

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR TOTAL LITERACY - A CASE STUDY OF ERNAKULAM DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

Introduction

In earliest times, people lived in the oral world. Writing is much younger than our species. And we could say, reading is still younger. The socio-cultural process of interchange and interaction has its genesis in the world of orality. The transition from the oral world to literacy was by no means a quantum leap to reckon with. On the contrary, as any student of human history and development would know, it was a very slow process. In the ancient world of oral tradition, the importance of literacy, to begin with, would have been so very different from today. Surrounded by the oral culture, literacy could hardly command prestige and status in the ancient world as it had little association with wealth, power and knowledge that it acquired later. Literacy seemed to have found its way to the modern world as reading and writing slowly caught the attention and interest of the people. Later, emerging on the scene was the concept of mass literacy, mainly in the west, societies began to grow into literate world from orality. However, at whatever rate the literate world grew, the oral culture could not be wiped out easily and completely. Could we say the oral world is reappearing with the advent of electronic media and the popularity it enjoys today ? The future may have to hold some space for the above thought, but the compelling truth is that the oral world brought to us by the electronic media today takes its shape and form

extensively from the world of letters.

Rationale of the Present Study

Mass literacy has become a much talked about concept among the nations of the world today. While some societies became fully literate a few centuries ago, many societies world over are still limping towards the goal. Obviously, India falls into the latter category. However, Kerala on the south-west coast of the Indian subcontinent was showing a different picture on the literacy scene throughout most part of the present century while the rest of the country painted a grim picture. Before the decade of the 90s began, Ernakulam district of Kerala joined the club of totally literate societies. Total literacy campaign (TLC) has been going on in the country since the successful Ernakulam experiment. Can we say, the much acclaimed total literacy in Ernakulam district was the end-product of a sole TLC experiment ?

India's literacy performance has been dismal throughout the present century. Placed against the national context, one may say that Kerala's literacy progress for the century was laudable (see tables 2.1 to 2.3). Yet again, removed from the above context, one may argue that literacy progress in Kerala was not so phenomenal. If at all, the progress was slow, gradual and steady wherein Kerala could claim a unique place in the Indian map. It is this uniqueness that Kerala earned for itself warrants the significance of a study into its literacy past.

To understand the spread and progress of literacy in a society at any given point of time, one needs to look beyond the

numerical data. Numerically precise answers are not only difficult to arrive at but would be incomplete to understand the growth of literacy in any society. Understanding the relationship between various forces operative in the society and their role in deciding the course and direction literacy would take, is imperative. As literacy makes progress in any society it is best understood when it is put in the context of the socio-economic, political and cultural happenings of the time. Performance or progress in literacy often get reported in terms of numerical data which are hardly explanatory in the absence of deeper understanding of the context.

Statistical data presented in table 2.2 show that Cochin was on the forefront in matters of literacy in the beginning of the century. When Ernakulam became the first district in the country to be totally literate, its legacy as part of the erstwhile Cochin State could not be overlooked. Total literacy achieved by Ernakulam district cannot be considered in isolation from the past. As any statistical data from table 2.1 to 2.3 would reveal that total literacy status achieved by Ernakulam had its share in a long past too. Hence, there is a legacy alongwith the one year total literacy experiment which placed Ernakulam district on the map of totally literate districts in the country at the top. With such a legacy behind, it was not surprising when Ernakulam became the first totally literate district of the country. The present study was an attempt to understand the various factors which have been operating in the society which contributed to the total literacy status in Ernakulam district.

Statement of the Problem

Factors responsible for total literacy - A case study of Ernakulam district.

Following were the objectives of the study.

Objectives

- (i) To study historically the attempts at spread of literacy in Ernakulam district in pre - and post-independence period.
- (ii) To study the achievement of total literacy in Ernakulam district in terms of the role played by :
 - Voluntary organisations
 - Different socio-cultural institutions/agencies
 - Educationally interested groups/individuals
 - Government officials etc.
- (iii) To identify the factors responsible for total literacy in Ernakulam district on the basis of the data regarding objectives 1 & 2.

Explanation of Terms

Factors : Something contributing to a result (in this case the spread and progress of literacy leading to total literacy) which may be changes, events, happenings etc, taking place socially, politically, culturally, economically etc.

