

Development and Obstacles of Women Education in Independent India

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ABSTRACT: Women constitute almost half of the population of the world. Education for women is the best way to improve the health, nutrition and economic status of a household that constitute a micro unit of a nation economy. In this context, it can be argued that lack of woman education can be an impediment to the country's economic development. This paper aims to study the improvement of women education after independence and the policy debates on women's education and literacy rate of women since the introduction of planned development in the country. Drawing on existing literature and various statistics concerning women's education, the paper provides an overview of the various governmental strategic initiatives regarding the improvement of women education and highlights some of the issues related to obstacles of women education and regarding suggestions to overcome these. Finally the researchers conclude that after 73 years of independence the problems of women education do not reduced completely. There were a lot of initiatives taken by the government with respect to our constitutional provisions but these were not acted purposively. Therefore some suggestions are provided.

Keywords: Women Education, Independent India, Literacy Rate, Obstacles.

INTRODUCTION:

Accessing education in the name of continuous learning process starts from mothers' womb. In this sense education is the birth right of all children. As Swami Vivekananda said, "Education is the manifestation of perfection already existing in man". According to him, human beings deserve education by birth. Being human, we all accept this birth right as the basic fundamental human rights by putting it in our Indian constitution.

Women play a prominent role in the cultural, social, political and economic life of a country. Education is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development and welfare. Discrimination of women from womb to tomb is well known. Women comprise nearly half of the population of a country. At the 2001 census, India had a female population of 46 million which accounts 15% of worlds women population, characterized by regional and culture different making it impossible to make any kind of generalization. But social discrimination and economic deprivation on the basis on gender is common to all, irrespective of religion, caste, community, and state. There many common circumstances in which Indian women live hinder their participation in social, economic and political life of the country. Throughout history their live have generally been confined to home with restricted role of a home-maker, that of mother and wives. There is no equality between men women. Women receive only small share in development opportunities and are often excluded from education, better, jobs, participation in political system and better health care, decision making, etc. Besides, they suffer from physiological, social and cultural barriers, which hinder their development. Thus this is true of ancient, medieval and modern time. The status of women in India has been eventful subject to great much change during the course of history. The history of women in India has been eventful .Contemporary Indian cultural reflect a strong connection to its ancient history. India's past provides insight to the current status of Indian women in society.

History of Women's Education in India:

Historically women have taken part in all spheres of life with courage and gusto. Indian higher education system is no exception. Indian mythology is rich with stories of highly educated and evolved women. We embrace womanhood that our deity of education is a woman. 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. Women had taken part in all fields of knowledge such as theology, religion, philosophy, fine arts, and astronomy. But still education has been found to be restricted to a certain strata of the society. It was not available to everyone.

Later when the British arrived in India, English education came into being. European missionaries came and established many schools. These missionaries promoted schooling for girls from the early part of 19th century. Mostly girls from poor families attended these schools. By the end of the 19th century, women were graduating from colleges and universities in a sizeable number. (In 1882, there were 2,700 schools and colleges for girls with 127,000 students.) The social reform movement of the 19th century (that originated within the Indian intelligentsia and later spread to sections of the middle classes) had a major role in this upsurge of education among women, but this movement was largely an urban phenomenon. This period coincided with several other reforms such as child marriage, Sati Pratha, and Purdah system.

In 1857, three universities were established in three presidencies – Bombay (now renamed Mumbai), Calcutta (Kolkata) and Madras (Chennai). Acquiring higher education presented a personal challenge to middle class girls, but the participation of Christian and Parsi women was much higher than that of Hindu women, and it was the lowest among Muslims. Around the beginning of the 20th century the new emphasis on education for women was not just to make them better housewives and mothers but also to help them educate their children and so contribute to nation building. In 1906, Sarojini Naidu said, in a speech to the Indian Social Conference in Calcutta, “Therefore, I charge you, restore to your women their ancient rights, for, as I have said, it is we, and not you, who are the real nation builders, and without our active cooperation at all points of progress all your congresses and conferences are in vain. Educate your women and the nation will take care of itself, for it is as true today as it was yesterday and will be to the end of human life that the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world”. At this time only 2% of Indian women had any education, so one can imagine the meagre number of women who got ‘higher’ education. But education was increasingly being viewed as a means to enhance the social presence of Indian women and enable them to adapt to a changing external situation.

