

# Educational Status of Muslim Women of Khayrasole Block in Birbhum District, West Bengal: A Geographical Study

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## **Abstract:**

Education of women in particular is important for the development of a society. This is not only because women constitute half of the population and therefore they naturally have a right to education but also because women's education has far reaching impact on the society as a whole. India is a country with diversities inhabiting various ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious groups. After Independence, much emphasis was given to women's education, including Muslim women. Past researches on socio-economic profile of Muslims confirm that Muslims, especially women, remain socially, economically and educationally backward. The committee has clearly revealed that only 4 per cent Muslim population is educated and it is the most educationally and economically backward minority in the country. According to Census 2011 in Birbhum district 37.71% population is belongs to minority section and out of this 37.06% are Muslim population. The literacy rate of Muslim female is 57.47% while the literacy rate of female in general is 64.14%. The research paper tries to reveal the distribution of Khayrasole Block in Birbhum District, educational level of Muslim women, literacy rate of Muslim women, male-female literacy gap, and highlights the schemes initiated for the development of Muslims woman's education. The present paper also tries to analyse the leading problems of the study and give some suggestions for accelerating the degree of the educational level and harmonious development of Islamic society.

**Key words:** Education, Empowerment, Enrolment, Muslim women, Literacy.

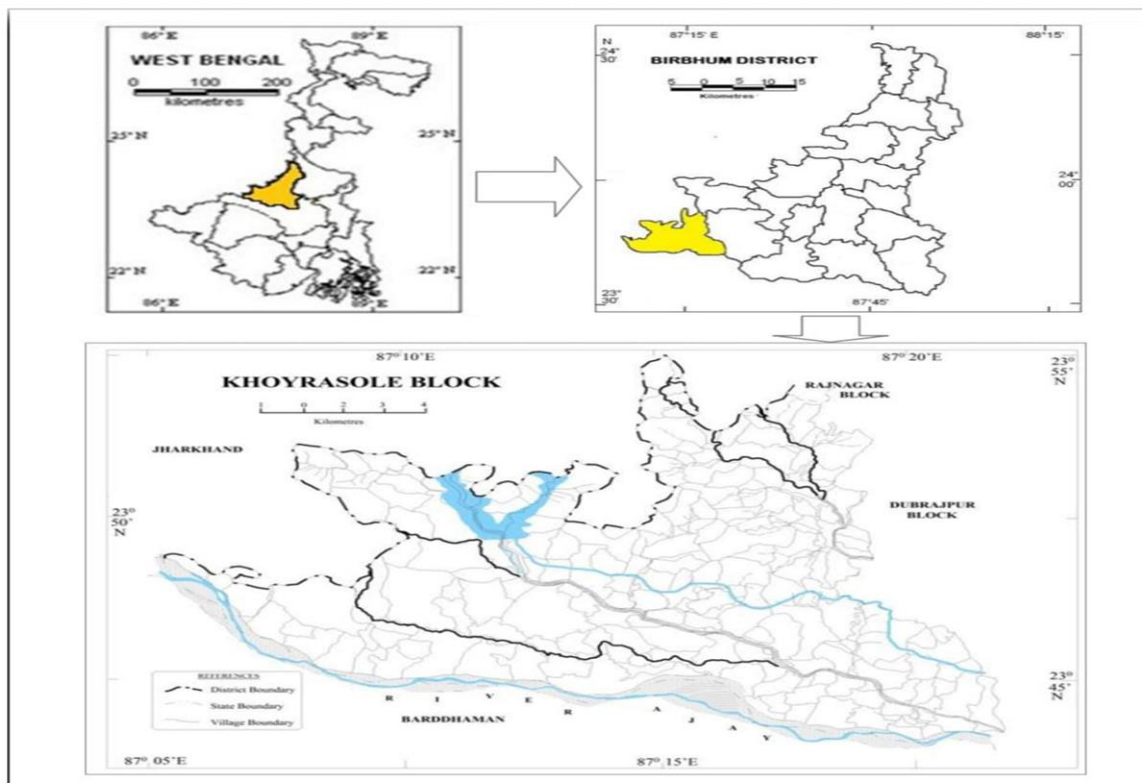
## **1. Introduction**

Education is the basic and fundamental requirement of the citizens of a nation. Education empowers a woman to participate in political and economic decision-making in the community as well as in the household and thereby enable her to participate in development efforts in both the family and the community. Women are important part of society, without their proper education a society cant developed. Educated women are capable of bringing socio-economic changes. Education will empower women to come forward and contribute towards the development and prosperity of the country. Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. The gap in the male-female literacy rate is just a simple indicator. According to the 2011 Census, the male literacy rate is 82.14 while female literacy rate is 65.46 only. In Islam there is no priority of men over woman to acquire education. Both are equally encouraged to acquire knowledge. Islam attaches immense importance to the acquisition and extension of knowledge. Islam has always

