

PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE EXAMINING DISCRIMINATION IN LITERACY ATTAINMENT OF SCHEDULED CASTES: A REGIONAL ANALYSIS (UTTAR PRADESH)

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Literacy attainment, being one of the most important parameter that reflects socioeconomic development of a society, becomes much more important in developing countries like India where majority of the population have been excluded historically and were not allowed to have education at all. In the pretext of increasing efficiency by implementing division of labour, Indian socio-religious structure based of varna system did not allow, except few exceptions, people at large to study. Even women belonging to 'swarna' castes were not allowed to study. Only male members of Brahmin caste have religious sanction of Dharmashastras to engage in educational and institutional knowledge producing activities. It established hegemony of hand full of people over the entire education system.

What is more noticeable is the fact that 'education system' in Indian Subcontinent had been, usually, based on Rote memory of religious scriptures and it seriously lack the critical analysis and objective rationality. It continued unless and untill the British colonial government introduced educational structure based on western liberal ideas (Woods dispatch also called Magna Carta of English education, CE 1854)

This discriminatory and exclusionary Varna-caste system not only failed to provide efficient social system (as mass poverty has always been prevalent throughout the history since Vedic period except few elite classes having prosperity) for every section of society but also it resulted into rampant illiteracy and lack of mass education across the history. However, during British period a series of constitutional development resulted into introduction of modern education along with establishment of rule of parliamentary law instead of rule of Manu Smriti. Rule of law allowed accessibility of all sections of society to educational institutions equally. There was codification of laws into Indian penal code IPC, CPC, CrPC etc in mid 19th century on the recommendation of first law commission headed by Lord Macaulay along with which the Manusmriti based Brahmanical rules and orders were nullified.

But mere British Government's legal entitlement of allowing children of every community into schools didn't ensure the inclusion of child from deprived and downtrodden sections into school education particularly of 'untouchables'. Thus mass illiteracy remained continued even in post independence era as there has been continuation of discrimination against these castes which were termed as scheduled castes, for the first time, by the Government of India Act-1935.

Scheduled castes (SCs) refer to a group of the castes which have been mentioned in the constitution of India as scheduled castes. The basis of inclusion of a community into Scheduled Castes has been the fact that whether the community has been the victim of untouchability practiced against at any point of the history.

Further, British government also took affirmative actions (positive discrimination), for example, reservation of seats in legislatures (communal award and later modified by Gandhi –Irwin pact in 1932AD) as well as in jobs of government sectors. The main purpose was to ensure the representation of Dalits in public sphere which could lead to mitigate the practice of inhumane treatment of untouchability.

Post-independence governments continued with this policy of encouragement of Dalit community (SCs) that led to increasing number of enrollment of scheduled caste students. Though there has been cases of huge dropout particularly because of poverty as most of the scheduled castes population have been in below poverty line bracket in Uttar Pradesh, though the situation have been improving gradually. But introduction of Mid day meal scheme and Sarva SikshaAbhiyan which are flagship programme of governments led to sudden increase in enrollment ratio and a drastic fall in dropout rate has been reported.

Children are provided meals in primary schools that attempts to ensures not only the nutritional level essential for better concentration in study but also has been successful in up to great extent in reducing caste hatred and discrimination on the ground of untouchability as now children belonging to any caste are having food at the same place. So this has been able to fight against the prejudices up to a large extent. Though now the literacy rate has improved significantly, it is usually still far behind the upper strata of society in Uttar Pradesh

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does disparity between scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes still exist in literacy attainment even after so many efforts taken by governments in past few decades?
2. What are the psychosocial factors responsible for the prevalent disparity and discrimination in literacy attainment of Scheduled Castes with respect to Non-SCs?

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this paper includes finding disparities and mapping it at four different levels of education (Primary, Middle, Secondary, Senior Secondary) between-

1. Scheduled and Non- Scheduled castes
2. Scheduled castes in rural and urban areas

Thereafter, to find the psychosocial reasons responsible for such kind of disparity that exists. Here, literatures suggest that the disparities exist not only because of economic reasons (though it's strong reason) but also because of attitude of the society and family members towards providing opportunity to their child/ward.

