



Information Literacy Competency and
Readership Study of
Five Specific Localities in
Urban, Industrial and
Semi-Urban Areas of
Kolkata Metropolitan City

Principal Investigator:

Dr. Chaitali Dutta

Jadavpur University

A UNESCO funded project

**INFORMATION LITERACY COMPETENCY AND
READERSHIP STUDY OF FIVE SPECIFIC LOCALITIES IN
URBAN, INDUSTRIAL AND SEMI-URBAN AREAS
OF KOLKATA METROPOLITAN CITY**

*Information Literacy Competency and
Readership Study of Five Specific Localities in
Urban, Industrial and Semi-Urban Areas of
Kolkata Metropolitan City*

Principal Investigator:

DR. CHAITALI DUTTA
Jadavpur University

A UNESCO FUNDED PROJECT

PREFACE

As the Principal Investigator of this Project, I enjoyed the privilege of active support and cooperation from UNESCO, without which it would not have been possible for me to complete the Project.

I also enjoyed the privilege of the constant inspiration, constructive criticism and valuable suggestions that Prof. Subir Kumar Sen, Reader, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Calcutta kindly shared with me. I express my sincere gratitude towards him.

Thanks are also due to my beloved students who worked sincerely on the survey —Smt. Sumita Dey, Smt. Soma Mitra, Smt. Bidushi Sardar, Sri Ranadip Chandra and Sri Gautam Mukhopadhyay.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Sri Shyamal Gan of National Sample survey, Govt of India, for his valuable suggestions and sincere guidance as an expert in Statistics.

I acknowledge the help of Sri Soumen Mondal, Sri Gautam Mukhopadhyay, Smt. Mala Aditya and Smt. Moushruti Das in data entry, collection of information, and in other areas of this work.

I have no words to express my gratitude towards Smt. Ratna Sengupta for her cooperation and help in innumerable ways.

Last but not the least, I would like to express my gratitude to Sri Anup Kumar Das, of UNESCO, New Delhi, without whose active support and cooperation, this Project could not have been completed in time.

Kolkata
The 28th March, 2008

Dr. Chaitali Dutta

CONTENTS

Preface -----	v
Introduction -----	9
Scope -----	14
Objectives -----	15
Methodology -----	16
Literature Review -----	17
The Target Areas Under Survey -----	21
Analysis of Data -----	39
Observations and Discussion -----	51
Major Findings and Conclusion -----	55
References -----	56
Appendix I : Copy of the questionnaire -----	57
Appendix II : Two Maps of Kolkata and Howrah-Hooghly -----	61

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Readership is a complex socio-cultural phenomenon. Smith and Robinson¹ define 'Reading' as "an active attempt on the part of the reader to understand a writer's message." Therefore, readership surveys are necessarily an attempt to map the reader's needs with the writer's message through a close study of the readers' reading habits. However, it is worth pointing out here that reading habits are a lot harder to study than any other habits, because only the physical act of reading can be directly observed, not the mental act that it appears to denote but frequently does not. Statistics and answers to questionnaires tell us the amount of printed material consumed, the rate at which it is consumed, the number of books bought, when and where were they bought and the person or group of persons who had bought them, but books bought are not necessarily books read. There are people, and they are not very few in number either, who buy books merely for the mantelpiece. Surveys such as this, yield only subjective evidence, which is, more often than not, fraught with illusions and dead ends.² Yet there aren't any other methods of studying reading habits and the importance of studying the reading habits of a community in understanding the intellectual lifestyle of the community cannot be over emphasized.

Reading habit of the general public depends on several factors. Nowhere in the world has there been any kind of universal readership before the advent of the printing press. India, too, was no exception. If we try to trace the history of readership in India, we will see that general readership or public reading habit among educated urban population in India registered an unprecedented growth during the late 19th and early 20th century. However, the growth of the reading populace has been uneven, diverse and very slow. Before the arrival of the printing press in India, general mass education and literary recreation was mostly restricted to oral renditions of mythological stories or incidents from the holy texts. Even after the arrival of the printing press, few books were published and even less were purchased. People still relied more on recitals from texts for entertainment and enjoyment, rather than reading books themselves. In small gatherings, people would listen to storytellers read out from books or narrate well-known stories like those of the epics from memory. Thus the knowledge of the Sciences and the Arts were disseminated among the general public through popular oral tradition for a long time even after the advent of printing. It was during the late 18th and early 19th century that the proliferation of printing presses in Bengal caused many a change to the world of letters and the intellectual scene in and around Bengal, especially in the elite circles of Kolkata.

Prose came to be recognized as 'the' medium of literary communication, replacing poetry; Schools on European model started coming up throughout Bengal and helped in the spread of basic literacy. Social and political consciousness started growing. Thus a need for reading materials was generated and to live up to the market demand, magazines, periodicals and newspapers were brought out both in English and in the vernaculars.

However, it would be interesting to note here that literacy among women did not spread in the same rate as it did among men, and there were several reasons for it. It was a time when formal education, especially English language education was in vogue in the country. However,

the conservative nature of the Bengali upper and middle-class family posed as an obstacle to women achieving similar education as men. Vidyasagar and other social reformers tried their best to change the situation and to promote education for women, and were successful to a large extent. As a result, women were given a chance to educate themselves. However, English language education was an exception. The women of Bengal did not yet exert themselves fully to English language education. Consequently, although there was a considerable demand for Bengali books among Bengali women, books written in English, and particularly books on English Literature, were largely considered to be men's domain.

Therefore, within a couple of generations a spectacular situation emerged. Men were found to be reading books and periodicals written primarily in English, while women were with books written in Bangla (which happened to be mainly fictions and books on religion).

Therefore, we may state that there was a marked change in the public reading behaviour in Bengal between 18th and 20th century that continued more or less till the First World War. The following factors may be held responsible for the changes:

- Establishment of printing presses
- Advent of type-making technology for vernacular scripts
- Popularity of prose
- Production and availability of paper for printing
- Appearance of authors, editors and publishers in the scene (although most of the time the same person had to discharge all the duties)
- Establishment and growth of different types of libraries
- Availability of literate people who would buy books and other reading materials

By 1930's several new technologies for information exchange and dissemination, like the telephone and the radio, were developed in the West and slowly made their way into the Indian sub-continent. However, till the end of World War II their availability to the general public was limited. But around 1947 these two media of communication were found to be supplementing as well as competing with other media of information exchange such as letters, newspapers and books. However, these inventions did not cut down on the reading time of the reading public to any great extent, as did another invention – talking cinema or the talkies, as they were popularly known.

Within a very short span of time filmmaking became a large industry in India and a section of the public, particularly the women started spending more and more time in theatres at the cost of the time they had previously devoted to reading fiction or popular magazines. Television appeared in the Indian scene in the 50's and gained in popularity since the mid-70's. Soon, it emerged a strong competitor to reading as a leisure activity. Reading of newspapers, did not appear to be adversely affected in any way. However, these are all general observations and in the absence of sufficient field data, it is impossible to establish any of these observations as hard facts.

It can be justifiably argued that TV, Talkies, Radio and later on, the Computer impacted the reading habits of people from different sections of the society differently. This is mainly because, reading has become almost like a natural instinct for the civilized man and as such the set of

skills required to read are acquired a lot easily and a lot early in our lifetime than those required to operate and enjoy (especially operate, as these were new technologies hitherto unknown) technological innovations like the computer. Moreover, technology has always been somewhat expensive. As a result, people who are well off enough to be able to afford technologies at home, always enjoy its fruits better and also become more adept at using them. Therefore, it was observed that in Bengal, the reading habit among the middle and lower middle class sections of the population, especially among that non-elite section that had not much education to speak of, did not register any marked downward slide as a result of the advent of newer modes of entertainment. However, television did catch up in the end and pretty quickly too.

Kolkata is a new metropolis. It has grown for only about 300 years and is still growing. Its growth and expansion have been largely unorganized and uneven, resulting in great demographic variations in different pockets of Kolkata that are spatially not very far from each other. Distribution of Kolkata's population is uneven. Some pockets have a very high population density. These are the pockets where socio-cultural institutions are found in large numbers. There are areas where most of the cinema halls and 'theatres' are located; there are areas where schools are scanty, where local population (Bengali speaking) is far exceeded by migrant population (non-Bengalis). Keeping these factors in mind, five localities (of Kolkata), representing five different socio-economic and cultural strata of Kolkatans, were chosen in order to get an idea of the reading behaviour of the Bengali speaking people. The present study also aims at determining the Information Literacy Competency of people residing in different areas of this metropolis, which according to Jagtar Singh and H.P.S. Kalra, "...encompasses, traditional literacy, computer literacy, media literacy and network literacy in the context of information problem solving skills."³ This is probably the only such study, although on small scale, taken up so far in a planned manner.

Target areas of survey: -

The five localities selected for the present study are as follows:

- Urban areas (comparatively old areas) with high concentration of public entertainment facilities, such as cinema halls, theatres etc. For this purpose, Shyambazar, Bagbazar, Hatibagan and adjacent areas have been selected.
- Urban (mainly posh) areas with high level of civic amenities and an affluent population, like Ballygunge, Gariahat, Golpark, Lansdown and Bhawanipore have been selected.
- Industrial localities such as Howrah, Liluah, Bally, Uttarpara.
- Localities with a high population of persons once displaced from the erstwhile East Bengal, now Bangladesh. South suburban areas like Dhakuria, Jadavpur and localities spreading up to Garia have been included in this group.
- Recently developed or developing semi-rural areas not far from Kolkata, such as Behala and Barisha.

Scope

The present study has tried to seek an answer to the following two interrelated questions:

1. Whether the extent of reading (in both quantitative and qualitative terms) by the Bengali speaking community in Kolkata has really gone down in the face of the challenge posed by the newly introduced non-print and electronic media.
2. What are the other factors that are putting reading at risk?

