

A STUDY OF THE NATIONAL LITERACY MISSION OF INDIAN GOVERNMENT IN EDUCATING

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Abstract:

The National Literacy Mission was initiated by the Government of India on 5th May 1988 with the objective of eradicating illiteracy, by imparting functional literacy among non-literate population. It was intended to provide three R's – Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. Further, through Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), NLM has adopted several strategies for favorable public opinion and involving people and creating awareness about development issues affecting society.

Building a system that supports continuing education and life-long Learning

Continuing education programme within the National literacy Mission (NLM): A nationwide effort for adult and continuing education was set in motion with the establishment of the National Literacy Mission (NLM) in 1988. The NLM sought to ensure that that the Total Literacy Campaign and the Post-Literacy Programmes successfully move on to continuing education which provide life-long learning.

The Continuing Education Scheme, launched under the NLM in 1995, provided a learning continuum to the efforts of the Total Literacy and Post-Literacy Programmes in the country. The main thrust of the Scheme of Continuing Education has been on providing further learning opportunities to neo-literates by setting up of Continuing Education Centres (CECs), which provided area-specific, need-based opportunities for basic literacy,

upgradation of literacy skills, pursuit of alternative educational programmes, vocational skills and also promoted social and occupational development.

Apart from establishing CECs, the scheme also provided for undertaking diverse activities such as

- (i) Equivalency Programmes enabling adult learners to continue their learning till they are able to achieve equivalence levels with Classes III to VIII and beyond in the formal school system or through open and distance learning system;
- (ii) Quality of Life improvement Programmes to equip learners and the community with essential knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to raise their standards of living;
- (iii) Individual Interest Promotion Programmes providing opportunities for learners to participate and learn about their individually chosen social, health, physical, cultural, and aesthetic interests.
- (iv) Skill Development and Income Generating Programmes facilitating the participants to acquire or upgrade their vocational skills and take up income-generating activities

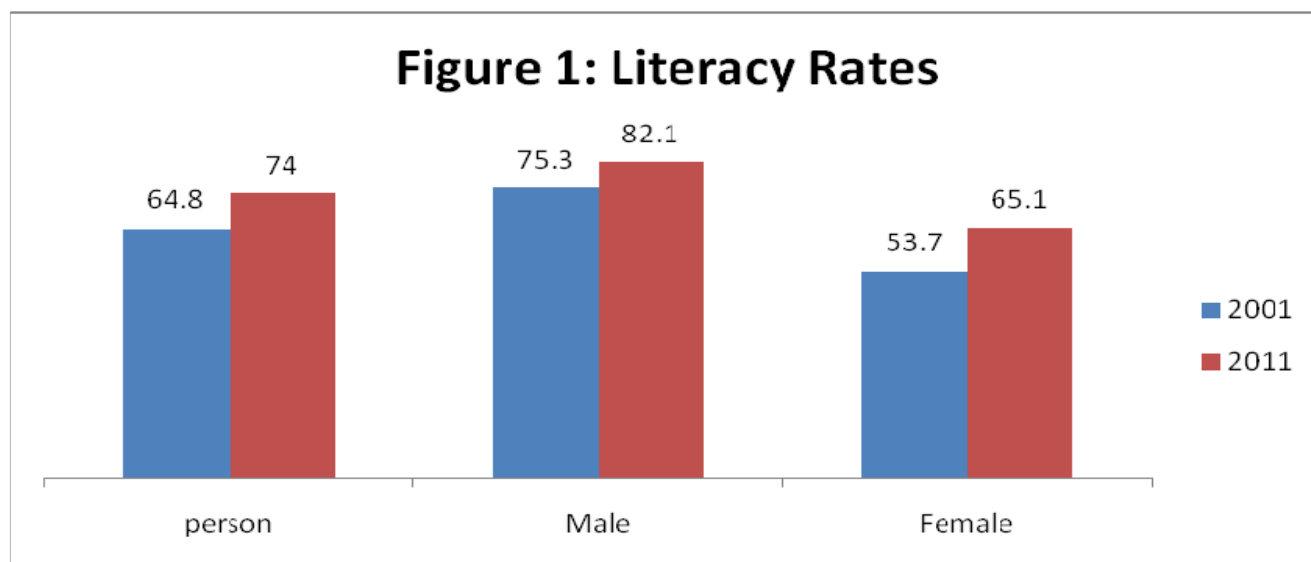
Continuing education programme within the Saakshar Bharat Mission:

