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## POVERTY AND STATUS OF WOMEN IN HOOGHLY DISTRICT OF WEST BENGAL: A GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

*Poverty is a severe and multi-dimensional deprivation. The extent of poverty and its associated deprivation significantly affect the development of any region. Women are one of the most vulnerable and deprived section of society and suffer a lot from the curse of poverty. Therefore, enhancement of the status of women is very essential to overcome poverty in a geographical region. Keeping this in mind, an attempt has been made, in this study, to identify the spatial pattern of poverty and status of women in Hooghly district of West Bengal. To reveal this fact, twelve determinants of poverty and seven indicators of status of women have been taken up for quantitative analysis. The study depicts widespread disparity in the levels of poverty ranging from standard score value of 1.94 for Arambag block to -1.51 for Chanditala-I block. Similarly, in respect to status of women, the disparity varies from the highest standard score of 2.51 recorded by Chanditala-II to the lowest of -1.54 witnessed by Goghat-I block. The study further reveals that intensity of poverty is inversely associated with the status of women and vice versa.*

**Keywords:** Poverty, Status of women, Dimension index, Composite index, Hooghly district.

### Introduction

Poverty refers to the people who lack basic resources that are required for their survival. It is a major social problem and its alleviation and elimination are major international concerns (Liu et al., 2018). There are many causes of poverty at national or regional level, such as economic structure, infrastructure, education, environment, social factors, racial discrimination, natural disasters, wars, government corruption and chaotic management and the individual factors, like poor health, drug addiction, single parent, etc. (Kotler and Lee, 2009). These poverty-influencing factors vary across different time scales and geographical regions (Ding and Zhiming, 2018). For example, poverty, especially in rural areas, is

greatly affected by natural geographical environment (Li et al., 2016).

Women are vital and productive workers in national economy (Sharma and Kour, 2015). The general wellbeing of women in the society is considered as the status of women (Ramotra, 1997). It is often described in terms of their level of income, employment, education and health (Dash, 2005). Further, it is a true index of cultural, social, religious and spiritual development. Women play a crucial role in development as well as transformation of any society, but their status has not been fully recognized and they are considered inferior to male members. Sharma and Kour (2015) have revealed that even after having different types of legislative support, women are still lagging

behind men due to existing social structure, discrimination against women, prevailing patriarchal norms, lack of education, poverty and economic dependency. Inequality in the status of women as compared to men varies from caste to caste, religion to religion and region to region.

Sociologists, economists and social scientists have carried a large number of studies about the status of women, but they have failed to express the regional disparity. Lee and Schultz (1979) have mapped regional patterns of status of women in United States by using three indicators viz. income, education and prestige occupation. Andrews (1982) has made an attempt to show the world wide regional variation of women's status with the help of composite Status of Women Index (SWI) by using three social indicators, like female life expectancy, literacy and total fertility rate. In India, Nuna (1990) has examined the regional disparity in social wellbeing of women with the help of twenty six demographic, social and economic indicators. Similarly, Kumar (1993, 1997) has studied the regional variation in the status of women in India by using z-score and Principal Component Analysis technique. Poverty has historical, social, and cultural foundations, therefore both social and geographical topography of poverty should be investigated (Mridul and Mishra 2013). In the light of the above, the present study focusing on poverty and inequality in the status of women in Hooghly district of West Bengal has been taken up.

### Objectives

Major objectives of the study are:

- to assess and analyse the spatial pattern of poverty and status of women and

- to find out the relationship between poverty and status of women in Hooghly district.

### Study Area

The district Hooghly, in the state of West Bengal, is located at the west bank of river Hooghly. The district lies between 22° 39' 32" to 23° 01' 20" N latitudes and 87° 30' 20" to 88° 30' 15" E longitudes (Fig. 1). The district covers an area of 3145 km<sup>2</sup> ranking 13<sup>th</sup> among all the districts of West Bengal. For administrative purpose, the district has been divided into four subdivisions, 18 community development blocks and 210 gram panchayats consisting of 1,915 villages. The soils of the district are mostly alluvial type, which are the product of riverine flood plains.

The total population of the district is 55,20,389 persons with a density of 1,753 persons per km<sup>2</sup>. The district has recorded 9.49 per cent growth rate of population during 2001-2011. About 83 per cent population of the district is literate, while its sex ratio is 958 females per 1000 males. According to the District Human Development Report (2011), Hooghly district holds third position in terms of gender development index and sixth in the human development index. Though the district is known for its industrial background, yet the favourable topographical and climatic set up has made the district as one of the most important agriculturally prosperous districts of West Bengal. According to Census 2011, 39.01 per cent people are under working class. Out of the total working population, 12.06 per cent are cultivators, 27.10 per cent are agricultural labourers, 5.19 per cent are industrial workers and remaining 55.65 per cent are involved in other working activities.

