



# COMPARATIVE STUDY OF WOMEN AND EDUCATION FROM ANCIENT AGE TO PRESENT

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## ABSTRACT

This research endeavors to conduct a comprehensive comparative analysis of the status of women and their engagement with education in India across diverse historical periods, spanning from ancient times to the contemporary era. The study aims to unravel the evolution of women's education, shedding light on societal attitudes, institutional frameworks, and the transformative forces that have shaped the educational landscape for women. Beginning with the ancient age, the research examines the nuances of educational practices in early Indian civilizations and their impact on women's access to knowledge. Drawing from historical texts, inscriptions, and archaeological evidence, the study seeks to discern the role of women in educational settings and the societal structures influencing their participation. Moving through medieval times, the research investigates shifts in educational paradigms, considering the impact of cultural, religious, and social factors on women's education. Notable historical figures and movements advocating for or against women's education will be explored, providing insights into the evolving dynamics of gender and learning. The study then transitions to the colonial period, marked by significant educational reforms and policy changes. The examination encompasses the introduction of formal schooling for women and the concurrent socio-political developments that influenced their educational opportunities. Key figures and movements advocating for women's education during this period will be scrutinized to understand the complex interplay of colonial influences and indigenous responses. The post-independence era forms a pivotal point in the research, as it explores the legislative and policy interventions aimed at promoting gender equality in education. The study delves into the challenges and successes of initiatives such as affirmative action, girl child education programs, and awareness campaigns. Contemporary perspectives on women's education, encompassing access, quality, and relevance, will be critically analyzed to gauge the present-day status.

**Keywords:** Female Enrolment, Female Literacy Rate, Women in Education

## **INTRODUCTION:**

We live in a society where the upbringing of children still depends largely on the mother. What good are we going to pass on to the next generation if that mother is illiterate? For the development of any country women's education is playing very vital role and India is not exception of it. It's equally important to take care of health of woman. Countries social and economic development is highly depends on women's education. If we really evaluate last 70 years after India got its independence, only in last two decades we can see progressive efforts for developing women as a whole in India. An educated woman has capability to handle her home and professional life. They can effectively contribute in controlling the population of India not by force but by wisdom. The women education in ancient India was quite good but in the middle age it was deteriorated because of many restrictions against women. However, again it is getting better and better day by day as modern people in India understand that without the growth and development of women, the development of country is not possible. It is very true that equal growth of both sex will increase the economic and social development in every areas of the country. Women should be given equal opportunity in education like men and they should not be isolated from any development activities. Women covers almost half population of the country means if women are uneducated the half country is uneducated which bring poor socio-economic condition. Through the women education the social and economic development will be faster in India. To spread the importance and improve the level of women education all over the country, countrywide national propaganda and awareness programme are very necessary. Female literacy rate as per the 2011 census is 65.46%, women's education in India is still a point in question. It is still below the world average of 79.7%. This paper is effort to understand reasons for poor literacy among Indian women, it will allow to the society and government to create better society

## **MEANING OF WOMEN EDUCATION:**

Women education refers to every form of education that aims at improving the knowledge, and skill of women and girls. It includes general education at schools and colleges, vocational and technical education, professional education, health education, etc. Women education encompasses both literary and non-literary education. Educated women are capable of bringing socio-economic changes. The constitution of almost all democratic countries, including India, guarantees equal rights to both men and women.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN EDUCATION IN COUNTRY:**

Education is one of the main components for all developments and a powerful tool to form knowledge-based society in this post-modern world. It has become an imperative concept that education is most essential for individual growth and societal developments, which is now been accepted unanimously and universally. Educating girls and women is of utmost importance for the world as a whole. When we consider the entire human population, the percentage of educated women is at much lower level than men. Following are the clear benefits any country will have if women's are educated and India is not exception.