The Saakshar Bharat mission (new variant of National Literacy Mission) launched in 2008 seeks to enable the neo-literate adults to continue their learning beyond basic literacy and acquire equivalency to formal education system; impart to non- and neo-literates relevant vocational skills to improve their earning and living conditions; and promote a learning society by providing opportunities to neo-literate adults for continuing education. The Basic Education Programme is designed to achieve the goal of enabling the neo-literates to continue their learning beyond basic literacy and acquire basic education equivalent to 10 years of education in formal education system or through the open learning system. The National Literacy Mission Authority has undertaken the task of developing competency levels for flexible basic education at Level I, Level II and Level III, which roughly are equivalent to five, eight and ten years of formal schooling. The vocational education (skill development) Programme seeks to equip non- and

neo-literate adults with vocational skills to improve their living and earning conditions. Under the programme, skill development training (relating to different vocations like

confectionery and food processing, carpentry, plumbing, tailoring and embroidery, toy making, artificial jewellery, beautycare etc.) is imparted to those having rudimentary level of education. The main purpose of the Continuing Education Programme (CEP) is to provide opportunities to neo-literates and other targeted beneficiaries for life-long learning. Under the programme an Adult Education Centre (AEC) has been set up in each Gram Panchayat in the districts covered by the programme. The programme envisages the provision of facility for a library and reading room which are expected to be gradually equipped with ICT devices. The CEP involves short-term thematic case on health awareness/care, food and nutrition, water conservation/drinking water/sanitation/population/development/education issues, AIDS/STD, consumer awareness/rights, legal literacy and other topics of interest and relevance to the lives of the learners; group discussion; vocational and skill development; sports, recreation and cultural activities; information and awareness, and technology demonstration.

Scheme of assistance to voluntary agencies for adult education and skill development: The main objective of the scheme of assistance to voluntary agencies for adult education and skill development is to secure involvement of the voluntary sector in the effort of the Government to promote functional literacy, skill development and continuing education among adults. The scheme comprises three components: State Resource Centres (SRCs), Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSSs) and assistance to voluntary agencies. The SRC provides academic and technical resource support to adult and continuing education programme through the development and production of materials and training modules. The SRCs provide technical and academic support to State Literacy Mission Authorities in the implementation of Saakshar Bharat Mission. The Jan Shikshan Sansthan provide vocational training to non-literates, neo-literates as well as school dropouts by identifying such skills as would have a market in the region of their establishment. Skill development training is being imparted in more than 350 vocational courses including cutting and tailoring, beauty culture and health care, fashion design, electrical and electronics, automobile repair, soft toys making, agriculture and allied courses, cottage industry courses, handicrafts, bakery and confectionery, textile technology, leather technology etc.. A total of 250 Jan Shikshan Sansthan were functional during the year 2013-14.

Increase in literacy between 2001-2011 at National level:

Source: MHRD Annual Report 2011-12

Significantly, there has been a significant jump in the female literacy, from 53.67 per cent (2001) to 65.46 percent (2011) in comparison to the male literacy of 75.26 per cent to 82.14 per cent during the same period. Hence, female literacy increased at a faster of 11.79 per cent than that of males with 6.88 per cent. The gap of 21.59 percentage points reported between male and female literacy rates in 2001 census has been reduced to 16.68 percentage points in 2011. All this indicates that the gender gap is shrinking in the country, which is a positive sign. However, at state level there are large variations in the gender gap and states like Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand have reported of gap of 20 percentage points between male and female literacy rates. The literacy rates

among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have increased, but the literacy rate among Muslims is a cause of concern. The government has been making every effort to reduce the disparities through focus on backward areas and groups of population.

Rural/Urban differentials in youth literacy rates continue to persist. The rural/urban differentials are higher for females (12 percentage points) than for males (3.8 percentage points)

Regional differentials in youth literacy rates: Despite an impressive decadal increase of 10.1 percentage points in youth literacy rate, there are wide regional differentials in literacy

rate. The youth literacy rates ranged between 99 percent in Kerala and 72.3 per cent in Bihar, the difference being 26.7 percentage points. Seventeen States and Union Territories achieved a youth literacy rate of 90 per cent and above.

