

A Critical Look at Poverty and Education in India



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Abstract

There is in general perception that it is lack of education which leads to poverty. Social scientists while examining the nature and causes of poverty do consider education as important one to influence economic condition. Keeping in mind this broad framework an attempt is made in this paper to examine the relationship between education and poverty.

This paper therefore tries to examine the validity of perception based on secondary source of data three tables show the degree of literacy, level of poverty and perception income. The tables reveal very clearly the fact that the states with higher rate of income and very low rate of income do perform much better and much poor in literacy. But the states in transition do not correspondingly exhibit the same results.

Thus level of income is not exclusively found dependent on rate of literacy but poorly literate states however do not reveal improvement in level of income.

Keywords: Vicious Cycle, Perception, Descending Order, Identification, Literacy, Prosperity, Population, Methodology, Subsistence, Magnitude.

Introduction

In economics it was commonly reported and even today it is believed that "India is poor because she is poor". Very simple meaning is that poverty does not allow the poor households to be capable enough to have adequate income. It is necessarily found that even today there prevails a "vicious cycle of poverty" [Rugnan Nurkse, "Problems at Capital Formation in underdeveloped countries] It means that poor households in general do not attain minimum level of subsistence. Development thinkers and practitioners on other hand opine that it is the below level of education or poor education which keep these households poor.

Social scientists while examining the causes, nature and magnitude of poverty very clearly explain different factors responsible for poverty. From amongst various factors responsible for poverty, education is considered a critical one. Though there is yet to have establishment of defined relationship in between the level of education and the degree of poverty, there prevails an understanding that there is a negative relationship between level of literacy and level of poverty. In view of examining this general perception, a simple approach is to have a comparative look at the data expressing below poverty line and level of literacy amongst the major states of India.

Poverty in absolute and relative terms are defined and measured differently. Beginning from Dandekar and Reth to Suresh Tendulkar – attempts are made by economists to measure the poverty. Identification of poor in social and economic contexts also varies significantly. Currently Tendulkar Methodology is accepted at large to identify the poor and measure the poverty line from policy framing.

An attempt is made in the following section to primarily focus on poverty data of the major states of the India. Secondly, literacy level for the same period is revealed and thereafter states position in descending order both for poverty and literacy is revealed. These therefore would clearly reveal the actual degree of relationship observed in between education and poverty.

A quick look shall also be provided at perception income level reported amongst the states with highest rate of literacy and the states with lowest rate of literacy. This would also examine the impacts of education on income. Though perception is associated with size of population in a way this would therefore indicate the states income education and poverty in accordance with the size of population.

Statistical Look At Number of Poor People, Percentage of Below Poverty Line in**The States in Aggregate for the Year 1993-94, 2004-05 and 2011-12**

Name of State	No. of Poor people(lakh) 1993-94	% of below poverty	No. of Poor people(lakh) 2004-05	% of below poverty	No. of Poor people(lakh) 2011-12	% of below poverty
Andhra Pradesh	153.97	22.19	235.10	29.60	176.60	21.10
Arunachal Pradesh	3.73	39.75	3.80	31.40	3.50	25.90
Assam	96.36	40.86	97.70	34.40	116.40	37.90
Bihar	493.35	54.96	493.80	54.40	543.52	53.50
Goa	1.91	14.92	30.40	24.90	1.30	8.70
Gujarat	105.19	24.21	171.40	31.60	136.20	23.00
Haryana	45.88	25.05	54.60	24.10	50	20.10
Himachal Pradesh	19.86	28.44	14.60	22.90	6.40	9.50
Jammu	20.92	25.17	14.50	13.10	11.50	9.40
Karnataka	156.46	33.16	166.50	33.30	142.30	23.60
Kerala	76.41	25.43	62.00	19.60	39.60	12
Madhya Pradesh	208.02	42.52	315.70	48.60	261.80	36.70
Maharashtra	305.22	36.86	392.40	38.20	270.80	24.50
Manipur	6.80	33.78	9.00	37.90	12.50	47.10
Meghalaya	7.38	37.92	4.10	16.10	4.40	17.10
Mizoram	1.95	25.66	1.50	15.40	2.30	21.10
Nagaland	5.65	37.92	1.70	8.80	4.10	20.90
Orissa	160	48.37	221.60	57.20	153.20	37.00
Punjab	25.11	11.97	53.60	20.90	43.50	15.90
Rajasthan	128.50	27.41	209.80	34.40	167	24.80
Sikkim	1.64	41.43	1.70	30.90	0.80	13.10
Tamil Nadu	202.10	35.03	194.10	29.40	21.80	17.10
Tripura	11.79	39.01	13.40	10.00	6.30	17.40
Uttar Pradesh	604.16	40.83	737.70	40.90	737.90	37.70
West Bengal	254.56	35.66	288.30	34.20	240.30	26.70
All India	320.00	35.97	4072.30	37.20	3546.80	29.80

(source-'Statistical Supplement'-India Development Report 2015 Oxford)

As presented in the above table it is evidently found that in respect of BPL, Bihar and Orissa is found far behind with other states. These two states during the period of 20 years have not improved their position. UP is little less poorly dense state but this state has also not shown much improvement during 20 years. North-Eastern states considered very poor have been able to improve their condition significantly. It is important to note that almost except two-the states have improved their position in this regard particularly in the period of 2004-05 to 2010-11. From amongst the major developed states of India, Tamil Nadu in this respect is found at the top followed by Punjab Haryana, Gujarat and Maharashtra. States with rapid growth progress such as Karnataka, Sikkim, HP, and West-Bengal have performed much better in present than past by restricting percentage of BPL in the last decade. As presented in the table from amongst major states indicated in the table states have percentage of BPL more than India's ratio.

