

A Comparative Study on Growth of Female Literacy in West Bengal and India During Last Six Decades

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Abstract: Literacy is considered as the main driving force of development for a nation. It is a key for socio-economic progress. 'Education for all' is one of the important tasks that carried out by the Government of India but still we have the lowest female literacy rate in Asia. As per UN report, education for women is the single most effective way to improve lives and health of a family and a society at large. A woman with education is a powerful person, she has the power to educate the children in her family, guide them in taking decisions, contribute economically and offer valuable inputs for improvement on home and society. The Indian literacy rate has grown to 74.04% (2011) from 12% at the end of British rule in 1947. Although this was a greater than six fold improvement. The 2011 census, however, indicated a 2001–2011 decadal literacy growth of 9.2%, which is slower than the growth seen during the previous decade. Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women education in India. There is a wide gender disparity in the literacy rate in India, effective literacy rates (age 7 and above) in 2011 were 82.14% for male and 65.46% for female, whereas female literacy rate of West Bengal is comparatively high (71.16%). In this context the present study is an attempt to highlight the growth of female literacy in West Bengal in comparison to India.

Keywords: Literacy, EFA, Female Literacy, Decadal Literacy Growth, Gender disparity, Growth of Female Literacy, Comparative Study. Importance of Female Literacy.

1. INTRODUCTION:

"When women move forward, the family moves, the village moves and the nation moves" - J. L. Nehru.

Education is the most important pillar for the development of the human society. Literacy and education are vital developmental indicators for a nation. Education is the most powerful weapon of success and development of nation. Proper education helps creation modern society. A nation can be educated in the real sense of the term, when its entire population is educated. Men and women are just like the two wheels of a chariot. They are equal in importance and should work together in life.. Education of women is an important part of educational reconstruction in India. Women education guarantees better advancement of human progress. Mahatma Gandhi rightly said 'educate one man, you educate one person but educate a woman and you educate a whole civilization' Education for women is a crucial factor which has a bearing upon the development of any society. It brings about self-esteem and confidence. So the study of female literacy is very significant.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY :

- The main objectives of this study are-
- To know the literacy and literacy rate in present context.
 - To find out the growth of female literacy in West Bengal
 - To study the progress of female literacy in India
 - To make a comparison on female literacy between West Bengal and India.

3. METHODOLOGY:

In this study the quantitative, qualitative and mixed method also been used. The present study is based on primary and secondary sources. Maximum relevant data is taken from consecutive census reports of India, published by the Government of India, District Statistical Handbooks published by the Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics, Government of West Bengal .Apart from these a number of articles published in various National and International journals have also been consulted for the purpose. It is a documentary study. It is based on official documents. Major findings in the study are drawn with the help of cartographic techniques.

4. MEANING OF LITERACY:

As per Indian Census, Literacy means "a person who can read and write a simple message in any language with understanding is considered literate" (Census of India, 2011). UNESCO says "Literacy is a human right, a tool of personal empowerment and a means for social and human development. Educational opportunities depend on literacy. It is at the heart of basic education for all, and essential for eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy" (UNESCO 2010).

5. LITERACY RATE:

The working definition of literacy in the Indian census since 1991 is as follows:
Literacy rate: The total percentage of the population of an area at a particular time aged seven years or above who can read and write with understanding. Here the denominator is the population aged seven years or more. The literacy rate taking into account the total population in the denominator has now been termed as 'crude literacy rate', while the literacy rate calculated taking into

account the seven and above population in the denominator is called the effective literacy rate. The formula for computing both are as follows.

$$\text{Crude Literacy Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Literate Persons} \times 100}{\text{Total Population}}$$

$$\text{Effective Literacy Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Literate Persons aged 7 and above} \times 100}{\text{Population aged 7 and above}}$$

6. IMPORTANCE OF FEMALE LITERACY:

A woman has to play three main duties in her life. Firstly, she is to be a good daughter, secondly, she is to be a good wife and thirdly she is to be a good mother. Proper education teaches a woman what she should be. It also teaches her how she should do it to be a good daughter, a helpful wife and a responsible mother. An educated woman is a good friend, a skilled nurse and an efficient advisor to her husband. She is always able to share his sufferings. Hence it is very significant that women should be educated. An educated girl is more important than an educated boy. Women education in India plays a vital role in overall development of the country. Moreover educated women can also help to reduce infant mortality, maternal mortality, improve socio-economic growth, reduce child marriage, reduce population, reduce domestic and sexual violence. Hence the importance of female literacy from socio-economic and cultural point of view is very significant.

