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EXTENT OF LITERACY IN THE RURAL MAHARASHTRA

V. D. DESHPANDE
and
S. G. SAPRE

Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona

In this paper we propose to study the extent of literacy in the rural areas of the Maharashtra State. The study is confined to ten centres surveyed by the Agro-Economic Unit of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics between 1955 and 1958 for the purpose of assessing economic change. Each one of these centres was located in ten different districts and consisted of a cluster of three or four neighbouring villages comprising a population of about 5,000. The total number of villages covered by the ten centres was thirty. These ten centres were classified as relatively prosperous or poor on the basis of the share of cash crops in the total value of the agricultural produce. Those centres where the contribution of the cash crops in the total agricultural produce was more than 25 per cent were classified as prosperous centres and grouped together, under Group I. The remaining centres, which were not so prosperous according to this criterion were classified under Group II. The validity of the above criterion for the grouping of the centres into prosperous and not-so-prosperous groups is brought out by Table I which shows that the per capita income was comparatively higher in Group I where the share of the cash crops in the total produce was also larger. Thus, the contribution of the cash crops in the total produce was nearly 56 per cent in Group I as against 13 per cent in Group II. The per capita income was Rs. 220 and Rs. 149 respectively in Group I and Group II. Data in respect of literacy is presented for the two groups separately in order to find out whether the spread of literacy was more in relatively rich tracts as compared to that in the poor tracts.

A detailed information about the location, important crops grown, educational facilities available, etc., is given group-wise in Appendix I. Both the groups consisted of the five centres comprising of 15 villages. Almost all the centres in Group I had good irrigation facilities and the commercial crops grown in this group were groundnut, cotton, potato, onion and banana. The centres in Group II were located in a predominantly cereal producing tract where little or no irrigation was available. Data regarding the total agricultural production and per capita income was not available in respect of Selu centre. The data presented for Group I in Table I, therefore, pertains to only four centres. Selu was, however, included

TABLE I—AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND PER CAPITA INCOME IN THE TWO GROUPS

| | Group I | Group II |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Total Agricultural Produce (value in Rs.) | 3,374,012 | 1,778,897 |
| Value of Cash Crop Produce | 1,898,960 | 243,376 |
| Percentage of Cash Crop in the Agricultural Produce | 56.28 | 13.68 |
| Total Population | 21,592 | 23,636 |
| Total Income | 4,749,169 | 3,520,402 |
| Per Capita Income | 219.95 | 148.94 |

under Group I because the area under cotton was considerably large and one village in this centre was the biggest banana producing centre in the tehsil. Lift irrigation was also practised to some extent due to the availability of cheap power supply in the region.

It may be noted that educational facilities were available at all the centres for the last seventy years or so. During the survey years, all the centres had schooling facilities upto the 7th standard. The total number of students was 3831 in the first group and 3368 in the second group. Taking into consideration the number of teachers which was 112 in Group I and 95 in Group II the number of students per teacher comes to 34 and 35 in the respective groups. This number is the average number on roll and not the average of actual attendance.

The data collected through house to house inquiry during the course of the village surveys can be examined to find out the variations in the extent of literacy in the two groups in respect of (1) sex and age, (2) caste, and (3) income groups. Table II presents these data for the two groups by giving the number of literates in the male and female population and also in the adult and non-adult population of either sex. The literate population is further split into educands and non-educands whereas among the illiterates, the number of children not of school-going age is given separately. Educands mentioned in the table are those who were attending the school at the time of the inquiry. The term non-educands refers to those who were not attending school at the time of our inquiry but who had some educational background. Those who had not received formal schooling but had become literates either through adult education campaign or on their own are also included among the non-educands. Illiterates are those who are other than educands and non-educands, including the children who had not attained the school-going age. The concept of literacy used in the present study is thus much broader than the census definition which is ability to read and write a letter. This definition excludes the children who are in the first three or four standards in a primary school. The census definition also excludes those who have received the school education but have relapsed into illiteracy. The cases of both these types are treated as literates for the purpose of the present study.

