

# EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN WEST BENGAL

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**Abstract:** Literacy is considered as one of the indicators of educational development of a nation and an essential but necessary step towards education. Literacy can also help in the development of human civilization through reducing poverty, ignorance, exclusion, etc..The present study has examine the educational status of women in west Bengal with respect in India of various governmental CencusReport(1951-2011).According to 2011 cencus reports the women literacy rate in india 65.46% & 71.16% in west Bengal, So the women literacy rate in west Bengal is satisfactory position with respect in India, also the male-female gender gap has been decrease. As per census 2011,the total literacy rate in West Bengal has grown from 68.64% in 2001 to 77.08% in 2011. PurbaMedinipur has the highest literacy rate of 87.66% in West Bengal.The position of West Bengal has always been higher than the all-India average; and West Bengal ranks the sixth among major states in this regard. But until the last decade, the improvement in literacy has been relatively slow in the state, especially for women. As a result, according to the Census, the Literacy rate of female in West Bengal has increased from 36.56 % in 1981 to 46.56 % in 1991 and to 60.22 % in 2001 and to 71.16 % in 2011 regarding female literacy in India. The trend of female literacy rate in West Bengal has been increased, this is the highest improvement for women literacy rate in West Bengal.

**Key Word:** Women, Literacy Rate, Cencus report, West Bengal.

## Introduction:

*“If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother Indian Empowered”.*

----- JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

Women in any nation are the mirror of its civilization. They are the most precious part of the society The position of Women in society is the index of the standard of social organization. There is no chance for the welfare of the World, unless the condition of Women is improved. In fact, the status offamily or country has not risen where there is no esteem for women, where they live in sadness. But actually, their social, economic and political status is lower than that of men in almost all countries of the world, of course women enjoyed a better position in some societies than in another, but their overall position everywhere is lower than their male counterparts in regards to education, employment, political participation, health status etc. The constitution of India not only provides for equal rights and privileges for women and men but also for making special provision for women. A series of social legislations have been enacted from time to time for raising the status of women in the country. After independence different five-year plans have consistently placed special emphasis on providing minimum health facilities integrated with family welfare and nutrition for women and children, acceleration of women's education, their increase in the labour force and welfare service for women in need. Various welfare and development schemes have been introduced to improve the living condition of women and to increase their access to and control over material and social resources. Special step has been taken to remove legal, social and other constraints to enable them to make use of the rights and new opportunities becoming available for them. Women in India now participate in all activities such as education, politics, media, art and culture, service sector, science and technology, etc. Inspiteof all these development measures and the constitutional legal guarantees; women have

lagged behind men in almost all sectors. In this context, researchers have been selected to study the literacy status of women in West Bengal.

### Objectives:

The present study was undertaken to achieve the following objectives-

- To study the position of West Bengal regarding female literacy in India.
- To study the trend of female literacy rate in West Bengal.
- To compare the growth of female literacy between West Bengal and India.
- To study the trend of the Gender Gap of female literacy in West Bengal.
- To compare the growth of female literacy between rural and urban area in West Bengal.
- To study the literacy status of scheduled Castes & scheduled Tribe in West Bengal.
- To make a comparison between district-wise literacy rate of women in 2001 and 2011 in West Bengal.

### Research Question:

- ❖ What is the position of West Bengal regarding female literacy in India?
- ❖ What is the trend of female literacy in West Bengal?
- ❖ Is there any disparity in growth of female literacy in West Bengal and in India?
- ❖ What is a gender gap of women's literacy in West Bengal?
- ❖ Is there any disparity in the growth of female literacy between rural and urban area in West Bengal?
- ❖ What is the growth rate of Schedule Caste Women Literacy rate in West Bengal?
- ❖ What is the growth rate of Schedule Tribe Women Literacy rate in West Bengal?
- ❖ What is the present status of various districts –in W.B regarding female literacy rate?

### Method of the Study:

Documentary studies constitute an important approach in social science research. In this study, documentary analysis has been followed. So, the study is documentary nature. It is based on official documents and secondary data. The conclusion made in the study was based on Secondary sources like books, the Journal reports, Census reports etc..