But the development of educational opportunities for girls was held back because of child marriage and *Purdah*. Not only that, but women's education was not smooth as several traditional and orthodox forces came in the way. For instance, Sardar Dayal Singh, speaking on behalf of the Indian Association of Punjab, stated "the object of female education in this country is not to make sound scholars but to make better mothers, sisters and wives". “Girls should be taught suitable subjects and not be made to swallow history and geography indiscriminately,” opined Lahore AryaSamaj. Many universities were established during this period. Banaras Hindu University in 1916, Aligarh Muslim University in 1920, and Delhi University in 1922 became new hubs of women’s liberation. At this stage, many enlightened national leaders took much interest in this area and strove hard to bring about a change in the mind-set of the people.

OBJECTIVE OF THIS STUDY:

- [1] To study the progress of women education after independence in India.
- [2] To identify the issues related to problems or obstacles of women education.
- [3] To provide suggestions for overcoming the barriers of women education.
- [4] To highlight the initiatives of Indian government and Constitutional provisions for Women Education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Ghara (2016) studied on “Status of Indian Women in Higher Education”. The study was taken a look on women participation through women higher education institutes, women enrolment as compared with population. The participation in terms of distribution of institutes and enrolment has been studied for the years 2011-2016. The trend has been found as increasing but slow. Correlations have also been studied.

In the study on “Girls’ Education in India: Status and Challenges”, *Sahoo (2016)* were taken objectives as: to assertion recent status and challenges of girl’s education in India; to provide possible suggestions to

overcome the challenges of girls' education in India. The investigator has used different type articles, reports, research papers, books, official websites, and online materials to conduct this study. The paper concludes that girls' education is very poor condition in elementary and secondary stage than the higher education. At elementary and secondary level girls' enrolment rate has been decreased from 2012 to 2015, but girls' gross enrolment ratio has been increased at higher education level from 2012 to 2015. Parental attitude, lack of infrastructure, lack of security, superstitions related to girls, socio-economic condition of parents are the major challenges for promoting girls' education in India. This paper suggests that higher authorities, community members, NGOs and all citizens of India must have to take responsibility to eradicate different barriers related to girls' education from our society.

Bhat (2015) studied on "Role of Education in the Empowerment of Women in India". The study was discussed that, Women education in India has a major preoccupation of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to responds to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. So that we can't neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment and India poised to becoming superpower in recent years. Education of women is the most powerful tool to change the position in society. Women education in India has been a need of the hour, as education is a foundation stone for the empowerment of woman. . Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family and develops the concept of participation.

A perceptual study was conducted by **Gul & Dr. Khan (2015)**, which has tried to elicit stockholders perception regarding girls' education, its factors and challenges in South Kashmir. In the present research study, obtained findings revealed the fact that situation of girls' education in South Kashmir is inadequate. The result clearly indicated irregular attendance, inappropriate curriculum, boring teaching methods, additional burden of work at home, poorly developed or maintained buildings or inadequate basic facilities at school, shortage of teachers, and lack of motivated teachers were the causes of girl illiteracy. Girl's education can be improved by raising additional resources and directing them to where the need is greatest. It requires adequate funding, well trained teachers, a school environment that promotes girls' learning, and a social environment that values educated girls and women, removal of school fees, free textbooks and school uniforms, construction of schools closer to communities to lower transport costs and travel time.

Ansari & Nasreen (2014) conducted a study on "Status of Female Literacy in Various Districts of Uttar Pradesh". The present study was conducted to explore the status of female literacy in various districts of Uttar Pradesh. The female literacy rate of all the districts have been categorized under five heads: 1. Very high, 2. High, 3. Average, 4.Low and 5. Very low. Female literacy rates were plotted on graph through monochromatic colour scheme to give a clear picture and understanding of female literacy. A very high regional variation with a declining trend regarding the female literacy was observed throughout the study area.