Development of information technology, as also the parallel developments in telecommunication is now opening up new vistas for capturing information. Dependence on libraries for retrieval of information is therefore gradually diminishing. Internet has now become an all-purposive tool for communication and exchange of information. In the present study too, it has been observed that a good number of the respondents want better and efficient services from the libraries and are also keen on using other media, such as primarily the internet, for latest information. This in itself is also considered as a kind of 'reading,' as one necessarily 'reads' the 'pages' on the net. However, for the purpose of the present study we have overlooked such 'readings' and have restricted ourselves primarily to the more classical definition of the act of reading.

Moreover, while attempting to answer these questions, the present study has considered feedback only from respondents who are twelve years old or more and speaks Bengali.

Lastly, it is worth pointing out that although, apparently, the sample selected for the survey might seem grossly disproportionate in terms of its male-female ratio of the respondents, it would be well worth remembering that this has happened because the sample was taken randomly and as such the outcome is totally spontaneous and free from any sort of biases.

Objectives

The objectives of this field survey are as follows:

- To attempt a critical study of the readership of people from different social strata of five specific localities of Kolkata Metropolitan City.
- To attempt a study of the influence and to measure the encroachment of different media on people's reading habit.
- To attempt an assessment of the probable causes behind the difference in pattern of the reading habits of people in different localities of Kolkata Metropolitan City.
- To attempt an assessment of the role played by Public Libraries in promoting reading habits.
- To attempt a mapping of the Information Literacy Competency Level of people living in Urban, Industrial and Semi-Urban areas of Kolkata Metropolitan City.
- To attempt to reach a viable conclusion from the results of the study.

Methodology

As has already been mentioned, five representative localities with different demographic patterns, concentration and characteristics were selected and from each of these locations, a sample of fifty persons was chosen at random. A draft of the final questionnaire (vide Appendix 1) was prepared and responses from small sample groups in different localities (not always restricted to the five selected localities mentioned above), comprising of ten persons in each group, were collected. On the basis of these responses and feedback, the questionnaire was further modified. The field assistants were thoroughly trained both in individual and in group sessions with them and thereafter, each field assistant visited random persons in a particular chosen locality. Those who were approached were total strangers to the assistants. In many cases, the respondents approached could not be persuaded to respond or spare time to answer the questions. In most of the cases, the respondents asked the assistants to come back at a particular time, which the assistants did uncomplainingly. The points in the (final) questionnaire had to be first explained to the respondents and thereafter the assistants recorded the responses. It thus took several weeks to complete the questionnaire-based survey. After the completion of the survey, the 251 responses collected were duly analyzed along the axes of different parameters and were tabulated (for details see “Analysis of data”)

LITERATURE REVIEW

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. GRIMSHAW (Shirley) and others. Electronic books: children's reading and comprehension. *British J. Educational Technology*. 38,4;2007: 583-99.
This study investigates the difference between child's comprehension and enjoyment of *story* books.
2. To read or not read: a question of national consequence. National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).
This is a research report recently released by the National Endowment for the Arts. It tries to highlight the general reading behaviour of the Americans, the picture offered is not bright. It concludes with the remark that the Americans read fewer books.
3. HUGHES-HASSEL (Sandra) and RODGE (Pradnya). The leisure reading habits of urban adolescent. *J Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. 51, 1;2007:22-33.
This research report has come to the conclusion that there is a strong relationship between leisure reading and adolescent's school performance, though the leisure reading behavioural pattern have never been considered as a subject of any serious research. This study further concludes that more than two thirds of the students indicated their inclination towards fun-reading only.
4. ABDUL RASHID. User education in Indian libraries: an assessment. *Library Review*. 46, 8; 1997:561-96.
This paper discusses the concept of "User education" in international context and in the course of discussion the author highlights different programmes undertaken in India in this area and also points out the bottlenecks and constraints responsible for the slow rate of progress in these programmes. A good number of recommendations are also prescribed for betterment of the condition.
5. BARKER (R E) and ESCARPIT (R) Ed. *The Book hunger*. UNESCO, Paris. 1973. p. 203.
The book contains a wonderful chapter on 'Reading Habits', wherein the editors have enumerated the different reading habits and have tried to describe the different forms it could take. They have further indicated the ways and have listed different studies undertaken in this area. They have also very successfully prescribed some remedies for removing the constraints in the way of development of reading habit. This study though not a very recent one, still has some relevance to the reading behaviour in the present era.

THE TARGET AREAS UNDER SURVEY

Bagbazar, Shyambazar, Hathibagan

Five localities of Kolkata Metropolitan City have been selected for this survey, of which the areas on the northern part of the city, such as Bagbazar, Shyambazar and Hathibagan are some. These are urban areas with high concentration of public entertainment facilities and are mostly inhabited by middle or lower middle class Bengali-speaking communities.

The distribution of population, literacy rate, general educational institutions etc. in these areas are shown below :

Table I : Distribution of population in Shyambazar

Ward	Male (in number)	Female (in number)	Total	Households
8	11,307	9,764	21,071	4,366
10	18,348	15,459	33,807	5,872
Total	29,655	25,223	54,878	10,238

[Source : Census of India, 1999, 2001]

Table II : Distribution of population in Bagbazar

Ward	Male (in number)	Female (in number)	Total	Households
7	10,711	9,515	20,226	4,479

[Source : Census of India, 1999, 2001]

Table III : Distribution of population in Hathibagan

Ward	Male (in number)	Female (in number)	Total	Households
11	15,475	10,715	26,190	5,260

[Source : Census of India, 1999, 2001]

Table IV : Literacy Rate : Shyambazar

Ward	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total
8	89.6	86.7	88.3
10.	87.4	85.5	86.5

Table V : Literacy Rate : Hatibagan

Ward	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total
11	82.7	80.1	81.6

[Source : Census of India, 1999, 2001]

Table VI : Literacy Rate : Bagbazar

Ward	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total
7	88.8	80.0	84.7

[Source : Census of India, 1999, 2001]

**Table VII : Distribution of Formal Educational Institutes
in Shyambazar, Hathibagan and Bagbazar area.**

Area	Ward	Schools	Colleges	Universities
Shyambazar	8	4	1	—
	10	8	3	—
Bagbazar	7	3	3	—
Hathibagan	10	-	1	—
	11	6	2	—
Total :		21	10	—

Mostly middle and lower middle class educated Bengalees live in these areas. The presence of a good number of schools and colleges in this area reflects the fact that people are interested in formal and higher education.

As for public entertainment facilities, it can be said that Shyambazar-Hathibagan area is famous for its many public theatres and cinema halls. There are some old and important public libraries situated around here. For example, Bharati Parishad, Bagbazar Reading Library, Tala Friends Association, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad etc. can be mentioned. Some of these libraries which were visited during this study are discussed below :

Bharati Parishad

Bharati Parishad is an age-old public library in the Shyambazar area. Established in 1893, this library has a collection of a good 50,000 books on different subjects like literature, philosophy, science, religion, art and culture, music, sports, travels, etc. The library houses both English and Bengali books and has a current membership of 350 users, of which 290 are adults and the rest are children. On an average 20-25 readers use the library daily, and most of them seem to like fiction. Books are lent out to members for 14 days, and periodicals and magazines for 7 days. There is also a provision for life membership at the library.

Bagbazar Reading Library

This library was established in 1883 and houses a huge collection of 65,000 volumes that include both fiction as well as non-fiction books like books on politics, history, economics, science, philosophy, religion, medicine, sports, commerce, travel etc. The section on fiction too houses different genres like short stories, detective fiction, adventure stories, children's fiction, etc. The library boasts of 13,891 members, of which 578 are children. On an average, 60-80 users visit the library daily. Primarily researchers and students use the library frequently. Users have to pay a monthly subscription charge of Rs. 5 for using the library, although the library has annual and donor members too. Library staff say, users mostly ask for magazines and fictions.

Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Library

It is a very old heritage library of North Kolkata. It was established in 1893. It houses a collection of 2,00,000 books and other documents, including 3208 Bengali and 3068 Sanskrit manuscripts. Some of these manuscripts are written on Palm leaves. Besides these, the library has 52 Tibetan manuscripts and a few others written in different Indic languages. The library collection includes books on philosophy, religion, sociology, education, science (both pure and applied), literature, philology, art etc. The personal collections of some famous people were later added to the library collection. Some such collections are : Chittaranjan collection, Vidyasagar collection, Ramendra Sundar Trivedi collection, Satyendra Nath Dutta collection, Ramesh Chandra Dutta collection, Gopal Das Choudhury collection, Benoy Krishna Deb collection, Bijit Kumar Dutta collection, Panchanan Chakraborty collection, Umesh Chandra Bhattacharya collection etc.

The library maintains a rich collection of 5500 periodicals. Presently, it has 2000 members—1200 life and 800 ordinary members. The members are from all walks of life. Mostly serious readers and scholars become members of this library. The library provides lending, reference and reprographic services to its users. It also offers reading room facility to its members. On an

average, 20-25 members use the library everyday. Annual membership subscription is Rs. 100/ and the life membership fee is Rs. 1500/-

Bhawanipur, Rashbehari, Lansdowne, Gariahat, Ballygunge, Golpark

These urban areas of the southern part of Kolkata enjoy all civic amenities and are mostly inhabited by affluent people. A large number of non-Bengalis are residents of these areas. But there are pockets, where middle class, Bengali speaking communities are also to be found. There are in these areas a unique mix of the old and the modern, the rich and the poor, the traditional culture and the emergent hybrid.