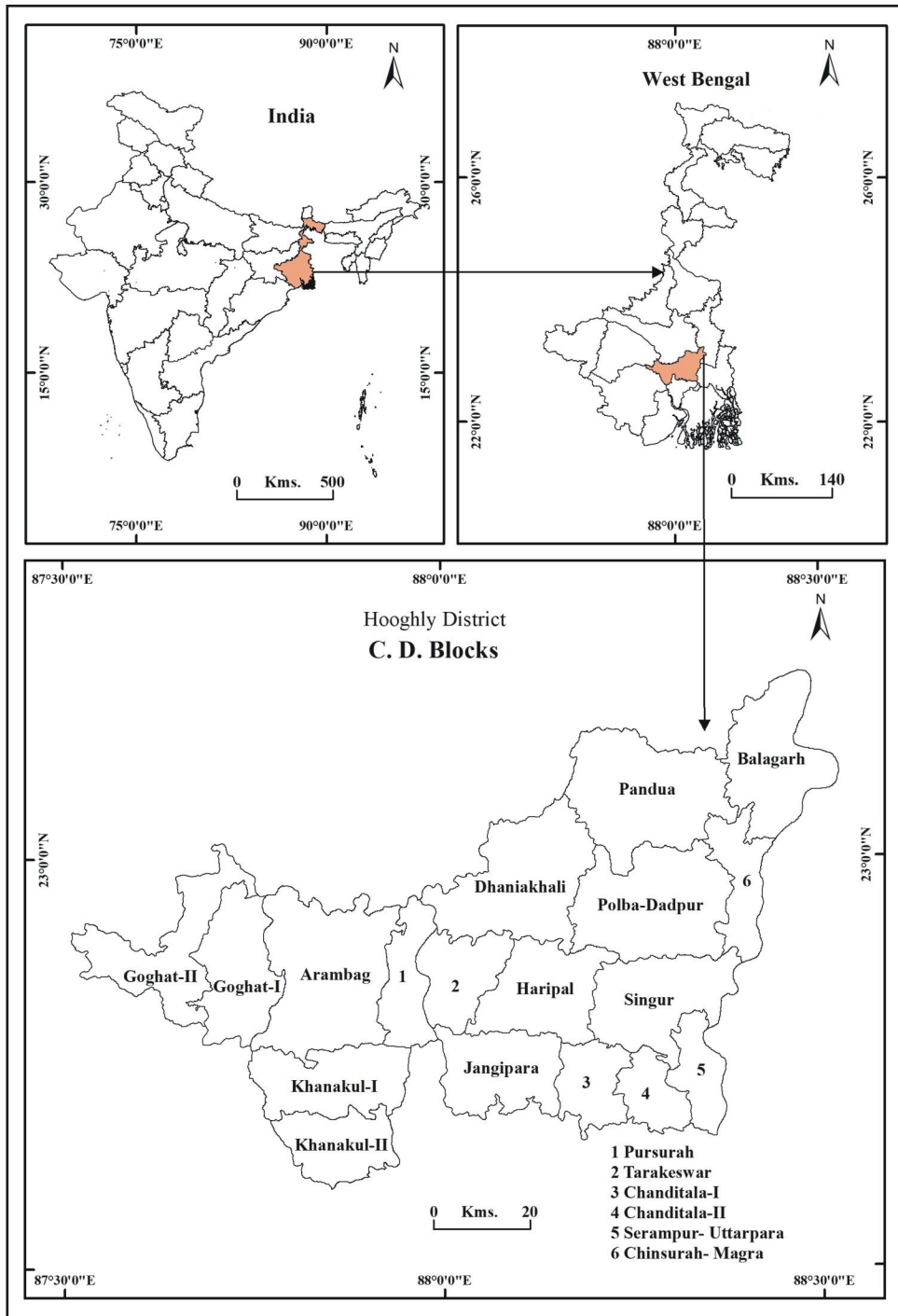


Fig. 1



### Database and Methodology

The present study is based on secondary data collected from District Census Handbook 2011, District Statistical Handbook 2014 and District Human Development Report of Hooghly 2011. In order to compute the level of poverty, twelve variables such as: percentage of scheduled caste (SC) population ( $x_1$ ), percentage of scheduled tribe (ST) population ( $x_2$ ), percentage of below poverty line (BPL) households ( $x_3$ ), literacy rate ( $x_4$ ), gap in male-female literacy rate ( $x_5$ ), percentage of marginal workers ( $x_6$ ), percentage of agricultural labourers ( $x_7$ ), household-wise availability of drinking water ( $x_8$ ), household-wise availability of power supply ( $x_9$ ), household-wise availability of toilet facility ( $x_{10}$ ), household-wise availability of kitchen facility ( $x_{11}$ ) and household-wise availability of banking services ( $x_{12}$ ) have been taken up. Similarly, for assessment of the status of women, seven variables such as: sex ratio ( $y_1$ ), female literacy rate ( $y_2$ ), percentage of female cultivators ( $y_3$ ), percentage of female agricultural labourers ( $y_4$ ), percentage of female household industrial workers ( $y_5$ ), percentage of female other workers ( $y_6$ ) and percentage of women headed households ( $y_7$ ) have been selected. For normalization of data into a unit free form, Dimension Index (DI) has been calculated as:

$$\text{Dimension Index} = \frac{\text{Actual value} - \text{minimum value}}{\text{maximum value} - \text{minimum value}}$$

