



## Changes in Male- Female Literacy of Scheduled Population in Himachal Pradesh, 1991-2011: A Geographical Perspective

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**Abstract:** Among the various qualitative attributes of population, literacy holds an important place as it is a reliable index of the socio-economic development of an area. The present paper is an attempt to analyse the change in male- female literacy of scheduled population in Himachal Pradesh, 1991-2011. The change in literacy are indicative of the pace at which the life and economy of a particular society is being transformed. Himachal Pradesh is predominantly a rural state with 92.90 per cent of scheduled caste population and 95.47 per cent of scheduled tribe population residing in rural and backward areas where education continues to have little economic and social relevance. Female literacy is also low in urban areas as compared to male literacy because the towns have a large number of male migrants who are educated; towns and cities attract large number of male students. The change in male-female literacy of the scheduled population is witness to be highly variable throughout the State. The study of change in male-female literacy of the scheduled population clearly indicates that Himachal Pradesh has the change gap (9.48 percent) between male and female literacy rate. It also tries to investigate the possible cause such gap of between two sexes and to suggest some measure to minimize the gap.

**Key words:** Literacy rate, Rural-Urban, Male-Female, Himachal Pradesh.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Literacy is a sensitive indicator of socio, economic and cultural advancement of an area. It develops the personality and rationality of individuals, qualifies them to fulfill certain economic, political and cultural functions (Naik, 1975, pp 88) and therefore play an active part in the socio-economic transformations of a society. Changes in literacy rates are indicative of the processes of social advancement and economic transformation, the area is experiencing. Literacy transition can provide the required impetus to these processes of social economic in a developing society (Smita, 1992).

According to the census of India, "A Person aged seven years and above who can both read and write with understanding in any language has been taken as literate". It is not necessary for a person to have any formal education or passes any minimum educational standard for being treated as literate. People who are blind, but could read in Braille are treated literates.

Literacy is one of the significant measures for measuring socio-economic and cultural advancement of a region. On the other hand, illiteracy and low educational standards act as impediments in the path of planning development. Therefore, the study of literacy deserves special attention because it has a bearing on the pattern of employment, household structure, standard of living, social and cultural life and above all on the economic progress of a region. In Himachal Pradesh, a micro-level study of literacy and geographical inequality among different sections further increases the relevance of its study. The study has therefore tried to focus on the changes in male- female literacy of scheduled population in Himachal Pradesh during the period 1991-2011.

### 2. OBJECTIVES, DATA SOURCE AND METHODOLOGY :

The main objectives of the study are:

- To describe and analyze the changes in male-female literacy of scheduled population in the state.
- To examine the changes in rural- urban literacy of scheduled population of Himachal Pradesh.

To achieve the above stated objectives the district has been considered to the most appropriate unit of study, for which data are available. This study primarily based on secondary source of data, which obtained in the form of Primary Census Abstract, for Himachal Pradesh, from census of India. The quantitative techniques have been used in the present



study to understand the changes in literacy between two sexes of the scheduled population. For this purpose, the census data has been tabulated, calculated to derive representative figures, averages and percentages. The main focus of the study is in the explanations regarding change in literacy that emerged from the table. The literacy rate has been computed by using the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Literate Persons Aged 7+ years}}{\text{Total Population Aged 7+ years}} \times 100$$

### 3. CHANGES IN LITERACY OF SCHEDULED POPULATION IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

The literacy rate of the scheduled population in the state has increased considerably, particularly after attaining full-fledged statehood status on 25 January in 1971. As per census data, the literacy rate of scheduled population in the state of Himachal Pradesh increased from 18.36 per cent in 1971 to 77.9 per cent in 2011. In case of the scheduled caste population, the literacy rate has increased from 18.82 per cent in 1971 to 78.9 per cent in 2011 while in case of the scheduled tribe population; it increased from 15.89 per cent to 73.6 per cent in respective years. This tremendous increase in the literacy rate reveals the committed efforts of the state government to remove illiteracy from the state. The significant increase in the literacy rate was also due to different procedures adopted by the Indian Census for calculating literacy rate during the period 1971 - 2011. From censuses carried out between 1951 and 1981, all children under the age of five years were considered to be illiterate. However, in the censuses from 1991 to 2011, all children under the age of seven years were regarded as illiterate. It is not easy to make the analysis comparable for the period between 1971 and 2011. For this, below seven year old population group has to be excluded from the total population. Therefore, the study of change in the literacy rate of the scheduled population at district level is restricted to the census decades 1991 to 2011 for which comparable data was available. As the 1991-2011 decades were considered for the analysis of changes in the literacy rates of the scheduled population, a significant increase of 25.62 per cent points over the period of two decades was found from 52.32 per cent in 1991 to 77.94 per cent in 2011. However, this implied that the increase in the literacy rate among the scheduled population was not uniform across the state. During the years 1991–2011, i.e. a period of two decades, significant regional variations in terms of change in literacy rate of the scheduled population as well as the male-female and rural-urban differences in the scheduled population literacy rate occurred.