1. **Economic development and prosperity:** Education will empower women to come forward and contribute towards the development and prosperity of the country.
2. **Economic empowerment:** So long as women remain backward and economically dependent on men, the helpless condition of them cannot be changed. Economic empowerment and independence will only come through proper education and employment of women.
3. **Improved life:** Education helps a woman to live a good life. Her identity as an individual would never get lost. She can read and learn about her rights. Her rights would not get trodden down. The life or condition of women would improve a lot, if we take a broad outlook in the field of female education.
4. **Improved health:** Educated girls and women are aware of the importance of health and hygiene. Through health education, they are empowered to lead a healthy life-style. Educated mothers can take better care of both herself and her baby.
5. **Dignity and honor:** Educated women are now looked upon with dignity and honor. They become a source of inspiration for millions of young girls who make them their role-models.
6. **Justice:** Educated women are more informed of their rights for justice. It would eventually lead to decline in instances of violence and injustice against women such as dowry, forced-prostitution, child-marriage, female foeticide, etc.
7. **Choice to choose a profession of her choice:** Educated women can prove be highly successful in the fields of life. A girl-child should get equal opportunity for education, so that, she can plan to become a successful doctors, engineers, nurses, air-hostesses, cook, or choose a profession of her choice.
8. **Alleviate poverty:** Women education is a pre-requisite to alleviate poverty. Women need to take equal burden of the massive task of eliminating poverty. This would demand massive contribution from educated women. There cannot be much social and economic changes unless girls and women are given their rights for education.

#### DATA ANALYSIS OF WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA:

Women's education in India is still perceived as an unnecessary indulgence in many parts. The data clarifies that Kerala tops the charts with 92.07% female literacy (and 94.00% overall literacy), Bihar scores much lesser with 51.50% of female literacy (and 61.80% overall literacy).

In 2015 3.7 million eligible girls were out of school and in rural areas girls receive an average of fewer than four years of education. In a country where 21.9% of the population is below its official poverty limit, it does not come as a surprise that poverty is the major obstacle that limits education for girls. But poverty is not the only thing that is disrupting the fundamental right of education amongst Indian girls there are many more contributing factors such as the distance of schools from the corresponding villages, lack of sanitation facilities in schools, shortage of female teachers, gender bias in curriculum, absence of support from their respective families and this list is never ending. There's a common belief among rural households that girls

should stop schooling after reaching puberty because more often than not they are teased by boys throughout the long walk from their home to school. India has the highest number of child brides in Asia and inevitably there is this dogma surrounding young girls that educating them is a waste of time and money as they are born only to be married off and manage the household. In rural households and especially amongst the poor, the girl child is a valuable resource for housework and in the fields, an additional hand that cannot be wasted away through an education with almost invisible gains and far too heavy a price that most rural and poor families cannot afford to pay.

As a result, a large gender gap emerges which was highlighted in the 2011 census that showed the male literacy rate to be 82.14% while for females it lags behind at 65.46%. Although getting the girl child to enrol in primary schools seems to be most problematic, once enrolled, girl children are more likely to continue their primary education. At the secondary level of education, girls tend to drop out more than boys, again posing a challenge to retain the girl child for secondary education. In our so-called 'modern India', estimates show that for every 100 girls in rural India only a single one reaches class 12 and almost 40% of girls leave school even before reaching the fifth standard and more than 15% children in schools can't read a simple story in Hindi, our national language.

The differences between the positions of men and women in the society will not lessen; leave alone disappear, as long as there are differences between the education levels of men and women. We must realize that going to school is one thing, on the other hand, the quality of education that one gets is another. Within government schools- overcrowded classrooms, absent teacher, unsanitary conditions are common complaints and can cause parents to decide that it is not worth their child going to school. A 2010 report conducted by the National Council for Teacher Education estimated that an additional 1.2 million teachers were needed to fulfil the RTE act requirements and merely 5 % of government schools complied with all the basic standards and infrastructure set by the act. Moreover 40% of classrooms had more than 30 students and over 60% didn't have any electricity and over 21% of the teachers were not professionally trained. Although much work has been done to improve the state of education in India, we are still a long way off from attaining standards comparable even to other developing nations.

