

Chapter-10
General Observation, Discussion
and Recommendation

Major findings

Remarks on Hypothesis

Overall Constraints in Muslim Women Education

Recommendations Suggested

GENERAL OBSERVATION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

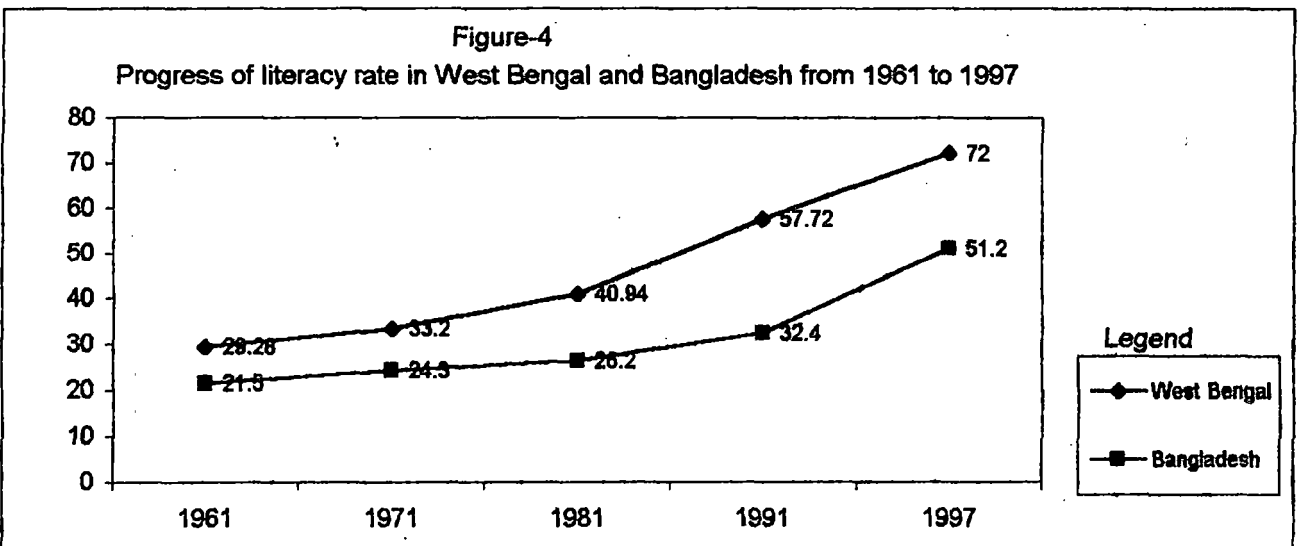
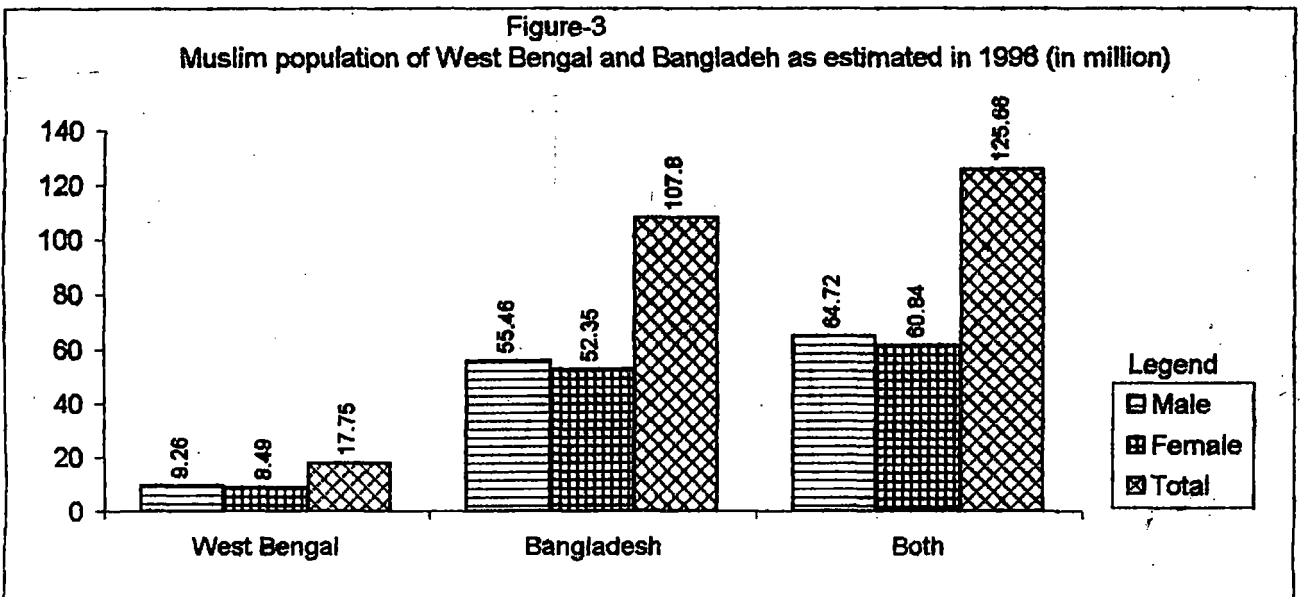
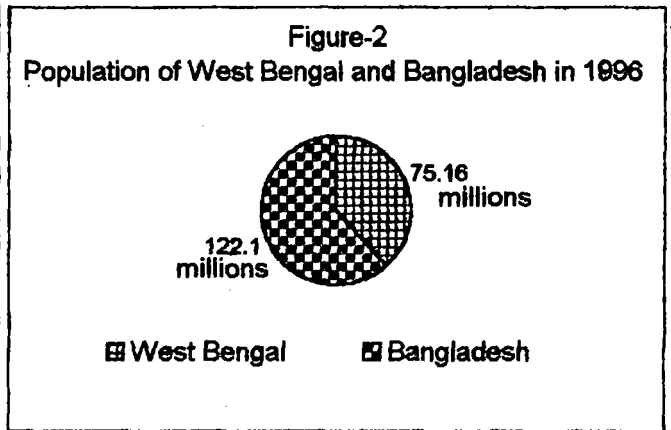
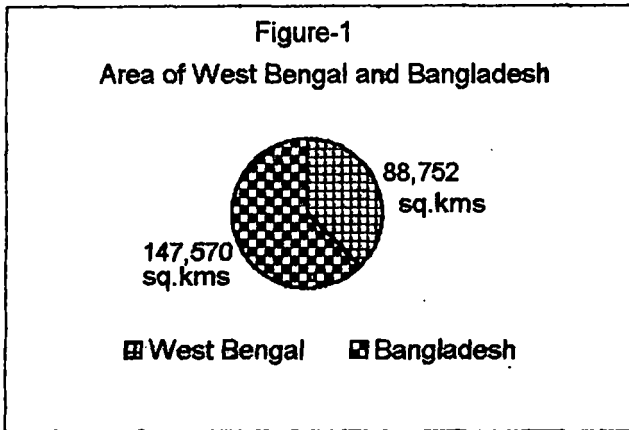
The basic objective of this study is to examine the state of education of the Muslim women of rural West Bengal (India) and rural Bangladesh with special reference to their educational status, problems and prospects. In the foregoing chapters I have presented the relevant facts and figures as well as analysed the state of Muslim women education and other related issues. In this section I shall present a general observation of the entire study with discussions relating to hypotheses and constraints in Muslim women education and finally some suggestions shall be made on the basis of the empirical findings.