### 4. CHANGES IN LITERACY OF MALE- FEMALE SCHEDULED POPULATION, 1991-2011 :

Male literacy is universally found to be higher than female literacy, especially in developing countries around the world. As a result, male - female disparity is prevalent in most of the less developed countries of the world, and India is no exception in this respect. In Himachal Pradesh, the literacy rate among the males in the scheduled population increased from 64.6 per cent in 1991 to 85.67 per cent in 2011, implying an increase of 21.07 percentage points; whereas among the females, it improved from 39.60 per cent in 1991 to 70.09 per cent in 2011 by 30.49 per cent points during the period of 20 years from 1991 to 2011. Thus, increase in the overall female literacy rate was marginally higher than the increase in their male counterpart's literacy rate (Table 1).

A sharp variation was observed in the *change in male- female literacy rates of scheduled population*. Table 1, has shown that the districts of Sirmaur, Chamba, and Kullu had seen a high increase (more than 24 per cent points) in male literacy rate of the scheduled population. In these districts the literacy of male scheduled population was quite low (much below the state average) in the year, 1991. Contrary to this, three districts recorded a low increase (below 18 per cent points) in male literacy rate of scheduled population. These included district of Chamba in the north-west, Kullu in the central, and Sirmaur in southern part of Himachal Pradesh. The remaining five districts (Shimla, Solan, Mandi, Kinnaur and Bilaspur) displayed a moderate increase (18 to 24 per cent points) in their male literacy rates of scheduled population during the period of 20 years i.e. from 1991 to 2011.

Similarly, during the period 1991 -2011 a significant increase in female literacy of scheduled population was recorded to be more than 35 per cent points in the north-western district of Chamba, central district of Kullu and southern district of Sirmaur in the state of Himachal Pradesh. Contrary to this, there were five districts, which recorded a low increase (less than 30 per cent points) in their female literacy rates. These included Bilaspur, Hamirpur, Una, Kangra and Lahaul & Spiti districts. The remaining four districts found a moderate increase (30 to 35 per cent points) in female literacy. These included Mandi, Solan, Shimla and Kinnaur districts.

A regional contrast was also observed, *change in male and female literacy rates in the case of scheduled caste population* of the state. The districts of Sirmaur (30.12 per cent points), Chamba (29.23 per cent points), Kullu (26.56 per cent points) and Kinnaur (25.55 per cent points) had seen a high increase (more than 25 per cent points) in male literacy rate of scheduled caste population (Table 1). In these districts, the literacy of the male scheduled caste population was at the end scale in the ranking for the year 1991 or much below the state average (64.94 per cent). Contrary to this,



five districts recorded a low increase in the male literacy rate of scheduled caste population (below 20 per cent points). These districts were situated in this manner: Lahaul & Spiti district in the north and Bilaspur, Una, Hamirpur and Kangra in the western parts of the state. The remaining three districts (Shimla, Solan and Mandi) displayed a moderate increase (from 20 to 25 per cent points) in their male literacy rates of scheduled caste population during the period of 20 years i.e. 1991 – 2011. Similarly, in the last twenty years, an increase in female literacy of scheduled caste population was recorded to be more than 38 per cent points in the central district of Kullu (39.40 per cent points), the eastern district of Kinnaur (38.71 per cent points) and the southern district of Sirmaur (38.59 per cent points) in the state of Himachal Pradesh. In contrast with this, there were four districts, which recorded a low increase (less than 30 per cent points) in their female literacy rates. These included Una (26 per cent points), Bilaspur (26.17 per cent points), Kangra (24.20 per cent points), and Hamirpur (20.12 per cent points) districts. The remaining five districts found a moderate increase (30 to 38 per cent points) in female literacy. These included Chamba (36.81 per cent points), Lahaul & Spiti (36.36 per cent points), Shimla (35.32 per cent points), Solan (32.12 per cent points), and Mandi (31.36 per cent points).

