

## Rural Literacy in Scheduled Caste Population in India

Vishal Singh

Research Scholar, Department of Geography, Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak,  
Haryana (India).

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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; rural literacy in scheduled caste population has increased up to significant level. Female literacy is remaining in miserable condition and 30.10 million scheduled caste females are illiterate which is 62.07 per cent share of total rural scheduled caste illiterates. Gap between male-female increased with increase in literacy up to 1991 census however; after this, it is decreasing slowly yet it is high (20.02 per cent) and shows low status of female in society. large part of Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, western Haryana, Bihar, Jharkhand, western part of West Bengal, northern and western districts of Madhya Pradesh, southern part of Odisha, almost part of Andhra Pradesh, north-eastern part of Karnataka as well as border area of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu contain low literacy.*

**Key Words:** *Trend and Gender Gap, Spatial Pattern*

### Introduction

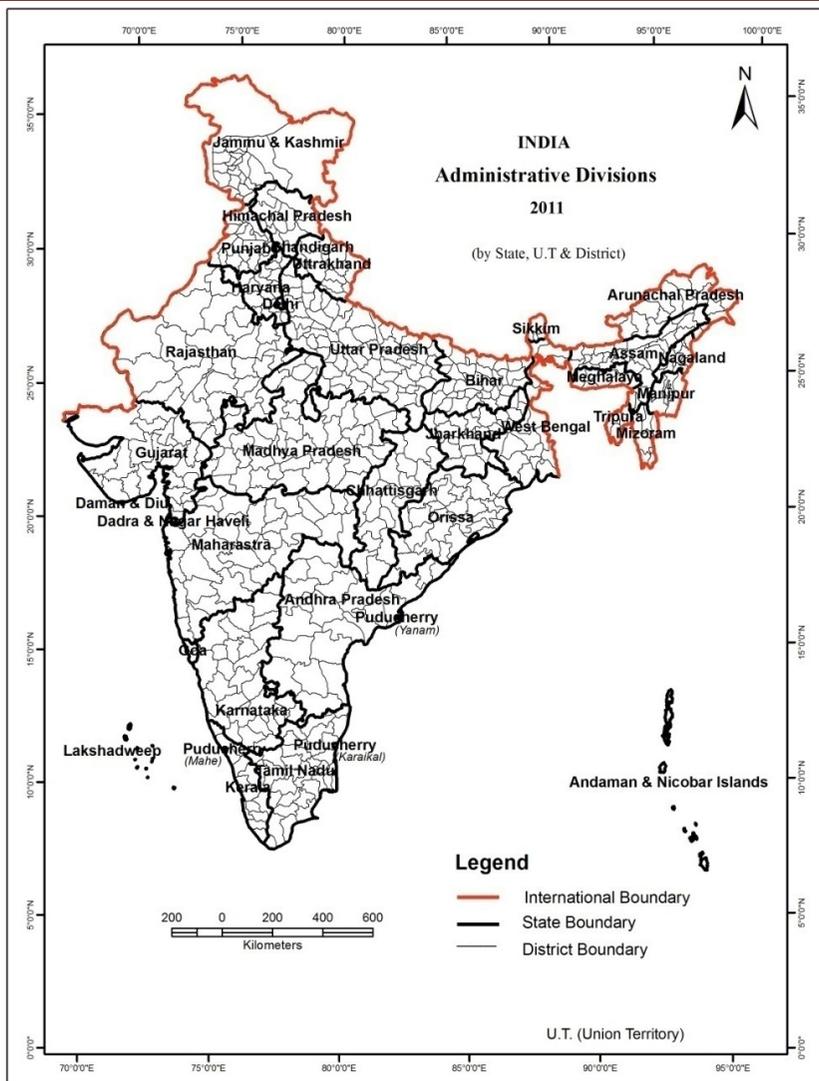
According to Indian census, literacy is defined as the ability of people to read and write a simple message in any language with some understanding. It is not mandatory that to be treated as a literate, a person should have received any formal education or acquired any minimum educational standard. Literacy 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).

Scheduled caste refers to caste falling in the scheduled category. Caste acquired a new meaning in India after Independence. With the introduction of reservation policy in 1950, a large number of caste groups were assigned the status of scheduled castes, done on the basis of a scheduling policy which has been evolving since 1950. The list of scheduled castes for various states and union territories notified under the provision of Indian Constitution (Article 341) or supplemented from time to time. Scheduled caste, as defined by the Constitution in 1950, included all the people covered under the category of *Sudras* and other castes who too had suffered similar neglect in the past and had remained backward. Scheduled caste population is suffering with low literacy rate as well as high gender disparity especially in rural area of country.