considered learning at least a useful accessory to become a good Muslim, and as necessary condition which helps to develop their faculties Islam holds the person who seeks knowledge in high esteem and Quran is full of verses which praise learned. Islam has always considered and advocated education of its followers as one of its most preferred activities. However, the high status and equal treatment granted to woman by the Islam which prevailed during early Islamic period did not last long. The status of Muslim woman deteriorated and they were denied of their rights. Although Indian constitution provides equal opportunity to the Muslim women they are still educationally backward. It is a matter of concern that why they are educationally backward, what their present educational status is and what are the solution of the problems.

**2. Study area:**

The area under study is located in the south-western part of Birbhum district in West Bengal with latitudinal and longitudinal extension of 23 ° 44'N to 23 ° 55'N and 87 ° 5'E to 87 ° 22'E (Map-1.1). The total geographical area of the Block is 27219 hectares. Administratively the area constitutes of 10 Gram Panchayats and 170 mouzas (Table 1.1: Appendix-I), out of which 44 mouzas are completely uninhabited. The study area is surrounded by Jamtara Block of Jharkhand State in the western side and by southern parts of Rajnagar Block in the northern part. In the east, the area is entirely bordered by Dubrajpur Block of Birbhum District. At last, southern part of the study area is naturally bounded by the River Ajay separating it from the district of Barddhaman. In this study area there are 24.30% Muslims are situated (as per 2011 census).



Map-1.1: Location of Study Area

### 3. Objectives:

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To find out the educational attainment of Muslim women in the Khayrasole block.
2. To discuss the problems related to Muslim women education.
3. To analyse the initiated schemes related to educational development.
4. To draw some tentative solutions with recommendations regarding educational development.

### 4. Database and Methodology:

The present research paper has been designed on the basis of Secondary organizations in the present study, including the Census of data of India. The secondary information is collected from many sources like, 2001 and 2011 census, Block Development Offices of Birbhum District, etc. The methodology reveals the way to solve the research problem systematically. Besides analysing the secondary information for the study, relevant thematic maps have been prepared using GIS tools. The GIS software like Q- GIS software, TNT Maps, has been used for the Purpose. Other than thematic maps, necessary cartograms have been prepared chiefly using Microsoft Excel Program. Besides, Literacy Rate: Number of Literate population/ Total Population (excluding 0-6 years) x100, Disparity Index by Sopher (1980), and modified by Kundu and Rao (1986),  $D = \text{Log}(X_2/X_1) + \text{Log} [(Q-X_1)/(QX_2)]$ .