It can be seen from Table II that the percentage of literates for Group I was around 32 whereas for Group II this percentage was around 23. The percentage of the literate population for both the groups together came to 28. It is thus clear that the degree of literacy was considerably higher in the first group than in the second group. The extent of literacy in different age and sex groups is worth noting. Among non-adult population the proportion of educands mainly represents the literate class. The proportion of educands among the male non-adults was 34 per cent in Group I as against 29 per cent in Group II. Similarly, the proportion of educands among the female non-adults was nearly 20 per cent in Group I as against 11 per cent in Group II. Thus the proportion of educands among male as well as female non-adults was higher in Group I than in Group II. It may also be noted that the differences in the two groups (in respect of the extent of literacy) were more marked in the case of female non-adults than in the case of male non-adults. Among male adults the percentage of literates was about 53 in the first group and 38 in the second group. The corresponding percentages among female adults were 12 and 7 in Group I and Group II respectively. It may

TABLE II—DISTRIBUTION OF EDUCAND, NON-EDUCAND AND ILLITERATE POPULATION ACCORDING TO AGE AND SEX

| Age and Sex Group | Group I | | | | | | | Group II | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Male Adults .. | 480 | 3876 | 4356 | 3796 | — | 3796 | 8152 | 247 | 2605 | 2852 | 4322 | — | 4322 | 7174 |
| Per cent .. | 5.89 | 47.55 | 53.44 | 46.56 | — | 46.56 | 100 | 3.44 | 36.31 | 39.75 | 60.25 | — | 60.25 | 100 |
| Male Non-Adults .. | 1889 | 174 | 2063 | 908 | 2533 | 3441 | 5504 | 1448 | 176 | 1624 | 1226 | 2130 | 3356 | 4980 |
| Per cent .. | 34.32 | 3.16 | 37.48 | 16.50 | 46.02 | 62.52 | 100 | 29.08 | 3.53 | 32.61 | 24.62 | 42.77 | 67.39 | 100 |
| Female Adults .. | 40 | 942 | 982 | 7201 | — | 7201 | 8183 | 37 | 472 | 509 | 6559 | — | 6559 | 7068 |
| Per cent .. | 0.49 | 11.51 | 12.00 | 88.00 | — | 88.00 | 100 | 0.52 | 6.68 | 7.20 | 92.80 | — | 92.80 | 100 |
| Female Non-Adults .. | 1024 | 196 | 1220 | 1627 | 2364 | 3991 | 5211 | 479 | 88 | 567 | 1750 | 2092 | 3842 | 4409 |
| Per cent .. | 19.65 | 3.76 | 23.41 | 31.22 | 45.37 | 76.59 | 100 | 10.86 | 2.00 | 12.86 | 39.69 | 47.45 | 87.14 | 100 |
| Total .. | 3433 | 5188 | 8621 | 13532 | 4897 | 18429 | 27050 | 2211 | 3341 | 5552 | 13857 | 4222 | 18079 | 23631 |
| Per cent .. | 12.69 | 19.18 | 31.87 | 50.03 | 18.10 | 68.13 | 100 | 9.36 | 14.14 | 23.50 | 58.64 | 17.86 | 76.50 | 100 |

1 = Educands, 2 = Non-educands, 3 = Total literates (1+2), 4 = Illiterates.
 5 = Not of school-going age, 6 = Total illiterates (4+5), 7 = Total population.

be noted that the prevalence of literacy was higher in Group I than in Group II both among the male and female adults. However, the difference, as between the two groups, was more marked among male adults than among female adults. Among female adults, literacy was at a low level in both groups. On the whole, however, literacy was more prevalent in Group I than in Group II among adult and non-adult population of both sexes.

Data in Table II also reflect on the progress of compulsory education in the region under study. The success of the measures in respect of compulsory education can be judged by comparing the total children of school age with those actually attending school. Thus out of the total non-adult population of school age in the two groups together, *i.e.*, out of 10,985 non-adults only 4,840 or 44 per cent were attending school. In Group I, out of 5,818 non-adults 2,913 or 50 per cent were reported as attending the school whereas in Group II, 1,927 out of 5,167 or 37 per cent were reported as attending school. Thus the proportion of the non-adult school age population attending school was higher in Group I than in Group II.

The proportion of literates among the non-adults may be considered as a definite indicator of the future literate population. As such, the comparison of the data in respect of literates among the adults with those in respect of non-adults will give the trends in respect of the spread of literacy in the future. For the sake of this comparison it is necessary to exclude the non-adult population not of school-going age. After excluding this population it is found that in both the groups the prevalence of literacy would be much higher among the newer generations (non-adults) than older generations (adults) of both sexes. These data are presented in Table III. It may also be noted that among the males, the literacy differences as between the two groups in respect of the present adult generation and the future adult generation would be slightly reduced. However, in the case of females, the differences in this respect as between the two groups would be increased since a greater proportion of females in Group I would become literates than that in Group II.