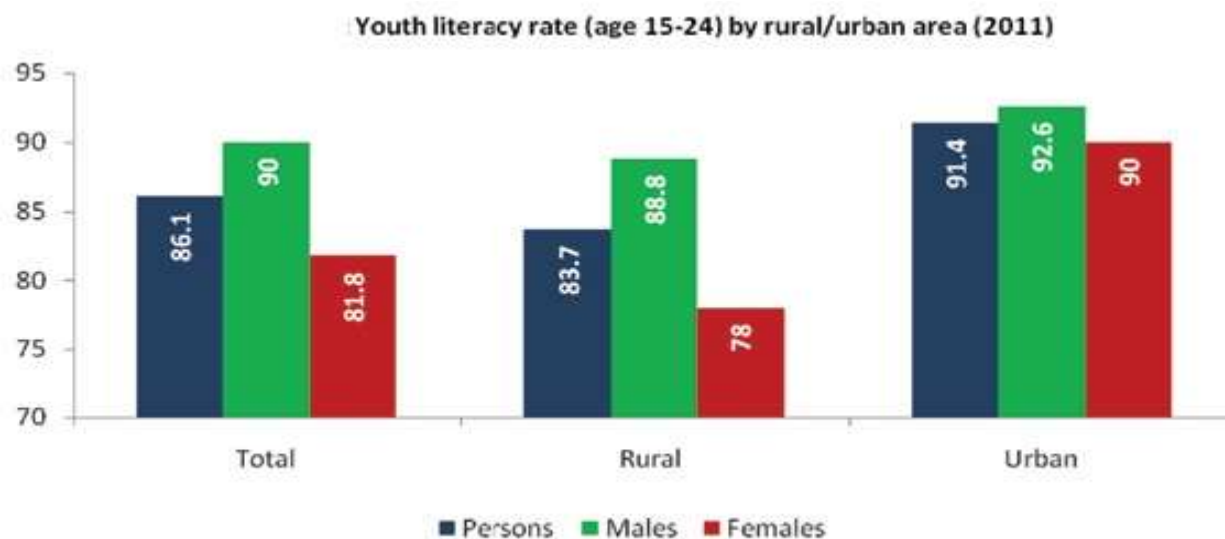


Figure 2: Youth literacy rate

The youth literacy rate for males ranged between 99 per cent in Kerala and 79.6 per cent in Bihar, while the youth literacy rate for females ranged between 99 per cent in Kerala and 63.7 per cent in Bihar, the difference being 35.3 percentage points. The youth literacy rate for females ranged between 99 per cent in Kerala and 63.7 per cent in Bihar, the difference being 35.3 percentage points.

Adult Literacy

According to the criteria followed in Censuses in India, a person aged seven years and above with the ability to both read and write, with understanding in any language, is treated as literate. A person, who can only read but cannot write, is not considered 'literate'. People who are blind but can read in Braille have been treated as literates. All children in the age group 0-6 years are treated as illiterate by definition even if the child has been going to a school and has picked up reading and writing skills. In the Censuses prior to 1991, children below five years of age were treated as illiterates and population aged 5 and above was classified as 'literate' or 'illiterate'. Since the ability to read and write is not developed until one has time to develop these skills, in 1991 Census, it was decided

that all children in the age group 0-6 years be treated as illiterate by definition and population aged seven and above only be classified as either 'literate' or 'illiterate'. Therefore, for calculating literacy rate, the sub-population group in the age group of 0-6 years is excluded from the total population and only the population aged seven years and above is considered for working out the literacy rate (effective literacy rate). Adult education/literacy programmes in India are designed to extend educational option to those adults who have lost the opportunity of formal education but feel the need for learning and joining different types of education programme, including literacy, basic education, vocational education (skill development), equivalency, physical and emotional development, practical arts, applied science and recreation. In India, the main focus of adult education has been on basic literacy since a large number of the population continues to be illiterate. A series of adult education programmes were implemented since the first Five-Year Plan period, the most prominent of them being the National Literacy Mission (NLM) launched in 1988 following the formulation of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986/1992. The initial target of the NLM was to impart functional literacy to 30 million non-literates by 1990 and additional 50 million by 1995. Since the inception of the NLM in 1988, 127.45 million persons were made literate.

Females constituted 60 per cent of the learners.. About 23 per cent of learners belonged to Scheduled Castes (SC) and 12 per cent of them belonged to Scheduled Tribes (ST). By the end of the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002-07), the NLM had covered 597 districts of the country under Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), 485 districts in Post-Literacy Phase (PLP) and 328 districts under Continuing Education Programme (CEP). Under the Continuing Education Programme 197,612 Continuing Education Centres (CECs) and 20,939 nodal CECs were set up in 328 districts. A total of 26 State Resource Centres were set up to extend pedagogical support to literacy programmes in the respective States, and 221 Jan Shikshan Sansthan were established to impart skill development training. The programmes under the NLM had generated increasing demand for primary education. Despite significant accomplishments, illiteracy continued to be a concern at the beginning of the XIth Five-Year Plan period (2007-2012). According to 2001

