

Literacy among Scheduled Caste Population of Patna District

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Abstract

Education has been treated as a fundamental human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of the Human rights and the International Human Rights Covenants, achieving the rights for Basic education particularly for the underprivileged sections of the society of these scheduled caste community which is not only the obligation of the state but the biggest moral challenges of our times. Literacy is the basic indicator of the level of development achieved by a society. Literacy growth is generally associated with important traits of modern civilization. The present study is significant as literacy levels serve as indicators of the knowledge and skills of a population. The basic objective of the present study is to find out the literacy level of the scheduled caste population of Patna based on gender and comparison with the literacy rate of the general population. The gender differences in literacy levels still exist in all social classes. The result of the study reveals that the literacy rate of females among Scheduled castes has been growing faster but not proportionally to the general population.

Keywords: Scheduled Caste, Literacy, Education.

Introduction

Traditionally, Indian society is constructed on a caste system with huge inequalities in social, economic, and political domains. The preservation of social and economic inequalities which reinforced the detachment of society laterally on caste lines wherein the livelihood and the status got tagged at the time of birth, dependent on the type of family in which one is born and not by the individual initiatives, ability, educational attainment or skills acquired during their whole life. The strong instrument used to preserve the socio-economic differentials was the separation of work from knowledge and power. The

waged class was denied access to education as it was considered a privilege of a few elite groups.

Literacy growth is generally associated with important traits of modern civilization such as modernization, urbanization, industrialization, communication, and commerce. Literacy creates an important input in the overall development of individuals by enabling them to comprehend their social, political, and cultural betterment and respond to it *appropriately*. The repudiation of education was crucial to prevent them from attaining rights in productive assets, mainly land, which was largely in the hand of upper castes who seldom worked on it. On the other hand, the lower castes being without land and other productive assets were forced to seek employment from the land-owning class and were at their compassion. This manifested itself in the occurrence of bonded labor, whereby the waged class even lost the prime of the workplace. Many of them got tied to their masters because they continued thankfully for generations together. The absence of education and lack of consciousness forced the lower classes to work as manual laborers, many of them working in unclean occupations like foraging, scavenging, etc., from one generation to another. After the independence, this bond of master-slave type was sought to be reformed as the impartiality of opportunity and social justice was adopted as the guiding principles of the Indian Constitution to achieve progress and inclusive development in the society. A few tactics followed to stun the historical malaise are described here. First, elimination of untouchability and discrimination based on caste, creed, and religion. To confirm that these principles are adhered to, constitutional assurances and several legislative provisions have been made. Second, equality of access in education was measured as a central aspect of accomplishing equity and social justice.

The word Scheduled Caste presents fuzziness. In a caste-based society, they designate a category constituting the lower and depressed section of the populace. The term 'Depressed' for the first time was used in the 1931 census for the classification of those who were regarded as outcasts or untouchables and those who suffered from various social disabilities in the matter of education and general advancement. They occupied a peculiar position in our social and political system. Socially these castes occupied the lowest tread of the caste hierarchy and were involved in the most debasing jobs, and to add insult to injury were considered to pollute those whom they happen to touch even innocently. The expression 'Scheduled Caste' was first used by the Simon Commission and embodied in the Government of India Act of 1935. Before 1935 they were known as untouchables of exterior castes or depressed castes. They were in fact, outside the caste (Varna) system. They were external in the sense that they were not allowed to live within the village settlement where people other than this group did live. Naturally, they lived outside the village settlement. Mahatma Gandhi termed this caste 'Harijans'

