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Gender Inequality in Literacy Rates in Maharashtra

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Introduction

Literacy programs primarily aim at improving the quality of human capital, which is very vital for the development of any nation. The confidence and behaviour pattern of the neo-literates change tremendously when they are able to read & write. Freire (1987) a famous Brazilian educator observed that literacy enabled adults to read the world by reading the word. Literacy can affect people's lives, both women's and men, through several channels. It increases access to knowledge, information and new ideas. It enhances overall efficiency, opportunities in the labour market and social status (Jejeebhoy, 1996).

The improvement in literacy rate has been phenomenal in post independent India i.e. from 18.33 percent in 1951 Census to 74.04 percent in 2011 Census. The corresponding increase in case of males in the same period has been from 27.16 percent to 82.14 percent and among females from 8.86 percent to 65.46 percent.

Objectives of the paper

- 1) To study the literacy rates in Maharashtra from (1951-2011).
- 2) To analyse the districtwise literacy rates of Maharashtra of Males in the decade (1991-2011).
- 3) To evaluate the inter-census disparities in female literacy rates for (1991-2011) for all district of Maharashtra.
- 4) To find the gap between Males and Females literacy rates for all district in the decade (1991-2011).

Literacy Rates in Maharashtra

The literacy of Maharashtra in 1951 (Refer Table 1) was as low as 27.91 percent with male and female literacy rate 40.49 and 14.56 percent respectively. It has been continuously increasing at a good speed over the decades and now the literacy rate for Maharashtra in Census 2011 is 82.91 percent for the population aged 7 years and above. The corresponding figure for males and females are 89.82 percent and 75.48 percent respectively. The male literacy during this period (1951- 2011) has increased by more than two times whereas the female literacy has increased by more than five times during the same period. The female literacy has always increased at a speed higher than the male literacy rate in all the decades. In this decade (2001-2011) the female literacy rate has increased by 12.61 percent, which is almost three times the increase in male literacy rate (i.e.4.48 percent). It has been observed that the speed at which the literacy has increased in this decade (2001-2011) is lesser as compared to the last few decades.

Table 1: Literacy Rates in Maharashtra (1951 – 2011)

Year	Persons percent	Males percent	Females percent	Change in Percent Points Literacy			Gender Gap	Ratio Male/ Female I.R
				Persons	Males	Females		
1951	27.91	40.49	14.56	-	-	-	25.93	2.78
1961	35.08	49.26	19.80	25.69	21.66	35.99	29.46	2.49
1971	45.77	59.40	31.00	30.47	20.58	56.57	28.40	1.92
1981	53.54	66.61	39.55	16.98	12.14	27.58	27.06	1.68
1991	64.87	76.56	52.32	21.16	14.94	32.29	24.24	1.46
2001	76.88	85.97	67.03	18.51	12.29	28.12	18.94	1.28
2011	82.91	89.82	75.48	7.84	4.48	12.61	14.34	1.19

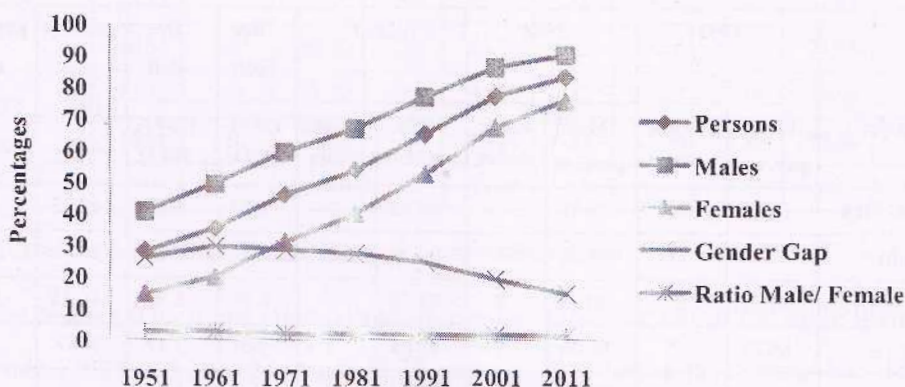
Source: Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India

Note: 1) Literacy rate for 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1981 are related to population aged 5 and above.
Literacy rate for 1991, 2001 and 2011 are related to population aged 7 and above.