Census there were 304 million illiterates in the country, with 100 million in the age group 15-35 years and 160 million in the 35+ age group. Gender and regional disparities also continue to persist. Large gender gap in literacy rate remained a major concern. The National Literacy Mission (NLM) was, therefore, recast with a renewed focus on female literacy and the *Saakshar Bharat* (Literate India) Mission was launched on the International Literacy Day, 8 September 2009 as India's National Literacy Mission. The Mission is designed to impart functional literacy to 70 million adults (60 million females) in the age group of 15 years and above in districts in rural areas that had adult female literacy of 50 per cent or below in 2001. Besides, 35 districts affected by left wing extremism are also being covered under the Mission. According to these criteria, 410 districts qualify for coverage under the Mission. The programmes offered under Saakshar Bharat include Functional Literacy programme, covering 70 million non-literate adults (60 million women), Basic Education Programme for 1.5 million adults, Vocational Skill Development Programme for 1.5 million persons and Continuing Education Programme. Auxiliary target of the Mission is to cover 1.5 million adults under basic education programme and an equal number under vocational skill development programme.

Literacy rate among population aged 7 years and above

India has made considerable progress in improving literacy rate among population aged 7 years and above during the period 2001-2011. One of the main targets relating to literacy in the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-2012) was achieving 80 per cent literacy rate by the year 2012. Literacy rate for population aged 7 years and more grew by 8.15 percentage points from 2001 to 2011. Male literacy grew by 5.63 percentage points while female literacy grew by 10.97 percentage points

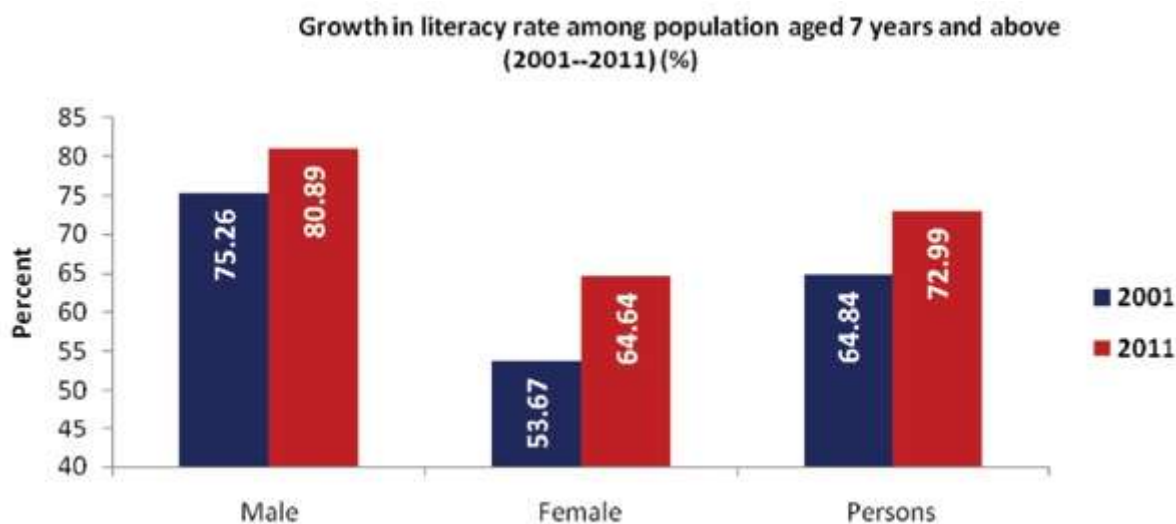


Figure 3: Growth in literacy rate

Number of persons aged 7 years and above made literate: A total of 202.75 million persons (Male:98.11 million; Female: 104.64 million) age 7 years and more were made literates during the period 2001-2011. One of the positive trends during the period 2001-2011 was that out of a total of 202.75 million literates added during the decade, females (104.64 million) outnumbered males (98.11 million).

