Abstract
The problem is mainly concerned with the status of education, employment and fertility of Muslims in Malda district of West Bengal. The researcher has attempted to make a comprehensive assessment of education, employment and fertility status among Muslims in Malda district and also tried to compare it with non-Muslim population. Malda is one of the less developed districts of West Bengal. Presently the district has recorded balanced population composition of Muslims and non-Muslims. The present research has been carried out within the fourfold of Population Geography, which mainly deals with the systematic study of the spatial variation in the demographic and non-demographic qualities of human being.

The Muslims of India are the largest religious minority in the country and also the second largest Muslim community in the world after Indonesia. Muslims with 13.40 per cent of India’s population are not only the largest minority community, but their presence is visible in all the states and union territories of the country. This largest minority community of the country has been moved to the lowest socio-economic stratum in post-independent India. They are even behind (and are continuously lagging behind) the Scheduled Castes in many folds of life. They are educationally most marginalized, economically poor and politically a powerless community in the country in general and in West Bengal in particular. West Bengal occupies third position among various states and union territories of the country in terms of percentage of Muslim population after Jammu and Kashmir (67 per cent) and Assam (30 per cent). The Muslims of West Bengal constitute 25.25 per cent of the total population of the State and 14.62 per cent of the total Muslim population in India.

Muslims of West Bengal like their counterparts in other regions of the India have contributed largely in the development of society, culture and civilization of India. A country cannot progress if its largest minority community is left behind and so marginalized/underprivileged. Muslims are to be included if comprehensive development of the country and the state is desired. Political parties seem to be insincere to a great extent as far as ameliorating their conditions and ensuring their safety and security are concerned. Nonetheless, discrimination, social stagnation and educational marginalization cumulatively resulted in a growing economic marginalization of the Muslims in larger parts of the country.

Dearth of research oriented studies and micro level data on Muslims as complained by scholars, researchers and committees prompted the researcher to formulate some realistic plan and systematic study of the comprehensive nature to generate empirical micro level data related to life conditions of Muslims in the study area. The micro level study of a district assumes significance as it is possibly the first of its kind to address and assess the present situation of Muslims lives in all its diversity. Thus, the analysis of status of a community is of immense significance for a population geographer.

The study attempts to highlight the dimensions of Muslims education, employment and fertility status by taking Malda district of West Bengal as a case study. Malda district has been selected for so many reasons: it is a one of the less developed districts of West Bengal.
and is listed as ‘minority concentrated district’ of the country. Studies on the status of Muslim education, employment and fertility have not so far been undertaken in Malda district. Therefore, the present effort may be deemed to be both innovative and original. It compares the determinants of differential education, employment and fertility status of the Muslims and non-Muslims in Malda district. This is a feasible and a methodologically sound approach for understanding the problem in the right perspective. The study is different in several respects from most of the earlier studies conducted Malda and also in the state West Bengal. The earlier studies were based on either secondary data or data generated from either a developed region or an undeveloped region and no attempt was made to highlight the link between development and religious affiliation. Some studies on Muslims have already been carried out with a different focus. All these considerations have led me to undertake Malda district as a case study.

Availability of data related to the social, economic and demographic indicators is the most important factors in planning, administrative and development process. Non availability of data at the micro level often poses as a limitation to the efforts to identify problematic areas within the district.

The main objectives of present doctoral research are to analyze the status of the Muslims in Malda district and examine the spatial pattern of Muslim literacy and education, employment, occupation and income level, and fertility status of Muslims in the district of Malda, and the association between them. Such kind of study will also highlight the status of different social groups which in turn will help in understanding and assessing the level of development of the particular social group. The study is based on primary data generated through field survey at village at block level.