### Concept of Literacy:

Literacy is traditionally meant as the ability to read and write. In modern time meaning of the term has been expanded to include the ability to use language, numbers, images, computers, and other basic means to understand, communicate, gain useful knowledge, solve mathematical problems and use the dominant symbol system of a culture.

The UNESCO defines literacy as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying context.

According to Census report, a person aged seven and above, who can both read and write with understanding in any language, is treated as literate. A person, who can only read but cannot write, is not literate. In the Censuses prior to 1991, children below five years of age were necessarily treated as illiterates. The age limit was raised to 7 years based on the advice of experts that the ability to read and write with understanding is not ordinarily achieved until that age. It was, therefore decided at the 1991 Census that all children in the age group 0-6, would be treated as illiterate by definition and the population aged seven years and above only would be classified as literate or illiterate. Same criterion has been retained in the Censuses of 2001 and 2011. It should be clearly understood that it is not necessary that to be treated as literate, a person should have received any formal education or acquired any minimum educational standard.

**Literacy rate:**

In earlier Censuses up to 1981, it was customary to work out the literacy rate taking into account the total population. Since literacy rate is more meaningful if the sub-population in the age group 0-6 is excluded from the total population, it was decided in 1991 to calculate literacy rate for the population seven years and above. The same concept has been retained in all Censuses since 1991.

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 7 and above population in the denominator is called the effective literacy rate. The formula for computing crude literacy rate and effective literacy rate are as follows:

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

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

**Importance of Female Literacy:**

Female literacy can be considered to be a more sensitive index of social development to overall literacy rates. Female literacy is relatively related with fertility rates, population growth, infant and child mortality rates and shows a positive association with female age at marriage, life expectancy, participation in modern sector of economic activities and above all female enrolment. Female Literacy is vital to build a foundation on which their societies can grow. The importance of female literacy from social and economic point of views are many-

**Female Literacy Contributes to Economic Growth:** Investing in the education of girls is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty. By one estimate, countries that do not meet the MGD target of gender parity in education are at risk of foregoing 0.1 to 0.3 percentage points actually in per capita economic growth.

**Literate mothers increase human capital through their influence in the health, education and nutrition for children:** Daughters of literate mother are more likely to attend school. A mother's education also translates into higher immunization rates and better nutrition for her children both of which increase enrolment and improve school performance. Every year of mother's education corresponds to 5 to 10 percent lower mortality rates in children under the age of five.

**Improves family's economic prospects by improving female's qualification and skills:** As better educated women participate in paid employment, families enjoy higher income and overall productivity increases. In rural economics, the education of women and girls may translate into higher agricultural production.

**Improves reproductive Health:** Literate women are more likely to seek adequate parental care, skilled attendance during child birth and to use contraception. They tend to initiate sexual activity, marry and begin child.

**Literacy Status of Women in West Bengal:**

Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society. Objective and research question wise analysis has been done below.

**Objectives:-1 To study the position of West Bengal regarding female literacy in India.**

**Research Question:-1 What is the position of West Bengal regarding female literacy in India?**

**Table: 1 Women Literacy Rate in India with All States (2001-2011).**

Sl. No	State	2001 Census	2011 Census	Change (%)	Ranking	
		Female (%)	Female (%)		2001	2011
1	Kerala	87.72	91.98	4.26	1	1
2	Mizoram	86.75	89.40	2.65	2	2
3	Lakshadweep	80.47	88.25	7.78	3	3
4	Tripura	64.33	83.15	18.82	13	4
5	Goa	76.47	81.84	5.37	4	5
6	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	74.71	81.84	7.13	8	6
7	Chandigarh	75.37	81.38	6.01	6	7
8	Pondicherry	73.90	81.22	7.32	9	8
9	Delhi	75.24	80.93	5.69	7	9
10	Nagaland	56.87	76.69	19.82	18	10
11	Daman and Diu	67.42	79.59	12.17	10	11
12	Himachal Pradesh	75.61	76.60	19.01	5	12
13	Sikkim	59.63	76.43	16.8	19	13
14	Maharashtra	67.03	75.48	8.45	11	14
15	Tamil Nadu	64.91	73.86	8.95	12	15
16	Meghalaya	50.43	73.78	23.35	28	16
17	Manipur	61.46	73.17	11.71	15	17
18	Panjab	60.53	71.34	11.19	16	18
<b>19</b>	<b>West Bengal</b>	<b>59.61</b>	<b>71.16</b>	<b>11.55</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>19</b>