meaning people of God (Hari means God and Jans means people). They are being deprived socially, economically, and politically for generations. In traditional Indian society, the deprivation of one section of people to another gave rise to social inequality. This persists in our society and economy. The worst victims or sufferers are the scheduled castes also now termed as Dalits. Thus, a special category of castes known as 'scheduled castes' was created by the British Government to divide the Hindu population in pursuance of its 'Divide and Rule' policy. They were neither 'untouchables' whose cause was so assiduously championed by Ambedkar, nor the depressed classes as defined by the Lothian Committee, especially constitute to define and enumerate the depressed classes, solely on the criteria of (a) denial of access to the interior of ordinary Hindu temples and (b) causing pollution by touch or within a certain distance, but "a group of castes, races or tribes which appear to correspond to the classes of persons formerly known as 'depressed classes' as the Majesty in council may specify". Earlier the prevailing idea had been that inclusion in the list of Depressed Classes might affect the social prestige of the castes. The scheduling of castes based on the social, political, economic, and educational level of development removed that stigma so much so that even those castes which only a decade earlier had asked for exclusion from the list 3 of Depressed classes no longer pressed for it, because of the apparent political, economic and educational benefits. From now on, the process of upward mobility of castes either by the 'Sanskritization' process or by the 'Evangelical' process not only got stalled but a reverse process set in, that of inclusion of castes in the list of 'Scheduled Castes' which continues to remain the official designation for untouchables down to the present, though the term was primarily coined to denote those who would enjoy the special electoral arrangements for the 'Depressed Classes' under the 1935 Act.

In an age of information revolution, education is the way of imparting and acquiring knowledge to teaching and learning in the conscious process by which a person learns and applies the learning for his life experiences. Over time, facilitating and providing education has become one of the most vital functions of the state. It is an instrument in the awakening of a person, imparting cultural values, preparing for better practical training, and helping to learn and adjust to the surrounding social and natural environment. For the underprivileged section of the society, like the member of scheduled castes, who were subjected to deprivation of various forms, education seems to be the most important tool of empowerment. Views on education extend from the narrow concept of schooling and skill formation to the broad vision of growth and development of a person in life including mental and spiritual. Education is a continuous learning process through various stages of the development of a person, as an individual or as group adjustment with the society as at large, earning and spending of the income and participation in civic affairs which involves a whole gamut of issues like general welfare,

freedom, appeal to reason and pervading happiness including access and entitlement to equal like of opportunity in imparting education to all but with a form on the development of less privileged so that they are brought on the same platform with the privileged in matters of employment and developing their skills to get suitable employment.

According to the Census data, the percentage of scheduled caste population to the country's total population was 14.82 percent in 1971, 15.75 percent in 1981, 16.48 percent in 1991, 16.20 percent in 2001, and 16.8 percent in 2011. The estimated current population of SC is 20.14 crore. According to the census of India 2011, the literacy rate of India grew 74.04 % from 12 % at the end of British rule in 1947. according to NSO current literacy rate of India is 77.7%. The level is still below the World average literacy rate of 86.7%. Of the total scheduled caste population, more than 90 percent live in rural areas; only less than 10 percent live in urban areas.

Rationale of the Study

Since independence, the Government of India has been provided some constitutional safeguard to the people who are socially, economically, and culturally backward. The objective of such a policy is to benefit the weaker sections of society. This has been administered by the Central and State Governments. It tries to remove the social and religious disabilities of the lower caste. It provides facilities in education, employment, parliament, state legislators, and local bodies, and finally, the policy safeguards the deprived class from all sorts of social injustice and exploitation. Several research studies have been carried out on this section of people by different levels of administrators, different organizations, NGOs, research scholars, social thinkers, academicians, and others. Their main objective was to find out some solution to abolish the gap between scheduled caste and non-scheduled caste and the welfare of the scheduled caste people in Indian society.

The present study is significant as literacy levels serve as indicators of the knowledge and skills of a population. Literacy and other skills achieved through the education by an individual provide fundamental tools for life-long learning. Literacy growth provides opportunities for economic participation and social engagement.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

1. To study the literacy level of the scheduled castes.
2. To find out the literacy level of boys and girls of scheduled castes.
3. To find out the literacy gap of scheduled caste and the general population.