7. GROWTH OF FEMALE LITERACY IN WEST BENGAL:

Table. 1: Female Literacy rate(%) in West Bengal (1951-2011)

District	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Darjeeling	9.26	11.93	31.85	40.17	54.83	66.63	73.74
Jalpaiguri	10.01	15.04	20.27	26.98	44.09	59.00	66.65
Coochbihar	15.46	23.23	19.43	26.90	47.29	60.92	69.08
Dinajpur (N & S)	7.24	12.37	17.17	22.21	35.08	50.48	60.48
Malda	5.84	9.34	14.22	19.67	33.16	49.28	57.84
Murshidabad	8.36	12.26	17.75	23.26	39.06	55.04	63.88
Birbhum	11.47	17.40	24.46	29.98	43.14	56.16	64.07
Bardhaman	18.14	24.75	32.56	42.83	52.81	63.26	70.47
Nadia	18.24	23.61	29.28	35.77	51.63	64.24	71.35
24 Parganas (N & S)	19.33	27.13	35.53	41.72	57.33	69.17	76.57
Hugli	21.81	28.21	38.65	48.26	59.15	69.69	76.95
Bankura	9.73	14.47	24.24	30.43	42.32	53.66	60.44
Puruliya	5.04	8.27	13.25	18.87	30.59	44.43	51.29
Mednipur (E & W)	12.17	19.42	29.24	46.58	55.19	67.57	76.46
Howra	22.67	54.40	40.64	48.75	61.46	71.41	79.73
Kolkata	52.31	28.68	63.01	64.50	70.29	79.19	84.98
West Bengal	16.97	20.27	26.56	36.56	46.56	60.22	71.16

Source: Census of India (1951-2011), computed by author

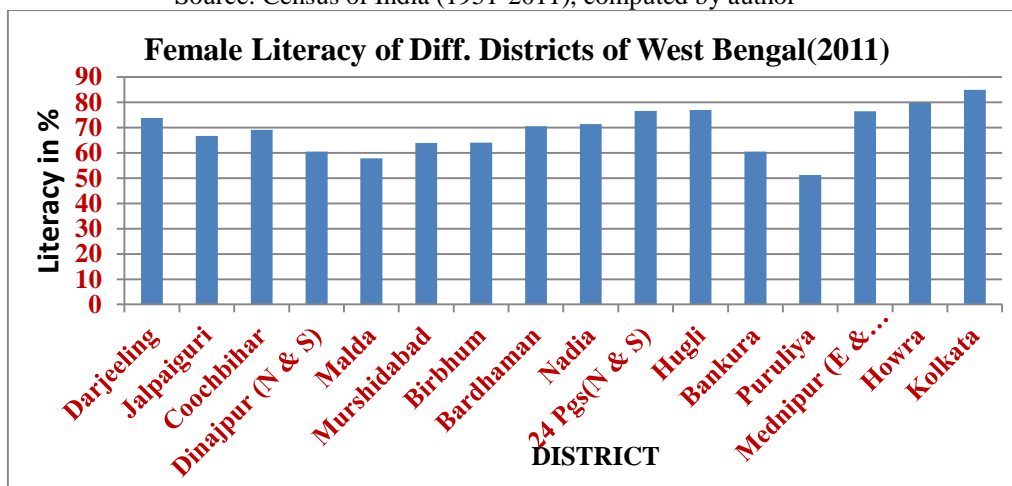


Figure1: District wise female literacy

7.1. Analysis:

The data shows the literacy rate in percentage of different districts of West Bengal during the 1951 to 2011. According to Census data of 2011, the pictogram depicts female literacy of Kolkata (84.98) is higher than other districts of West Bengal whereas Puruliya is lowest female literacy district. It is very noticeable that those districts are above 70% female literacy rate, they are comparatively developed districts of West Bengal. In the opposite hand Puruliya, Bankura, Malda, Dinajpur are comparatively less developed districts because the female literacy rate is less 60%.

