

Status of Women Education in Bankura Municipal Town, 1991–2011: An Exploratory Analysis

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Dhiren Barman

Assistant Teacher, Sargaria Adibasi High School
Balagarh, Hooghly, West Bengal, India

<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9542-4210>

Abstract

Women's education is one of the most important demographic attributes that describe the social aspects of the population. It is measured as the number of literate women per hundred women in the total female population. Currently, female literacy is a very important indicator of gender equality and the social development of a region. The female education rate in Bankura city is low and is increasing daily. A huge gender gap is observed between the female and male literacy rates in Bankura city. The male literacy rates were 56.03%, 80.12%, and 83.29% in 1991, 2001, and 2011, respectively. On the other hand, the female literacy rates were 51.47%, 65.92%, and 73.55%, respectively. Poverty, lack of girls' schools, child marriage, lack of social security, and lack of social awareness among women are the major causes of educational backwardness of women in Bankura Town. The study is based on primary field survey data and secondary data obtained from the Census of India for 1991, 2001, and 2011, and employs percentage, comparative, and GIS-based spatial analysis to examine ward-wise variations in female literacy. Awareness on women education, vocational training courses, arrangement of free education and scholarships for women (like Kanyashree Prakalpa), various Central and State Government schemes (Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) Scheme, Sukanya Samiriddhi Yojna, Balika Samridhi Yojna, Mukhyamantri Rajshree Yojna, Sabooj Sathi Prakalpa, Rupashree Prakalpa) will enhance women's education in Bankura Town. Women's education is very important for the proper social and economic growth of a country. Education develops a person properly and turns a person into a real human resource. This society will truly progress if the female and male literacy rates increase.

Keywords: Women Education, Female Literacy, Gender Equality, Educational Disparity, Women Empowerment, Bankura Municipal Town, Spatial Analysis

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 India empowered".

P.T. Jawaharlal Nehru

Women's education is an important indicator of gender equality, social development, and socioeconomic progress. Higher female literacy contributes to women's empowerment by improving access to employment, health awareness, decision-making, and participation in social and economic activities. Despite improvements in educational opportunities in India, gender disparities in literacy continue to exist across regions and at the local level in India.

Bankura Municipal Town experienced considerable improvement in literacy during the study period; however, the progress was not spatially uniform. The female literacy rate increased from 51.47% in 1991 to 65.92% in 2001 and 73.55% in 2011, while considerable differences persisted among municipal wards. These variations indicate the need to examine women's education at the ward level rather than considering only the overall municipal literacy rate.

Therefore, this study examines the status and spatial pattern of women's education in Bankura Municipal Town during 1991–2011. Particular attention is given to ward-wise female literacy, gender disparities, and local factors associated with educational backwardness. Such an analysis is important for identifying disadvantaged areas and developing targeted measures to improve women's educational participation and empowerment.

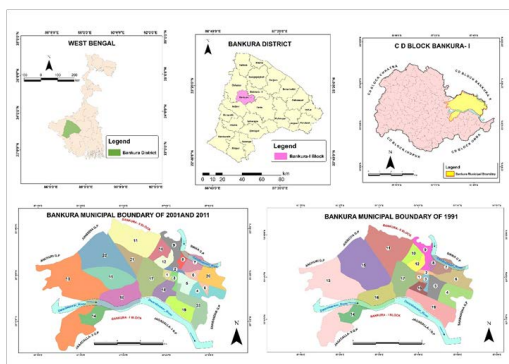


Figure 1 Location Map of Bankura Municipality of Bankura District in West Bengal

Location of the Study Area

Regional/physical Setting: Bankura town is situated in the western part of West Bengal. It is a part of the Burdwan Division of the state and is included in the area known as “Rarh” in Bengal. The town is flanked by the Dwarakeswar and Gandheswari Rivers on the northern and southern sides, respectively, and is located in a transitional natural region between the alluvial plain in the east and denuded spurs of the Chotanagpur plateau in the west. The general elevation of the area ranges from 150 to 160 m above MSL, with a general gradient from west to east.