Here, maximum value is the highest observed value of a given distribution, while minimum value is the lowest value of a given distribution for each indicator. The range of DI varies from 0 to 1. After normalization of data, ranks have been assigned in ascending order for each parameter following Kendall's ranking method. Afterwards, the aggregate of the ranks

of different indicators has been calculated to retrieve composite index. For calculating standard scores, the data have been standardized by calculating z-scores with the help of following formula:

$$Z_i = \frac{X_i - \bar{X}}{S}$$

where,  $Z_i$  = Standard Score,  $X_i$  = Individual observation,  $\bar{X}$  = Mean of the population, and  $S$  = Standard Deviation of the population.

To show the interrelation between poverty and status of women, correlation coefficient has been calculated. To predict the variability between them, regression model has been used. Tables and maps have been prepared for better visual representation and interpretation of the data.

## Results and Discussion

### Spatial Pattern of Poverty

#### Areas of Extreme Poverty

Although Hooghly is one of the most agro-based industrial districts of West Bengal, yet there are few blocks where poverty is extremely persistent. Arambag, Goghat-I and Pandua blocks by witnessing 1.94, 1.79 and 0.86 standard scores respectively fall in areas recording extreme level of poverty (Table 1; Fig. 2). Among these blocks, the level of poverty is highest in Arambag block, because it has recorded highest DI in BPL population (1.00) and second highest DI in concentration of marginal farmers (0.93). The block has also scored higher DI than the district average in SC population, agricultural labourers and gap in male-female literacy. The block is below the district average in DI recorded for literacy rate, availability of kitchen and banking services. Therefore, the block has emerged to be the most poverty-stricken block of the district. However, the block has recorded higher values

Table 1  
Hooghly District: Block-wise Dimension Index Values of the Indicators of Poverty

Blocks	Indicators of Poverty												Composite Score	Standard Score
	X <sub>1</sub>	X <sub>2</sub>	X <sub>3</sub>	X <sub>4</sub>	X <sub>5</sub>	X <sub>6</sub>	X <sub>7</sub>	X <sub>8</sub>	X <sub>9</sub>	X <sub>10</sub>	X <sub>11</sub>	X <sub>12</sub>		
Extreme Level of Poverty														
Arambag	0.87	0.09	1.00	0.22	0.77	0.93	0.76	0.74	0.86	0.41	0.26	0.23	82.00	1.94
Goghat-I	0.92	0.39	0.53	0.24	1.00	0.17	0.74	0.69	1.00	0.23	0.55	0.32	84.00	1.79
Pandua	0.66	1.00	0.63	0.04	0.53	1.00	0.93	1.00	0.00	0.06	0.12	0.59	96.00	0.86
Medium Level of Poverty														
Tarakeswar	0.33	0.33	0.26	0.39	0.72	0.90	0.67	0.74	0.48	0.41	0.15	0.71	98.00	0.79
Jangipara	0.61	0.30	0.58	0.30	0.49	0.50	0.61	0.96	0.67	0.28	0.37	0.52	97.00	0.72
Pursurah	0.24	0.03	0.57	0.49	0.74	0.50	0.59	0.70	0.99	0.54	0.45	0.37	97.00	0.65
Goghat-II	0.82	0.31	0.24	0.11	0.84	0.53	0.74	0.57	0.92	0.30	0.45	0.15	100.00	0.43
Khanakul-II	0.58	0.00	0.21	0.17	0.73	0.64	0.50	0.83	0.99	0.26	0.76	0.41	102.00	0.43
Dhaniakhali	0.70	0.93	0.57	0.05	0.43	0.84	0.98	0.56	0.57	0.02	0.00	0.81	105.00	0.14
Polba Dadpur	0.80	0.75	0.50	0.00	0.65	0.60	1.00	0.56	0.38	0.00	0.25	0.75	107.00	-0.14
Chinsurah-Magra	0.56	0.24	0.20	0.63	0.48	0.45	0.18	0.64	0.38	0.76	0.62	0.70	110.00	-0.36
Low Level of Poverty														
Singur	0.07	0.09	0.26	0.77	0.29	0.04	0.25	0.50	0.73	0.53	0.71	0.85	112.00	-0.50
Khanakul-I	0.53	0.02	0.08	0.07	0.86	0.64	0.61	0.79	0.95	0.11	0.52	0.00	116.00	-0.72
Chanditala-II	0.00	0.06	0.03	0.79	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.67	0.59	0.81	0.87	0.83	118.00	-1.00
Balagarh	1.00	0.60	0.09	0.17	0.56	0.39	0.77	0.45	0.57	0.31	0.56	0.45	113.00	-1.08
Serampur-Uttarpara	0.31	0.05	0.00	1.00	0.33	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.42	1.00	1.00	1.00	118.00	-1.08
Haripal	0.50	0.44	0.47	0.25	0.46	0.47	0.71	0.44	0.34	0.22	0.28	0.73	122.00	-1.36
Chanditala-I	0.17	0.01	0.03	0.60	0.05	0.05	0.28	0.63	0.68	0.50	0.71	0.76	125.00	-1.51
District Average	0.54	0.31	0.35	0.35	0.55	0.48	0.58	0.64	0.64	0.38	0.48	0.56	-	-