The population distribution, rate of literacy, distribution of general educational institutions and other important information about these areas collected from various documentary and non-documentary sources, are furnished below :

Table VIII : Distribution of population in Bhawanipur, Lansdowne, Rashbehari, Gariahat, Ballygunge, Golpark Areas

Area	Ward	Female (Number)	Male (Number)	Total	Households
Bhawanipur	71	15,421	17,778	33,199	7,571
	73	10,925	13,491	24,416	5,456
Lansdowne	72	11,096	13,391	24,487	5,159
Rashbehari	83	11,859	12,522	24,381	4,952
	84	11,336	12,064	23,400	4,769
	86	12,082	13,066	25,148	5,727
	87	6,681	6,643	18,324	3,121
	88	13,016	14,034	27,050	6,002
Gariahat-Golpark	68	11,659	12,522	24,181	5,702
	85	14,994	16,237	31,231	6,762
	90	11,002	11,143	22,145	5,264
	92	18,153	17,763	35,916	8,645
	93	27,180	28,849	56,029	12386
Ballygunge	65	34,865	45,233	80,098	13,292
	69	19,801	23,557	43,358	8,696

[Source : Census of India, 1999, 2001]

Table IX : Literacy Rate : Bhawanipur, Rashbehari

Area	Ward	Female (Number)	Male (Number)	Total	% of literacy in Female	% of literacy in Male	% of literacy
Bhawanipur	71	12,080	15,279	27,359	84.9	92.4	88.0
	73	8,886	11,307	19,693	82.8	89.5	8.65
Rashbehari	83	8,525	10,129	18,654	77.2	85.9	81.7
	84	8,243	9,960	18,203	78.8	89.0	84.0
	86	8,859	9,999	18,858	77.9	81.5	79.8
	87	5,664	5,897	11,561	89.5	94.0	91.7
	88	9,022	10,918	19,918	74.8	83.7	79.4

[Source : Census of India, 1999, 2001]

Table X : General Educational Institutes in Bhawanipur, Rashbehari, Lansdowne, Gariahat, Golpark, Ballygunge

Area	Ward	School (in number)	College (in number)	University (in number)
Bhawanipur	70	13	2	
	71	4	3	
Lansdowne	72	5	2	
Rashbehari	83	3	2	
	84	2	2	
	87	1	1	
Gariahat-Golpark	85	3	3	
	93	1	1	
	90	3	2	
Ballygunge	65	1	—	
	68	7	—	
	69	15	2	

[Source : Census of India, 1999, 2001]

The above table shows that the level of education among the residents of these areas is pretty high. There is a good number of schools and colleges located in these areas.

Jatin Das Smriti Pathagar is a noteworthy library in this area. A brief introduction of it is provided below :

Jatin Das Smriti Pathagar

This public library is situated at 184, S.P. Mukherjee Road, Kolkata 26. It has a collection of 18,000 documents, including 12,000 books and 6,000 bound journals. It subscribes 6-7 current periodicals and 7 newspapers. The collection of this library includes both fiction and non-fiction on different subjects, like politics, history, science, travel etc. The library has a good collection of text books. At present, the library has 200 adult and 10 child members. On an average daily 40 to 50 members use the library. The library renders lending and reading services to its users.

Howrah and Hooghly

Howrah, known as the twin city of Kolkata, has some densely populated pockets both in urban and semirural areas with moderately high literacy rate and some old and reputed libraries. A statistics of Howrah and Hooghly is given below :

Table XI : Area, Population Distribution and Density of population in Bally (Howrah) and Uttarpara-Kotrang (Hooghly), 2001

Locality	Area (Sq. Km.)	Population	Density/Sq. Km.	Percentage of population to district population
Bally (M)	11.81	2,60,906	22,092	6.11
Uttarpara-Kotrang (M)	16.34	1,50,363	9,202	2.98
Konnagore (M)	4.42	72,177	16,330	1.43

[Source : Census of India, 1999, 2001]

Table XII : Literacy Rate

Locality	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total
Bally	85.2%	77.4%	81.9%
Uttarpara-Kotrang	89.8%	82.7%	86.5%
Konnagore	90.8%	83.3%	87.3%

[Source : Census of India, 2001]

As can be seen from the above table, Konnagore is ahead of Uttarpara-Kotrang, Bally (Howrah) in terms of literacy rate both among men and women.

**Table XIII : General Educational Institutes (by types)
in the Districts of Howrah and Hooghly in 2004-2005**

Locality	Recognised Schools	Colleges	General Universities	Centres of open Univ.	Tech. Schools	Tech. Colleges	Tech. Univ.
Howrah District	2,674	16	—	8	14	12	1
Hooghly District	3,719	24	—	5	16	13	—
Total	6,393	40	—	13	30	25	1

[Source : Census of India, 1999, 2001]

Table XIV : Libraries, Reading Rooms and Mass Literary Centres in Bally, Uttarpara and Konnagore

Locality	Year	No. of Pub. Libs.	No. of Reading Rooms	No. of Mass Literacy
Bally	2004-05	6	6	1
Uttarpara-Kotrang (M)	"	5	5	16
Konnagore (M)	"	2	2	—

[Source : Officer-in-Charge, Literacy and Education Cell, Hooghly Zilla Parishad, Chinsura, Hooghly]

An intellectual activity such as reading is dependent on many factors like economic status, family background, home environment, educational level, age, cost of reading materials and their availability. Considering these factors, it seems that the availability of reading materials free or at affordable cost, is very important. Libraries and reading rooms extend the provision of having reading materials by the willing readers.

The above table shows the number of public libraries' reading rooms and mass literacy centres in the areas of Bally, Uttarpara-Kotrang and Konnagore.

Table XV : Newspapers and Periodicals published in the District of Howrah

Year as on	Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Other	Total
2001	—	3	6	6	6	21
2002	—	5	7	6	5	23
2003	—	4	9	6	7	26
2004	—	5	9	5	7	26
2005	—	4	9	5	7	25

[Source : District Information & Cultural Officer, Howrah]

The above table gives a clear reflection of the intellectual activities and the possibilities of getting current information through the published reading materials by the citizens of Howrah district. Similar data are available for Hooghly also, which are shown in the table below :

Table XVI : Newspapers and Periodicals published in the District of Hooghly

Year as on 31st March	Daily	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Other	Total
2001	—	12	30	2	4	48
2002	—	13	29	5	6	53
2003	—	13	29	2	5	49
2004	—	13	29	6	—	48
2005	—	12	29	1	6	48

[Source : District Information & Cultural Officer, Hooghly]

In the opinion of David William Martin, “...general public’s enjoyment have particularized facilities located on the east bank of the Hooghly. Westbank-sited Howrah and its neighbours have much less to rejoice about. They are entitled to feel overlooked, for apart from two (admittedly excellent) locations—the Botanical Gardens at Sibpur, and the Ramakrishna Movement’s Belur Math up river—they are blessed with not much else in terms of good recreational facilities”.⁴

The activities undertaken and the services rendered by some of the important public libraries in these localities, which were visited during the survey are described below :

Uttarpara Jaikrishna Public Library

Uttarpara Jaikrishna Public Library, an old and very important public library of Hooghly District with a rich collection of 45,000 books, including valuable and rare documents dating back to the 17th century, was established on 15th April, 1859. It has now been declared as a heritage library of the state and functions as a Government sponsored district library since

1964. It operates with a reading, lending, daily newspaper, old newspaper and periodicals, career guidance, and a research and reference section. It also houses a children's section. The collection of old periodicals contains some 25,000 volumes and the new periodicals section consists of some 20,000 volumes. It also has in its collection some 1000 old and rare manuscripts. The library houses both Bengali and English books, and also maintains a Braille collection since 2003.

Visitors to the library come not only from adjacent areas, but from all over the state. Serious scholars, teachers and researchers consider this library to be a valuable source of information. On an average, 70-80 books are lent out each day, while the average daily footfall count at the library comes to around 100, of which about 50-60 are students. Students usually come here for career guidance. On an average around 30-35 reference queries are daily answered by personnel at the reference section. The library has also started a collection of locally published periodicals and little magazines, with especial preference to those that are published from Hooghly district. Therefore, it could be concluded that with its huge and valuable collection, the library is serving users from the district as well as from other parts of the state quite well. Unfortunately, in the opinion of library staff, the number of serious readers to the library is gradually falling.

Bhadrakali Association Primary Unit Library

This small primary unit library, established in 1921, is situated not very far from Uttarpara. It has a collection of 10,300 books and 1000 bound periodicals. The collection comprises of mostly Bengali fiction. The library operates with two sections, namely, Lending and Reading. The children's section comprises only Bengali fiction—mainly adventure stories, detective novels and comics. The library also subscribes five daily newspapers. So far, the library has 550 members, which includes men, women and children, although, according to library staff, women and children use the library more often than men. The library keeps open from 12:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. everyday, except second and fourth Saturdays and Sundays.

Bally Sadharan Granthagar

This is a subscription based famous old public library in Howrah district, established in the year 1885. The library houses a collection of 36,000 books and 6000 bound periodicals. It also subscribes at least 10 current periodicals. The library has around 1200 registered members, of which 70-75% members use the library more or less regularly. Housewives and superannuated persons frequent the library more often than young people and students. On an average, 20 users read in the 'Reading Room' of the library everyday and around 70-75 books are lent out daily, out of which approximately 70% are usually fictions and the rest, non-fictions. There are text books and books on career guidance in the collection, but their demand as compared to fictions is very little. The library has a separate children's section with a separate collection of 6000 books. Five to six current periodicals are also subscribed exclusively for this section. A separate non-recurring grant of Rs. 1,50,000 has also been allocated for this children's section that has created a very positive impact on the local children and is extracting excellent response from the juvenile members of the library. Statistics on membership tells us that the present number of members of this section stands at 165.