Total literacy : The target population for total literacy campaign in Ernakulam district were aged between 5 and 60. More than 98% of this target group were literate when Ernakulam district was declared totally literate.

The concept of total literacy is different from project to project as the target age group and their academic achievement may vary from project to project.

Delimitation of the Study

The study is delimited to the erstwhile princely state of Cochin and Ernakulam district of Kerala. Going down the history lane, the study is delimited in time down to 19th century.

Methodology

A detailed summary of the methodology adopted for the present study is given in chapter 3. Here, a brief summary of the methodology follows.

The methodology of the study has been adopted objectivewise.

For Objective 1.

Documents, records dealing with the socio-economic, cultural and political history and characteristics of Kerala in general and Cochin State/Ernakulam district in particular were the major sources of data for objective 1. A comprehensive study was undertaken to collect data from these sources.

Leaders of different socio-cultural and political groups, educationists and historians of the state of Kerala were other sources of data. Unstructured interviews were conducted to study their perceptions/views regarding the spread of literacy from 19th century to the present century.

Owing to the nature of data which were mostly

narrative/descriptive, qualitative analysis was attempted. Numerical data were put to percentage analysis wherever possible and considered for comparative analysis.

For Objective 2.

Sources of data mentioned earlier under objective 1 constituted some of the sources of data for objective 2 also. Other sources of data were documents available at the offices of various socio-cultural/voluntary agencies. An extensive study was undertaken to collect data from these sources.

Individuals/groups involved with the total literacy campaign in the district of Ernakulam were the human sources of data. Unstructured interviews were conducted to study their perception, vision, initiation etc.

Narrative/descriptive data were qualitatively analysed. Numerical data were organised in tables and percentage analysis was done at appropriate places.

For Objective 3.

Data collected under objectives 1 & 2 were further analysed qualitatively to identify the factors responsible for total literacy in Ernakulam district. For the purpose data collected were organised to understand the manner in which various forces operating in the society at various point in time affecting the spread and growth of literacy.

Findings of the Study

In this section under various heads, findings of the study are presented. The presentation is concise as elaborate presentation is already done in the previous chapter. Findings concerning socio-political and economic development are presented first followed by those on educational development so that the latter are seen in the perspective of the former. This is followed by findings regarding various agencies in educational development and their contributions in the field.

I. Concerning the Social, Political and Economic Development.

- [A] 1. Nineteenth century Cochin was rooted in casteism. Social, political and economic life of the people were dictated by caste canons.
2. Social life under caste rule was one of deprivation and degradation. In the absence of occupational freedom, people - especially the lower castes - lived in slavery and abject poverty. Caste practices limited social mobility among people. Social practices under caste system promoted inequality at all levels of life.
3. Slavery prevailed in Cochin from very early times. A Royal proclamation by Ravi Varma in 1854 abolished slavery in Cochin.
4. Organised struggle by low castes during 19th century challenged the upper castes and exerted pressure on the government to recognise their social rights.

5. Old social structure in Cochin collapsed as temple entry was announced in 1948.

[B] 1. Cochin State became a subsidiary ally of the British in 1809. In 1812, Cochin administration was taken over by Col.Munro, the British Resident.

2. Administrative reforms were introduced by Col.Munro. The government machinery under Munro needed qualified people to run its departments. Social status alone, hitherto decided the position in state administration, became inadequate 'qualification' to run the 'modern' administration.

3. Political consciousness among citizens began to grow and the administration was forced to respond to the political assertiveness of people.

4. By the beginning of 20th century, political participation of people in government was being recognised by the state.

5. By early decades of 20th century, citizens of Cochin were being preferred in matters of appointment to state services against outsiders. Later, a scheme of communal representation was considered for the recruitment to state services.