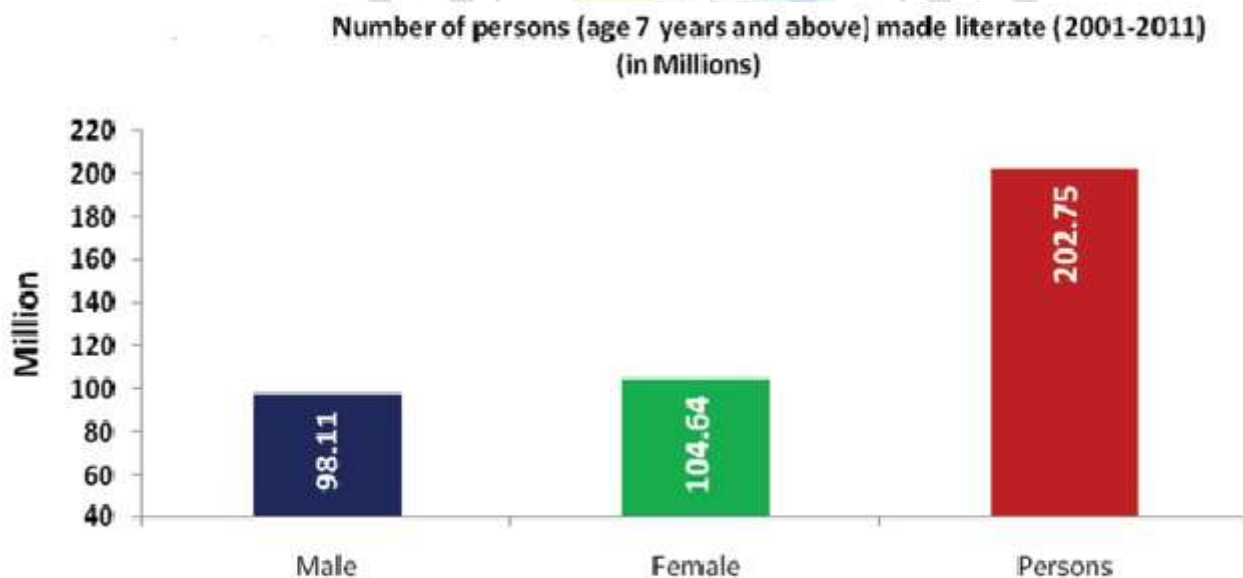


Figure 4: Number of persons made literate

Decrease in the number of non-literates: Despite growth in population, the number of nonliterate rates in the country decreased by 21.51 million (from 304.10 million to 282.59 million) during the period 2001-2011. The number of male non-literates decreased by 7.91 million.

million (from 110.62 million to 102.71 million) during this period while the number of female non-literates decreased by 13.59 million (from 193.48 million to 179.89 million) during the period 2001-2011

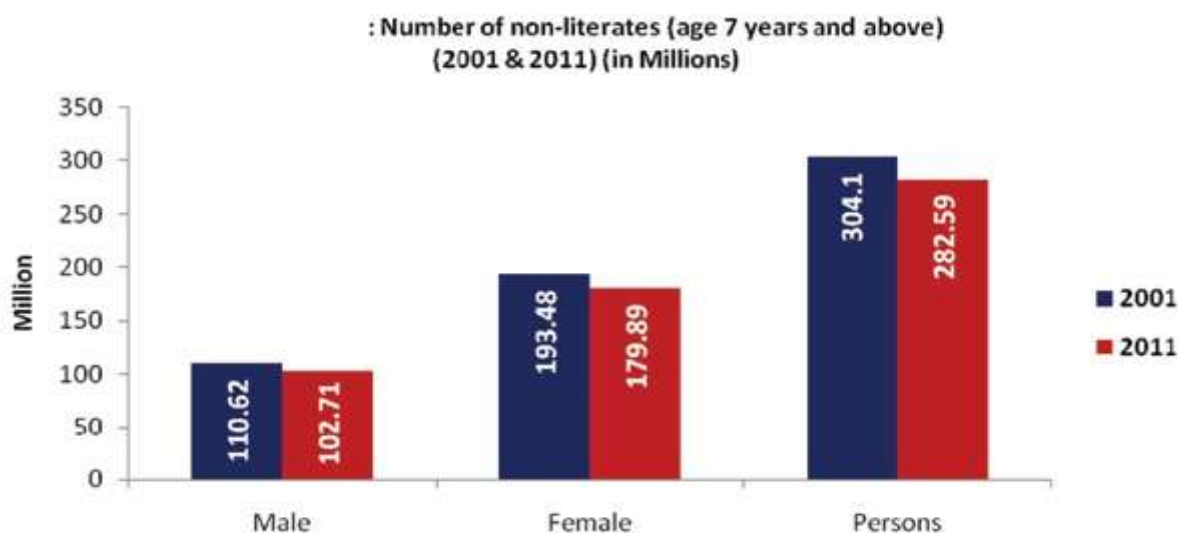


Figure 5: Number of non- literates

Female literacy growth rate by rural and urban areas (2001-2011): Female literacy rate (All areas) grew by 10.97 percentage points (from 53.67 per cent in 2001 to 64.64 per cent in 2011) from 2001 to 2011. Female literacy rate (rural areas) grew by 11.8 percentage points (from 46.13 per cent in 2001 to 57.93 per cent in 2011) from 2001 to 2011. Female literacy rate (Urban areas) grew by 6.25 percentage points (from 72.86 per cent in 2001 to 79.11 per cent in 2011) from 2001 to 2011