Demand for Bengali books, periodicals and comics is the highest in this library, that also organizes different cultural programmes, lectures, art exhibition, etc. from time to time.

Dhakuria, Jadavpur, Ramgarh, Gangulibagan, Garia

In these localities, majority of the population are once displaced people from the erstwhile East Bengal (now Bangladesh). These south suburban areas are now rapidly developing.

The distribution of population, general educational institutions, literacy rates, etc. are given below to provide an idea about the socio-economic and cultural background of these areas :

**Table XVII : Distribution of population in Dhakuria Jadavpur
Ramgarh, Gangulibagan, Garia**

Area / Locality	Ward	Female (Number)	Male (Number)	Total	Households (in number)
Dhakuria-Jadavpur	92	18,153	17,763	35,916	8,645
Ramgarh- Gangulibagan	100	15,013	14,652	29,665	7,359
Garia	110	11,234	11,531	22,765	5,798

[Source : Census of India, 2001]

Table XVII : Literacy Rate

Area / Locality	Ward	Female	Male	Total	% of literacy in Female	% of literacy in Male	Total % of literacy
Dhakuria	92	14,578	15,543	30,121	85.3	93.6	89.4
Jadavpur	101	14,982	16,813	31,813	88.8	93.6	91.3
	102	7,817	8,739	16,556	83.5	90.7	87.1
	103	10,288	11,341	21,629	87.5	94.8	91.2
	104	12,273	13,302	25,575	90.6	96.0	93.3
	105	8,275	9,325	17,600	87.5	94.5	91.1
	106	10,998	12,975	23,973	81.2	91.6	86.5
	107	13,201	16,374	29,575	76.7	88.2	82.7
	108	9,390	13,625	23,015	60.9	77.5	69.7
	109	10,424	13,758	24,182	64.7	81.3	73.2
	111	12,500	14,235	26,735	87.3	92.6	90.1
	112	9,428	11,044	20,472	82.9	91.6	87.4
	113	11,636	13,123	24,759	84.3	92.3	88.4
	114	11,806	13,389	25,195	83.3	92.4	87.9
Ramgarh	100	12,491	13,033	25,524	88.6	95.1	91.8
Garia	110	8,205	9,463	17,668	79.7	89.1	84.5

[Source : Census of India, 2001]

**Table XIX : Educational Institutes (by types)
in Dhakuria, Jadavpur, Garia**

Area / Locality	Ward	School (in number)	College (in number)	University
Dhakura	92	3	—	—
Jadavpur	101	6	3	1
	102		3	
Garia	110	3	1	—
Total		12	7	1

[Source : Census of India, 1999, 2001]

Some important libraries of these localities are—

Bibek Sangha Sahar Granthagar

This town library is situated at Jhil Road, Bibek Nagar, not very far from Jadavpur railway station. It is a public library with a collection of 15,850 books (approx.), on literature, science, religion, social sciences, films, library science etc. Some translations of classics are also included in the collection. The library has a current membership of 287 users, of whom 30 are children. The library has some children's books in its collection, but no separate children section is maintained. The library operates with two sections—reading and lending sections. It has a reprography unit also. Other than offering usual reading and lending facilities this library renders inter-library loan facility and reference service to its users. The reading room is used by 40 users daily (average) and on an average 45 users (35 adult members and 10 child members) come everyday to the library for issuing books. The library subscribes 8 periodicals of which 5 may be termed as professional journals. According to the librarian, members are mostly interested in fictions.

Udayan Club Library

It is a small public library, situated at Bikramgarh, Jadavpur. It houses a collection of 6500 books on different subjects, like science, social science, literature etc. At present it has 700 members of whom 360 are adults and 340 are children. The library offers lending and reading facilities to its users. On an average, 10-20 readers use the library everyday. The users generally ask for fictions, detective stories. The library subscribes 4-5 current periodicals regularly.

Ajad Hind Pathagar

This is a big library with a rich collection of 22,537 books and 5,000 (approx.) bound journals. It also subscribes 3-4 periodicals (current titles). Books in the collection of this library are on different subjects, like, literature, science, etc.

The library offers reading, lending and reference service to its users. It has at present 1012 adult and 128 child members. Every day on an average, 75 members use the library. According to the library staff members, the users normally ask for fictions and especially defective stories.

Jyoti Sangha Pathagar

It is a small public library with a collection of 5380 books and 500 bound journals. Books are mainly on science, history, and literature. The collection also includes text and reference books, both in English and Bengali. The library has 300 members at present. The number of child members is 50. The library offers reading and lending facilities to its users. On an average, 15 adults and 5-6 children use the library every day. The users generally ask for fictions.

Behala, Barisha, Thakurpukur

These areas are located on the southern end of greater Kolkata. These old areas remained underdeveloped for many years. Now the scenario is changing. Still in many areas the condition of sewerage, sanitation and public health care is poor. It is a densely populated area inhabited by middle and lower middle class Bengali speaking people, a majority of which are displaced people from erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

The distribution of population, rate of literacy and general educational institutes are given below :

Table XX : Population distribution in Behala

Ward	Female (in number)	Male (in number)	Total	Households
115	15,028	15,588	30,616	7,074
116	13,524	14,949	28,473	6,461
117	1,968	13,308	25,276	5,081
118	12,675	13,247	25,922	5,938
119	9,265	10,145	19,410	4,074
120	10,804	11,096	21,900	5,155
121	14,735	15,235	29,970	6,456
122	17,015	17,942	34,957	7,996
123	14,870	15,699	30,569	7,215
124	16,883	17,412	34,295	7,560
125	20,314	21,931	42,245	9,984
126	13,706	13,531	27,234	6,465
127	17,913	18,671	36,584	8,706
128	15,666	16,198	31,864	7,520
129	19,013	19,954	38,967	9,087
130	13,345	13,285	26,630	5,980
131	14,698	15,438	30,136	7,301
132	13,304	14,785	28,089	6,771

[Source : Census of India, 1999, 2001]

Table XXI : Population distribution in Barisha

Ward	Female (in number)	Male (in number)	Total	Households
123	14,870	15,699	30,569	7,215
124	16,883	17,412	34,295	7,560
126	13,703	13,531	27,234	6,465

[Source : Census of India, 2001]

Table XXII : Population distribution in Thakurpukur

Ward	Female (in number)	Male (in number)	Total	Households
125	20,314	21,931	42,245	9,984

[Source : Census of India, 1999, 2001]

Table XXIII : General Educational Institutes (by type) in Behala, Barisha, Thakurpukur

Area Locality	Ward	School (in number)	College (in number)	University (in number)
Behala	118	1	2	—
	131			
	132	1		
Barisha	124	—	1	—
Thakurpukur	125	1	2	—
Total		3	5	—

[Source : Census of India and Kolkata & Howrah Guide, 2001]

Some important libraries in these localities are :

Barisha Sahitya Parishad Library

This library, situated at Motilal Gupta Road, Kolkata 8, has been serving the local residents since 1918. It houses a collection of 9,375 books, including 718 English titles, and subscribes 6 current Bengali and 3 English periodicals. The library has 6,695 users, which includes 752 juvenile users. There is no separate children's section in the library, but the library does offer some special services to users under 16 years of age. Generally, the library offers 'lending' and 'reading' facility to its users. On an average, 22 books are used daily by adult users, and 3-5 books by adolescents and children. Users usually issue books on religion, philosophy and literature. The subscription charge for using the library is a negligible Rs. 2 per month, and the library is usually open from 1 to 8 in the evening each day, except 2nd and 4th Saturdays and Sundays. The 'Reading Room' of the library is largely used for reading newspapers that the library subscribes. In fact, the library subscribes four Bengali and three English newspaper. It is a closed access library managed by a two-member staff.

Barisha Town Library

Another important century old library in this area is the Barisha Town Library, located on K.K. Chowdhury road, Kolkata 8. This library was established in the year 1904, and houses a collection of 23,961 books, including 2929 English titles. The library also subscribes to 9 Bengali and 2 English current periodicals, and 6 Bengali and 4 English daily newspapers. The collection comprises of books on literature, philosophy, religion, travel, popular science and general knowledge. The library also has a separate children's section with 2,700 books, most of which are in Bengali. The library hours are between 2 PM to 9 PM daily, except on 2nd and 4th Saturdays and Sundays. On an average, 55 adult members and 5 to 6 child members use the library daily. A considerable number of non-members (around 40) use the library everyday to read newspapers. It is a closed access library run by 3 people.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Table 1 : Respondents according to age and sex

Age group	Number of Female Respondents	Number of Male Respondents	Total
13-20	—	08	08
21-30	15	15	30
31-40	11	49	60
41-50	12	37	49
51-60	08	51	59
61-70]	05	31	31
71-80]		09	14
Total	51	200	251

The above table shows the distribution of respondents in different age groups from 13 to 82 years. Maximum number of respondents belong to the middle age group, i.e., from 31 to 50 and the total number of respondents in this group is 109, followed by 59 respondents belonging to the age-group 51-60.

Table -2 shows the categorisation of the respondents into Male and Female, which are further categorised according to profession or occupation. The occupation of the largest number of respondents is service. The next position is occupied by businessmen. The number of retired persons is also not negligible.

Table 2 : Profession / Occupation of the Respondents.