The study was conducted in Malda district of West Bengal. This district has been selected for the present research work due to several different reasons. It is one of the Muslim concentrated districts of the country and the state and also listed in ‘Sachar Committee Report’ for its one million plus population (GOI, 2006). Malda district is relatively more economically backward and it tends to be less advanced in terms of human development index in West Bengal (GWB, 2004). Historically, the district of Malda is famous for its rich culture and history, where traditional Muslim culture still flourishes. The study was conducted in Malda district of West Bengal. Malda district is a centrally located district of West Bengal. Geographically, the district is extended between 24°40'20" to 25°32'8" North latitudes and 87°45'50" to 88°28'10" East longitudes. The district covers an area of 3733 sq. km and supports 3.29 million people. In Malda district 1.63 million (49.72 per cent) are Muslims and 1.62 million (49.28 per cent) are Hindus. There are other religious groups also (Christians 8388, Sikhs 283, Buddhists 164, Jains 293 and others 23701). The district have 92.68 per cent rural population living over 1642 villages (including 44 uninhabited) which are almost highest among all the districts of India. The district has reported second lowest literacy rate in the state (50.28 per cent). Further, employment rate in the study areas is 40.70
The district is inflicted with dire socio-economic and cultural disparities across the region and human groups as well. Malda district stands at bottom having lowest Human Development Index in the state.

The present doctoral thesis entitled “Dimensions of Education, Employment and Fertility Status of Muslim Population in Malda District (West Bengal)” is attempted under seven chapters with the exclusion of introduction and conclusion.

Chapter I titled ‘Concepts of Education, Employment and Fertility, Literature Review and Methodology’ is based totally on theoretical concept and determinant parts focusing on providing a broad-base for understanding the concept of three constrains: education, employment and fertility. The review of literature part gives chronological account of the work done on the theme of study and related concept. Finally a critical evaluation of the work is being attempted. The methodological part discusses the nature of the problem, objectives, hypothesis, research design; questionnaire construction details of survey, significance of the study and limitation of the study have been highlighted.

Chapter II titled as ‘The Study Area: Malda District’ discusses the personality of the Malda district presenting a brief account of history, physical, cultural, demographical and social background. It also examines proliferation of Muslims in the district i.e. population growth, population distribution etc.

Chapter III investigates the ‘Literacy and Employment in Malda District’. This chapter is entirely based on secondary data obtained from different published and unpublished sources at district and block level. The focus of this chapter is on providing broad-base understanding of the trend (1951-2001), and change and distribution of literacy rate, employment rate by blocks (1991-2001).

There are four chapters which deal with the empirical findings of the research work. Chapter IV entitled ‘Muslims and non-Muslim Community Differentials’ has a bifocal aim. First part describes the characteristics of sample households, second part deals with the literacy, education, employment, occupational structure, income and fertility of these two socio-religious communities.

Chapter V entitled as ‘Muslims Education, Employment and Fertility: A Block Level Analysis’ of Malda district provides an account of descriptive analysis of various dimensions of Muslim education, employment and fertility. In fact, the entire chapter has taken the form of an interpretation of what have emerged on the maps.

Chapter VI titled as ‘Muslims Education, Employment and Fertility: A Village Level Analysis’ of Malda district provides an account of descriptive analysis of various dimensions of Muslim education, employment and fertility.

Chapter VII entitled as ‘Muslim Education, Employment and Fertility Linkages’ is discussed under three sections. First section deals with dimensions of relationship of Muslims education, employment and fertility at block and village level with the help of choropleth maps and radar diagrams respectively. Second section explains the interrelationship among
the sets of variables separately of Muslim education, employment and fertility. Third section examines association between one sets of variable and the other set of explanatory variables. Finally the present study drawn the conclusion and give some suggestions and policy implications.

The present work as largely based on sources of data supplemented with the secondary sources. Primary data has been collected through extensive primary data has been carried out during January-June 2009. Apart from the primary data secondary data has been collected from Census of India Publications, District Statistical Handbook, Block and Municipalities Headquarters and Various other offices and Officials. For this study sample unites i.e. village and wards are chosen as the micro-unit of analysis in Malda district of West Bengal. There are 15 development blocks and 2 Municipalities in Malda (Harischandrapur-I, Harischandrapur-II, Chanchal-I, Chanchal-II, Ratua-I, Ratua-II, Manikchak, English Bazar, Old Malda, Habibpur, Bamongola, Gazol, Kaliachak-I, Kaliachak-II and Kaliachak-III) which comprise 1598 inhabitant villages. Out of these 1598 villages, 80 villages were selected as a micro unit of analysis through stratified random sampling technique at 5 per cent level by blocks and again they were stratified on the basis of population size (upto 500, 501-1000, 1001-1500, 1501-2000 and above 2000) and Muslim population concentration (below 25 per cent, 25-50 per cent, 51-75 per cent and Above 75 per cent), accessibility and connectivity to various transport facilities, distance from the town and block headquarters, various basic infrastructure facilities. All these attempts have also been made to select the villages of varying characteristics, keeping in view that all the sections of society could be represented under this sample survey. For this purpose two tier questionnaires were used (household questionnaire and village questionnaire).

