CHAPTER VI

LITERACY

Among the various qualitative attributes of population, literacy holds an important place as it is a fairly reliable index of the socio-economic development of an area. The trends in literacy are indicative of the pace at which the life and economy of a particular society are being transformed. Among the different countries of the world, Iran, with only 21.1 per cent (1966) of its total population capable of both reading and writing, is one of the least literate. Even if the children below 7 years of age, who are normally illiterate, are excluded, the percentage of literates in Iran works out to only 29.4. The magnitude of illiteracy was far more in the countryside where only 15.1 per cent of the people above the age of 7 were literate (Table 10).

Iran is a country where over 98.78 per cent of its population adheres to Islam. Despite the directives of Prophet which clearly say that education is precept on each Muslim (Talabol Elme Farizaton Ala Kole Muslim), Iran

1 The term literate in Iran refers to a person who can both read and write a message in any language and/or has a school certificate for the first grade of elementary school.

Table 10

Literate Rates of Population Aged 7 and Above: 1966

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/ostan</th>
<th>In per cent</th>
<th>Country/ostan</th>
<th>In per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persons</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>T: 17.05</td>
<td>27.49 5.84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R: 11.75</td>
<td>20.97 1.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U: 37.47</td>
<td>53.42 9.51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sistan and</td>
<td>T: 14.44</td>
<td>22.38 6.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baluchestan</td>
<td>R: 9.64</td>
<td>16.62 2.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U: 37.84</td>
<td>52.86 21.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kordestan</td>
<td>T: 13.28</td>
<td>21.0 4.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R: 8.12</td>
<td>14.5 1.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U: 41.87</td>
<td>55.62 25.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmandarikol</td>
<td>T: 28.03</td>
<td>43.68 12.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R: 22.19</td>
<td>30.06 6.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U: 33.78</td>
<td>49.49 17.45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semnan</td>
<td>T: 37.47</td>
<td>52.13 22.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R: 27.47</td>
<td>43.63 11.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U: 51.3</td>
<td>64.67 37.17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamadan</td>
<td>T: 21.45</td>
<td>34.03 8.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R: 14.55</td>
<td>26.95 1.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U: 34.18</td>
<td>51.63 23.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ports and</td>
<td>T: 21.35</td>
<td>34.15 7.75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islands of</td>
<td>R: 15.38</td>
<td>27.3 2.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian Gulf</td>
<td>U: 39.15</td>
<td>55.4 24.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorestan</td>
<td>T: 21.23</td>
<td>31.33 10.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R: 18.04</td>
<td>29.73 3.13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U: 44.62</td>
<td>56.78 31.42</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaharmahal</td>
<td>T: 19.8</td>
<td>33.25 5.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>azad and</td>
<td>R: 14.9</td>
<td>25.8 2.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakhtiyar</td>
<td>U: 29.05</td>
<td>47.6 9.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kohkiluyeh</td>
<td>T: 16.9</td>
<td>25.4 5.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R: 13.15</td>
<td>22.5 3.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U: 38.45</td>
<td>50.1 19.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ports and</td>
<td>T: 13.53</td>
<td>21.43 5.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islands of</td>
<td>R: 10.3</td>
<td>17.53 2.67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman Sea</td>
<td>U: 34.6</td>
<td>47.93 20.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iram</td>
<td>T: 12.63</td>
<td>21.05 2.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R: 10.28</td>
<td>18.05 1.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U: 37.58</td>
<td>40.33 11.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Calculated from Regional Statistical Books of various shahrestans, 1966.

