

A Critical Review of Government Initiatives for Women's Education in Post-Independence India.

Dr. Anjana Jadon

Asst. Professor

Government Girls Degree College, Chhibramau, Kannauj, U.P.

jadon_anjana@rediffmail.com, anjanajadon83gmail.com

Abstract: Women education is an essential need to change their status in the society. Educated women can play a very important role in the society for socio-economic development. Education eliminates inequalities and disparities as the means of recovering their status within and out of their families. *It is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. Education provides more strength to women. Such strength comes from the process of empowerment and empowerment will come from the education. Education plays a significant role in women empowerment inequality and vulnerability of women in the society in India. This paper is an effort to capture the emerging picture with respect to women's education in India.*

Keywords: Women education, empowerment, opportunities.

I. INTRODUCTION

Women play a very important role in the progress of a family, society and country. In order to make democracy successful in the country women education is necessary together with the men. Educated women are the real source of happiness in the family. Education is one of the milestones *for women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life-style (Bhat, 2015).*

The female literacy rate in India is lower than the male literacy rate. Compared to boys fewer girls are enrolled in the schools and many them drop out. "Educate a Girl, Empower a Nation." Women play a vital role in the development of the nation. In this century the economic wealth of the country not only depends on the men but also in the hands of the women. To improve the role of women in the society the government mainly concentrated on their education and increasing employment opportunities. In these circumstances, we require the further improvement in the equality in gender, level of literacy and empowerment of women in every corner in India. For that, the Indian Government has launched quite a few programmes and schemes to carry them into conventional of development. These actions have brought about observable changes in the socio-economic conditions of women. After India got independence, the participation of women nationalists was widely acknowledged. When the Indian Constitution was formulated, it granted equal rights to women, considering them legal citizens of the country and as an equal to men in terms of freedom and opportunity. Free and compulsory education to the children between the ages of 6 to 14 is a fundamental right of Indian citizens according to the Indian Constitution under the 86th Amendment. Even though the Indian government, has taken some measures such as the "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan" (the main intend of this program is to give primary education particularly to girl children from poor rural areas). In spite of these activities there are many obstacles in women education. Hence, this study is mainly focused on women education in India an analysis.

Education in India:

Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It is not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside (Suguna, 2011). The Indian Education system has two important structures, one is formal and another one is non-formal education.

Some other educational programmes also formulated to motivate the women education such as online education and distance education. The main objective of the entire educational programme is to make every girl child to educate. This low level of literacy not only shows a negative impact on women's lives but also on their families and country's economic development. Hence it is of foremost importance to raise the level of education amongst women. There are an estimated 33.3 million Indians enrolled in higher education courses in India, according to the HRD ministry's All India Survey on Higher education report for 2015. On these, 17.9 million are boys and 15.4 million are girls as of 2014-2015. Fundamental Rights of women are equality, freedom to religion, educational rights, cultural and educational, against exploitation, freedom. Improving girls' educational levels has been demonstrated to have clear impacts on the health and economic future of young women, which in turn improves the prospects of their entire community. After the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, *Basic education is more than an end in itself; it is the foundation for lifelong learning and human development* (Ramachandran, 1998).

