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PUNJAB-HARYANA REGION: PATTERNS OF LITERACY, 2011

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Three maps and three tables included in this study reveal that Punjab and Haryana region had by 2011 attained a respectable level of literacy (75.7 per cent) where 7 to 8 persons in every ten people were recorded as literate and equally important was the fact that both male and female literacy rates were high with some notable spatial differentials in male-female literacy rates. Interestingly, while male literacy was relatively higher in Haryana sub-region (84.06 per cent) than that in Punjab sub-region (80.44 per cent), female literacy was lower in Haryana sub-region (65.94 per cent) than that in Punjab sub-region (70.73 per cent). However, there is no denying the fact that Punjab and Haryana region was one of the highly literate regions of the country at least in terms of having attained the basic knowledge of reading and writing.

Fig.1 and Table 1 depict that general literacy varied in Punjab and Haryana region from the lowest of 54.08 per cent in Mewat district to the highest of 84.70 per cent in Gurgaon district of Haryana. Mewat was traditionally a district with high concentration of Muslim population and that too of comparatively socially and economically backward Muslims even among Muslims. In north India Muslims generally are found to be less enthusiastic about sending their children to schools, which may not be true of Muslims of south India. Spatial variations in literacy in case of Haryana sub-region were slightly wider (from 54.08 to 84.70 per cent) in comparison to

Punjab sub-region where the literacy varied from the lowest of 61.83 per cent in Mansa district to the highest of 84.59 per cent, in case of Hoshiarpur district (Table 1). Hoshiarpur district had a tradition of higher literacy rate since long and Mansa was one of the comparatively backward districts. Broadly speaking, the spatial pattern of general literacy in Punjab and Haryana region was bi-modal with two significant pockets of high literacy, one, around National Capital of Delhi in the south (in Haryana) and the other in the north covering most districts of Bist-Doab and extending up to districts around Chandigarh both in Punjab and Haryana (Fig. 1). Thus, the districts of Ambala and Panchkula and that of Rupnagar and S.A.S. Nagar lying outside the Bist-Doab constituted the extended arm of traditional area of high general literacy i.e. the Bist Doab. Both the areas around Delhi and Chandigarh have attracted educated immigrants from across the country to take advantage of up-coming developments in fields of secondary, tertiary and quaternary services. As is revealed by Fig. 1, the literacy rates taper off gently as one moves away from these nodes indicating that we need to do more than just providing the children the attraction of mid-day meal, because this attraction can bring the poor to school premises but there are other areas warranting attention of the administration if quality education is to be provided, because it is quality education that not only can bring the children to schools but also can hold them there.

