

## EXISTING EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF MUSLIMS IN INDIA: A SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON A SPECIFIC AREA OF ASANSOL, WEST BENGAL

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**Abstract:** India is a country of multiplicity, in terms of religion, culture, language and socio-economic status. In India, the National Minority Commission (1992) notified Muslims as minority along with Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, and Jains on the basis of religion. Muslims are the largest religious minority and second largest religious group in India. But, they are lagging behind in education in comparison with other religious groups. Especially, Muslim women are the most vulnerable to the stern reality. A marked intercommunity gap of education between the Muslim men and women is observed and this matter to be taken into consideration for the social justice. This paper presents a brief discussion on the present educational status of Muslim community, highlighting the disparity in the level of education between Muslim and Hindu people and especially Muslim men and women in two wards of Asansol Municipal Corporation and also find out the enrollment, dropout, and achievement rates. Thereafter, this paper tries to portray the quality of educational infrastructure present in schools in two wards and its relevant impressions on the Muslim and Hindus and analyzes the probable causes of educational achievement and backwardness particularly on the Muslim community along with some suggestive measures for their educational development that is very urgent for this area.

**Key Words:** Municipal Corporation, Religious Minority, Backwardness, Educational Infrastructure, Dissimilarity.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

India is the third largest Muslim dominated country, a nation home to 10.9% of the world's Muslims after Indonesia (12.7%) and Pakistan (11%). After the publication of Sachar Committee Report (2006) and periodic publication of religion based data in 2001 and 2011 by the Census of India, it is a well-known fact that the Muslims are the demographically largest and sociologically most significant minority of our country. The sociological significance of the Muslims as a minority group does not rest solely on their numerical strength. Rather, their social construction as a minority in the socio-political history of India is a crucial factor [1]. Therefore, the assessment of educational status as a very significant indicator of human development for all including the Muslims remain an important task.

The contribution of education to inclusive growth and development is widely recognized. "Education is found to be a more sustainable and more effective measure than other measures to reduce inequality in society. Unequal education reproduces social inequality [2].

"Much theoretical and empirical literature rightly lays emphasis on education as a necessary precursor to socio-economic mobility. In fact, the positive outcomes of education are so huge and so crucial for human development that one often takes education as a single measure to assess the overall well-being of a population or a subset of it. In brief, the higher the proportion of a population with formal schooling, the wider is the stock of human capital and the greater the ability to achieve upward socio-economic mobility" [3].

"According to the findings of various studies by Dreze and Kingdom(1990), Despande (2001), Gang, Sen and Yun (2008), Bhalotra and Zamora (2010), Desai and Kulkarni (2008), Basant and Sharif (2010), Basant (2012) and Raychaudhury (2013) Muslims significantly lag behind the higher caste Hindus or Hindu others in terms of educational participation and achievement"[4]. To analyze and interpret those differences in that sphere among different communities in any spatial unit or areal unit in-depth study is extremely urgent for researchers.

After 70 years of Independence, the minority Muslims defined by the Constitution of India are lagging behind in various aspect of development including education. Apart from this by study area, no work has been done in respect of Muslim minority; this research gap encouraged us to do this work. The other active factor behind the choice of this topic is the need for portrayal of the conditions of the local Muslims of the area. The analysis of education will give particular attention to religious and gender differences.

This present study is in search of the present educational status of the Muslim community in terms of differences between Hindu and Muslim community in two wards of Asansol Municipal Corporation and at the same time, there is a concern about the access most of the educational facilities and provision of educational infrastructure. "In the Indian context, Dreze and Kingdom (1999) and Duraisamay (2002), find a significant influence on the

availability of schools on children educational decision and school enrollment. Explaining school quality by pupil-teacher ratio, Kochar finds that the improvement in school quality can raise the probability of attending school for both boys and girls in India”[4].