The gap between the male-female literacy rates has decreased to 14.34 percent from 18.94 percent in the last decade. The ratio of male: female literacy rates have improved to

1.19:1 in 2011 from 2.78:1 in 1951. That is male literacy rate is now only about 1.19 times of female literacy rate in the year 2011 as compared to 2.78 times in 1951.

Figure 1: Literacy Rates in Maharashtra (1951-2011)



Source: Derived from Table 1

It is observed in Figure 1 that literacy rate in Maharashtra has been increasing consistently from 1951 to 2011. The gender gap is also decreasing from the year 1961. In the year 2011 it is lowest.

Literacy rates and Rank of literacy rates by Gender

In the Table 3.2a, it is observed that the male literacy rate over the decades have improved from 76.60 percent in 1991 to 85.97 percent in 2001 and further to 89.82 percent in 2011 and female literacy rate from 52.30 in 1991 to 67.03 percent in 2001 and further to 75.48 percent in 2011. Eighteen districts in the year 2011 have male literacy rates above the State average, whereas for female literacy rates the corresponding figure is only thirteen. None of the districts has male or female literacy rates below fifty percentages in the year 2011. All the districts in Maharashtra in the year 2011 have male literacy rates above 71 percent and female literacy rates above 53 percent. Mumbai (Suburban) has the highest literacy in males (94.28 percent) in the year 2011 followed by Nagpur (93.76 percent) and Sindhudurg (93.68 percent). Nandurbar is the district with least literate male literacy rate (71.98 percent). The worst male literate districts in Maharashtra are Gadchiroli (80.21 percent) and Dhule (82.59 percent).

Though Gadchiroli has shown good improvement in male literacy rates in the year 2011 (8.35 points) as compared to 2001, its rank (i.e. 34) has not improved over the decade. Other district whose male literacy has improved are Nanded (6.18 points), Jalna (6.10

points), Parbhani (6.03 points) and Hingoli (6.02 points). Due to which their ranks has improved over the decade (2001-2011) by 3, 2, 3 and 2 respectively.

Table 2a: Literacy rates and its Ranking of Males in Maharashtra (1991-2011)

State/District	1991		2001		2011		Dec Diff	Dec Diff	percent inc	percent inc
	Male percent	Rank males	Male percent	Rank males	Male percent	Rank males	(1991-2001)	(2001-2011)	(1991-2001)	(2001-2011)
MAHARASHTRA	76.60		85.97		89.82		9.37	3.85	12.23	4.48
Mumbai (Sub) *	-	-	91.56	1	94.28	1	-	2.72	-	2.97
Nagpur	81.79	3	90.18	4	93.76	2	8.39	3.58	10.26	3.97
Sindhudurg	86.23	2	90.26	2	93.68	3	4.03	3.42	4.67	3.79
Gondiya	-	-	89.61	5	93.54	4	-	3.93	-	4.39
Bhandara	78.82	7	88.97	6	93.17	5	10.15	4.20	12.88	4.72
Akola	77.63	10	88.91	8	92.89	6	11.28	3.98	14.53	4.48
Pune	81.56	4	88.34	9	92.72	7	6.78	4.38	8.32	4.95
Amaravati	78.40	8	88.91	7	92.70	8	10.51	3.79	13.41	4.26
Wardha	78.33	9	87.18	12	92.27	9	8.85	5.09	11.30	5.83
Satara	80.61	5	88.20	10	92.09	10	7.59	3.89	9.41	4.41
Ratnagiri	76.64	13	85.89	18	91.43	11	9.25	5.54	12.08	6.44
Kolhapur	80.33	6	87.47	11	91.33	12	7.14	3.86	8.89	4.41
Thane	77.56	11	87.06	13	90.90	13	9.50	3.84	12.25	4.41
Buldana	76.53	14	86.93	14	90.69	14	10.40	3.76	13.59	4.33
Raigarh	75.94	15	86.15	16	90.68	15	10.21	4.53	13.44	5.26
Mumbai *	87.87	1	90.23	3	90.54	16.5	2.36	0.31	2.68	0.35
Washim	-	-	85.43	20	90.54	16.5	-	5.11	-	5.98
Sangli	74.83	17	86.26	15	90.40	18	11.43	4.14	15.28	4.80
Aurangabad	72.93	19	84.88	21	89.31	19	11.95	4.43	16.39	5.22
Ahmadnagar	75.30	16	85.70	19	88.81	20	10.40	3.11	13.82	3.63
Chandrapur	71.30	20	82.94	24	88.73	21	11.64	5.79	16.33	6.98
Yavatmal	70.45	22	84.09	22	88.58	22	13.64	4.49	19.37	5.33
Nashik	73.98	18	83.65	23	88.03	23	9.67	4.38	13.07	5.24
Jalgaon	77.46	12	85.91	17	87.97	24	8.45	2.06	10.91	2.40
Latur	70.47	21	82.94	25	87.42	25	12.47	4.48	17.69	5.41
Hingoli	-	-	80.71	28	86.73	26	-	6.02	-	7.45
Nanded	64.38	28	80.44	30	86.62	27	16.06	6.18	24.94	7.69