For analyzing the data, standard index and correlation coefficient technique is applied. In order to take a more comprehensive study on a wide array of variables, the standard index score additive model has been used to arrive at a composite index. Standard index have been used to develop a composite score for socio-economic development and fertility status of the district at block level and village level. The transformation of the set of variables in this way results in the equalization of two important parameters of this distribution and the units of measurement are eliminated, thus enabling scores on different variables to be combined by simple addition and divided by number. For analyzing the association among Muslims education, employment and fertility co-efficient of correlation technique is applied and t-test is applied to find out the significant relationship at 1 per cent and 5 per cent level.

After foregoing detailed discussion the conclusions are drawn. The district has been observed that the regional disparities in literacy, employment and four broad occupations groups by sex are wide. However what needs to be made clear is that since independence, an upward trend in the growth of literacy and employment has been noticed in the successive decades and during 1991-2001. The change in regional distributional pattern of literacy and employment is quite noticeable.

Abstract

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During survey it has been found that the average household size and percentage of complex household in rural areas in general and among Muslims in particular is higher than urban areas and non-Muslims respectively. Further the percentage of female-headed household among Muslims is lower than non-Muslims. Out of the total sampled households, more than three-fourths are originally inhabitant of villages or locality and others are migrated to sampled localities from other places and the major reasons for migration were reported to be employment and education. Non-Muslims concentrated villages are well served with *pucca* approach roads. Muslim areas tend to have proportionally less schools than non-Muslim localities. Many Muslim concentrated villages in the district do not have any educational institutions.

**EDUCATION**

The overall literacy rate for the sampled population is 64.29 per cent. The literacy rate for male and female is 69.08 per cent and 59.01 per cent respectively. Muslim literacy rate is 61.63 per cent. Muslims are lagging behind the non-Muslims by 5.55 per cent. The rural-urban gap in general literacy rate at the district level is 25.40 per cent points and it is 25.86 per cent and 24.84 per cent points for non-Muslims and Muslims respectively. The gender gap in literacy rate is 10.07 per cent points. The gender gap in Muslim literacy rate is 9.10 per cent points whereas in case of non-Muslims the corresponding figure is 10.90 per cent points. The gender gap in literacy is low and almost equal for both the SRCs i.e., non-Muslims and Muslims in the blocks of Chanchal-I and Kaliachak-I where highest rural literacy rate has been recorded. Among Muslims, high level of gender gap has been observed in the blocks of Habibpur, Ratua-II and Ratua-I, whereas among non-Muslims, the gender gap is high in the blocks of Old Malda, Gazol, Bamongola and Habibpur. An analysis of literacy data by age groups gives an impressive picture of the educational achievement of the younger population even for socially deprived groups, when compared to their respective adult population. The SRCs wise literacy rate by age-group particularly highlights that there is hardly any difference when one focuses on the literacy rate of 7-14 years. The gap builds up as one move to higher age groups. It has been found that 19.21 per cent of Muslims ageing above 60 years are literate, whereas it is 41.79 per cent for non-Muslims. Further, age-specific analysis of literacy rate by social groups indicates that low level of literacy among Muslims is not recent phenomena, they are traditionally marginalized.

As far as the educational level is concern, gap between Muslims and non-Muslims increases as the level of education increases. Muslims have lower share of education except below primary and primary level because these categories of education include *Madrasa* and *Maktab* and Muslims prefer to send their children in traditional institutions. Thus Muslims in general and Muslim female in particular are marginalized community in Malda district. The enrolment rate in urban areas is higher than in rural areas for both the religious categories. Although the enrolment figure is same for both the communities but it has been observed that the dropout rate in schools among Muslim students is high. In comparison to the non-
Muslims, dropout rate among Muslims is lower in below primary and primary stage whereas it is higher at middle and secondary level of education. This means that as the level of education increases, participation of Muslims decreases. The survey data indicates that girl’s dropout rate at every stage is higher than boys. As far as the reasons of dropout are concerned, poverty has emerged as the major factor (71.04 per cent) followed by non-availability of schools in locatility irrespective of religious affiliations.

