

LITERACY RATES IN NORTH EAST INDIA: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to study the literacy rate in North Eastern states of India. For this purpose, the paper considers the total population and literacy rates for eight states of North Eastern India as per census 2001 and 2011. **Objectives of the study:** The objective of the present study is to analyze and compare the literacy rate of last two census of the state in North East India. **Methodology:** For analyzing the objective, the present study has fully relied on secondary data which was collected from census reports, records and journal. **Results:** This paper concludes that Mizoram has the highest literacy rate of 91.3% and Arunachal Pradesh has the lowest rate of 65.4% in the last two censuses.

Key words: Education, Census, Literacy rates, North East India.

Background:

North East India (officially North Eastern Region, NER) is the easternmost region of India representing both a geographic and political administrative division of the country. Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim are eight states located in the North East of the country and command special importance in India, not only because of their location but also their cultural and historical uniqueness. The states of North Eastern Region are officially recognized under the North Eastern Council (NEC) constituted in 1971 as the acting agency for the development of the north eastern states. Long after induction of NEC, Sikkim formed part of the North Eastern Region as the eighth state in 2002.

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The landscape, the range of communities and geographical and ecological diversity make these states quite different from other parts of the country. They are known as eight siblings and referred to as 'eight sisters' or 'seven sisters and one brother'. These states cover an area of 2,63,179 sq. km, approximately eight per cent of the country's total geographical area and house around 3.76 per cent of the total population the country. Around 98 per cent of the boundary of these states has international borders. Surrounded by hills and beautiful rivers, these states fall in the category of eastern Himalayan ranges and Patkai-Naga hills along with Brahmaputra-Barak river systems and valley plains. The hills and basins are a mixture of mountain ranges, plateaus, low hills and valleys. Rich in natural resources and flora and fauna, the region is a gateway to east and South-East Asia.

Northeast India has a subtropical climate that is influenced by its relief and influences from the southwest and northeast monsoons. The Himalayas to the north, the Meghalaya plateau to the south and the hills of Nagaland, Mizoram and Manipur to the east influences the climate. Since monsoon winds originating from the Bay of Bengal move northeast, these mountains force the moist winds upwards, causing them to cool adiabatically and condense into clouds, releasing heavy precipitation on these slopes. It is the rainiest region in the country, with many places receiving an average annual precipitation of 2,000 mm, which is mostly concentrated in summer during the monsoon season. Cherrapunji, located on the Meghalaya plateau is one of the rainiest places in the world with an annual precipitation of 11,777 mm.

The states have distinct cultures and multiple ethnic groups and are a fine example of unity in diversity. The variety of ethnic groups, languages and religions reflect the multi-cultural character of the states. The region houses over 200 of the 635 tribal groups in the country, speaking a variety of Tibeto-Burman languages and dialects. States like, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland are predominantly inhabited by tribals with a certain degree of diversity among the tribes. States like, Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Sikkim are inhabited by people of various religious denominations like, Hindus, Christians, Muslims and a combination of local tribes and communities.

The region has remained isolated from the rest of the country because of its location and terrain and has failed to secure equal benefits in the process of development. This has resulted into social-political disturbances and unrest for a few years. While the region has a lower level of industrial and economic development, it has abundant forest resources. Petroleum and tea are two significant resources harnessed in the region. At the same time, agriculture, horticulture and handloom continue to be the main activities of these states.

Introduction:

Literacy is a fundamental human right. It is not only a means of liberation but also an instrument of social change. It is not the mere acquiring of the skill to write a few words, as some people think or performing some rudimentary legal or economic function. It is kindling a thirst for knowledge, a taste for education and acquiring some basic skills to pursue the search of knowledge. Literacy in fact opens up greater potential of the masses for self-development. It helps inculcate dignity and self respect among the people.

The United Nations Population Commission, 1948 had recommended the definition of 'Literacy as ability both to read and write a simple message in any language'. The World Conference of Education Ministers on the eradication of illiteracy organized by UNESCO at Tehran, 1965 concluded that rather than an end itself, literacy should be regarded as a way of preparing men for a social, civic and economic role that goes beyond the limits of rudimentary literacy training, consisting merely in the teaching of reading and writing. The process of learning to read and write would be made an opportunity for acquiring information that can immediately be used to improve living standard; reading and writing should lead not only to elementary knowledge but to training for work, a greater participation in civil life and a better understanding of the surrounding world.

