

Rural Literacy in India: A Geographical Analysis

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Abstract

The study examines the trend of literacy and gap between male-female after independence. The study also analysis the spatial pattern of literacy as well as gender disparity. The study reveals that after independence; literacy rate in India has increased five and half times. Female literacy is remaining in miserable condition and 42.07 per cent females are found illiterate. Gap between male-female is decreasing slowly after 1981 census yet it is high (19.22 per cent). Large part of Jammu & Kashmir, south Punjab, some districts of Haryana, northern part of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, almost part of Rajasthan, north part of Gujarat, western district of Madhya Pradesh,, northern and southern districts of Odisha and Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, north-east part of Karnataka as well as border area of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu contain low literacy rate.

Keywords: Trend and Gender Gap, Spatial Pattern

Introduction

According to Indian census, literacy is defined as the ability of people to read and write a simple message in any language with some understanding. It is not mandatory that to be treated as a literate, a person should have received any formal education or acquired any minimum educational standard. Literacy status can be acquired through adult literacy classes or by attending any non-formal education system. Persons who are unfortunately blind and read in Braille are also treated as literates. From 1991 census, children below seven years are ignored when working out literacy rate in the country and the population aged seven years and above only would be classified as literate or illiterate. The proportion of literate persons in a population is known as literacy level and the process of dissemination of literacy among the people in a society known as literacy transition. Literacy is related to all type of development which prepares the individual for full participation in a rapidly changing social and economic order.

An overall progress in literacy is necessary in a country; equally important is its distributional spread in all its areas – towns and villages, social classes and the two sexes (Gosal, 1979) but rural India is suffering with low literacy rate as well as high gender disparity.

Study Area

It is an all India Study. India is located in the northern and eastern hemispheres. It is extended from 6° 45' north to 37° 6' north latitudes and 68° 7' east to 97° 25' east longitudes. It has 28 states, 7 union territories and

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640 districts at the time of census enumeration (2011) however; rural population is living in 631 districts of country.