* T stands for all areas, R for rural areas and U for urban areas.
continued to neglect the spread of literacy among its masses. The prevalence of illiteracy in Iran is to be understood in the context of the country's socio-economic history. For centuries together its economy has mainly been of subsistence agricultural type, based on primitive technology. Such an economic set-up was not conducive to the growth of literacy. Even in other parts of the world the dissemination of literacy was subsequent to the industrial revolution they experienced.\(^3\) Since Iran remained predominantly an agricultural country until as late as 1955-56 (about 60 per cent of the working force was engaged in agricultural activities), its literacy rates continued to be low. It was only in the year 1961-62 when the present government of Iran started taking constructive steps like the abolition of landlordism, opening up of a large number of schools in the countryside, sending of literacy corps etc., that the country started making some progress in the field of literacy. Secondly, a vast majority of the country's population until recently was in rural areas. The type of economy in the rural areas was such that literacy or education was not an occupational necessity. Thirdly, the opportunities for getting education were also limited.

and were largely confined to urban areas. Until 1961-62 about 90 per cent of the villages were without any school. Fourthly, although Islam grants equal rights to males and females, the females have been the victims of socio-political prejudices until recently. Prior to 1961-62, women in Iran did not enjoy the right to vote and were not allowed to participate much in the economic struggle. Fifthly, the appalling poverty of the people, conservative and orthodox outlook and lack of socio-economic awareness of the masses were other impediments to the progress of literacy. Above all, Iran has had a chequered history and has been facing invasions from Arabs, Mongols, Taymurs, Russians in the past and in recent years was occupied by the foreign powers during the two world wars. Such a history has left its own imprint upon the literacy standards of the country. Thus, the population of Iran continues to be largely illiterate despite tremendous efforts by the government since 1961-62.

Growth of Literacy During 1956-66

Table 11 reveals that in 1956 the percentage of literates among the population aged 10 and above was only 14.9. This literate population was concentrated largely in urban areas (33.3 per cent) where the facilities for education existed while mass illiteracy (about 94 per cent)
Table 11

IRAN

Growth of Literacy \(^4\) : 1956-66

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>1956 (In per cent)</th>
<th>1966 (In per cent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total Males Females</td>
<td>Total Males Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All areas</td>
<td>14.9 22.2  7.3</td>
<td>28.1 39.0 16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural areas</td>
<td>6.0 10.8  1.0</td>
<td>13.7 23.5  3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban areas</td>
<td>33.3 45.2 20.6</td>
<td>49.1 60.9 36.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


prevailed in the rural areas. Moreover, the literacy among females was extremely low, only 7.3 per cent. In the rural areas the female literacy was practically absent as hardly one in hundred females could read and write. At that time the economy of the country was primarily of subsistence agricultural type; the life of the people was self contained; the educational facilities were practically absent, particularly in the rural areas and for females; the taboo against the female education in a tradition of

\(^4\) Literacy rates of population aged 10 and above have been compared because of the non-availability of data pertaining to the literacy rates of population aged 7 and above for the year 1956.
hejab (veil) was quite strong; and the interest on the part of government to spread education was lacking. This kind of situation persisted up to 1961-62, since when there has been steady progress. By 1966 the literacy rates, which increased to 28.1 per cent, had been doubled. In relative terms, however, the literacy rates progressed more amongst the females and in rural areas. The female literacy increased from 7.3 per cent in 1956 to 16.5 per cent in 1966 (Table 11). Similarly, the female literacy in rural areas increased from barely one per cent in 1956 to 3.4 per cent in 1966. The urban literacy rate increased from 33.3 per cent in 1956 to 49.1 per cent in 1966 while the rural literacy rate advanced from 6 per cent to 13.7 per cent during the same period. This growth in literacy was associated firstly, with the process of urbanization, which gained an impetus during this decade. The proportion of urban population to total population increased from about 30 per cent in 1956 to 38 per cent in 1966. Secondly, opening of new educational institutions on a large-scale further geared up the process of spread of literacy. The number of schools in the country which was about 8,400 in 1956 rose to about 36,000 in 1966 (Table 12). Thirdly, the waning prejudices against female mobility outside the four walls of the house, their education and their
Table 12
IRAN
Number of Schools and Students: 1956-66