10.1. Major Findings

Education is the most powerful instrument and pivotal force for reshaping the society. It is the birthright of all citizens for acquisition of skills to become a functioning member of social groups, specially work groups. It has been playing an effective role in social development since the beginning of human civilization. As our moral value is awakened, consciousness is expanded, and self-determination is strengthened through education, it can rightly be regarded as a driving force for Human Resource Development. So, it is essential to educate all the citizens of a country for the sake of overall development. Literacy and education both for men and women are equally important, but women's education is specially and specifically significant. It is expected that if women are given education, their overall development as well as their empowerment will be ensured.

Islam rightly thinks that education is a necessary condition that helps women to develop their faculties. Actually, the great encouragement given by Islam to women in their educational, cultural and spiritual activities is undoubtedly an unique step that proves Islam admits no distinction between man and woman in their basic spheres of life. According to Islamic dictum, "Acquisition of knowledge is compulsory for all Muslim men and women". There is nothing in *Quranic* injunctions that is opposed to the pursuit of secular education rather some evidences seem to support it. Verily the originality of Islam lies in its endless struggle for exploration and its ceaseless quest for learning. But unfortunately the dynamic spirit of Islam regarding education is very often misinterpreted.

History reveals that in 1947, the colonial British rule ended in Indian subcontinent followed by the partition of the subcontinent on the basis of two-nation theory. Accordingly the greater Bengal was divided into two parts and emerged on the scene with two different identities. The area constituting West Bengal, as a Hindu dominated area became a part of India while Bangladesh, as a Muslim dominated region became a part of Pakistan adopting the name East Pakistan. Another 24 years elapsed with the breakaway of East Pakistan and in the year 1971, Bangladesh, putting off the shackles of pseudo colonial Pakistan, emerged as an independent sovereign country fighting a great and sanguine War of Liberation. Though West Bengal and Bangladesh are now belonging under two different political identities, their people are deeply related with the bonds of same language and almost of the same culture. The basic difference between the two in respect of their area, population, and progress in literacy from 1961 to 1997 is shown below (figures 1-4).



The empirical data for the present research have been collected by broad and intensive field study at four Muslim dominated villages choosing two from West Bengal (India) and two from Bangladesh. In West Bengal the villages are Ghoshpara and Nalpur while in Bangladesh the villages are Gangachara and Betuail. The main empirical findings are:

1. This study includes a total number of 677 families and 3727 individuals out of which 300 families consisting of 1824 individuals belong to West Bengal and the rest 377 families consisting of 1903 individuals belong to Bangladesh. So far the religion is concerned the families of West Bengal are composed of 264 from Muslims and rest 36 from Hindus. Similarly the families of Bangladesh are composed of 325 from Muslims and 52 from Hindus.
2. Total number of Muslim population as included in our study is 3239 consisting 1617 from West Bengal and rest 1622 from Bangladesh. The village-wise distribution of these Muslim population at the study villages are 446 at Ghoshpara comprising 234 males and 212 females; 1171 at Nalpur comprising 612 males and 559 females; 993 at Gangachara comprising 524 males and 469 females; and 629 at Betuail comprising 327 males and 302 females with sex ratios 906, 913, 895 and 924 respectively.
3. The average family size of the Muslims of West Bengal study villages is 6.13 comprising 5.44 for Ghoshpara and 6.43 for Nalpur while it is 4.99 for Bangladesh study villages comprising 5.31 for Gangachara and 4.56 for Betuail. So, we may assume that Bangladeshi Muslims are more conscious to keep their family size small than that of West Bengal.

4. So far the main source of earning is concerned 72 per cent Muslim families of Ghoshpara are agro-based while it is 58 per cent for Betuail, 49 per cent for Gangachara and less than 2 per cent for Nalpur. Similarly per family average landholdings for the Muslims are 176 decimals at Ghoshpara, 138 decimals at Betuail, 93 decimals at Gangachara and only 27 decimals at Nalpur. As a matter of fact Gangachara is rapidly losing rural characteristics due to her location at the centre of upazila sadar while Nalpur as situated outskirts of town has already turned into a semi-urban area.
5. The per family average yearly income as determined for the Muslim families at 1997-98 constant market price stand Rs.23,102 (equivalent to US\$.600) for Ghoshpara, Rs.59616 (US\$.1549) for Nalpur, Tk.34,172 (US\$.751) for Gangachara and Tk.49,972 (US\$.1098) for Betuail. Thus we find that of the four study villages the overall economic condition seem to be really satisfactory at Nalpur, quite alarming at Ghoshpara while neither pleasing nor unpleasing at Gangachara and Betuail. The dependency ratios among the Muslims are also harmonious with their economic condition as those stand 2.46 for Ghoshpara, 1.91 for Nalpur, 2.44 for Gangachara and 2.01 for Betuail.
6. Ghoshpara and Betuail are located in interior rural areas while the rest two viz Nalpur and Gangachara are situated very close to the urban centres. The later two villages are provided with more educational institutions than the first two. Yet it is noticed that all the study villagers have greater opportunity to be enrolled in higher educational institutions situated at the adjacent villages or at close distances.

7. With regard to Muslim population (7⁺ years) Ghoshpara records 52 per cent of literacy rates comprising 61 per cent for males and 41 per cent for females; Nalpur records 81 per cent of literacy rates comprising 87 per cent for males and 75 per cent for females; Gangachara records 61 per cent of literacy rates comprising 68 per cent for males and 54 per cent for females; and Betuail records 67 per cent of literacy rates comprising 74 per cent for males and 58 per cent for females. Same trends are also prevalent in adult literacy rates. Thus the 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.
8. In West Bengal the Muslim girls have jointly attained 67 per cent of literacy rates for the population of 7⁺ years and 56 per cent for the adult population while in Bangladesh the rates are 55 per cent and 44 per cent respectively. So, the Muslim girls of the study villages of West Bengal are running ahead in literacy status 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, Nalpur as situated at semi urban area is characterized with extraordinarily higher percentages of enrolment and literacy than the national level. 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.