TABLE III—LITERACY ACCORDING TO AGE AND SEX

| | Adult Males | | Non-Adult Males | | Adult Females | | Non-Adult Females | |
|----------|-------------|-------|-----------------|-------|---------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| | Lite-rates | Total | Lite-rates | Total | Lite-rates | Total | Lite-rates | Total |
| Group I | 4356 | 8152 | 2063 | 2971 | 982 | 8183 | 1220 | 2847 |
| Per cent | 53.44 | | 69.44 | | 12.00 | | 42.85 | |
| Group II | 2852 | 7174 | 1624 | 2850 | 509 | 7068 | 567 | 2317 |
| Per cent | 37.75 | | 56.98 | | 7.20 | | 24.47 | |

TABLE IV.—PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION IN THE TWO GROUPS ACCORDING TO CASTE AND LITERACY

| Caste Groups | Group I | | | | | Group II | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| | Literates | | Total | | Total | Literates | | Total | | Total |
| | Educands | Non-educands | Literates | Illiterates | | Educands | Non-educands | Literates | Illiterates | |
| A | B | A + B | C | D | C + D | | | | | |
| I. Brahmins .. | 23.68 | 43.27 | 66.95 | 33.05 | 100=587 | 18.11 | 44.03 | 62.14 | 37.86 | 100=243 |
| II. Advanced Hindus .. | 13.62 | 32.08 | 45.70 | 54.30 | 100=1593 | 12.65 | 27.11 | 39.76 | 60.24 | 100=1645 |
| III. Marathas .. | 12.60 | 20.91 | 33.51 | 66.49 | 100=2587 | 9.74 | 11.27 | 21.01 | 78.99 | 100=5439 |
| Castes allied to Marathas | 13.85 | 17.94 | 31.79 | 68.21 | 100=9247 | 7.55 | 10.98 | 18.53 | 81.47 | 100=2304 |
| IV. Intermediate Hindus I .. | 15.51 | 27.12 | 42.63 | 57.37 | 100=2083 | 14.58 | 27.09 | 41.67 | 58.33 | 100=1392 |
| V. Intermediate Hindus II .. | 10.50 | 16.41 | 26.91 | 73.09 | 100=3047 | 10.57 | 15.48 | 26.05 | 73.95 | 100=2261 |
| VI. Backward Classes .. | 11.39 | 11.17 | 22.56 | 77.44 | 100=1396 | 6.30 | 8.24 | 14.54 | 85.46 | 100=5584 |
| VII. Mahars .. | 12.61 | 16.95 | 29.56 | 70.44 | 100=1404 | 9.07 | 14.32 | 23.39 | 76.61 | 100=2681 |
| Depressed Castes .. | 8.76 | 7.98 | 16.74 | 83.26 | 100=2294 | 7.40 | 5.99 | 13.39 | 86.61 | 100=1001 |
| VIII. Muslims .. | 9.75 | 20.83 | 30.58 | 69.42 | 100=2636 | 13.21 | 26.52 | 39.73 | 60.27 | 100=1052 |
| IX. Others .. | 18.75 | 18.18 | 36.93 | 63.07 | 100=176 | 17.24 | 41.38 | 58.62 | 41.38 | 100=29 |
| Total .. | 12.69 | 19.18 | 31.87 | 68.13 | 100=27050 | 9.36 | 14.14 | 23.50 | 76.50 | 100=23631 |

Table IV gives the caste-wise distribution of educands, non-educands and illiterates in the two groups. Caste group I includes Brahmins. Caste group II includes Advanced Hindus like the *Jains*, *Lingayats*, *Vanis*, *Marwaris*, etc. Marathas and the allied castes such as *Kunbis*, *Malis*, *Dhangars*, etc., are included in caste group III. Intermediate Hindus I and II grouped respectively under caste group IV and V represent the functional castes like the carpenters, potters, tailors, barbers, etc. Under group VI come the backward classes and tribes such as *Lamans*, *Bhils*, *Vanjaris*. The untouchable castes like the *Mahars*, *Mangs*, *Dhors*, etc., are grouped under group VII. Group VIII consists of Muslims. It may be noted that the proportion of population belonging to the backward and depressed classes was higher in Group II than in Group I, i.e., 39 per cent and 19 per cent respectively. It may, thus, be possible to attribute the differences in respect of literacy between Group I and Group II to the differing caste composition. It may, however, be noted from Table V that the differences in the extent of literacy as between the two groups were also prominent even after excluding the backward and depressed class population from the total population. The presence of a comparatively higher proportion of the backward and depressed class population has, therefore, brought down the proportion of the literates in Group II only to a limited extent. Further, it can be seen from Table III that taking the individual caste groups, the proportion of literates was higher in Group I than in Group II in almost all the caste groups. Thus, amongst Marathas the proportion of literates was 33 per cent in Group I as against 21 per cent in Group II. In the case of Brahmins, the percentage of literates was about 67 in Group I as compared to 62 in Group II. In the case of backward castes this proportion was nearly 23 per cent in Group I as against 15 per cent in Group II. Similar was the case in respect of the rest of the caste groups except in the case of Muslims. It is, therefore, clear that even in the individual caste groups, the degree of literacy was greater in Group I than in Group II.