The availability of socio-cultural data reveals that Muslims are relatively backward in various dimensions including education, comparing to another religious group in India. In West Bengal also Muslims are the second largest religious group and largest minority group and same applies for Barddhaman district (Table:1). According to the studies of Hussain, Abbas, Owasis[5]; Hossain [6], Mainuddin [7], Das, Kar and Kayal[8]; Narula[9], Hossain [10] indicate that in West Bengal The Muslims particularly the Muslim women are the most vulnerable in terms of educational participation and achievement.

According to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act or Right to Education Act (RTE) 2009 under Article 21(a) of the Indian Constitution, makes education a fundamental right of every child between the ages of 6 and 14.

To bring change in the lifestyles of the minority the 7<sup>th</sup> Left Front Government of West Bengal announced 10% reservation in the field of the job for Muslim OBC who remains educationally and socially backward as per notification no: 6309-BCW/MR-84/10 dated 24<sup>th</sup> September 2010, by the Backward Classes Welfare Department. In continuation of this notice, the present Hon’ble Chief Minister of West Bengal issued a notification to include more Muslim castes in the state list of Other Backward Classes (OBC) with the notification no: 1673-BCW/MR-209/11 dated 11<sup>th</sup> may 2012. About 87% of the Muslim population in West Bengal is now covered under OBC category. Besides this in National and state level, various type of educational scholarship and scheme is implemented which provide “monthly, annual and one-time grants” financial assistance to attract children from disadvantaged sections to school. So, the Muslim community can be benefited from this affirmative action and has been able to overcome the challenge of improving educational status, which is not possible in previous time.

## 2. OBJECTIVES:

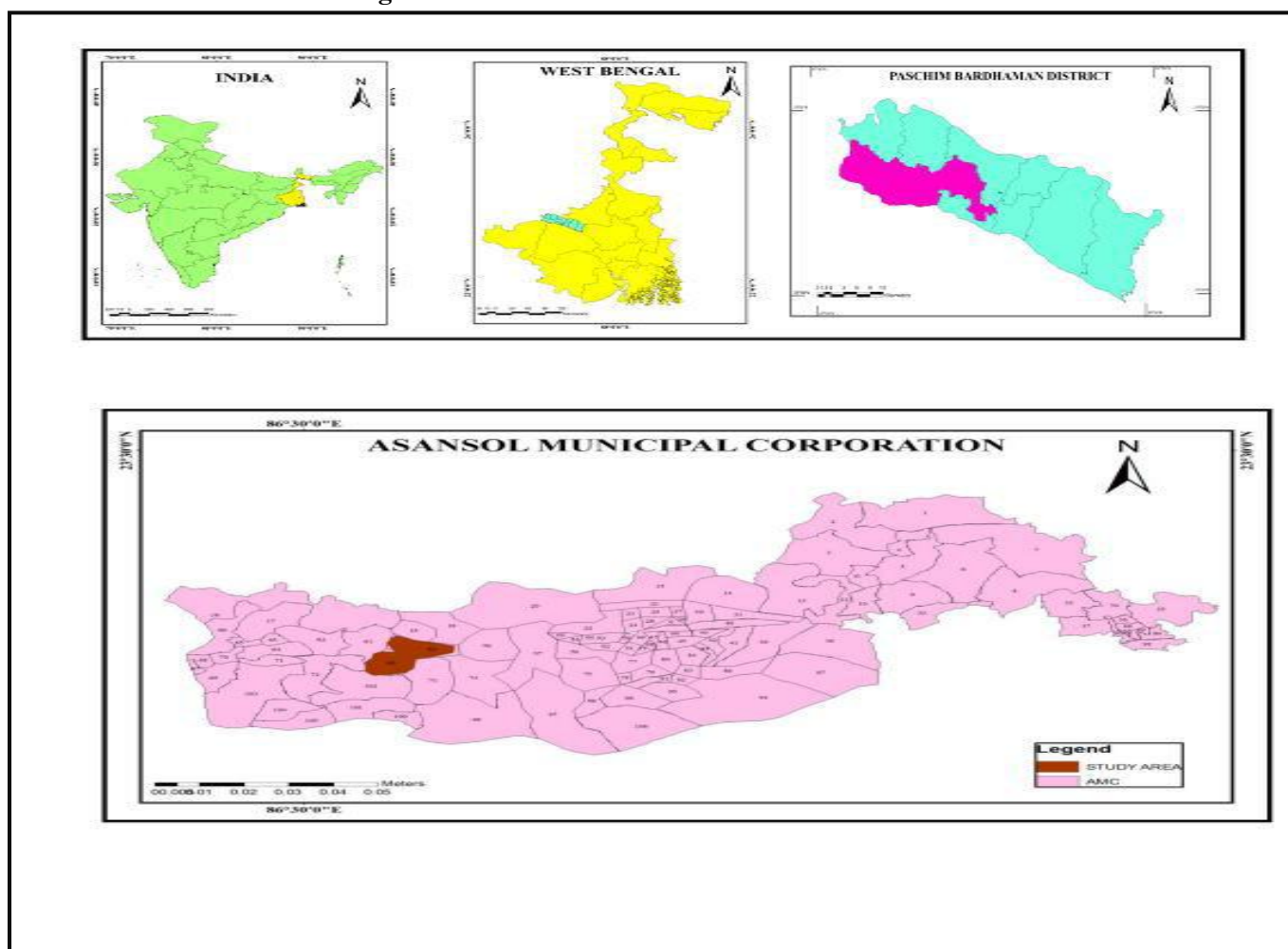
- To find out the disparity in the level of education between Muslim and Hindu people in two wards of Asansol Municipal Corporation.
- To understand the quality of educational infrastructure in the school present in two wards.
- To evaluate the Muslim women educational status.
- Finally to analyze the probable causes of educational backwardness of Muslim people.