20	Gujarat	60.40	70.73	10.33	17	20
21	Uttarakhand	63.36	70.70	7.34	14	21
22	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	43.53	65.93	22.4	30	22
23	Karnataka	57.80	68.13	10.33	22	23
24	Assam	51.85	67.27	15.42	25	24
25	Haryana	59.61	66.77	7.16	20	25
26	Orissa	50.51	64.36	13.85	26	26
27	Chhattisgarh	55.73	60.59	4.86	23	27
28	Madhya Pradesh	54.61	60.02	5.41	24	28
29	Uttar Pradesh	43.00	59.26	17.26	31	29
30	Andhra Pradesh	50.29	59.74	9.45	27	30
31	Jammu and Kashmir	42.22	58.01	15.79	32	31
32	Arunachal Pradesh	40.23	59.57	19.34	33	32
33	Jharkhand	38.87	56.21	17.34	34	33
35	Bihar	33.12	53.33	20.21	35	34
34	Rajasthan	43.85	52.66	8.81	29	35
-	India	54.16	65.46		11.3	

Source: Census Report of India, 2001.

**Interpretation:** Table-1 reveals that the national average of female literacy rate is 65.46 percentages in 2011. Kerala, Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Tripura, Goit performed well in female literacy, whereas the progress of female literacy of Bihar, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Jammu & Kashmir, and Arunachal Pradesh are poor. Kerala is the highest (91.98) and Rajasthan is the lowest (52.66) position in female literacy. Ranking of West Bengal in female literacy is 19<sup>th</sup> (2011). It is higher by 11.3 percent changes of India female literacy.

**Objectives 2-To study the trend of Gender Gap of female literacy rate in West Bengal.**

**Research Question 2-What is a gender gap of women's literacy in Best Bengal?**

**Table: 2 Gender Gap in Literacy Rate in West Bengal (1951-2011).**

Year	Literacy Rate in West Bengal			
	Total	Female	Male	Gap
1951	24.42	12.74	34.14	21.40
1961	34.46	20.27	46.57	26.30
1971	38.86	26.56	49.57	23.01
1981	48.65	36.56	59.93	23.37

1991	57.70	46.56	67.81	21.25
2001	69.22	60.22	78.58	18.36
2011	77.08	71.16	82.67	11.51

Source:- Census report of India 2011.

**Interpretation:**It is observed that the 1951 census to the 1981 census the literacy rates for the male-female literacy rate in West Bengal has increased, where as the gap between the male-female literacy rate was 21.40% in 1951 and the gap was 23.37% in 1981. The highest gap between male-female literacy was found in 1961. After 1981to 2011, the male-female literacy gap has been decreasing, In 2011 the gap was 11.51%.

**Objectives:3**To study the growth rate of female literacy in West Bengal.

**Question Research:3** What is the growth rate of female literacy in West Bengal?

**Table: 3** Growth of Female Literacy Rate in West Bengal (1971-2011).

Year	Female Literacy Rate	
	West Bengal	Growth Rate
1971	26.56	6.29
1981	36.56	10.00
1991	46.56	10.00
2001	60.22	13.66
2011	71.16	10.94

Source: Census Reports (1951-2011), India.

**Interpretation:**The above table(Table-3)has show the progress of female literacy rate in West Bengal during the period of 1971 to 2011.It revealed that there is a consistently gradual increasing trend in female literacy rate in West Bengal. In regarding female literacy, position of West Bengal has been increase gradually between 1971 to 2011. The growth rate of female literacy since 200 in West Bengal has highly progressed.