Objective of the study:

1. To analyze the literacy rates of the state in North East India.
2. To compare the literacy rate of last two census.

Methodology:

For analyzing the objective, the present paper has fully relied on secondary data which were collected from census reports, records and journal.

Result and Discussion:

As per the data published by the 2001 census, it was found that Mizoram rank top in the North East India states for literacy rates with 661445 of which 350105 male and 311340 female. The literacy rate of the state, Mizoram was 88.8 percent of which 90.7% male and 86.7% female. The Arunachal Pradesh has the lowest literacy rate of 54.3%, of which 63.8% male and 43.5% female. The number of literate persons along with its percentage of North East India according to 2001 census was shown in Table 1.

Table 1**State-wise literacy of North East India according to 2001 Census**

State	Literate			Percentage of Literacy		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Arunachal Pradesh	484785	303281	181504	54.3	63.8	43.5
Assam	14015354	8188697	5826657	63.3	71.3	54.6
Manipur*	1310534	753466	557068	70.5	80.3	60.5
Meghalaya	1157875	614272	543603	62.6	65.4	59.6
Mizoram	661445	350105	311340	88.8	90.7	86.7
Nagaland	1132323	640201	492122	66.6	71.2	61.5
Sikkim	318335	189060	129275	68.8	76	64.4
Tripura	2022099	1150707	871392	73.2	81	64.9

*Excluding Paomata, Purul, Mao-Maram sub-divisions of Senapati district.

Note: Literacy rate in the percentage of literates to population aged 7 years and above.

Source: Statistical Abstract Manipur 2009, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Manipur.

The table also reflects that Manipur rank third among the North Eastern states of India according to 2011 census. The number of literate persons according to 2001 census was 1310534 of which

753466 were males and 557068 were females. The percentage of literacy of the state was 70.5 as per 2011 census. The percentage of male literacy was 80.3 and female literacy was 60.5.

Table 2

State-wise literacy of North East India according to 2011 Census

State	Literate			Percentage of Literacy		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Arunachal Pradesh	766005	439868	326137	65.40	72.60	57.70
Assam	19177977	10568639	8609338	72.20	77.80	66.30
Manipur	1908476	1039858	868618	76.94	83.58	70.26
Meghalaya	1785005	913879	871126	74.40	76	72.90
Mizoram	848175	438529	409646	91.30	93.30	89.30
Nagaland	1342434	723957	618477	79.60	82.80	76.10
Sikkim	444952	251269	193683	81.40	86.60	75.60
Tripura	2804783	1501369	1303414	87.20	91.50	82.70

Note: Literacy rate in the percentage of literates to population aged 7 years and above.

Source: Statistical Year Book of Manipur 2016, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Manipur.

From table 2, it is clear that the highest literacy rate of 91.30 percent, of which 93.30 percent male and 89.30 percent female is recorded in Mizoram while Arunachal Pradesh was the least literacy rate with 65.40 percent, of which 72.60 percent male and 57.70 percent female in 2011 census.

In term of literacy, Manipur rank fifth among the North Eastern states of India according to 2011 census. The number of literate persons was 1908476 of which 1039858 were males and 868618 were females. The percentage of literacy of the state was 76.94 as per 2011 census. The percentage of male literacy was 83.58 and female literacy was 70.26.

Comparison of state-wise literacy of 2001 and 2011 census:**Table 3****Comparison of state-wise literacy of North East India according to 2001 and 2011 Census**

State	Literacy rate of 2001			Literacy rate of 2011		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Arunachal Pradesh	54.3	63.8	43.5	65.40	72.60	57.70
Assam	63.3	71.3	54.6	72.20	77.80	66.30
Manipur	70.5	80.3	60.5	76.94	83.58	70.26
Meghalaya	62.6	65.4	59.6	74.40	76	72.90
Mizoram	88.8	90.7	86.7	91.30	93.30	89.30
Nagaland	66.6	71.2	61.5	79.60	82.80	76.10
Sikkim	68.8	76	64.4	81.40	86.60	75.60
Tripura	73.2	81	64.9	87.20	91.50	82.70

Note: Literacy rate in the percentage of literates to population aged 7 years and above.