The spatial distribution of Muslim literacy shows that all the blocks which are concentrated by Muslim population have low level of literacy rate. Muslim literacy rate is high in the Chanchal-I, Kaliachak-I, Old Malda and Gazol. This is mainly because of better educational infrastructure and is well connected with district headquarters. Low level of Muslim literacy rate is found in the northern part to incorporate in Harischandrapur-I, Harischandrapur-II, Chanchal-II and Ratua-I. These blocks are concentrated by Muslim Badiya community, whose living standard is low as compared to other Muslims.

Village wise distribution of literacy rate by sex shows males are more educated than females in almost all the villages because girls are not sent to schools situated far away from their residence and even they are not sent to schools nearby the localities or other villages. The literacy rate among females is increasing at primary level as compared to males whereas the proportion of males is found to be higher as compared to females after high school education. Similarly the village wise distribution of Muslim literacy and education based on composite standard index shows that out of the total sample village only 5 per cent village falls in very high and high categories of Muslim literacy and education. They are situated near to main towns and are easily connected through good transportation facilities. Further, among the 30 Muslim concentrated villages (above 50 per cent Muslim population), 21 villages show the very low and low level of composite standard index of education. The analysis depicts that the effect of population size and Muslim concentration on education is that the large size villages obtain better infrastructure facilities which aid in educational development. Due to the inadequate educational infrastructure in Muslim concentrated areas of the district, lack of education and the dearth of proper educational facilities are the most important reason for the marginalization of district in general and Muslim concentrated areas in particular. Although Muslim female literacy rate was earlier lower but it also increased at a faster pace resulting in significant narrowing down of the gender gap in literacy. Further, it seems that there has been improvement in the literacy rate of Muslims. They remain particularly poor in modern education. Moreover Muslims are economically marginalized, compared to other sections of the community. They are educationally marginalized with low rate of literacy, discriminated against in employment and have comparatively more insecurity of life and property. Hence, a focus on this level offers the greatest effort for improvements in educational level of the population. With the community’s growing focus on education and parents’ perception about education in recent years, there has been a significant increase in enrolment among Muslims.

Abstract
EMPLOYMENT

The overall employment rate for the sampled population is 36.19 per cent. The male and female employment rate is 44.05 per cent and 27.69 per cent respectively. The corresponding figures for rural-urban employment rate are 36.31 per cent and 34.44 per cent respectively. Rural areas have higher employment rate than urban areas because in the former, the share of agricultural work is higher. Muslim employment rate is 35.35 per cent. In terms of employment rate, Muslims lag behind than non-Muslims by 1.51 per cent points. Employment rate among Muslim and non-Muslim males is almost equal but the employment rate among Muslim females is 3.13 per cent points lower than non-Muslim females. The total employment rate among Muslims is low because of the low female work participation. Thus Muslims in general and urban Muslim females in particular are marginalized communities in Malda district. The overall gender gap in employment rate is 16.36 per cent, in rural and urban areas, the figures are 16.44 per cent points and 15.01 per cent points respectively. The gender gap in employment rate among non-Muslims and Muslims is 14.76 per cent points and 17.76 per cent points respectively. This shows that non-Muslim females are more likely to work than the Muslim females. It is clear from the data that out of 15 blocks only four blocks namely: Kaliachak-III, Chanchal-I, Ratua-II and Harischandrapur-II have slightly higher Muslim employment rate than non-Muslims. The gender gap in employment rate among non-Muslims is highest in Ratua-II and lowest in Kaliachak-I, whereas in case of Muslims it is highest in Harischandrapur-I and lowest in Old Malda. Muslims have exhibited higher employment rate in the aged age group, whereas in case of non-Muslims, it is higher in middle age group (30-45 years). It has also been observed that high incidence of poverty among Muslims compels them to work in their old age (21.79 per cent non-Muslim and 26.16 per cent Muslim).