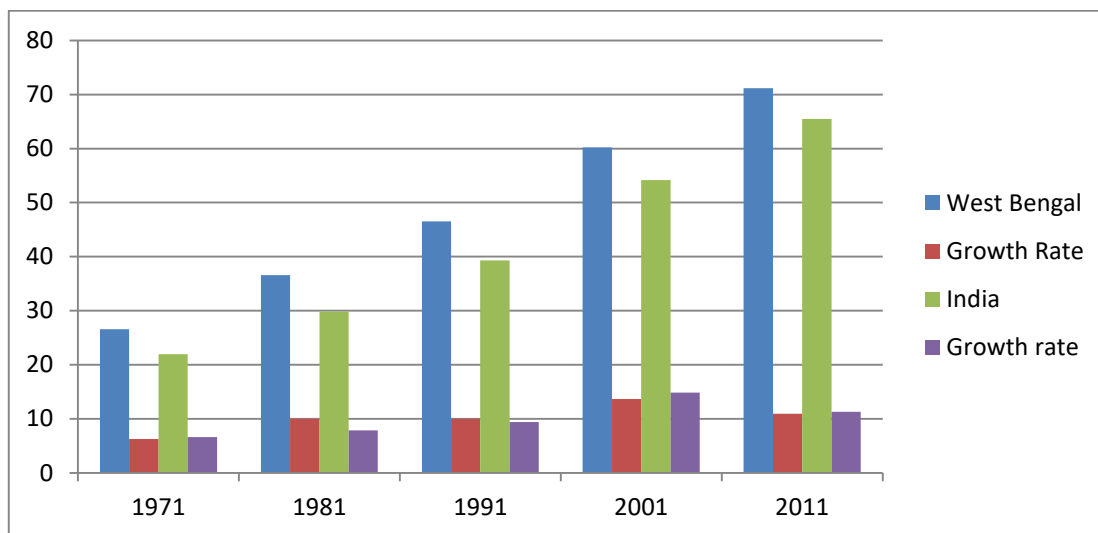
**Objectives 4**-compare the growth of female literacy between West Bengal and India.

**Research Question 4**-Is there any disparity in growth of female literacy in West Bengal and in India?

**Table: 4** Growth of Female Literacy Rate in West Bengal and India (1971-2011).

Year	Female Literacy Rate			
	West Bengal	Growth Rate	India	Growth rate
1971	26.56	6.29	21.97	6.63
1981	36.56	10.00	29.85	7.88
1991	46.56	10.00	39.29	9.44
2001	60.22	13.66	54.16	14.87
2011	71.16	10.94	65.46	11.30

Source: Census Reports (1951-2011), India.



**Interpretation:**The above table (Table-4)has show the progress of female literacy rate both in West Bengal and India during the period of 1971 to 2011.It revealed that there is a consistently gradual increasing trend in female literacy rate in both India and West Bengal. In regarding female literacy, position of West Bengal is far better than India. The growth rate of female literacy since 1981 in West Bengal as well as India has progressed satisfactory. But it has decreased in 2011 in both West Bengal and India compared to 2001.

**Objectives 5- To compare the growth of female literacy between rural and urban area in West Bengal.**

**Research Question 5-Is there any disparity in the growth of female literacy between rural and urban area in West Bengal?**

**Table: 5 Compare the Growth of Rural and Urban Female Literacy in west Bengal (1971-2011).**

Year	Female Literacy Rate			
	Rural	Growth Rate	Urban	Growth Rate
1971	18.05	6.32	54.11	4.09
1981	25.34	7.29	60.72	6.61
1991	38.12	12.78	68.25	7.53
2001	53.82	15.7	76.14	7.89
2011	66.08	12.26	81.70	5.56

Census: Census 2011-Provisional Population Totals-India.

**Interpretation:**The above table-5 is showing that the compare between rural and urban female literacy rate since 1971 to 2011 in West Bengal.The rural female literacy has gradually increased from 1971 to 2011 with special eference urban female literacy rate. West Bengal is better position in rural female of present sication. As per 2011 census report the rural female literacy is 66.08 and growth rate is 12.26 and urban fimale literacy rate 81.70 in West Bengal.

**Objectives 6-To study the literacy status of Scheduled Caste in West Bengal.**

**Research Question 6-What is the growth rate of Schedule Caste Women Literacy rate in West Bengal?**

**Table: 6 Schedule Caste Male- Female Literacy Rate in West Bengal(1991-2011).**

Year	Schedule Caste Male Female Literacy Rate			
	Male	Growth Rate	Female	Growth Rate
1991	54.6	-	28.9	-
2001	70.54	15.94	46.92	18.02
2011	84.54	14.00	64.9	17.98

Source: Census Reports 2011, India.