6. Politically conscious and assertive population forced welfare services from the government.

- [Q] 1. The agricultural economy in Cochin at the turn of 19th century was not progressive. The social system prevailed in Cochin prevented a progressive agricultural economy. Land and labour were the prerogative of caste canons. With the change in political power cash-economy gained importance during 19th century. Book-keeping and accounting increasingly found its way in the changing economy.
2. Developmental measures taken during 19th century expanded agricultural sector.
3. The 1898 settlement conferred proprietary rights on tenants of state owned land for thirty years.
4. Land reforms introduced in the first half of 20th century protected tenants from eviction at the hands of land lords. Rents were fixed according to the produce of the land.
5. Cochin had trade relations with other countries of the world since ancient times. Direct involvement of common people in trade was minimum till 19th century. By 1792, trade regulations were changed and articles were opened to public trade. In the 1840s tax reforms were made to promote inland trade.
6. Communication means were improved for the development of trade and commerce during 19th century.
7. Developments in trade and commerce and improvements in the agricultural sector during 19th century did not change the economic condition of the poor to any appreciable level.

8. By 20th century beginning, expansion in cultivable land presented little scope. Rice - staple food of the people - production fell short of need of the population. Cultivable land available per head was insufficient due to faulty land distribution prevailed in Cochin. By early 20th century, agriculture in Cochin was mostly in the hands of petty farmers with no capital who cultivated land sub-let to them by non-cultivating tenants of larger holdings. Most of the tenants were entering government services and sub-let their holding to the care of poor under-tenants.

- [D] 1. Elected governments of Kerala introduced agrarian reforms during the 1960s and abolished landlordism in 1969.
2. Elected governments of Kerala, irrespective of their political ideologies, promoted social welfare policies.

II. Concerning Educational Development - 19th century.

[A] Popular education was not state concern till 19th century, in Cochin. People made their own arrangements for the education of the young.

1. Well-to-do upper castes arranged tutors at home. Nambudiri youths left home and joined matt for higher learning after receiving preliminary lessons at home.
2. In rural parts, traditional village school teachers, Ezhuttachans, taught 3R's at their houses.

3. Rigid, caste rules prevented low caste population from attending these village schools.
4. Low caste population practically received no knowledge of 3R's. A few Kaniyans, a sub-caste of the low caste Izhava who were astrologers by occupation acted as teachers for the Izhavas occasionally.

[B] State intervention in popular education began in 1818 A.D.

1. The state of Cochin opened vernacular schools in 1818. These schools did not succeed and were abolished in 1832.
2. As a second attempt vernacular schools were opened again a few years later in each taluka.
3. Rev. J. Dawson opened the first English schools in Cochin in 1818 and received grant-in-aid. This school was closed down three years later as it was not a success.
4. In 1835, government opened English schools in each district.

[C] Government extended partial financial assistance to missionaries who were engaged in promotion of popular education.

[D] In 1889, the government introduced grants-in-aid. A department of vernacular education was organised in 1890.

1. Many indigenous schools were brought to aided list and came under the supervision of department of vernacular education.
2. Separate schools for boys and girls were being opened in most of the talukas by 1890.

3. Number of schools in the organised sector under the control of the department of vernacular education increased by 52% from 1891 to 1892.
4. Number of pupils attending these schools increased by 53% from 1891 to 1892.
5. Attendance of girl students in the organised sector increased by 64% from 1891 to 1892.
6. Only 9.6% of the school-going age population attended schools in 1892.
7. Only 4.2% of girls of the school-going age population attended schools in 1892.
8. By 1901, 34% of the school going age population was attending school.
9. 49% of the school going age population among boys attended school in 1901.
10. 19% of the school-going age population among girls attended school in 1901.
11. 72% of schools in the organised sector were managed by private agencies in 1901.
12. In 1881, Cochin had only 1.8% literates among its population. In 1891, Cochin registered 14.3% literacy. Literacy rate declined to 13.5% in 1901.
13. Female literacy increased from 3.9% in 1891 to 4.5% in 1901.
14. In 1901, Cochin State led the rest of India in literacy.

III. Concerning Educational Development - 20th century.

[A] Educational reforms were introduced in Cochin in 1908.

1. Vernacular education up to class IV was made free for backward classes and girl students.
2. Later, primary education for girls were made totally free. Secondary education for girls were made at half rate of fee.
3. Subsequently, fees in vernacular elementary schools were abolished for all students throughout the state.

[B] In 1911, an Education Code was drawn.