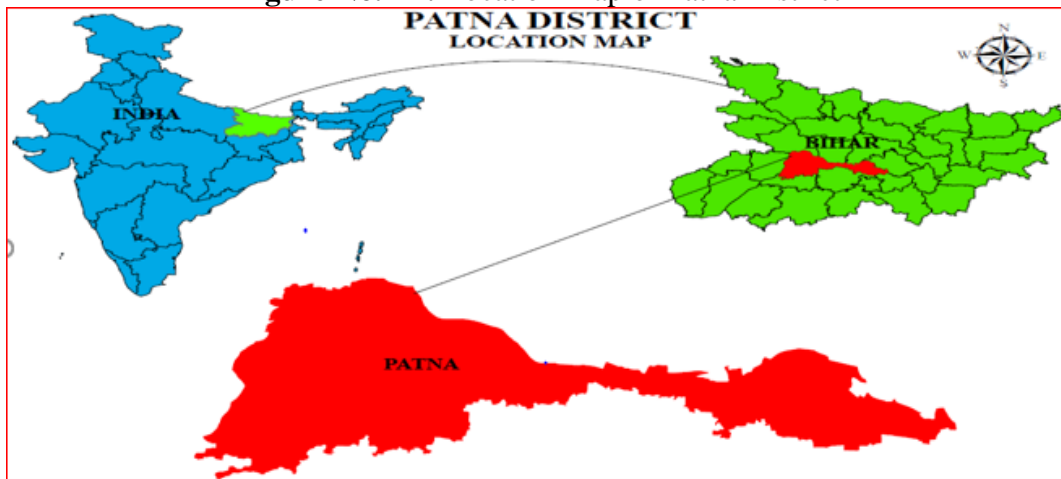
Methodology

The Study is largely based on data collected through documentary sources. The information gathered from various sources i.e., census of India, Dept. of Statistics, Journals, books, etc. All the data regarding population and literacy rate of scheduled caste in comparison to other populations. This data is helpful to find out the literacy growth of the scheduled caste population.

Study Area

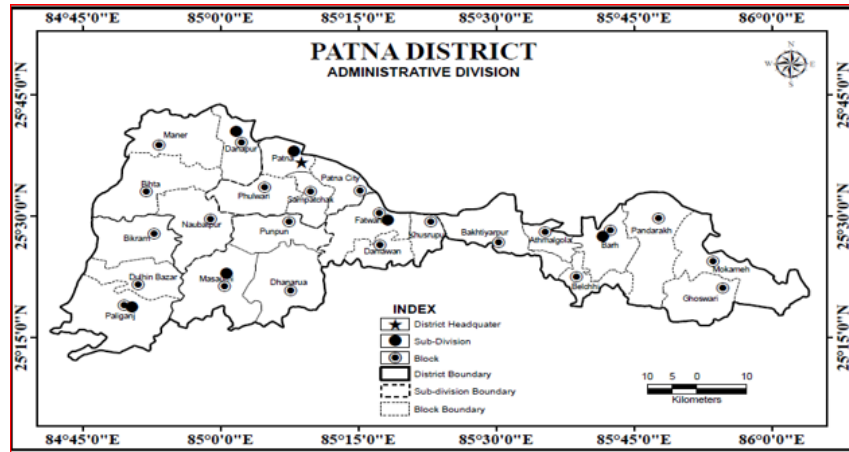
Patna District lies virtually in the heart of South Bihar Plain. The district is bounded in the north by the river Ganga. Lakhisarai and Begusarai district surrounds the district from the east, Jahanabad and Nalanda districts surround it from the south and Bhojpur district from the west. Patna District extends between 25°13' and 25°45'N latitude and 84°43' and 85°44' E longitude. The district consists of 23 blocks.

Figure No. - 1: Location Map of Patna District



Source: Census of India, 2011

Figure No. - 2: Administrative Division of Patna District



Source: Census of India, 2011

After collecting and computing the block-wise population of Scheduled castes of Patna district from different Sources two tables were prepared.

Table- 1 Block -wise Literacy Rate of Schedule Caste (SC) Population in Patna District

Sl. No.	Name of Block	Number of Literates	Literacy Rate
1	Maner	12052	41.6
2	Dinapur-Cum-Khagaul	25,181	53.29
3	Patna	91,838	56.11
4	Sampatchak	7780	36.95
5	Phulwari	21,844	43.09
6	Bihta	18,553	41.75
7	Naubatpur	17015	38.63
8	Bikram	14864	43.03
9	Dulhin Bazar	8622	36.83
10	Paliganj	17,237	36.03
11	Masaurhi	19985	38.66
12	Dhanarua	17148	35.34
13	Punpun	16338	35.7
14	Fatwah	12226	32.04
15	Daniawan	7117	34.09
16	Khusrupur	8714	35.53
17	Bakhtiarpur	14489	35.19
18	Athmalgola	5573	35.83
19	Belchhi	5131	31.06
20	Barh	15899	40.07
21	Pandarak	9987	39.32
22	Ghoswari	5049	37.17
23	Mokameh	15,494	46.12
24	Patna District	Total	388136
			42.15

Source: www.censusindia.gov.in

Table -1 shows the block-wise literacy rate of Scheduled castes of the Patna district. In this table, it is found that the overall literacy rate of the Scheduled Caste population of Patna district is 42.15%. In which, Belchhi block has a minimum literacy rate of schedule population i.e., 31.06 % and maximum literacy rate belong to Patna block i.e., 56.11 % but the gap between minimum and maximum literacy rate is 25.05 % which shows that there is large variation among the block-wise literacy rate of scheduled caste population.