**Interpretation:** The above table ( table 6) has revealed that the literacy rate in both male and females of SC in West Bengal. In West Bengal the growth rate in male shows a decreasing trend but in female it shows an increasing trend. The gap between male and female literacy shows a decreasing trend in West Bengal.

**Objectives 7-To study the literacy status of Scheduled Tribe in West Bengal.**

**Research Question 7- What is the growth rate of Schedule Tribe Women Literacy rate in West Bengal?**

**Table: 7 Schedule Tribe Male-Female Literacy Rate in West Bengal (1991-2011).**

Year	Schedule Tribe Male-Female Literacy Rate			
	Male	Growth Rate	Female	Growth Rate
1991	40.10	-	15.0	-
2001	57.38	17.28	29.15	14.15
2011	74.1	16.72	43.51	14.36

Source: Census Reports 2011, India.

**Interpretation:** The above table (table-7 ) has revealed that the literacy rate in both male and females of ST is in West Bengal. In West Bengal the growth rate in male shows a decreasing trend but in female it shows an increasing trend. The gap between male and female literacy shows a increasing trend in West Bengal.

**Objectives 8- To make a comparison between district-wise literacy rate of women in 2001 and 2011 in West Bengal.**

**Research Question:8-What is the present status of various district –in W.B regarding female literacy rate?**

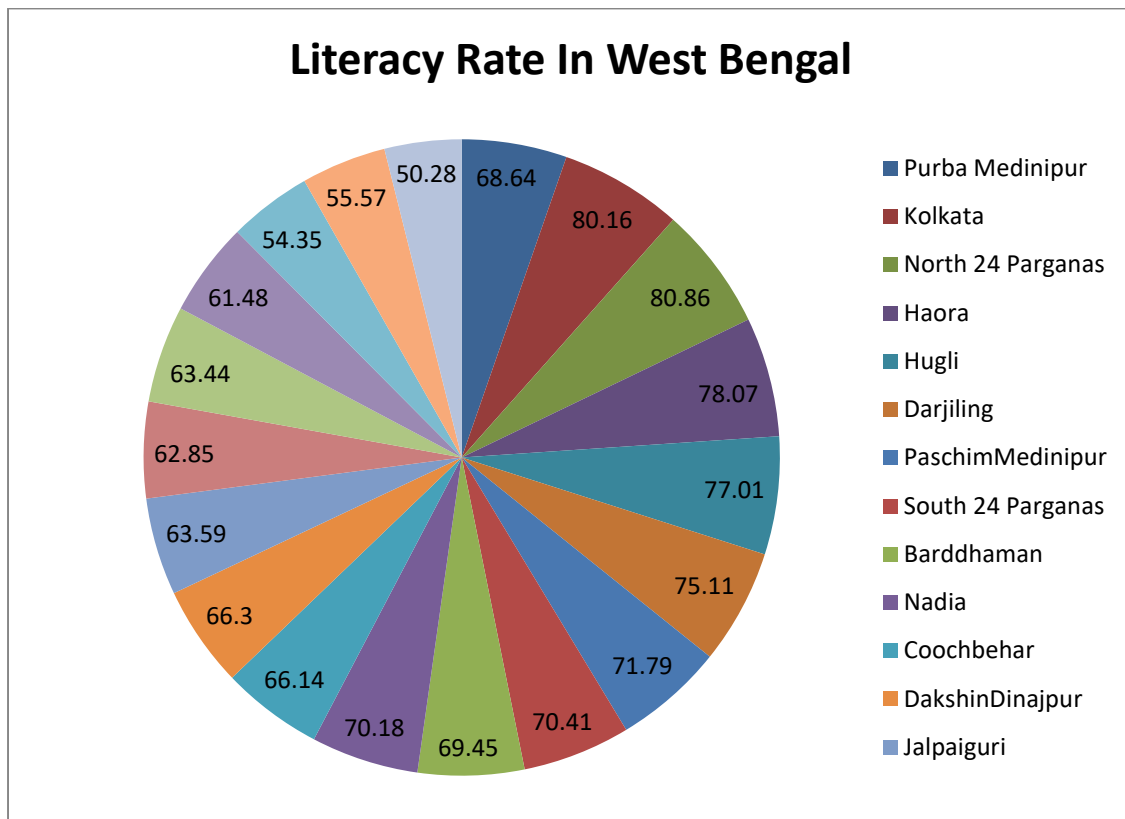
**Table: 8 District Wise Female Literacy Rate in West Bengal 2001-2011 Census.**