Peacock (2009) was published an essay on "The "Education" of the Indian Woman against the Backdrop of the Education of the European Woman in the Nineteenth-Century" by the Forum on Public Policy. The essay was discussed the role and education of the women of India, with special reference to the women of Bengal during the nineteenth-century and a comparison is made between the education of the Indian woman and the education of the European woman during this era. The education of the Indian woman is also referenced against the backdrop of the nationalist movement in India against imperialist rule and its effects on the women of the country.

Singh (2008) was published a paper on "Higher Education for Women in India—Choices and Challenges" by the Forum on Public Policy. The paper was analysed gender disparity in education evident across the socio-economic spectrum in India. Concern for girls' education in last few years has lead to a considerable expansion of access at the primary level. But a great number of girls especially in the rural areas drop out before they reach secondary or higher stages of education. Many enter in to matrimony and become young mothers before having the opportunity to realize their full potential. Removed from formal schools at the onset of puberty, those who are not married, take on household responsibilities. The ones who are able to resist social and pedagogic pressures to drop out and reach the level of college or university, take studies seriously as they know this privilege will vanish after matrimony. Many are not even able to peruse their goals of further education or choice of vocation. There is a need to develop gender –specific pedagogy and provide flexibility in the system of education, in which women could fulfil their aspirations, overcoming

their domestic obligations. Higher education should prepare them to face a world of opportunities and challenges.

Sen & Shivakumar (2001) was founded that girls in India are discriminated against in several ways – fewer months of breastfeeding less of nurturing and play, less care or medical treatment if they fall ill, less of “special” food, less of parental attention. As a result, girls are far more susceptible than boys to disease and infections, leading to poor health and a shorter lifespan. It is this life-long discrimination in nurturing and care that is the real killer of girls – less visible and dramatic, but as unequivocally lethal as female foeticide and infanticide.

RESEARCH METHOD:

This study is a qualitative study. This paper is basically descriptive and analytical in nature. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyse the development of Women Education in India after independence and also point out various issues and challenges for Women Education. It has been done on the basis of the secondary sources of data like books, research journal, newspaper articles and different websites. Collected data was analysed qualitatively.

PROGRESS OF WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA AFTER INDEPENDENCE:

After independence the status of Indian women has changed. Both structural and cultural changes provided equality of opportunities to women in education, employment and others. The Govt. of India has already been formulated various policies and programmes in all aspect like education, social economic, political etc. for the betterment of women. Education is an important input in human resource development and it is essential for the country’s economic growth. A high literacy rate, especially of women, can improve several socio- economic indicators, namely low birth rate, low IMR and increase in life expectancy. The recognition of this fact has created awareness on the need to focus on important literacy and improving universalizing elementary education. The task of providing basis education to all with concrete plan of action, gained greater momentum only after the national policy of education (NPE) was adopted in 1986 and revised 1992. The supreme court of India, in the Unnikrishan case 1993 declared primary education to be a fundamental right .In the view of declaration by Supreme Court constitution was amended. The constitution (86th amendment) act 2002 was enacted by the parliament of India making education a fundamental right. The right to be education act was enacted in 2006 to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age group 6-14 years. The nation firmly education to providing education for all, the priority areas being free and compulsory primary education , covering children with special need, eradication for illiteracy, vocationalisation, education for women’s equality, the special focus on the education of SCs\STs\OBCs, and minorities. Major or programme like Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), District Primary Education Programme for Girls at Elementary Level, Prarambhikshikshakosh, National Institute of Open Schooling, Janshikshansansthan, Mahilasamakhya, National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, Development of Women Studies. Post-doctoral Fellowship for Women, Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education , Scheme for Construction and Running Hostel for Girls, Kasturba Gandhi Balikavidyalaya, and other scheme at primary education to higher education level.

After Independence Educational Development Indicators of Women Education in India:

Table-1: Literacy Rate in India (in%)

Year	Persons	Males	Female	Male-female gap in L.R
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	24.0	30.4	15.35	15.05
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.98
1981	36.2	46.9	29.76	17.4
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16	21.70
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

The above data (table-1) shows the literacy rate in the country. The data reveals steady increase in the literacy rate. The literacy rate has increased 39.59% in 2011 (74.04%) from 1971 (34.45) there is an average of 10% decadal increase in literacy rate. So, on observing the above table, we come to know that at no point could the literacy rate of women match that of men. As a result, even after 65 years of

independence, women occupy a secondary position in our social hierarchy. Inspire of being aware of her position, women can't transform the situation due to lack of education.