1. Education Code 1911 envisaged the policy of vernacular primary education in villages.
2. Scholarship scheme was introduced to assist poor and deserving candidates. Scholarships were introduced to train students in industrial schools as teachers.
3. Private schools were given grant-in-aid to employ trained teachers.
4. Education Code 1911 revised curricula, made provision for training of female teachers and revised the pay scale of teachers.
6. Night schools were established to promote adult education.
7. During 1901-1921 the number of primary schools increased by 17.2%.
8. Number of pupils attending primary schools registered 172% increase from 1901 to 1921.
9. By 1921, accessibility to primary education was high in

Cochin; one primary school per 1.32 sq. miles.

10. Nair and Christian communities led other communities in general as well as female literacy.
11. The low-caste Izhavas made considerable improvement in literacy; 8.2% in 1911 to 16.6% in 1921.
12. Cochin registered an upward trend in literacy in 1911 (15.1%) and 1921 (18.5%) after a decline in 1901.

[C] Education Code 1911 was revised and Education Code 1921 was drawn.

1. Education Code 1921 instituted special scholarships for girls and members of Muslim, backward and depressed communities of the society.
2. Public examinations in class IV and class VII were abolished.
3. The vernacular was adopted as the medium of instruction even in English Schools up to class VII.
4. The percentage of girl students to girls of school-going age population rose from 20 in 1915 to 66.4 in 1932.
5. In the 1920s, the state opened special schools for Pulayas, the depressed class. Government and aided schools were thrown open to Pulaya boys and girls. The exchequer registered a rise of 146% in expenditure for Pulaya education from 1920 to 21 to supply them with books, food and clothing.

[D] In 1927, a new department was created to protect the

educational interests of the depressed classes. A learned member of the depressed classes was appointed the assistant Protector of the department.

1. During 1930-35, the State took over the management of aided schools largely attended by depressed classes. New schools opened in depressed class localities were taken to the aided list.
2. Literacy among Pulayas progressed from 0.9% in 1921 to 5.3% in 1931.
3. Enrolment in primary schools registered an increase of 141% from 1911 to 1931. 48.8% of children (42.3% boys & 55.6% girls) aged 6 to 12 years did not attend school in 1931.

[E] By 1935, the government opened libraries in villages to promote continuing education among those who left schools after primary education.

[F] The state policy of promoting vernacular primary education and participation of private agencies in education continued throughout the first half of 20th century.

1. In 1901, 68% of the total number of educational institutions were in the primary sector.
2. In 1911, primary sector constituted 95% of the total educational institutions.
3. In 1921, 90% of the total number of educational institutions were in the primary sector.
4. In 1931, primary sector accounted for 65% of the total

number of educational institutions.

5. In 1941, primary sector constituted 71% of the total number of educational institutions.
6. About 86% of the educational work done in 1905 were by private agencies; 61% unaided and 25% aided.
7. During 1930-31 about 75% of the total educational institutions were in private sector.
8. Private sector covered about 69% of the total strength of student population attending educational institutions in the state during 1930-31.

[G] Literacy made progress in Cochin since 1889.

1. Literacy rose from 1.8% in 1881 to 35.3% in 1941 (for all ages). For the age group 5 years and above literacy in 1941 was 41%.
2. Nairs and Indian Christians led other communities in literacy throughout the period 1901-41. Female literacy remained high among these two communities.
3. Among the low-caste, Izhavas made considerable progress in literacy and registered 34.7% literacy in 1941.
4. Pulayas progressed in literacy to 9.8% in 1941 from an almost no literate community.
5. By 1941, Muslims lagged behind the Izhavas in literacy although there was not much difference in the literacy status of both the communities in 1901.
6. Growth of literacy was almost parallel between male and female for the period 1891-1941. Female literacy registered a better growth pattern during the decade 1921-31.

7. Female literacy in Cochin was 30.6% in 1941.

[H] 1. Since 1911, primary education in Cochin was free. By 1948, primary education was made compulsory through act XI of 1948.

2. Private participation in educational work still remained high, 75%, in 1948.

3. 57% of the total out-lay on education was spent on primary education in 1948 as against 44% in 1901.