## 3. ABOUT THE STUDY AREA:

Asansol is in Paschim Barddhaman district in the Indian state of West Bengal, situated in the heart of coal country. The Geographical identity of this locality is defined by the coordinate 23<sup>o</sup>20’N to 23<sup>o</sup>31’N and 86<sup>o</sup>28’E to 86<sup>o</sup>42’E . Accoring to the Census of India ,It is the second largest city of West Bengal and the 39<sup>th</sup> largest urban agglomerations in India..A hundred years ago the whole of this tract was a wilderness of forest and jungle dotted at long intervals with tiny clearings and settlements [11]. Historians are of the opinion that the land was formed after cleaning the forest of ‘Sal’(Shorea Robusta) and ‘Asan’(Terminalia Tomentosa) trees. The etymology of Asansol suggests that the name is a combination of ‘Asan’ tree, found on the banks of river Damodar [12]. It is located on Chotonagpur plateau. Dhanbad district of Jharkhand lies on the western side, Durgapur Sub-division of Burdwan district lies on the eastern side. To the South, on other sides of the Damodar River is the Purulia district and Bankura district. To North are Dumka and Birbhum district on the other sides of the Ajay River.

Asansol is administered by the Asansol Municipal Corporation. The Municipality was approved in 1885 and it was upgraded to the status of a Municipal Corporation in 1994(Asansol Municipal Corporation). In 2015 the municipal areas of Kulti, Raniganj, and Jamuria included under the Asansol Municipal Corporation with the notification no: 335/MA/O/C-4/1M-36/2014, published in *Kolkata Gazette* Extraordinary on dated 3<sup>rd</sup> day of June 2015. Now the Asansol Municipal Corporation has 106 wards encompasses the area of 326.48 sq.km (Asansol Municipal Corporation). The present work is carried out at ward no 59 and 60 (23<sup>o</sup>24’N to 23<sup>o</sup>25’N and 86<sup>o</sup>31’E to 86<sup>o</sup>32’E), erstwhile those two wards are administered by the Kulti Municipality but now administered by the Asansol Municipal Corporation. The total area of ward no 59 and 60 are approximately 101 hectare and 63.38 hectare respectively and this two ward surrounded by ward 18 & 19 in northern direction, ward 102 in southern direction, ward 73 & 74 in south eastern direction and ward 61 & 72 in western direction(Fig :3.1).