### 5. Results and Discussion:

District wise Concentrations of the Muslim population in West Bengal: Before discussion about the educational status of Muslim women, the distribution percentage of Muslim people across the state was determined. In West Bengal, 27.01% (according to Census of India, 2011), people belonged to the Muslim community. So, the total number of Muslims is 24,654,825, and the remaining 73% includes Hindus, Christian, and other communities. But Birbhum is a district with a moderate concentration of Muslims, which is around 37.06% (according to Census of India, 2011). The remaining percentage of 62.94% includes the community of Hindus, Christian, and other religions. In the Birbhum district, the total number of the Muslim population is 1298054 (according to Census of India, 2011). Moderate population density is observed in the surveyed area. In the present day, the population is increasing day by day. A high growth rate of population occurred due to a lack of proper education and consciousness among Muslim parents. (Table no.1)

**TABLE 1**  
**Muslim population in Percentage, West Bengal, 2011 Census**

DISTRICT	TOTAL POPULATION	MUSLIM POPULATION	% OF MUSLIM POPULATION
Bankura	3,596,674	290,450	8.08
Bardhaman	7,717,563	1,599,764	20.73
<b>Birbhum</b>	<b>3,502,404</b>	<b>1,298,054</b>	<b>37.06</b>
Cooach Bihar	2,819,086	720,033	25.54
Dakshin Dinajpur	1,676,276	412,788	24.63
Darjeeling	1,846,823	105,086	5.69
Hooghly	5,519,145	870,204	15.77
Howrah	4,850,029	1,270,641	26.20

Jalpaiguri	3,872,846	445,817	11.51
Kolkata	4,496,694	926,414	20.60
Malda	3,988,845	3,988,845	51.27
Murshidabad	7,103,807	4,707,573	66.28
Nadia	5,167,600	1,382,682	26.27
North 24 Pargana	10,009,781	2,584,684	25.82
Paschim Medinipur	5,913,457	620,554	25.10
Purba Medinipur	5,095,875	743,436	24.59
Purulia	2,930,115	227,249	7.76
South 24 Pargana	8,161,961	2,903,075	35.57
Uttara Dinajpur	2,903,075	1,501,170	49.92
<b>West Bengal</b>	<b>91,276,115</b>	<b>24,654,825</b>	<b>27.01</b>

Source: Census of India, 2011

**6. Educational Status of Muslim Women in Khayrasole Block in Birbhum district:**

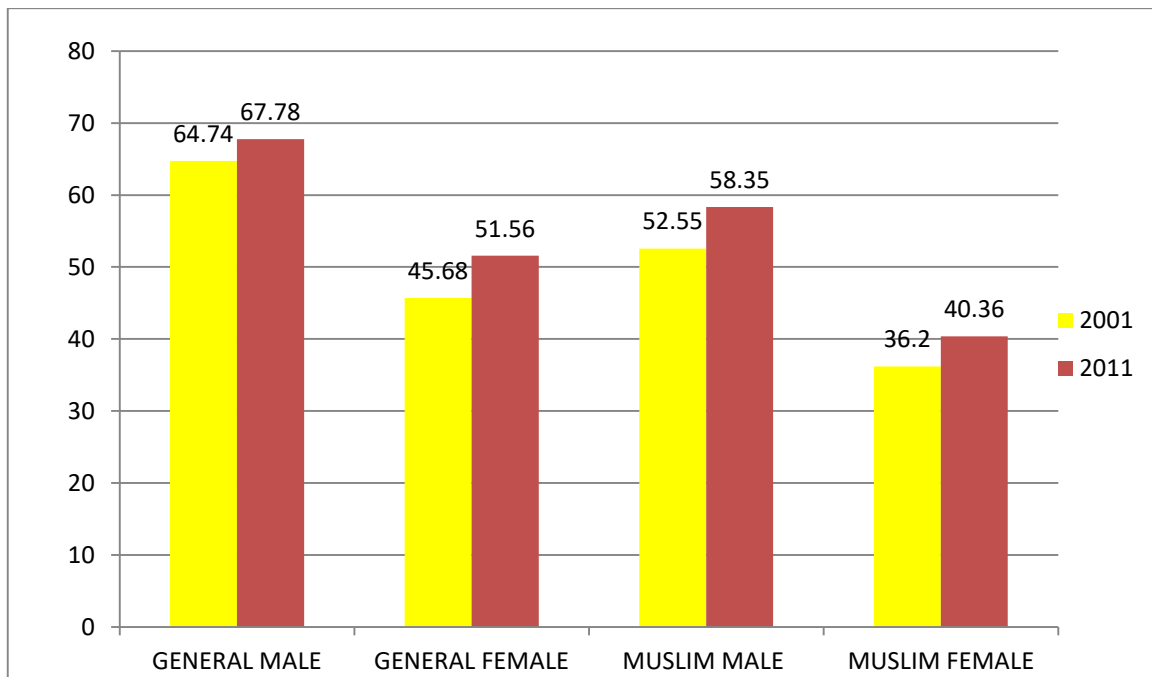
Muslim Women in Khayrasole Block in Birbhum district, most of the people are deprived from the basic educational facilities. But, women's education is needed for harmonious development for Muslim societies. The present study discusses the status of Muslim women with enlightening of the percentage of literacy rate. According to the Census of India 2001, in Khayrasole in Birbhum district, the literacy rate of Muslim Women is 36.20 percent (Fig No.2), whereas the Muslim male literacy rate is 52.55 percent. In terms of Muslim educational status, it is clear that in this Census, the literacy rate of Muslim women in the surveyed area is lower than the Muslim Male literacy rate. Here, the General literacy rate is 64.74 percent for males and 45.68 percent for females. On the other hand after ten years, as per the Census of India 2011, in Khayrasole in Birbhum district, the literacy rate of Muslim Women is 40.36 percent (Fig No.2), whereas the Muslim male literacy rate is 58.35 percent. In terms of Muslim educational status, it is clear that in this Census, the literacy rate of Muslim women in the surveyed area is lower than the Muslim Male literacy rate. Here, the General literacy rate is 67.78 percent for males and 51.56 percent for females. From the below given table, it is identified that there is a positive growth of literacy rate of Muslim women in 2001 census than 2011 census.