Sl. No	District	Literacy Rate		
		2001	2011	Change
	West Bengal	68.64	77.08	8.44
1	PurbaMedinipur	80.16	87.66	7.50
2	Kolkata	80.86	87.14	6.28



3	North 24 Parganas	78.07	84.95	6.89
4	Haora	77.01	83.85	6.84
5	Hugli	75.11	82.55	7.44
6	Darjiling	71.79	79.92	8.14
7	PaschimMedinipur	70.41	79.04	8.63
8	South 24 Parganas	69.45	78.57	9.12
9	Barddhaman	70.18	77.15	6.97
10	Nadia	66.14	75.58	9.45
11	Coochbehar	66.30	75.49	9.19
12	DakshinDinajpur	63.59	73.86	10.26
13	Jalpaiguri	62.85	73.79	10.94
14	Bankura	63.44	70.95	7.52
15	Birbhum	61.48	70.90	9.41
16	Murshidabad	54.35	67.53	13.18
17	Puruliya	55.57	65.38	9.81
18	Maldah	50.28	62.71	12.43
19	Uttar Dinajpur	47.89	60.13	12.25

Source:Census Report of India 2011.



#### Interpretation:

As per census 2011 West Bengal has a literacy rate of 77.08%. The literacy rate in Bengal has grown from 68.64% in 2001 to 77.08% in 2011. PurbaMedinipur has the highest literacy rate of 87.66% in Bengal. Kolkata has a literacy rate of 87.14% followed by north 24 pargana with 84.95% Haora with 83.85% and Hugli with 82.55%. Uttar Dinajpur is the least literacy district in West Bengal with 60.13% literacy rate. Malda has 62.71% and purulia has 65.38% literacy rate. Literacy rate in Mursidabad has grown with 13.18% during the last decade, which is the highest growth in Bengal. Malda and Uttar Dinajpur also have a good improvement of above 12% at the same time. District with least increase in literacy rate are Kolkata, Haora, north 24 pargana and bardhaman. They have a increase of above 6% in last 10 years.

The state has 71.16 percent women literacy rate. In this case Kolkata has the highest women literacy rate of 84.98 percent in the state. East Medinipur has 81.81 percent North 24 Parganas has 81.05 percent women literacy rate in bengal. Purulia has the lowest women literacy rate of 51.29 percent. North Dinajpur and Maldah have a women literacy rate of 53.15 percent and 57.84 percent.

#### Finding of the Study:

- ❖ The position of West Bengal has always been higher than the all-India average; and West Bengal ranks the sixth among major states in this regard. But until the last decade, the improvement in literacy has been relatively slow in the state, especially for women. As a result, according to the Census, the Literacy rate of women in West Bengal has increased from 36.56 % in 1981 to 46.56 % in 1991 and to 60.22 % in 2001 and to 71.16 % in 2011 regarding female literacy in India.
- ❖ The trend of female literacy rate in West Bengal has been increased 12.74% in 1951 to 71.16% in 2011, this is the highest improvement for women literacy rate in West Bengal.
- ❖ The Male-Female literacy gap in West Bengal has been decrease in 1951 to 2011, the literacy gap 21.40% in 1951 and 11.51% in 2011.