IV. Concerning Educational Development-Post Independence Period.

[A] 1. No compulsory primary education is in force in Kerala since 1.6.1959 [The Kerala Education Act, 1958 revoked those Acts which provided for compulsory primary education in Travancore, Cochin and Malabar with effect from 1.6. 1959.]

2. The Kerala Education Act 1958 provided teachers security and better conditions of service.

3. The Kerala Education Act 1958 prescribed definite standard for recruitment for teachers in government and private schools.

4. Free education up to class VII was available throughout the state in 1950s.

[B] Scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students were provided with special financial assistance for educational purposes.

[C] Many of the lower primary schools in Kerala operated in shift since long.

[D] There was a free mid-day meal scheme for needy children in lower primary school. This was discontinued since 1986.

[E] Provisions for periodical medical inspection of lower primary students were available since the academic year 1957-58.

- [F]
1. An Adult Education Board was constituted during the period 1950-51 to promote adult education.
 2. Adult Education Research and Training Centre was set up to train workers in adult education.
 3. By 1978, a State Resource Centre was functioning for the promotion of adult education.
 4. Literacy centres were set up in some colleges by department of Adult Education in Kerala University and Calicut University.
 5. Adult Education centres were run by Department of Education in Panchayats.

[G] The Department of Public Instruction was reorganised during 1957-58. The State was divided into educational districts and sub-districts. Educational Officer at sub-district level was directly in charge of primary schools.

- [H]
1. During 1956-57, educational institutions in the organised sector were thinly distributed in Kerala.
 2. Enrolment in educational institutions was comparatively

high in Kerala during 1956-57.

- [I] Expansion of lower primary education in terms of number of schools was achieved to a very large extent by 1956-57.
- [J] Enrolment in primary stage of education in Kerala began to decline after 1974-75 and remained more or less steady to the decade of 80s. Since the 1950s, girls enrolment in lower primary school was high in Kerala. Girls enrolment to total enrolment in lower primary schools increased from 46% in 1950-51 to 48.29% in 1978 and to 48.79% in 1986.
- [K] 1. Retention rate in lower primary schools has been high in Kerala. During 1960s, the retention rate in lower primary schools in Kerala was 67%. By 1980s drop-out rate in lower primary schools in Kerala was very low with a retention of 99.6%.
2. Drop-out rate among the SC/ST students was still substantially high in the 1980s.
- [L] Teacher availability in primary schools was very high in Kerala. About 94% of primary schools in Kerala had four or more teachers attached to each school, in 1986.
- [M] About 58% of the total number of primary schools in 1961-62 were in private sector. Private participation in primary sector of education increased to 61% during 1983-84.
- [N] By 1986, about 94% of Kerala's rural population had accessibility to primary schools within 1km distance.
- [O] In 1960-61, about 72% of the total expenditure on education

in Kerala was on primary education. By 1980-81, share of primary education on total expenditure on education decreased to 58%.

- [P]
1. Rural literacy in Kerala was higher than urban literacy in most part of the country. Disparity in rural-urban literacy was low in Kerala. Male-female literacy did not show wide gap between them.
 2. Both in rural and urban areas larger share of literates were from primary educated groups.
 3. Among the SC/ST population the number of primary educated literates more than doubled from 1950s to 1960s.

- [Q]
1. As in 1981, all villages in Ernakulam district had at least one primary school. At least 2 primary schools were available per 10,000 population in all towns of the district.
 2. Male literacy in all talukas except one was more than 50% in 1961. Female literacy was below 50% in all talukas in 1961. By 1971, 4 talukas in Ernakulam district registered more than 60% literacy among women with remaining talukas showing female literacy above 55%.
 3. Disparity in male-female and between taluka literacy narrowed during 1960s.
 4. In 1971, rural and urban literacy in Ernakulam district were above the state average.

5. SC/ST literacy in Ernakulam district was above the state average for the group in 1971 & 1981.
6. By 1971, more than 94% of the age group 10-19(male) were literates. Among the female, more than 90% of the age group 10-19 were literates. There was considerable difference in male-female literacy among the age group 20-34 and 35⁺.
7. By 1981, male and female literacy in Ernakulam district were 80.75% and 72.88% respectively.