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total schools</th>
<th>Total students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>8,405</td>
<td>1,086,912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-67</td>
<td>36,156</td>
<td>5,532,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


participation in economic activity have given their own stimulus to the growth of literacy in the country. The progressive attitude of the present king has helped the nation in providing a larger number of female teachers particularly in rural areas which has facilitated the expansion of female education. Fourthly, the progressive policies followed by the government since 1961-62 have been responsible for giving a special spurt to literacy rate in Iran. These policies include: making primary education compulsory; formulating certain laws which make education a prerequisite for getting a government job or a promotion; adult literacy campaign; and sending of literacy corps to rural areas. It is worth mentioning
here that the year 1961-62 holds a prominent place in the socio-economic history of Iran when the country experienced what is popularly known as the 'white revolution'. A national referendum was held to get the opinion of the people on six major issues. Included in these issues were the granting of equal rights to males and females and creation of literacy corps with the main objective of propagating literacy in rural areas. The nation almost unanimously voted in favour of these two steps. Consequently, literacy corps were sent to villages, a number of schools were opened, and females were provided opportunities to get education. Thus, the year 1961-62 marks a significant divide in socio-economic history of Iran and makes a new beginning with regard to the growth of literacy in the country. Notwithstanding all these developments during recent years, Iran remains largely illiterate since 71 persons out of every 100 above the age of 7 still cannot read and write. Not only that, there are wide disparities in literacy rates in relation to residence, sex and area, which will be treated in the following pages.

5 The term 'white revolution' was used by the King for the socio-economic reforms implemented by him after a national consensus was arrived on six major issues through a referendum.

Rural-Urban Differential in Literacy

There is a wide gap between the literacy rates of rural and urban areas. The urban literacy rate of Iran in 1966 was 50.4 per cent as compared to the rural literacy rate of only 15.1 per cent (Table 10). This disparity in the literacy rates of urban and rural areas is the product of: (i) the pattern of socio-economic life is such that the need to get education is more in urban areas than in rural areas; (ii) the educational facilities available in urban places are far more than those in the countryside; (iii) the urban population is socially more awakened and economically more capable of imparting education to their children; (iv) the females in the urban areas enjoy relatively high status than their counterparts in the countryside; and (v) many educated persons in rural areas tend to migrate to urban places in search of jobs. This process adds to the number of literate persons in the urban areas and consequently the number of literates in rural areas undergoes a decline.

The decade 1956-66, however, marks the beginning of a new era with regard to the progress of literacy. The general literacy rate almost doubled itself during this period. The rural literacy rate registered a faster growth than the urban literacy rate. While the rural literacy rates increased 2.3 times, the urban literacy grew by 1.5 times.
during 1956-66. Consequently, the inequality in the literacy rates of the two areas has been somewhat narrowed down. This was achieved through opening up of a large number of schools in rural areas, sending literacy corps to the countryside, starting adult literacy campaign in rural areas and educating the rural people about the need for getting education. By the year 1966, the literacy corps who were ultimately absorbed as teachers after two years of national service had imparted education to 1,195,298 students of below 15 years of age.

**Male-Female Differential in Literacy**

Despite the fact that Islam grants high status to women, with a right to participate in economic activity and to own property independently, there is a glaring inequality in the literacy rates of males and females. In fact, the female literacy rates in Iran have been so low until recently that the general literacy was almost synonymous with male literacy. According to the 1966 census only 17.9 per cent of the female population of the country was literate as compared to the literacy rate of 40.1 per cent among the males. This signifies that the process of literacy has been operating largely in the context of its functional and occupational value, which explains greater emphasis upon male education.

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The excessive illiteracy among the females was the product of various socio-economic factors. Firstly, in spite of Islam granting equal status to males and females, there has been a general prejudice against the female mobility outside their homes until very recently. Secondly, the females in the rural areas assist the males in many activities like picking of fruits, harvesting, drying of fruits, cattle rearing, carpet weaving, spinning, etc. The parents are reluctant to spare their daughters for education. Thirdly, the prevalence of a system of early marriage of the females also stops many a female from going to schools. Fourthly, not only the educational institutions for girls were few but also the number of female teachers ready to work in rural areas was inadequate. Fifthly, rarely a female child was sent to a school even in an adjacent village in case there was no school in the village. Lastly, the prevailing poverty of the people was also a great hindrance to the progress of literacy, particularly of females.