Muslims in general and Muslim females in particular have lower share in main worker’s category than non-Muslims. By analyzing the workers according to the nature of the works it has been observed that majority of the workers are engaged in household works (22.47 per cent) followed by agricultural labour (19.15 per cent), cultivation (17.05 per cent), non-agricultural labour (16.95 per cent), business (10.73 per cent). Remaining 13.64 per cent and 9.39 per cent respectively are employed in regular salaried services and in government services. In all the occupational categories, sharp differences across the SRCs and gender are noticed. In comparison to the non-Muslims, Muslims have much lower share in the category of regular salaried workers (both government and private sector) and the share of females is much higher in home based workers category irrespective of their religious affiliation. Further, it has been found that the share of population of students and pensioners and actual workers (15-60 years) is lower while the share of unemployed is higher among Muslims as compared to non-Muslims resulting in higher unemployment rate among Muslims. A substantially larger proportion of the Muslim households are in the less than Rs.2000 income bracket.
During the course of study, it has been observed that people of Malda are engaged in diverse occupations. Although, the number of workers engaged in traditional crafts and trades or non-agricultural activities and small manufacturing units are not very large but the number of units and workers are likely to increase substantially as further diversification and proliferation of non-agricultural activities are taking place across the district. Cottage and household based non-agricultural activities in Malda district presently include traditional artisans like cobbler, black smith, gold smith, carpenter, oil-presser, potter, weaver, tile-maker, and bamboo craftsman etc. to fulfill the local needs of rural people. Other industrial or household-based non-farm activities of a more specialized nature are also carried in particular regions and blocks. Rice milling is chiefly carried out in Old Malda block while jute carpet manufacturing is recorded solely in Gazol area. Handloom weaving activity is fairly diversified and prominent in Chanchal-II, Ratua-I and Ratua-II, Old Malda, Manikchak and Kaliachak-I and Kaliachak-II block while idol making units have been reported in Habibpur. Household based bidi binding activities are mainly spotted in Kaliachak region, Manikchak, Ratua-I and Ratua-II blocks.

The analysis of spatial distribution of Muslim employment rate reveals that high level of Muslim employment rate is reported in Ratua-II, Manikchak, English Bazar, Kaliachak-II and Kaliachak-III. All these blocks fall in south-western part of the district and are close to the main service centre of the district and have good means of transportation and communication. Low level of employment rate is recorded in Harischandrapur-I, Harischandrapur-II, Chanchal-II and Ratua-I situated in northern part, and Old Malda and Habibpur in the eastern part of the district. It may be noted that the Muslim concentrated blocks falling in south-western part of the district have high share of marginal workers as well as main workers. Compared to other SRCs, Muslim workers are more vulnerable as they are concentrated in the informal sector characterized by low wages, bad working conditions and little or no social security. The block wise distribution shows that Muslim concentrated blocks have low level of household income and per capita income.

The distribution of Muslim employment by villages shows that out of 30 Muslim concentrated villages, 12 villages fall in very high and high levels of employment rate, whereas 6 villages fall in very low and low categories. It may be stated further that among 19 large population size villages, low and very low levels of composite standard index of employment and occupational structure is reported only in 3 villages, whereas out of twelve small population size villages (Below 1000 persons), low level of composite standard index of employment and occupational structure is reported in one village. This means large the population size of villages better is the employment opportunities and other infrastructural facilities.

Due to the socio-educational marginalization of Muslims, their participation in the progress of the district is not vigorous as it should be. They are unable to take advantage of the innumerable facilities that the fields of cooperation, community development and small scale industries offer.
FERTILITY