TABLE V

| | Backward and Depressed Classes | | Remaining Caste Groups | | Aggregate Population | |
|-------------|--------------------------------|-------|------------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|
| | Literates | Total | Literates | Total | Literates | Total |
| Group I .. | 1114 21.86% | 5094 | 7505 34.18% | 21956 | 8621 31.87% | 27050 |
| Group II .. | 1573 16.98% | 9266 | 3979 27.69% | 14365 | 5552 23.50% | 23631 |

Table VI brings out the distribution of literates and illiterates according to different income-groups. As in the case of caste groups, the degree of literacy was greater in Group I than in Group II in respect of most of the income brackets. In the first income group, i.e., upto Rs. 250 there was very little difference as between the two groups in respect of the proportion reporting as literates. From the second income group onwards there was a considerable difference as between Group I and Group II. Thus in the second income group the proportion of literates was 25 per cent in Group I as against 17.5 per cent in Group II. The proportion of literates in the third income group was 33 per cent in Group I as against 26 per cent in Group II.

TABLE VI—DISTRIBUTION OF THE LITERATE AND ILLITERATE POPULATION ACCORDING TO INCOME GROUPS

| Income Groups | Group I | | | | | Group II | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------|----------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------|-------|-------|
| | Educands | Non-educands | Total Literates (A) | Total Illiterates (B) | Total A+B | Educands | Non-educands | Total Literates (C) | Total Illiterates (D) | Total C+D | | |
| 1 = Up to Rs. 250 | .. | .. | 67 | 109 | 176 | 784 | 960 | 72 | 77 | 149 | 714 | 863 |
| Per cent | .. | .. | 6.98 | 11.35 | 18.33 | 81.67 | 100 | 8.34 | 8.92 | 17.26 | 82.74 | 100 |
| 2 = Rs. 251 — 750 | .. | .. | 1088 | 1504 | 2592 | 8183 | 10775 | 851 | 1216 | 2067 | 9746 | 11813 |
| Per cent | .. | .. | 10.10 | 13.96 | 24.06 | 75.94 | 100 | 7.21 | 10.29 | 17.50 | 82.50 | 100 |
| 3 = Rs. 751 — 1,000 | .. | .. | 494 | 775 | 1269 | 2585 | 3854 | 393 | 658 | 1051 | 3025 | 4076 |
| Per cent | .. | .. | 12.82 | 20.11 | 32.93 | 67.07 | 100 | 9.64 | 16.14 | 25.78 | 74.22 | 100 |
| 4 = Rs. 1,001 — 1,500 | .. | .. | 553 | 852 | 1405 | 2704 | 4109 | 392 | 650 | 1042 | 2577 | 3619 |
| Per cent | .. | .. | 13.46 | 20.73 | 34.19 | 65.81 | 100 | 10.83 | 17.96 | 28.79 | 71.21 | 100 |
| 5 = Rs. 1,501 and above | .. | .. | 1231 | 1948 | 3179 | 4173 | 7352 | 503 | 740 | 1243 | 2017 | 3260 |
| Per cent | .. | .. | 16.74 | 26.50 | 43.24 | 56.76 | 100 | 15.43 | 22.70 | 38.13 | 61.87 | 100 |

APPENDIX I

| Centre | Group I | | | | | Group II | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|--|
| | Kasbe Sukene | Pusegaon Selu | Waghode- Budruk | Dhad | Malthan | Manor | Goregaon | Murud | Kothari | |
| District | Nasik | Wardha | East Khandesh | Bul- dhana | Poona | Thana | Bhandara | Osmana- bad | Chanda | |
| Taluka | Niphad | Wardha | Raver | Chikhali | Sirur | Palghar | Gondia | Latur | Chanda | |
| No. of Villages | 3 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 4 | |
| Irrigation facilities | Canal and well | Canal and well | Well only | Nil | Nil | Nil | Tank irriga- tion | Nil | Nil | |
| Important Crops | Onion, Ground- nut, Sugarcane, Bajri. Gram | Potato, Bajri, Ground- nut | Cotton, Banana, Ground- nut | Cotton, Jowar | Bajri, Jowar | Paddy | Paddy, Pulses | Jowar, Cotton | Jowar, Oil- seeds | |
| No. of Schools | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 5 | |
| No. of Students | 733 | 564 | 1270 | 560 | 507 | 358 | 801 | 1151 | 551 | |
| No. of Teachers | 18 | 16 | 30 | 23 | 10 | 9 | 26 | 30 | 20 | |
| Year of Survey | 1955- 1956 | 1955- 1956 | 1956- 1957 | 1955- 1956 | 1957- 1958 | 1956- 1957 | 1956- 1957 | 1955- 1956 | 1956- 1957 | |