A notable development of the decade 1956-66 was that the female literacy rates improved much more rapidly than the male literacy rates. While the female literacy rate increased by 2.2 times, the male literacy rates increased

8 His Imperial Majesty Shahanshah Aryamehr, op.cit., p.44.
9 ibid., p.44.
Iran

Literates As Percent of Population
Aged 7 and Above: 1966
(Data by Shahrestans)

Percentage
- 50
- 40
- 30
- 20
- 10

Map 18
IRAN
Literate Males As Percent of Males
Aged 7 and Above: 1966
(Data by Shahrestans)
IRAN

Rural Population

Literate Females As Percent of Females

Aged 7 and Above 1966

(Data by Shahrestans)
Persons Without Any Certificate As Percent of Total Literates: 1966
(Data by Shahrestans)
by 1.8 times. Thus, the disparity in the literacy rates of the two sexes was somewhat reduced.

Spatial Patterns of Literacy

After having traced the progress of literacy during 1956-66 and having studied the differential in literacy by residence and sex we may proceed to study the spatial patterns of literacy as existing in 1966. A number of maps showing general literacy (Map 18), male literacy (Map 19), female literacy (Map 20), general literacy of rural population (Map 21), male literacy of rural population (Map 22), female literacy of rural population (Map 23), male-female differential in literacy (Map 24), proportion of literates without any certificate (Map 25), proportion of literates with elementary stage certificate (Map 26), and proportion of literates with secondary stage certificate (Map 27) have been prepared for this purpose. Although, the general, male and female literacy rates of the country average 29.4, 40.1 and 17.9 per cent respectively, there are wide inter-regional variations in these rates. Similarly, there are spatial variations, though not as striking as those of literacy rates, in the levels of education from one part of the country to another. The discussion in the following pages would, however, be confined to the spatial variations in the literacy rates.
and mention will be made of the levels of education in each case. On the basis of the rates of general literacy, Iran may be divided into the following four types of areas:

A. Areas of low literacy with less than 20 per cent of population as literate;
B. Areas with 20 to 30 per cent of population as literate;
C. Areas with 30 to 40 per cent of population as literate; and
D. Areas of high literacy with more than 40 per cent of population as literate.

A. Areas of Low Literacy

Out of 462 bakhshes in the country as many as 184 had a literacy rate of less than 20 per cent. Such areas of low literacy were largely peripheral in location. The entire eastern border from Dasht-e-Gorgan to western part of Bandar-e-Lengeh shahrestan and the border areas in the west facing Iraq, Turkey and U.S.S.R. upto southwestern part of Caspian Sea, form two conspicuous and compact areas where only less than one-fifth of population was capable of reading and writing. The female literacy here was only 3 to 4 per cent (Map 20). In many bakhshes it was even less than one per cent, particularly in rural areas (Map 23).
The male literacy, however, ranged between 10 and 30 per cent. The regional pattern of rural literacy also corresponds fairly well with that of general literacy, with the difference that the rates of literacy in rural areas are far lower (Maps 18 and 21). The low literacy in these areas is associated mainly with the following factors.

Firstly, over 80 per cent of population depends directly upon agriculture, pastoralism and other primary activities. Agriculture is of subsistence type and general economic conditions are depressed due to low agricultural productivity, particularly in the eastern belt. Education does not hold much functional value in such a subsistence economic set up.

Secondly, economic exigencies necessitate the participation in economic struggle by all, males and females, young and the aged. Carpet weaving facilitated by the exigencies of natural environment and developed under economic compulsions permits such a participation in economic activities by females and children as it is carried on within the four walls of the house. This keeps many females and children away from school.

Thirdly, in view of the backwardness of agricultural economy of these areas the degree of urban development has been low which in turn has indirectly worked against the promotion of literacy.
Lastly, the number of schools until very recently was negligible in these areas. It was only after the 'white revolution' of 1961-62 that these areas have received some facilities for education. However, it will take some time before the backlog of illiteracy from these areas is eliminated.