In the case of *scheduled tribe population*, there was an increase in male literacy in the north-western district of Chamba (26.84 percentage points); Bilaspur district (22.81 percentage points) and in the western parts and southern district of Sirmaur (25.04 percentage points). In these districts (with the exception of Bilaspur district) the literacy of male scheduled tribe population was quite low or much below the state average in the year of 1991. In contrast to this, there was a low increase in the male literacy rate of scheduled tribe population in Solan (11.24 per cent points), Shimla (11.05 per cent points), Kullu (10.80 per cent points), and Mandi (7.45 per cent points) districts of the state. Decrease in male literacy of scheduled tribe population in the districts of Kangra, Hamirpur and Una during the period 1991-2011 has also been noted (Table 1). In these districts the male literacy of the scheduled tribe population was high in 1991, but relatively low in 2011. The remaining two districts included Kinnaur (15.07 per cent points) and Lahaul & Spiti (14.74 per cent points), where the district’s male literacy increased moderately.

**Table: 1**

**HIMACHAL PRADESH: CHANGE IN LITERACY RATE OF SCHEDULED POPULATION, 1991-2011**

Sr.No	District	Change in Literacy (in per cent points)								
		Scheduled Caste Population			Scheduled Tribe Population			Scheduled Population		
		Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
1	Sirmaur	33.96	30.12	38.59	26.29	25.04	28.56	33.38	29.65	37.84
2	Chamba	32.67	29.23	36.81	32.36	26.84	38.17	32.51	27.80	37.67
3	Kullu	32.67	26.56	39.40	14.94	10.80	19.52	30.61	24.79	37.07
4	Kinnaur	31.65	25.55	38.71	21.01	15.07	26.17	24.65	18.97	30.15
5	Shimla	28.71	22.89	35.32	14.26	11.05	19.08	28.29	22.44	34.93
6	Solan	26.66	21.47	32.12	15.48	11.24	22.55	25.67	20.71	30.84
7	Mandi	25.65	20.05	31.36	17.37	7.45	28.45	25.32	19.51	31.24
8	Lahaul & Spiti	25.04	17.23	36.36	21.64	14.75	28.12	21.91	14.95	28.73
9	Bilaspur	22.07	18.04	26.17	27.12	22.81	31.62	22.52	18.47	26.64
10	Una	21.71	17.87	26.19	-10.56	-7.97	21.82	21.37	17.48	25.74
11	Kangra	20.82	17.38	24.20	-4.81	-4.27	25.36	19.17	16.04	22.32
12	Hamirpur	17.42	14.52	20.12	-10.82	-7.42	6.77	17.33	14.45	20.06
<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>		<b>25.73</b>	<b>21.29</b>	<b>30.44</b>	<b>26.55</b>	<b>20.43</b>	<b>33.02</b>	<b>25.62</b>	<b>21.01</b>	<b>30.49</b>

**Source:** Calculated from Primary Census Abstract of Himachal Pradesh, 1991 and 2011

On the other hand, increase in female literacy of the scheduled tribe population was high in the north-western district of Chamba (above 35 per cent points). In contrast to this, there were five districts, which recorded a low increase (less than 25 per cent points) in their female literacy rates. These included Solan, Una, Kullu, Shimla and Hamirpur districts of the state. The remaining six districts recorded a moderate increase in female literacy (25 -35 per cent points) in the districts of Bilaspur, Sirmaur, Mandi, Lahaul & Spiti, Kinnaur and Kangra.



### 5. CHANGES IN LITERACY OF RURAL-URBAN SCHEDULED POPULATION, 1991-2011 :

There was also a significant difference in terms of improvements in the literacy rates of the rural and urban scheduled population in Himachal Pradesh. Rural literacy rate of scheduled population rose from 51.14 per cent in 1991 to 77.32 per cent in 2011, recording an increase of 26.18 per cent points ; the urban literacy of scheduled population increased from 70.98 per cent in 1991 to 86.56 per cent in 2011, recording an increase of 15.58 per cent points (Tables 2 and 3). This means that the increase in the rural scheduled population literacy rate was higher than that of their urban counterparts; and the rural-urban literacy difference fell from 19.84 per cent points in 1991 to 9.23 per cent points in 2011. There are various factors that contributed towards this development. First of all, the govt. has taken interest and constructive steps to establish educational institutions not only in urban areas but also in rural areas; to develop rural – urban links for social – economic progress; to increase transport and communication connectivity; to strengthen rural – urban ties and to increase rural – urban commuting for the purpose of education and employment.