Administrative Setting: Bankura, a Class I municipal town/city, is the headquarters of Bankura district, West Bengal. It has been a center of Western Bengal's Malla kingdom, and its nearby areas have enormous cultural and historical importance.

Geographical Setting: Bankura town is located centrally within the district between 87°2'0" E to 87°6'0" E longitude and 23°13'0" N to 23°15'30" N latitude. The town is 35 km away from the industrial city of Durgapur and approximately 250 km from Kolkata.

Research Gap

Although several studies have examined literacy and educational development in India and West Bengal, very few have focused on ward-level variations in women's education in Bankura Municipal Town. Earlier studies mainly discussed general literacy patterns without examining the spatial distribution of female literacy and local factors influencing educational disparities. Therefore, the present study attempts to analyze the status of women's education at the municipal ward level using both primary and secondary data and provides suitable recommendations for improving female educational participation.

Review of Literature

Several researchers have examined women's education, literacy, gender disparities and educational development in India. Agarwal (1993) emphasized that female education is essential for the social and economic development of society and contributes significantly to improving women's status. Varshney (2002) examined interstate gender disparities in literacy using census data and identified considerable differences in male and female literacy rates across Indian states. Hassan (2005) discussed the geographical dimensions of population and literacy patterns and emphasized the importance of spatial analysis in understanding regional variations in educational development. Jaglan and Sindhu (2008) examined the regional dimensions and determinants of gender disparity in educational attainment and demonstrated the influence of socioeconomic and regional factors on educational inequality. Adhikari and Kamle (2010) investigated the spatial patterns of education and development in West Bengal and highlighted significant regional variations in educational attainment. Halder (2012), with special reference to West Bengal, analyzed the progression of women's literacy and identified continuing regional disparities in female literacy.

Recent research has focused on the relationship between education, women's empowerment, gender equality, and socioeconomic development. Mittal (2021) examined the impact of education on women's empowerment in India and emphasized that education can strengthen women's employment

opportunities, socioeconomic participation, awareness, and decision-making. Shukla and Tiwari (2022), through a spatial examination of literacy, highlighted the persistence of geographical variations in gender disparity and demonstrated the importance of analyzing literacy at smaller spatial levels.

Recent studies have also focused on the institutional and policy dimensions of women's educational development in the region. Nandi (2022) examined initiatives undertaken to promote women's education in West Bengal and highlighted the importance of government intervention in improving women's educational participation. Das (2023) discussed women's empowerment through education in India and emphasized the role of education in strengthening women's social and economic positions. Sakshi and Bano (2023) used spatial analysis to demonstrate that gender disparity in literacy continues to vary considerably across geographical areas. Their findings indicate that aggregate literacy figures may conceal significant local-level inequalities between men and women in the region.

Bhuwania, Mukherji, and Swaminathan (2024) examined women's education through the Mahila Samakhya community-based empowerment program and demonstrated the potential of empowerment-oriented interventions to improve women's and girls' educational outcomes. Anjoon (2024), in a study focusing on the Murshidabad district of West Bengal, examined gender disparity and literacy in relation to the population and identified continuing spatial differences in educational attainment. These studies are particularly relevant to the present research because they demonstrate that gender disparities in literacy should be examined not only at the national or state level but also across smaller geographical units.

More recent research continues to emphasize female educational participation and the role of education in women's empowerment. Gochhayat and Ravindran (2025) examined dropout and retention dynamics among female students across Indian states and highlighted the continuing inequalities affecting women's participation in education. Paswan and Gupta (2025) discussed women's educational empowerment in relation to contemporary education

policy and emphasized the importance of inclusive educational opportunities for strengthening women's participation and empowerment.