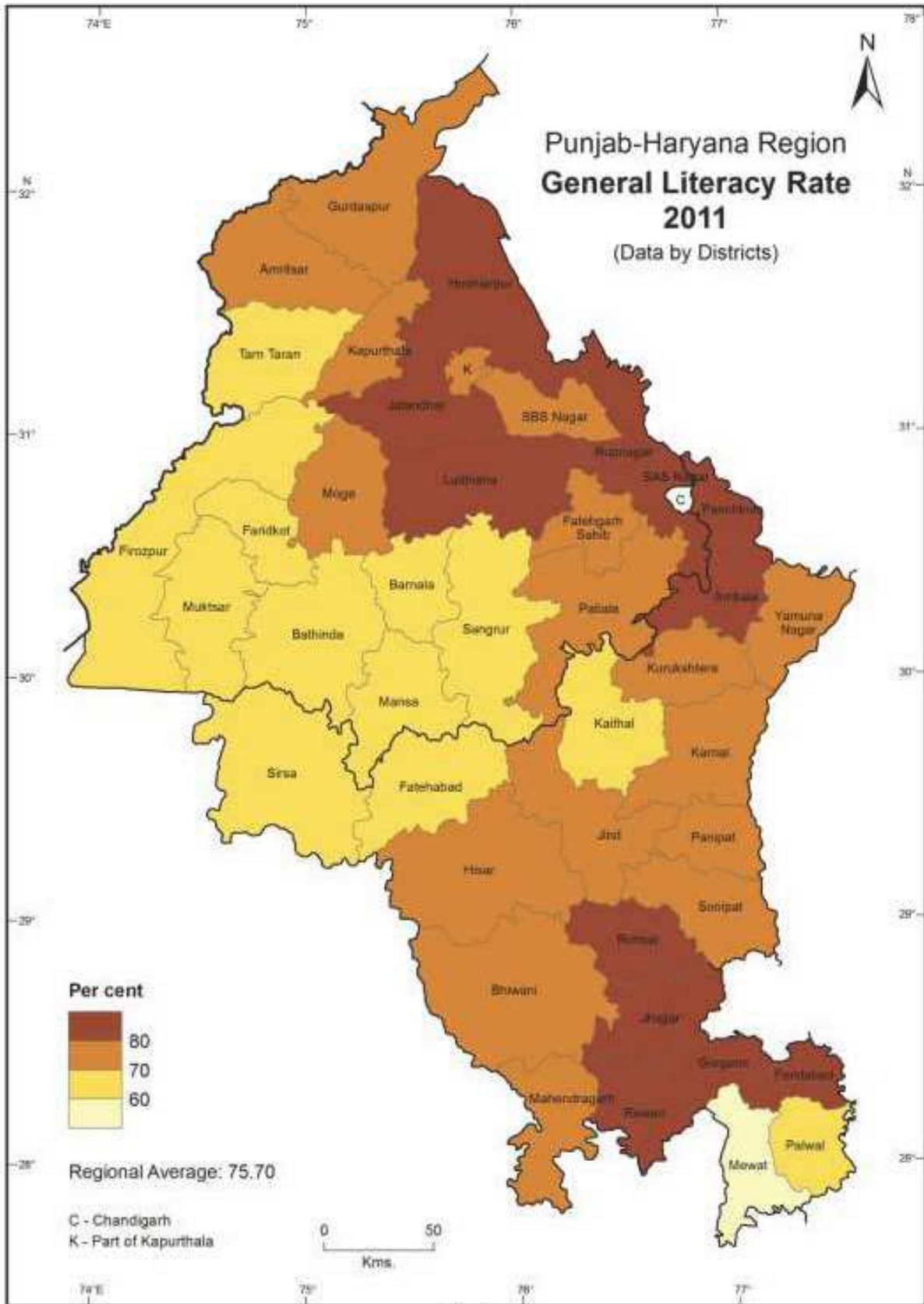


Fig. 1

Table 1
Punjab-Haryana Region: General Literacy Rate, 2011

State/District	Percentage	State/District	Percentage
Punjab	75.84	Haryana	75.55
Hoshiarpur	84.59	Gurgaon	84.70
S.A.S. Nagar	83.80	Panchkula	81.88
Rupnagar	82.19	Ambala	81.75
Jalandhar	82.48	Faridabad	81.70
Ludhiana	82.02	Rewari	80.99
Gurdaspur	79.95	Jhajjar	80.6
S.B.S.Nagar	79.78	Rohtak	80.22
Fatehgarh Sahib	79.35	Sonipat	79.12
Kapurthala	79.07	Yamunanagar	77.99
Amritsar	76.27	Mahendragarh	77.72
Patiala	75.28	Kurukshetra	76.31
Moga	70.68	Panipat	75.94
Faridkot	69.55	Bhiwani	75.21
Firozpur	68.92	Karnal	74.73
Bathinda	68.28	Hisar	72.89
Sangrur	67.99	Jind	71.44
Tarn Taran	67.81	Palwal	69.32
Barnala	67.82	Kaithal	69.15
Muktsar	65.81	Sirsa	68.82
Mansa	61.83	Fatehabad	67.92
Regional Average	75.70	Mewat	54.08

Source: Worked out from the data collected from Primary Census Abstract, 2011, excluding 0-6 age group of population.