### 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 640 districts at the time of census enumeration (2011) but 31 districts do not contain scheduled caste population as well as 10 districts are without rural scheduled castes.



Source: Census of India, 2011

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-Scheduled Caste published by office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India as well as 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,

Ds = Gender Disparity index

X<sub>2</sub> = Male Literacy Rate

X<sub>1</sub> = Female Literacy Rate

When we see the status of illiterates; we found that there were 60.05 million scheduled caste illiterates in rural area of country at the time of 1991 census enumeration which was 86.37 per cent share of total scheduled caste illiterates. The rural illiterates decreased 11.56 million after 1991 and recorded 48.49 million in 2011 census which is 83 per cent of total scheduled caste illiterates

At national level, literacy rate has increased slowly. According to 1961 census; it was only 8.89 per cent which increased up to 18.48 per cent in 1981 but after 1981 census; it is increasing rapidly. During 2001 census it was 51.16 per cent and now in 2011 census; it has recorded 62.85 per cent.

Table 1

| Rural Literacy in Scheduled Caste Population at National Level |                     |                    |                      |                                       |   |                                 |
|--|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Year   | Total Literacy Rate | Male Literacy Rate | Female Literacy Rate | Gap between Male-Female Literacy Rate | Ratio between Male-Female Literacy Rate | Score of Gender Disparity Index |
| 1961   | 8.89                | 15.06              | 2.52                 | 12.54                                 | 5.98 : 1                                | 0.80                            |
| 1971   | 12.77               | 20.04              | 5.06                 | 14.98                                 | 3.96 : 1                                | 0.63                            |
| 1981   | 18.48               | 27.91              | 8.45                 | 19.46                                 | 3.30 : 1                                | 0.57                            |
| 1991   | 33.25               | 49.95              | 19.45                | 30.5                                  | 2.57 : 1                                | 0.49                            |
| 2001   | 51.16               | 63.66              | 37.84                | 25.82                                 | 1.68 : 1                                | 0.30                            |
| 2011   | 62.85               | 72.58              | 52.56                | 20.02                                 | 1.38 : 1                                | 0.20                            |

**Source:** Adopted and computed from:

- Selected Educational Statistics (1999-2000), Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India p. XXIII.
- Statistics of School Education 2007-08, Department of School Education & Literacy Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.
- Primary Census Abstract-Scheduled Caste, 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 analysis state wise; it is found highest in Tripura (89.10 per cent) followed by Kerala (87.21 per cent), Mizoram (81.96 per cent), Goa (81.41 per cent) and Himachal Pradesh (78.33 per cent) while Bihar (47.66 per cent), Jharkhand (52.72 per cent), Rajasthan (57.17 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (58.65 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (59.80 per cent) contain low literacy rate.

Among the union territories; Chandigarh contains lowest literacy rate (68.50 per cent) followed by Puducherry (73.87 per cent) and NCT of Delhi (77.18 per cent) while Daman & Diu as well as Dadra & Nagar Haveli contain literacy rate above 82 per cent.

Table 2

| Rural Literacy Rate in Scheduled Caste Population (2011) |         |       |         |            |
|--|---------|-------|---------|------------|
| (in per cent)  |         |       |         |            |
| State/Union Territory                                    | Persons | Males | Females | Gender Gap |
| Tripura  | 89.10   | 92.57 | 85.45   | 7.12       |
| Kerala   | 87.21   | 91.50 | 83.19   | 8.31       |
| Mizoram  | 81.96   | 85.79 | 70.77   | 15.02      |
| Goa  | 81.41   | 88.42 | 74.71   | 13.71      |
| Himachal Pradesh   | 78.33   | 85.85 | 70.70   | 15.15      |
| Maharashtra  | 75.79   | 84.61 | 66.63   | 17.98      |
| Assam  | 75.66   | 82.10 | 68.82   | 13.28      |
| Gujarat  | 75.18   | 85.36 | 64.39   | 20.97      |
| Sikkim   | 74.35   | 79.88 | 68.42   | 11.46      |
| Manipur  | 73.66   | 81.50 | 65.67   | 15.83      |
| Uttarakhand  | 73.12   | 83.81 | 62.14   | 21.66      |
| Tamil Nadu   | 69.91   | 78.22 | 61.66   | 16.56      |
| Chhattisgarh   | 68.97   | 80.48 | 57.46   | 23.01      |