Table. 2: Female literacy of W.B. during last six decades:

Year	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Female Literacy Rate(%)	20.27	26.56	36.56	46.56	60.22	71.16

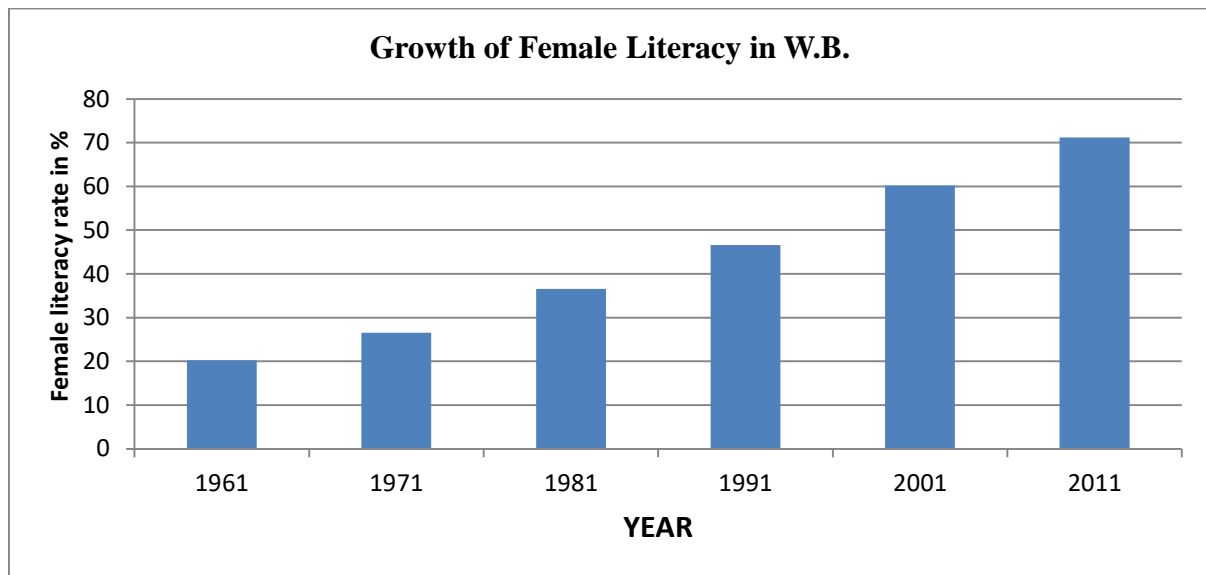


Figure2: Growth of female literacy in West Bengal (1961-2011)

7.2. Findings and Discussion:

The result of the study shows that female literacy of West Bengal during last five decades. It also reveals that the growth of female literacy rate is gradually increasing but in comparison to other states or union territories, the female literacy rate is not so good. It is not good sign of the state of West Bengal. It is interesting to note that Kerala is now highest female literacy rate (91.98%). In this reason, we all know that Kerala is a developed state of India. In the other hand the female literacy rate is comparatively low in Rajasthan (52.66%), Bihar (53.33%) that's why gender disparity of these state is also seen in present time. According to 2011 census report, the total female literacy rate in percentage of all states and UTs are shown in the table below.