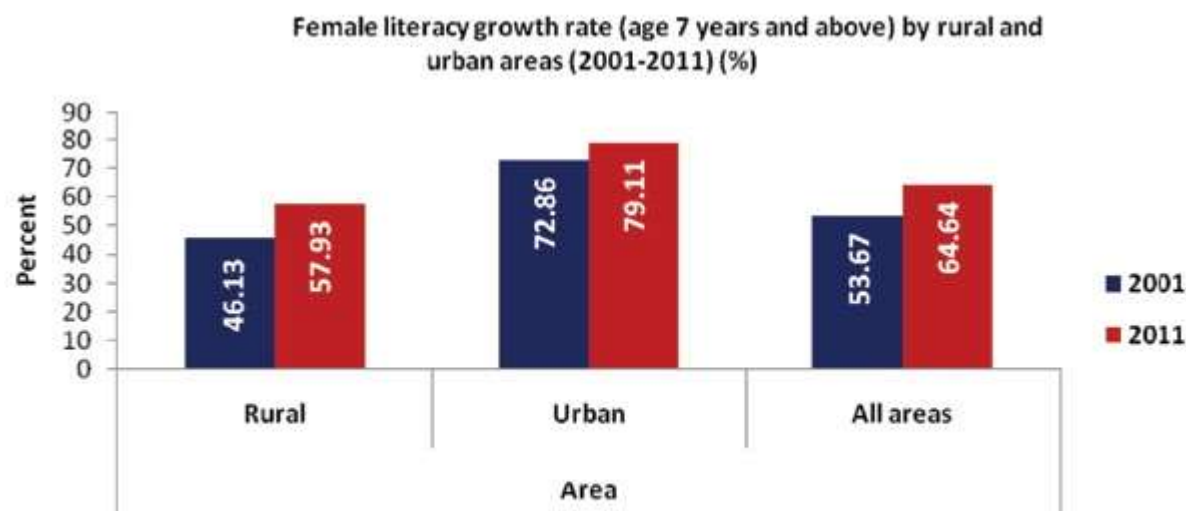


Figure 6: Female literacy growth rate

Improvement in gender parity in literacy rates: The number of female literates per 100 male literates has gone up from 71 to 80 during the period 2001-2011

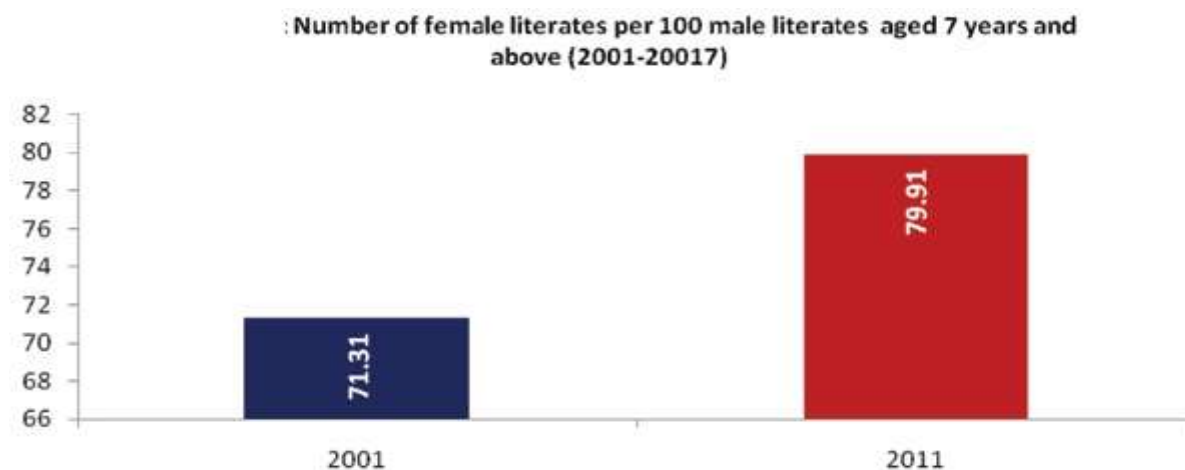


Figure 7: Number of female literates per 100 male literates

Differentials in male and female literacy rates among population aged 7 years and above:

Between 1991 and 2001, literacy rates for males, aged seven years and above, increased from 64.13 per cent to 75.26 per cent, the decadal increase in literacy rate being 11.2 percentage points. The literacy rates for males, aged seven years and above, further increased from 75.26 per cent in 2001 to 80.89 per cent in 2011, the decadal increase in literacy rate being 5.63 percentage points. Thus, approximately four out of every five males in the country were literate in 2011. The literacy rate for females, aged seven years and above, increased from 39.3 per cent in 1991 to 53.7 per cent in 2001 and to 64.6 per cent in 2011. The decadal increase in literacy rate during 1991-2001 was 14.4 percentage points while the decadal increase in literacy rate during 2001-2011 was about 11 per cent. Thus, approximately two out of every three females in the country were literate in 2011.