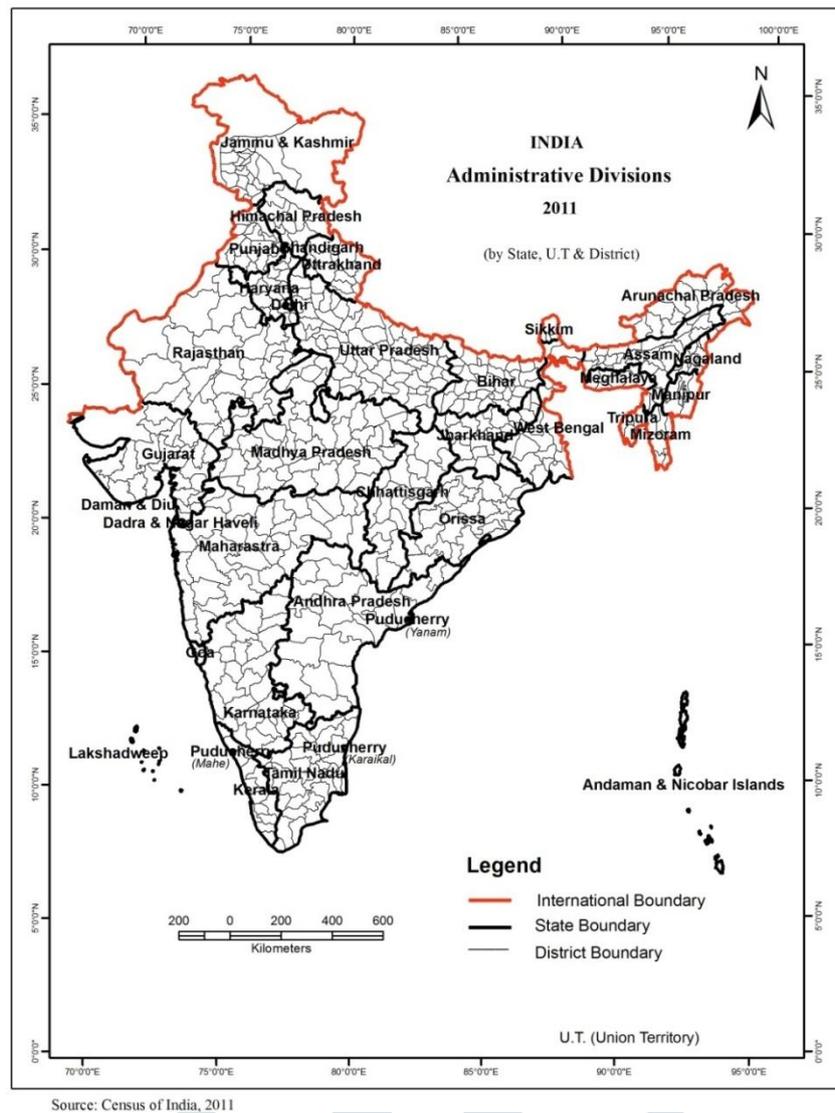


Figure 1

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the trend of literacy (1951-2011) at the level of total, male and female as well as gap between male-female literacy.
- To represent spatial pattern of literacy at district level.
- To identify disparity between male-female literacy at district level.

Data and Methodology

In this study, data have collected from Primary Census Abstract published by office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India as well as Selected Educational Statistics, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

Methodology is central to any research work which helps in scientific description and explanations of reality. Absolute figures are converted into percentages as well as ratios and these percentages and ratios are processed for necessary cartographic representations and interpretation. Requisite maps have been drawn with the help of Arc GIS software. Sopher's Disparity Index (1980) modified by Kundu and Rao (1985) as given below, has been used to compute gender disparity in literacy at district level.

$$Ds = \text{Log}(x_2/x_1) + \text{Log}(200-x_1/200-x_2)$$

Here,

D_s = Gender Disparity index

X_2 = Male Literacy Rate

X_1 = Female Literacy Rate

When we see the status of illiterates; we found that there were 279.82 million illiterates in rural area of country at the time of 1991 census enumeration which was 85.10 per cent share of total illiterates. Rural illiterates decreased 50.19 million after 1991 and recorded 229.63 million in 2011 census which is 81.23 per cent of total illiterates.

Rural literacy rate has increased slowly. According to 1951 census; it was only 12.10 per cent which increased up to 36.01 per cent in 1981 and now in 2011 census; it has recorded 67.77 per cent.

Table 1

Rural Literacy in India						
Year	Total Literacy Rate	Male Literacy Rate	Female Literacy Rate	Gap between Male-Female Literacy Rate	Ratio of Male-Female Literacy Rate	Score of Gender Disparity Index
1951	12.10	19.02	4.87	14.15	3.91 : 1	0.62
1961	22.50	34.30	10.10	24.20	3.40 : 1	0.59
1971	27.89	39.55	15.52	24.03	2.55 : 1	0.47
1981	36.01	49.59	21.70	27.89	2.29 : 1	0.43
1991	44.69	57.87	30.62	27.25	1.89 : 1	0.35
2001	58.74	70.70	46.13	24.57	1.53 : 1	0.26
2011	67.77	77.15	57.93	19.22	1.33 : 1	0.19

Source: Adopted and computed from:

- Selected Educational Statistics (1999-2000), Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.
- Primary Census Abstract, Census of India, 2001.
- Primary Census Abstract, Census of India, 2011.

Note: Literacy rates for 1951 census to 1971 census relate to population aged five year and above while the rates for the 1981 census to 2011 census, relate to the population aged seven year and above.

When we examine state wise; it is found highest in Kerala (92.98 per cent) followed by Goa (86.65 per cent), Tripura (84.90 per cent), Mizoram (84.10 per cent) and Himachal Pradesh (81.85 per cent). Dadra & Nagar Haveli contains low literacy rate (64.12 per cent) while rest union territories contain literacy rate above 80 per cent. Lowest literacy rate is found in Bihar (59.78 per cent) followed by Arunachal Pradesh (59.94 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (60.45 per cent), Jharkhand (61.11 per cent) and Rajasthan (61.44 per cent).

