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Trend of Literacy in Varanasi City: A Geographical Study

Neelam Pal

Department of Geography, BHU.

$$\min \sum_{i=1}^n w_i x_i$$

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ABSTRACT

Today, Literacy is one of the most important parameters to evaluate an area or region's development phase. Literacy accelerates the social, cultural, economic, political condition and that it has a strong relationship with regional development. Banaras has ever remained the great centre of Hindu culture and civilization. The two religions, Buddhism and Hinduism, which still influence the thought of almost half the world, received their impulse and strength from this city (cf. Singh, R.L. 1955). This city records a settlement history since ca. 1000 BCE. However, the present city has grown during the early 18th century. Since ancient period, Varanasi has become the great centre of learning, education and research and presently the city is the chair of ancient oriental and modern learning. It has vast scope of the education for the people of the country and abroad. Despite of these educational institutions and facilities the overall literacy in Varanasi is very poor. The present paper is an attempt to Study the trend and pattern of literacy in Varanasi City on the ward level and to highlight the problems, impact, and suggestions for the improvement of literacy in the City. The results are presented through various maps and tables generated in ArcGIS. Tables and data is calculated on the basis of 2001 census.

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Introduction

Population Geographers consider literacy as a qualitative attributes of population, which is a fairly reliable parameter of the socio-economic development of region (cf. Gosal 1969: 261). It influences various other demographic attributes like fertility, mortality, migration, and economy. In addition, it affects the urbanization, industrialization, communication, and commerce, which are indispensable to the advancement of nation in the modern time (cf. Ghosh, 1985: 104). The Ministry of Human Resource and Planning Commission decide that in 1991, the question of literacy be canvassed only for those aged seven and above. Earlier it was taking into account the entire population. Generally, Literacy perceived as ability to reading and writing with understanding in minimum one language. "A literate person is one who is able both to read and write. A person who can neither read nor write is called illiterate (Chandana 1980)." In Indian perspective, those people who can read and write both with understanding ability of any language, classified as literate.

Since ancient period, Varanasi has been the great centre of learning and education. Even today, it has a vast scope of the education for the people of the country and abroad. There are a good number of holy retreats, research centres, traditional Sanskrit *pathshalas*, school, and colleges. Four universities, viz. Banaras Hindu University, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, M.G. Kashi Vidyapeeth, and Central University of Tibetan Studies are situated in the city. There also exist some autonomous or deemed university level institutions like U.P. College, Prashvanath Jain Institute, and Arya Mahila College. Despite the presence of these educational institutions and facilities, the overall literacy is relatively poor in Varanasi.

The quality of population can be judged from the varying levels of literacy. Up to 1981, it was customary to exclude children in the age group of 0-4, while calculating literacy.

However, the Census of 1991 has redefined the concept of literacy; it states "Literacy rate would, however, be more meaningful if one exclude the population in the age group of 0-6 from the total population." At this stage, age-rangedata is not available. Therefore, intended for the present purpose the estimated population aged seven years and above was taken into account. That is how, in the 1991 and 2001 Census the term 'literacy rate' used in reference to population-aged seven years and above.

Objectives

Varanasi is the chair of ancient culture and civilization. There are a good number of holy retreats, research centers, Sanskrit paths alas, school and colleges. Four universities situated within the city are Banaras Hindu University, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Kashi Vidyapeeth, and Tibetan Buddhist institution Samath. Despite these, the literacy rate of the city is only 72 per cent in 2001 census that is not up to that extent as an ancient seat of culture and learning. The present work entitled "Trend and Pattern of Literacy in Varanasi City: A Geographical Study" is modest attempt. Essentially the major objectives of this study are as under:-

1. To be acquainted with the trend of literacy growth in Varanasi city during 1951-2001.
2. To be known with the spatial pattern of literacy on ward level.
3. To investigate the problems associated with spatial-temporal basis.
4. To find out applied solutions for the better.