Table -2: Enrolment of girls in primary and middle school (in millions)

Year	Primary (I-V)			Middle upper primary (VI-VIII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1950-51	13.8	5.4	19.2	2.6	0.5	3.1
1960-61	23.6	11.4	35.0	5.1	1.6	6.7
1970-71	35.7	21.3	57.0	9.4	3.9	13.3
1980-81	45.3	28.5	73.8	13.9	6.8	20.7
1990-91	57.0	40.4	97.4	21.5	12.5	34.0
1995-96	60.9	46.2	107.1	22.7	14.8	37.5
1999-00	64.1	49.5	113.6	25.1	17.0	42.1
2001-02	63.6	50.3	113.9	26.1	18.7	44.8
2004-05	70.12	61.56	131.69	28.71	22.96	51.67

The table -2 contain data of enrolment of girls and boys in primary and middle school. In 1950-51 the 13.8 million girls were enrolled in primary school and 2.6 middle boys and 0.5 girls were in middle upper primary school. This increased in next various years 1960-61, and 1970-71, 1990-91 and 2004-05. In 2004-05, 70.12 million boys and 61.56 girls in primary and 28.71 million boys and 22.96 million girls in middle school. There is considerable increase in enrolment number of both boys and girls. However as compare to enrolment of boys, enrolment of girls still lags far behind.

Table-3: Enrolment of girls in secondary school (in %)

Year	Sec.\Sr.Sec.\Intermediate (IX-XII)
1950-51	13.3
1960-61	20.5
1970-71	25.0
1980-81	29.6
1990-91	32.9
1995-96	36.1
1999-00	38.9
2001-02	39.5
2004-05	41.5

The present data (table-3) contains the data of enrolment of girls in secondary school. In 1950-51 the 13.3 girls were enrolled in sec. Classes. In 1990-91 32.9 % girls and in 2001-02 39.5 % girls were enrolled. Now the enrolment increase to 41.5 % in 2004-05. Some improvement is seen in the enrolment of girls in secondary school. Yet it is 20 % less than enrolment of boys.

Table- 4: Enrolment of girls in higher education (in %)

Year	Enrolment of Girls
1950-51	11.3
1960-61	17.4
1970-71	21.9
1980-81	26.7
1990-91	31.6
1995-96	36.0
2001-02	39.3
2004-05	37.1
2007-08	38.6

Table- 4 shows the enrolment of girls an in higher education. The data reveals there has not been increase in enrolment of girls in higher education enrolment of girls has been constant in last few years. In 2007-08 the total enrolled for higher education only 38.6% were girls. This number is far behind the boy's enrolment.

ISSUES RELATED TO PROBLEMS OR OBSTACLES OF WOMEN EDUCATION:

After studying the different type articles, reports, research papers, books, official websites, and online materials the researchers identify some important issues which makes obstacle to promote women education in independent India.