Source: Compiled by Author

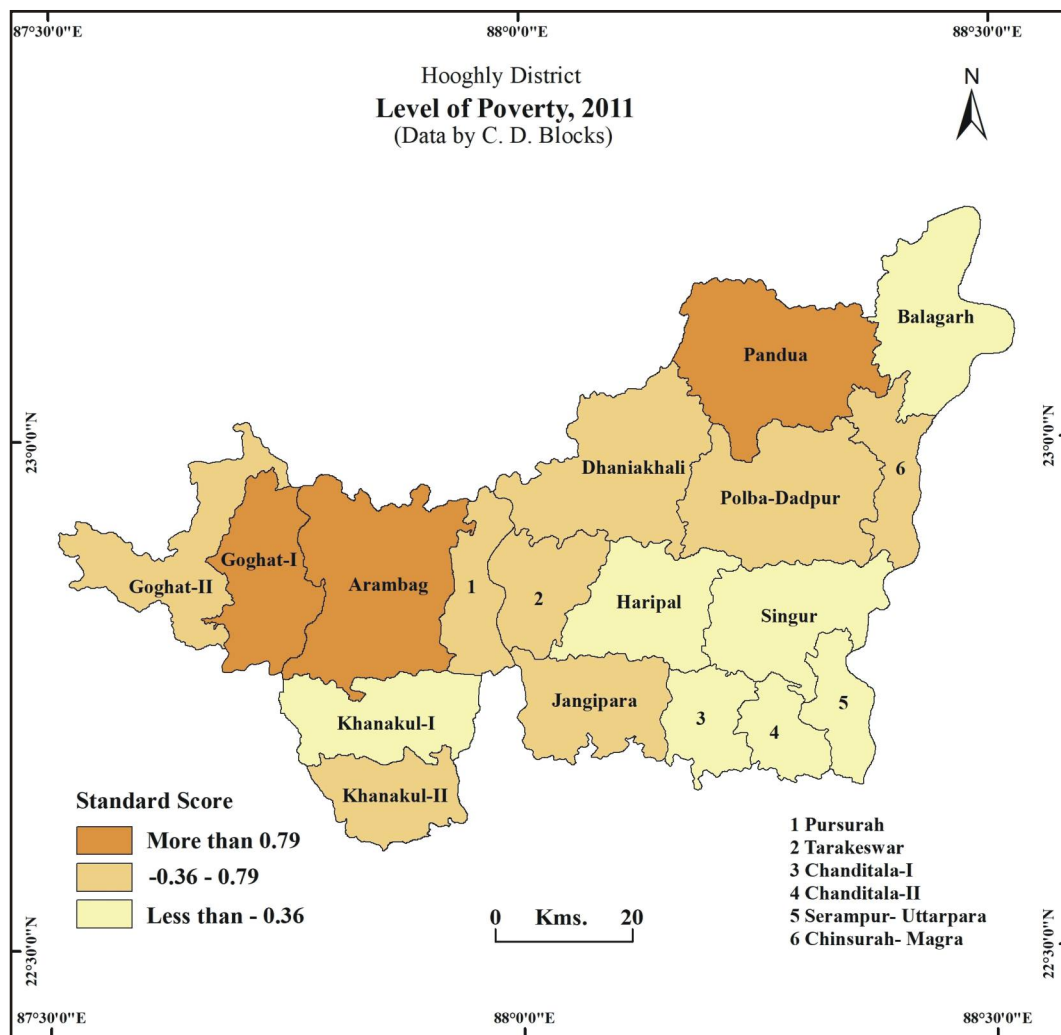


Fig. 2

of DI in indicators like availability of drinking water, power supply and toilet facility suggesting better position in the availability of these services. Similarly, the situation is worst in Goghat-I block as it has witnessed highest DI gap between male-female literacy rate (1.00) and second highest DI in SC population (0.92). The DI recorded by the block in indicators like ST population (0.39), BPL households (0.53) and agricultural labourers (0.74) is more than

the district average. Similarly, DI related to literacy rate, availability of toilet and banking facility is less than the district average. All these factors are responsible for very high level of poverty in this block. However, even after having very high level of poverty, the block has achieved highest DI in availability of power supply. Similarly, in Pandua block, poverty is very high due to highest DI it has registered in ST population (1.00) and marginal workers

(1.00). The block has also witnessed higher DI in SC population, BPL households, and agricultural labourers. The district has witnessed lower DI in literacy rate (0.04), availability of power supply (0.00), toilet (0.06) and kitchen facility (0.12). Despite having very high poverty, availability of drinking water is highest in the block. Areas of extreme level of poverty are mainly concentrated in two pockets located in western and north-eastern parts of the district (Fig. 2).