At district level, the child woman ratio is 732.31, total fertility rate is 3.40 and general marital fertility rate is 143.83. The age specific fertility rate is 90.08, 179.02 and 71.34 for the age group of 15-24, 25-34 and 35-44 years respectively. The fertility rate among rural women is higher than urban women irrespective of their religious affiliations. One reason could be that urban women are more likely to use contraceptives and marry at later age than their rural counterparts; therefore, the fertility levels in urban and rural areas tend to be different. Overall mean child ever born is higher among Muslims (2.63) than non-Muslims (2.52). The fertility rate for both the Muslims and non-Muslims is higher in those blocks where they have their concentration. Non-Muslim fertility rate is high in eastern blocks because these blocks are dominated by SC and ST population. Fertility is high for both the SRCs in the blocks of Chanchal-II, Kaliachak-III and they have reported lowest literacy and employment rate. Muslims have higher fertility rate than non-Muslim the difference is more pronounced in older reproductive age-group of 25 plus. In the recent time, it has been observed that the gap in Muslim and non-Muslim fertility has narrowed down.

Education and occupation have inverse relationship with fertility. However the degree of influence of education and occupation on husband and wife varies. Women with primary education tend to have higher fertility than women with secondary and above education, and women with no schooling tend to have higher fertility than women with primary education. Further, it has been found that education up to graduate level for men and high school level for women is effective in increasing age at marriage which in turn reduces fertility. The differences of fertility across the various occupations held by husband and wives suggest that the highest level of fertility has been observed among the unemployed women followed by those who are engaged in agriculture, whereas in case of husbands, highest fertility rate is reported among those who are engaged in agriculture followed by those whose work in non-agricultural sector. In general, higher occupation needs higher education which may result in postponement of age at marriage, thereby indirectly help in bringing down the fertility. Family income plays a positive role for reduction in fertility. An inverse relationship is observed between household income and fertility, as fertility among high income groups is lower as compared to fertility among the low income groups. The reason could be that poor people may perceive children as a source of income and thus motivating them to have more children. Another reason could be that the poor people have limited access to education and family planning methods.

The study has revealed that the relationship between religion and reproduction is complex. Socio-economic variables (education and employment) influence reproductive tendency of the people. The difference in average number of children is indirectly determined by age at marriage, age at pregnancy and adoption of family planning measures among the couples across both the SRCs. The present study reveals that older women have a significantly higher MCEB.
It has also been found that as the age at first marriage increases, the fertility rate tends to decline. It may be observed that there is growing prevalence and demand for family planning measures. Adoption of Family planning methods is no more a religious problem, but it is determined by socio-economic and to some extent, political conditions of the area. The couples with better socio-economic status reported significantly lower fertility as against their counterparts who were at the lower strata of the socio-economic hierarchy and it is true for both the SRCs. Further, the improvement in socio-economic status, especially education results in reduction of fertility.

It has been found that fertility is relatively low in the blocks where more economic and educational development has taken place, such as Kaliachak-I in south, English Bazar in central and Chanchal-I in north. However the blocks which are economically and educationally marginalized, fertility rate is high. Some regional differences in fertility were visible in child-woman ratios and total fertility rate. The spatial distribution of Muslim fertility shows that it is high in northern blocks of Harischandrapur-I, Harischandrapur-II, Chanchal-II, and Ratua-I as the concentration of Muslims is high and low level of socio-economic development. Similarly non-Muslim fertility rate is high in the eastern blocks viz. Habibpur, Old Malda and Bamongola where their concentration as well as educational and economic development is low. This means that reproductive behaviour of any SRC is not determined by its concentration rather by its level of socio-economic development. Access to good child delivery and other health services/facilities is relatively poor among the Muslim concentrated areas and the children of the community are slightly at higher risk of being nutritionally deprived than the children of other non-Muslims.

The distribution of Muslim fertility by villages shows that the fertility and Muslim concentration interaction effect is low. However, the size of population of a village and fertility interaction effect is absent. The overall analysis of interactions shows that the effect of population size and Muslim concentration on fertility is not constant but it may rely on levels of influence of other socio-economic factors. A minor difference is seen in the concentration of Muslim population and fertility levels.