The existing literature demonstrates that women's educational attainment is influenced by a combination of socioeconomic conditions, regional disparities, accessibility to educational facilities, gender-related barriers, government policies, and empowerment initiatives. Although previous studies have examined women's education, literacy patterns, and gender disparities at the national, state, district, and regional levels, comparatively limited research has focused on ward-level spatial variations in women's education in Bankura Municipal Town. In particular, insufficient attention has been paid to changes in female literacy across individual municipal wards over an extended period. Therefore, this study attempts to address this research gap by analyzing the status and spatial pattern of women's education in Bankura Municipal Town during 1991–2011, with particular emphasis on ward-wise female literacy and educational disparities.

Objectives

- To study the status of literacy rate in Bankura Municipal Town during 1991-2011.
- To study ward-wise female literacy rate in Bankura Town during 1991-2011.
- To study the current education policies in Bankura Town.
- To suggest some recommendations to improve female literacy in Bankura Town.

Database and Methodology

The present study covers the period from 1991 to 2011 and is based on primary and secondary data. Secondary data were obtained from the Census of India for 1991, 2001, and 2011; the District Statistical Handbook; Bankura Municipality records; books; journals; government reports; and official websites. Ward-wise census data were used to examine temporal and spatial variations in total and female literacy in Bankura Municipal Town.

Primary data were collected through field surveys covering the 23 wards (Ward Nos. 1–23) of the Bankura Municipal Town. A stratified sampling technique was adopted, with each

municipal ward treated as a separate stratum to ensure representation from different parts of the study area. Households constituted the primary sampling units, and information was collected using structured questionnaires and personal interviews. The questionnaire covered educational status, accessibility to educational institutions, socioeconomic conditions and factors influencing women's education. The primary survey was undertaken across all 23 municipal wards to obtain household-level information to supplement the ward-wise secondary data analysis.

The collected data were classified, tabulated, and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including percentage and comparative analyses. GIS and cartographic techniques were used to prepare thematic maps showing ward-wise literacy distribution in the study area. Primary information was cross-checked with respondents and compared with available secondary data wherever possible. Participation in the field survey was voluntary, and the information collected was used only for academic research purposes, while maintaining respondent confidentiality.

Discussion

Table 1 Ward Wise Total Population, Total Literacy, Literacy % and Female Literacy % of Bankura Town from 1991-2011

Ward No.	Year 1991								
	Male	Female	Total POP	Male LIT	Fe LIT	Total LIT	Male LIT %	Fe LIT %	Literacy %
1	1234	1189	2423	1069	880	1949	86.62	74.0117746	80.437
2	1215	1104	2319	1059	815	1874	87.16	73.82246377	80.81
3	1874	1743	3617	1482	1105	2587	79.08	63.39644291	71.523
4	3896	3683	7579	2425	1627	4052	62.24	44.17594352	53.463
5	3859	3445	7304	3082	2268	5350	79.86	65.83454282	73.247
6	4217	3868	8085	2592	1671	4263	61.46	43.20062048	52.727
7	2926	2750	5676	2097	1438	3535	71.66	52.29090909	62.279
8	2041	1862	3903	1567	1225	2792	76.77	65.78947368	71.534
9	1792	1663	3455	1343	915	2258	74.94	55.0210463	65.354
10	4022	3727	7749	3052	2456	5508	75.88	65.8975047	71.08
11	4633	4331	8964	3684	2936	6620	79.51	67.79034865	73.85
12	2358	2071	4429	1625	1122	2747	68.91	54.17672622	62.023
13	2756	2930	5686	1955	1763	3718	70.93	60.17064846	65.388
14	2049	1881	3930	1600	981	2581	78.08	52.15311005	65.674
15	6686	5650	12336	5319	3342	8661	79.55	59.15044248	70.209
16	3157	2923	6080	2446	1500	3946	77.47	51.31713992	64.901
17	3466	3000	6466	2689	1805	4494	77.58	60.16666667	69.502
18	2043	1914	3957	1634	1287	2921	79.98	67.24137931	73.818
19	5650	5268	10918	3215	1684	4899	56.9	31.96659074	44.87
Total				43935	30820	74755	56.03	51.47	65.07