Fig. 2 and Table 2 depict the spatial variations in male literacy rate in the study region. These reveal that Mansa district in Punjab has the lowest male literacy (67.31 per cent) and Rewari district in Haryana has the highest male literacy (91.44 per cent) in the region. Both these districts did suffer neglect in the economic development for decades and yet one has the highest male literacy in the region and the other one has the lowest male literacy. Rewari district emerged as a traditional area of service in the armed forces. There may be hardly any pocket in Rewari district where people have not sought their employment in armed forces of India. Thus, such people had greater exposure and wanted their families to be educated. Such tradition has continued for decades in the district and hence no wonders

that the district has emerged as a district of highest male literacy in Punjab and Haryana region. However, the male literacy in Punjab varied between 67.31 per cent in Mansa district to 88.75 per cent in Hoshiarpur district. In Haryana, it varied between 69.94 per cent in Mewat district to 91.44 per cent in Rewari district. Thus, broadly speaking, male literacy in Haryana was marginally higher than that in Punjab. Could this be related to the gradual process of settling down of illiterate farm labour that has in-migrated from areas like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, etc. permanently in Punjab-sub region, is a question that may require a detailed field investigation. The spatial pattern of male literacy shows that generally it decreases as one moves from east to west. North-western Haryana and south-

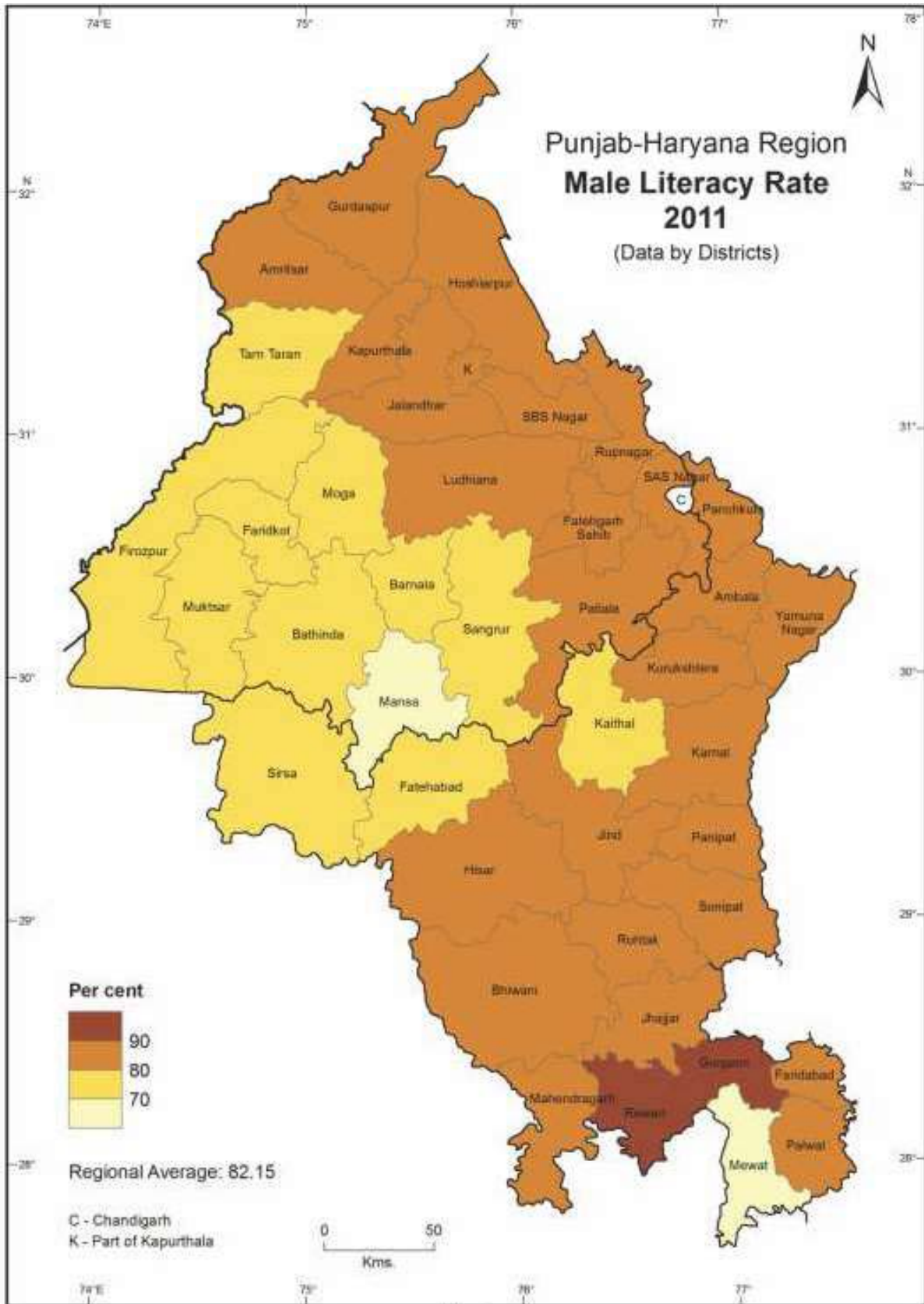


Fig. 2

Table 2
Punjab-Haryana Region: Male Literacy Rate, 2011