8. PRESENT SCENARIO OF FEMALE LITERACY IN INDIA:

Table. 3: Female Literacy rate in India (Census of 2011):

States/ UTs	Total female literacy %
Kerala	91.98
Mizoram	89.40
Lakshadweep	88.25
Tripura	83.15
Goa	81.84
Andaman & Nicobar	81.84
Chandigarh	81.38
Puduchery	81.22
Delhi	80.93
Daman & Deu	79.59
Nagaland	76.69
Himachal Pradesh	76.60
Sikkim	76.43
Maharastra	75.48
Tamilnadu	73.86
Meghalaya	73.78
Manipur	73.17
Punjab	71.34
West Bengal	71.16
Gujrat	70.73

Uttarakhand	70.70
Karnataka	68.13
Assam	67.27
Haryana	66.77
Dadra & Nagar Havelly	65.93
Orissa	64.36
Chattisgarh	60.59
Msadhya Pradesh	60.02
Andhra Pradesh	59.74
Arunachal Pradesh	59.57
Uttar Pradesh	59.26
Jammu & Kashmir	58.01
Jharkhand	56.21
Bihar	53.33
Rajasthan	52.66
INDIA	65.46

Source: Census of India, 2011

8.1. Analysis

The table 3 shows that the female literacy rate of different states and had an average of 65.46% female literacy in India. On the basis of 2011 census report, the high female literacy rate is 91.98% in Kerala and a lowest female literacy rate is 52.66% in Rajasthan. Although Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Tripura, Goa performed well and Bihar, Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh etc are comparatively poor. The ranking of West Bengal in female literacy is nineteenth (19th) as per census report of 2011.

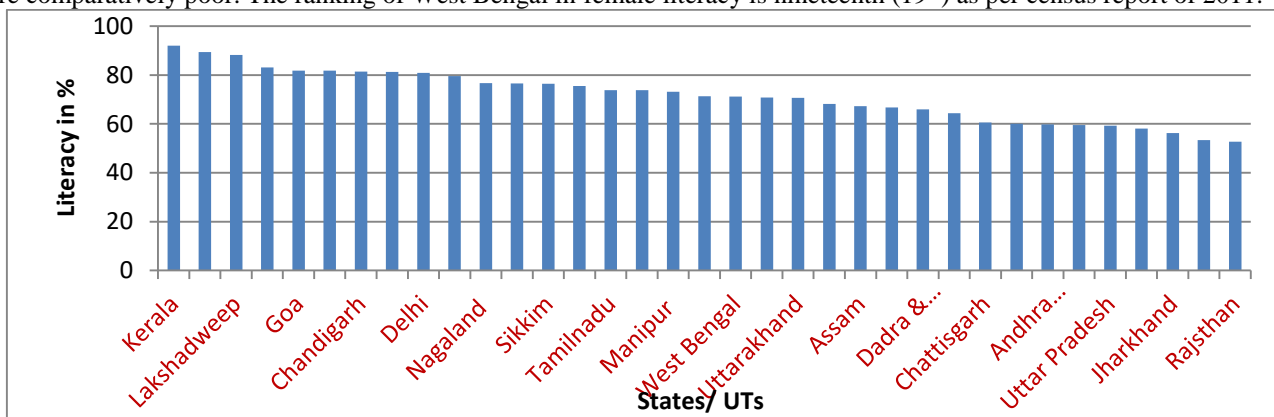


Figure3: State wise female literacy growth in India

8.2. Analysis

The pictogram shows the state wise female literacy rate in percentage. According to figure – the female literacy rate is more than 80% in Kerala, Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Tripura, Goa, Andaman Nicobar, Chandigarh, Puduchery and Delhi. The figure also reveals that the female literacy rate is less than 60% in Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