### **Areas of Moderate Poverty**

By recording standard score values ranging between 0.79 and -0.36, the moderate level of poverty has been recorded by eight blocks, namely Tarakeswar followed by Jangipara, Pursurah, Goghat-II, Khanakul-II, Dhaniakhali, Polba-Dadpur and Chinsurah-Magra of the district. These blocks are mainly concentrated in the central part of the district with isolated patches in the southern and western parts (Fig. 2). Among these blocks, poverty level is high in Tarakeswar block due to higher DI it has recorded a gap in male and female literacy (0.72), marginal workers (0.90) and agricultural labourers (0.67). Also, the block has witnessed lower DI in availability of power supply (0.48) and kitchen facilities (0.15) as compared to the district average. In Jangipara, Pursurah and Goghat-II blocks, poverty is more due to the registration of higher DI in marginal workers and agricultural labourers and lower DI in availability of kitchen facility and banking services. Among the blocks in this category, the level of poverty is comparatively lowest in Chinsurah-Magra block. It is due to lower DI recorded by it in ST population, concentration of BPL households, gap in male-female literacy, marginal workers and agricultural labourers. It is also because the

block has witnessed higher DI in literacy rate, availability of drinking water, toilet, kitchen and banking facilities. Highest DI in agricultural labourers and lowest DI in literacy rate and toilet facility have been observed in Polba-Dadpur block. Likewise, the lowest DI in kitchen facility and ST population persist in Dhaniakhali and Khanakul-II blocks respectively. In all other indicators, these blocks have adequate position in respect to poverty. In fact, the blocks falling in this category have mixed characteristics, high as well as low values of various indicators associated with level of poverty, hence, recorded moderate level of poverty (Table 1). Among this group of blocks, Tarakeswar, Jangipara and Pursurah blocks have more orientation towards extreme level of poverty while, blocks like Chinsurah-Magra, Polba-Dadpur and Dhaniakhali comparatively have lower level of poverty, hence inclined towards areas of low poverty.

### **Areas of Low Poverty**

Seven blocks of the district such as Chanditala-I with standard score of -1.51 followed by Haripal (-1.36), Serampur-Uttarpara (-1.08), Balagarh (-1.08), Chanditala-II (-1.00), Khanakul-I (-0.72), and Singur (-0.50) have witnessed low level of poverty (Table 1). Low level of poverty is mostly concentrated in the south-eastern part, with isolated patches in north-eastern and western parts of the district (Fig. 2). Among the blocks falling in this category, the level of poverty is lowest in Chanditala-I block as it has registered lower DI in SC population (0.17), ST population (0.01), BPL households (0.03), gap in male-female literacy (0.05), marginal workers (0.05) and agricultural labourers (0.28). The block has witnessed higher DI as compared to district average in indicators like



literacy rate (0.60), availability of power supply (0.68), toilet facility (0.50), kitchen facility (0.71) and banking services (0.76) (Table 1). Likewise, in Haripal block low level of poverty is on account of lower DI it has registered in SC population (0.50), gap in male-female literacy (0.46), marginal workers (0.47) and higher DI in availability of banking services (0.73). Similarly, the blocks of Chanditala-II and Serampore-Uttarpara have also recorded lower DI in SC population, ST population, BPL households, gap in male-female literacy, marginal workers and agricultural labourers. These blocks have also witnessed higher DI in availability of toilet facility, kitchen facility and banking services as compared to the district average. As a result, the level of poverty is low in these blocks. The Chanditala-II block has also obtained lowest DI in SC population (0.00), gap in male-female literacy (0.00) and marginal workers (0.00), hence level of poverty is low. Serampore-Uttarpara block has attained highest DI in literacy rate (1.00), availability of toilet facility (1.00), kitchen facility (1.00) and banking services (1.00) which are accountable for low poverty in this block. Low poverty has also been reported in Balagarh block due to lower DI it has registered in BPL households (0.09) and marginal workers (0.39). The block has witnessed higher DI in availability of kitchen facility (0.56), in spite of having highest DI in SC population (1.00). In Khanakul-I block, poverty is low as it has obtained lower DI in ST population (0.02) and BPL households (0.08). The block has registered higher DI in availability of drinking water (0.79), power supply (0.95) and kitchen facility (0.52) than the district average. In spite of having low level of poverty Khanakul-I block has recorded lowest DI in banking services (0.00). By recording

lower DI in SC population (0.07), ST population (0.09), BPL households (0.26), gap in male-female literacy (0.29), marginal workers (0.04) and agricultural labourers (0.25), Singur block has witnessed low level of poverty. The block has also recorded higher DI in literacy rate (0.77), availability of power supply (0.73), toilet facility (0.53), kitchen facility (0.71) and banking services (0.85). The above mentioned seven blocks of the district fall in areas of low poverty, because all indicators together have played a significant role for the overall development of these blocks resulting in low intensity of poverty in these areas.

From the preceding analysis it can be stated that there are widespread inter-block disparities in the level of poverty. The study reveals that about 17 per cent blocks fall in the category of high poverty area while almost 39 per cent blocks fall under low area of poverty. Remaining 44 per cent blocks come under the areas of moderate level of poverty.

