

Government Policies and Development of Women Education in India in 20th and 21st Century

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Abstract - Educating women in India has been a priority for the government and civil society alike because of the vital role that educated women can play in the progress of the nation. The ability to adapt to adversity, to question one's conventional position, and to make positive life changes are all made possible by education, making it a crucial step towards women's empowerment. India is on track to become a powerhouse and a developed nation by the year 2020, thus we must not overlook the significance of education in advancing women's equality in this country. Slow progress is being made to increase rural women's access to higher education. This indicates that many women in our nation are still uneducated and hence vulnerable to being taken advantage of. Women's education is one of the most effective means of social transformation. Getting an education helps level the playing field and raises their social standing at home.

Keywords - Women Empowerment, Female Literacy Rate, Education.

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INTRODUCTION

"When you teach a guy, you're educating just one person; when you educate a woman, you're educating a whole household. Jawaharlal Nehru once said, "Empowering women means empowering mother India." Nearly half of the world's people are female. However, the dominant male mindset caused them great harm by denying them equal chances around the globe. However, the widespread improvement of women's lives in the modern world may be directly attributed to the popularity of feminist views. One of the primary goals of these women's rights campaigns has been equal access to higher education. Educating women in India has been a priority for the government and civil society alike because of the vital role that educated women can play in the progress of the nation. By 2020, India is expected to have one of the highest levels of literacy and knowledge among all countries, as well as be at the forefront of economic development. Women will, without a doubt, be essential in helping the nation progress. The contribution of women to the economy is essential to national development. Despite improvements, this is still not enough in India. There has been little progress towards empowering women, but that may change if the industry undergoes a series of changes. India has the potential to become one of the world's greatest economies, but its growth is being stymied by the underrepresentation of women in the workforce.

INDIA'S HISTORY OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Women in India formerly enjoyed equal access to education during the Vedic era, but this privilege was later revoked. There was a resurgence of support for girls' education in India under the British Raj. Many influential Indians of the time, such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, worked to advance women's education in the realms of both society and religion. Each of the leaders of India's lower castes—Babasaheb Ambedkar, Periyar, and Mahatma Jyotiba Phule—took distinct measures to help more women attend college. However, when India gained its independence in 1947, the government made female education a top priority and has taken many measures to guarantee that all Indian women may pursue higher education if they so choose. Thus, during the last three decades, the number of educated women has grown, and this growth has outstripped that of men. In 1971, just 22% of Indian women could read and write; by the end of 2001, that number had risen to 54.16 percent. Female illiteracy has increased by 14.87 percent, while male illiteracy has increased by 11.72 percent.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN INDIA

Education for India's female population is crucial to the country's overall development. It improves the quality of life at home and in the neighbourhood while also helping to expand half of the labour force. Women who have finished their formal education are more likely to encourage their daughters to continue their own education and are better able to meet the

challenges of motherhood. Further, women's access to education has the potential to boost population growth and lower infant mortality rates.

Obstacles: In India, there is still a long way to go until gender discrimination and educational opportunities for women are equalised. One indicator is the gender gap in literacy rates. While over 75% of males could read and write, just 54.16 % of women could do so in 2001.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN BY WAY OF EDUCATION

Many official and informal efforts throughout the globe are focusing on women's empowerment and the topic of women's political rights. The worldwide women's conference in NAROI in 1985 is credited with introducing the notion of women's empowerment. The ability to adapt to adversity, to question one's conventional position, and to make positive life changes are all made possible by education, making it a crucial step towards women's empowerment. We must not lose sight of the importance of education in furthering women's equality in India, which is on pace to become a superpower and a developed nation by 2020. There are just 13 years left till 2020. This can only happen if women in this nation are given equal representation in government. India may have the greatest percentage of illiteracy in the world at the present time. India's literacy rate has grown dramatically, from 18.3% in 1951 to 64.8% in 2001, with a corresponding increase in female enrollment of 7%, to 54.16 percent. Women only make up 39% of literate adults, compared to 64% of males, despite the clear benefits of increasing female participation in the workforce. All of our laws, development strategies, plans, and programmes have helped women go forward in a variety of fields thanks to our political system, which is based on a system of representative government. Government policy changed during the fifth five-year plan (1974-1988) to prioritise development, which included women's problems, rather than welfare. Over the last several decades, the concept of women's empowerment has been more central in discussions about what it means to be a feminist. Parliament formed the National Commission for Women in 1990 to ensure that women's rights and legal safeguards were upheld. The Constitution of India's 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) provided a framework for women's participation in local decision making via the reservation of seats in the local bodies of panchayats and Municipalities.

PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Despite feminist critiques, constitutional guarantees, safeguarding legislation, and the honest efforts of state and federal administrations via different plans and programmes over the last 62 years, the fate of women in India's educational system remains a mystery. The United Nations has also applied significant pressure here. It is disheartening to see that the proportion of literate Indian women is even lower than the national average of 65.38 percent, as reported by the 2001 Census. The number of rural women who are able to attend college is slowly rising, but this is not fast enough. This shows that many women in our country are still uninformed and open to abuse. Moreover, educational possibilities are not distributed equally. Women only make up 54% of the literate population, while men make up 76%; this stark difference demonstrates how educational gaps contribute to maintaining gender inequality.