Solapur	70.08	23	81.99	26	86.35	28	11.91	4.36	16.99	5.32
Parbhani	64.90	26	79.63	32	85.66	29	14.73	6.03	22.69	7.58
Osmanabad	68.39	24	80.42	31	85.31	30	12.03	4.89	17.59	6.08
Jalna	64.43	27	79.15	33	85.25	31	14.72	6.10	22.85	7.71
Bid	66.34	25	80.70	29	83.99	32	14.36	3.29	21.65	4.07
Dhule	63.13	29	81.40	27	82.59	33	18.27	1.19	28.94	1.46
Gadchiroli	56.56	30	71.86	34	80.21	34	15.30	8.35	27.04	11.63
Nandurbar	-	-	66.16	35	71.98	35	-	5.82	-	8.79

Source: Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India

The district which has showed the minimum improvement in the male literacy in the same decade (2001-2011) is Mumbai (0.35 percent) and hence its ranking has deteriorated by 13.5 points. Next in the line are districts Dhule and Jalgaon which has shown a meagre improvement of only 1.19 and 2.06 points and as a result their rankings among the districts has deteriorated by 6 and 7 points respectively.

Table 2b Literacy rates and its ranking of Females in Maharashtra (1991- 2011)

State/District	1991		2001		2011		Dec Diff	Dec Diff	percent inc (1991-2001)	percent inc (2001-2011)
	Female percent	Rank fem	Female percent	Rank fem	Female percent	Rank fem	(1991-2001)	(2001-2011)		
MAHARASHTRA	52.30		67.03		75.48		14.73	8.45	28.17	12.61
Mumbai (Sub) *	-	-	81.12	2	86.93	1	-	5.81	-	7.16
Mumbai *	75.80	1	81.38	1	86.03	2	5.58	4.65	7.37	5.71
Nagpur	64.74	3	77.42	3	85.07	3	12.68	7.65	19.59	9.87
Amaravati	61.13	4	75.73	4	83.52	4	14.60	7.79	23.89	10.28
Akola	53.28	9	73.44	5	81.91	5	20.16	8.47	37.84	11.53
Wardha	61.02	5	72.45	7	81.89	6	11.43	9.44	18.74	13.02
Pune	59.77	7	71.89	8	81.13	7	12.12	9.24	20.28	12.85
Thane	60.28	6	73.10	6	80.78	8	12.82	7.68	21.26	10.51
Sindhudurg	66.87	2	71.23	9	79.73	9	4.36	8.50	6.53	11.93
Gondiya	-	-	67.58	13	77.30	10	-	9.72	-	14.38