State/District	Percentage	State/District	Percentage
Punjab	80.44	Haryana	84.06
Hoshiarpur	88.75	Rewari	91.44
SAS Nagar	87.89	Gurgaon	90.46
Rupnagar	87.50	Mahendragarh	89.72
Jalandhar	86.15	Jhajjar	89.31
Ludhiana	85.98	Faridabad	88.61
SBS Nagar	85.41	Rohtak	87.65
Gurdaspur	84.56	Ambala	87.34
Fatehgarh Sahib	83.33	Sonipat	87.18
Kapurthala	83.15	Panchkula	87.04
Patiala	80.20	Bhiwani	85.65
Amritsar	80.15	Yamunanagar	83.84
Firozpur	75.44	Panipat	83.71
Faridkot	74.60	Kurukshetra	83.03
Moga	74.44	Palwal	82.66
Bathinda	73.79	Hisar	82.20
Tarn Taran	73.24	Karnal	81.82
Sangrur	73.18	Jind	80.81
Muktsar	71.76	Kaithal	77.98
Barnala	71.57	Sirsa	76.43
Mansa	67.31	Fatehabad	76.14
Regional Average	82.15	Mewat	69.94

Source: Worked out from the data collected from Primary Census Abstract, 2011, excluding 0-6 age group of population.

western Punjab together constitutes the largest block of low male literacy (Fig. 2). Almost entire Haryana except Sirsa, Fatehabad and Kaithal districts in the north and Mewat district in the south, had more than 80 per cent male literacy. Districts of Gurgaon and Rewari had more than 90 per cent male literacy which was found nowhere in Punjab. If Punjab was divided by an axis running from north-west to south-east the areas lying in the eastern parts of this axis had high male literacy and those lying in the western parts of this axis had low male literacy. Location near Delhi, Chandigarh; location along GT road studded with industrial towns; tradition of service in armed forces (Rewari, district); tradition of long time emigration to foreign countries (Bist-Doab); concentration of Muslim population (Mewat

and Sangrur districts) etc., among others, are the determinants of this kind of spatial pattern of male literacy in the study region.