Table 2

Rural Literacy Rate (2011)				
(in per cent)				
State/Union Territory	Persons	Males	Females	Gender Gap
Kerala	92.98	95.35	90.81	4.54
Goa	86.65	91.71	81.63	10.08
Tripura	84.9	90.07	79.49	10.58
Mizoram	84.1	88.16	79.81	8.34
Himachal Pradesh	81.85	89.05	74.62	14.43
Sikkim	78.95	84.62	72.45	12.17
Maharashtra	77.01	85.15	68.54	16.61
Uttarakhand	76.31	86.62	66.18	20.44
Nagaland	75.35	78.96	71.51	7.45
Tamil Nadu	73.54	82.04	65.05	16.99
Manipur	73.4	80.29	66.34	13.95
West Bengal	72.13	78.44	65.51	12.94
Gujarat	71.71	81.61	61.36	20.25
Punjab	71.42	76.62	65.74	10.88
Haryana	71.42	81.55	60.02	21.54
Odisha	70.22	79.65	60.74	18.91
Meghalaya	69.92	71.46	68.37	3.08
Assam	69.34	75.4	63.03	12.36
Karnataka	68.73	77.61	59.71	17.91
Chhattisgarh	65.99	76.98	55.06	21.92
Uttar Pradesh	65.46	76.33	53.65	22.67
Madhya Pradesh	63.94	74.74	52.43	22.31
Jammu & Kashmir	63.18	73.76	51.64	22.13
Rajasthan	61.44	76.16	45.8	30.37
Jharkhand	61.11	72.86	48.91	23.95
Andhra Pradesh	60.45	69.38	51.54	17.84
Arunachal Pradesh	59.94	67.44	52.04	15.4
Bihar	59.78	69.67	49	20.67
Union Territories				
Lakshadweep	91.58	94.53	88.5	6.04
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	84.5	88.53	79.85	8.67

NCT of Delhi	81.86	89.37	73.1	16.27
Daman & Diu	81.36	89.43	71.93	17.5
Chandigarh	80.75	85.77	73.17	12.6
Puducherry	80.1	87.44	73.02	14.42
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	64.12	76.4	49.58	26.81
India	67.77	77.15	57.93	19.22

Source: Calculated from-
Primary Census Abstract, Census of India, 2011.

Note: Population in age group 0-6 is ignored.



