

# Literacy and Social Development in Assam: A Brief Study

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## **Abstract**

Education is the most important instrument for changing the economic condition of the rural society. It is also crucial to every aspect of social and economic development. The economic development is a measure of the welfare of humans in a society and education is a prime leading piece for the development in a region. It's not only helps the farmers planning and management, rational decision making, record keeping, computation of cost and revenue, but it also provides knowledge to adopt improve methods of cultivation, to understand processing methods and storage procedures, to know the programmes, targets and policies of the government, to know the family welfare, health, nutrition and home economics etc. However, agriculture is the primary source of occupation to the Indian rural people who directly or indirectly depend on agriculture. The present paper deals with the role of education and economic development through agriculture at the micro levels in rural Assam. It also attempts to examine the spatial variation of agricultural development of the studied in the district of Kamrup.

**Keywords:** Literacy, Social Development, Education, Assam

By literacy we generally mean being able to read and write. The Census report of 2001 shows that a large sections of rural population specially the females are illiterate. Among the Tribals, Adivasis and Muslims the high illiteracy is observed. For them education and its institutions are a boring place to go to. Poverty and environment have made their habits and life styles different. There is no reason why these people can not be brought into the main stream of national life. The constitution-makers of India gave a directive for a state affairs where free and compulsory education is available for children up to the age of 14 years. At that time there were less than 50 million children in this age group. Today this number of children has been multiplying in this age group and we have not yet been able to realize this dream of the constitution makers. Though of lately, the Govt. of India is providing today free text books to the pupils up to class VIII and attempts are made to achieve the goal of 100% literacy through the Sarva Shiksha Abhijan.

It is not always possible for the children of the poor to keep away from working and hence an integrated approach must be adopted towards both formal and non formal sectors of education. Universalisation of elementary education is a national commitment. Therefore, all Governmental and non-Governmental agencies have to mobilise their resources to achieve hundred percent enrollment of children in the age group 6-14 years either in formal or non-formal system of education.

The world conference of Ministers of education organised by UNESCO at Tehran in 1965 held that "Rather than an itself, literacy should be regarded as a way of preparing man for a social, civic, economic role that goes for beyond the limits of rudimentary literacy training consisting merely in the

teaching of reading and writing. Reading and writing should not only lead to elementary general knowledge but to training for work, increased productivity, a greater participation in civil life, a better understanding of the surrounding world and should ultimately open the way to basic human culture."

In a democratic country, every individual has to discharge his duties towards the society. If the members of the society are literate, they will certainly fulfill the needs and requirements of the society. The schools have to gear up their training in accordance with the requirement of the society. In fact, society and school are complementary to each other and like the two sides of a coin. According to John Dewey, "School should be the true representative of the society. If the standard of education of a particular society is high, the society is bound to develop. Education must have the potentialities to equip the students to be able to face life. The educational institutions have to become the training ground for the successful and responsible future citizens, so that they realise the social values and objectives of the society."

India's needs today are different from what they were in the past. India is now free and independent. The educational needs of a free country are different and ought to be different. In a changing world the problems of education are also likely to be changed. In the rapidly changing world of today, one thing is certain that "Yesterday's educational system will not meet today's needs".

In our country, a large number of people struggle for food, clothing and shelter. We can not give only clothes to a starving man who needs food and shelter. In a country of grinding poverty the central place naturally goes to the economic aspect. The growing population of the country needs more trained and skilled persons to enhance its productivity to meet its requirements. With the passing of time every thing is changing day by day and to cope with the changing environment, every individual of the society must be equipped with the knowledge and technique of doing works in a proper manner, the society is bound to develop.

"It gets manifested when the char-dwellers migrate in search of livelihood options. Their attire, traits, behaviour, language and religion on one hand and the lack of knowledge on the part of the people of the mainland about the chars on the other, ultimately leads to a scenario, where these char dwellers are straightaway labelled as Bangladeshi or illegal immigrants. Due to which, they have a tendency to abandon them as illegal immigrants, without displaying the courage to trace the root cause of their migration from the char areas. This not only creates doubt, suspicion and dispute among the population groups, but also generates a public opinion which becomes unfavourable for inclusion of the char dwellers into the mainstream. Any additional public expenditure gets highlighted as feeding the Bangladeshi's at the cost of depriving the Indian nationals."

Today, it is not only the fate of a Char-dweller, but of many other Bengal-origin Muslims who are constantly faced with an identity crisis.

## **Findings / Results**

### **Poverty**

- Monthly per capita expenditure of Muslims is much lower than the national average.
- Majority of Muslim families in rural and char areas do not receive food grain.

- One out of every three Muslim family in rural areas survives on less than about
- Most of children between 0-10 years of age group are suffering from malnutrition (anaemia) due to poverty in the Muslim country.

### **Literacy**

- Socio-Economic status of Muslim is worse than Dalits.
- 25% Muslim children belonging to 6-14 years age groups either drop out or never attend school in their locality.
- Dropout rates is higher at primary, middle and higher secondary levels specially in Char-dwellers.
- In premier colleges only 1 out of 25 under graduate and 1 out of 50 for postgraduates is a Muslim.
- Below 10% of Muslim children among the school going age go to Madarsas.

### **Conclusion**

From the above discussion it is clear that the poverty and illiteracy is the root barrier to socio-economic status, educational, political, cultural development of community or a country. Financial dependency and education focused and cultural the standard of the society in the surface world. Education can play a foremost role to mitigate or minimise the poverty. Eradication of poverty would ensure a sustainable and inclusive growth of economy is society. After passing several decades of independence Govt. of India has not succeed to eradicate poverty and illiteracy by implementing various schemes like MNREGA, IAY, Old Age Pension, IRDP, JRY etc. And different educational policy especially in Muslim society. More over Ajmal foundation also made an effort to minimize both Poverty and illiteracy by implementing various schemes in the field of education, medication, financial help etc. Poverty and illiteracy as discussed is very worst in the rural and char dwellers of Assam Government should focus on the following suggestion Create proper awareness in regards of scientific family planning and population control specially in rural and char area. Special provision to ensure financial development to each and every household of Muslim community. Ensure compulsory education to each and every child under the Education Act 2009. Create constitutional provision for free Higher Education to Muslim community for balancing. Implementation of reservation system especially in job, education etc. Like other backward classes to balanced the Muslim community. Provide special schooling and medication system for char dwellers of Assam.

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