It may be noted that not only the literacy rates in these areas are poor but also the levels of education are very low. An overwhelming majority of the literates in these areas is either without a certificate or has crossed only the elementary stage of education (Maps 25 and 26). This implies that literacy in these areas is only a recent phenomenon.

Thus, illiteracy prevails in those areas where the economy is overwhelmingly agricultural and of subsistence type. The schools are not only few and far between but also have been opened only recently. The degree of urbanization is low and the compulsions of depressed economy necessitate female and child participation in the economic struggle.

B. Areas Having 20 to 30 Per Cent Literacy Rates

As one moves inward from this sufficiently wide but peripheral belt, the literacy rates improve gradually reaching their peak in the proximity of Tehran. The areas having 20 to 30 per cent are widely spread covering large
parts of Kerman, Khorasan, Esfahan, Fars, Central, Hamadan ostans, farmandarikol of Persian Gulf ports and islands, and the Caspian lowlands. In fact, these areas make two distinct large arcuate belts. One, covering the less densely populated parts in the east and south and the second, covering more densely populated parts in the west and north. Besides, there are also small patches of similar literacy rates distributed sporadically in Azarbaijan, Kermanshah and Khuzestan ostans.

The economically backward, sparsely populated drier areas in the east and south have 20 to 30 per cent literacy. The mainstay of economy here is agriculture which is of subsistence type and is based upon primitive technology. Mining, quarrying and carpet weaving which absorb female and child labour on a large scale are the other activities. For all such activities education has had little functional relevance. Moreover, until recently the initiative on the part of government for the spread of literacy and education was almost lacking. The schools were only few to find, particularly in rural areas and for females. Further, the general poverty of the people necessitated participation in economic activities by all the members of a family. This kept many potential students away from schools. Above all, since the area has been under acute population pressure
it has been experiencing out-migration mostly of educated people. This has reduced the number of literates left in the area.

The second area of 20-30 per cent literacy rates covering largely central province and Caspian coastal plains is also predominantly agricultural though comparatively much prosperous. Over two-thirds of the population derives its livelihood from agriculture. The agriculture, here, is of intensive type which has its own demands on labour. Moreover, this is the only area in the country where two crops in a year are raised. The industry in the region, though still in its infancy, is expanding rapidly. Consequently, the demand for unskilled labour both for agriculture and construction work has been fast increasing in recent years. With the result, the region has been experiencing large scale in-migration of unskilled and semi-skilled workers most of whom are illiterate. Thus, while on the one hand, the increasing demand for labour in these areas has stopped many students from going to schools, on the other hand, it has resulted in an influx of mostly illiterate workers. Both these factors have played their own role in keeping the literacy rates of the areas relatively low.

The two areas discussed above also strike a comparison between themselves from the point of view of levels of education. The agriculturally poor region in the east and
south has relatively low standard of education in comparison to its counterpart in the north and west which is agriculturally prosperous and industrially developing. While in the former case, around 85 per cent of the literates either do not hold a certificate at all or have crossed only the elementary stage of education, in the latter case the corresponding figure is in the neighbourhood of 70 per cent.

Thus, 20-30 per cent literacy rates are typical of two types of areas. One, areas of depressed agricultural economy experiencing out-migration and second, areas of prosperous agricultural economy with increasing urbanization experiencing in-migration mostly of unskilled or semi-skilled workers for agricultural and construction activities.

C. Areas of Relatively High Literacy

Relatively high literacy rates of 30 to 40 per cent were recorded in 78 bakshesh in all. Largely, these were confined to the central part of Iran around Tehran shahrestan, though patches having relatively high literacy in Khuzestan, Fars, Khorasan and Azarbaijan ostans are also found. Both male and female literacy rates were relatively high in these areas. Male literacy was invariably over 40 per cent, while the female literacy ranged between 10 and 30 per cent. Map 21 showing the spatial pattern of general literacy in rural areas reveals that rural literacy rates are not high
everywhere in these areas, implying that relatively high literacy rates in these areas are largely the product of relatively high proportion of literates among urban population. Not only that, the female literacy rates among the rural population in all these areas are extremely low, usually below even 5 per cent (Map 23).