9. In terms of age of entry in formal education Muslim girls are 4 months later than boys in West Bengal while it is 2 months in Bangladesh. Further, the boys and girls of Bangladesh are advanced by 1 month and 2 months respectively than that of West Bengal. But with regard to tenure of schooling Muslim girls of West Bengal are running ahead than Bangladeshi Muslim girls while they are keeping pace with their male counterparts.
10. In West Bengal the highest percentage of drop-out cases have occurred at secondary level while in Bangladesh it is happened at primary level. With regard to religious education 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 remaining out of school.
11. It is our empirical observation that 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. So far the overall economic condition is concerned, we have noticed that the 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.

As regards the perception of males towards women's education, employment, empowerment, dignity and other gender equity related issues we find that—

1. On the whole 39.4 per cent male respondents belonging to the Muslim community of West Bengal and Bangladesh deny the equal dignity of their womenfolk while another 3.7 per cent believe in women's superior position than men. So, with regard to Islamic notion of gender equality, 43.1 per cent male respondents belonging to Muslim society of West Bengal and Bangladesh have misconception about women's dignity.
2. About half of the male respondents in the study villages of West Bengal and Bangladesh do not possess positive feelings on the issues of women's right and empowerment. Actually, more than one-fourth male respondents have denied women's participation in familial decision making process and right of a daughter in choosing her own husband; about half of them have opposed women's economic independence; two-thirds of them have disagreed the need of their political empowerment and more than three-fourths have disapproved daughter's equal share in parents property.
3. Muslim males of West Bengal are more conscious about their women's comparative backwardness in education with respect to the women belonging to Hindu community while in Bangladesh the Muslim males are more aware of the educational backwardness of their womenfolk in comparison with themselves. Yet, majority of them does not pay any heed to minimize the existing disparity.

4. On the whole about three-fourths of the male respondents in the study-villages are either unaware of Islamic notion on female education or possess misconception on it.
5. The Muslim males are more interested in educating the boys than the girls. In our study half of the total male respondents have suggested higher education for the boys while only one-fifth (21.2%) of them have suggested higher education for their girls and women.
6. More than one-fifth (21.3%) Muslim males support strict purdah observance in terms of Burkha or Veil and 16.2 per cent hold completely unfavourable attitude towards coeducation. However, Muslim males of Bangladesh in comparison with that of West Bengal are more fascinated towards observing the institution of purdah and less fascinated towards coeducation.
7. Of the total male respondents 58 per cent support women's employment outside houses while 32 per cent of them impose condition and rest 10 per cent disapprove it.
8. As main barrier against Muslim women education one-fifth of the male respondents identifies familial poverty while 14.3 per cent of them denotes involvement of Muslim girls in familial work; 12.1 per cent indicate early marriage; 11.4 per cent conceive lack of girls' learning curiosity; 11.4 per cent assume lack of awareness of Muslim parents; 10 per cent grasp strict purdah observance; 6.4 per cent guess less employment opportunity; 5.7 per cent describe feelings of insecurity; 4.3 per cent charge indifferent roles of religious leaders; and the rest 3.6 per cent assert lack of transport facilities for the girls.

We have also examined the perceptions of women on their education, empowerment and other gender related issues and thus discovered that-

1. On the whole 37.5 per cent of the Muslim females think themselves satisfied for being female sex while 24.4 per cent are dissatisfied; 26.9 per cent fail to determine their sex satisfaction and 11.2 per cent oppose to answer.
2. 72.5 per cent of female respondents of West Bengal and Bangladesh believe that women are equal to men by dignity while 23.8 per cent think themselves inferior to men by dignity and the rest 3.7 per cent believe in women's superior position in comparison with men.
3. As regards the rights and empowerment of women 84.4 per cent of the female respondents in total have supported women's participation in familial decision making process while 75 per cent have expressed urge towards political empowerment of women; 70 per cent have argued for the right of a daughter in choosing her own mate; 56.9 per cent have expressed positive feelings towards women's economic independence and 36.9 per cent have pleaded for share of daughter equal to son in parents property.
4. On an aggregate only 26.3 per cent female respondents in the study-villages are rightly acquainted with the Islamic notion on female education while 40.6 per cent of them possess misconception on it and rest 33.1 per cent are unaware of any religious notion concerning female education.
5. On the whole 87.5 per cent female respondents realize that they are lagging behind education than male counterparts while 67.5 per cent comprehend their backwardness in education in comparison with the Hindu females.