Adult literacy rate (age 15 years and above)

During the period 2001 to 2011, the adult literacy rate (age 15 years and above) increased by 8.3 percentage points (from 61 per cent in 2001 to 69.3 per cent in 2011). The adult literacy rate for males increased by 5.4 percentage points (from 73.4 per cent to 78.8) during this period while the adult literacy rate for females increased by 11.5 percentage points (from 47.8 per cent in 2001 to 59.3 per cent in 2011).

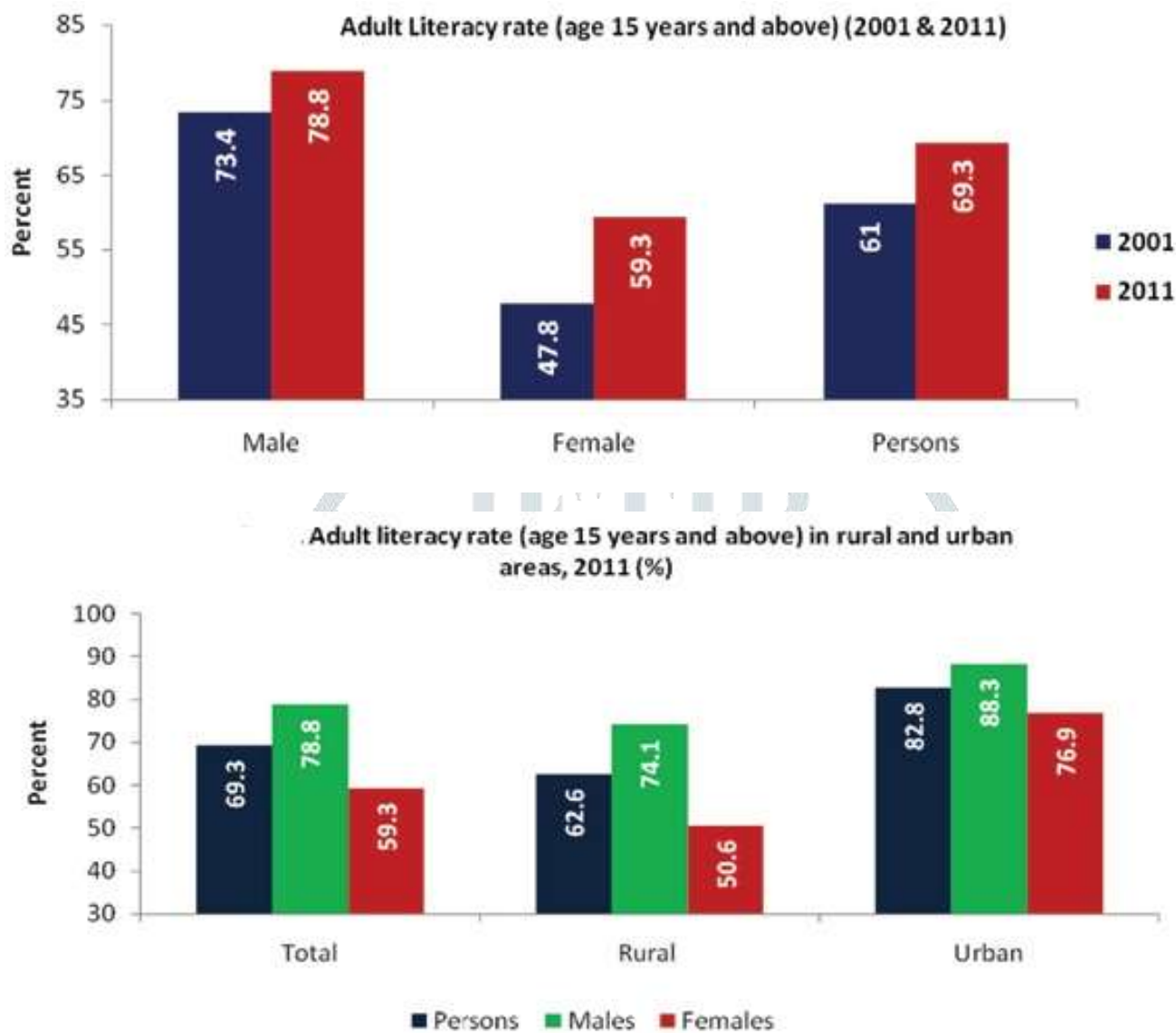


Figure 8: Adult Literacy Rate

During the year 2011, the adult literacy rate (age 15 years and above) in rural areas was 62.6 percent compared to 82.8 percent in urban areas, the difference being 20.2 percentage points. The adult literacy rate for males in rural areas was 74.1 percent compared to 88.3 percent in urban areas, the difference being 14.2 percentage points. The adult literacy rate for females in rural areas was only 50.6 percent compared to 76.9 percent in urban areas, the difference being 26.3 percentage points. This indicates that almost 50 percent of females, aged 15 years and above, remain non-literate.