Fig. 3 and Table 3 display spatial pattern of female literacy in Punjab and Haryana region. Almost 7 out of every 10 females (68.49 per cent) could read and write. However, in Haryana female literacy was comparatively low (65.94 per cent) than that in Punjab (70.73 per cent). It speaks of regional difference in the status granted to women in the two sub-regions. Mewat district in Haryana (36.60 per cent) and Mansa district in Punjab (55.68 per cent) continue to be the typical areas of lowest female literacy in the region. These also indicate that regional variations in female literacy in the study region were much wider than those in either general or male literacy. Spatially, a bi-

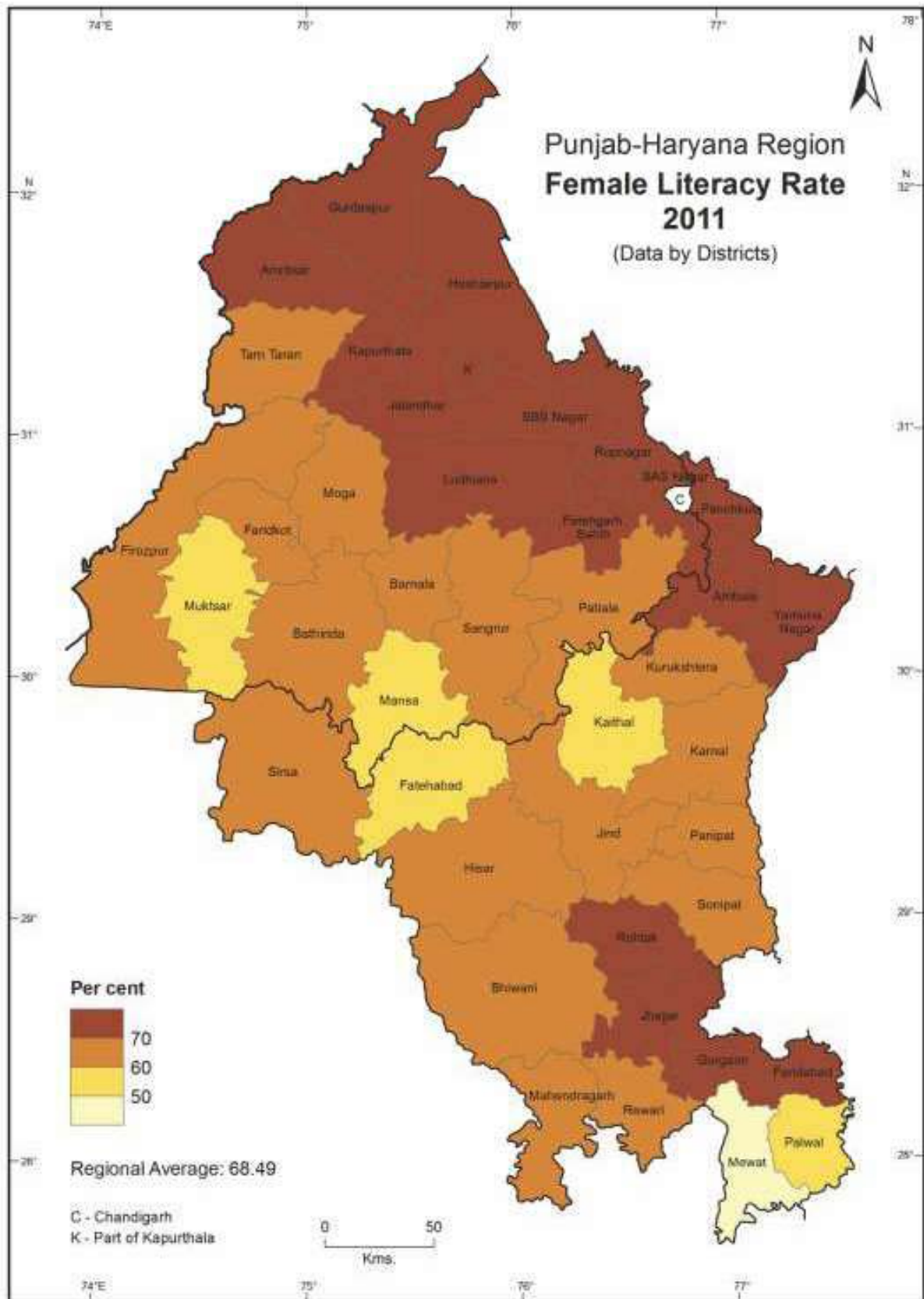


Table 3
Punjab-Haryana Region: Female Literacy Rate, 2011

State/District	Percentage	State/District	Percentage
Punjab	70.73	Haryana	65.94
Hoshiarpur	80.31	Gurgaon	77.98
SAS Nagar	79.18	Panchkula	75.99
Jalandhar	78.48	Ambala	75.50
Ludhiana	77.88	Faridabad	73.84
Rupnagar	76.42	Rohtak	71.71
Gurdaspur	74.85	Yamunanagar	71.38
Fatehgarh Sahib	74.80	Jhajjar	70.73
Kapurthala	74.63	Sonipat	69.89
SBS Nagar	73.93	Rewari	69.57
Amritsar	71.96	Kurukshetra	68.84
Patiala	69.80	Panipat	67.00
Moga	66.48	Karnal	66.82
Faridkot	63.91	Mahendragarh	64.57
Barnala	63.57	Bhiwani	63.54
Sangrur	62.17	Hisar	62.25
Bathinda	61.94	Jind	60.76
Tarn Taran	61.85	Sirsa	60.40
Firozpur	61.69	Kaithal	59.24
Muktsar	59.24	Fatehabad	58.87
Mansa	55.68	Palwal	54.23
Regional Average	68.49	Mewat	36.60

Source: Worked out from the data collected from Primary Census Abstract, 2011, excluding 0-6 age group of population.

modal female literacy pattern emerges on Fig. 3 indicating sharpness in variation. The nodes of high female literacy are by and large the same as those of general literacy implying that the spatial pattern on Fig. 3 corresponds fairly well with that on Fig. 1. Obviously, factors controlling the level of female literacy were the same as mentioned earlier in case of male and general literacy except that the factor of status of females gets added to the list. Female literacy had a positive correlation with status granted to the females. That is why, Mewat district (a district with highest concentration of Muslim population) exhibited not only the lowest female literacy in the region but also the widest gap between the lowest and highest female literacy in the region under study. Low female status and Muslim population proportion seem

to be synonyms.