Fig :3.1 LOCATION MAP OF THE STUDY AREA



#### 4. METHODS & MATERIALS

Both primary and secondary data have to be used as per requirement. The published Socio-Religious data of The Census of India (2001, 2011) have to be used for population and literacy figure. Primary schools data collected from the Sub-Inspector office of Kulti circle and from Islamia Girls Junior High School present in those two wards. The ward map of Asansol Municipal Corporation collected from Asansol Municipal Corporation office. To study the present educational status 100 households of ward no 59 and 60 were surveyed by personal field survey in February 2017 and the total numbers of Muslims and Hindu respondents are 260 and 232 respectively.

The methodology employed in the present study is descriptive and analytical. Methods have been used according to their relevance and requirement for the fulfillment of the present study. The primary data has been collected by using structured questionnaire and interview method. Stratified Random Sampling method used for a sample survey. The stratification is made by Muslim and Hindu household from two wards in 50:50 ratios. Due to the inclusion of Kulti, Raniganj, and Jamuria Municipality in Asansol Municipal Corporation in 2015, compile the 2011 census data of those areas to represent the present status.

To evaluate the educational level, educational qualification have categorized from primary to post-graduate level provided by the educational institution, following the definition used in Village Directory and Town Directory of District Census Handbook for the educational institution. For the assessment of educational infrastructure of the 5 schools (4primaries, 1 junior high girl's school) present in two wards of Asansol Municipal Corporation, this paper has mainly focused on the pupil-teacher ratio, classroom-teacher ratio, drinking water facility, toilet facility, electricity, building type etc.

The levels of inequality in Level of Education are measured by the Index of dissimilarity. The general equation for calculating Index of dissimilarity is:

$$1/2 \sum \frac{m_i}{M} - \frac{h_i}{H}$$

(Where comparing Muslim and Hindu population)

$m_i$  = The Muslim population  $i^{th}$  attribute (e.g. level of education).

M= Total Muslim population of this attribute.

$h_i$ = The Hindu population of the  $i^{th}$  attribute.

H=Total Hindu population of this attribute

Simple percentage method has been used to show the growth rate of population, literacy rate, and community wise population share in the study area. Various type of statistical diagram and maps are prepared by using Microsoft Excel Package (2013) and ARC-GIS software (10.2) respectively.

## 5. FINDINGS:

### SECTION: 1

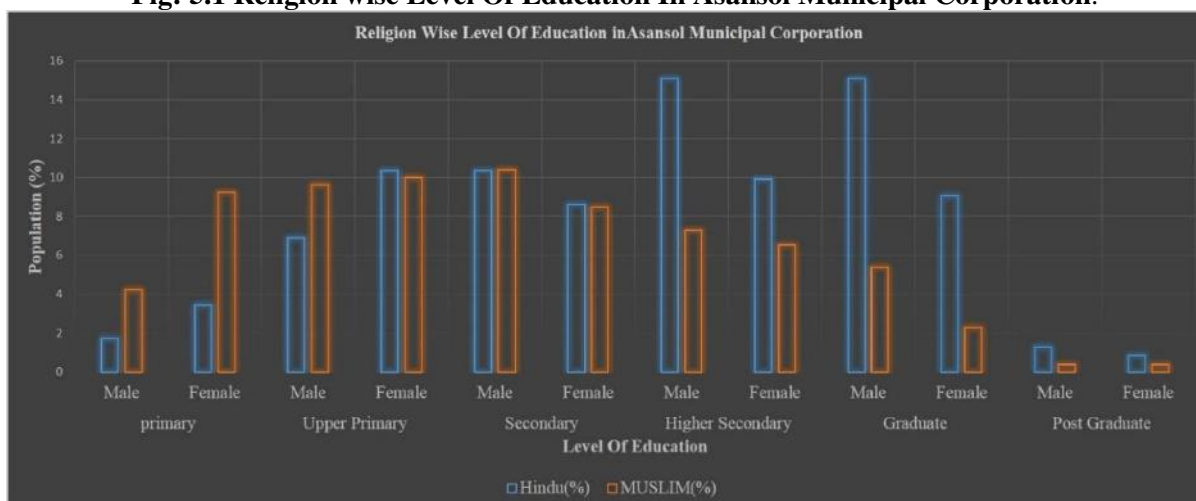
According to 2001 Census, in Asansol Municipal Corporation the proportion of Muslim Community is 19.56%, which expanded to 21.02 % in 2011 Census with the growth rate of 2.89 % (2001-2011). But due to the inclusion of Kulti, Raniganj, Jamuria municipal area into AMC the present percentage of Muslim is 21.02% with the growth rate of 16.14%. (This high growth rate is mainly due to the huge areal enlargement of AMC). In Asansol Municipal Corporation Muslim is the largest minority and second largest religious group, after Hindu Community and educationally the most backward segment of society. In AMC according to Census of India 2011, the percentage of literate Muslim is 63.78%, which is below the district average (65.81%) but higher than the state average (58.48 %). Muslims have the highest number of illiterates, 36.22% of their total population- while Christian have the highest number of literates among AMC's religious community with 87.12% of them educated.