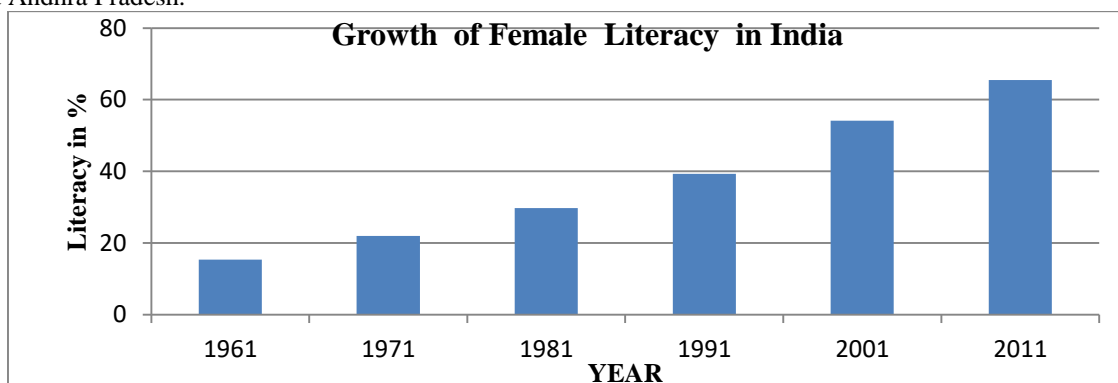


Figure4: Census wise female literacy growth in India

9. COMPARISON BETWEEN WEST BENGAL & INDIA IN FEMALE LITERACY:

Table. 4: Female Literacy (%) in West Bengal and India:

Year	West Bengal		India	
	Female literacy %	Growth Rate	Female literacy %	Growth Rate
1961	20.27	7.53	15.35	6.48
1971	26.56	6.29	21.97	6.62

1981	36.56	10	29.76	7.79
1991	46.56	10	39.29	9.53
2001	60.22	13.66	53.67	14.87
2011	71.16	10.94	65.46	11.30

Source: Census of India,(1961-2011)

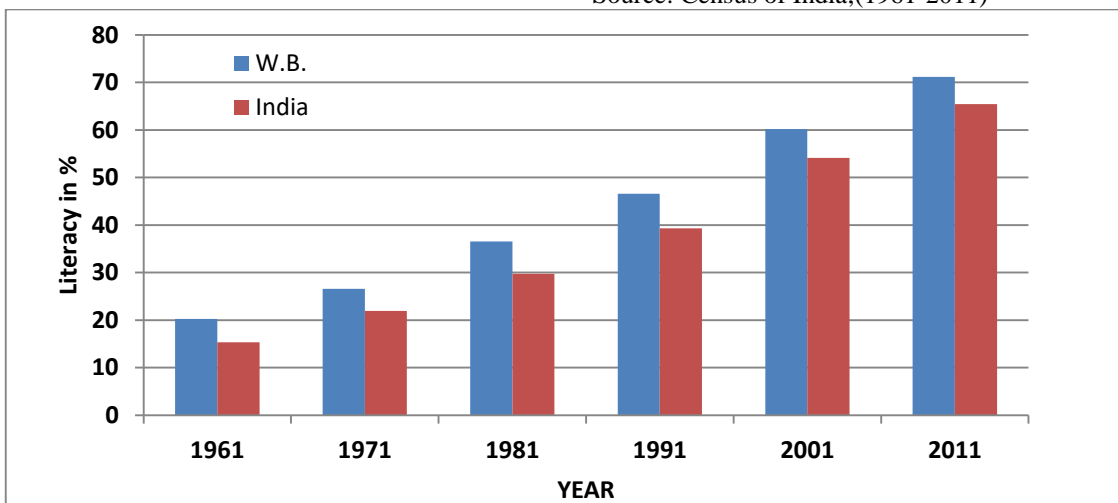


Figure5: Comparative bar diagram showing female literacy in W. B. and India

9.1: Analysis:

From the above data, it is interesting to note that the female literacy rate of West Bengal is comparatively higher than India. A comparative study of female literacy rate from 1961 to 2011 of West Bengal and India indicates varied picture of societies. The above pictogram depicts that the comparison of female literacy rate during 1961 to 2011 of both cases clearly.