Thus, the study region emerges as one of the high literacy rates area in general. But is it enough to be satisfied with such an attainment after 70 years of Independence. The time seems to be ripe for shifting our focus from quantity to quality. We may have succeeded in raising the quantum of literate people by providing such attractions as mid-day meal in schools but we have literally failed in providing huge quantum of student population a quality education. It is in this area that we need to work now. The attraction for children should come from qualitatively attractive infrastructure (neat and clean environment, good class rooms, qualitative laboratories, good spacious playgrounds and above all quality teachers) not only to attract the student population to schools

but also to hold them in schools. Thus, we may have to rise above the mid-day meal psychology of propagating school education.

In fine Punjab-Haryana region emerges as one of the highly literate regions of India with only limited intra-regional variations. Broadly speaking, the literacy levels in study area decline as one move from east to west. The district of Mansa in Punjab and Mewat district in Haryana emerged as the typical areas of lowest literacy both among males and females. Spatial variations in the study region have been found to be much wider in case of female literacy in comparison to that in male literacy. The factors contributing to intra-regional spatial variations in literacy rates among others include: location in the proximity of either Delhi or Chandigarh; tradition of service in the armed forces; tradition of emigration to the West and associated inflow of remittances; focus on industry or tertiary/quaternary services sector development; concentration of Muslim population; and status granted to women in the local society. The question raised

in this analysis about shifting the focus from quantity to quality needs to be addressed in times to come by the policy makers. The wonky policies followed too long, now must give way the ones that seek to bring in qualitative changes in our education system and also the ones that intend to bridge the wide gap in the quality of education in government and privately run schools. Education quality cannot be expected to improve when mid-day meal is used as a lollipop to bring the child to school. The time is ripe for rising above the mid-day meal psychology if our education system needs to be invigorated.

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