



## Rural - Urban Composition of Literacy in Malda District, West Bengal

### KEYWORDS

Male-female literacy, Rural-urban literacy, Male-female disparity, Rural-urban disparity, Male-female disparity index etc.

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### ABSTRACT

The present study is an attempt to analyze the rural-urban composition of literacy in Malda District of West Bengal. The research work is based on secondary sources of data collected from the District Census Hand Book (2001),<sup>1</sup> Malda district. Literacy rate has been computed for the population above 6 year and Sopher's Disparity index (1974) modified by Kundu and Rao (1983)<sup>2</sup> has been employed for measurement of male-female disparity in literacy. It is observed that the total as well as male and female literacy rates are higher in urban area than rural area. The total and rural-urban literacy rates are much lower in the district than our national level. The male female disparity in rural area is higher than urban area and the male rural-urban disparity in literacy is lower than female.

### INTRODUCTION

Literacy is an important indicator of development of population. Literacy reflects the socio-economic and cultural setup of a nation, ethnic group or community. It influences and determines qualitatively and quantitatively not only the human resources but also other population attributes like fertility, mortality, age of marriage and economic participation of a population ultimately, aiming towards welfare of the society (Sawant and Lewis, 2004).<sup>3</sup> Literacy is essential for eradicating poverty and mental isolation for cultivating peaceful and friendly international relations and for permitting the free play of demographic processes (Chandna, 1980).<sup>4</sup> Literacy is a cultural attribute of population. It acts as an index to judge the socio-economic development of an area (Kumari, S, 1987).<sup>5</sup> Prior to the advent of the skill of reading and writing, society could be classified as pre literate and literate. Literate society began somewhere during the 4th million B.C. through a gradual transmission from pictography to the use of an alphabet (Golden, 1968).<sup>6</sup> Davis observed that if the rate of literacy transition was low the economic development slowed down, while the economic development was rapid if the literacy transition was fast.

Literacy refers ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. 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 (UNESCO).<sup>7</sup> The Population Commission of United Nation considers the ability to both read and write simple message with understanding in any language a sufficient basis for classifying a person literate. The Indian census has adopted this definition (Census of India, 1981).<sup>8</sup> But there is variation of definition in some countries. For example, the people of Finland have to pass a difficult test for being declared as literate (UNESCO, 1957).<sup>9</sup> The measurement of literacy in Indian Census is done in the population above 6 years of age. 0-6 years child population is excluded in determining the number of literates.

Rural-urban populations in a country also display a wide disparity in respect of literacy rate. The literacy rate of urban population are significantly high in comparison to rural population in the developing country (Chandna, R.C., 2004).<sup>10</sup> Rural-urban differential in literacy emanates from the differences in the type of economy, degree of concentration of educational institutions, status granted to the female and migratory pattern of the two areas. The rural-urban differential in literacy has been narrowing down largely due to the opening of large number of schools in the countryside and also due to the increasing degree of socio-economic awakening among the rural population.

### OBJECTIVES:

The main objectives of the present research work are following :

- (i) To analyze (block wise) rural-urban composition of literacy.
- (ii) To study male-female literacy in rural as well as urban population.
- (iii) To analyze rural-urban composition of male-female disparity in literacy.
- (iv) To analyze rural-urban disparity in literacy.

### STUDY AREA:

Malda district is undertaken as the area for the present study located in middle part of West Bengal. It is extended between 24°40'20"N to 25°32'08" N latitude and 87°45'10" E to 88°28'10" E longitude. The district covers an area of 3733.66 Sq.km. Malda is called as gateway of North Bengal. To the south is Murshidabad district, to the north are North and South Dinajpur district. To the east is international border of Bangladesh and to the west are Santhal Pargana of Jharkhand and Purnea of Bihar.

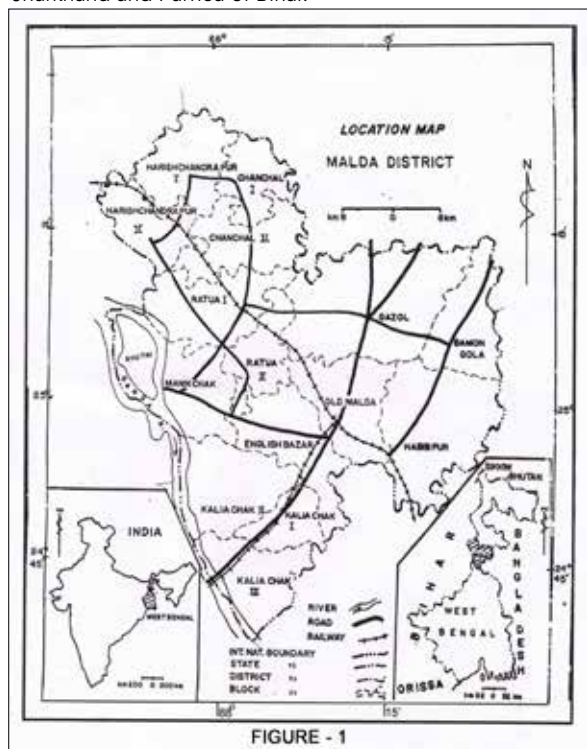


FIGURE - 1

The district comprises two sub-division namely Malda Sadar and Chanchal. These sub-division are further divided into 15 blocks. Malda Sadar sub-division consists of nine community development blocks namely English Bazar, Gazole, Habibpur, Kaliachak-I, Kaliachak-II, Kaliachak-III, Manikchak, Old Malda and Bamongola. Chanchal sub-division consists of six community development blocks namely Chanchal-I, Chanchal-II, Ratua-I, Ratua-II, Harishchandrapur-I and Harishchandrapur-II.