6. 38.1 per cent female respondents feel that the main objective of education is to become independent followed by 25 per cent who consider it is to educate children. Similarly 17.5 per cent respondents are in opinion that the main objective is to get good husband while 12.5 per cent believe it is to increase family status and 6.9 per cent think it is to acquire knowledge.
7. The entire illiterate female respondents are unhappy for remaining illiterate and two-fifths of them blame their parents for not sending them to school. On the other hand two-thirds of the respondents withdrawn before completing graduation degree are seemed dissatisfied for their educational status.
8. Muslim women are surprisingly unaware about the need of religious education because only 14.4 per cent of them think that women should be well taught in interpretation while 85.6 per cent have suggested the level of performing prayer or fluency in reading the Quran.
9. The entire female respondents feel the need of education. But 12.5 per cent of them suggested primary level of education for women while 25 per cent enticed secondary level; 28.1 per cent argued for higher secondary level and rest 34.4 per cent pleaded higher level of education (graduation and above) for women. The majority of the female respondents who have pleaded for higher education think that it will help girls to become independent and make them able to play better role in child rearing.
10. About two-thirds of female respondents have completely positive attitude towards women's employment while 19.4 per cent support it under special consideration and rest 15 per cent hold totally unfavourable opinion on it.

11. One-fourth Muslim females support rigidity of purdah in terms of Burkha; 27.5 per cent support moderate purdah in terms of modest dressing; 26.2 per cent feel advantage and disadvantage alike in practicing purdah; 12.5 per cent simply oppose this custom and the rest 8.8 per cent strongly condemn it. On the other hand 56.2 per cent of females possess favourable attitude towards coeducation while 28.8 per cent impose certain conditions to accept it and the rest 15 per cent hold unfavourable attitude towards it. However, Muslim women of the two regions are equally fascinated towards coeducation while the women of Bangladesh are more fascinated towards observing purdah.
12. Regarding main barriers against educational growth of Muslim women 22.1 per cent of the female respondents think that Muslim women are lagging behind education due to their familial poverty while 18.6 per cent believe illiterate parents are mainly liable for their educational backwardness; 12.4 per cent state that early marriage is hindering women education; 11.7 per cent conceive familial workload is the main barrier; 9 per cent assume strict purdah observance and lack of girls' school are the main causes; 7.6 per cent grasp self-apathy of Muslim girls are mainly liable for their educational backwardness; 6.2 per cent guess lack of government initiatives as well as less employment opportunity provided for them by the government are the prime reasons; 5.5 per cent describe the main barrier is derived from feelings of insecurity and fear of immodesty; 4.1 per cent deliberate indifferent roles of religious leaders is the main reason while the rest 2.8 per cent assert far distance of the school in general and lack of transport facilities for the girls in particular are the prime barriers against women education.

10.2. Remarks on Hypothesis

Although it is an exploratory research, we have been guided by some hypotheses. Before drawing concluding remarks we consider it necessary to delineate about how much the hypotheses are supported by the findings of the inquiry. The following are the humble attempts in this regard:

1. In our first hypothesis we had comprehended that Muslim girls and women of rural West Bengal and rural Bangladesh are lagging much behind in formal education in comparison with other members of their society. Our inquiry reveals that this hypothesis is completely true for Ghoshpara where the Muslim women are lagging behind education than their male counterparts and also from Hindu men and women. We have also seen that Muslim women are lagging behind education than their male counterparts in Nalpur but as the entire population of this village is composed of Muslims, we could not make inter community comparison. On the other hand regarding the study villages of Bangladesh we have observed that Muslim women are lagging behind education than their male counterparts and also from males belonging to Hindu communities but they are distinctly running ahead than the Hindu women. Hence, our findings partially support the first hypothesis.
2. The second hypothesis of our inquiry has been formed on the comprehension that the state of formal education among rural Muslim girls and women is relatively weak for their poor economic background and unfavorable attitudes towards modern education. This hypothesis is also partially upheld by our findings as we realize that most of the Muslim women possess positive attitude towards education, but due to poverty they are not keeping pace with other people.