Growth of Literacy

The level of literacy demonstrates the quality of population of Varanasi city. The study area (Varanasi M.C.) witnesses increasing trend of literacy. The reason for this is city influence, technical development; transportation facility, improved economic status, frankness of new educational institutions, public awareness and government policy, etc. According to

1951, 1961, and 1971 censuses of Varanasi MC, correspondingly there was 29.66, 40.04, and 43.14 percent literacy, which rose to 45.71 percent in 1981. The census of 1991 and 2001 shows 63.64 and 72.02 percent literate population in the city could read and write a message with understanding. (Table 1.1)

Table 1.1. Varanasi city: Literacy Ratio

Year / Decade	Total	Male	Female
1951	29.66	39.30	18.03
1961	40.04	51.42	26.29
1971	43.14	53.28	31.06
1981	45.71	55.33	34.49
1991	63.64	73.22	52.32
2001	72.02	78.76	64.28

Source: District census handbook 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, and 2001.

When we analyze the table 1.1, we see that female literacy rate is even much lower than the males. In 1951 census where percentage of male literacy was 39.30 it was only 18.03 in female. In 2001 census, the male literacy was 78.76 percent where as the female literacy was 64.28 percent.

In 2001, the total literate population of Varanasi MC was observed as 72 per cent, which was higher as compared to the State urban average (56.3 per cent) and national urban average (70.1 per cent), but was low as compared to the prevalent literacy rates in other KAVAL cities. The Varanasi city (72.0 per cent) stands on forth position among KAVAL Towns of Uttar Pradesh for its literacy rate. The Agra city has the lowest literacy rate (70.0 per cent) among all KAVAL Towns. The Varanasi city has 64.2 per cent female literacy and comprises the highest gap (14.6 percent) between male and female literacy. Only Lucknow (62.6 per cent) has shown lower female literacy rate than Varanasi city. Here the literacy level showed the actual literate person which exclude the 0-6 year population. (Table 1.2)

Table 1.2. Literacy rate in KAVAL cities

City	Total Literacy Rate (in %)	Male Literacy Rate (in %)	Female Literacy Rate (in %)	Difference in literacy Rate (in %)
Kanpur	78.8	82.9	73.9	9.0
Agra	70.0	81.7	71.9	9.8
Varanasi	72.0	78.8	64.2	14.6
Allahabad	80.9	86.1	74.3	11.7
Lucknow	77.1	76.3	62.6	13.7

Source: Census of India 2001.

Although here is, an increase in literacy rate in female population but that is very unsatisfactory. This is because of the dominance of male over female, older thoughts of some people, burden of household work on females, prevalence of early marriage and prejudices against their employment and mobility. All these factors are responsible to the present scenario of literacy in Varanasi city. In association to Varanasi city, there is a large gap between male and female literacy is 14.6 per cent, which demonstrates very poor and uneducated surroundings of dwellers and migrated population to the city for their livelihood and economic activities. It also exhibits about lack of educational activities and social restructuring programmes and efforts.

Ward wise spatial pattern of literacy:

In order to understand the level of literacy development on ward level in 1981, 1991 and 2001, grouped into six categories at an interval of ten percent as shown in table 1.3. In 1981, the average literacy rate of the city was 45.71 percent. Samath,

Bazardiha, Alaipura, Kamalgarha, Bandhukacchibagh, Ghousabad, Pandeypur, Shivpur reserve reveals very low literacy rate is below 45 percent.

Table 1.3. Ward wise literacy percentage in Varanasi MC

Sr. No	Category	Interval value per cent	1981	1991	2001
1	Very Low	<45	15	5	4
2	Low	45-55	11	5	7
3	Moderately Low	55-65	11	9	11
4	Moderately High	65-75	3	10	18
5	High	75-85	-	10	32
6	Very High	85-95	-	1	18
TOTAL	No of Wards		40	40	90

Source: District census handbook, 1981, 1991, and 2001.

Muslim community mostly inhabits in these some wards generally situated in the outer area of the city. Many Reason behind this low literacy rate are as less number of schools, lack of transportation facility, unawareness to the benefits of schooling and ethical values etc. Garhwasitola (71.26per cent), Mishrapokhra (67per cent), Kameshwar Mahadev (65.05per cent), and Dashashwamedh (63.70per cent) are experienced moderately high percentage of literacy where the literacy was 71.26, 67.0, 65.05, 63.70, percent respectively. These all wards situated mostly in the core of the city area. However, no wards observed in high and very high category.