## **Spatial Pattern of Status of Women**

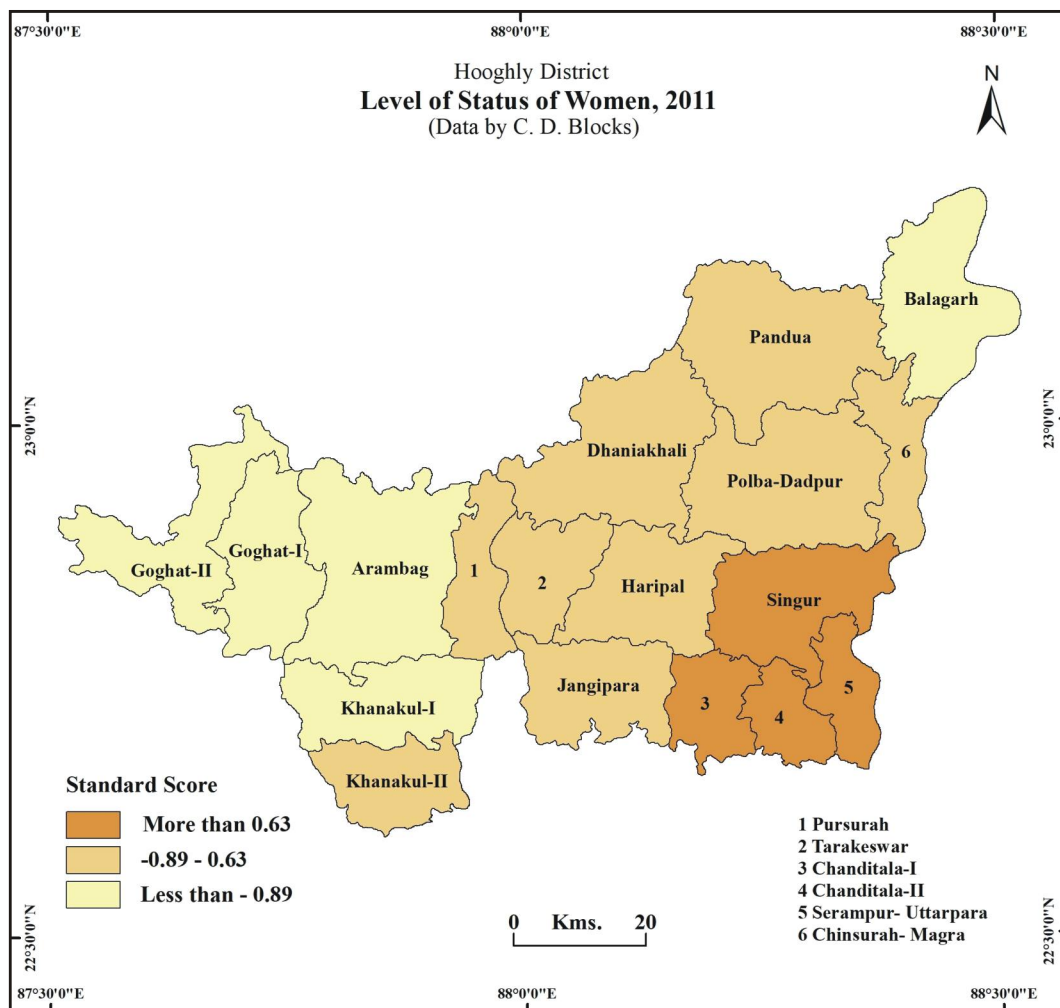
### **Areas of High Status of Women**

Chanditala-II, Chanditala-I, Singur and Serampur-Uttarpara blocks by witnessing 2.52, 1.23, 1.07 and 0.85 standard scores respectively fall in areas of high status of women (Table 2; Fig. 3). Among these blocks, the status of women is highest in Chanditala-II block because of highest DI it has witnessed in female literacy rate (1.00), women headed households and females engaged in other working activities. The block has recorded second highest DI (0.94) in sex ratio and lowest DI (0.00) in female agricultural labourers. In all other indicators, the DI is above the district average; hence the status of women is high in this block. Chanditala-I block has registered lower DI in female cultivators (0.09) and

Table 2  
Hooghly District: Block-wise Dimension Index Values of the Indicators of Status of Women