India is ranked 105 amongst 128 countries in its Education for All Development Index. There is much work to be done to enhance education in India; particular attention is warranted to women's access to education. An attempt has to be made to remove the social, psychological and structural barriers, for the participation of the majority of women in education. Even though the Government and various voluntary organisations are engaged in several attempts to sensitize the local population to the need for women education, unless parents of the girl child see value and merit in sending the girl child to school, they will resist doing so and instead prefer to use her help in household chores or agricultural activities. It is absolutely vital that we incorporate the belief among women that they must stand on their two feet and the only feasible way to achieve this is through education and its proper utilization. One way to make the families more interested is by making the school come to them rather than sending their girls to school far away from home by

implementing more mobile schools across rural India. Following mentioned factors are quite significant for framing policies for budget for women's education

- I. Undernourishment and malnutrition of the girl child
- II. Sexual harassment and abuse at early age
- III. Lower socio-economic status of parents
- IV. Infections and low immunity power at childhood
- V. So many social restrictions and taboo in their life
- VI. Forced to follow orders of elders in family whether at home of parents or parents-in-law
- VII. Allowed to get only limited education

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDARATION:**

#### **Affordability & Priority:**

When the parents cannot afford education for their kids, the son is always given preference over the daughter, if at all they try and send them to school. The daughter stays at home and cooks, cleans, and helps her parents in doing the chores, or she might even be employed as a helper somewhere, which is child labour and illegal as per law. If both the kids are sent to school, and if there is a personal or financial issue where they cannot afford the education of both the kids, it is mostly the daughter who would be first pulled out of the school. The school dropout rate amongst adolescent girls stands high at 63.5%.

#### **Feelings of unsafe atmosphere at Higher Education:**

If the daughter wants to go for higher studies it becomes a matter of discussion among parents, relatives, neighbors, (along with long lost aunts) on if there is a need for the same! If the son wants to go for higher education then it is seen as an achievement and opportunity for the boy to settle well and would be lauded among the same set of people.

#### **Social & Cultural Expectations from women:**

It is a well-known fact that most Indian families spend more on their daughter's wedding when compared to her education. And the daughters-in-law are mostly expected to take care of the family rather than continuing their studies or having a steady career. Because of this reason, women are said to have jobs and not careers the chances are that her own daughter might become an illiterate mother one day, thus continuing the vicious cycle.

#### **Financially family gets help from son:**

The common perception is that the girls of the family will get married one day and would not contribute to the financial needs of the family. But what we are not able to understand is that the upbringing and empowerment of future generations is left to illiterate mothers. This is like a chain reaction wherein the next generation of daughters, mostly from the rural areas, are treated the same. In a poverty stricken family, every hard earned rupee would be spent on the needs and education of the son without any questions.

Though the daughter shows better prospects of shining well in studies, it is unfortunate that who goes to school is decided based on sex rather than their capability.

### **EDUCATION IN ANCIENT INDIA:**

It is quite surprising to note that women of India were getting all kind of importance in the ancient era, they were far more independent and superior in all the aspects as compared to the women of 21<sup>st</sup> century, they were getting highest respect among the society due to their knowledge, & command.

Gargi participated in debate with Yajnavalka on philosophical issues. Lilabati was a great mathematician of ancient India. Thus we find that ancient society was not conservative to provide education to women and that many of them attained to great proficiencies in learning. The ancient women had equal rights with men in respect of education. The Upanayana (Vedic initiation) of girls should have been as common as that of boys. In the Vedic period the women not only enjoyed privileged position but also possessed high standard of morality. They had contributed positively to the educational system. The number of women who used to receive general literary and cultural education must have been fairly large. For a long time family was the only educational institution, and even boys used to receive education only from their fathers or elders. The same naturally was the case with girls. But in later times a class of women teachers came to being (Upadhyayani). There was no purdah custom in Hindu society down to the 12th century, and so there was no difficulty for women in taking to the teaching profession. Lady teachers may probably have confined themselves to the teaching of girl-students. Panini refers to boarding houses for lady-students, chhatrisalas, and these probably were under the care of lady teachers.

