

# Literacy in India

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## Literacy in India: Status, Schemes, and the Road Ahead

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### Context:

Tripura has recently attained the status of a “**fully literate state**”, based on data from the **Understanding Lifelong Learning for All in Society (ULLAS)** - *Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram*. This achievement highlights India's progress in improving literacy, especially in the northeastern region, and aligns with the broader national goals of **inclusive and equitable education**.

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### What is Literacy?

- As per the **ULLAS programme**, literacy is defined as the *ability to read, write, and perform basic arithmetic with comprehension*, along with **critical life skills** like digital and financial literacy.
  - According to the **Office of the Registrar General of India**, a **literate person** is someone **aged 7 years and above** who can read and write with understanding in **any language**.
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### Status of Literacy in India (2023-24)

- **India's total literacy rate: 80.9%**
- **Top states by literacy rate:**
  - **Goa - 99.72%**
  - **Mizoram - 98.2%**

- Kerala - 96.2%
  - Tripura - 95.6%
  - States with lowest literacy rates:
    - Andhra Pradesh - 72.6%
    - Bihar - 74.3%
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## Major Government Measures to Promote Literacy

- **Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009**  
Ensures *free and compulsory education* for children aged **6-14 years**, sets **minimum standards** for schools, and prohibits *discrimination and corporal punishment*.
- **National Education Policy (NEP), 2020**
  - Emphasizes **foundational literacy and numeracy**.
  - Promotes **multilingualism, vocational training**, and **digital education**.
  - Focuses on **21st-century skills** and **holistic development**.
- **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan**  
An umbrella programme integrating:
  - **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**
  - **Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)**
  - **Teacher Education (TE)**
- **PM SHRI Schools (2022)**
  - Aims to upgrade **14,500 schools** as model institutions to demonstrate NEP implementation.

- Covers government and local body-run **elementary to senior secondary schools**.
  - **DIKSHA Platform**
    - Offers **digital resources** for teachers and students.
    - Supports **blended learning** and **teacher training**.
  - **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao**
    - Promotes **education of the girl child**.
    - Addresses **gender-based educational disparities**.
  - **PM Vidyalakshmi Scheme**
    - Provides **collateral-free loans** for students entering **Quality Higher Education Institutions (QHEIs)**.
    - Removes **financial barriers** to higher education.
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## Effectiveness of Educational Initiatives

- **Literacy improvement:**
  - From **14% in 1947** to **80.9% in 2023-24**.
- **Reading ability among Class 3 students:**
  - **23.4%** could read Class 2-level text in 2024, up from **16.3% in 2022**.
- **Arithmetic skills:**
  - Notable improvement seen across both **government** and **private** schools.
- **Preschool enrolments (age 3-5):**

- Increased in **2024** compared to **2018** and **2022**, reflecting NEP's focus on **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)**.
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## Key Challenges in Achieving Higher Literacy

- **Social exclusion:**
  - Marginalized groups face **limited access** due to **caste, gender, and poverty**.
- **Regional disparities:**
  - Large gaps exist between **urban and rural, private and public, and state-wise education quality**.
- **High dropout rates:**
  - Caused by **poverty, child labour, poor infrastructure, and lack of support services**.
- **Teacher-related issues:**
  - **Shortages, uneven qualifications, and lack of training** affect quality.
- **Administrative inefficiencies:**
  - **Bureaucratic delays** hinder timely implementation of schemes.

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## Way Forward

- **Curriculum restructuring** to make learning more **practical, skill-based, and inclusive**.
- Focus on **interactive, tech-enabled** education tailored to the **needs of diverse learners**.
- Promote **community participation, digital equity, and teacher empowerment** to close the existing gaps.