In the linkages between education vis-à-vis employment, it has been observed that Harischandrapur-I and Harischandrapur-II have reported low level of education as well as low level of employment, whereas high level of education with high level of employment has been observed in Manikchak and Gazol. In other words, education has positive relation with the employment because there is not a single block where low level of education with high level of employment has been observed. The corresponding analysis of education vis-à-vis fertility linkage shows that the education has negative relation with the fertility because there is not a single block where high level of education with high level of fertility has been observed. Thus, it is aptly clear that the education is positively associated with employment and negatively associated with fertility. However, employment is not significantly correlated with the fertility status in Malda district.
The linkage between education, employment and fertility by village as shown in a radar diagram reveals that high level of fertility with low level of education has been observed in Niar, Gohila, Belshur, Degun, Jalapur, Udaypur, Chandi Pashad, Mirdadpur and Kamalpur. Further, medium levels of educational development with high level of fertility have been identified in those villages where Muslim concentration is high. However, the relationship between employment and fertility is low. In the present study, three tier analyses i.e., at district, block and village level of dimensions of education, employment and fertility status have been done. At the district level, this analysis is done for both Muslims and non-Muslims. The spatial distribution of Muslim education, employment and fertility has been done at block and village level and reveals the same results.

The relationship between Muslims education, employment and fertility is uneven and presents a very complex picture. The study has shown that literacy rate is positively correlated with government service while it is negatively correlated with agricultural labourer at 1 per cent level of significant. This means that higher literacy rate among Muslims will increase their chances of getting employed in government services and would decrease the same in the category of agricultural labourer. The variable graduate is negatively correlated with farmer and agricultural labour where as it is positively correlated with business and government service at 1 per cent level of significant. Thus it may suggest that by achieving higher education, Muslims can get jobs in government services and business and have least probability of being engaged in agriculture related activities. Similarly professional and technical education is positively correlated with government salaried occupations at 5 per cent level of significant i.e., the more the Muslims are equipped with professional and technical education, the higher are their chances of getting job in government services.

In the present study, it has been observed that literacy rate negatively correlates with fertility rate at 1 per cent level of significant. High school literates are negatively correlated with total fertility rate and child ever born at 5 per cent level of significant. Thus the study corroborates the findings that higher the educational level of couples, lower will be the fertility because achieving higher educational level increases the tendency to be married at late age thereby reducing the chance of fertility. Further it has found that the Muslim employment rate is negatively associated with age-specific fertility rate (35-44 years) at 5 per cent level of significant because Muslims engaged in occupations of main workers category show low level general marital fertility rate and that of home based workers category show high level of general marital fertility rate. Employment in government service shows negative correlation with total fertility rate because the person aspiring to get job in government services has to attain high level of education which in turn leads to delay in marriage. Therefore, it may be concluded with confidence that where Muslims are poor and educationally marginalized may be they have high fertility but their reproductive behaviour does not differ from that the non-Muslims as they show a systematic and consistent change to the changing circumstances.

Abstract
Finally the results of the hypothesis tested are noted briefly. Status of Muslims in Malda district portrays a dismal picture affected by lack of opportunity and socio-economic backwardness. In Malda district Muslims are analytically identified as least developed community found to be educationally and economically more marginalized with high fertility. Muslims are at a double disadvantage with low levels of education combined with low quality education, their deprivation increases manifold as the level of education increases. The economic condition of Muslims in the district shows that they are poor and mostly working in primary sector. Muslim’s representation in regular salaried jobs in organized sector is much lower than non-Muslims and they have low level of average household and per capita income. Present study depicts that regional disparities in educational levels and the employment by sex and occupations groups are wide. The correlation between education, employment and fertility suggests that there is a significant positive correlation between Muslim education and employment level. Fertility declines with increasing level of income.

Apparently Muslim community seems to be a problem for a region in achieving socio-economic development. As analysis reveals that higher concentration of Muslims is one of the major causes for low level of literacy which is the root cause of socio-economic marginalization of a region in general and of Muslim community in particular. However the study reveals that Muslims are not a problem, it is rather their mass illiteracy leading to the marginalization. It is observed that higher education tends to reduce fertility, and results in higher employment, both of which are the testimonies of human development. Enhancement of education level is the only solution for balanced development and to bring social consciousness among Muslims in Malda district. In a nutshell, entire socio-economic development of Muslim community depends on the efforts for raising their literacy and education rate which may diminish the overall difference in population by religion in the district. The Muslim marginalization is cyclic process; economic marginalization lead to social and educational marginalization and that in turn result in economic marginalization.