Co-education was also prevalent in ancient India in mild form. Sometimes boys and girls were educated together while receiving higher education. From the 'Malatimadhava' of Bhavabhuti, written in the 8th century A.D., we learn that the nun Kamandaki was educated along with Bhurivasu and Devarata at a famous centre of education. In the 'Uttara-Rama-charit also (of the same author) we find Atreyi receiving her education along with Kusa and Lava. It is difficult to determine the exact extent of education imparted to women during the early Vedic period in India.

Upanayana ritual was obligatory for girls, and this must have ensured the imparting of a certain amount of Vedic and literary education to the girls of all classes. But female education received a great set-back during later Vedic period primarily owing to the deterioration of the religious status of women. Upanayana began to be gradually prohibited to girls and by about 500 B.C. it had already become a formality. The discontinuance of Upanayana was disastrous to the religious status of women and they were declared unfit to recite Vedic Mantras and perform Vedic sacrifices. Thus Vedic education was prohibited to women. With the advent of foreigners the Brahmanical society became rigid and conservative. The pandits adopted measures of defense. For this the women lost their freedom. They were confined within the home. In the changed situation the right to study came to be denied to women.

The dancing girls in the South who often were attached to temples (devadasis) received some education, particularly in dancing and music. They were famous for their wit and cleverness. These semi-prostitutes learnt to read, sing and dance. These prostitutes sometimes worked as spies. The education of prostitutes is a very ancient custom in India. The Arthashastra of Kautilya refers to the education of the prostitutes. Buddhism no doubt had its effect on the education of women. The Buddhist monastic order included not only monks but also nuns (bhikshunis). But it was only with the greatest reluctance that the Buddha consented to this arrangement. In this he no doubt reflected the opinions of his time which were against the independence and education of women. His aunt, Mahaprajapati, expressed her desire to join the order, but he refused thrice. At last, at the fervent appeal of Ananda, his first and favourite disciple, the Buddha yielded. He, however, expressed his sorrow and opined that the admission of women would ruin his work. The nuns were made closely dependent on the monks, and could only be admitted by them. There are ample evidences to show that the Buddha, like Manu, shared the low opinion of women. It is true that Buddhist nunneries did not spread to a desirable extent. Their number was very few. The cause is very simple. The Buddhist movement gave only an indirect impetus to female education. Nunneries had gone out of vogue by the 4th century A.D. Chinese pilgrims of the 5th and 7th centuries. A.D. do not refer to them at all.

### **INFLUENCE OF MANUSMRITI ON INDIAN CULTURE & EDUCATION:**

With the code of Manu (200 A.D.) (Manusmriti or Manusanghita) her dependent position was firmly established. According to Manu, “by a girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one, nothing must be done independently”. Manu further opines that “in childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, when her lord is dead to her sons”, a woman must never be independent. “Day and night must women be kept in dependence by the males of their families. Her father protects her in childhood, her husband protects her in youth, and her sons protect her in old age; a woman is never fit for independence”. Thus, at the time of Manu, women were in low esteem and were not allowed to study the Vedas. Early marriage had become by now the custom. The mischief caused by the discontinuance of Upanayana was further enhanced by the lowering of the marriageable age. In the Vedic period, girls were married at about the age of 16 or 17; but in the later Vedic period (from 500 B.C to 500 A.D.) girls were married at the age of 8 or 9. Early marriage of girls gave a death-blow to female education. Though in society, as a whole, female education received a great set-back during this period, it continued to receive attention in rich, aristocratic and royal families. Girls in these families were given a fairly good literary education but surely not Vedic literature. The only education a girl of an ordinary family received was one which fitted her to fulfil her duties in the household of her husband. Her duties mainly confined to rearing up her children, keeping everything clean, preparing food for the members of the family and looking after the household utensils. Thus, the education of girls was entirely domestic. They used to receive education at homes. Women in India were deprived of educational privileges for centuries, but there were always some exceptions to this general condition. Raja Ram Mohan Ray and Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar were some famous social reformers during the British rule in India who paid their attention towards the women education.