|                        |              |              |              |              |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Jammu & Kashmir        | 68.27        | 77.28        | 58.47        | 18.81        |
| Odisha                 | 68.05        | 78.45        | 57.59        | 20.86        |
| West Bengal            | 67.53        | 75.70        | 58.93        | 16.76        |
| Haryana                | 65.75        | 75.10        | 55.20        | 19.90        |
| Punjab                 | 62.98        | 68.94        | 56.47        | 12.47        |
| Madhya Pradesh         | 62.72        | 74.05        | 50.39        | 23.66        |
| Meghalaya              | 61.14        | 67.94        | 53.45        | 14.48        |
| Karnataka              | 60.44        | 69.98        | 50.82        | 19.16        |
| Uttar Pradesh          | 59.80        | 71.12        | 47.35        | 23.77        |
| Andhra Pradesh         | 58.65        | 66.97        | 50.39        | 16.59        |
| Rajasthan              | 57.17        | 71.80        | 41.40        | 30.40        |
| Jharkhand              | 52.72        | 64.05        | 40.78        | 23.28        |
| Bihar                  | 47.66        | 57.05        | 37.41        | 19.64        |
| <b>Union Territory</b> |              |              |              |              |
| Daman & Diu            | 93.23        | 97.73        | 88.52        | 9.21         |
| Dadra & Nagar Haveli   | 82.82        | 88.43        | 74.24        | 14.19        |
| NCT of Delhi           | 77.18        | 86.72        | 66.34        | 20.38        |
| Puducherry             | 73.87        | 81.82        | 66.42        | 15.40        |
| Chandigarh             | 68.50        | 76.64        | 57.91        | 18.73        |
| <b>India</b>           | <b>62.85</b> | <b>72.58</b> | <b>52.56</b> | <b>20.01</b> |

Source: Calculated from-

- Primary Census Abstract-Scheduled Caste, Census of India, 2011.

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

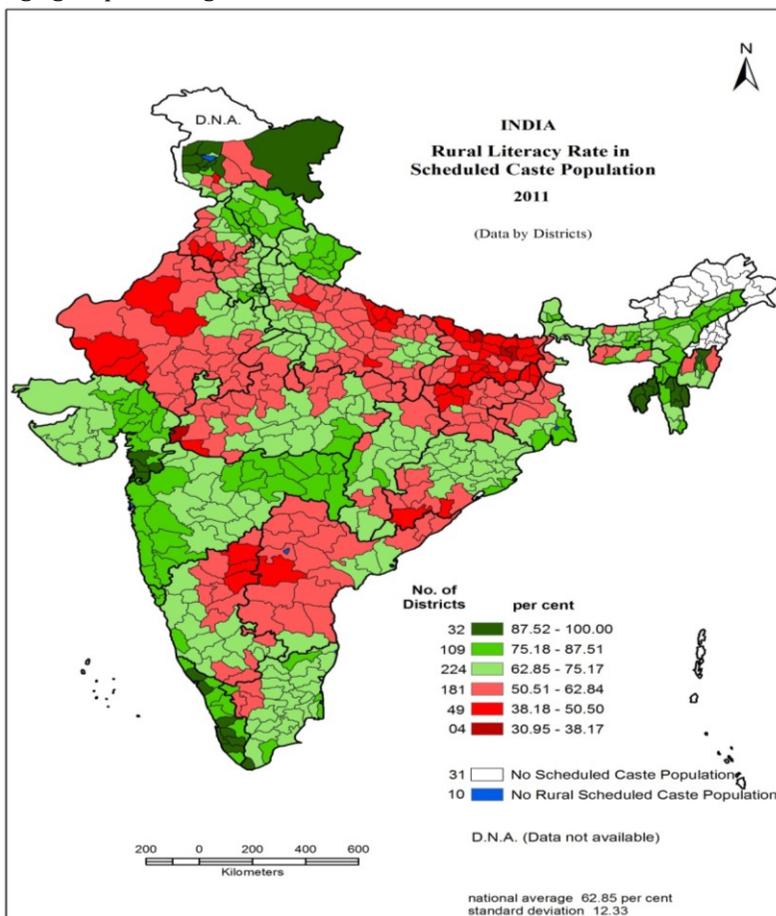


Figure 2

The remarkable increase has recorded by some states during last decade such as Bihar (20.73 per cent), Jharkhand (20.20 per cent), Tripura (15.51 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (15.28 per cent), Sikkim (14.12 per

cent), Odisha (13.82 per cent) and Karnataka (13.19 per cent) while at national level; it is remaining 11.69 per cent during same decade.