Profession / Occupation	Female (No.)	%	Male (No.)	%	Total	%
Student	06	11.8	12	6	18	7.2
Home maker	29	56.9	0	0	29	11.6
Service						
(a) Government	05]	17.7	41]	41	91	36.3
(b) Private	04]		41]			
Business	03	5.9	69	34.5	72	28.7
Professional	0	0	01	0.5	01	0.4
Retired	02	3.9	31	15.5	33	13.2
Unemployed	02	3.9	05	2.5	07	2.8
Total	51		200		251	

Table 3 : Educational Qualifications of the Respondents

Levels of Education	Number of Female Respondents	Number of Male Respondents	Total
Having no formal schooling	01	–	01
Read upto/Passed Higher Secondary	10	59	69
Diploma in Engineering	–	01	01
Bachelor degree in Sciences, Technology Management Sciences	–	13	13
Bachelor degree in Humanities and Social Science	28	102	130
Master degree in Science Technology, and Management	–	06	06
Master degree in Humanities and Social Science	12	19	31
Total :	51	200	251

From Table -3 , it is clear that most of the respondents have received higher education. 130 respondents hold Bachelor degrees in Humanities and Social Sciences and 13 in Science, Technology, Management, Law etc. 31 respondents hold Master degrees in Humanities and Social Sciences and 6 in Science, Technology, etc.

Table 4 : Respondents with regular reading habits.

Number of Male Respondents	Percentage	Number of Female Respondents	Percentage
152	76	46	90.19

From the above table, it is clear that out of 251 respondents (of whom 200 were male and 51 were female), 152 male respondents and 46 female respondents have a habit of reading regularly. This comes to 76% and 90.19% of the total respondents in each category. It can also be inferred from this table that out of 251 respondents, 53 respondents are not regular readers. Of this 53, 48 are male and 5 are female, i.e., 24% of the male respondents and 9.8 % of the female respondents are practically non-readers.

Table 5 : Age, Hobby and Profession / Occupation of the Non-habitual Readers

Female				Male			
Age group	Number of Respondents	Hobby	Profession	Age group	Number of Respondents	Hobby	Profession/ Occupation
13-30	1	Sewing	Business	13-30	5	Travelling, Painting, Watching TV & movies	Student, Service, Business, Unemployed
31-50	3	Sewing, TV watching	Home-maker	31-50	26	TV watching, Music, Sports, Chatting, Computer	Business, Service-holders
51-70	1	Listening Music, Sewing	Home-maker	51-70	16	TV watching, Music, Gardening and others	Business, Service, Retired
71 and above	–	–	–	71 and above	1	Watching Movies	Business
Total	5			Total	48		

It is significant that maximum number of non-readers belongs to the age groups of 31-50 years. This is true for both male and female respondents. Most of the male non-readers are engaged either in business or in some government and non-government organisations. Some of them are self-employed. Excessive work pressure, fatigue and lack of free time are the probable causes for their lack of interest in reading. Strikingly, the number of non-readers among elderly people (both male and female) is the least. No female respondent over 70 years was found to be lacking interest in reading, and only one male respondent from the same age group did show any reluctance for it.

Table 6 : Time spent by Male Non-Readers in using different media

Different Media	Number of Respondents using the media				Total
	below 1 hr.	1 hr. to below 3 hrs.	3 hrs to below 6 hrs.	6 hrs and above	
TV	5	24	12	1	42
Radio	1	10	3	1	15
Audio Player	1	6	0	0	7
Video Player	0	0	0	0	–
Computer	1	2	1	2	6

Out of the total 48 male non-readers 42 watch TV regularly. In case of radio, the number is 15. Six respondents said they use computer regularly.

Table 7 : Time spent by Female Non-Readers in using different media

Different Media	Number of Respondents using the media				Total
	below 1 hr.	1 hr. to below 3 hrs.	3 hrs to below 6 hrs.	6 hrs and above	
TV	–	2	3	–	5
Radio	–	–	–	1	1
Audio Player	–	–	–	–	0
Video Player	–	–	–	–	0
Computer	–	–	–	–	–

Table 8 : Hobbies of Respondents (Female) : Reading books vis-a-vis others

Hobby	Number of Respondents of different age group						Total	%
	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71 and above		
Reading books	9	3	6	6	3	0	27	52.9%
TV Watching	3	2	7	3	0	1	16	31.4%
Listening								
Music	5	3	2	3	0	0	13	25.5%
Sewing	1	1	2	1	3	0	8	15.7%
Singing	2	2	0	1	0	0	5	9.8%
Cooking	0	0	1	1	1	0	3	5.9%

Table 9 : Hobbies of Respondents (Male) : Reading books vis-a-vis others

Hobby	Number of Respondents of different age group							Total	%
	13-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71 and above		
Reading books	0	2	16	13	20	11	3	65	32.5
T. V. Watching	2	4	11	9	13	14	3	56	28
Listening Music	0	3	16	17	6	5	0	47	23.5
Sports	3	3	11	11	8	4	0	40	20
Travelling	0	1	4	4	3	2	0	14	7
Singing	0	2	1	1	4	1	1	10	5
Reading									
Newspaper	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	6	3
Movie Watching	0	1	2	1	0	1	1	6	3
Gardening	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	4	2

It can be observed from Table - 8 and Table - 9 that reading is still a very popular pastime among both male and female respondents. It is also significant to note that women's inclination towards reading is much more than men's. It is also very interesting to note that men generally watch TV much more than women. Among male respondents, 3% considers reading newspaper as a hobby, which is also a specific type of reading.

Reading can be a pastime for only those who can read and understand, which means, unless his reading Braille, he should be able to see and understand what is written. Effective reading also depends on mental tranquillity and concentration. People usually become calmer with age, but they also gradually lose their eye-sight. Yet, we found many people, aged 71 or above sharing a keen interest in reading. This is possible because they belong the old school that had always preferred the print media to others and view reading as a part of life. It is, therefore, important to keep in mind that habits, attitudes and values acquired early in life, mostly stay with us.

Table 10 : Use of Non-print Media by the Respondents

Age group	Different non-print media									
	Radio		T.V.		Addio Player		Video Player		Computer	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
21 – 30	7	10	15	13	8	6	8	4	4	8
31 – 40	6	25	11	48	5	24	3	14	1	12
41 – 50	6	21	12	35	8	16	5	13	2	9
51 – 60	7	27	8	50	2	13	3	13	4	9
61 – 70	2	19	4	30	2	10	1	9	1	5
71 & above	–	6	1	9	–	3	–	3	–	2
Total	28	108	51	185	25	72	20	56	12	45

From Table - 10 it is clear that all female respondents watch TV. Among male respondents, the number of people, who watch TV is 185, i.e., 92.5%. Therefore, it can be inferred that TV is the most popular medium of all entertainment media, closely followed by Radio. Twenty eight female respondents (54.9%) and 108 male respondents (54%) said they follow radio programmes regularly.

Table 10A : TV / Radio Programmes viewed / listened to by the Respondents.

Type of Programmes	Female		Male		Total	%
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage		
News	48	94.12	192	96	240	95.62
Sports	30	58.82	182	91	212	84.46
Music / Dance	29	56.86	91	45.5	120	47.81
Drama/Film	25	49.02	85	42.5	110	43.82
Serial	38	74.50	69	34.5	107	42.62
Discussion	16	31.37	78	39	94	37.45
Others	13	25.49	20	10	33	13.15

It is observed from Table – 10A that most of the respondents are interested in news (tele or broad casts). In number this comes to 192 (96%) among male respondents and 48 (94.12%) among female respondents. This indicates peoples’s eagerness to get current information. Male respondents are specially interested in sports and watch or listen to the programmes related to sports. Interest in music or dance programmes and films occupies the next two positions in the list. Song and dance programmes and cinema attract 56.5% women and 45.5% men and 49.02% and women attract 56.86% men respectively. Women are more interested in TV serials than men. 74.5% women are interested in serials, whereas, in case of men, the figure is almost half, i.e.. 34.5%.

Table 11 : Type of Books read by the Respondents

Female Respondents		Male Respondents		Total	Percentage
Type of Books	No. of respondents	Type of Books	No. of respondents		
Books on Religion	26	Books on Religion	64	90	35.85
Fictions, stories	22	Fiction, Stories	75	98	39.04
Travel	06	Travel	18	24	9.56
Poetry, Business	02	Business	04	06	2.39
		Science	03	03	1.19
		History	02	02	0.79
		Philosophy	01	01	0.39
		Biographies	01	01	0.39
		Children Books	01	01	0.39

Among the book readers, a total of 39.64% read fictions, 35.85% read books on religion and 9.56% read travel related books. This statistics has also been corroborated by the librarians or the staff of various public libraries which were visited in course of this study.

Table 12 : Reasons for reading as mentioned by the respondents

Reasons	Female	Male	Total	%
Pleasure	–	66	66	26.29
Acquiring knowledge	11	43	54	21.51
Pastime	11	32	43	17.13
Recreation	06	18	24	9.56
Professional Need	–	04	04	1.59
Hobby	02	04	06	2.39

While responding to why they read books, 26.29% of the respondents informed that they read books primarily because they like to read the same. 21.51% replied that they read books for acquiring knowledge and for 17.13% of respondents, reading is just a pastime. 9.56% said they read for entertainment. Only 2.39% of respondents said they consider reading as a hobby and 1.59% of respondents read to fulfill their professional need.

Table 13 : Source of availability of books

Reasons	Female		Male		Total	%
	No.	%	No	%		
Self Purchase	35	68.6	111	55.5	146	58.16
As a member of a library	20	39.21	66	33	86	34.26
Any other means	24	47.06	86	43	110	43.82

From Table – 13, it is clear that 58.16% respondents claimed they buy the books they read, while 34.26% respondents use to borrow books from libraries. It seems women are more prone to use libraries for their reading needs (39.21%) than men (33%). Employees of different public libraries have also claimed that women use libraries more than men.