**TABLE 2**

**Literacy Rate of Muslim Women and General literacy Rate in Khayrasole Block in Birbhum District**

Category	Literacy Rate in % (2001)		Literacy Rate in % (2011)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>General</b>	<b>64.74</b>	<b>45.68</b>	<b>67.78</b>	<b>51.56</b>
<b>Muslim</b>	<b>52.55</b>	<b>36.20</b>	<b>58.35</b>	<b>40.36</b>

Source: Census of India, 2001 & 2011



**Fig No.2**

**Literacy Rate of Muslim Women and General literacy Rate in % 2001 & 2011**

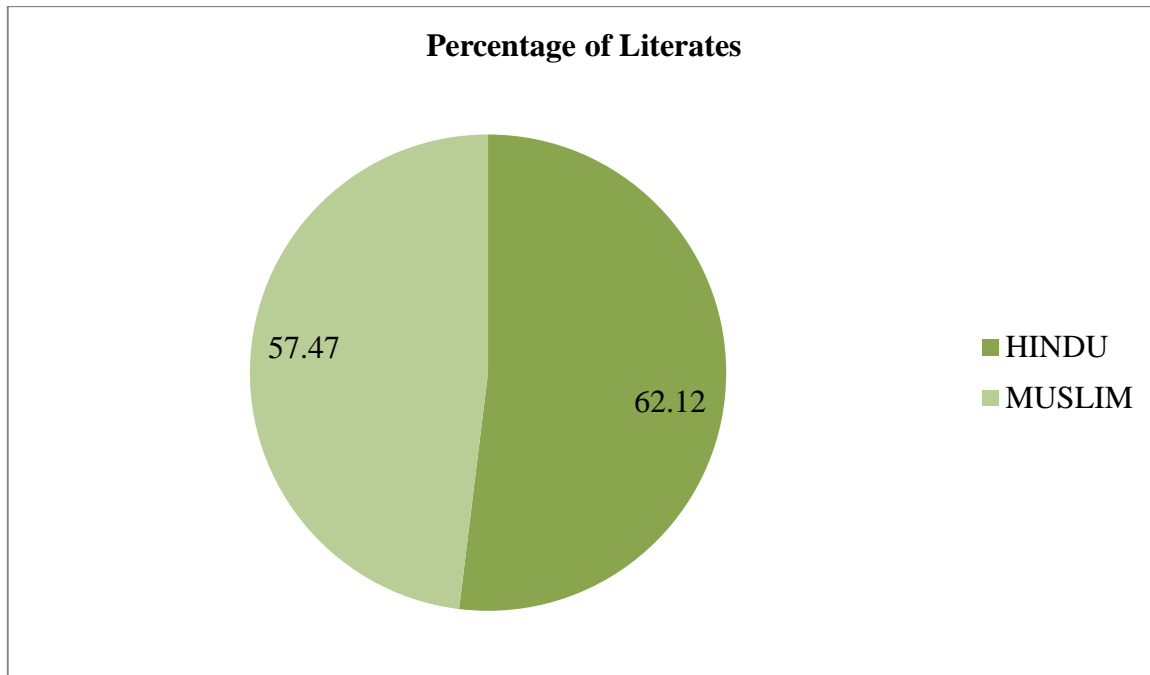
### 7. Educational Status and Attainment Of Muslim Women