Ward No.	Year 1991								
	Male	Female	Total POP	Male LIT	Fe LIT	Total LIT	Male LIT %	Fe LIT %	Literacy %
1	2090	2013	4103	1756	1546	3302	84.01	76.8	80.477
2	1896	1787	3683	1710	1454	3164	90.18	81.36	85.908

3	1668	1623	3291	1399	1108	2507	83.87	68.26	76.177
4	2795	2744	5539	2016	1506	3522	72.12	54.88	63.585
5	3428	3165	6593	2825	2228	5053	82.4	70.39	76.641
6	2694	2547	5241	2121	1616	3737	78.73	63.44	71.303
7	2841	2753	5594	2203	1697	3900	77.54	61.64	69.717
8	1907	1746	3653	1565	1192	2757	82.06	68.27	75.472
9	2825	2703	5528	2258	1823	4081	79.92	67.44	73.824
10	3464	3303	6767	2929	2473	5402	84.55	74.87	79.828
11	3440	3335	6775	2996	2600	5596	87.09	77.96	82.592
12	3072	2897	5969	2481	1910	4391	80.76	65.93	73.563
13	3537	3439	6976	2762	2098	4860	78.08	61	69.667
14	2364	2244	4608	2024	1459	3483	85.61	65.01	75.585
15	3528	3212	6740	2921	2071	4992	82.79	64.47	74.065
16	2457	2394	4851	1947	1501	3448	79.24	62.69	71.078
17	3548	3017	6565	2940	2103	5043	82.86	69.7	76.816
18	2453	2280	4733	2039	1580	3619	83.12	69.29	76.463
19	4415	3994	8409	2691	1723	4414	60.95	43.13	52.491
20	3308	3007	6315	2456	1758	4214	74.24	58.46	66.73
21	2238	2117	4355	1964	1679	3643	87.75	79.31	83.65
22	3752	3425	7177	3361	2736	6097	89.57	79.88	84.951
23	2709	2607	5316	1859	1243	3102	68.62	47.67	58.352
Total	66429	62352	128781	53223	41104	94327	80.12	65.92	73.24

Ward No.	Year 2011								
	Male	Female	Total POP	Male LIT	Fe LIT	Total LIT	Male LIT %	Fe LIT %	Literacy %
1	1973	1912	3885	1789	1585	3374	90.67	82.89	86.846
2	1787	1773	3560	1621	1481	3102	90.71	83.53	87.134
3	1727	1731	3458	1530	1285	2815	88.59	74.23	81.405
4	3336	3318	6654	2635	2120	4755	78.98	63.89	71.46
5	3151	3007	6158	2704	2384	5088	85.81	79.28	82.624
6	2392	2305	4697	1976	1698	3674	82.6	73.66	78.22
7	3476	3336	6812	2879	2342	5221	82.82	70.2	76.644
8	1879	1759	3638	1621	1344	2965	86.26	76.4	81.5
9	2853	2779	5632	2446	2070	4516	85.73	74.48	80.184
10	3584	3532	7116	3178	2950	6128	88.67	83.52	86.115
11	4571	4400	8971	4073	3802	7875	89.1	86.4	87.78
12	2920	2927	5847	2346	2077	4423	80.34	70.96	75.645
13	3240	3157	6397	2750	2359	5109	84.87	74.72	79.865
14	2423	2261	4684	2146	1743	3889	88.56	77.08	83.027
15	3908	3894	7802	3197	2764	5961	81.8	70.98	76.403
16	2605	2730	5335	2106	1953	4059	80.84	71.53	76.082
17	3448	3034	6482	2950	2155	5105	85.55	71.02	78.756