In 1991, the average literacy rate was 63.64 percent. There were five wards of Kamalgarha, Alaipura, Bandhukacchibagh, Gopalganj, Nawapura showing very low category literacy rate respectively 35, 36, 40, 42, 45 percent. In the core of the city Garhwasitola ward reveals very high literacy followed by Rajminder, Jangambari, Kameshwar Mahadev, Dashashwamedh, Asi wards having high literacy percentage 84, 82, 81, 81, 81 percent respectively mostly situated in the core of the city. This tendency reveals the availability of the schools, high working population percentage, and the city effects. Generally, in all the city wards, the literacy percentage is comparatively high in males rather than females. The highest Male literacy rate is in Garhwasitola 92 percent and the lowest literacy rate in Kamalgarha is 42 percent. As the similar highest female literacy 86 percent and lowest 35 percent in the Kamalgarha ward.

Although the percentage of literacy has successively increased, its rate varies from 45 percent to 95 percent in the majority of the wards, which are under high category literacy in 2001. Out of 90 wards, only four wards under very low literacy rate are Saraipura, Alaipura, Chittanpura, Basania where the literacy percentage is only 28.66, 36.65, 42.85 and 44.43 respectively. These all wards populated with Muslim majority where the tendency of low literacy compares to Hindu majority. The lowest male and female literacy is in the Basaniya ward, where the male literacy 36.39 and female literacy 20.17 percent. The whole picture of the city shows that about 18 ward of the city area are having moderately high literacy rate. The highest literacy rate found in Kalbhairav, Nariya, Senpura, Bramhnal wards where the literacy was 92, 92, 90, 89 percent respectively. The highest male and female literacy is in Kalbhairav ward, which is 95 percent in both male and female literacy. These high literate wards are in the core of the city is being better because about 68 wards where the percentage of literate is more than 65 percents even though the female literacy is highly unsatisfactory. (Fig.1)

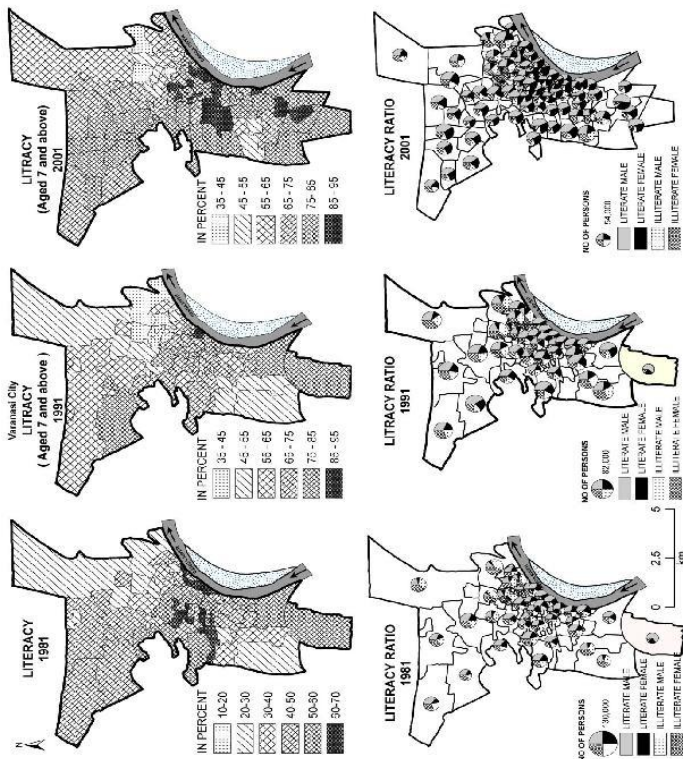


Fig 1.

Conclusion

Literacy study, on Varanasi City shows that the growth in literacy strongly related to the regional development. Most of

wards where the ratio of literacy is low are related with the slum dwellers, Muslim weavers, weaker section of society, scarcity of educational institute and somewhere unawareness about education. The wide gap between male and female literacy is mainly due to preference to boy's education, female's responsibility in household work and early marriage. Poverty also compels the parents to involve their children to sundry works, rather than sending them to schools. Therefore, in order to achieve the universalization of education there is a need to give more stress for female literacy. The establishment of financial and technical assistance is very essential for the weaker section especially Muslim weaver and the slum areas. The political and administrative decision has to engage attention with the help of NGO's and voluntary organization for the awareness of education, establishment of schools and elevation of the society. Each section of the society and all age group have to be involved in literacy programs.

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