These individual attitude and consequent behavioral action also depends upon the value system ingrained in the people's mind about the importance of getting education. It is also true for providing education to their child. There lie differences in attitudeformation among the different social groups about providing and getting education. Though Scheduled castes at large comes under the lower income group doesn't afford higher education for their child leading to higher drop out ratio, this is not the only reason. There are other reasons too. Objective of this paper is to explore the psychosocial factors responsible for such kind of disparity and discrimination in literacy attainment of Dalit community in reference of the rest of the social groups. As development in literacy attainment cannot be looked in isolation. It can only be seen in reference to other community.

DATABASE

All data for calculation of literacy rates of different social groups have been taken from Census of India 2011. This paper is based on the government source and therefore gives much reliable and complete picture of the ground realities.

METHODOLOGY

First question that arises is who is considered to be literate. The united nation's has defined literacy as the ability of a person to read and write with understanding a short simple statement on his every day. However, according to definition of Indian census, a person who can both read and write with understanding in any language is to be taken as literate. To achieve the objective of this paper, measuring disparity is the most important. This paper is based on Sopher's Index. Here values of Sopher's Index has been calculated to measure disparities in literacy rates between-

1. Scheduled and Non- Scheduled castes
2. Scheduled castes in Rural and Urban areas

Non-SCs population of each district of Uttar Pradesh has been calculated by subtracting population of Scheduled castes from total population of each district. Value of Sopher's index have been calculated at four different levels of education-

1. Primary level of education (age group- 9 to 11 years)
2. Middle level of education (age group – 12 to 14 years)
3. Secondary level of education (age group-15to 17 years)
4. higher secondary level (age group 18 to19 years)

It is to be noted here that Sopher's index is most appropriate out of the available indices to measure this kind of disparities as it is very much sensitive to minor changes in rates of two variables. And actually, it can measure the relative disparity between two groups. This method had been designed by David Sopher in 1974. According to this, if X1 and X2 represents values of variables of two different groups, the disparity index (D) can be calculated using the formula-

$$D = \log\left(\frac{X_2}{X_1}\right) + \log\left(\frac{100 - X_1}{100 - X_2}\right)$$

Where, $X_2 > \text{ or } = X_1$

Here, group 2 is taken as the group whose value is usually higher. For example, for calculating literacy rate between male and female groups, male is taken as group 2 because males have usually higher literacy rate than female. Here, the values of X_1 and X_2 must be in percentage not in absolute terms

The higher value of Sopher's index shows higher disparity level and vice-versa. If value of index is negative, it shows the same level of disparity but reflecting opposite scenario that is, to say, female literacy rate is higher than that of male. In case of perfect equality, value of D becomes zero.

In order to look into the reason why such kind of pattern of discrimination is found, I have established correlations among taken variables, which shows strong relationship among them.

Literature Review

Lynch¹ (1969) O.M. (1969), in 'The Politics of Untouchability' analysed the process of social mobility and change among a Scheduled Caste Community, namely, Jatavas in Agra city of India. In his study he revealed that Arya Samaj movement stimulated the Jatavas to acquire education and sanskritic symbols, rites and beliefs to improve their social status. A few rich Jatavs started opening cotton mills, shoe industry. Then they started identifying themselves with upper castes to improve their ritual status in the society.

Suma Chitnis² (1972) in his study stated that programmes for the betterment of the status of the Scheduled Castes have concentrated heavily on their education. Laws against untouchability and against discrimination by caste and the reservation of admission in educational institutions and in employment are, between them, expected to clear the ground for the equality of the Scheduled Castes. More specifically, education has been viewed as the instrument through which members of the Scheduled Castes can be equipped for a social structure in which status is determined, not by ascription but by individual achievement and worth.

While the purpose behind the generous provision of educational facilities for the Scheduled Castes is clear and well-reasoned, the approach is naive in its assumptions, viz, (a) that the facilities provided would be Wankhede³ (2008) opined that education is considered as an important means development of weaker sections like the Scheduled Castes in the

¹'The Politics of Untouchability: Social Mobility and Social Change in a City of India', Columbia University Press, New York, U.S.A.

