6-14 years under the study villages of West Bengal comprising 82.54 per cent for Ghoshpara and 90.58 per cent for Nalpur were initially enrolled for formal education. The rest 11.94 per cent girls comprising 17.46 per cent for Ghoshpara and 9.42 per cent for Nalpur do not enroll their names for formal education. But in course of time 9.42 per cent girls comprising 4.76 per cent for Ghoshpara and 10.87 per cent for Nalpur have been dropped out from the formal education. As a result at present 20.9 per cent Muslim girls in the study villages of West Bengal comprising 22.22 per cent for Ghoshpara and 20.29 per cent for Nalpur are remaining out of school. In view of the said statistics we may assume that the Muslim girls at Ghoshpara are somewhat backward in comparison with Nalpur with regard to their enrolment percentages while their position is almost similar with regard to their continuation into school.

On the other hand 83.33 per cent of Muslim girls of the same age group under the study villages of Bangladesh comprising 77.6 per cent for Gangachara and 93.15 per cent for Betuail were initially enrolled into formal educational institutions. The rest 16.67 per cent girls comprising 22.4 per cent for Gangachara and 6.85 per cent for Betuail do not enroll their names for formal education. But ultimately 5.05 per cent girls comprising 2.4 per cent for Gangachara and 9.59 per cent for Betuail have been dropped out from the formal education. As a result at present 21.72 per cent Muslim girls in the study villages of Bangladesh comprising 24.8 per cent for Gangachara and 16.44 per cent for Betuail are out of school. In view of the enrolment statistics we may assume that the Muslim girls at Gangachara are about 15 per cent backward than that of Betuail while they are lagging behind the girls of Betuail by about 8 per cent with regard to their continuation into school.

Table-7.7.17 also shows that with regard to enrolment percentage Betuail holds the topmost position followed by Nalpur, Ghoshpara and Gangachara. But we observe a reverse scenario in drop-out situation. Because, Gangachara records the lowest cases of drop-outs followed by Ghoshpara, Betuail and Nalpur. Thus ultimately we found that continuation of girl children in school ranges from 79 per cent to 84 per cent. The trend may be explained positively for the equilibrium tendency that is about to establish among the study villages. Despite these, the overall situation seems disheartening as we find more than one-fifth girls of 6 to 14 years belonging to the study villages are remaining out of school. However, considering the overall situation we may conclude that the situation of Muslim girl children in West Bengal and Bangladesh are equally inferior.

7.8: Inter Community Comparison

The facts of the foregoing discussion distinctly reveal the educational backwardness of Muslim women in comparison with their male counterparts. It is expected that an inter community comparison will help us to ascertain about how much the Muslim women are lagging behind or running ahead in comparison with the women belonging to Hinduism. In this connection it may be noted that so far the religious groups are concerned the study villages except Nalpur are inhabited by both the Hindu and the Muslim communities but none from any other creed. Exceptionally the population of Nalpur as included in this study is entirely composed of Muslim population. So, a table showing Hindu-Muslim comparison in the study villages with regard to female literacy is presented below.

Table-7.8.18: Hindu-Muslim Comparison with regard to Women Literacy (7⁺ years).

Study Villages	Rate of Female Literacy by Religion			Remarks
	Hindu	Muslim	Difference	
Ghoshpara (West Bengal)	56.41	41.40	15.01	Muslim women are lagging behind literacy than the Hindu women by 15.01 per cent.
Nalpur (West Bengal)	N.A.	75.0	N.A.	As entire population is composed of Muslims, comparison is not possible.
Gangachara (Bangladesh)	44.19	53.77	9.58	Hindu women are lagging behind literacy than the Muslim women by 9.58 per cent.
Betuail (Bangladesh)	44.12	57.72	13.6	Hindu women are lagging behind literacy than the Muslim women by 13.6 per cent.

The above table shows that the Muslim women are lagging behind in education than the Hindu women by 15.01 per cent at Ghoshpara. But in the study villages of Gangachara and Betuail they are running ahead in education than the Hindu women by 9.58 per cent and 13.6 per cent respectively. Thus it is evident that Muslim women in West Bengal (India) are distinctly lagging behind in education in comparison with the Hindu women while in Bangladesh they are running ahead than their Hindu compatriots.