Gender and regional disparities in adult literacy rates: Despite an impressive increase in literacy rate among population aged 15 years and above during the period 2001-2011, wide gender and regional disparities in adult literacy levels persist. Nationally the gender gap was 19.5 percentage points, 9.5 per cent more than the targeted 10 per cent. Only seven States/UTs had achieved the target of reducing gender gap in adult literacy rates to less than 10 percentage points. These States/UTs include Andaman & Nicobar Islands (9.5 percentage points), Goa (9.1 percentage points), Kerala (4.6 percentage points), Lakshadweep (9.1 percentage points), Meghalaya (5.1 percentage points), Mizoram (4.8 percentage points), and Nagaland (8.4 percentage points).

The literacy rate for population, aged 15 years and above, during the year 2011 ranged between 93.5 per cent in Kerala and 55.4 per cent in Bihar, the difference being about 38.1 percentage points. Only 12 States and Union Territories achieved a literacy rate of 80 per cent and above. These States/UTs are Kerala (93.5 per cent), Lakshadweep (91.6 per cent), Mizoram (91.3 per cent), Goa (87.7 per cent), Goa (87.7 per cent), Daman & Diu (86.1 per cent), Tripura (85.8 per cent), Andaman & Nicobar Islands (85 per cent), NCT of Delhi (84.8 per cent), Chandigarh (84.8 per cent), Puducherry (84.4 per cent),

Himachal Pradesh (80.4 per cent) and Maharashtra (80.2 per cent) During the year 2011, the literacy rate for males aged 15 years and above ranged between 96 per cent in the Union Territory of Lakshadweep and 67.5 per cent in the State of Bihar. Twenty one States and Union Territories achieved a male literacy rate of 80 per cent or more.

During the year 2011, the literacy rate for females aged 15 years and above ranged between 91.3 per cent in Kerala and 42.2 per cent in Bihar, the difference being 49.1 percentage points. Only four States and one Union Territory have achieved a female literacy rate of 80 per cent or more. Gender gap in adult literacy rates ranged between 4.6 percentage points in Kerala and 32.5 percentage points in Rajasthan

CONCLUSION

Given the structural inequalities and exclusionary and discriminatory character of Indian society, the State has developed remedies against caste and ethnicity-based exclusion and discrimination and for empowerment of excluded groups, the SC/STs, which constitute about one-fifth of India's total population. The safeguards against exclusion and discrimination in the forms of

legal measures and affirmative action's cover public employment, public education and legislative seats and also other government amenities like public housing, etc. However, affirmative action policy in India is conned to the government sector only and the vast private sector is excluded from its jurisdiction. The Government has used some sort of an Informal affirmative action policy in the private sector.

Over time, there has been considerable improvement in the share of SC/ST reservation and representation in government employment and educational institutions. The reservation in legislative bodies has also ensured the SC /STs some space in the executive and decision making process. The impact of formal reservation policy in government sector and informal affirmative action policy in private sector has led to some improvement in the human development of SC /STs. However, as compared to non-SC / ST population of the country, the rate of improvement has been rather slow. And as result, despite positive improvements, the disparities in human development between SC and ST sand non-SC / ST continue even today.

During the course of the implementation of reservation policy, some problems have become apparent. Although the Government has taken steps to improve the implementation of reservation policy, there has been resistance to the policy in indirect forms and as result, its success is uneven across sectors and department. Reservations is close to the population mark of SC / STs in lower categories of jobs, but lower than the population mark in case of high grade positions and technical education institutions. Owing to the indirect nature of resistance to implementation of reservation policy, the extension and the percolation of the reservation policy to several government sectors has been slow.

The other issue that recently acquired prominence is the demand made by SC / ST groups to extend the affirmative action policy of the Government to the private sector employment and educational institutions and other private sector spheres as well; this is under active consideration by the Government of India.

Education, thus for the weaker sections of the society needs to become the panacea and an inclusive growth strategy for their economic and social up-liftmen