²'Education for Equality: Case of Scheduled Castes in Higher Education', Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 7, No. 31/33, August, pp. 1675-1681

³Wankhede, G. G. (2008), "Accessing Higher Education: Affirmative Action and Structured Inequality – The Indian Experience", Social Change, Vol.38, No.1, March, pp.31-51.

contemporary period of globalization. However, due to their traditional socio-economic handicaps, their access to, performance and sustenance in education is hampered. The government committed itself to 65 compensate their deprivations through various measures. The findings show that there are several weaknesses in implementing the scheme and yet it is found to be very useful for the

optimally and equitably used; (b) that given the opportunity for school and college education, members of the Scheduled Castes would measure up on par with those who are backed by a tradition of formal education; and, (c) that the policy of reservations would best serve the attainment of equality for the Scheduled Castes. He found that these assumptions are unrealistic and educational programmes based on them have led to the perpetuation of old inequalities and the creation of some new ones.

beneficiaries. They suggested that the scheme needs to be revamped in a big way.

Biradar and Jayasheela⁴ (2007) in their study opined that educational status in respect of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is significantly lower as compared to others. Although the rate of literacy increased significantly, a greater illiteracy continued to exist in respect of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes as compared to that of non-SCs/STs.

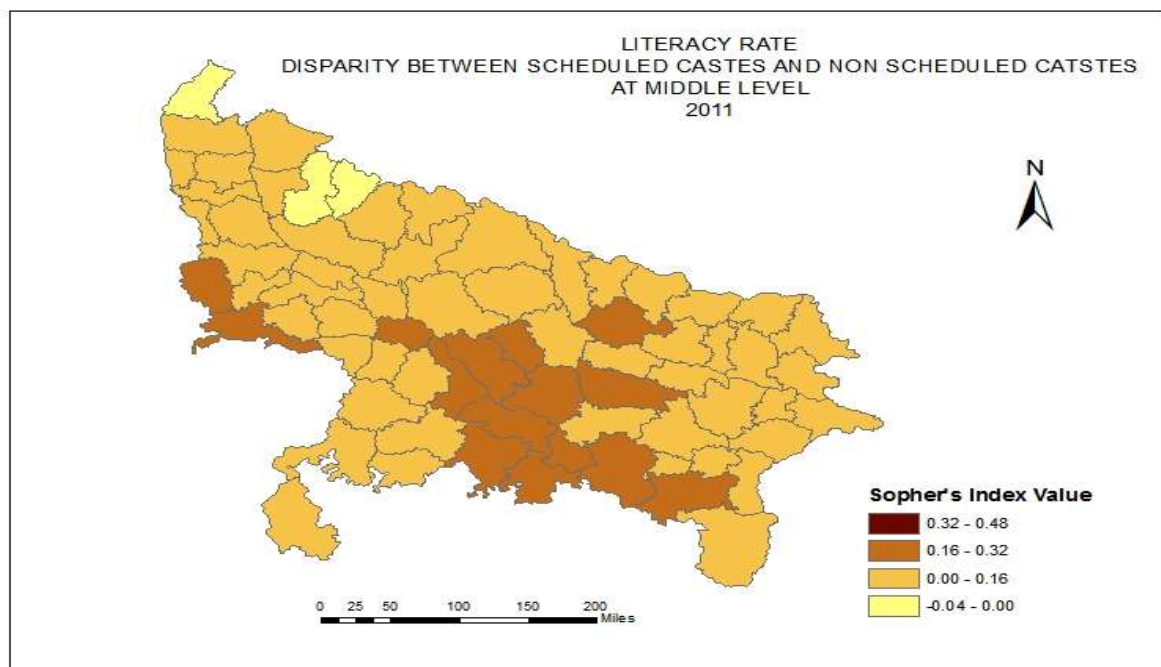
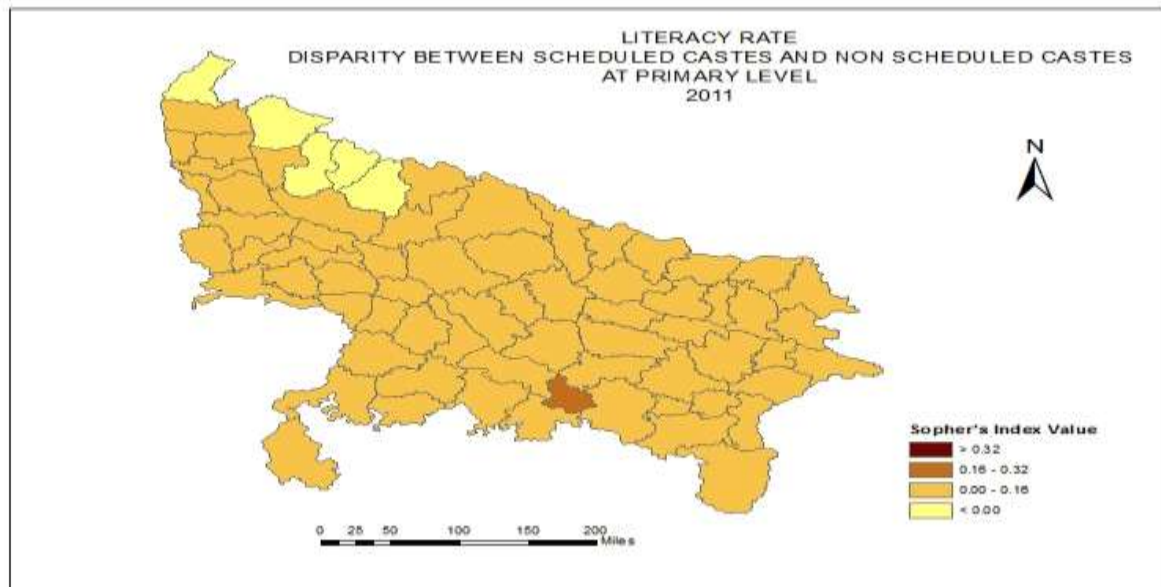
The educational status among social groups is found to be highly unequal in India, even after more than five decades of efforts made by government and nongovernment sectors. The educational status in respect of SCs vis-à-vis non-SCs is far from satisfactory level. In spite of several programmes implemented towards provision of compulsory education, especially for SCs/STs, the illiteracy rates continue to be quite significant among them. This unequal distribution of education among social groups has an adverse impact on the society such as unequal access to better job options, meager earnings, incidence of poverty, health hazards and thereby resulting in powerlessness.