Source: Statistical Year Book of Manipur 2016, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Manipur.

Table 3 depicts that the overall literacy rate, male and female literacy rate for 8 states of North East India under 2001 and 2011 census. The comparison of 2001 and 2011 census shows an improvement in overall literacy rate in all the states. The highest overall literacy rate was Mizoram (88.8% in 2001 & 91.30% in 2011) while the lowest literacy rate was Arunachal Pradesh (54.3% in 2001 & 65.40% in 2011) census. In 2001 census, the states of Mizoram, Tripura and Manipur registered more than 70% literacy rate while all the states (except Arunachal Pradesh) registered more than 70% literacy rate in 2011 census.

Gender gap of state-wise literacy in 2011 census:

There has always been a wide gap between the rates of literacy among male and female in Manipur. Historically, a variety of factors have been found to be responsible for poor female literacy rate which included gender based inequality, social discrimination and economic exploitation, social superstition, engagement of girls child in household duties, low enrolment of

girls child in educational institutions etc. the gender gap in different censuses was shown in table 4.

Table 4

Gender gap of state-wise literacy in 2011 census

Censuses	Percentage of Literacy			Differential
	Total	Male	Female	
Arunachal Pradesh	65.40	72.60	57.70	14.9
Assam	72.20	77.80	66.30	11.5
Manipur	76.94	83.58	70.26	13.32
Meghalaya	74.40	76	72.90	3.1
Mizoram	91.30	93.30	89.30	4
Nagaland	79.60	82.80	76.10	6.7
Sikkim	81.40	86.60	75.60	11
Tripura	87.20	91.50	82.70	8.8

Table 4 shows that the Gender gap of state wise literacy has come down by 14.9 percent in Arunachal Pradesh during 2011 censuses and clearly indicates the high priority was given to female literacy during the decade in the state. The lowest is in the Meghalaya state with 3.1 percent.

State-wise Disparity in Literacy rates in 2011 census:

Table 5

State-wise Disparity in Literacy rates in 2011 census

Sl.No	Name of States	Top Literacy rate of NE States		
		Total	Male	Female
1	Mizoram	91.30	93.30	89.30
2	Tripura	87.20	91.50	82.70
3	Sikkim	81.40	86.60	75.60
4	Nagaland	79.60	82.80	76.10
5	Manipur	76.94	83.58	70.26

6	Meghalaya	74.40	76	72.90
7	Assam	72.20	77.80	66.30
8	Arunachal Pradesh	65.40	72.60	57.70

Table 5 shows that literacy rates among states of North East (NE) vary widely from 91.35 in Mizoram to 65.4% in Arunachal Pradesh. It also depicts that the highest male literacy rate comes to 93.3% in Mizoram and the lowest was Arunachal Pradesh i.e. 72.6%. In case of female literacy, 89.3% in Mizoram which is the highest while the lowest was Arunachal Pradesh with 57.7%

Conclusion:

Literacy is a fundamental human right. It is not only a means of liberation but also an instrument of social change. With this regards, Government of India adopted various policies and programme for eradication of illiteracy in our country. Adult Education and Universalization of Elementary Education are some of the programme for removal of illiteracy in our country.

After independence, there has been a significant increase in population and literacy percentage in North Eastern states of India. In North Eastern states, Mizoram has the highest literacy rate of 91.3% and Arunachal Pradesh has the lowest rate of 65.4% in the last two censuses. In 2011 census, the highest male literacy rate comes to 93.3% in Mizoram and the lowest was Arunachal Pradesh i.e. 72.6%. In case of female literacy also, 89.3% in Mizoram which is the highest while the lowest was Arunachal Pradesh with 57.7%

In term of literacy, Mizoram rank second among India's states and Manipur rank fifth among the eight states of North Eastern India according to latest 2011 census.

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