Combined Literacy Rate Amongst Major States

States	1991	2001	2011
Andhra Pradesh	44.1	60.5	67.7
Arunachal Pradesh	41.3	54.6	67.7
Assam	52.9	65.3	73.2
Bihar	38.5	47	63.8
Goa	75.5	82	87.4
Gujarat	61.3	69.3	79.1
Haryana	55.9	67.9	76.6

Himachal Pradesh	63.9	76.5	83.8
Jammu	Na	66.6	68.7
Karnataka	56	66.6	75.6
Kerala	59.8	90.9	93.9
Madhya Pradesh	44.2	63.7	70.6
Maharashtra	64.9	76.9	82.9
Manipur	59.9	70.5	79.9
Meghalaya	49.1	62.6	75.5
Mizoram	86.7	88.8	91.6
Nagaland	61.6	66.6	80.1
Orissa	49.1	63.1	73.5
Punjab	58.5	69.7	76.1
Rajasthan	38.6	60.4	67.1
Sikkim	56.9	68.8	82.2
Tamil Nadu	62.7	73.5	80.3
Tripura	60.4	73.2	87.8
Uttar Pradesh	41.6	56.3	69.7
West Bengal	57.7	68.6	77.7
All India	52.2	64.8	74

(source-India States Report 2015 Oxford)

As presented in the above table it is clearly found that there is significant improvement during 20 years both at the national level and amongst the states of India. It is evidently found from this table that conventional developed states such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Haryana's performance in respect of literacy is relatively slower than that is observed in the less developed states such as Tripura, Kerala, Nagaland and Meghalaya. Popularly

known s backward states like Bihar, MP, Rajasthan, UP, Orissa are lagging behind in literacy but their progress is found much better. From amongst southern states. Andhra Pradesh is found much slow. MP is found relatively progressing fast. Rajasthan, Sikkim has also reported significant noticeable change in literacy.

Comparative Performance Amongst the States in Literacy and Poverty.

Looking at the table, data of 2010-12, the states at the bottom most meaning maximum percentage of people below poverty line-they are Bihar, Manipur, Assam, UP and Orissa. In comparison with these 5 states the states having least percentage of people below poverty line i.e. Performed top five states are found Goa, Jammu, Himachal, Kerala and Sikkim.

Now, if examined top 5 states having highest literacy rate and bottom 5 states having lowest literacy rate in 2011 it is as under.

5 states with Highest literacy	5 states with lowest literacy
Kerala	Bihar
Mizoram	Rajasthan
Tripura	Andhra/Arunachal Pradesh
Goa	Jammu
Himachal Pradesh	Uttar Pradesh

It is thus found that among the states having maximum percentage number of below poverty line, Bihar-UP is also amongst 5 bottoms most states in respect of literacy. While from North-East front Manipur and Assam have not improved themselves in respect of poverty as against significant improvement in literacy. It is also found that from among top 5 states in respect of literacy rate, Goa, HP and Kerala are also amongst 5 states with minimum percentage of BPL. Kerala is reported to be 1st in Literacy and 5th in Percentage of people below poverty line (from bottom)

One important point which also needs to examine is relationship between the three variables i.e. per capita income of the state, percentage number of people below poverty line and literacy rate of the respective state.

In the following table states are arranged in ranking order in respect of the three variables.

Ranking of the States in Respect of Per Capita Income, Literacy Rate and Percentage of Bpl

States	Literacy rate 2011	Per capita income 2011-12	Percentage of BPL 2011-12
Andhra Pradesh	21	16	13
Arunachal Pradesh	21	21	8
Assam	17	30	3
Bihar	23	32	1
Goa	4	1	22
Gujarat	10	9	12
Haryana	13	8	15
Himachal Pradesh	5	13	20
Jammu	20	23	21
Karnataka	14	17	11
Kerala	1	12	11

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Madhya Pradesh	18	28	6
Maharashtra	6	7	10
Manipur	9	29	2
Meghalaya	15	20	17
Mizoram	2	18	13
Nagaland	9	15	14
Orissa	16	27	5
Punjab	12	14	18
Rajasthan	22	24	9
Sikkim	7	5	19
Tamil Nadu	8	10	17
Tripura	3	19	16
Uttar Pradesh	19	31	4
West Bengal	11	22	7
All India			

(source-author's –based on India States Report 2015)

As indicated in the table, states in respect of literacy rate are ranked in descending order based on 2011 census. The states are however considered in the division of India of 1991, 25 states are ranked in descending order by size of per capita income based on 2004-05 prices for the year 2011-12. Percentage of people below poverty line is also in descending order for the year 2011-12.

Looking at the table, Bihar seems to be the poorest states from amongst 25 where literacy is also reported at the bottom. Rajasthan seemed from the bottom in literacy is fifth from bottom in respect of per capita income and 9th from bottom in respect of BPL. Kerala conventionally highest literate state of India is reported sixth from amongst the states mentioned in the table as per ranking in income while in respect of BPL, the state ranks 11th i.e. 10 states have BPL more than Kerala. Tamil Nadu also seems to have significant relationship in between literacy rate and general economic condition.

In Maharashtra it is evidently found that literacy rate, per capita income and BPL status holds significant relationship. Goa has proved supremacy meaning education leading to economic prosperity.

In aggregate it is clearly found from this table that states with higher literacy in aggregate are found better placed in respect of economic condition. Similarly the states with poor literacy are also found poor in aggregate economic condition. The floating-uneven relationship is reported in the states where improved literacy is not found corresponding improvement in income level.

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