Blocks	Indicators of Status of Women							Composite Score	Standard Score
	Y <sub>1</sub>	Y <sub>2</sub>	Y <sub>3</sub>	Y <sub>4</sub>	Y <sub>5</sub>	Y <sub>6</sub>	Y <sub>7</sub>		
High level of Status of Women									
Chanditala-II	0.94	1.00	0.55	0.00	0.43	1.00	1.00	97.00	2.52
Chanditala-I	0.91	0.86	0.09	0.32	0.80	0.54	0.87	80.00	1.23
Singur	0.53	0.68	0.34	0.20	1.00	0.55	0.52	78.00	1.07
Serampur-Uttarpara	0.11	0.43	0.40	0.06	0.42	0.97	0.97	75.00	0.85
Medium level of Status of Women									
Chinsurah-Magra	0.32	0.44	0.20	0.51	0.11	0.58	0.90	72.00	0.62
Haripal	0.74	0.50	0.11	0.77	0.23	0.23	0.61	68.00	0.32
Dhaniakhali	1.00	0.37	0.20	1.00	0.06	0.00	0.79	68.00	0.32
Jangipara	0.57	0.46	0.04	0.53	0.91	0.24	0.53	66.00	0.16
Pandua	0.85	0.32	0.14	1.00	0.00	0.04	0.95	65.00	0.09
Khanakul-II	0.40	0.16	0.44	0.49	0.31	0.47	0.19	62.00	-0.14
Polba-Dadpur	0.53	0.26	0.12	0.97	0.17	0.01	0.70	59.00	-0.37
Pursurah	0.09	0.15	0.62	0.55	0.35	0.34	0.11	59.00	-0.37
Tarakeswar	0.21	0.17	0.17	0.65	0.33	0.32	0.39	58.00	-0.44
Low level of Status of Women									
Balagarh	0.26	0.32	0.00	0.87	0.15	0.17	0.56	52.00	-0.90
Khanakul-I	0.00	0.00	0.56	0.49	0.51	0.36	0.07	51.00	-0.97
Arambag	0.13	0.11	0.14	0.60	0.18	0.45	0.14	50.00	-1.05
Goghat-II	0.11	0.03	1.00	0.78	0.06	0.11	0.00	46.00	-1.35
Goghat-I	0.06	0.01	0.43	0.75	0.07	0.26	0.10	43.00	-1.58
District Average	0.43	0.35	0.31	0.58	0.34	0.37	0.52		-

Source: Compiled by Author

**Fig. 3**

female agricultural labourers (0.32) and higher DI than the district average in all other indicators. Therefore, this block also falls in this category of areas. Similarly, due to low DI in agricultural labourers (0.20) and higher DI than district average in all other indicators, the Singur block has witnessed high status of women. Serampore-Uttarpara block has registered low DI in sex ratio (0.11) and female agricultural labourers (0.06) and higher DI in all other indicators than the district average.

Therefore, this block has also been included in this category of areas. In fact, all the blocks falling in this category have recorded lowest DI values of females working as agricultural labourers, suggesting higher status of women. The area of high status of women is mainly concentrated in the south-eastern part of the district (Fig. 3).

#### **Areas of Medium Status of Women**

Medium status of women has been

recorded by nine blocks namely Chinsurah-Magra witnessing standard score of 0.62 followed by Haripal (0.32), Dhaniakhali (0.32), Jangipara (0.16), Pandua (0.09), Khanakul-II (-0.14), Polba-Dadpur (-0.37), Pursurah (-0.37), and Tarakeswar block (-0.44). These blocks are mainly concentrated in central and northern parts of the district (Fig. 3). Among these blocks, Chinsurah-Magra holds highest position due to higher DI it has recorded in female literacy (0.44), female other workers (0.58) and women headed households (0.90). Haripal, Dhaniakhali, Jangipara and Pandua blocks also have registered moderate status of women by having higher values of DI than district average in four indicators. Tarakeswar block is at the lowest position among these blocks by holding lower DI in all the indicators except female agricultural labourers (0.65). In fact, the blocks falling in this category of areas have mixed characteristics of high as well as low values of DI in various indicators, hence recorded moderate level of status of women (Table 2).

#### **Areas of Low Status of Women**

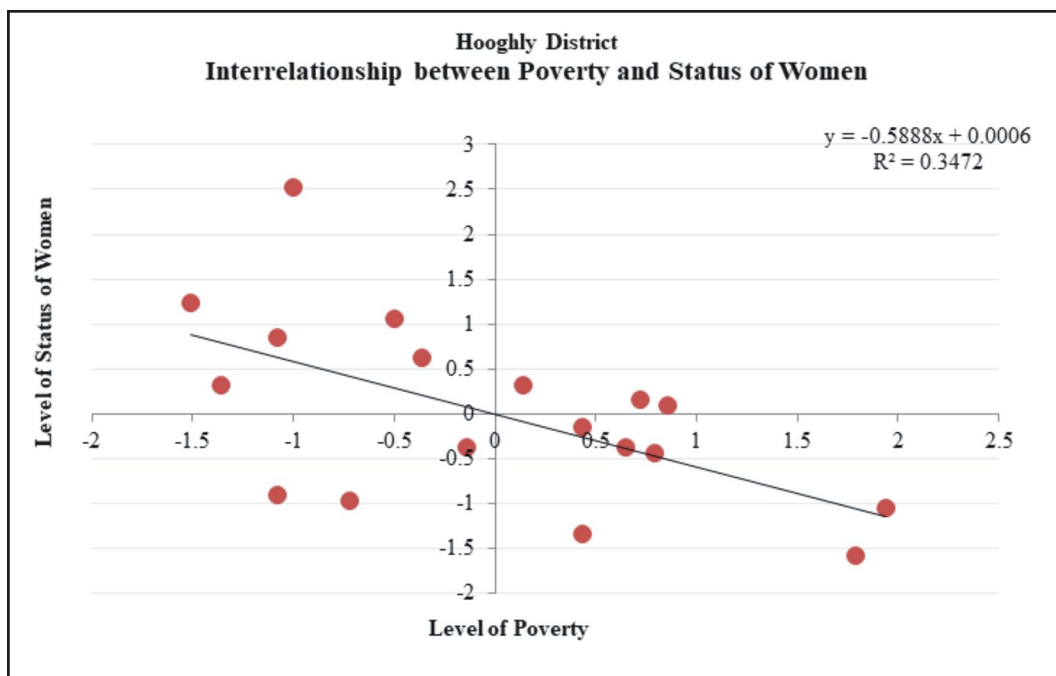
Low status of women has been noticed in five blocks such as Goghat-I with -1.58 standard score followed by Goghat-II (-1.35), Arambag (-1.05), Khanakul-I (-0.97) and Balagarh (-0.90). Leaving aside, Khanakul-I block, all these blocks have registered higher values of DI than the district average in percentage of females engaged as agricultural labourers which depict poor status of women (Table 2). In all other indicators, the DI values are not only less than the district average, but also at the lowest level. Otherwise also, all the blocks have shown very poor status of literacy rate and sex ratio. There are only three blocks like Balagarh, Khanakul-I and Arambag which

