

Change in Rural Literacy in India

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ABSTRACT

Literacy and level of education are basic indicators of the level of development achieved by a society. Spread of literacy is generally associated with important traits of modern civilization such as modernization, urbanization, industrialization, communication and commerce. Literacy is one of the great challenges in the developing world. But universal education is an unattainable dream for those who lack access to quality educational resources. Worse, many of them do not attend due to their need to work for the family in the agricultural fields or households. Although Literacy forms an important input in overall development of individuals enabling them to comprehend their social, political and cultural environment better and respond to it appropriately. This paper reports on this summative change in rural learning assessment. While we found learning across the board, higher levels of education and literacy lead to a greater awareness and also contributes in improvement of economic and social conditions. It acts as a catalyst for social upliftment enhancing the returns on investment made in almost every aspect of development effort, be it population control, health, hygiene, environmental degradation control, employment of weaker sections of the society.

I INTRODUCTION

The importance of education for social, economic, Political and environmental progress is universally recognized. In the formulation of education policies, especially in a country where illiteracy is still a dominant evil, removal of illiteracy must be the central object. Although, literacy rates are considered to be mere statistical indicators of 'Education' trends. United Nations Development Programme defines literates is those who can with understanding, both read and write, a short, simple statement related to their everyday life. 2001, India census defines literate as "A person aged seven and above who can both read and write with understanding in any language."

II FACTS & FIGURIS

(a) Rural Literacy in India

In the 2001 census, only 59.21% of the rural folk in India were literate while the urban areas displayed a literacy rate of 80.06%. It is depressing indeed to note that about 41% of India's rural population cannot read and write. The urban rural literate ratio in 2001 was 1.35:1.00. The issue is of great concern as more than 70% of India's total population of over one billion lives in rural areas. In other words, **more than 250 million villagers of the country are illiterate. In contrast with rural female literacy of only 46.58%, the rural male literacy in 2001 was 71.18%** The number of illiterate females in rural areas is a matter of still greater concern. Their number exceeded 160 million as against a total of approximately 140 million literate rural females. Rural-urban difference is more pronounced in case of women than for men.

(b) Progress of Rural literacy

The general literacy rate from 1951 to 2001 has shown a steady increase decade and has risen from 18.33% in 1951 to 65.38% in 2001. rural literacy, on the other hand, progressed from 12.10% in 1951 to 59.40% in 2001. The ratio between urban and rural literates which was 2.86:1.00 in 1951 has got reduced to 1.35:1.00 in 2001, urban-rural female literate ratio has experienced continuous decline since 1951 and it has come down from 4.58:1.00 in 1951 to 1.57:1.00 in 2001. However, the number of school In the rural areas has been inadequate. Still another vital factor operating in favour of improving rural literacy is the phenomenal development of faster communication. Wide urban-rural differential in literacy needs to be narrowed down by strengthening rural-urban interaction, greater diversification of rural economy and awakening particularly of rural females. The trend towards globalization tends to reduce differentials between rural and urban areas. Much however, still remains to be done to improve conditions.

(c) Progress of Rural Scheduled Caste Literacy and Rural Sheduled Tribe Literacy

Fortunately, urban-rural disparity has shrunken significantly among schedule educate and scheduled tribe population ever since 1961. This is true for male as well as female population in these social groups. Among scheduled tribe population the urban-rural differential has reduced from 4.64:1.00 in 1991. The reduction of the differential is a striking evidence of a healthy trend. It comes from realization among these classes of the necessity for change as well as the opportunity provided to them over several decades after independence through concessions and reservations and awareness campaigns to improve their lot. It

augurs well for their future. It is most encouraging to find that in more recent times, the rural females of poor minorities have been awakened through public awareness campaigns and the differential has reduced significantly.

III SPATIAL DIMENSIONS OF RURAL LITERACY

Like the spatial patterns of total literacy in 2001 in India, the spatial patterns of rural literacy in 2001 in India also showed wide regional variations. Regionally, Kerala with 90.05% rural literacy continued to occupy the first position among all the states in the country. It was followed by Mizoram (80.46%) and Goa (79.65%). Bihar with 44.42% literacy rate was at the other end of the scale. It is interesting to note that except Dadar and Haveli all the union territories registered a rural literacy rate significantly higher than the national average. Such high rural literacy rates in these union territories may be accounted for by high degree of urbanization and the resultant strong rural urban interaction. **According to the 2001 census, among 582 districts in the country the highest rural literacy was recorded in Kottayam district (95.87%) in Kerala.** Serchhip district in Mizoram state followed Kottayam closely with 95.60% rural literacy rate. **Dantewada district in Chhattisgarh state, at the other end of the scale, registered the lowest rural literacy (25.95%) in the country where rural female literacy was depressingly low (16.84%). 209 displaying (35% of the total number of districts) in the country are displaying more than 65% rural literacy.** Districts of Kerala, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur recorded about 65% literacy rate. Union territories of Pondicherry, Chandigarh, Daman and Diu, Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands also recorded high literacy rates. **180 districts (30% of the total) recorded less than 55% literacy.** These were largely located in Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh. **193 districts (about 35% of the total) were in the category of 55% to 65% literacy rate and were spread all over the country.**

IV STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES

National Literacy Mission (NLM) launched in 1998 in pursuance of the national policy on Education, 1986 embarked on a vigorous programme of eradication of illiteracy through its total Literacy campaign (TCL). By March 2003, it had already made 98 million people literate, 190 districts were in total literacy campaign, 196 were

in post literacy stage and 201 were in continuing education state stage. **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**, is the national umbrella Programme to universalize elementary education. Different states have evolved their own strategies to improve their female literacy. Rajasthan has involved the **Panchayats to spearhead the campaign. Pradesh has its own**

Mahila Padhna Badhna Andolan, in Uttar Pradesh, network of 100 Non-Government Organizations has set up a program aimed at making about 24 lac women literate within a period of six months in eight low female literacy districts. Orissa has similar programme in seven districts with less than 30% female literacy. Bihar involves panchayat functionaries in the process along with women volunteer teachers and makes use of women's self-help groups. The state hopes to cover about three million non-literate women in six to twelve months.

The 86th Constitutional amendment adding clause 21 A to the right to life, in Dec. 2002, guaranteed every child between the ages of 6-14-years, education up to the elementary stages as a fundamental right. An urgent attention to its realization especially in the rural society needs to be realized at the earliest. It may also be noted that the United Nations general assembly in its 56th session in 2001 adopted United Nations literacy decade (UNLD) towards achieving education for all (EFA). The United Nations literacy decade extended over 2003-2012 recognize that literacy is essential for every child, adult and youth of the 21st century.

V CONCLUSION

India has undoubtedly recorded a phenomenal educational development since independence. However, the malaise still persists. Rural areas characterized by a literate majority continue to be primarily concentrated only in north, east, north west and southern coastal areas while vast rural areas in the rest of the country have yet to free themselves from the curse of low rural literacy rates resulting in low general literacy.

In rural areas more than two-fifths of the population is still illiterate. Urban - rural literate ratio still calls for more vigorous efforts especially among the rural female population. Much still remains to be done. Rural women need to wake up and actively participate in the movement for universalization of literacy. **Special attention needs also to be paid to promote rural literacy among various social groups comprising scheduled castes and scheduled tribes especially among the female components of these groups.** The efforts made by the national literacy mission

have emerged as the main strategy to combat illiteracy especially in rural India.

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