Blocks of High Literacy Rate (Above 45%)

The literacy rate of three blocks namely Patna (56.11%), Danapur-Cum-Khagaul (53.29%), and Mokameh (46.12%) is higher than the overall literacy of the district (42.15). These blocks have a higher literacy rate because they belong to the urban area of the Patna district. Patna block also belongs to the district headquarter as well as the part of the district capital. Danapur-cum-Khagaul is part of the urban fringe of the district. Being an urban area there is several educational institutions, public facilities, Township, health amenities, properly connected with roadway, railways, and waterways. These facilities provide favorable conditions for literacy growth.

Blocks of High Literacy Rate: (41 % to 45 %)

Four blocks, Phulwari (43.09%), Bikram (43.03), Bihta (41.75%), and Maner (41.6%) have high literacy rates. These blocks belonging to an urban area create favorable conditions for education. Bihta block is developing fastly as an educational hub, here lots of educational institutions such as Private and Government school is opening. IIT Patna a famous educational institute is opened here which provides good education facilities and attracts students for study.

Blocks of Moderate Literacy Rate: (37 % to 41 %)

The five blocks of Patna district namely Barh (40.07), Pandarak (39.32%), Masaurhi (38.66), Naubatpur (38.63), and Ghoswari (37.17%) have moderate Literacy rate. In this group, urban and rural areas come together and form an environment for education but in rural areas scheduled caste population is struggling for daily needs of survival, which affects their education.

Blocks of Low Literacy Rate (33% to 37 %)

Numer of low literacy blocks is nine. Paliganj (36.03%), Dulhin Bazar (36.83%), Sampatchak (36.95%), Punpun (35.7%), Khushrupur (35.53%) Dhanarua (35.34%), Bakhtiyarpur (35.19%), Athmalgola (35.83%) and Daniawan (34.09%) have low literacy rate. Here castism, untouchability, economic condition, social wellbeing are the main reasons for the low literacy rate.

Blocks of Very Low Literacy Rate (Below 33 %): Fatwah (32.04%) and Belchhi (31.06%) blocks have very low literacy rates. Since 1981 Fatwah is demarcated as an urban area by the census of India but being a part of the Tal area it suffers from flooding and gets delayed in cropping which creates economic crises for their population. Other reasons for the low literacy rate are lack of awareness, gender biasedness, castism, and educational facilities. Belchhi block comes under rural but also part of tal area. Here too seasonal flood destroys their cultivated land and damages the life support system. Scheduled caste people are unable to overcome these problems and which affects literacy.

Table-2 Block wise Male and Female Literacy Rate of Scheduled Castes of Patna District (2011)

SL. No.	Name of Block	Literacy rate			Gap in Male-Female Literacy Rate
		Total	Male	Female	
1	Maner	41.6	49.52	32.91	16.61
2	Dinapur-Cum-Khagaul	53.29	60.64	45.23	15.41
3	Patna	56.11	62.44	48.97	13.47
4	Sampatchak	36.95	45.2	28.03	16.9
5	Phulwari	43.09	50.67	34.85	15.82
6	Bihta	41.75	49.98	32.78	17.2
7	Naubatpur	38.63	46.7	29.79	16.91
8	Bikram	43.03	51.9	33.43	18.47
9	Dulhin Bazar	36.83	44.84	28.36	16.48
10	Paliganj	36.03	45.44	26.13	19.31
11	Masaurhi	38.66	47.36	29.22	18.14
12	Dhanarua	35.34	44.13	25.98	18.15
13	Punpun	35.7	43.99	26.76	17.23
14	Fatwah	32.04	40.1	23.13	16.97
15	Daniawan	34.09	42.03	25.16	16.87
16	Khusrupur	35.53	44	26.3	17.7
17	Bakhtiarpur	35.19	42.59	26.86	15.73
18	Athmalgola	35.83	43.59	27.21	16.38
19	Belchhi	31.06	39.3	22	17.3
20	Barh	40.07	47.81	31.29	16.52
21	Pandarak	39.32	52.51	30.36	22.15
22	Ghoswari	37.17	44.37	29.16	15.12
23	Mokameh	46.12	53.65	37.5	16.15
24	Patna District Total	42.15	50	33.51	16.49