Table: 2

HIMACHAL PRADESH: CHANGE IN LITERACY RATE OF RURAL SCHEDULED POPULATION, 1991-2011

Sr.No	District	Change in Rural Literacy (in per cent points)								
		Scheduled Caste Population			Scheduled Tribe Population			Scheduled Population		
		Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
1	Sirmaur	35.06	31.15	39.68	26.33	25.35	28.24	34.40	30.69	38.84
2	Kullu	33.19	27.17	39.84	15.66	11.54	19.88	31.35	25.57	37.68
3	Kinnaur	31.65	25.55	38.71	21.01	15.07	26.17	24.65	18.97	30.15
4	Shimla	30.40	24.70	36.46	13.63	10.85	17.39	29.94	24.28	35.98
5	Solan	27.68	22.26	33.25	17.09	13.07	23.66	26.62	21.54	31.88
6	Mandi	26.30	20.62	31.99	17.67	7.42	28.75	25.95	20.09	31.86
7	Lahaul & Spiti	25.04	17.23	36.36	21.64	14.75	28.12	21.91	14.95	28.73
8	Bilaspur	22.35	18.39	26.28	27.25	22.90	31.66	22.80	18.81	26.76
9	Una	22.06	18.18	26.42	-17.70	-12.31	21.62	21.69	17.92	25.94
10	Kangra	20.84	17.38	24.17	-5.83	-5.01	26.12	19.15	16.05	22.27
11	Chamba	20.36	59.56	57.82	32.44	26.98	38.15	33.17	28.49	38.26
12	Hamirpur	17.71	14.85	20.36	-10.68	-7.92	35.70	17.62	14.77	20.30
<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>		<b>26.33</b>	<b>21.90</b>	<b>30.92</b>	<b>26.78</b>	<b>20.72</b>	<b>33.10</b>	<b>26.17</b>	<b>21.60</b>	<b>30.93</b>

Source: Calculated from Primary Census Abstract of Himachal Pradesh, 1991 and 2011

Similarly, *literacy rate of rural scheduled caste population* has changed from 52 per cent in 1991 to 78.33 per cent in 2011, recording an increase of 26.33 per cent points; the literacy of urban scheduled caste population has increased from 70.32 per cent in 1991 to 86.43 per cent in 2011, recording an increase of 16.11 per cent points (Table 2 and 3). This means that the increase in the rural scheduled caste population literacy rate was higher than that of their urban counterparts; and the rural-urban literacy difference fell from 18.32 per cent points in 1991 to 8.10 per cent points in 2011.

In the case of *literacy rate of Rural scheduled tribe population*, it changed from 46.18 per cent in 1991 to 72.96 per cent in 2011, recording an increase of 26.78 per cent points; the urban literacy of scheduled tribe population increased from 80.72 per cent in 1991 to 87.39 per cent in 2011, recording an increase of 6.67 per cent (Table 2 and 3). This implied that the increase in the rural scheduled tribe population literacy rate was higher than that of their urban counterparts; and the rural-urban literacy difference had a sharp fall of 34.54 per cent points in 1991 to 14.43 per cent points in 2011.



**Table: 3**

**Himachal Pradesh: Change in Literacy Rate of Urban Scheduled Population, 1991-2011**

Sr. No	District	Change Urban in Literacy (in per cent points)								
		Scheduled Caste Population			Scheduled Tribe Population			Scheduled Population		
		Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
1	Sirmaur	20.24	16.32	24.82	2.31	-0.01	10.13	20.04	16.05	24.73
2	Kangra	19.08	15.07	23.49	15.22	13.19	22.31	18.11	14.61	22.01
3	Una	17.60	12.35	23.58	21.57	16.89	33.87	17.66	12.38	23.67
4	Shimla	16.33	12.07	22.93	8.16	7.48	9.65	16.05	11.91	22.52
5	Chamba	15.55	11.73	20.34	10.65	6.17	18.84	14.34	10.72	19.27
6	Bilaspur	14.82	10.59	20.50	14.78	17.26	13.24	14.86	11.01	20.23
7	Kullu	14.73	10.92	19.87	8.10	5.83	11.68	12.14	8.89	16.69
8	Mandi	14.52	10.01	19.92	14.71	10.18	23.41	15.52	10.02	20.03
9	Solan	14.33	11.88	17.15	-6.35	-9.86	1.54	14.16	11.54	17.21
10	Hamirpur	10.96	8.53	13.93	-4.70	-2.44	-4.97	10.80	8.35	13.87
11	Lahaul & Spiti	NUSC*	NUSC*	NUSC*	NUST**	NUST**	NUST**	NUSP***	NUSP***	NUSP***
12	Kinnaur	NUSC*	NUSC*	NUSC*	NUST**	NUST**	NUST**	NUSP***	NUSP***	NUSP***
<b>Himachal Pradesh</b>		<b>16.11</b>	<b>12.06</b>	<b>21.32</b>	<b>6.67</b>	<b>4.99</b>	<b>10.51</b>	<b>15.58</b>	<b>11.67</b>	<b>20.72</b>