Table. 5: Growth of Female Literacy in Urban and Rural Area of West Bengal and India:

Year	West Bengal				India			
	Urban		Rural		Urban		Rural	
	Literacy	Growth Rate	Literacy	Growth Rate	Literacy	Growth Rate	Literacy	Growth Rate
1961	50.02	-	11.73	-	43.75	-	26.49	-
1971	54.11	4.09	18.05	6.32	52.54	8.79	26.13	-0.36
1981	60.72	6.61	25.34	7.29	58.07	5.53	26.92	0.79
1991	68.25	7.53	38.12	12.78	64.05	5.98	30.17	3.25
2001	76.14	7.89	53.82	15.70	72.86	8.81	46.13	15.96
2011	81.70	5.56	66.08	12.26	79.92	7.06	58.75	12.62

Source: Census Report of India (1961-2011)

Comparative Graph of Female literacy in Urban & Rural area in W.B. & India

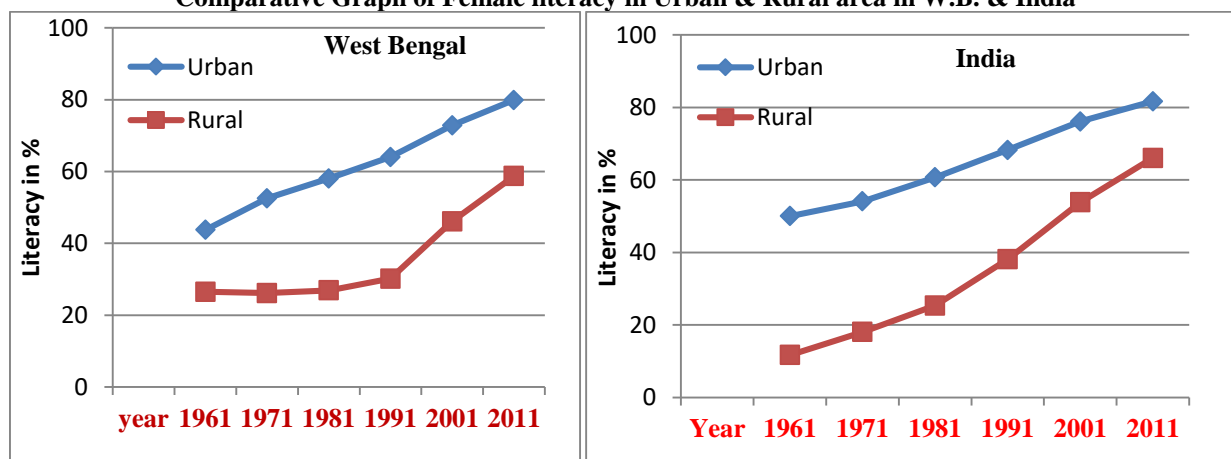


Figure6: Urban and Rural female literacy in West Bengal and India

9.2. OBSERVATION:

The present study reveals some significant facts.

- Firstly, the total female literacy rate of India is less than West Bengal from 1961 to 2011. As per census report of 2011, it is 81.70 in West Bengal whereas 79.92 in India.

- Secondly, the rural female literacy in West Bengal is lower than India up to 198. It is very interesting that the rural female literacy has grown gradually from 1991 and presently west Bengal is better than India. According to 2011 census rural female literacy rate of West Bengal is 66.08 and it is 58.75 in India.
- Thirdly, the gap of urban and rural female literacy rate of West Bengal is comparatively high. Actually the rate of rural female literacy of west Bengal is gradually increasing after the 1991.
- Fourthly, rate of urban population in both cases are mostly similar
- Fifthly, the female literacy rate in India shows a positive trend in post Indian census reports.

10. CONCLUSION:

‘Educating a boy is educating a person...Educating a girl is educating a nation’- this statement is 100% true. Women play a prominent role in the socio-economic, cultural, political life of our society. Female literacy is a reasonably good indicator of development in a society. The Government of India and also Government of West Bengal have taken various programmes, schemes, policies to promote female literacy (Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Kanyashree etc.) but this not sufficient because the gender gap is still prevalent. The literacy rate of women is much lower compared to men. In the Indian society which is patriarchal, girls have fewer privileges and lower status than boy. According to 2011 Census report the rate of male literacy is 86.41% but the female literacy is 71.22%. Now it is most essential task of our central and state govt. to bring the every girl and woman into the light of education and ensure the social, cultural, political as well as economic development of our country.

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