Attempts at collecting data on the educational situation among the Muslims in India (see Ahmad 1981; Kamat ; Kareem 1988; Peer 1988 and Saxena, 1989) have invariably shown that at the high school level and higher, the Muslims are at least three to four times behind other communities [1].

The household survey of all 100 households on educational status in the two wards (59, 60) of AMC provide plenty of data on the educational level for both Muslim and Hindu people. According to household survey data, 92.67% Hindu people are literate, while Muslims perform poorer than Hindu, with 74.62 % literates of their total population. The difference in educational level is considerably high at higher levels of education than at the lower levels and it also noted that women are the poor performer, whether Muslim or Hindu, in achieving the higher level of education, particularly after upper primary level.

In the lower level of education, representative of Muslim community is quite high than Hindu, with 13.46 % Muslim in primary level and 19.62% in the upper primary level of their total population, comparing to the 5.17% Hindu in primary and 17.24% in the upper primary level. But after upper primary level, the portrait is changed, the educational progressing graph tending to negative for Muslims and positive for the Hindu community (Fig:5.1).

**Fig: 5.1 Religion wise Level Of Education In Asansol Municipal Corporation.**



Source Of Data: Household Survey (2017) & Compile By Authors.

10.34% Hindu people completed matriculation, while this percentage is 10.38% amongst Muslim people of their total population. The proportion of Higher Secondary passed is 25% for Hindu and only 13.84% for Muslim people. Regarding the graduate and post-graduate level education Muslims are the most disadvantaged as their respective shares, with 7.96% Muslim graduates comparing to 24.14% Hindu graduates. 2.15 % Hindu completed post-graduation, this figure is only 0.77% for Muslim people.

The index of dissimilarity (di) for the level of education between Hindu and Muslim community is 0.2529. Its means 25.29% inequality in the level of education between Hindu and Muslim community is present in this area( Table : 5.1). This inequality creates an unequal society in this area .

**Table: 5.1 Dissimilarity Index**

Level of Education	Hindu	Muslim	hi/H	mi/M	hi/H-mi/M
primary	12	35	0.055814	0.181347	0.125533
Upper primary	40	51	0.186047	0.264249	0.078202
Secondary	44	49	0.204651	0.253886	0.049235
Higher Secondary	58	36	0.269767	0.186528	0.083239
Graduate	56	20	0.260465	0.103627	0.156838
Post Graduate	5	2	0.023256	0.010363	0.012893
dissimilarity index= $1/2\sum(mi/M-hi/H)=0.25297$					