respectively have shown better position in one indicator of women headed households, females engaged in household industries and female other workers. However, in other indicators, their performance is at the lowest level. These blocks of the district are far away from the major urban centers like Chinsurah, Chandannagar, and Serampur located in the eastern parts of the district; therefore, have least impact of urbanization. The areas of low status of women are mainly confined to western part of the district with an isolated patch located in the north-eastern part (Fig. 3).

On the whole, the study highlights that the status of women in the study area is predominantly moderate in nature, as 50 per cent of the blocks of the district have recorded moderate level of status of women. Only 22 per cent blocks witnessed high status of women, while 28 per cent of blocks recorded low status of women. Thus, the study shows very high level of regional disparities in the status of women in the district.

#### **Interrelationship between Poverty and Status of Women**

To analyse the interrelationship between level of poverty and level of status of women, coefficient of correlation has been calculated. It has been found that both the variables are negatively correlated (-0.589). The correlation is significant at 0.01 level. The results, therefore suggest that higher the intensity of poverty, lower will be the level of the status of women. As correlation is not causation, therefore regression model has been drawn to predict how both the variables of poverty and status of women make impact on each other (Fig. 4). Since the  $R^2$  value is 0.3472, therefore it can be concluded that almost 35 per cent variance in status of women

**Fig. 4**

can be explained by the level of poverty. The lower value of regression reveals that level of the status of women is not only determined by level of poverty alone. But, there are some other factors like female literacy, sex ratio, percentage of female workers and percentage of women headed households that affect the status of women.

The block level analysis also supports this observation. There are blocks like Goghat-I and Arambag where level of poverty is high, but level of women status is low. In blocks like Singur, Chanditala-I, Chanditala-II and Serampur-Uttarpara level of poverty is low, but status of women is high. Whereas, there are blocks like Khanakul-I and Balagarh where both the level of poverty and status of women are low. Similarly, Goghat-II block with moderate level of poverty has recorded low level of status of women. Likewise, Haripal

block having low level of poverty has witnessed medium level of status of women. Thus, the study reveals that it is not only the poverty, but there are some other factors also that determine the status of women in the study area.

### Conclusions

The study has highlighted block-wise spatial pattern of poverty and status of women in Hooghly district of West Bengal. The study has also examined how both the variables are interlinked with each other. The findings of the study reveal that poverty is not only the outcome of low income or expenditure. But it is the result of several other determinants also like concentration of SC and ST population, proportion of BPL households, levels of literacy, gap in male-female literacy, number of marginal workers and agricultural labourers.



All these factors are affecting the accessibility in various services like availability of drinking water, power supply, toilet facility, kitchen facility, banking services etc. The study reveals that due to extreme poverty, the status of women in Arambagh, Goghat-I and Pandua blocks is quite low. On the other hand, there are blocks like Chanditala-I, Chanditala-II, Singur and Serampur-Uttarpara where the poverty is low and the status of women is quite high. However, there are two blocks namely Khanakul-I and Balagarh where in spite of low poverty, the level of women status is also low. It is because of low sex ratio, low female literacy and lower percentage of females engaged in other working activities. Concentration of extreme to moderate poverty and low status of women development mostly persist in the western part of the district. However, low level of poverty and high level of women status has been observed in the south-eastern part of the district. Hence, the study reflects that there is widespread inter-block disparity in spatial patterns of poverty and status of women. The study shows inverse relationship between the levels of poverty and status of women. However, the regression analysis reveals that the status of women is not only determined by the levels of poverty alone. But, there are some other factors like female literacy, sex ratio, percentage of female workers and percentage of women headed households that affect the status of women. The study would be helpful to the policy makers interested to overcome the inter-block disparities in the patterns of poverty and status of women in the Hooghly district of West Bengal.

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