- ❖ The growth of female literacy between West Bengal and India has improve satisfactory, 1971 the female literacy rate 21.97% and growth rate 6.63 . 2011 the literacy rate 65.46% growth rate 11.30% in India and the female literacy rate in West Bengal 1971, 26.56 % growth rate 6.29. & 2011 literacy rate 71.16% and growth rate 10.94%.
- ❖ The compare between rural and urban female literacy rate since 1971 to 2011 in West Bengal. The rural female literacy has gradually increased from 1971 to 2011 with special eference urban female literacy rate. West Bengal is better position in rural female of present sication. As per 2011 census report the rural female literacy is 66.08 and growth rate is 12.26 and urban female literacy rate 81.70 in West Bengal.
- ❖ The male-female literacy gap of West Bengal has been decreasing. In the similar manner like India rural and urban male female literacy rate and SC, ST male female literacy rates of West Bengal has been increased. The literacy rate of India was 76.75% in 2001 where as 77.08% was the literacy rate of West Bengal.
- ❖ The literacy rate in both male and females of SC is in better position in West Bengal then India. In West Bengal, the growth rate in male shows a decreasing trend but in female it shows an increasing trend. The gap between male and female literacy shows a decreasing trend in West Bengal.
- ❖ As per census 2011 West Bengal has a literacy rate of 77.08%. The literacy rate in Bengal has grown from 68.64% in 2001 to 77.08% in 2011. PurbaMedinipur has the highest literacy rate of 87.66% in Bengal. Kolkata has a literacy rate of 87.14% followed by north 24 pargana with 84.95% Haora with 83.85% and Hugli with 82.55%. Uttar Dinajpur is the least literacy district in West Bengal with 60.13% literacy rate. Malda has 62.71% and purulia has 65.38% literacy rate. Literacy rate in Mursidabad has grown with 13.18% during the last decade, which is the highest growth in Bengal. Malda and Uttar Dinajpur also have a good improvement of above 12% at the same time. District with least increase in literacy rate are Kolkata, Haora, north 24 pargana and Bardhaman. They have a increase of above 6% in last 10 years. The state has 71.16 % women literacy rate. In this case Kolkata has the highest women literacy rate of 84.98 percent in the state. East Medinipur has 81.81% North 24 Parganas has 81.05 % women literacy rate in Bengal. Purulia has the lowest women literacy rate of 51.29%. North Dinajpur and Maldah have a women literacy rate of 53.15 % and 57.84 %.

### Women Literacy Program in India:

West, Bengal is implementing various schemes, programs, social welfare schemes, Health and Nutrition, scholarship for women empowerment, girl child, pregnant women, mothers, Women Health. The government of India runs various types of schemes for the development of women. These schemes relate to education and to the economic rehabilitation of women, those schemes are:

- Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Schemes.
- Sukanya samridhi yojna.
- Balika samridhi Yojna.
- Mukhyamantri Rajshri Yojna.
- Mukhysmsntri Kanya Suraksha Yojna.
- Mukhyamantri Laadli Yojna.
- Mazi Kanya Bhagyashree Schemes.
- Nanda Devi Kanya Yojna.

### Central schemes implemented by the government of West Bengal:

Some of the central government-sponsored schemes, especially targeted towards women, which are implemented by the government of West Bengal, are:

- Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls (RGSEAG) – Sabla
- Swabalamban Programme for SC, ST Women.
- Support to Training and Employment Program for Women (STEP).
- Swayamsidha Programme.
- KanyashreePrakalpa(West Bengal Govt.).

**Suggestions:**

- Promoting affirmative action for girl's education.
- Encourage to take up employment and income generative activities.
- Parents Awareness for Women literacy.
- Drop-out and out of school girl's students will be reduced.
- Create awareness among people about child marriage and literacy etc. .
- Incentives in the form of mid-day meals, free text books, uniforms, rations etc.
- Appointment more female teacher in school and university.
- Gender review in curriculum and text books.
- Regular monitoring of girl's participations and achievement.
- Appointment of local persons as teacher.
- Scholarships for girls (state and central govt.).
- Increase Non-formal and Informal education for girls.
- Provision of vocational training for women.
- Integration of gender perspective into all economic structuring

**Conclusion:**

Illiteracy is greatest problem in India. So literacy Programme is an accepted national programme to achieve the desired development. In the occasion, various programme have taken in different periods. The 21<sup>st</sup> century of Women Education and Employment is the sole remedy to improve the status of women. Education is an important determinant for human resource development. Women play a prominent role in the economic, cultural, political and social life of our country. It is true that after independence India has achieved some improvement regarding women education but this is not sufficient because the gender gap still achievement. It is most essential task of our Govt. to bring to every girl and woman into the light of education and to ensure the social as well as the economic development of our nation. To ensure universal elementary education govt. scheme and Programme should be implemented and monitor very strictly. It is true that after Independence the literacy rate of India as well as West Bengal have been increased in different aspect like male-female literacy rate urban, rural male female literacy rate etc. Yet we have to go miles for away.

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