- [1] **Lack of Skilled Based Courses:** It is true that many women very skilful in household activities. They love to do finest handwork like weaving, embroidery, cooking, nursing, baking etc. But in school there is no such kinds of skill based subjects which bring them interestingly in the school to continue education.
- [2] **Girls' Harassment in School:** Though the government of India and school authority becomes aware against girls' harassment, yet it is still exist. In Indian school context from primary to high level girls are being harassed mentally and physically by many ways. Even in higher education women are being harassed by college politics and forced to involve political activities. Because of that they are being mentally disturb and unwilling to continue their education.
- [3] **Poverty:** India is cultivation based developing country even in 21st century. It suffers for poverty since independence. Specially most of the families in rural areas are very poor. They lead a struggling life by earning wages for their daily livelihood. Women and girls are also asked for accompany with their parents for earning wages inside as well as outside the home. So, in this struggling livelihood condition, they cannot imagine separately about their girls education.
- [4] **Lack of Female Teachers:** It is fact that female teachers can feel and understand the arising problems and wishes of girls during their study. Women can also share their experiences and issues related to study and others freely to female teachers during the school hours. But many schools do not have proper number of skilled female teachers in primary and upper primary level. They are facing the problems in better communication and being suffered in conflict. So this thing fears girls to attain the school regularly.
- [5] **Violence against Women:** Women are getting affected by the various violence almost every day which is disrupting the society. Women are being victims of violence at huge level day by day because of increasing crimes against women (according to the report of Crime Record Bureau of the Central Home Ministry). Woman is getting kidnapped at every 44 minutes, raped at every 47 minutes, 17 dowry deaths every day, etc. They may face violence within the family (dowry related harassment, death, marital rape, wife-battering, sexual abuse, deprivation of healthy food, female genital mutilation, etc.) or outside the family (kidnapping, rape, murder, etc.).
- [6] **Gender Discrimination:** Women are considered as weaker section of the society than men and given less importance. Girls children are becoming real victims of the discrimination. There are also discrimination of power and work between men and women because of the patriarchal system families in India. Gender discrimination affects women in the areas like nutrition, education, health, care, decline of female population, job, public life, etc.
- [7] **Problems of Female Education:** Women education percentage is low in India especially in the rural areas because they are discouraged for higher education like professional and technical education.
- [8] **Problems Related to Unemployment:** Women are getting more problems in searching their suitable work. They become more prone to the exploitation and harassment in the work areas.

In addition to these others issues are highlighted below:

- ❖ Inadequacies in Teaching Learning environment
- ❖ Parental preferences
- ❖ Social and religious values
- ❖ Lack of efforts for resource mobilization
- ❖ Inadequate school facilities
- ❖ Shortage of female teachers
- ❖ Gender bias in curriculum
- ❖ Teacher competencies
- ❖ Basic Teaching amenities'
- ❖ Ineffective administrative supervision and monitoring
- ❖ Purdah system
- ❖ Low retention and high dropouts
- ❖ Working as domestic servants etc.

According to a 1998 report by U.S. Department of Commerce, the chief barrier of female education in India are inadequate school facilities such as sanitary facilities, shortage of female teachers, gender bias in curriculum and also conservative cultural attitudes

SUGGESTIONS FOR OVERCOMING THE BARRIERS OF WOMEN EDUCATION:

Some of the factors that may encourage women education are given below:

- ❖ Through giving parental motivational campaigns
- ❖ Residential schools for girls.
- ❖ Parental associations should be formed to encourage and to take care of girl's education.
- ❖ Various schemes and programmes by state and centre government should be implemented to promote girls education.
- ❖ Arrange community awareness programmes
- ❖ Imparting basic amenities including building and toilet facilities will promote women education.
- ❖ Promote gender sensitivity in curriculum
- ❖ Give Natural Learning Experiences (NLE)
- ❖ Promote Activity Based Learning.
- ❖ Provide apt counselling in apt time.
- ❖ Appoint counsellors in Schools.
- ❖ Organize co-curricular activities

CONCLUSION:

This paper examined the trends in women education, the investments on education and infrastructural supports in India. The study revealed that there had been significant progress in the performance of women education revealed from female literacy levels and its change over time. It was also observed that the gaps between rural and urban female literacy rates are narrowing down.

To explore the influence of certain variables of interest such as rural poverty, urbanization and drop-out rate on the educational attainment of women, a multiple regression equation was estimated. It was observed that rural poverty acts as a push factors for women's education rather than as an obstacle to women's education. The significant influence of urbanization on women's education implied that urbanization had been playing a beneficial role in the attainment of women's education in India. At the same time, the drop-out rate had a negative effect on women's education. It revealed that reduction of girl's drop-out rates is necessary for achieving women's education.

In sum, the study revealed that there have been concerted efforts to encourage girls to attend schools, which would lead to higher literacy in future. The study also revealed that there are several infrastructural barriers to women education in India. The study calls for focused approach towards increasing women centred educational infrastructure so as to reduce the women drop-out rates and to improve female literacy levels in India.

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