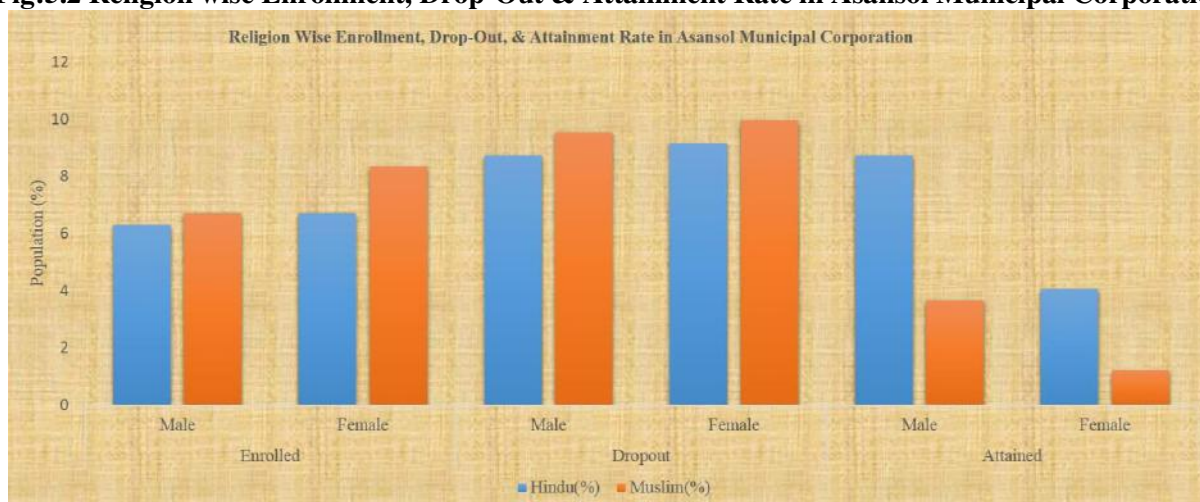
Source of Data: Household Survey (2017 ) & Compile By Authors.

In our study area, in recent times, it is revealed by data, that the present enrollment rate of Muslim students particularly Muslim female, is quite high than Hindu people. It can be assumed that the steps or programs taken by the Government are favoring the situations of learning. The proportion of the population that has completed at least graduation is used as an indicator of higher levels of educational achievements. [13]. It is only 4.87% for Muslim people comparing to 12.80% for Hindu people. One of the pivotal reasons for the low participation of Muslims in higher education is their notably low achievement level in higher secondary and graduation level. The Muslim community has also remained slow to reap the advantage of affirmative action of Government’s educational and employment policies and programs because they could not fulfill the eligibility criteria to get the assistance.

**SECTION:2 WOMEN EDUCATIONAL STATUS**

It is very much important to throw some light on women educational status for comparison study.It is also revealed from the household survey, the enrollment rate of Muslim girls is highest with 8.33% of the total enrolled student. But at the same time, Muslim women have the highest dropout rate and lowest educational achievement (graduation level) rate with 1.21 % compare to Hindu women with 4.06% women completed graduation level(Fig: 5.2).

**Fig:5.2 Religion wise Enrollment, Drop-Out & Attainment Rate in Asansol Municipal Corporation.**



Source of Data: Household Survey (2017)

It was noted that ‘seclusion’ plays a predominant role and deters accessibility to education. Muslim women are not expected to go out without proper male escorts. As a result of this, a majority of Muslim girls are forced to withdraw from their schools and not continue their education further especially post-puberty. The social and cultural roles of Muslim women are different from what women perform in the modern society. Stereotyping of Muslim women is another factor which has an impact on their gender identity. This is associated with multiple marriages, *purdah* and triple *talaq* [14].

Besides this highest enrollment rate of Muslim girls, is a good indication of their educational status, it is because the new generation has understood that education is the only powerful weapon, which saves them from the disadvantaged section of society. Besides this several initiatives launched by Govt. of India and state Govt. of West Bengal for women education, encouraged them to go to school. The neighborhood, interaction with the co-ethnic peers in the community played an important role in molding the educational aspiration of young Muslims.

### SECTION:3 INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITY OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

People's access to education depends crucially on the Educational Infrastructure in place. The number of schools & other institutions, their intake capacity, their spatial spread and distance from habitats, teacher strength, amenities available in the institutions, etc. are significant elements through which affordable education can be reached to the people.