It is interesting that literacy rate is decreased in Mizoram (6.93 per cent) from 88.89 per cent in 2001 to 81.96 per cent in 2011 as well as its increase is remaining very low in Chandigarh (2.69 per cent) from 65.82 per cent to 68.50 per cent during same time period.

When we analysis district level; literacy rate varies from 30.95 per cent in Alirajpur district of Madhya Pradesh to 100 per cent in Bandipore district of Jammu & Kashmir. Figure 2 shows that districts which are located in western, central, southern and north-eastern part of country as well as developed small states such as Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand contain high literacy rate due to coastal location, high degree of urbanization, more diversified economy, early start of modern education under state patronage, greater allocation of funds for the development of education. On the other hand; large part of Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, western Haryana, Bihar, Jharkhand, western part of West Bengal, northern and western districts of Madhya Pradesh, southern part of Odisha, almost part of Andhra Pradesh, north-eastern part of Karnataka as well as border area of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu contain low literacy.

### Male Literacy Rate

At national level, male literacy rate has increased up to significant level. According to 1961 census; it was only 15.06 per cent which increased up to 27.91 per cent in 1981 but after 1981 census; it is increasing rapidly and now in 2011 census; it has recorded 72.58 per cent.

When we examine state wise; Bihar (57.05 per cent), Jharkhand (64.05 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (66.97 per cent), Meghalaya (67.94 per cent), Punjab (68.94 per cent) and Karnataka (69.98 per cent) contain low literacy rate.

Among the union territories; Chandigarh contains lowest literacy rate (76.64 per cent) followed by Puducherry (81.82 per cent) and NCT of Delhi (86.72 per cent) while Daman & Diu as well as Dadra & Nagar Haveli contain literacy rate above 88 per cent.

The remarkable increase has recorded by some states during last decade such as Bihar (18.39 per cent), Jharkhand (17.49 per cent), Sikkim (12.31 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (12.09 per cent), Tripura (11.59 per cent) and Karnataka (11.27 per cent) while at national level, it is remaining 8.92 per cent during same decade.

It is interesting that literacy rate is decreased in Mizoram (2.54 per cent) from 88.33 per cent in 2001 to 85.79 per cent in 2011 as well as its increase is remaining very low in Chandigarh (3.01 per cent) from 73.63 per cent to 76.64 per cent, Madhya Pradesh (4.32 per cent) from 69.73 per cent to 74.05 per cent and Rajasthan (4.87 per cent) from 66.93 per cent to 71.80 per cent during same time period.

### Female Literacy Rate

At national level, female literacy rate increased very slowly. According to 1961 census; it was only 2.52 per cent which increased up to 8.45 per cent in 1981 but after 1981 census; it is increasing rapidly. During 2001 census, it was 37.84 per cent and now in 2011 census; it has recorded 52.56 per cent yet it is low.

When we examine state wise; Bihar (37.41 per cent), Jharkhand (40.78 per cent), Rajasthan (41.40 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (47.35 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (50.39 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (50.39 per cent) and Karnataka (50.82 per cent) contain low literacy rate.

Among the union territories; Chandigarh contains lowest literacy rate (57.91 per cent) followed by NCT of Delhi (66.34 per cent) and Puducherry (66.42 per cent) while Daman & Diu as well as Dadra & Nagar Haveli contain literacy rate above 74 per cent.

Almost states and union territories have recorded significant increase in female literacy during last decade such as Bihar (23.28 per cent), Jharkhand (23.05 per cent), Tripura (19.56 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (19.02 per cent), Odisha (18.83 per cent) and Uttarakhand (16.04 per cent) while at national level; it is remaining 14.72 per cent during same decade.

It is interesting that literacy rate is decreased in Mizoram (29.23 per cent) from 100 per cent in 2001 to 70.77 per cent in 2011 as well as its increase is remaining very low in Chandigarh (2.66 per cent) from 55.25 per cent to 57.91 per cent and Manipur (4.29 per cent) from 61.38 per cent to 65.67 per cent during same time period.

### Male-Female Disparity in Literacy

Male-female disparity in literacy is existing continue. In 1961; the gap between male-female literacy rates was 12.54 per cent at national level which increased with increase in literacy and recorded 30.5 per cent in

1991 however; after 1991 census, it is decreasing slowly and now in 2011 census, it has recorded 20.02 per cent which is high.