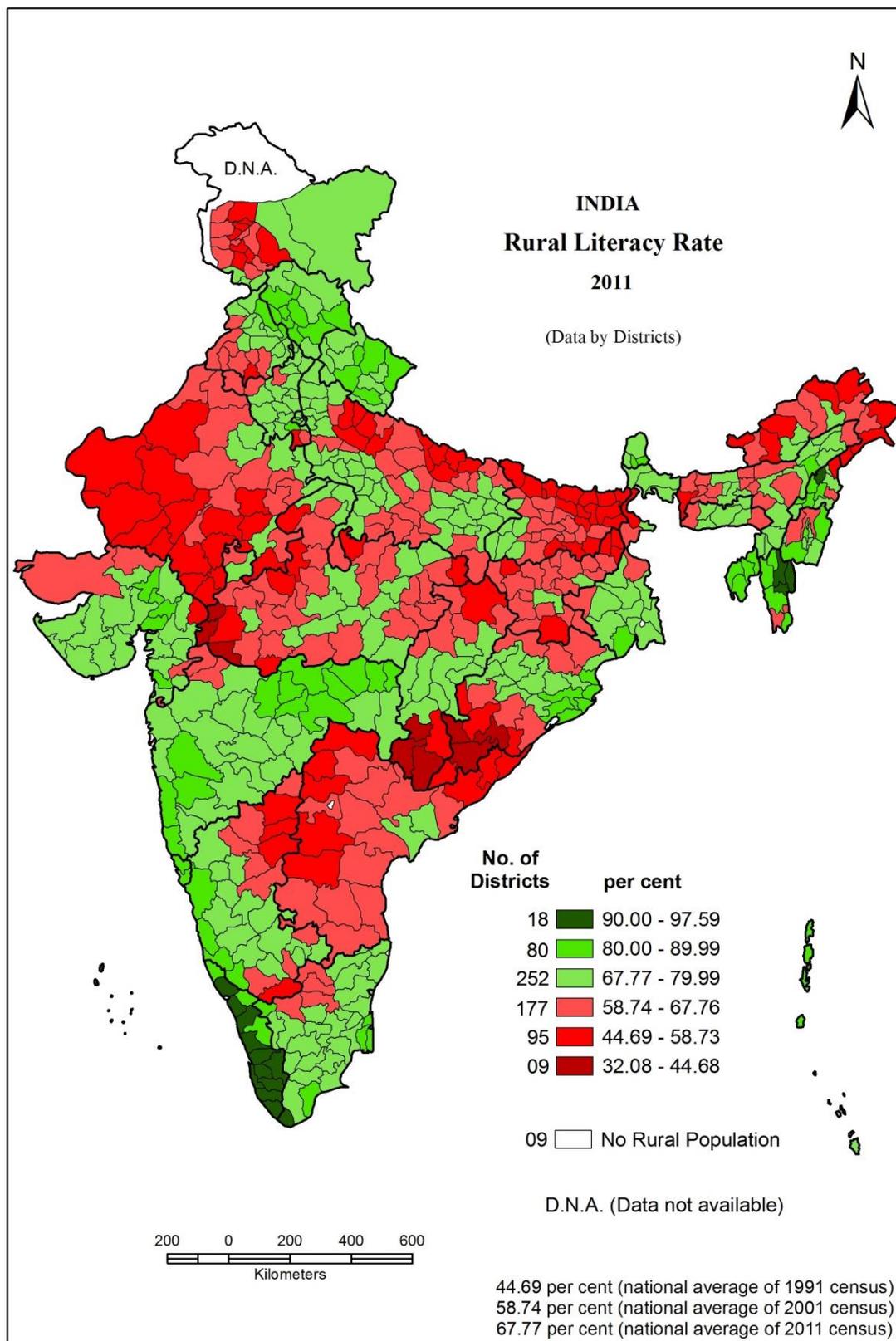


Figure 2

Remarkable increase has recorded by some states and union territories during last decade such as Bihar (15.86 per cent) followed by Jharkhand (15.37 per cent), Tripura (15.18 per cent), Dadra & Nagar Haveli (14.78 per cent), Meghalaya (13.63 per cent), Jammu & Kashmir (13.40 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (12.93 per

cent), Nagaland (12.55 per cent), Sikkim (12.12 per cent) and Arunachal Pradesh (12.11 per cent) while at national level it is remaining 9.02 per cent during same decade.

When we analysis district level; literacy rate varies from 32.08 per cent in Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh to 97.59 per cent in Serchhip district of Mizoram. Figure 2 shows that districts which are located in western, southern and north-eastern part of country as well as socio-economically developed small states such as Himachal Pradesh, Uttrakhand and Haryana contain high literacy rate due to coastal location, high degree of urbanization, more diversified economy, considerable proportion of Christian population, early start of modern education under state patronage, greater allocation of funds for the development of education. On the other hand; low literacy rates are found in Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh due to subsistence economy, low role of private sector, history of native rule, prejudice against females, high proportion of peoples which are backward (Muslim, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes). However; intra-state variation also exists in these states.

Rural Male Literacy Rate

Rural male literacy rate in India has increased four times after 1951 census. According to 1951 census; it was only 19.02 per cent which increased up to 49.59 per cent in 1981 and now in 2011 census; it has recorded 77.15 per cent.

When we examine state wise; lowest literacy rate is found in Arunachal Pradesh (67.44 per cent) followed by Andhra Pradesh (69.38 per cent), Bihar (69.67 per cent), Meghalaya (71.46 per cent) and Jharkhand (72.86 per cent) however; remarkable increase is recorded in some states and union territories during last decade such as Bihar (12.57 per cent) followed by Meghalaya (12.22 per cent), Jammu & Kashmir (12.11 per cent), Jharkhand (11.91 per cent), Dadra & Nagar Haveli (11.90 per cent), Tripura (11.66 per cent) and Nagaland (11.38 per cent) while at national level, it is remaining 6.45 per cent during same decade but in Andhra Pradesh, this increase is remaining very low (4.02 per cent) from 65.35 per cent to 69.38 per cent.

Rural Female Literacy Rate

Rural female literacy rate in India is increased slowly. According to 1951 census; it was only 4.87 per cent which increased up to 21.70 per cent in 1981 however; after 1981 census; it is increasing rapidly and now in 2011 census; it has recorded 57.93 per cent.

When we examine state wise; it is found lowest in Rajasthan (45.80 per cent) followed by Jharkhand (48.91 per cent), Bihar (49 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (51.54 per cent) and Jammu & Kashmir (51.64 per cent).