The total population of Malda district is 3290468 persons. Out of total population, only 7.32% are urban live in three blocks namely old Malda (39.12%), English Bazar (50.37%) and Habibpur (10.51%). The decadal growth rate of population (1991-2001) is 24.78. The total literacy rate is 50.30% and rural literacy is 47.80% while urban literacy is 79.30% (District Census Hand Book,2001).11

**DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY**

The present paper intends to analyze the rural-urban composition of literacy in Malda district of West Bengal entirely based on secondary sources of data collected from District Census Hand Book, Malda (2001).12 Literacy rate has been computed for the population above 6 year. For the measurement of male-female disparity in literacy, Sopher's Disparity Index (1974) modified by Kundu and Rao (1983)13 has been employed –

$$Ds = \log(x2/x1) + \log(100 - x1) / (100 - x2) \dots\dots\dots (I)$$

Kundu and Rao's modified disparity index formula, as follows:

$$Ds = \log(x2/x1) + \log(200 - x1) / (200 - x2) \dots\dots\dots (II)$$

x2 is considered for male and x1 is considered for female literacy rate.

**RURAL-URBAN COMPOSITION OF LITERACY**

The literacy rate in Malda district is much lower (50.30%) than our national level (64.36%). The total literacy in rural area is 47.80% whereas in urban area, it is 79.30%.

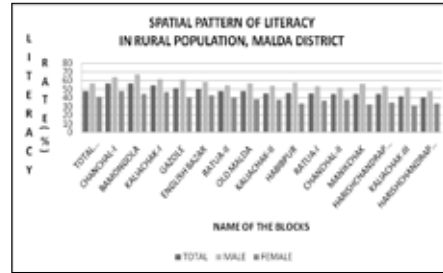
**Table-1: Rural-Urban Composition of Literacy and Male-Female Disparity in Malda District.**

Blocks	Literacy Rate			Male-Female Disparity Index
	Male	Female	Total	
<b>RURAL LITERACY</b>				
Harishchandrapur-I	53.10	34.60	44.10	0.223
Harishchandrapur-II	47.70	33.30	40.70	0.189
Chanchal-I	63.80	47.90	56.10	0.171
Chanchal-II	51.30	37.40	44.50	0.173
Ratua-I	53.10	36.20	45.00	0.204
Ratua-II	54.50	40.80	47.80	0.163
Gazole	61.50	40.10	51.00	0.231
Bamongola	67.50	44.10	56.10	0.237
Habibpur	57.60	33.40	45.60	0.278
Old Malda	56.60	38.10	47.70	0.218
English Bazar	57.90	42.50	50.40	0.175
Manikchak	55.50	31.90	44.10	0.281
Kaliachak-I	61.60	46.60	54.30	0.164
Kaliachak-II	53.80	37.80	46.10	0.191
Kaliachak-III	52.10	30.70	41.80	0.267
Total Rural	56.60	38.50	47.80	0.208
<b>URBAN LITERACY</b>				
Habibpur	81.00	66.10	73.70	0.168
Old Malda	77.70	63.10	70.60	0.160
English Bazar	87.30	78.60	83.00	0.149
Total Urban	84.40	73.80	79.30	0.148
Total (Rural+Urban)	58.80	41.30	50.30	0.195

Source: District Census Hand Book, Malda District, 2001<sup>14</sup>

The literacy rate in rural and urban areas are varied. In rural areas it ranges from a maximum in Chanchal-I and Bamongola (56.10%) to a minimum in Harishchandrapur-II (40.70%) while in urban area it ranges from a maximum in English Bazar (83.00%) to a minimum in Habibpur (73.70%). In rural area, five blocks namely Chanchal-I, Gazole, Bamongola, English

Bazar and Kaliachak-I have higher literacy when rest blocks have lower literacy. In urban areas Old Malda and English Bazar (municipality) have higher literacy rate than urban average literacy



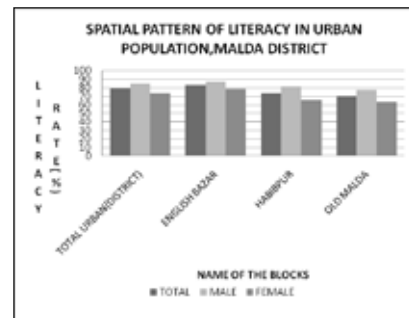
**Figure – 2** whereas urban literacy in Habibpur is lower (Table-1 and Figure-2 & 3). It is observed that literacy rate in urban area is much higher than rural area (Table-2&Figure-6).