Score of Sopher's Disparity Index (1980) modified by Kundu and Rao (1985) is found 0.20 at national level. Rajasthan (0.33) followed by Jharkhand (0.26), Uttar Pradesh (0.25), Madhya Pradesh and Bihar (0.24) as well as Chhattisgarh (0.22) contain high disparity.

Negative score of disparity index is found in Saiha (-0.26) followed by Champhai (-0.10) and Kolasib (-0.08) districts of Mizoram which shows high female literacy than male. Serchhip and Aizawl districts of Mizoram, Senapati district of Manipur and Pulwama district of Jammu & Kashmir has recorded equality between male-female literacy.

Figure 3 shows that Large area of Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, south Haryana, entire Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand, large area of Manipur, large part of Gujarat, almost part of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, southern districts of Odisha, large area of Andhra Pradesh and north-eastern districts of Karnataka contain high gender disparity.

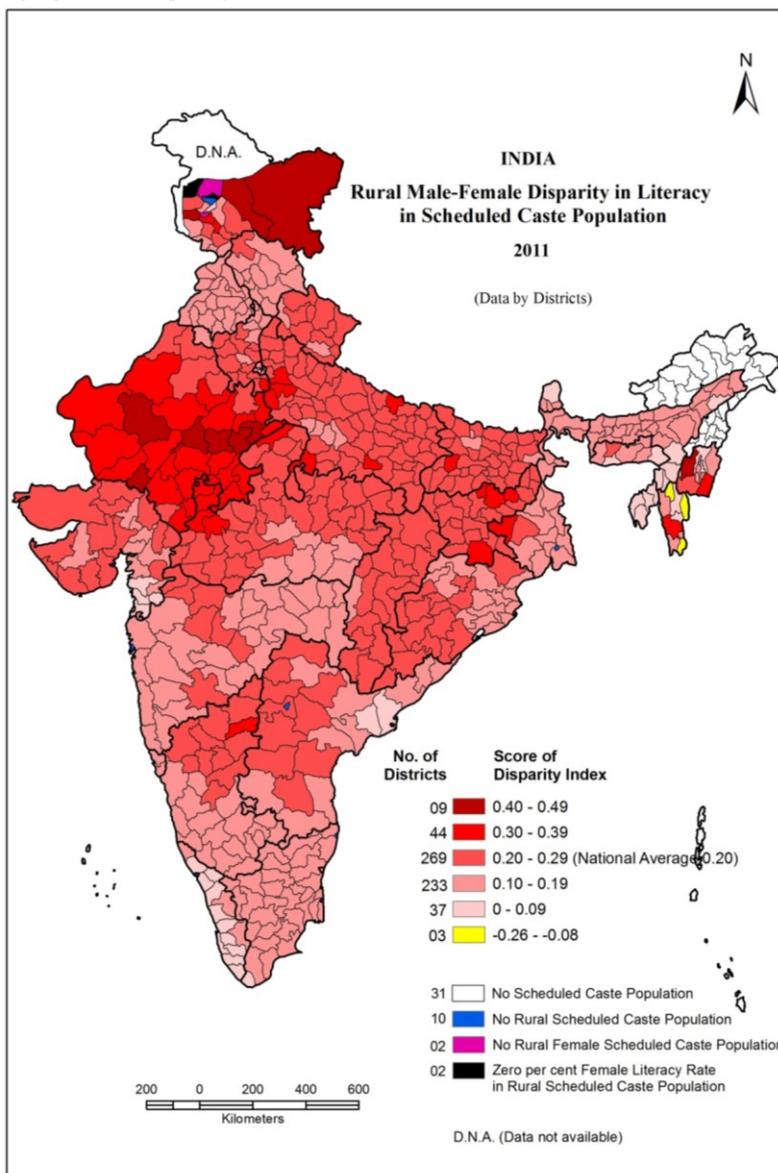


Figure 3

**Conclusion**

After independence; rural literacy in scheduled caste population has increased up to significant level. Female literacy is remaining in miserable condition and 30.10 million scheduled caste females are illiterate which is 62.07 per cent share of total rural scheduled caste illiterates.

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 (20.02 per cent) and shows low status of female in society.

Almost part of Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, western Haryana, Bihar, Jharkhand, western part of West Bengal, northern and western districts of Madhya Pradesh, southern part of Odisha, almost part of Andhra Pradesh, north-eastern part of Karnataka as well as border area of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu contain low literacy. Patriarchal society and low status of female, 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, 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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