Broadly speaking, the areas of relatively high literacy are those which have a high proportion of workers engaged in non-agricultural activities and a high degree of urban development. In most of these areas only 20 to 40 per cent of the working force is directly dependent upon agriculture. Moreover, each such area of relatively high literacy, with the solitary exception of Sistan and Baluchestan ostan, is a seat of a University. Most of these Universities are by now (1977) a quarter century old.

Among the various areas of relatively high literacy large parts of Khuzestan ostan form a conspicuous area where the literacy rates are more than 30 per cent. The area specializes in the production of oil and natural gas. The proportion of workers in agricultural activities is usually less than 25 per cent. The nature of economy of the area is such that it demands education. The University of Ahvaz and the Oil Faculty at Abadan together provide the facilities for education. Thus, the high functional value of education and the availability of facilities for getting education
together have been responsible for raising the literacy rates of this region.

Parts of Fars ostan form another area having relatively high literacy. This again is an area where economy is diversified and where over 60 per cent of the working force is engaged in non-agricultural pursuits. The degree of urban development and of urban influence is high. Moreover, the area had for long been the seat of a national capital. Marvdasht, near Shiraz was the capital of the country from 600 B.C. to the beginning of Christian era. All these factors have stimulated the spread of literacy in the area. No wonder, the region holds a tradition in education because even during the times when Aryans occupied the country (prior to 8th century B.C.) it possessed a number of schools and other educational institutions. The region has produced a number of famous poets and writers of Persian literature.

Large parts of Esfahan ostan together with Shahrud and Damghan shahrestans constitute still another compact area of relatively high literacy. Esfahan was the capital of the country for about 200 years from the beginning of 17th century to the end of 18th century. This provided and added stimulus to the urban and industrial growth of the region. By now the region has a fair concentration of textiles, handicrafts and carpet weaving industries. The comparatively high degree of urban and industrial development of the
region provided an environment conducive to the spread and growth of literacy. Not only the number of schools multiplied but also the local religious leaders locally known as mollahs propagated literacy in mosques. Presently the region is a seat of higher education as it possesses a University of its own. Above all, the peaceful and stable history of the area has also been helpful as it permitted uninterrupted development of the area which had its positive impact upon the spread of literacy.

Lastly, the western parts of Central province which (i) have only less than a quarter of working force engaged in agriculture, (ii) are the most industrialized part of the country and (iii) have a very high degree of urban development, also have a relatively high literacy. Besides, the region's proximity to the national capital Tehran is to a large extent responsible for raising the literacy rates of these areas because many a worker who work in Tehran have settled in this region due to high cost of living in the national capital.

Thus, relatively high literacy was characteristic of those areas which have (i) high degree of urban and industrial development, (ii) high proportion of non-agricultural workers, (iii) high density of schools and (iv) had proximity to the national capital in the past or at present.
D. Areas of High Literacy

There were in all 17 bakhshe where more than 40 per cent of population could read and write. The highest literacy rate (62.5 per cent), however, prevails in Shemiranat in the north of Tehran. Both male and female literacy rates are high in these bakhshe. While the male literacy rates range from 40 to over 50, the female literacy rates range from 30 to more than 40. Although a large part of the population in most of these bakhshe is urban even the rural population does not lag far behind in the field of literacy. The rural literacy rates here range between 30 and 50 per cent.

There is only one extensive compact area which has a literacy rate of more than 40 per cent, though a few individual bakhshe with such a high literacy rate have a scattered location in Khuzestan, Mahabad and Bandar-e-Pahlavi. Out of 17 bakhshe having high literacy, 10 bakhshe in the vicinity of the national capital of Tehran make a contiguous region. This region is the country's most urbanized part with 68 to 96 per cent of its population living in urban places. This is largely due to the fact that as much as 80 per cent of the big factories of the country are concentrated in these ten bakhshe. Such a high concentration of industries has had a positive impact upon the progress of literacy in the area. Moreover, the region being in the vicinity of the national capital has a very high density of schools both in rural and urban areas and also for both males and females. Above all,
Tehran with four universities and over ten professional institutions has become the most important educational centre of Iran.