18	2467	2453	4920	2140	1809	3949	86.74	73.74	80.264
19	4573	4305	8878	2922	2200	5122	63.89	51.1	57.693
20	3322	3114	6436	2750	2173	4923	82.78	69.78	76.491
21	2410	2328	4738	2100	1889	3989	87.13	81.14	84.191
22	4490	4333	8823	3991	3623	7614	88.88	92.1	86.297
23	3308	3155	6463	2328	1873	4201	70.37	59.36	65
Total	69843	67543	137386	58178	49679	107857	83.29	73.55	78.5

Literacy Rate

It is one of the most significant demographic attributes that describes the social aspects of the population. It is calculated as the number of literate people per hundred of the total population. The total literacy rate in Bankura town was 65.07% in 1991. A very high literacy rate of 80.81% was seen in Ward no. 2 in the central part, and the lowest rate of literacy (44.87%) was seen in Ward no. 19 in the southwestern part of the town. In 1991, it was very high in Ward nos. 1 and 2. High literacy rates were found in Wards 5, 8, 11, and 18. Moderate literacy rates were found in Wards 8, 10, 15, and 17. A low literacy rate was found in Wards 4, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14, and 16. A very low literacy rate was found in Ward No. 4, 6, 19.

According to the 2001 census, the total literacy rate in Bankura town was 73.24%. The highest literacy rate (85.90%) was observed in Ward 2 in the central part, and the lowest literacy rate (52.49%) was observed in Ward 19 in the south-eastern part of Bankura town. In 2001, a very high literacy rate was found in Wards 1, 2, 11, 21, and 22. A high literacy rate was found in Ward no.3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18. Moderate literacy rates were found in Wards 4, 7, 13, and 20. Low literacy rates were found in Wards 19 and 23.

As the census 2011, the total literacy rate of Bankura town was 78.50%. The highest literacy rate (87.78%) was observed in Ward 11 in the north-western part, and the lowest literacy rate (57.69%) was observed in Ward 19 in the south-eastern part of Bankura town. In 2011, very high literacy rates were found in Ward no. 1,2,3,5,8,9,10,11,14,18,21 and 22. A high literacy rate was found in Wards 4, 6, 7, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, and 20. A moderate literacy rate was found in Ward No. 23. A low literacy rate was found In Ward no. 19.