3. The third hypothesis of our inquiry reveals that the unfavourable attitudes towards modern education among the Muslims are not resulted from religious injunction or sentiment; rather it is due to their implicit ignorance and lack of functional necessity for formal education in their underprivileged and inartistic socio-cultural life. The findings of our inquiry are totally harmonious with this hypothesis. Because, we have realized from religious study that the originality of Islam lies ceaseless quest for learning. Moreover, Islam has given highest importance on educational attainment without gender discrimination. But we find that among the Muslim respondents of our study villages 72.5 per cent males and 73.7 per cent females are either unaware of Islamic notion on female education or possess misconception on it. Further a significant part of these respondents are seemed unable to perceive the functional necessity of education in their day to day life.
4. The fourth and last hypothesis combines so many reasons as barriers of Muslim women education. It declares that the minority status and economic insolvency of Muslims in West Bengal jointly hinders their women education while lack of infrastructural facilities, fear of insecurity and insignificant roles of influential males and religious leaders etc are largely liable for educational backwardness of rural Muslim women in both West Bengal and Bangladesh. This hypothesis is also agreeable with our findings as inter community comparison discloses that in West Bengal the Muslims are economically poor and educationally backward in comparison with the Hindus while the scenario is totally reverse in Bangladesh. The other barriers of women education as stated in this hypothesis are also supported by the opinions of the both men and women respondents.

10.3. Overall Constraints in Muslim Women Education

The foregoing discussions reveal that the overall educational position of the Muslims in general and their girls and women in particular in the rural areas of West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh is very depressing due to following reasons:

Historical

1. The educational backwardness of the Muslims in the context of Indian subcontinent is a historical reality. Due to various religio-political reasons the Muslims in greater Bengal were away of education throughout the British rule.
2. Muslim upper classes had a negative attitude towards English education as they lost their political power in the hands of the British. They were also hesitant to utilize the educational opportunities offered by the British because of the apprehension that such alien education would destroy their religious and cultural values.
3. British officials cast suspicious look upon the Muslims because they thought that the Muslims from whom they seized power had dreams of regaining formal political supremacy. The British also showed distrust towards the Muslims and followed discriminatory policy upon them which further reinforced the antagonistic attitude of the Indian Muslims towards the British and their English education.
4. During the second half of the nineteenth century some enlightened Muslim leaders viz Abdur Rauf, Nawab Amir Ali Khan Bahadur, Moulvie Abdool Luteef and Syed Ameer Ali came forward for the development of Muslim education in Bengal as well as whole of India. They directed their full attention for strengthening Muslim education within British administrative framework. But for various reasons they cannot reach their expected goal.

5. There was also a setback with regard to educational development of the Muslims of greater Bengal immediately after partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Due to this partition, the people of its eastern part (now Bangladesh) faced pseudo colonial oppression of Pakistan while the middle class Muslims were disintegrated and the lower class Muslims became rudderless in the other part (now West Bengal). As a result majority of them lost their ambitions and entered into conservative shell once again.

Situational

6. Socio-political atmosphere of a State or country largely affects the educational status of its inhabitants. Muslims in West Bengal are a cultural minority and less resourceful in adopting themselves to the prevalent institutions than the majorities. This has created an inferiority complex among them and it affects their education. The available educational facilities in the rural areas of both West Bengal and Bangladesh are not well extended and fairly equipped and the villagers cannot utilize them properly for their educational uplift.

Economic

7. Poor economic condition is the most vital reason behind educational backwardness of any group, community or nation. Unfortunately the vast bulk of Muslim people of West Bengal and Bangladesh are basically poor who cannot afford the cost of education owing to their improvised condition. Due to poverty, the parents cannot afford to send their children for higher education to the schools. After two to three years of schooling, they send their children to workshops for a meager salary. Many poor Muslim think that it is beyond their capacity to educate their children.

8. Impoverished economic condition of the Muslims is seriously hampering the education of Muslim women. It is observed that the level of education among the economically well off is higher than that of those who are economically poor. The girls who hailed from lower socio-economic background dropped out from the school at an early age and got engulfed in assisting their mother in household affairs or engaged in low paid odd jobs.
9. The lack of interest in female education is because of the belief that gainful employment opportunities for the educated women are not available. On the other hand the educated keep aloof from the illiterate Muslim masses for which the common Muslims could not develop awareness about the importance of education. The rich who constitute a microscopic minority also are not much concerned about the need of educational advancement of underprivileged Muslims in general and their women in particular.