Table 14 : Rank list of authors favoured by Female respondents

Rank	Name of the author	Number of responses
1.	Ashapura Devi	15
2.	Rabindranat Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay	14
3.	Suchitra Bhattacharya	07
4.	Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay	05
5.	Mahasweta Devi	04
6.	Sanjeeb Chattopadhyay, Bani Basu, Buddhadev Guha	03
7.	Samaresh Majumder, Satyajit Ray, Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay	02
8.	Samaresh Basu, Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay, Agatha Christie, Sankar, Gambhirananda, Saradananda, Bimal Kar Narayan Gangopadhyay, Banaphul, Premendra Mitra, Leela Majumdar, Shakespeare, Thomas Hardy, Sukanta Bhattacharya, Nabanita Debsen, Premchand.	01

Ashapura Devi leads as the favourite author among women respondents, followed by Rabindranath Tagore and Saratchandra Chattopadhyay respectively. Contemporary writer Suchitra Bhattacharya has bagged the third position, followed by Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay jointly on fourth and Mahasweta Devi on fifth. The interest generated by women writers among female respondents is noteworthy, as is their interest in 19th – 20th century classical writers like Rabindranath, Bankim Chandra and Sarat Chandra.

The same trend has also been noticed among men, wherein Rabindranath and Sarat Chandra top the list of preference, followed by Sunil Gangopadhyay on 2nd position and Ashapura Devi and Mahasweta Devi jointly on 3rd. The 4th and the 5th position respectively go to Satyajit Ray and Buddhadev Guha. Therefore, we can see that besides contemporary writers, the interest generated by writers of yesteryears still remains unabated among contemporary readers.

Table 15 : Rank list of authors favoured by the Male Respondents

Rank	Name of the author	Number of Male Responses
1.	Rabindranath Tagore Sarat Chandran Chattopadhyay	30
2.	Sunil Gangopadhyay	23
3.	Ashapura Devi, Mahashweta Devi	14
4.	Satyajit Ray	11
5.	Buddhadev Guha	09
6.	Samaresh Basu, Suchitra Bhattacharya, Sanjeeb Chattopadhyay	08
7.	Samaresh Majumder	07
8.	Bani Basu, Tarashankar Bandyopadhyay	06
9.	Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay	05
10.	Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay, Manik Bandyopadhyay Bimal Mitra, Bibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyay	04

Table 16 : Magazines / Periodicals subscribed and read by the Respondents

Female Respondents			Male Respondents		
Rank	Name / Title of the Magazine	No. of Res- pondents	Rank	Name / Title of the Magazine	No. of Res- pondents
1.	Desh (Literary Magazine published fortnightly)	17	1.	Saptahik Bartaman	43
2.	Sananda (A fortnightly magazine for women)	12	2.	Desh (Fortnightly literary magazine)	40
3.	Saptahik Bartaman	10	3.	Sananda (A fortnightly magazine for women)	32
4.	Sukhi Grihakone	3	4.	Anandalok (A fortnightly film magazine)	14
5.	Anandalok (Flim mag)	3	5.	Anandamela	13

In magazines, the first choice of women seems to be a classy literary magazine like 'Desh', while men prefer 'Saptahik Bartaman' the most, which is also quality magazine. Although primarily a women's magazine, men have ranked 'Sananda' third while for women it's the second best, 'Saptahik Bartaman' comes third, in the order of preference for women. Besides these, cine-magazine 'Anandalok', children's magazine 'Anandamela' and women's magazine 'Sukhi Grihakone' also enjoy quite a bit of popularity.

Table 17 : Rank-list of newspapers read regularly by the Respondents

Rank	Title of the Newspaper	Number of Male Respondents
1.	Ananda Bazar Patrika	194
2.	The Telegraph	67
3.	Bartaman	54
4.	Times of India	38
5.	The Statesman	21
6.	Aajkal, Sambad Pratidin	17
7.	Ganashakti	15
8.	Dainik Statesman, Economic Times	07

**Table 18 : The extent of fulfilment of need of information
by reading newspapers among the respondents**

Degree of Satisfaction	Female	Male	Total	%
Fully	19	47	66	26.29
Patially	29	142	171	68.13
Not at all	03	11	14	5.58

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Observations

It has been observed from this field survey that most of the respondents are aged between 31 and 50, are in service and hail from middle-class families. Some of the respondents are, however, businessmen or are self-employed. Most of the women respondents are housewives. Next come people employed in government and private sectors. Since children have been excluded from the purview of this field research, there are only about 3 or 4 respondents who have reached adolescence. They are all boys and are students. Among the women respondents, those who are students are all aged 21 or above. As the sample size was small, we found very few people who are into different professions like Medicine, Legal practice or Teaching. However, we did find some superannuated persons and a handful of unemployed people during the course of the survey.

If we are to consider the educational qualification of the respondents, we will see that 69 people have completed High School (i.e., have passed Higher Secondary Examination), 143 are graduates, 38 have completed their post-graduation and 1 person holds a professional (technical) diploma, besides, another (woman), who has never had any formal education. From this we can conclude that middle-class Bengalees have a desire for higher education, or at least for attaining higher qualification, due to which Bengalees, in general, are developing a habit of 'compulsory reading.' We have found that out of all the respondents, 152 men and 46 women have a 'reading habit,' i.e., 76% male respondents and 90.19 % female respondents read more or less on a regular basis. On the other hand, out of the 53 other respondents who are not regular readers, 48 are men and 5 are women. This means, 24% male respondents and 9.8% female respondents do not have a habit of reading regularly. Therefore, it can be seen that the number of men who do not read regularly far exceeds the number of women in the same category. Further, we can also see that most 'non-readers' are usually aged between 31 and 50. In attempting to state a plausible reason for not reading, some of these respondents have held lack of time as the main reason. It could be assumed that as most men in this age group are either busy with their government/private sector jobs or with their businesses, and women with running the household, at the end of the day none of them are left with any time, or even desire, for reading. Older people, however, have mostly managed to cling on to their habit of reading. Among women in the age bracket of 51 to 70, we could find but a single 'non-reader,' and not even a single above 71. Among men in the same age bracket, we found 16 'non-readers' under 70 and just one above, despite the fact that eyesight, which is very much required for reading, dims with age. Nevertheless, the reason why elderly people are found to have a penchant for reading is perhaps because reading habit is one habit that a person develops quite early in his life and so it becomes difficult to get rid of; and perhaps people don't even want to get rid of it so easily. Another reason behind a large number of elderly readers is that at advanced age, due to less work pressure, people find more time for

relaxation and reading and perhaps the mind also becomes more tranquil, thereby allowing one to concentrate on reading.

27 female and 56 male respondents have said they read for entertainment or as a hobby. This figure comes to 52.9% and 28% respectively, which isn't too bad actually. Besides, 3% males have claimed that reading newspaper is a hobby for them, which also comes under 'reading' broadly.

Among the non-print media, Television tops the chart. All the women respondents (100%), as well as 185 male respondents (92.5%) have claimed that they watch TV regularly. Next comes the Radio. 54.9% women and 54 % men respondents listen to the radio regularly. In response to the question, "what kind of programmes on TV or Radio interest you," most of the respondents (95.62%) have claimed news bulletins are their favourite. There isn't much difference between the genders in this respect. 84.46% respondents – mostly men (91%) – said that they are also interested in sports programmes. Song and Dance programmes and cinema attract 56.86% women and 45.5% men and 49.02% women and 42.5% men respectively. Women are more interested in TV serials (74.50%) as compared to men (34.5%). Different types of talk shows, chat shows and debates and discussions pull 37.45% people, of which 31.37% are women and 39% are men.

Among the book readers, a total of 39.04% read fiction, 35.85% read religious books and 9.56% read travel related books. This statistic has also been corroborated by the librarians or the staff of various public libraries. Responding to why they read books, 26.29% respondents have informed that they read books primarily because they like to read books. 21.51% have informed they read books to learn and for 17.13% reading is just a pastime. 9.56% say they read for entertainment. 58.16% respondents claimed they buy the books they read, while 34.26 % borrow books from libraries. It seems women are more prone to use libraries for their reading needs (39.21%) than men (33%). Employees of different public libraries have also claimed that women use libraries more than men.

As for the service provided by the libraries, merely 9.96% respondents have claimed the services to be excellent while 21.12% have said the service is 'okay.' Again, only 2.79% person have termed it to be much below expectation level.

Ashapura Devi leads as the favourite author among women respondents, followed by Rabindranath Tagore and Saratchandra Chattopadhyay respectively. Contemporary writer Suchitra Bhattacharya has bagged the third position, followed by Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay jointly on fourth and Mahasweta Devi on fifth. The interest generated by women writers among female respondents is noteworthy, as is their interest in 19th –20th century classical writers like Rabindranath, Bankim Chandra and Sarat Chandra.

The same trend has also been noticed among men, wherein Rabindranath and Sarat Chandra top the list of preference, followed by Sunil Gangopadhyay on 2nd position and Ashapura Devi and Mahasweta Devi jointly on 3rd. The 4th and the 5th position respectively go to Satyajit Ray and Buddhadeb Guha. Therefore, we can see that besides contemporary writers, the interest generated by writers of yesteryears still remains unabated among contemporary readers.

Among magazines, the first choice of women seems to be a classy literary magazine like 'Desh,' while men prefer 'Saptahik Bartaman' the most, which is also a quality magazine. Although primarily a women's magazine, men have ranked 'Sananda' third while for women

it's the second best. 'Saptahik Bartaman' comes third in the order of preference for women. Besides these, cine-magazine 'Anandalok,' children's magazine 'Anandamela' and women's magazine 'Sukhi Grihakone' also enjoy quite a bit of popularity. What is interesting to note is that all the magazines mentioned above are publications of established newspaper houses and that little magazines or other avant-gardes publications do not find a place in the respondents' preference lists.