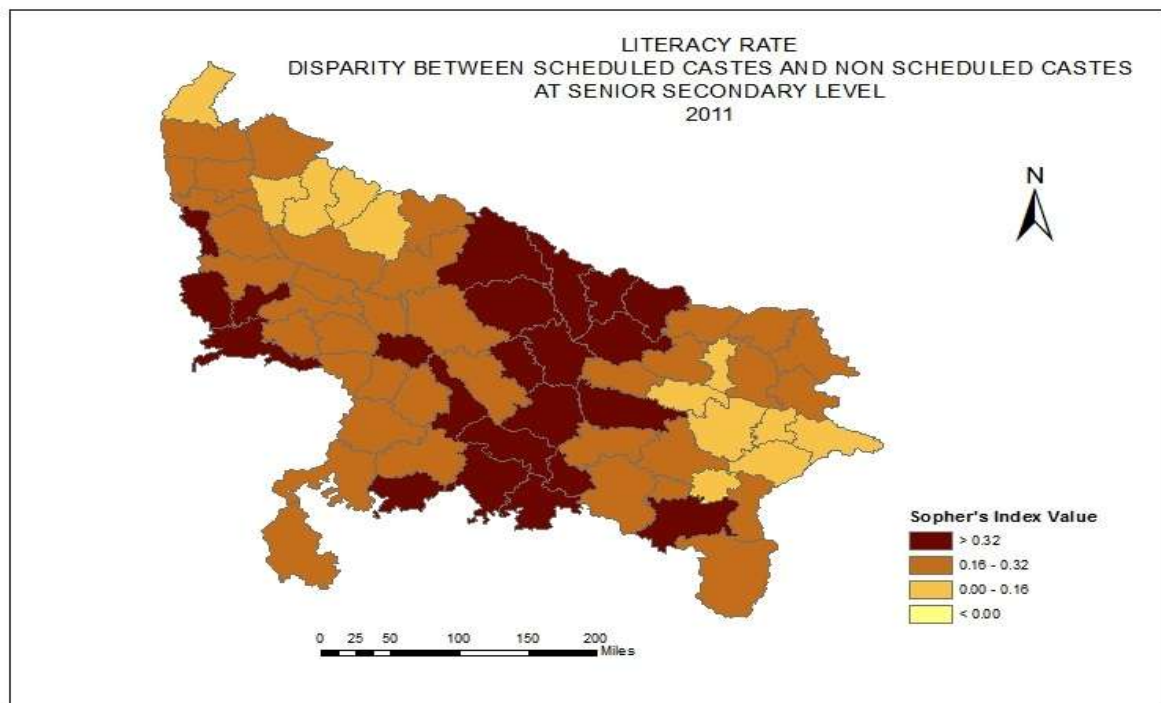
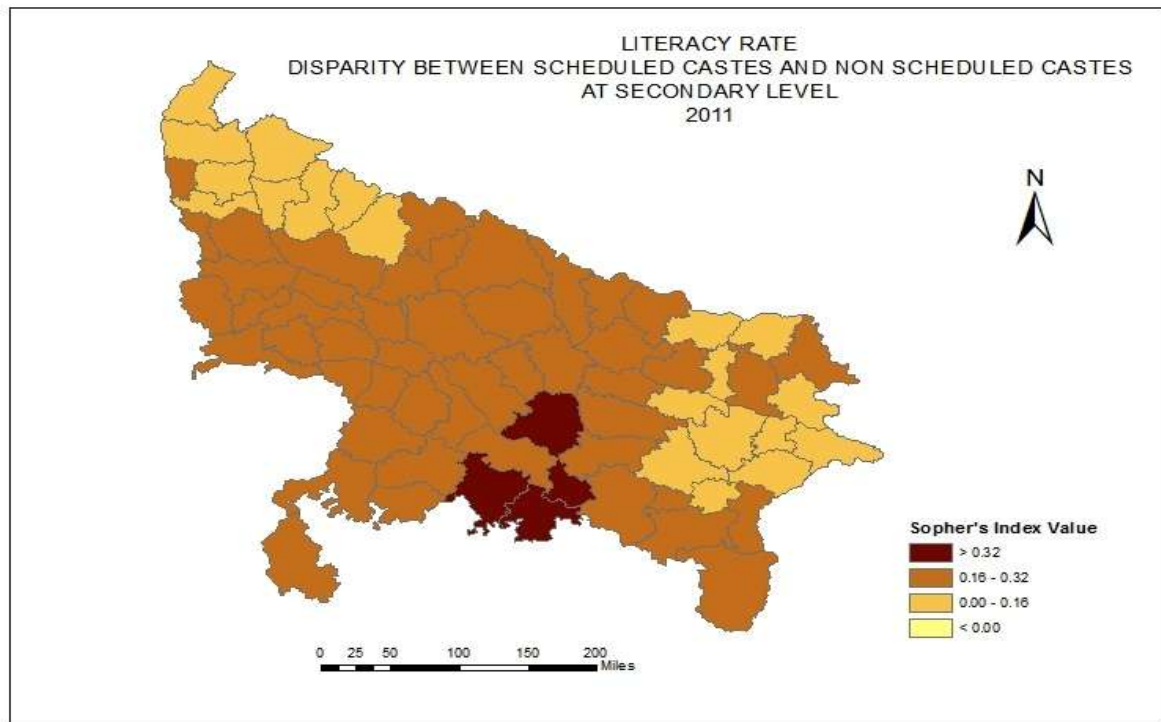
Naidu⁵ (2004) in his study he found that majority of the sample Scheduled Castes are illiterates and among the literates, majority have minimal educational attainment. It is further found that throughout all the three generations of the Scheduled Castes, illiteracy is high. However, the illiteracy over generations has come down, more so in case of fourth generation, the children of the respondents. Regarding educational mobility, it is found that the immobility is more pronounced than mobility. Of the immobile, majority is illiterates throughout. In case of the mobility, a substantial majority have shown upward mobility in all the cases. Except in the case of mobility between father and respondent generations, the downward mobility is very insignificant. He concluded that the status of the Scheduled Castes of his sample area is changing positively due to mutually complementary supportive forces like urbanization, economic development and progressive legislation. Here, I present 16 district wise maps (prepared using Arc GIS technology) of the state of Uttar Pradesh. These maps clearly depict the disparities that exist in literacy attainment.