The data collected from S.I. office of Kulti circle for Govt. aided primary schools, like- S.D.R.G.F.P school (established in 1949), Quazi Najrul F.P. school (established in 1999), Neamatpur Village F.P. school (established in 1946), Munshi Premchand F.P. school (established in 2002) and from Islamia Girls Junior High School (established in 2003) (this school is funded by District Officer Minority Affairs office) reveals that though the Schools are very old in nature but there is a lack of educational infrastructure, facility, and proper schooling environment along with the awareness of the people (Table:5.2 ). These schools are located within the range of 1-3 Km.

**Table: 5.2 Infrastructural Facilities of Schools present in two wards of Asansol Municipal Corporation.**

School	Teacher		Student		Classroom	Student-Teacher Ratio	Classroom-Student Ratio	Toilet		Playground		Boundary	
	M	F	M	F				M	F	YES	NO	YES	NO
Islamia girl's junior high school (established in 2003).	0	9	0	398	6	1 : 44	1 : 66	0	6	√			√
S.D.R.G.F.P school (established in 1949).	5	0	67	78	6	1 : 29	1 : 24	1	1		√	√	
Quazi najrul F.P.school (established in 1999).	4	0	27	80	3	1 : 26	1 : 36	1	1	√		√	
Neamatpur village F.P School (established in 1946).	5	3	117	139	9	1 : 32	1 : 28	1	1	√		√	
Munshi Premchand F.P. school (established in 2002).	5	0	128	135	8	1 : 52	1 : 33	1	1	√		√	

Source of Data: Sub Inspector office of Kulti circle for Govt. aided primary schools & Islamia Girls Junior High School.

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE ACT 2009) which become operative from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010, prescribes a Pupil-Teacher Ratio of 30:1 and 35:1 at primary and upper-primary level respectively in every school. But, this norms and standard have not maintained in 2 primary schools and 1 upper primary school (Table: 3). the student-classroom ratio is not also adequate and satisfying. The data reveals that in those school, except Islamia Girls Junior High school, there is a lack of lady teacher (only one school have lady teacher) which restricted the girls from pursuing schooling. Although these schools are fulfilling the standard of basic infrastructures in terms of

*pucca* building with a boundary wall, separate toilet for girls and boys, playground. But it is very much important to improve and modernize this schools with a resourceful library, computer system, good and adequate teaching-learning materials etc. Local Muslim children are also going to ‘*Maktabs*’ a neighborhood school, attached to the Mosque for religious education through the medium of Arabic. The *Jama Masjid* and the *Baitul Aman Masjid* are this type of Mosque in this area. Among this two Mosque, the *Jama Masjid* is the most oldest that has established in 1965, according to date engraved in the Mosque.

#### SECTION:4 REASONS BEHIND EDUCATIONAL BACKWARDNESS

Sachar Committee Report (2006) documented that apart from the economic circumstances of households, school enrollment for different communities is significantly affected by the local level of development (e.g. availability of schools and other infrastructure) and educational status of the parents.

It is often argued that only a very small section of the Muslim population Educational Backwardness of Indian Muslims looks forward to the charmed realm of professions or government employment through higher education [1]. When the household was interviewed by personal field survey, it was revealed that the main reason of educational retardation is economic. Financial burden and non-availability of the regularly paid job are the main cause of the educational backwardness and higher dropout rates.

Most Muslims are poor and mainly self-employed for tailor, craftsman, and marginal worker etc where education is not valued. Generally the poor cannot afford to remain unemployed and would typically accept whatever job offer comes their way [13].

The chances of participation in higher education increase significantly with parental education and are the highest with parents having the graduate education [15]. Though, these factors have an indirect effect.