V. Concerning the Total Literacy Campaign

- [A] The Ernakulam total literacy campaign was launched in January 1989 under the auspices of National Literacy Mission. People's participation in this campaign was very high. The district administration and the people's machinery jointly participated in this campaign.
- [B] Environment building and motivation campaign were organised throughout the district prior to the teaching-learning activities.
- [C] Learning and training materials were prepared specially for the total literacy campaign.
- [D] Training of the literacy workers was done at two levels. About 12,00 master trainers were trained. About 20,000 people were trained as instructors by master trainers.

[E] Master trainers and assistant Project officers monitored the literacy classes.

[F] Evaluation of the learner was conducted by instructor in the presence of an external examiner. Those who scored 80% marks in the evaluation were declared literates.

[G] About 1.35 lakhs of people of the age group 5-60 were made literates through the total literacy campaign in Ernakulam district. The project was closed in January, 1990 registering 98% literacy among the target group 5-60 years.

VI. Concerning Contribution of Christian Missionaries and Church

[A] 1. Roman Catholic missionaries and Protestant missionaries were different in their educational pursuit. Chief aim of both groups of missionaries was proselytisation. Educational pursuits of these missionaries were not oriented towards mass literacy.

2. Proselytisation work by the missionaries was mostly carried out among the low castes population. Work by missionaries brought a few of them in touch with letters whether by reciting prayers or reading Bible.

3. Protestant missionaries conducted schools in Cochin during 19th century.

4. It was only by 20th century catholic missionaries entered into the organised sector of education in Cochin.

[B] By early 20th century, the native Church participated in the organised sector of education in a greater way than the missionaries.

[C] Printing press was a significant contribution by the missionaries to Kerala. Portuguese missionaries established the first printing press in Cochin in 1575. The first newspaper in Malayalam, Rajyasamacharam, was published by a German missionary Dr. Herman Gundert. Malayalam-English dictionaries and Malayalam grammar books were published by missionaries.

VII. Concerning Community Organisations

[A] Towards the end of 19th century, people began to organise on communal line. By 20th century, the Nairs, the Izhavas and the Pulayas formed their own community organisations. All these organisations had two general objectives; (i) Consolidate their own position in the society, (ii) Effect reforms within the community. Education was perceived as an effective tool to achieve these goals by all these organisations.

[B] During 20th century many schools were established by the Nair Service Society (NSS), the community organisation of the Nairs and by the SNDP (Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam), the community organisation of the Izhavas.

[C] Narayana Guru, social reformer and spiritual leader of the Izhavas, advocated primary education for men and women of

the community. He insisted upon the SNDP and the community leaders to promote primary education. He promoted the opening of schools than establishing temples.

VIII. Concerning Complementary Agencies of Literacy

- [A] 1. Printing press was introduced in Kerala by missionaries in 16th century. Since 19th century printing was an industry in Kerala. The printing technology brought to Kerala by the missionaries promoted reading culture among people. By the end of 19th century, Malayalam books and newspapers were read widely by people.
2. By the end of 19th century, community organisations were relying on print media to disseminate information among their members.
- [B] 1. Kerala has a network of village libraries ; about 5300 libraries in 1990.
2. Village libraries and reading rooms came up during the National Movement. Reading materials available at these libraries and reading rooms were of national importance related to National Movement. A few libraries functioned as adult education centres too.
3. Village libraries initiated by people were totally financed by public contribution.
4. Kerala Grandhasala Sangham formed in 1956 has its objectives very closely related to the promotion of literacy.

IX. Concerning Agencies in Total Literacy Campaign

[A] KANFED - SRC, Kerala Association for Non - Formal Education and Development - State Resource Centre, was a participatory agency in the Ernakulam Total Literacy Campaign. It was involved both at the organisational and academic level of the campaign.

[B] 1. The Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), a people's Science Movement, was not involved in the execution of any full-fledged literacy project before the Ernakulam total literacy campaign.

2. The KSSP played a leading role in the Ernakulam TLC. The KSSP was involved in the TLC at all levels - organisational, planning, academic, supervising and at grass-root level of functioning.

[C] The government machinery in the total literacy campaign was led by the district collector. The district administration functioned as a coordinating and supervising body and helped to the smooth run of various activities related to the project.