⁴ Biradar, R.R., Jayasheela (2007), "Effects of Educational Inequality among Social Groups in Rural India", Journal of Rural Development, Vol.26, No.3, July-September, pp.379-401.

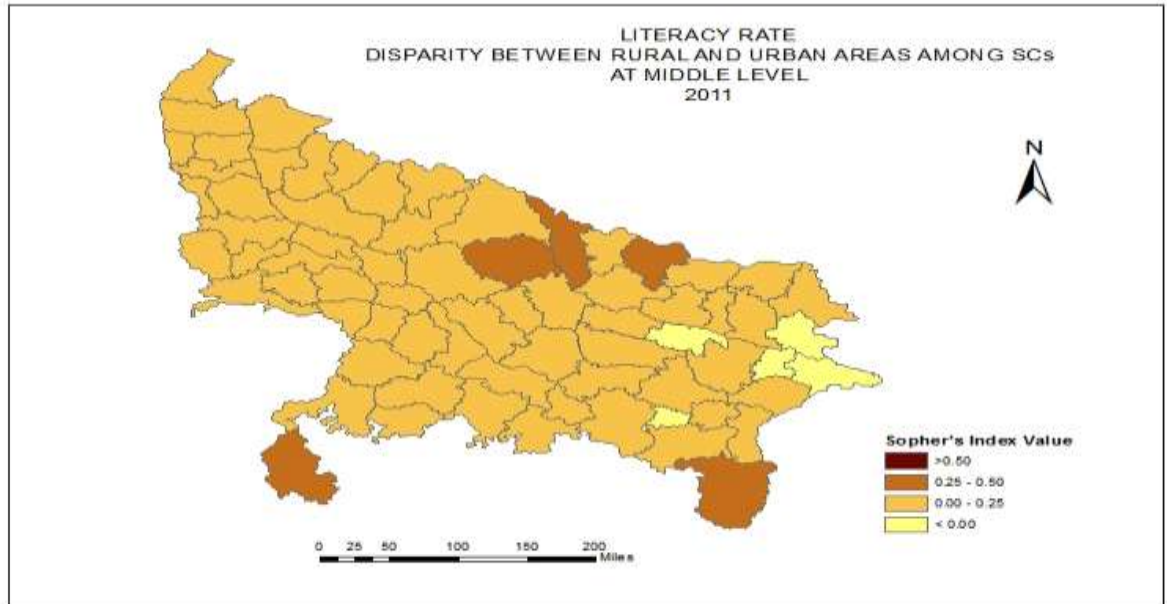
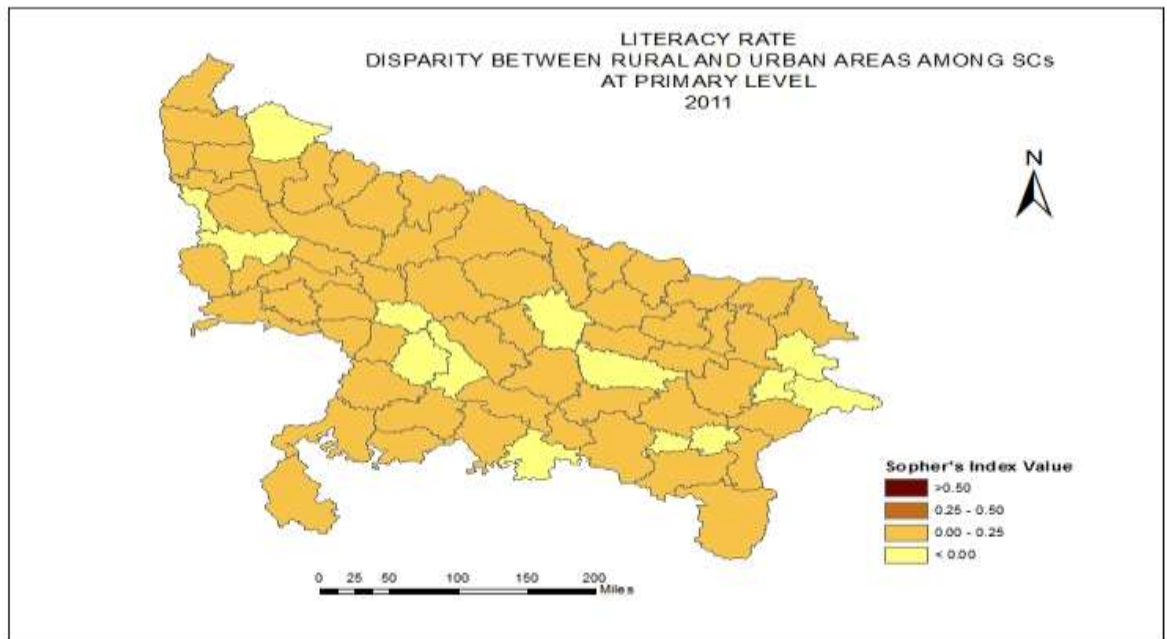
⁵ Naidu, R.V.K., (2004), 'Empowerment of Scheduled Castes', Kalpaz Publications, Delhi.