Unavailability of an educational institute, infrastructure, and a good educational environment is a core factor for educational backwardness especially for girls because all institutes are varied in terms of their access, cost, and quality. Muslim educational conferences often complain about the neglect of Urdu-medium schools and the teaching of Urdu as a language, and the non-availability of Urdu textbooks for many subjects. Closely related to this is the complaint about ‘the pronounced cultural bias in the curricula, their exposition in the prescribed textbooks and in actual teaching by Hindu teachers’ [1].As interviewed the Unavailability of Urdu and Hindi medium high school in the nearby locality, high pupil-teacher ratio, the absence of lady teacher are the main causes of high dropout rates for Muslims students. Reservation policies and financial assistance provided by the Government is more recent, the old generation did not get the fruit of that initiative, and it is also the main cause of their low literacy rate.

Most of them are going to local *Maktabs* and *Madrassah* for traditional religious education. “Madrassah, a Muslim religious school, loosely defined as a Muslim boarding school, are amongst the many Muslim educational institutions that still exist today amidst the tides of challenges brought about by urbanization” [16].With the onset of urbanization, modernization and expansion of secular administrative and educational centers, raise the Muslim’s anxiety that their conventional religious institute would be replaced and reorganize by secular association. In response, the Muslims resist this change. “For instance, for fear of being proselytized by Christian Missionaries who set up English schools in the cities, Muslims in Malaya (Known as Malaysia after independence in 1957) distanced themselves from this institutions that were known to have the agenda of producing lower and middle rank government and civil servants who would run the administrative machineries of the colony .Similar communal resistance against British education shaped the educational landscape of the Muslims in India”. Although the Muslims continued to persist that education should essentially be religious, that it should contain religious subjects and be taught through the medium of Arabic and Persian [16].

In our study area, Out of the total Muslim illiterate, 89.33% illiterate attending local *Maktabs* and *Madrassas* for only religious education (Household Survey Data 2017). This fact reveals the importance and acceptibility of religious learning as a substitute of mainstream education for the Muslim Community.

#### 6. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION:

This minority dominated area customarily shows a lower level of educational development may be due to the unconsciousness and irrational allocation of educational resources and negligence of planners, and Government officials towards Muslim concentrated areas. The great apathy of parents towards girl’s education, early marriage, religious ethos, and women’s domesticated role is still true to a large extent for lower literacy rate among Muslim women. Though, parental and societal attitude towards girl’s education is continuously changing in a positive manner. The high enrollment rate of Muslim girls is a possible indication of their changing educational status. Moreover, the recent trend of enrollment and interaction with the local Muslim people revealed that Muslim parents are not unfriendly and detrimental to contemporary and mainstream education and to send their children to the affordable formal schools. Our conversation with the local people indicates that the main problem may be the deficiency of schools and imperative infrastructural facility. Favorable educational infrastructure, family awareness and support

with good schooling environment will help to improved overall educational achievement, this is intimately related to the economic and social development of the area, particularly in the Muslims dominated regions of this part of India.

Taking together the above discussion following suggestions is made:

- There is an urgent need to ensure proper implementation and monitoring of educational policies and programs.
- For bringing children and retaining students in schools, especially girls demands additional investment in terms of infrastructural facilities, more female teacher, transport, scholarship etc.
- Particularly in those two wards, it is needed to establish Urdu and Hindi medium secondary and higher secondary level school within walking distance.
- At present, the schools need to be well resourced and functional.
- It is very much essential to improve and modernize Madrasah to attain the standards of the national education system. The GOI's program Scheme for Infrastructure Development in Minority Institution (IDMI) & Scheme to Provide Quality Education in Madrasah (SPQEM) are consistently working for the qualitative improvement of Madrasah.

Finally, it is evenly required to build favorable and secure schooling environment to abolish the feeling of discrimination, inequity, and favoritism of other religious groups, as education is the crucial factor for the development of religious minority, particularly Muslims in any region in India.

## 7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

The articulation of the topic has done with the efforts of more than one years of the survey by the team of the authors. The authors are highly grateful to the people of the locality who have generously responded to authors. The authors express their deep concern to Asansol Municipal Corporation, SI office (Kulti Circle) and the concerned Head of the Institutions of Schools. The consultation has done with some senior scholars to give final touch of the article.

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