Source: www.censusindia.gov.in

Table-2 shows the Block wise Male and Female Literacy rates of Scheduled Castes of Patna District. In this table, it is found that the overall literacy rate of the Male and Female Schedule Caste population of Patna district is 50 and 33.51 respectively and the gap between male and female literacy of Schedule

caste population is 16.49.

Patna block has the maximum literacy rate of the male and female SC population i.e., 62.44 and 48.97 and the gap between male and female literacy is 13.47 which shows that here too gap is substantial between the male and female literacy rate of the scheduled caste population but this gap is lowest among all other blocks of the sample. Most of the Scheduled caste population come to Patna for employment and stay here as immigrants. For more earning they use the concept of more hands, more work, and more money so, they also engage their children in work at the cost of school education hence. But the male-female literacy gap is patching fast perhaps due to the implementation of the Right to Education Act. Scheduled castes population of Patna block is gradually getting aware of the importance of education as well as government upliftment programs and policies for the improvement of their cultural and socio-economic and educational conditions.

The result and analysis of this table also revealed that the highest gap in literacy rate between males and females is in the Pandarak block i.e., 22.15. In the Pandarak block male and female literacy rate of the Scheduled caste population is 52.51 and 30.36 respectively. This is a rural block where SC's awareness towards education, lower socioeconomic status, and low standard of living create unfavorable conditions for education. Belchhi block of Patna district has a minimum male and female literacy rate of SC population i.e., 39.3 and 22 respectively. The gap between male and female literacy rates is 17.3 which is the highest among all blocks except Patna and Pandarak. Belchhi is also a rural block similar to Pandarak.

Results & Interpretation

From the analysis of the above data, it is found that the literacy rate of the Scheduled caste Population in Patna district is just 42.15 %. More than half of the SC population of Patna district is illiterate. Although the literacy rate of the SC population in the Patna block of Patna district is highest but here too a little over half of the SC population is literate. The overall literacy rate of the SC population of Belchhi block is the lowest. Only one-third of the SC population is literate in Belchhi. The overall literacy rate of more than 65% of the blocks of Patna district is below 40% and the overall literacy of another 20% blocks is just above 40%. Only 2 blocks of this district are having an overall literacy rate little above 50%. The data represents that in urban blocks literacy rate is relatively higher due to better availability of life support systems and the reverse is the case in rural blocks leading to a relatively lower literacy rate there. In rural areas, casteism is prevalent. Scheduled castes of rural areas are still

facing the high problem of inequality, untouchability, poverty, and social justice.

Variation in the male-female literacy rate is more or less high in each block of the Patna district. Patna block is having a low literacy gap because the Scheduled caste population of this block appears to have a relatively better awareness of the importance of girls education and availability of better life support system including social, political, and economic conditions whereas in Pandarak block the literacy gap between males and females is the highest among all other blocks which may be due to relatively poor awareness of the importance of girls education and poor life support system. . In Patna district as a whole, the literacy variation is quite high. This may be due to poor awareness towards education in general and women education in the particular, low social status of women in society, gender biasedness, dowry system, lack of economic knowledge, etc

Conclusion

Scheduled caste are those castes of the country that suffers from extreme social, educational, and economic backwardness arising out of the age-old practice of untouchability and certain other accounts like lack of infrastructural facilities and geographical isolation. They need special consideration for safeguarding their interests and for their accelerated socio-economic development. The gender differences in literacy levels still exist in all social classes but it is highest among SCs. The study shows that of late the literacy rate of females among SCs has been growing faster but not proportionally to the general population. The literacy gap between male and female schedule caste populations is high in different blocks of Patna district and all the blocks have more than a 10% literacy gap. Though school drop-out rates among SC male and female children is reducing, it is still high. The gender disparity has reduced considerably at the primary stage.

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