[D] The actual implementation of the total literacy project was carried out at the ward level of local bodies. Ward level committees were the actual implementing units of the project.

[E] 1. School children alongwith their teachers were involved in the environment building campaign of the total

literacy project.

2. Teachers, young as well as retired, participated in the total literacy campaign in various capacities.

[F] The 20,000 odd volunteer instructors were the real executioners of the total literacy project in Ernakulam district.

Conclusion

(1) Early decades of nineteenth century marked the political take over of Cochin by the British. The British power in Cochin continued upto the Indian independence. Cochin was a society rooted in casteism. Social practices determined by caste canons condemned human lives to an abominable state worse than beasts. The economic and political life of the people were trapped and tangled in the caste canons. It could be said that socio-economic and political freedom were almost unheard of and, if at all practised, were to the benefit of the uppercaste population. Majority of the population led a pathetic economic life in a hand-to-mouth existence.

Education was not a state affair in this society. Rich uppercaste children received education at their house. Although village schools run by traditional village school masters existed for others, it is highly doubtful, under the then prevailing socio-economic circumstances if attendance in these schools could have been even modestly moderate. In such compelling and conflicting conditions intensive literacy or wide spread literacy was highly unlikely. Even after the state entry into popular

education in 1818 A.D. and its ups and downs throughout the century. statistical data for the close of 19th century did not show evidences of wide spread or intensive literacy in Cochin society. At the same time there was a considerable upward trend in literacy progress since the fag-end of 19th century.

(2) Political reforms which began at the beginning of 19th century followed by the political power change in Cochin had not only put the political scene into a different gear but also forced to looking for new meanings, socially and economically. Socio-political awareness was gradually building up throughout the early decades of 19th century. Organised resistance to authority and demand for rights both political and social were on the rise. To keep up the tempo of socio-political awareness, education was probably looked upon as a kindling factor. New developments on the economic front were attracting a few talents with the knowledge of 3E's as accounting and book-keeping increased. Victims to age old caste practices, many knew, a major change in their socio-economic status was an impossible dream and they were also aware that the freely offered commodity 'education' was their only available tool to make even an attempt to bring a change in their socio-economic status. These compulsions might have taken a few to state schools and missionary schools.

(3) During the second half of 19th century socio-political struggles were gaining momentum and getting more and more organised. Under the contemptible social practices it was no wonder when people began to organise they did so more on the

basis of community. People began to realise that modern education was a commodity outside the purview of existing caste restrictions and they were more or less free agents to avail it. A healthy competition among various communities began to surface. Community leaders who looked forward to raising socio-cultural awareness among their members considered education as a potential agent of their renaissance programme. Demands for schools were the natural outcome. To facilitate change, communities started establishing schools. While socio-political compulsions necessitated the opening of schools, socio-cultural factors coupled with the hope for economic upward mobility or perhaps the urge to shake off the enforced inertia promoted attendance in these schools.

(4) By early decades of 20th century, a school-going culture was moderately spreading across communities. Popular enthusiasm for school education was complemented by enlightened policies of the administration. There was a visible political commitment on the part of the administration to cater to mass education by expanding primary education. As a result, unlike 19th century and before, literacy was fast spreading among different communities, breaking the uppercaste monopoly on letters, as early decades of 20th century passed by. When number of literates increased in different communities, especially among women, a multiple effect was in the offing, as the literate older generation would want that younger generation acquired those skills. In such a situation school-going could be easily assured.

(5) Private sector was a striking feature of primary education

in Cochin. A major proportion of primary education was in the private sector mostly aided by the state. Many of these schools belonged to community based organisations or influential members of communities. As social rigidity was still the order of the day throughout the first half of 20th century, different sections of the society might have found it easier to send children to one of those private schools run either by their community or by some of their community members. Hence private schools might have prompted the spread of literacy across various pockets of the society to some extent.

(6) All these factors resulted in a high proportion of school-going-age children attending school in Cochin even before independence. Obviously, this trend was upkept and Ernakulam district (which represents most of erstwhile Cochin) registered total enrolment consequently along with other parts of Kerala State. Optimum enrolment and a very high retention rate are the twin features of primary education in Kerala, a condition very favourable to the progress of literacy in any society.