Bhandara	50.44	13	67.82	11	77.02	11	17.38	9.20	34.45	13.57
Raigarh	52.20	11	67.75	12	76.79	12	15.55	9.04	29.79	13.35
Satara	53.35	8	68.38	10	76.29	13	15.03	7.91	28.17	11.57
Sangli	49.94	15	66.73	14	74.66	14	16.79	7.93	33.63	11.88
Ratnagiri	51.61	12	65.77	16	74.55	15	14.16	8.78	27.43	13.35
Kolhapur	53.08	10	66.02	15	74.18	16	12.94	8.16	24.39	12.35
Chandrapur	46.81	17	62.89	21	73.65	17	16.08	10.76	34.35	17.11
Nashik	49.89	16	64.35	17	73.43	18	14.46	9.08	28.99	14.11
Buldana	46.13	18	64.07	20	72.95	19	17.94	8.88	38.90	13.85
Yavatmal	44.81	20	62.52	22	72.41	20	17.71	9.89	39.52	15.82
Washim	-	-	60.57	24	72.26	21	-	11.69	-	19.29
Ahmadnagar	45.99	19	64.35	18	71.15	22	18.36	6.80	39.92	10.57
Jalgaon	50.34	14	64.30	19	70.92	23	13.96	6.62	27.74	10.29
Aurangabad	39.64	23	60.06	25	70.81	24	20.42	10.75	51.51	17.90
Latur	39.74	22	59.40	27	70.02	25	19.66	10.62	49.47	17.88
Solapur	41.73	21	59.84	26	68.55	26	18.11	8.71	43.41	14.55
Nanded	30.96	27	54.35	30	66.68	27	23.39	12.33	75.55	22.69
Osmanabad	39.16	24	56.89	28	66.67	28	17.73	9.78	45.27	17.20
Dhule	38.78	25	61.39	23	66.21	29	22.61	4.82	58.32	7.84
Hingoli	-	-	51.17	32	64.73	30	-	13.56	-	26.50
Parbhani	29.41	28	52.02	31	64.27	31	22.61	12.25	76.87	23.55
Bid	32.96	26	54.52	29	62.29	32	21.56	7.77	65.41	14.25
Jalna	27.30	30	49.07	33	61.28	33	21.77	12.21	79.74	24.88
Gadchiroli	28.87	29	48.07	34	60.66	34	19.20	12.59	66.52	26.19
Nandurbar	-	-	45.18	35	53.90	35	-	8.72	-	19.30

Source: Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India

It is observed in the above given Table 3.2b that Mumbai (Suburban) has the highest female literacy rate (86.93 percent) in 2011 with Mumbai (86.03 percent) and Nagpur (85.07 percent) in the second and third position. Nandurbar is the least female literate district with literacy rate being 53.9 percent in the same year. Gadchiroli (60.66 percent) and Jalna (61.28 percent) also have low female literacy in the State with rankings 34 and 33 respectively. The maximum increase in the female literacy in the decade (2001-2011) is seen in Hingoli (13.56 points i.e. 26.5 percent) followed by Gadchiroli (12.59 points), Nanded (12.33 points), Parbhani (12.25 points) and Jalna (12.21 points). In all these districts female literacy rate has increased by more than 20 percent in the decade (2001-2011). The minimum increase in female literacy rate is observed in Mumbai (4.65 points) and Dhule (4.82 points).

The female literacy has increased at a faster pace than male literacy over the last two decades (1991-2011) in all districts of Maharashtra. In 2011 the percentage increase in female literacy rate over the year 2001 is mostly in two digits, whereas the percentage increase in male literacy rate in the same year is mostly in single digit. The increase in the literacy rates of both the sexes is slower in the decade (2001-2011) as compared to (1991-2001) in almost all districts in Maharashtra. Sindhudurg is an exception to this in female category. In the decade (1991-2001) the percentage increase in male literacy rate is highest in Dhule district (28.94 percent) but in the decade (2001-2011) it is highest in Gadchiroli (11.63 percent).

It is ironical that the district Dhule which showed a percentage increase of 58.72 percent in (1991-2000) in female literacy rate in Dhule has shown an increase of only 7.84 percent in (2001 – 2011). The increase in female literacy rate in the decade (1991-2001) was highest in Jalna (79.74 percent), followed by 76.87 percent in Parbhani and 75.55 percent in Nanded. But the increase in female literacy rate in the decade (2001-2011) is comparatively quite low with only 24.88 percent in Jalna, 23.55 percent in Parbhani and 22.69 percent in Nanded.