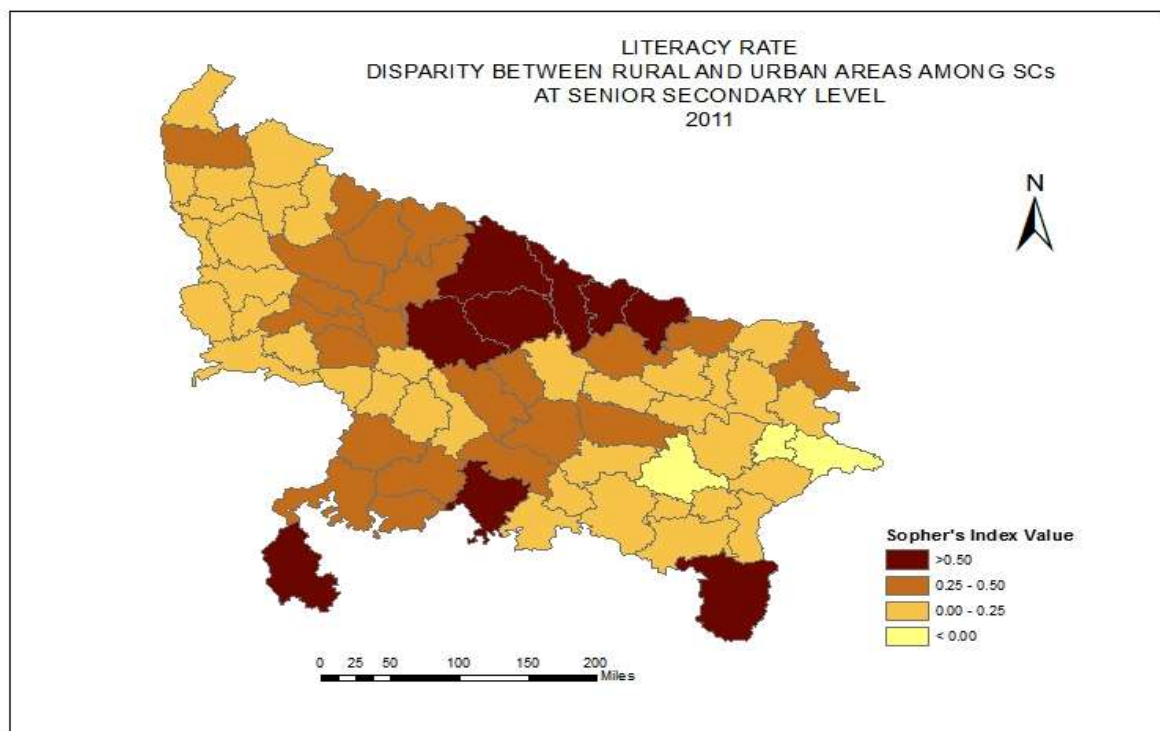
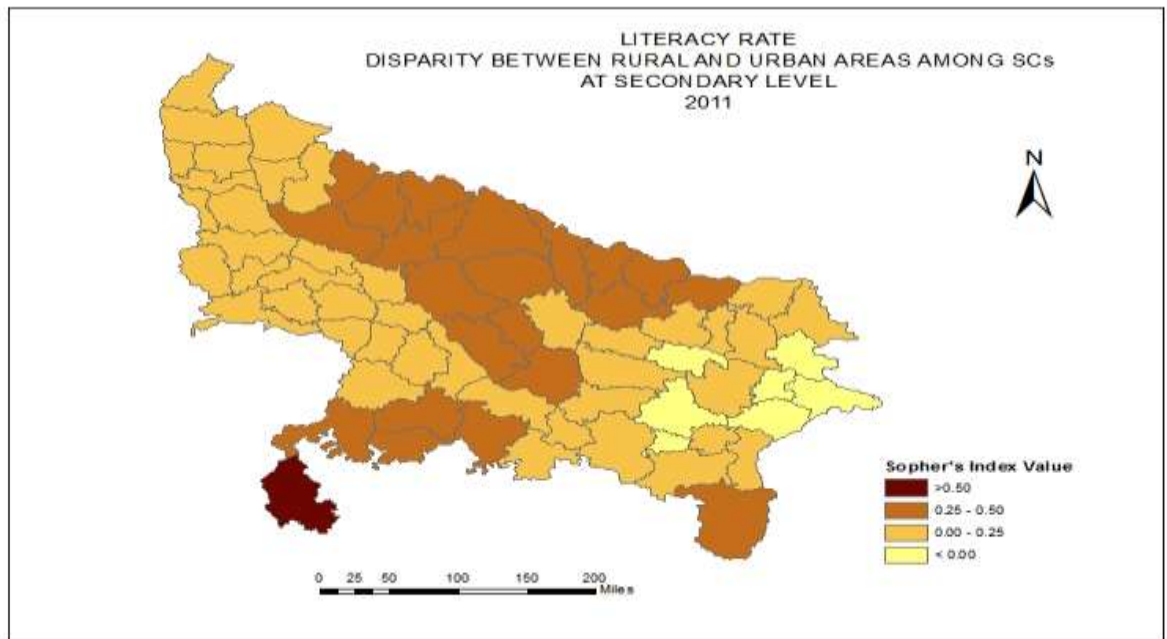
1. Disparity Between SCs And Non SCs