India: Literacy Rate from 1981 to 2017

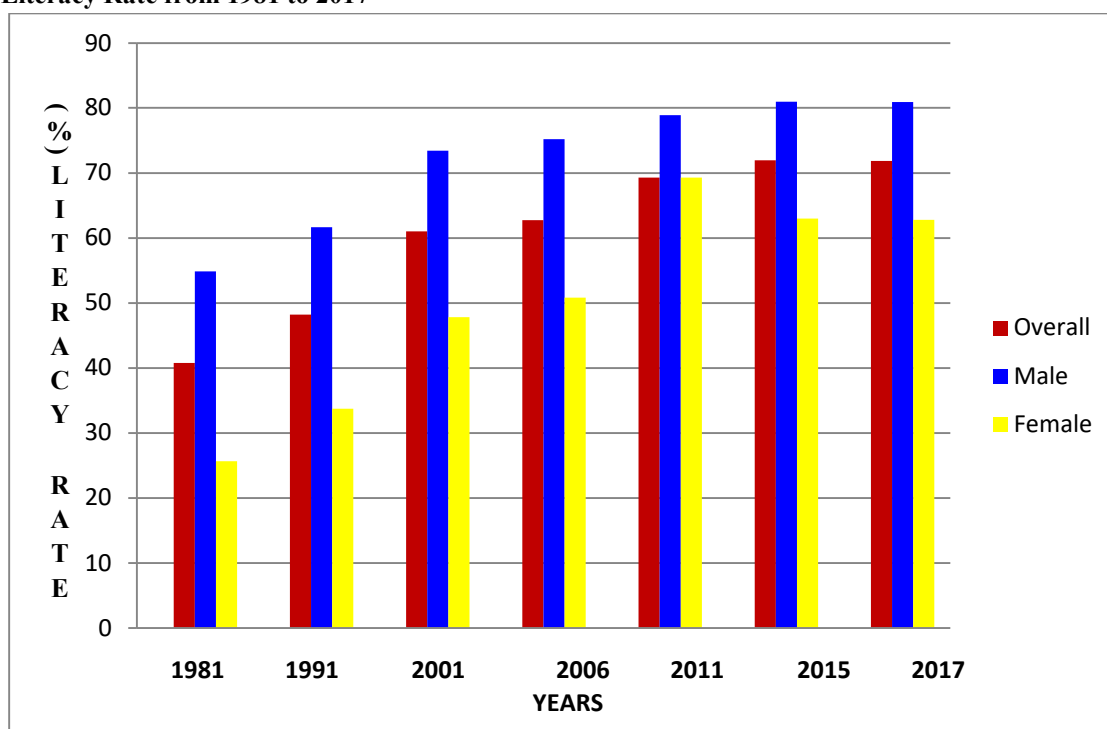


Fig. The literacy rate in India from 1981 to 2017. (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/271335/literacy-rate-in-india>)

Women education in ancient India:

In the Vedic Period women had access to education, but gradually they had lost this right. India Scriptures Rig Veda and Upanishads mention about several women sages and seers. Women enjoyed equivalent position and rights in the early Vedic era. However, after 500 B.C., the position of women started to decline. The position of women in ancient India was vital. In the Vedic period, women education in ancient India was prevalent. Indian women during the ancient times was said to be superior to men. The women in ancient India were given significance and they held an important position in the Indian society during that time. In the Vedic period, educational system was very developed.

Historically women have taken part in all spheres of life with courage and gusto. Indian mythology is rich with stories of highly educated and evolved women. One can trace the historical evidence of ancient Indian education to the 3rd century B.C. when education was imparted orally and many women scholars were part in it. When Buddhism spread to India,

some world famous educational institutions such as Nalanda, Vikramshila and Takshila were established. Research shows that a number of women were enrolled in these temples of learning. These universities flourished from about 5th century to 13th century. In the 11th century the Muslim rulers established universities in Delhi, Lucknow and Allahabad. Still education has been found to be restricted to a certain strata of the society. It was not available to everyone (<http://www.novapdf.com/>).

Some statements regarding to women education:

Women are the backbone of society. Mahatma Jyotirao Phule (1827, Pune) was a real philanthropist. He was the one to open first girl school in India and credited with opening first home for widows of the upper caste and a home for newborn girl children so that they can be saved from female infanticide. Some important thoughts are:

"If you educate a man you educate an individual but if you educate a woman you educate a family (nation)". **Dr. James Kwegyir Aggrey**

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To call woman the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to woman. If by strength is meant moral power, then woman is immeasurably man's superior. **Mahatma Gandhi**

"There is no more valuable investment than in a girls' education." **Ban Ki Moon, secretary-general, United Nations**

"Real empowerment of women would be possible only through education, encouragement of economic self-dependence and procisional of opportunities enabling the unfolding of one's full potential." **President Pranab Mukherjee**

I don't mind if I have to sit on the floor at school. All I want is education and I am afraid of no one." **Malala Yousufzai**

Obstacles in women's education:

Geographical, socio-cultural, health, economic, religious, legal, political, administrative, and educational factors, and initiatives by governments, non-governmental organisations, and other agencies to address the educational disadvantage of females. Gender discrimination still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education in India. The gap in the male-female literacy rate is just a simple indicator, while the male literary rate is more than the female. The women were considering only house wife and better to be live in the house (Bhat, 2015).