The Masjed-e-Soleiman, Abadan, Mahabad and Bandar-e-Pahlavi areas which also have a literacy rate of 40 to 65 per cent owe their high literacy largely to their industrial and urban development and concentration of armed personnel.

Obviously in all these areas mentioned above the level of education is relatively high. Since in most of these cases the degree of urbanization is high and the nature of jobs is such, for which education has a high functional value, therefore, the relatively high level of education is understandable. The universities and professional institutions which are located in these areas facilitate the spread of higher education.

In brief, the relatively high literacy rates are characteristic of those areas where (i) the economy is more diversified with limited role of the agricultural sector, (ii) the degree of urbanization is relatively high, and (iii) schools and institutions of higher education are properly spaced. There is a positive correlation between literacy rates and levels of education.
Conclusions

1. Iran, with 7 persons out of every 10 still unable to read and write, was one of the least literate countries in the world in 1966. The low literacy in the country was attributable to (i) lack of facilities for education in about three-fourths of the country, (ii) a majority of the country's population being rural, (iii) prejudices against female mobility and education, and (iv) appalling poverty and orthodox outlook of the people. However, a process of rapid growth of literacy has been initiated since 1961-62 when, among other things, a large number of new schools were opened, the literacy corps were sent to rural areas under the famous 'white revolution', adult literacy campaigns were started with a vigour, and females were granted equal rights to their male counterparts. Nonetheless, almost seven-tenths of Iran's population still remains illiterate. Not only that, levels of education among those who are recorded as literate are also low as an overwhelming majority of them have only crossed the elementary education. A sizable proportion (10.69 per cent) of such literates who have no certificate suggests that but for the adult literacy campaigns in recent years, the proportion of literates in the country would have been still lower.

2. It is noteworthy that there are striking disparities in the rates of literacy by sex and residence. The females
lag far behind the males in the field of literacy and education. For every five male literates there are two female literates. Not only that, the level of education among the females is extremely low. The excessive illiteracy among the females was the product of various socio-economic factors including the general prejudice against female education, participation of females in such occupations like carpet weaving and various agricultural operations, early marriage and limited number of educational institutions for girls. A notable development of the preceding decade, however, has been a quickening process of growth of literacy among the females in comparison to the males as a result of the government's efforts in this direction. This has narrowed down the gap between male and female literacy rates to some extent. Similarly the literacy rates of rural and urban population have been contrastingly different from each other. While over half of the urban population was recorded as literate, only one-sixth of the rural population could read and write. The rural-urban differential in literacy is associated with the differential in (i) the type of economy of the two areas, (ii) the availability of facilities for education in the two areas, (iii) the degree of socio-economic awakening among the population of the two areas, (iv) the status granted to the females in two areas, and (v) the pattern of migration of educated in the two areas.
However, a significant beginning has been made in narrowing down this gap in literacy of the two areas by, among other things, opening a large number of schools in the rural areas during the preceding decade.

3. Equally significant are the disparities in the literacy rates of different parts of the country. The regional pattern of literacy in Iran is such that the capital city of Tehran is like the literacy lamp. As one moves away from it the degree of darkness increases. The areas in the close vicinity of Tehran have the highest literacy rates, and as one moves away from the capital city the proportion of literacy goes on decreasing gradually reaching the minimum in the peripheral areas of the country. Spatially speaking, the patterns of both male and female literacy correspond fairly well with the patterns of general literacy. The regional variations in the literacy rates of Iran are, however, associated with the variations in the proportion of workers in agricultural activities, degree of urban-industrial development and availability of facilities for getting education. The literacy rates in different parts of Iran have a positive correlation with: (i) the percentage of workers in non-agricultural activities, (ii) the percentage of population living in urban areas, and (iii) the number of schools.