As for newspapers, 'Anandabazar Patrika' is the favourite followed by 'The Telegraph' – another publication of the same house – in the second place. 'Bartaman' and 'Times of India' respectively occupy the third and fourth positions, and the fifth position goes to the once extremely popular and famous newspaper, 'The Statesman.' As for newspapers, the English dailies enjoy almost the same popularity as the popular Bengali dailies.

29 women respondents and 142 men respondents said their information need is partially met by newspapers. In percentage, this comes to 68.13% inclusive of both men and women respondents. 26.29% respondents have claimed complete satisfaction with the newspapers in meeting their information need, while 5.58% have said they are not the least satisfied.

Responding to what kind of news catch their interest, 79.28% respondents replied sports news, 62.55% said political news, and 63.75% claimed their interest lie in social news. 42.63% respondents said they have interest in legal matters.

Major Findings and Conclusion

Careful analysis and interpretation of the collected data lead us to some important conclusions. Those are :

- Most of the respondents in the present sample are aged between 31 and 50 and are in service.
- The number of men who do not read regularly far exceeds the number of women in the same category.
- Older people have mostly managed to cling on to their habit of reading.
- Among the non-print media, television attracts most respondents.
- Women are more prone to use libraries for satisfaction of their reading needs.
- Reading still survives, despite the electronic media boom.

References

1. SMITH (N) and ROBINSON (H). Reading instructions for today's children. 1980. Englewood chiff, Prentice Hall, N.J.
2. BARKER (R E) and ESCARPIT (R), Ed. The Book hunger. 1973. Unesco, Paris. p. 132.
3. SINGH (Jagtar) and KALRA (H P S). Digital Libraries: new mechanism for horizontal and vertical integration of information. *In* Digital Libraries, ed. by N.M. Malwad and ors. 1996. New Age, New Delhi, p. 41.
4. MARTIN (David William). The changing face of Calcutta. 1997. Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi. p. 84.
5. SHARMA (A K) and SINGH (S P). Reading habits of faculty members in natural sciences: a case study of University of Delhi. *Annals of Library and Information Studies*. 52,4; 2005: 119-123.
6. Indian Standards Institution, new Delhi. Indian Standard recommendations for bibliographical reference: essential and supplementary elements. 1st rev. ed. 1978. Indian Standards Institution, New Delhi. p. 3-16.
7. GRIMSHAW (Shirley) and others. Electronic books: children's reading and comprehension. *British J. Educational Technology*. 38,4;2007: 583-99.
8. To read or not read: a question of national consequence. National Endowment for the Arts.
9. HUGHES-HASSEL (Sandra) and RODGE (Produya). The Leisure reading habits of urban adolescent. *J. Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. 51,1; 2007:22-33.
10. ABDUL RASHID. User education in Indian libraries: an assessment. *Library Review*. 46, 8; 1997: 561-96.
11. OGUNROMBI (S A). Factors affecting the reading habits of secondary school students. *Library Review*. 44, 4; 1995:50-57.
12. DIPTI's Kolkata and Haora : Guide. 2007 D.P. Publications and Sales Concern, Kolkata. p. 72-82.

তথ্যসচেতনা ও পাঠ-স্পৃহা সমীক্ষা
(ইউনেস্কো পোষিত প্রকল্প)

প্রশ্ন

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| ১। | নাম | : |
| ২। | বয়স | : |
| ৩। | পুরুষ /মহিলা | : |
| ৪। | শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা | : |
| ৫। | পেশা | : |
| ৬। | পেশাগতভাবে নিযুক্ত সংস্থার
নাম, ঠিকানা | : |
| ৭। | বাড়ির স্থায়ী ঠিকানা | : |
| ৮। | পরিবারের অন্য সদস্য সংখ্যা
ও তাদের সংক্ষিপ্ত পরিচিতি
(বয়স, শিক্ষা, পেশা) | : |
| ৯। | শখ / পিনোদন | : |

১০। বাড়িতে নীচের মাধ্যমগুলির
কোন কোনটি আছে এবং দৈনিক
মোটামুটি কত ঘন্টা সেটি / সেগুলি
ব্যবহার করেন ? :

ক) রেডিও :

খ) টেলিভিশন :

গ) অডিও প্লেয়ার :

ঘ) ভিডিও প্লেয়ার :

ঙ) কম্পিউটার :

১১। বই পড়ার অভ্যাস আছে কি না ? :
(টিক দিন)

হ্যাঁ

না

১২। কী ধরনের বই পড়েন ? :

১৩। বই পড়েন কী কারণে ? :

১৪। প্রিয় লেখক / লেখিকা কে কে ? :

১৫। যে বই পড়েন তা কোথা থেকে
পান ?

ক) নিজে কেনেন ? :

খ) কোন গ্রন্থাগারের সদস্য
হিসাবে পান ? :

গ) অন্য কোন ভাবে যোগাড়
করেন ? :

১৬। বাড়িতে কি পত্র-পত্রিকা রাখেন ? :

হ্যাঁ

না

১৭। যদি রাখেন তবে তা কি গ্রাহক
হিসাবে পান অথবা বিনামূল্যে
পান ? :

- ১৮। এইসব পত্র-পত্রিকার কতগুলি
নিয়মিত পড়েন ? :
- ১৯। মূল্যায়ন করতে হলে কোন্
পত্রিকাকে সেরা হিসাবে বাছবেন? :
- ২০। কোন সংবাদপত্র পড়েন ? :
- ২১। কয়টি সংবাদপত্র নিয়মিত
বাড়িতে রাখেন ? :
- ২২। সংবাদপত্র আপনার তথ্যের
চাহিদা কতটা মেটায় ? : পুরোপুরি আংশিক মেটায় না
- ২৩। কোন ধরনের খবর জানতে
বেশি আগ্রহ বোধ করেন ? : রাজনৈতিক খবর খেলার খবর আইন-আদালত
 শিল্প-সংস্কৃতি সামাজিক অন্যান্য
- ২৪। আজকের কোন্ খবরটি আপনার
কাছে সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ মনে
হয়েছে ? :
- ২৫। আপনি কি কোন গ্রন্থাগারের
সদস্য ? : হ্যাঁ না
- ২৬। যদি হন তবে গ্রন্থাগারটির /গুলির
নাম কী ? :
- ২৭। এইসব গ্রন্থাগার আপনাকে কেমন
পরিষেবা দেয় ? : খুব ভালো সন্তোষজনক আশানুরূপ নয়
- ২৮। এইসব গ্রন্থাগারে আপনি আরো
কী কী পরিষেবা আশা করেন ? :

২৯। আপনি বই বা পত্র-পত্রিকা ব্যবহার
করতে / পড়তে কোন অসুবিধা
বোধ করেন কি ? :

হ্যাঁ

না

৩০। যদি করেন, তবে কী অসুবিধা
তা বিশদ জানান :

৩১। আপনি কি মনে করেন বই-পত্রের
তুলনায় অন্য মাধ্যম ব্যবহার করা
বেশি সুবিধাজনক ? :

হ্যাঁ

না

৩২। উত্তর যদি হ্যাঁ হয়, তবে কী সুবিধা
তা জানান। :

৩৩। রেডিও বা টিভিতে কী ধরনের
অনুষ্ঠান আপনি দেখেন / শোনেন ?