Gap between Males and Females literacy rates

The gap between the male and female literacy rates has decreased over the decades (Table 3.3). This gap has decreased in all the districts of Maharashtra in both the decades. It has decreased in Maharashtra from 24.30 percent in 1991 to 18.94 percent in 2001 and further to 14.34 percent in 2011. The decrease in the gender gap in most of the districts are higher in the decade (1991- 2001) as compared to the decade (2001-2011). The gender gap is

highest in 2011 in Jalna (23.97 percent) followed by Hingoli (22.00 percent), Bid (21.70 percent) and Parbhani (21.39 percent). The gender gap is lowest in Mumbai (3.61 percent) followed by Mumbai Suburban (8.25 percent), Nagpur (8.69 percent) and Amravati (9.18 percent) in 2011.

Table 3: Gender Gap in Literacy Rates in Maharashtra (1991- 2011)

State/District	Gender gap			Decrease in Gender Gap (percent)	
	1991	2001	2011	(1991-2001)	(2001-2011)
MAHARASHTRA	24.30	18.94	14.34	5.36	4.60
Ahmadnagar	29.31	21.36	17.66	7.95	3.70
Akola	24.35	15.47	10.98	8.88	4.49
Amaravati	17.27	13.18	9.18	4.09	4.00
Aurangabad	33.29	24.82	18.50	8.47	6.32
Bhandara	28.38	21.15	16.15	7.23	5.00
Bid	33.38	26.18	21.70	7.20	4.48
Buldana	30.40	22.86	17.74	7.54	5.12
Chandrapur	24.49	20.05	15.08	4.44	4.97
Dhule	24.35	20.01	16.38	4.34	3.63
Gadchiroli	-	23.78	19.55	-	4.23
Gondiya	-	22.03	16.24	-	5.79
Hingoli	-	29.54	22.00	-	7.54
Jalgaon	27.12	21.61	17.05	5.51	4.56
Jalna	37.13	30.08	23.97	7.05	6.11
Kolhapur	27.25	21.45	17.15	5.80	4.30
Latur	30.73	23.54	17.40	7.19	6.14
Mumbai *	12.07	8.84	3.61	3.23	5.23
Mumbai (Sub) *	-	10.43	8.25	-	2.18
Nagpur	17.05	12.76	8.69	4.29	4.07
Nanded	33.42	26.09	19.94	7.33	6.15
Nandurbar	-	20.98	18.08	-	2.90

Nashik	24.09	19.30	14.60	4.79	4.70
Osmanabad	29.23	23.53	18.64	5.70	4.89
Parbhani	35.49	27.61	21.39	7.88	6.22
Pune	21.79	16.45	11.59	5.34	4.86
Raigarh	23.74	18.40	13.89	5.34	4.51
Ratnagiri	25.03	20.13	16.88	4.90	3.25
Sangli	24.89	19.53	15.74	5.36	3.79
Satara	27.26	19.82	15.80	7.44	4.02
Sindhudurg	19.36	19.03	13.95	0.33	5.08
Solapur	28.35	22.14	17.80	6.21	4.34
Thane	17.28	13.97	10.12	3.31	3.85
Wardha	17.31	14.73	10.38	2.58	4.35
Washim	-	24.86	18.28	-	6.58
Yavatmal	25.64	21.58	16.17	4.06	5.41

Source: Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India

In Sindhudurg the decrease in the gender gap was lowest in the decade (1991- 2001) i.e by 0.33 points only but in the next decade (2001-2011) this figure has improved to 5.08 points. The decrease in the gender gap in that decade is highest in Hingoli (7.54 points) followed by Aurangabad (6.32 points) and Parbhani (6.22 points). The decrease in the gender gap is lowest in Mumbai Suburban (2.18 points) followed by Nandurbar (2.90 points) and Ratnagiri (3.25 percent).

• Conclusions & Suggestions:

The literacy rate of Maharashtra has been continuously increasing at a good speed over the decades from 1951. In the female category Mumbai (Suburban) has the highest female literacy in 2011 with Mumbai and Nagpur in the second and third position. The increase in the female literacy is at a faster pace than male literacy in the decades (1991-2011) in all the districts of Maharashtra. On closer analysis it is found that in the decade (2001-2011) the female literacy has increased at a slower rate as compared to the decade (1991-2001). This cannot be seen as a good sign of development and needs to be introspected

to analyse the factors responsible for this slow growth in these districts. Steps should be taken by the State Government to improve this growth.

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