## INDIA'S POSITION AS COMPARED TO OTHER UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRIES:

Data from new research on female literacy show that India's school education system is under-performing in terms of quality when compared to its neighbours, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. The research studies changes in female literacy over a number of schooling years. The proportion of women who completed five years of primary schooling in India and were literate was 48 per cent, much less than 92 percent in Nepal, 74 per cent in Pakistan and 54 per cent in Bangladesh. These findings, which are part of a forthcoming background paper, were released in a blog-post by New York-based International Commission on Financing Global Education Opportunity (or Education Commission) last week. Justin Sandefur, one of the authors of the paper, said, "This is a simple but powerful signal that India's education system is under-performing." The data also revealed that, female literacy rates went up by one to 15 per cent after completing two years of schooling. Corresponding numbers for Pakistan and Nepal were three to 31 per cent and 11 to 47 per cent respectively. "This implies that schooling is roughly twice as productive at generating literacy for women during the early grades in Pakistan when compared to India. Or, it could also mean that Indian schools are much more lenient about promoting students who cannot read," Mr. Sandefur said.

Present century women are going to get equal rights in the all the fields, The Indian society in general & government in particular has established a number of institutions for the educational development of women and girls. India has also signed a number of MOUs in several international conventions that aim to ensure the rights of women as well as for right to education. These educational institutions aim for immense help and are concerned with the development of women in all sectors. In the modern era, women in India have come a long way. Indian women are given paripasu right with man in addition government is using all the technological methods to spread women education in the country The feminist ideas has, however, led to the marvelous development of women's condition in the society throughout the world in recent the times. Gender discrimination, the main obstacle for women, still persists in India and lot more needs to be done in the field of women's education India. The gender literacy gap is a simple indicator for male and female literacy. While the male literacy rate was 9.8 per cent and female literacy rate was 0.7 per cent according to 1901 census in India. Last year census year report is the male literacy rate is 82.14 and female literacy rate is 65.46 according to 2011 census in India. Girl's school enrolment is low over the year from 1951 to 2010 as compared to men in India. Following are certain notable factors in India which is not permitting the Indian women to go for education.



**DHS DATA ANALYSIS:**

For this research, the authors devised a way to measure the quality of education around the world, with a specific focus on girls, using data from nationally representative Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) — one of the most comparable data sources on living standards in the developing world. “We used data from all countries with DHS data that included the literacy measure,” Mr. Sandefur said. Around the world, female literacy rates are improving. However, it is not clear if that is because of improvement in school quality, the study says. India ranks low in global indices of female literacy as well. If countries are ranked by the earliest grade at which at least half of the women are literate — a proxy for quality of learning — India ranks 38th among the 51 developing countries for which comparable data is available. Indonesia, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Tanzania — all rank higher than India. Ghana is placed at the bottom. According to this study, just seven per cent of female students in Ghana can read after attaining their sixth grade.

Over the years, most countries studied made improvements in the number of girls finishing primary school, which should lead to more literate women. But for girls who don’t finish primary school, the trend is not encouraging: researchers found that little to no progress has been made in increasing basic literacy for the girls who drop out. The report notes, “Millions of women have spent multiple years in school and emerged unable to read a simple sentence” and “it’s not getting much better over time.” Adult female literacy by highest grade attained

<b><u>Grade</u></b>	<b><u>No schooling</u></b>	<b><u>2nd grade</u></b>	<b><u>4th grade</u></b>	<b><u>5th grade</u></b>
Nepal	11%	47%	80%	92%
Pakistan	3%	31%	57%	74%
Bangladesh	1%	8%	36%	54%
India	1%	15%	33%	48%