Educational status does not refer only literacy level. It also includes educational attainment, educational aspiration, consciousness about education, retention rate, dropout rate etc. Suri sub-division of Birbhum district is Muslim concentrated area. According to Census 2011, 48% population belongs to Muslim population. The overall literacy rate of Birbhum District is 70% whereas female literacy rate is 64%. It was an interesting fact that in Birbhum district the Muslim Female literacy rate was 57.47% which was far below the Hindu Female literacy rate i.e. 62.12%.

**TABLE 3**  
**Literates Female Population**

Female Population	Hindu	Muslim
Percentage of Literates	62.12	57.47

Source: Census Report, 2011



**Fig No. 3 Literates of Hindu & Muslim Female Population**

**8. Major Problems of Muslim Women's Education in the study area:**

Most of the Muslim families are among the most backward in Khayrasole as well as in Birbhum district. So, the major problems behind the backwardness of education amongst women in Muslim communities are as below:

**The Poor Economic Condition of the Muslim Family:** In Birbhum district, 40% of Muslims is engaged as agricultural farmers and wage labors. Many people go outside of the state and country for earning money. Poverty is one of the most crucial factors for the educational backwardness of the Muslim Community in the study area. Here, many teenage girls are engaged either in household works or various primary activities and provide financial assistant to their family. So, many Muslims families are unable to send their girl children to school.

**Gender Biased Education:** In Muslim family, gender- based education is observed. Most of the parents give preference to their boy's education; they have a negative attitude towards girls' schooling. That's why girls are often discouraged from going for higher education. Besides, most of the parents think that their daughter should be gone to her father-in-law's home after marriage. But their son will stay in the house, and they would be reared with the income of their son. That's why the Muslim family is not interested in educating the girl child.

**Religious Effects on Girl's Education:** In the research area there are 30 percent of people are illiterate. They don't know about the importance of women's education. Most of the parents believe in the religious concept of Islam. There is a misconception regarding the "chastity" of girls if they have studied in Colleges or attained a higher level of education. If they travel long distances, they are perceived to have lost their chastity due to interaction with boys.

**Early Marriage of Girls:** In the research area, early marriage of girls happened before reaching a certain age (18 years). It was observed in the Muslim for a variety of society reasons including poverty, insecurity as well as for political and financial goals. So, this early marriage of girls stops their education early. Child marriage results in long-term, complicated consequences for child brides and grooms.

**Insufficient Educational Institutions for Girls:** In the study area a lack of adequate educational institutions was observed. There is a shortage of Primary education institutes, high schools, and colleges for girls. Mainly Muslim girls are not interested in going to school or colleges for long distances. There is no sufficient minority college as well as minority university in Khayrasole block for achieving a higher level of education. So, because of a lack of sufficient educational institutions, the educational status of Muslims women has not developed satisfactorily.