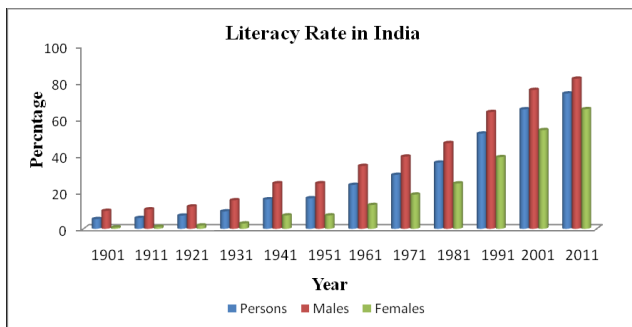
Table I: Indian literacy rate

Year	Persons	Females	Males
1901	5.3	0.7	9.8
1911	5.9	1.1	10.6
1921	7.2	1.8	12.2
1931	9.5	2.9	15.6
1941	16.1	7.3	24.9
1951	16.7	7.3	24.9
1961	24.0	13.0	34.4
1971	29.5	18.7	39.5
1981	36.2	24.8	46.9
1991	52.1	39.2	63.9
2001	65.38	54.0	76.0
2011	74.04	65.46	82.14

Source: Census of India (2011)

As can be seen in Table-1, the pace of rise in female literacy lagged substantially behind that of male literacy in the years leading up to independence. While the male illiteracy rate has risen from 9.8% to 24.9% over the last four decades, the female illiteracy rate has risen from 0.7% to 7.3%. Since gaining independence, the country's literacy rate has increased significantly. On the other hand, the percentage of males who can read and

write has risen considerably, from 25% in 1951 to 76% in 2001. The percentage of literate women increased faster than that of literate men between 1981 and 2001. Take the growth rates of 7.9 percent in 1951 and 54 percent in 2001 as an illustration. This research demonstrates that although female literacy rates are rising, they remain lower than male literacy rates (only 50% of women are literate compared to 75% of males). The rate at which females leave high school is higher than that of boys. The higher percentage of female illiteracy is a significant factor in women's subordinate social status and their dependence on men. Ignorance is the fundamental cause of women's exploitation and marginalisation. Women in India cannot fully benefit from the constitutional and legal safeguards afforded them without first achieving literacy. To ensure that women have the same opportunities as men in all fields, it is essential to support their education.



EQUITY IN EDUCATION

Improvements in gender parity may also be seen in the proportion of school-aged children who are male and female as a consequence of adult literacy programmes. The gender gap in reading levels is steadily shrinking as a consequence of increased engagement of women in literacy initiatives. In addition, the gender gap in enrollment is significantly reduced among the newly educated compared to the illiterate.

Table -2 : State-By-State Percentage Of Women Eliteracy In The Nation As Determined By The 2011 Censur

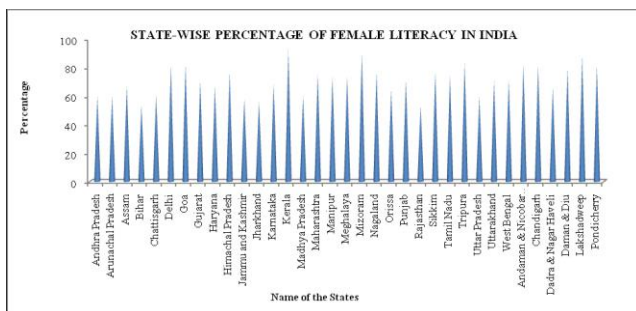
Sr. No.	Name of the State	Female Literacy
1	Madhya Pradesh	60.0%
2	Meghalaya	73.8%
3	Assam	67.3%
4	Kerala	92.0%
5	Chattisgarh	60.6%
6	Maharashtra	75.5%
7	Jharkhand	56.2%
8	Goa	81.8%
9	Haryana	66.8%
10	Himachal Pradesh	76.6%
11	Jammu and Kashmir	58.0%
12	Bihar	53.3%
13	Karnataka	68.1%
14	Andhra Pradesh	59.7%
15	Arunachal Pradesh	59.6%
16	Gujarat	70.7%
17	Manipur	73.2%
18	Delhi	80.9%
19	Mizoram	89.4%
20	Nagaland	76.7%
21	Orissa	64.4%
22	Punjab	71.3%
23	Rajasthan	52.7%

24	Sikkim	76.4%
25	Tamil Nadu	73.9%
26	Tripura	83.1%
27	Uttar Pradesh	59.3%
28	Uttarakhand	70.7%
29	West Bengal	71.2%

Union Territories		
1	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	81.8%
2	Chandigarh	81.4%
3	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	65.9%
4	Daman & Diu	79.6%
5	Lakshadweep	88.2%
6	Pondicherry	81.2%
All India		65.46%

Source: Census of India - 2011

Table -2 shows that the female literacy rate in India as a whole increased by 11% between the 2001 and 2011 censuses, from 54.16 to 65.46 percent. The highest literacy rate is found in Kerala, at 92.0%, and the lowest, at 52.67 percent, in Rajasthan. In the previous decade, women's has seen impressive growth. The government of India has implemented a number of initiatives and programmes designed to empower women in all spheres of society.



CONCLUSION

According to India's Country Report, "Empowerment" is "moving from a weak position to execute a power." Women's education is the most powerful tool for changing their social positions. Within households, education levels the playing field and elevates everyone's social position. Government-funded and -built colleges and universities for women alone were

established to guarantee that women had access to the same educational opportunities as men. The government is offering a variety of incentives, including as free textbooks, uniforms, stipends, lunches, after-school programmes, and more, to encourage more girls, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, to enrol in regular schools.

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