The table shows % of females literate who have studied upto that grade. For instance, only 15 per cent of Indian women who studied till Class 2nd can read a sentence (or literate). Countries are ranked by the earliest grade at which at least 50% of women are literate. India ranks 38th among 51 developing countries.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Nepal	3
Pakistan	8
Bangladesh	24
India	38

(Source: Education Commission; DHS rounds since 2000)

## STATE & CENTRAL GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION:

India has 3.8 million girls still out of school, and unsafe and ill-equipped school environments are a further deterrent for parents to send their girls to school. According to India's 2011 census, 53 percent of households and 11 percent of schools had no toilets. This is a significant safety hazard for girls and women and gives them no other choice but to expose and relieve themselves in unsafe and public places. What is the government of India doing to address this problem? Access to education has been one of the most urgent and important demands of these women's rights movements. It gives awareness to the women in the society as India has been in many dimensions of educational disparities in the society in common and also in general. The current administration has made some positive moves by announcing a Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign—the Save Daughters, Educate Daughters campaign. Coupling girls' safety and their education is both insightful and intelligent, provided there is a deeper realization of what this entails. The interim budget has allocated 100 crore rupees (1 billion rupees) specifically for this campaign, and another 50 crore rupees will go toward women's safety in public transport and 150 crore rupees toward women's safety in large cities. While girls' education has received some attention as a result of global advocacy, a wider view of education is needed and should undoubtedly include the physical, social and political circumstances in which girls are living. Several steps need to be taken in order to give concrete shape to the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign and educators in India have an important role to play. First, education should include gender studies in the core curriculum of schools so that students examine gendered social norms critically and learn to develop egalitarian constructions of masculinity and femininity. Boys and young men must be educated in schools to value and respect women and girls, take responsibility for the increasing violence against girls, and respect girls' rights to their own bodies. Girls must be empowered by their education to speak up when they are abused, protest unwanted advances and protect themselves, and to demand their right to bodily integrity and respect in and outside of their homes. Educators must address communities and teach them to value their daughters for more than the sexual, domestic and reproductive labor they provide. Next, immediate action must be taken to provide the infrastructure required to ensure the safety of girls and women on the streets, in schools and other institutions. This means adequate and separate toilets in schools and elsewhere. To his credit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the issue of women's safety specifically in his address to the Nation on August 15th, India's Independence day. He urged parents to focus on the upbringing of their sons, promised separate toilets for girls in all schools, and urged big corporations to direct their social responsibility funds to this end. Within a week two large corporations, Tata Consultancy Services and Bharti Enterprises, responded with contributions of 1 billion rupees each there are many reforms and strategies by the government towards the betterment of women education in India. But it is time to think about the simple measures we can take in our daily routine to contribute for women's education in India. It starts from every home; following programmes are in implementation as on today.

1. Sarwa Shiksha Abhiyan
2. Indira Mahila Yojana
3. Balika Samridhi Yojana
4. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh
5. Mahila Samridhi Yojana

6. Employment and Income Generating Training-cum-Production Centres
7. Programme of Development of Women and Children in rural areas
8. Short Stay Home for Women and Girls

## **CONCLUSION:**

Until the middle of nineteenth century, girls and women were educated only for traditional household works. Now, the society is witnessing changes in the role-status of women. There is greater emphasis on education girls and women in the same way as we educate boys and men. The modern-day parents want to fulfill the aspiration of their children without gender parity. The educated women should insist on exercising their civil, social, political and economic rights. This will help improve the overall condition of women in the society. We can hope for better days while all women of our country will be enlightened and educated. Women education have been improved in all the urban and rural areas of the country however in the rural areas extra programmes of development of women have been included. In order to improve socio-economic status of women in the rural areas, awareness programmes are run to develop income generating activities. Both man and woman covers the half half population of the country. They are like two sides of the coin so need equal opportunity to participate in the country development. One cannot exist without other because women are everything as they give birth to the future generation. If they would be well educated they would give rise educated future generation and thus healthy social and economic condition in India.

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