**Table-2 : Rural-Urban Disparity in Literacy of Malda District.**

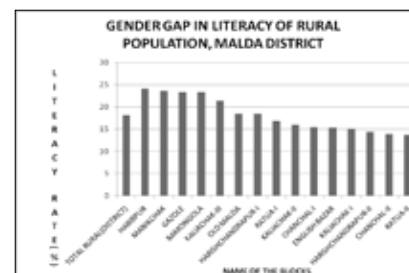
Literacy Rate (%)				
Gender	Total	Rural	Urban	Rural-Urban Disparity
Male	58.80	56.60	84.40	27.80
Female	41.30	38.50	73.80	34.30
Total	50.30	47.80	79.30	31.50

Source: Calculation based on Table-1

Male literacy in urban population (84.40%) is much higher than rural (56.60%). The male literacy in rural area ranges from a minimum in Harishchandrapur-II (47.70%) to a maximum in Bamongola (67.50%) whereas in urban area, it ranges from a minimum in Old Malda (77.70%) to a maximum in English Bazar (87.30%). In rural area male literacy is higher in six blocks namely Chanchal-I, Gazole, Bamongola, Habibpur, English Bazar and Kaliachak-I etc. than the rural male literacy of Malda district and rest blocks have low male literacy (Table-1, Fig. 2 & 3).



**Figure - 3** The female literacy in urban areas (73.80%) is also much higher than rural area (38.50%). In rural area the range of variations of the female literacy rate varies from the highest in Chanchal-I (47.90%) to lowest in Kaliachak-III (30.40%) while in urban area it is from highest in English Bazar (78.60%) to lowest in Old Malda (63.10%) (Table-1, Figure 2 & 3). It is observed that male and female literacy are much higher in urban areas than rural areas in every blocks of this district.



**Figure – 4**

The male-female disparity in literacy has been presented by Sopher's Disparity Index. The male-female disparity in literacy of the district is 0.195 while in rural area it is 0.208 and in urban area it is 0.148. In general male-female disparity in rural area is higher than urban area everywhere. In rural area it ranges from highest in Manikchak (0.281) to lowest in Ratua-II (0.163) and in urban area it ranges from the highest in Habibpur (0.164) to the lowest in English Bazar (0.149). There are eight blocks namely Kalichak-III, Manikchak, Old Malda, Habibpur, Bamongola, Gazole, Ratua-I and Harishchandrapur-I having higher male-female disparity index than the district level (0.195). While rest blocks have low index (Table-1, Figure-4 & 5).

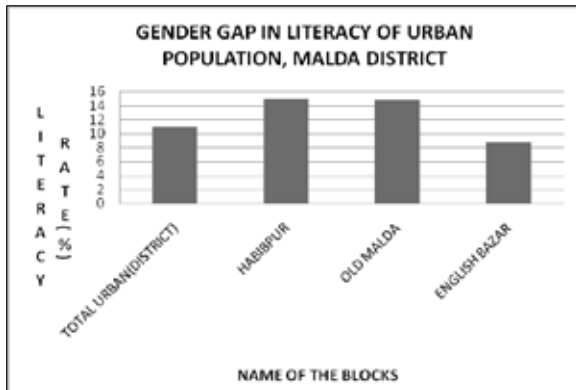


Figure - 5

The rural-urban disparity in literacy has been presented in percentage. The rural-urban disparity in literacy of the district is 31.50 whereas male rural-urban disparity is 27.80 and female rural-urban disparity is 35.30. It is observed that the female rural-urban disparity in literacy is much higher than the male (Table-2 & Figure-6).

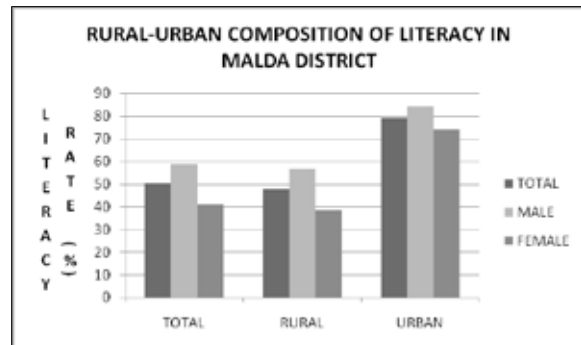


Figure - 6

#### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The overall analysis of the present research work reveals that literacy rate in the district, total as well as male and female are much lower than our national level. The total as well as male-female literacy rate are much higher in urban areas than rural areas. The rural male-female disparity in literacy is higher than the urban. The male rural-urban disparity is lower than the female. The male-female, rural-urban and regional disparity reflect the disparity in socio-economic and cultural set-up. It should be replaced by the equality in literacy. Therefore, it may be recommended that planners make such policies which are helpful in increasing the literacy rate in rural and urban areas and in minimizing the male-female, rural-urban and regional disparity in literacy of Malda district emphasizing backward rural areas.

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