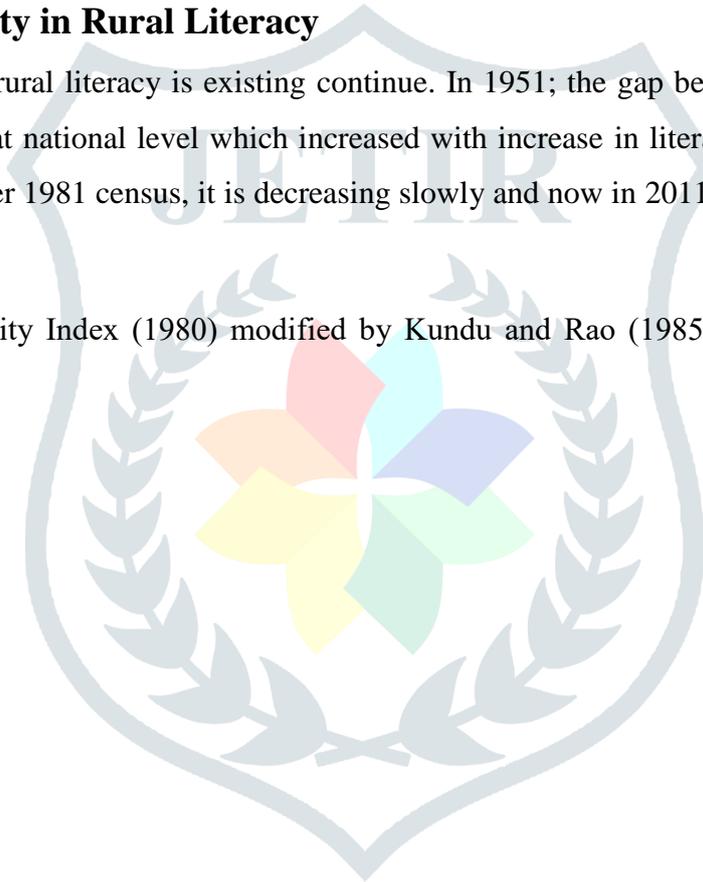
Dadra & Nagar Haveli contains only 49.58 per cent literacy rate while rest union territories contain literacy rate above 71 per cent.

The remarkable increase has recorded by some states and union territories during last decade such as Bihar (19.39 per cent) followed by Jharkhand (19.01 per cent), Tripura (18.99 per cent), Dadra & Nagar Haveli (18.75 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (16.75 per cent), Meghalaya (15.13 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (15.09 per cent), Jammu & Kashmir (14.90 per cent), Sikkim (14.43 per cent) and Odisha (14.09 per cent) while at national level, it is remaining 11.79 per cent during same decade.

Male-Female Disparity in Rural Literacy

Male-female disparity in rural literacy is existing continue. In 1951; the gap between male-female literacy rates was 14.15 per cent at national level which increased with increase in literacy and recorded 27.89 per cent in 1981 however; after 1981 census, it is decreasing slowly and now in 2011 census, it is 19.22 per cent which is high.

Score of Sopher's Disparity Index (1980) modified by Kundu and Rao (1985) is found 0.19 at national level.



