

SOME ANALYSIS OF THE TRENDS IN LITERACY IN INDIA BASED ON THE PROVISIONAL RESULTS OF THE 1971 CENSUS*

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ONE of the surprising results of the 1971 Census of India is the poor progress in literacy in India during the 1961-71 decade. The literacy rate for both sexes (number of literates as percentage of the total population) increased by a meagre 5 percentage points from 24.03 per cent in 1961 to 29.35 in 1971. If we consider the two sexes separately, the rate for males increased from 34.45 per cent in 1961 to 39.49 per cent in 1971, while for females it increased from 12.95 per cent in 1961 to 18.47 per cent in 1971. According to the educational statistics available the enrolment in primary schools increased from 35 millions in 1961 to 51 millions in 1971 the ratio of enrolment to population in the age group 6-11 having increased from 63 per cent to 79 per cent. The expenditure on education had increased from Rs. 344 crores in 1960-61 to Rs. 610 crores in 1965-66.¹ Despite these tremendous efforts in terms of outlay on education and achievements in terms of increase in school enrolment, why has the progress in literacy been so meagre? This paper will address itself to the following questions :

1. Measurement of the progress in literacy in terms of indices suitable for comparison of the two sexes and of the different states.
2. Whether the disparities between the sexes and between the different states of India are widening.
3. What are the possible factors that are responsible for the poor progress in literacy noticed for the decade.

Answers can be found for these questions only tentatively at present. For obtaining a clearer picture of the situation one requires

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