**Source:** Calculated from Primary Census Abstract of Himachal Pradesh, 1991 and 2011

NUSC\* No Urban Scheduled Caste Population

NUST\*\* No Urban Scheduled Tribe Population

NUSP\*\*\* No Urban Scheduled Population

**6. RESULTS:**

- The data shows that the female literacy rate in the scheduled population increased by a percentage point higher than that of the male counterpart in the state from 1991 to 2011. Out of 12 districts, 50 per cent districts recorded difference in increase of literacy rate of scheduled population by more than 10 per cent points in both male literacy and female literacy. The district of Lahaul & Spiti experienced the highest change in literacy rate or change in difference between male and female (13.78 percentage points) literacy rates of scheduled population during the 1991 - 2011, while the district of Hamirpur (5.61 percentage points) witnessed the lowest.
- During 1991-2011, male literacy of scheduled caste population in the state increased in the districts of Kullu, Kinnaur, Sirmaur and Chamba by more than 25 per cent points while female literacy increased by more than 38 per cent points. However, Chamba, was an exception and it recorded moderate increase in female literacy of scheduled caste population in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The highest difference between male and female literacy among the scheduled caste population was in tribal districts of Lahaul & Spiti and Kinnaur whereas it was the lowest in the districts of Hamirpur and Kangra during 1991 - 2011. It can be noted here that all the districts registered a higher increase in female literacy than in male literacy during the reference period.
- Male literacy of scheduled tribe population increased by more than 22 per cent points in the districts of Chamba, Bilaspur and Sirmaur, while female literacy in these districts increased by more than 28 per cent points. Kangra district recorded the maximum (21.11 per cent) male - female difference in change in the literacy rate of the scheduled tribe population, whereas it was minimal in the district of Sirmaur (3.52 per cent) during the year 1991-2011. It is clear from the data that, during the reference period, female literacy rates of the scheduled tribe population increased more than that of their male counterparts in all districts. Male literacy of scheduled tribe population increased by more than 22 per cent points in the districts of Chamba, Bilaspur and Sirmaur, while female literacy in these districts increased by more than 28 per cent points. Kangra district recorded the maximum (21.11 per cent) male - female difference in change in the literacy rate of the scheduled tribe population, whereas it was minimal in the district of Sirmaur (3.52 per cent) during the year 1991-2011. It is clear from the data that, during the reference period, female literacy rates of the scheduled tribe population increased more than that of their male counterparts in all districts.



- In the state of Himachal Pradesh, change in the literacy rate of the rural scheduled population (34.40 per cent points) and the rural scheduled caste population (35.06 per cent points) was the highest in the district of Sirmaur. It was the lowest in the district of Chamba in case of the scheduled tribe population. Contrary to this, district of Hamirpur recorded the lowest increase in the scheduled population and scheduled caste population, while Hamirpur registered a negative change in the literacy rate of the rural scheduled tribe population.
- Similarly, the increase in the urban scheduled population literacy rate and the urban scheduled caste population was recorded to be the highest in Sirmaur district and the lowest in Hamirpur district. Una district recorded highest increase in the scheduled tribe population and Sirmaur district had the lowest increase in that category.
- The north-western district of Chamba observed an increase of more than 30 per cent points in the literacy rate of the rural scheduled population and the rural scheduled tribe population while the districts of Kullu and Sirmaur noted the highest increase in the scheduled population and the scheduled caste population.
- The four districts of the state i.e. Kangra, Una, Sirmaur and Shimla recorded almost the same change in the literacy rate of urban scheduled population and urban scheduled caste population, that was more than 16 per cent points, while it was also the same in case of the urban scheduled tribe population in Kangra district.
- The districts of Hamirpur, Bilaspur, Una and Kangra had an increase of less than 25 percentage points in the rural literacy of the scheduled population and scheduled caste population while in the case of scheduled tribe population, districts of Lahaul & Spiti, Kinnaur, Mandi, Solan, Kullu and Shimla registered an increase of less than 25 per cent points in the rural literacy. Four districts of the state namely Hamirpur, Kullu, Bilaspur and Solan have shown an increase in the literacy of the urban scheduled population by less than 15 per cent points and the same change was also registered in six districts (Bilaspur, Mandi, Chamba, Shimla, Kullu and Sirmaur) of the state in the case of scheduled tribe population.

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