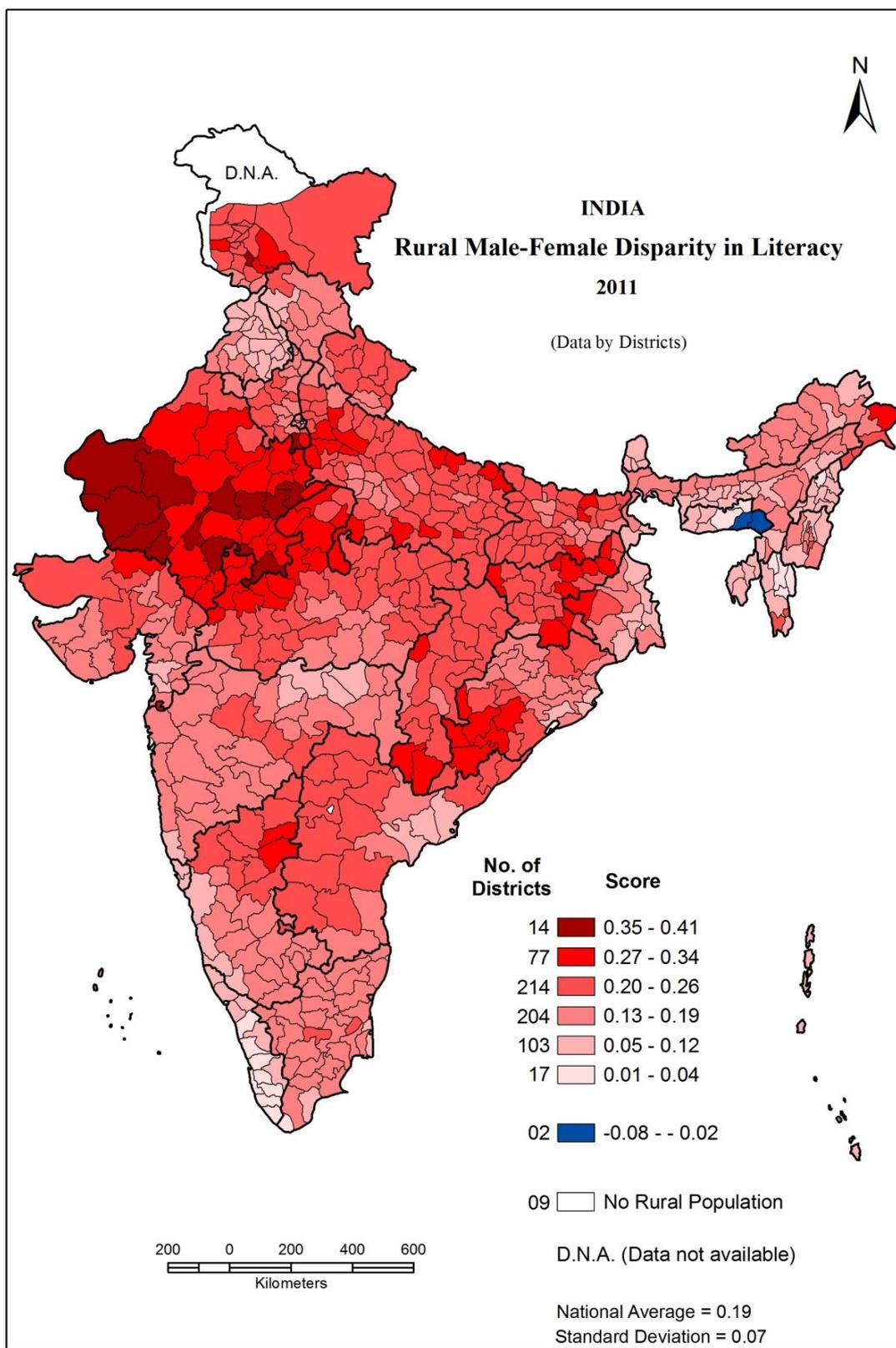


Figure 3

When we analysis district level; the highest score of disparity index is found in Mewat district (0.41) of Haryana followed by Jaisalmer, Tonk, Sawai Madhopur and Sirohi (0.39) as well as Ajmer and Jalor (0.38) districts of Rajasthan. On the other hand; Jaintia Hills (-0.08) as well as East Khasi Hills (-0.02) districts of Meghalaya contain negative score of disparity index which show high female literacy than male.

Figure 3 shows that Regional variation also exists. Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, south Haryana, entire Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, almost part of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, southern part of Odisha, large area of Andhra Pradesh and north-east part of Karnataka contain high gender disparity.

Conclusion

After independence; rural literacy rate in India has increased five and half times. Male literacy has risen rapidly than female while female literacy is remaining in miserable condition and 42.07 per cent females are illiterate. Gap between male-female is increased with increase in literacy up to 1991 census however; after this it is decreasing slowly yet it is high (19.22 per cent) and shows low status of female in society.

Large part of Jammu & Kashmir, south Punjab, some districts of Haryana, northern part of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, almost part of Rajasthan, north part of Gujarat, western district of Madhya Pradesh, northern and southern districts of Odisha and Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, north-east part of Karnataka as well as border area of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu contain low literacy rate. Patriarchal society and low status of female, teaching other than mother tongue, limited rural-urban interaction, minor role of private sector, out migration of literate persons from these areas, engagement the school age children in economic activities, little functional value of education for deprived section of society, unequal distribution of resources, poverty, low health condition, backward agriculture system, low level of infrastructure facilities, low level of urbanization and industrialization, terror and naxalite activities are the major causes of low literacy in these areas.

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