**Deficiency of Infrastructural Facilities in Schools for Muslim Women:** The physical condition of the school is a crucial matter of concern. There are many schools with adverse conditions of lady's toilets, and there are schools with no separate toilets for girl students. Therefore, many parents are worried about the safety of their daughters for sending them to schools. Many Muslim families think about the religious matter of cleanliness. So, they avoid sending their daughters for education in school.

**Job Crisis for Muslim Women:** In the surveyed area, most of the Muslim women are deprived of the opportunities of various types of jobs in West Bengal due to political corruption and discrimination. Mostly, because of poor economic conditions, they are unable to achieve the actual goal of success. Therefore, girls are not interested in enhancing their education due to the job crisis problem in the district. But local Govt. bodies should take steps for creating jobs.

**Lack of Educational Infrastructure in Madrasah and Makhtabs:** In the Khayrasole block, there are not sufficient infrastructural facilities for the development of the students. A low ratio of student-teacher, lack of upgraded syllabus, and lack of modern educational equipment for access to better education is seen in the Madrasah and Makhtabs. Therefore, the parents do not agree to send their girls to Madrasah for education.

## 9. Initiated schemes related to educational development for Muslim Women:

**Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme and Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme:** The salient goals of the scheme are to award scholarships to students (male and female) belonging economically backward sections of the minority community so as to provide them better opportunities to achieve higher education, and improve their employability.

**Scholarship to OBC Students:** The purpose of the OBC scholarship is to contribute financial assistance to OBC students (male and female) studying at Post-secondary stages of education and help them to complete their schooling. In the Birbhum district, there are many girls who belong to the OBC category. So, they are facilitated by this.

**Kanyashree Prakalpa:** The present Government of West Bengal announced in 2013 the Kanyashree Prakalpa, to enhance the percentage of higher education amongst girl students. Prakalpa mentioned that the government would provide Rs 500 per year as a scholarship to women student who belongs to the lower-income family (around Rs. 50,000 income per month). Prakalpa also mentioned that after 18 years of age, girls would get Rs. 25000 at a time. Most of the backward Muslim families got opportunities to be able to accelerate their women's education.

**Sabooj Sathi Bicycle Distribution Scheme:** Sabooj Sathi was launched in September 2015. In this scheme, the West Bengal government announced the distribution of bicycles to an estimated 40 lakh students of class IX to XI studying in Govt. run and Govt. aided Schools and Madrashes. The primary objective of the scheme is to empower the students, especially the girls, and reduce dropouts in higher education. It was because of this scheme that many poor Muslim girls were able to grow their educational status.

**Rupashree Prkalpa:** This project was launched in 2018, where the state government of West Bengal took the initiative to provide a one-time financial grant of Rs. 25,000 for economically weaker families, at the time of their daughters' marriages. The grant is aimed to mitigate the difficulties that low-income families face in bearing the expenditure of their daughters' marriages, for which they often have to borrow money at very high-interest rates. The scheme is implemented in all districts of West Bengal.

#### 10. Conclusion and Recommendation:

After the analysis of the educational status of Muslim women, it is identified that Muslims males and females both are far behind the other communities in the research area. In terms of the Muslim community, the female literacy rate is less than the male literacy rate and also less than the general literacy rate. Actually, most of the families are not able to give higher education to their daughters due to poor economic conditions, gender biases, and religious affections. The Government shows negligence for the development of education for Muslim people. As the recommendation for solving the problems on account of Muslim women education should be needed to enhance awareness among Muslim parents about the significance of education for women, and their future. People should think about various employment opportunities, self-employment schemes, self- help groups as well as increasing the economic well-being. Also, there is a need to upgrade the Madrasah education and its syllabus in order to raise the educational status of Muslims women. Parents should develop a positive attitude towards girl's higher education. The parents should take the initial measures to stop child marriages. The Government needs to implement the slogan "Education for All" among Muslim families. Free education for poor Muslim girls needs to be provided so as to develop their status and empowerment for higher education. Lastly, it is recommended that the Government and NGOs should take the measuring steps for the implementation of educational schemes properly in all study area of the Birbhum district.

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