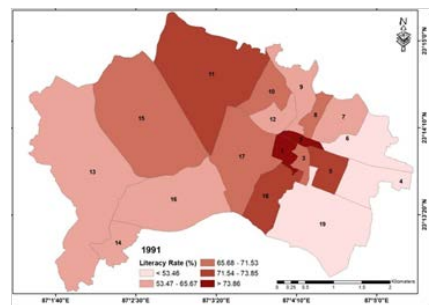


Figure 2 Distribution of Literacy Rate of Bankura Town in 1991

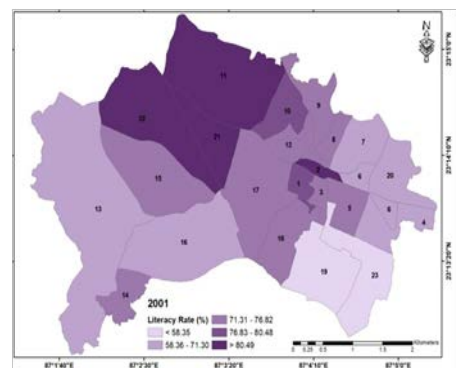


Figure 3 Distribution of Literacy Rate of Bankura Town in 2001

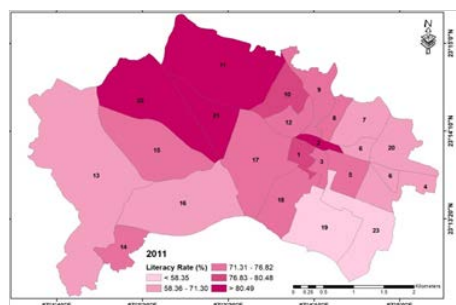


Figure 4 Distribution of Literacy Rate of Bankura Town in 2011

Female Literacy

It is one of the most important demographic attributes that describes the social aspects of the population. It is measured as the number of female literate population per hundred of the total female population. Nowadays, female literacy is a very important indicator for gender equality and the social development of a region. In 1991, the total female literacy rate in Bankura town was 51.47%. Ward no. 01 in the central part had the highest rate (74.01%) of female literacy in the town. However, Ward 19 in the southeastern part of the town had the lowest rate of female literacy (31.96%). In 1991, a high female literacy rate was found in Wards 1 and 2. Moderate female literacy rates were found in Wards 3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 17, and 18. A low female literacy rate was found in Wards 7, 9, 12, 14, 15, and 16. Very low female literacy rates were found in Wards 4, 6, and 19.

As the census 2001, the total female literacy rate in Bankura was 65.92%. The highest female literacy rate (81.36%) was observed in Ward 02 in the central part, and the lowest female literacy rate (43.13%) was observed in Ward 19 in the south-eastern part of the town. In 2001, a very high female literacy rate was found in Ward no. 2. A high female literacy rate was found in Wards no. 1, 5, 10, 11, 21, and 22. The moderate female literacy rate was found in Wards 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18. A low female literacy rate was found in Wards 4 and 20. A very low female literacy rate was found in Wards 19 and 23.

The total female literacy rate of Bankura town was 73.55% as the census 2011. The highest female literacy rate (92.10%) was observed in Ward No. 22 in the western part, and the lowest female literacy rate (51.10%) was observed in Ward No. 19 in the south-eastern part of the town. In 2011, very high female literacy rates were found in Wards 1, 2, 10, 11, 21, and 22. High female literacy rates were found in Wards 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18. Moderate female literacy rates were found in Wards 4 and 20. A low female literacy rate was found in Wards 19 and 23.

Women Education and Empowerment

Education plays a significant role in empowering

women socially, economically, and politically. Educated women are more likely to participate in decision-making, obtain employment opportunities, improve family health, ensure children's education, and contribute to community development. In Bankura Municipal Town, the gradual increase in female literacy indicates positive progress towards women's empowerment. However, inequalities among wards suggest that equal educational opportunities are required to achieve inclusive empowerment.

Future Research Directions

Future research should extend the present analysis beyond 2011 to examine recent changes in women's education and female literacy in Bankura Municipal Town. Longitudinal studies should be undertaken to understand changes in ward-level educational disparities over longer periods. Further studies should examine socioeconomic determinants, such as household income, parental education, occupation, social background, accessibility to educational institutions, and awareness of government educational schemes. Updated ward-level primary surveys would also provide a clearer understanding of the present educational status of women and help assess the effectiveness of government programs aimed at improving women's education and empowerment.

Statistical Interpretation

The statistical analysis revealed a steady improvement in female literacy in Bankura Municipal Town over the study period. The overall female literacy rate increased from 51.47% in 1991 to 65.92% in 2001 and further to 73.55% in 2011, indicating continuous progress in education. However, ward-level analyses have revealed considerable spatial disparities. Wards 1, 2, 10, 11, 21, and 22 consistently recorded higher female literacy rates, whereas Ward 19 remained the least performing ward throughout the study period. These spatial differences suggest that educational attainment is closely associated with access to educational facilities, socioeconomic conditions, and public awareness. The percentage-based comparative analysis confirms that although women's educational status has improved

significantly, educational inequality continues to exist across municipal wards, highlighting the need for targeted policy interventions.