2. Disparity Between Rural And Urban Areas Among SCs





Discussion and Interpretations

There is variety of reason why a Dalit student didn't achive the level of his/her counterpart of Non-SCs fellows. Various socio-economic reasons are attributed for such a condition. However, the socio-economic condition of an individual in itself is not independent from the

historicity of the societal interrelationships. Socio-economic condition, in a country like India, basically is the product of socio-religious structure based relationship among various social groups. And in turn the confidence and morale of a student also depends on the psychological attributes he/she has acquired from the socio-cultural environment which itself varies according to the caste hierarchy in India.

Findings and Conclusion

While the 83rd constitutional amendment recognizes education as a fundamental right of all Indian citizens, disparities continue to be pronounced among various social groups viz. SCs and Non-SC. Despite the provision of free and compulsory education, there exist huge disparities among them. Public welfare schemes like Mid day meal scheme and Flagship educational programmes like Sarva siksha Abhiyan though have been successful upto a large extent in eradicating mass illiteracy in scheduled castes in Uttar Pradesh, they have failed to curb the high drop out in scheduled castes, and their children are not able to continue in higher level of education, as evident from the above maps.

Above maps depicts that the disparities in literacy rates between SCs and NON-SC are increasing as per the higher level of education and it is also expanding spatially. That means at higher level of education more number of districts are showing higher disparities. One interesting observation is that some districts are showing negative value of Sopher's index indicating scheduled castes are more literate in these districts than that of Non- SC population. Generally the districts characterized by high level of urbanisation and higher female literacy of scheduled castes are showing less level of disparities that these factors are positively affecting the literacy rate of scheduled castes.

It's interesting to note that middle region of the Uttar Pradesh, in comparison to other parts of the state, shows higher disparity between SCs and Non-SCs if a child rises from primary to higher secondary level. This trend is also visible, to some extent, if we talk about the disparity between Scheduled castes living in rural and urban areas.

These observations are more or less being justified by the correlation of urbanisation and literacy of scheduled castes.

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