Socio-Cultural

10. The education of parents is very important for providing guidance to their children. But as large number of Muslim parents is illiterate, they cannot help their wards in this respect. Moreover, a significant part of the Muslims still holds pessimistic and conservative opinion with regard to acceptance of modern education. It is very often stated that modern education is not their goal and thus it is less important to them.
11. Due to ignorance towards functional necessity of female education, many Muslim parents think that any investment for such education is wastage. The common argument is that women are not anyway going to take up jobs outside the house and therefore there is no use in educating them.

12. The misinterpretation of Islamic prescriptions by less educated religious leaders is primarily responsible for developing a conservative and negative attitude towards modern education among the Muslims. Further, the rules of purdah observance and so also the practice of their early marriage hinder their formal education.
13. The elite and social reformers of a community play the most vital role for educational upliftment among its community members. But unfavourably the elite structure in Muslim society in both West Bengal and Bangladesh is authoritarian to which the fanatic religious personalities play the most dominant role. Thus the role of elite and leaders in expanding education is very insignificant.
14. Muslim communities of West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh are divided into three distinct groups with regard to education. One group is educated in secular institutions and thus benefited of mere secular education. Although they are acquainted with modern secular learning, majority of them does not understand religious instruction that is very important in their social life. The second group is educated in *Aleya Madrashas* and partially acquainted with modern secular education. They are jacks of all trades master of none. The third group is educated in *Khariji/Kaumi Madrashas* where no modern education is imparted. As the inevitable consequences these three groups seem to live in three different worlds. The most unfortunate fact is that the later two groups do not possess mutual respect rather they nakedly criticise one another. This unexpected situation further weakens the community solidarity and makes it incapable of taking any decision for educational upliftment of the entire community.

10.4. Recommendations Suggested

From the statement of observation and discussion thereof we find that the barriers against educational upliftment of the Muslim in general and their women in particular are intricate and complex in character. Hence, we think that an immediate action plan is essential for the amelioration of the educational backwardness of women in general and rural Muslim women in particular. We may propose the following suggestions in this behalf:

A. Policy Recommendations: Action to be taken by the Policy Makers

1. Education policy should be formulated on the basis of gender-equity; and representatives from leading NGOs, women's organisations and concerned persons should be involved in policy formulation and programmes.
2. The governments of West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh should take necessary steps to make the curriculum free from 'gender bias' through proper review and changes.
3. The government of West Bengal (India) in accordance with the directive principle in the article 45 of Indian constitution as well as the government of Bangladesh in accordance with article 17 of their constitution should enact and strictly implement necessary provisions to educate their entire men and women so that they can attain education for all by the year 2005 positively.
4. Political parties, mass media and women's organisations should undertake publicity campaign for expansion of women's education. NGOs may also play an important role in this area.

5. To improve the present situation of women's education, a separate education directorate may be created under the ministry of education.
6. Sectoral allocation for education should be increased to a satisfactory extent. It is expected that government should allocate 7 per cent of the total GNP and at least 30 per cent of the ADP on education.
7. Education policy should be multi-sectoral. All ministries should play a role similar to the education ministry in achieving gender-equity.
9. Annual target for removal of girls' illiteracy should be set by the national government for all local government organs at grassroots levels. Accountability should also be introduced to ensure effective implementation
10. To improve the quality of education regular dialogue should be held between the relevant authorities and both government and non-government field workers responsible for re-arrangement of teaching method and preparation and use of educational material.
11. Women should have representation in committees, such as education committee, teachers association, managing committee and various public organisation/trust and mass education committee.
12. Governments of West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh as a signatory to the declarations of the World Conference of Education for All in 1990 and the Fourth World Conference Women in 1995 should provide proper importance on women and their education.

B. Primary Education

1. The main objective of primary education should be complete this level without any break and ensure equal opportunity for the boys and girls for further education. To achieve this goal, the Governments of West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh should take necessary steps for increased enrolment of girls at primary level and their retention up to the completion of the level.
2. The curriculum of primary education should be designed in such a way that from the beginning of this level all students are made aware of women's educational right to participate in every aspect of socio-economic activities. The performances and contributions of outstanding women should be included in the syllabus at this level.
3. Education from this level should be such that the beneficiaries will be able to apply the acquired skills in their vocations of life. Different skills of household chores, viz cooking, sewing and handicrafts should be included for the girls at this level to motivate the poor and illiterate parents and their daughters towards female education.
4. To succeed with Universal Primary Education Programme, a national universal primary education commission comprising of experts should be set up. Participation of women expert in the commission should be ensured.
5. As a preparatory step for ensuring school going at the age of 5 years, the birth of all babies should be registered. Feeder schools and preparatory schools should be established.