Importance of women Education

- Better Standard of Living
- Improved Health and Hygiene
- Dignity and Honor
- Self Reliance
- Eliminating Crime against Women
- Decreased Mortality Rate
- Exploring the Hidden Potential
- Women in Politics or Bureaucracy
- Integral Development

Major problems of Women's Education in Bankura Town:

- Poverty is one of the major causes of educational backwardness of women in Bankura.
- Financial deprivation has become an obstacle to women's education.
- There is a lack of girls' schools, especially in rural areas. Due to the lack of separate schools, in many cases, girls are forced to drop out despite their wishes.
- Most guardians in this country and state place more importance on the education of their sons than on the education of their daughters. The general idea about girls' education is that girls are good at housework. Therefore, girls are educated only to make them suitable for marriage without valuing their talents, abilities, and desires. Despite their ability and potential, many women are unable to get an education after marriage.
- Many feel that well-educated girls do not want to follow worldly discipline.
- Conservatism and prejudice among backward communities and tribes hamper women's education.
- Although there is a law against child marriage, in many cases, the law is not obeyed. After marriage, it is not possible for almost all girls to continue their education.
- The lack of social security and social awareness among women has made women's education inaccessible.
- Due to the underdevelopment of communication systems and economic reasons, women are lagging behind in terms of education.

Recommendation on Women Education in Bankura Town

- Arrange for free education and scholarships for women who are deprived of education due to a lack of money.
- To provide separate toilets for girls on school premises. This way, a woman does not have to face any kind of embarrassment.
- Awareness of the importance of education needs to be raised.
- The Central and State Governments will extend a helping hand to voluntary organizations in various ways to expand women's education in every part of the country and in West Bengal. The government will prioritize women's education and invest generously in the country's overall development.
- Women should be provided with part-time education. Many women cannot afford full-time education due to social and economic constraints. Part-time education must be arranged for them.
- Education must be vocationalized. Education increases women's earning capacity. To achieve this, women's education should be vocational. One of the aims of education after women's primary education is to build well-housewives, good mothers, and good citizens.
- The Village Community will create a conducive social environment for school-age girls to attend school.
- Promotion of vocational training courses. Community participation in planning, development, and management of education programs needs to be addressed. In this district, the Mother Teacher Association has been formed in all primary schools.
- Promotion of adult literacy, especially for women, should be combined with skill training and income-generating activities.

Welfare Schemes for Women

The Government of India and the Government of west Bengal have launched various projects for the development of women's Education. These are -

- Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGBV): Girls are educated to primary level through KGBV. It basically works in rural areas

where female literacy is low.

- National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL): Girls who are not incentivized through SSA are covered by NPEGEL.
- Saakshar Bharat Mission for Female Literacy: This mission was launched with an objective to bring down the female illiteracy.
- Beti Bachao Beti padhao (BBBP) Schemes.
- Sukanya samiriddhi Yojna.
- Balika samridhi Yojna.
- Mukhyamantri Rajshri Yojna.
- Kanyashree Prakalpa.
- Sabooj Sathi Prakalpa
- Rupashree Prakalpa.

Conclusion

The study reveals that women's literacy in Bankura Municipal Town improved considerably between 1991 and 2011. Despite this progress, significant ward-level disparities still exist due to poverty, inadequate educational facilities, gender discrimination, and limited awareness. The findings indicate that improving women's education directly contributes to gender equality, social development, and women's empowerment. Therefore, greater investment in educational infrastructure, awareness programs, vocational education, and government welfare schemes is essential to reduce educational disparities and promote inclusive development.

Before and after Independence, India has been taking active steps towards women's status and education. The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002, has been a path-breaking step towards the growth of education, especially for females. According to this Act, elementary education is a fundamental right for children between the ages of 6 and 14. The government has undertaken to provide this education free of cost and make it compulsory for those in that age group. This undertaking is more widely known as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Since then, the SSA has developed many schemes for the inclusive and exclusive growth of Indian education as a whole, including schemes to help foster the growth of female education. The West Bengal government has launched various projects to bring girls in the light of education everywhere from

cities to villages, notably Kanyashree and Sabooj Sathi (SS).

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Author Details

Dhiren Barman, Assistant Teacher, Sargaria Adibasi High School, Balagarh, Hooghly, West Bengal, India,
Email ID: dhirenbarman84@gmail.com