We know that the Muslims are the largest minority community in West Bengal as well as in greater India but they are the absolute majority community in Bangladesh. So, in view of the findings revealed in table-7.8.18 we observe an agreeable relation between the majority-minority status and relative educational backwardness or advancement of the Muslim women belonging to West Bengal and Bangladesh. Yet, we cannot generalize our observation because the issue of educational backwardness of the women belonging to Muslim community in West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh may also be explained from economic point of view. A table is furnished below in this context.

Table-7.8.19: Hindu-Muslim Comparison with regard to their Per Capita Income.

Study Villages	Per Capita Income in 1997-98 at Constant Market Price			Remarks
	Hindu	Muslim	Difference	
Ghoshpara	Rs.5,417	Rs.4,248	Rs.1,369	Muslims are more insolvent than Hindus.
Nalpur	N.A.	Rs.11,317	N.A.	Comparison not possible.
Gangachara	Tk.5,919	Tk.6,435	Tk.516	Muslims are less insolvent than Hindus.
Betuail	Tk.9,274	Tk.10,964	Tk.690	Muslims are less insolvent than Hindus.

The above table shows that the per capita income of the Muslims at 1997-98 constant market price was less than the Hindus by Rs.1369 at Ghoshpara while it was more than the Hindus by Tk.516 at Gangachara and Tk.690 at Betuail. Thus it is evident that with regard to economic condition Muslims in West Bengal are less solvent than the Hindus while in Bangladesh they are more solvent than their Hindu compatriots. Hence, in view of the findings as revealed in the above table, we may assume an agreeable relation between the economic solvency and relative educational backwardness or advancement of the Muslim women belonging to West Bengal and Bangladesh. However, considering the above facts we may sum up that both the feelings of minority status and economic insolvency by the Muslim population in West Bengal (India) conjointly hinders their overall educational growth.

7.9: *Observations*

The foregoing discussion of this chapter reveals that among the four study villages Muslim women education is much depressing at Ghoshpara but quite encouraging at Nalpur while neither depressing nor satisfactory at Gangachara and Betuail. It further discloses that literacy status of the Muslims in general and their girls and women in particular are totally harmonious with the overall economic condition of the Muslim community. As a matter of fact, the more they are economically solvent, the higher is their literacy rate.

The Muslim girls in the study villages of West Bengal jointly running ahead in literacy and enrolment in comparison with those of Bangladesh. But the truth is that it does not show the real implication of relative educational status of the common Muslim girls of West Bengal. Because, the study village of Nalpur in West Bengal is situated in a semi-urban area and is characterized with extraordinarily greater percentages of enrolment and literacy that are significantly higher than the national standard. Hence, in view of reality we can say that the Bangladeshi girls are standing one step forward than the girls of Ghoshpara while they are lagging one step behind the girls of Nalpur.

Muslim girls of the study villages of West Bengal enter 4 months later than their male counterparts. The same trend is also prevalent in the study villages of Bangladesh where the girls are found 2 months delayed in comparison with the boys in entering into formal education. With regard to mean age of entry at formal educational institutions we find that on an average Bangladeshi boys and girls are advanced by 1 month and 2 months respectively than the boys and girls belonging to the study villages of West Bengal.

The West Bengal villages jointly records an average schooling tenure of 6.3 years both for males and females while in Bangladesh it is 6.6 years for males, 5.2 years for females and 6 years for persons. So, with regard to tenure of schooling Muslim girls of West Bengal are running ahead than Bangladeshi Muslim girls. It further shows that with regard to tenure of schooling Muslim girls are lagging behind the boys in Bangladesh while in West Bengal they are keeping pace with their counterparts.

In West Bengal the highest percentage of drop-out cases have occurred at secondary level while in Bangladesh it is happened at primary level. So far the religious education is concerned the Bangladeshi girls are significantly forward than the girls of Ghoshpara while they are keeping pace with the girls of Nalpur. Yet, the overall educational situation of girl child with regard to literacy is almost similar. At present 20.9 per cent Muslim girls in the study villages of West Bengal and 21.72 per cent Muslim girls in the study villages of Bangladesh are out of school.

Muslim women in West Bengal are distinctly lagging behind education in comparison with the Hindu women. While in Bangladesh they are running ahead than their Hindu neighbours. On the other hand so far the economic condition is concerned Muslims in West Bengal are less solvent than the Hindus while in Bangladesh they are more solvent than their Hindu neighbours. Considering the above facts we may sum up that the minority status and economic insolvency of the Muslim population in West Bengal conjointly hinders their overall educational growth.