6. New primary schools are to be established through "school mapping" and special schools may be set up to cover outlying areas so that there is an equal opportunity of women's education in all the regions. School schedule should be set according to the local needs.
7. The concerned governments should take a special proviso for appointment of 75 per cent women teachers at the primary schools. And until 75 per cent quota is fulfilled by the females' appointment of male teachers at primary level should be stopped.
8. At the time of recruiting Education Officer/Assistant Education Officer at Block/Upazila level, women candidate should be given priority. The responsibilities of the officer should be set and opportunities for effective performance should be created.
9. To ensure increased attendance of girl children the following measures may be initiated:
 - (a) Providing cost free uniform, books and all sorts of study materials and tiffin during lunch-time;
 - (b) Attractive gifts when promoted to next class;
 - (c) Rewarding those schools who have sent up more girls in the final examination;
 - (d) Introducing incentives for the needy parents to prevent drop-out at primary level.
 - (e) Introducing Food for Education Programme in the entire rural areas of the concerned State/country.
10. More eligible teacher should be appointed so that people-teacher ratio stands 40:1. Supervision should be more effective and the concerned officials should be accountable.

C. Secondary and Higher Secondary Education

1. The special scholarship project for women at this level should be introduced in West Bengal (India) and expanded in Bangladesh. The concerned governments and non-government institutions should take immediate steps with the help of various interested donors.
2. Like West Bengal, a school service commission should be formed in Bangladesh for recruiting eligible teachers at non-government secondary schools. At least 30 per cent women teachers should be recruited at the secondary schools and colleges in both West Bengal and Bangladesh. In technical institutions (Polytechnics) the number of women students and teachers should be increased and female teachers should be given priority in teachers training.
3. The government of West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh should encourage establishment of more girls' school of secondary level at rural areas along with expanded Girl's Scholarship Programme and Exemption of Tuition Fees Programme up to higher secondary level.

D. Higher Education

1. Efforts should be made to introduce open universities.
2. Women studies centre should be established in all the universities for arrange training and courses on women development and to conduct research on relevant topics.
3. Seats for women in proportion to the total number of women candidates should be reserved for them, in addition to the merit quota of admission. Admission policy may be relaxed in case of women in higher education.

E. Non-Formal Education

1. Opportunities for non-formal education should be created along with formal education and that must be remodeled after necessary evaluation. All NGOs and other organised groups should undertake such programme.
2. Voluntary groups, women's organisations and NGOs may be entrusted with the responsibility of organising non-formal education programmes. Women representatives at various levels of local government may take up such programme.
3. Women's position, perspective, roles, aspirations, legal rights and issues should be included in non-formal education.
4. The following topics must be included in non-formal syllabus: (i) Rights and dignity of women, (ii) Necessity of women education, (iii) General knowledge about preventive measures, (iv) First aid, (v) Primary Health Care, (vi) Sanitation and (vii) Immunization.
5. Non-formal education should be publicized, strengthened through mass communication media. Primary health education should be covered extensively in the newspapers and television.
6. Social Awareness about formal and non-formal education should be created through use of mass media.
7. Libraries/information centres e.g. community development library should be established in rural areas to increase awareness.
8. Posters, folk-songs and folk-theatre should be used in the rural areas to promote female education.

F. General Recommendations: Action to be taken by the Muslim Community

So far the Muslim women are concerned the educated and rich members of this community should share the responsibility of educating them. Muslim leaders and organisations may extend their cooperation adopting the following strategies:

- ◆ Muslim Voluntary Organisations should open educational institutions, especially pre-primary and primary schools;
- ◆ Every literate Muslim should have the commitment of making at least two person literate from their community;
- ◆ The rich Muslims should come forward to bestow adequate sums of money exclusively for the cause of education. They must promote educational trusts to start and maintain schools and colleges;
- ◆ The religious leaders should take the responsibility to explain the need and importance of female education in the light religious prescription and should discourage the custom of early marriage prevailing in Muslim society;
- ◆ The Muslim leaders in West Bengal should raise the issue of Muslim's educational backwardness in the national forum and should convince the government to solve the problem with national commitment.

These are the few problems and problem solving measures we have discussed in order to expand education among the Muslims in general and rural Muslim Women of West Bengal (India) and Bangladesh in particular. We do not think that our findings have illustrated a complete implication of the issues we have searched for but we believe our findings have highlighted some problems which are to be solved with great interest and care. The future researchers and policy makers shall be benefited by the findings of this study.