(7) Village libraries and print media were complementary features of the growing school-going culture in Cochin. They supported the sustainable growth of literacy. Presence of libraries and print media ruled out the immediate danger of non-utility of literacy skills and relapsing into illiteracy. Libraries and print media were indispensable to the functioning of many community organisations involved in the uplift of their community. Hence circumstances ensured that once acquired there were more ways to sustain the skills of literacy than to relapse

into illiteracy.

(8) Thus we see, the growing socio-political awareness, the need for keeping the tempo of this awareness, the wishful thinking of economic upward mobility with the expanding commerce and trade, the availability of 'education' as a commodity outside the purview of caste canons, the need felt for raising socio-cultural awareness, considering education as a potential tool for achieving this purpose; all these factors promoted the opening of schools and pursuit of education paving the way for the spread of literacy. The resultant effect was that 'school-going' gradually got woven into the socio-cultural fabric of the society as early decades of 20th century passed by. This socio-cultural transition was made easier by the enlightened educational policies of the state. High rate of enrolment and retention were the twin factors which further ensured the spread of literacy. Likewise, village libraries and print media were the complementary factors which created the cultural environment that sustained literacy. A general conclusion can be made that large majority of literates in Enakulam district are products of formal schooling. At least, since early 20th century, formal schooling had taken its shape in Cochin. Various socio-cultural, economic and political factors operating at different points of time shaped the existence of formal schooling in Cochin and later in Ernakulam district which resulted in spread of literacy and in creating a culture of literacy and literate society since long, thereby achieving total literacy in Ernakulam district in 1990.

Implications of the Study

Totally literate India is a dream fondly nursed by the Nation. Various programmes promoting literacy have been on the run since many decades. Presently, total literacy campaigns have been going on nation-wide since the successful total literacy experiment at Ernakulam in 1989. What are the implications of the present study for educational planning in India for making total literacy a reality? Implications are briefly mentioned below :

(1)

- Formal school sector is highly significant in making a society literate.
- Total enrolment of school-going age children is crucial to building up totally literate society.
- High retention in schools is an important aspect in the process of sustainable literacy acquisition.

Any educational programme in India which does not take into account the twin aspect of total enrolment and high retention as mentioned above would be self-defeating and far from creating a totally literate society. These two aspects of the educational endeavour in India are closely knitted into the socio-economic and socio-cultural life of the people. Hence educational planning in India needs to address the socio-economic and socio-cultural beats of the society.

- 2) Working towards a totally literate India, the ongoing total literacy campaigns have an important role. However, for the

acquisition of sustainable literacy, TLCs should look beyond target achievement.

- 3) Retaining the skills of literacy is as important as acquiring them. Therefore policy makers and planners of literacy programmes in India need to give due importance to "what is learnt?" as much as to meeting the target.

Suggestions for Further Research

Introduction

Every research study while attempting to find answers to some questions, delves out a number of other questions. These new questions guide further research in the particular field. With this idea in view a few directions for further research have been suggested :

1. Before a society becomes totally literate, the difference is often between literates and illiterates. What happens to this society when it is totally literate?
 - Does literacy erase inequality ?
 - Or would the socio-economic divide continue ?
2. Studies in educational 'wastage' is very common. This term 'wastage' often refers to the loss by dropping out of children from a particular educational programme before they reach the goal set up by the society. Such statistical data are important to third world countries like India where educational resources are scarce. However, the issue is

complex, than 'wastage' merely in numerical terms. Attempting answers to the following questions seem to be more important to the society.

- What do drop-outs learn before they drop out of school?
- Do they retain what they learnt in school?
- What is the minimum level of learning required for the retention of literacy?

3. It is almost a decade since the successful total literacy campaign at Ernakulam in 1989. Many districts in different parts of the country have become totally literate since then. Total literacy campaigns are going on in many other districts. It would be interesting to explore into the following aspect.

- How do neo-literates perceive their new status as literates?
- What are the socio-cultural equations between the neo-literates and others in a totally literate society?
- What is the utility of literacy as perceived by the neo-literates against their former world of orality?