Many barriers to education for girls remain. Some of the barriers to women's education are sociological, rooted in gender stereotyping and gender inequality and others are driven by economic concerns and constraints. A consequence of gender profiling and stereotyping is that women tend to participate more in programmes that relate to their domestic role (Nair, 2010).

Women Education: Over views of issues: GOI: Annual Report (1997)

Systemic issues	Content and process of education	Economy, society and culture
Problem of access. Dysfunctional of schools. Quality of schools. Motivation of teachers. Existence of multiple delivery system, formal, non formal, condensed, satellite and residential. Calendar and timings.	Gender stereotyping. Perpetuation of gender bias. Relevance of curriculum. Language. Joyful learning. Ready access to books, magazines, papers and so on. Appropriate reading material for the newly literate.	Poverty / powerlessness. Status of women. Cost of Family. Child labour / domestic chores. Farm / non-farm work. Caught up in survival battles. Perception of herself. Post puberty practices. Child marriage.

Steps to improve woman education: It is obvious that the above objectives can only be achieved by, first and foremost, ensuring that women acquire quality education. When this is done, the knowledge, skills, attitudes and other potentials that are required by women for full participation in national development will be developed. Following are the objectives to improve women education:

1. Enable women to improve their family health and diet.
2. Increase women's productive ability, thus raising their family's standard of living.
3. Give women access to appropriate technologies and management of cooperatives
4. Improve women's societal and cultural status.
5. Enable women discharge their responsibilities more effectively.
6. Help women to fight their own fears and feelings of inadequacy or inferiority
7. Educate women in all round development that is mentally, socially, physically, psychologically, religiously and economically etc.

Advantages of woman education:

Social improvement:

Women education helps the women to solve the issues and problems faced by society. Kothari commission of 1968 recommended education as a device for social progression. Through woman education, India can attain the objective of social development.

Gender equality:

Woman is a part of unprivileged section of society. Education helps them to seal a gender gap in society. Co-education institutes also teach men children to give respect to female.

Economic productivity:

Through women education the country can attain the growth in the economic level and it also raise the GDP of a nation.

Decrease in infant humanity:

The educated women understand her family situation and take suitable and better decisions in the family to avoid the dispute among the family members. Women education also brings down the infant humanity rate in India.

Improved living standard:

Education will automatically increase the employment opportunity for a woman. A well educated woman has the possibility to get good job and better standard of living.

Strengthening of democracy:

Education creates attentiveness among woman which causes enlarged contribution in politics which eventually leads to strengthening of democracy. They could protect their rights through mobilization.

Importance of women education in India:

According to the International Encyclopaedia on women (1999) various authors highlight the role of education for the empowerment of women. Since employment plays a vital role in improving women's status in a society education of women is of prime importance in any women empowerment programme (Dominic and Jothi, 2012).

Educating an Indian woman creates a vital opportunity for the social and economic development of India. An educated Indian woman will yield a positive impact in the Indian society by contributing positively to the economy of both the country and the society. An educated woman reduces the chances of her child dying before the age of five. The chances of controlling the population are high as an educated woman is likely to marry at a later age as opposed to uneducated woman.

II. CONCLUSION

It is crucial to note that the attitude of people towards women's education will go a long way in explaining the extent to which the people want their nation to develop. Like the saying goes that to educate a woman is to educate the society as whole. Education is considered as a key instrument for the women empowerment. It changes their lifestyle, improves their chances of employment, facilitates their participation in public life and also increased their status in the society. Even though considerable progress has been made with regard to literacy and education, the overall structure still remains unfavourable to women.

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