খবর

ফিল্ম

নাচ / গান

আলোচনা

সিরিয়াল

খেলা

অন্যান্য

সমীক্ষাকারীর স্বাক্ষর

SNAPS OF THE TARGET AREAS UNDER STUDY



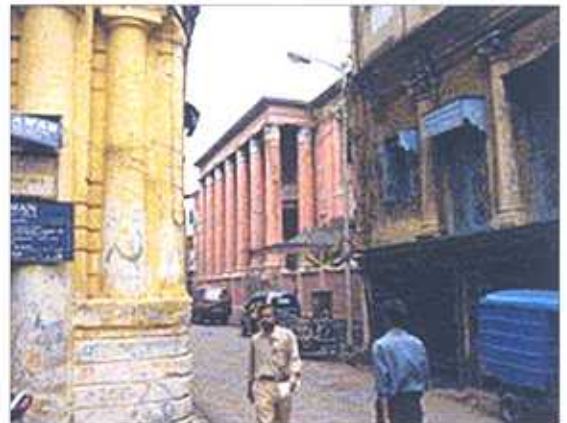
Shyambazar Five Point



Gariahat



Bhabanipur



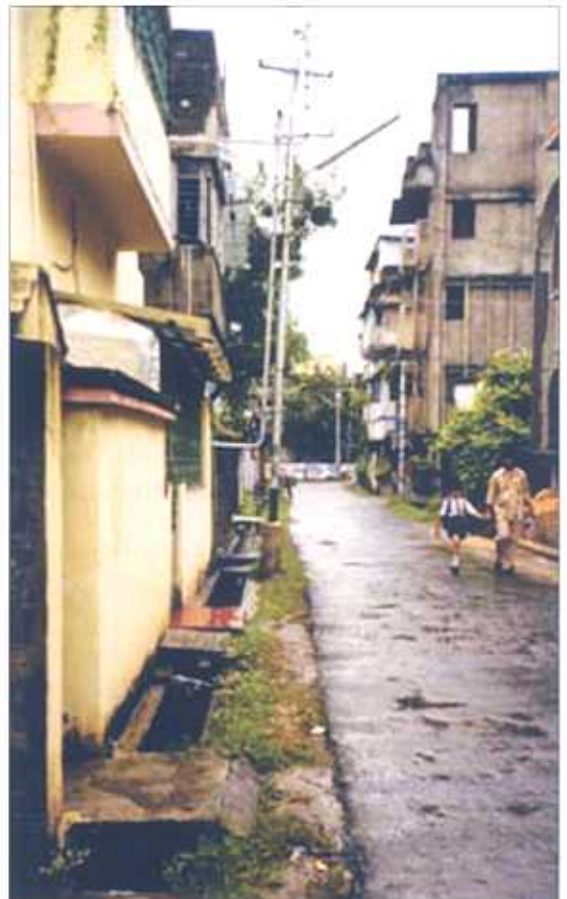
Uttarpara



Jadavpur University



Bullygunge

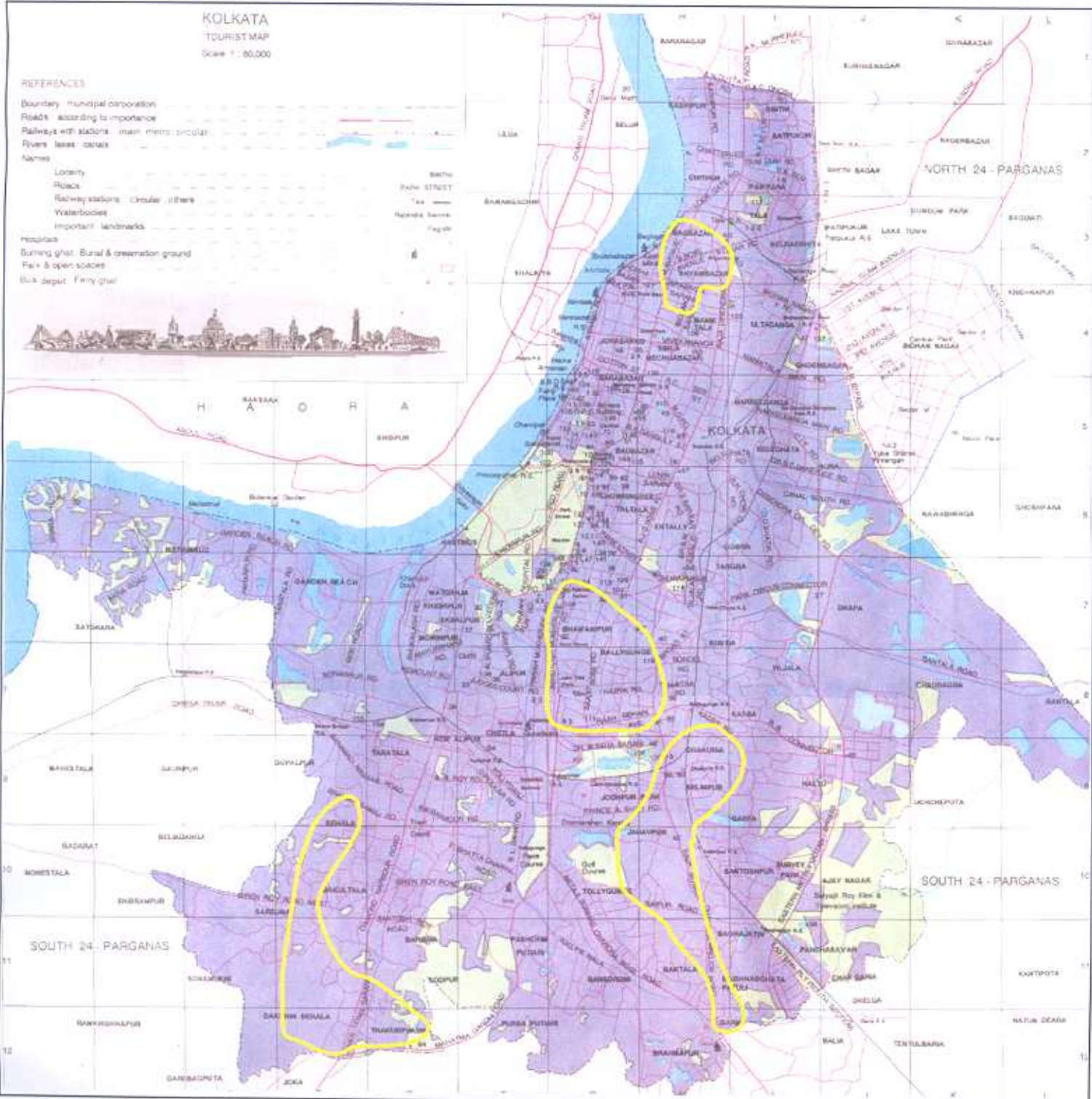


Behala

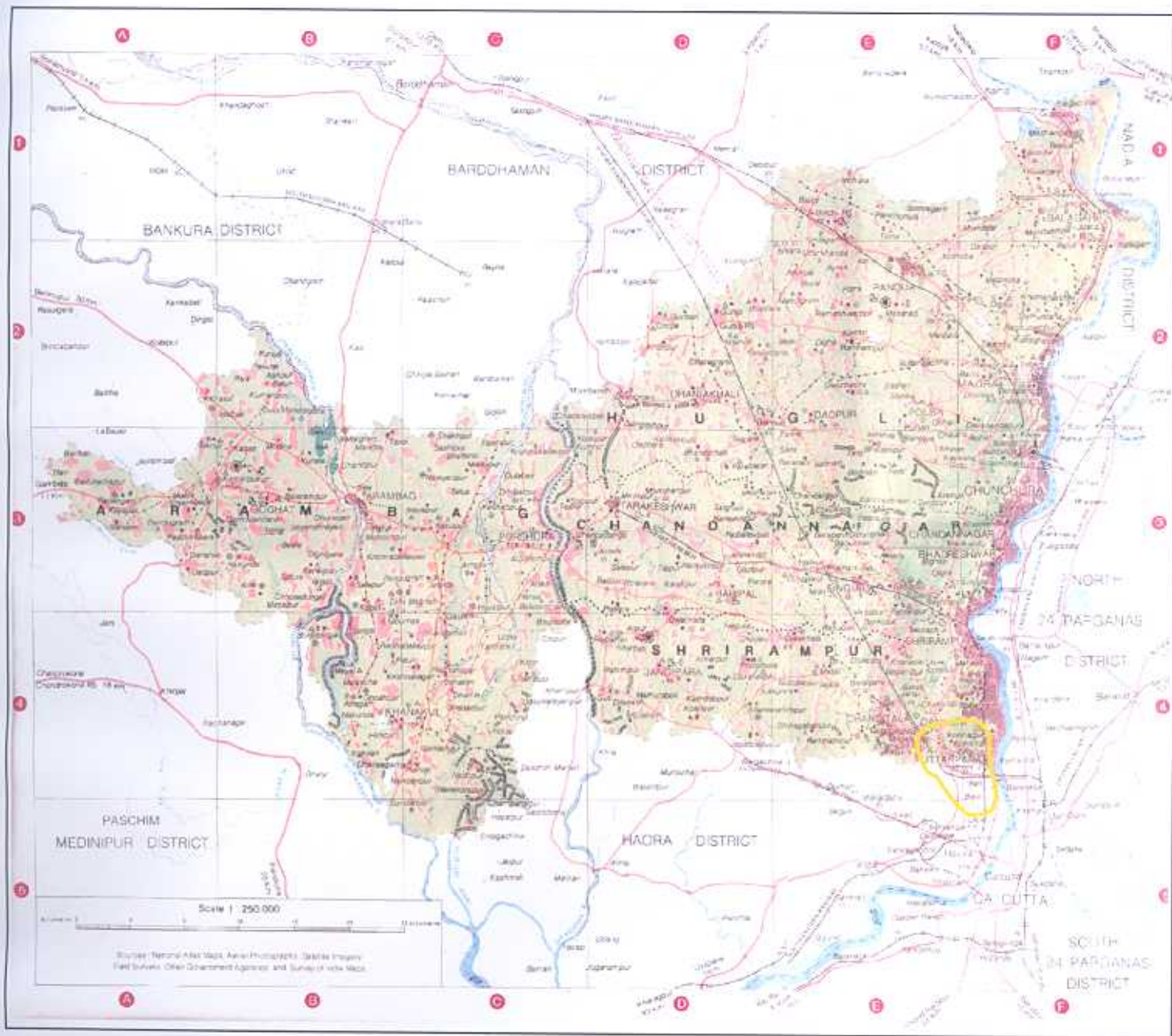
KOLKATA
TOURIST MAP
Scale 1 : 80,000

REFERENCES

- Boundary municipal corporation
- Roads according to importance
- Railways with stations main metro circular
- Rivers lakes canals
- Names
- Locality
- Roads
- Railway stations Circular others
- Waterbodies
- Important landmarks
- Hourglass
- Burning ghat Bural & cremation ground
- Fair & open spaces
- Bus depot Ferry ghat
- BATH
- PAVE STREET
- TEA
- RASTHA BANSA
- PAGOL



Localities under survey within Kolkata Municipal Corporation



Locality under survey within Hooghly and Howrah

Information Literacy Competency and Readership Study of Five Specific Localities in Urban, Industrial and Semi-Urban Areas of Kolkata Metropolitan City

© UNESCO, 2008

Published by:

The United Nations Educational Scientific & Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

UNESCO House

B-5/29, Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi – 110029, India

Phone: +91-11-26713000 | Fax: +91-11-26713001/2

Email: newdelhi@unesco.org

Disclaimer

The authors are responsible for the choice and the presentation of the facts contained in this publication and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization. The designations employed and the presentation of materials throughout the publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any county, territory, city or area or of its frontiers or boundaries.

Principal Investigator:

Chaitali Dutta

Research Partner:

Department of Library and
Information Science
Jadavpur University
Kolkata, India

Coordinator:

Anup Kumar Das

Department of Library and Information Science, Jadavpur University,
Kolkata, India

www.jadavpur.edu/academics/arts_library_and_information.htm

UNESCO Office in New Delhi

www.unesco.org/newdelhi

