



## Literacy and Women Development

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### KEYWORDS :

"Educate a man and he will leave his home to find work. Educate a woman and she will have fewer children, introduce better health practices to her family and village, run her household more efficiently, and most important, advocate for the education of her children."

Education is considered a fundamental human right and an essential ingredient for individual as well societal development. Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations. Investing in girls' education is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty. Investments in secondary school education for girls yield especially high dividends.

Girls who have been educated are likely to marry later and to have smaller and healthier families. Educated women can recognize the importance of health care and know how to seek it for themselves and their children. Education helps girls and women to know their rights and to gain confidence to claim them. However, women's literacy rates are significantly lower than men's in most developing countries.

Education benefits women in two distinct ways during different stages of life, and both formal and non-formal education play a role. While enrolled in primary and secondary school, girls are less likely to fall into early marriage, early motherhood, HIV infection, and street life. After leaving school, education helps women run their houses more effectively—a significant ability since in many parts of the world women are the key economic actors in households and are often solely responsible for providing for their families.

Literacy is a tool for lifelong learning. Gaining literacy expands a woman's opportunities to communicate feelings and needs. Literacy also affects a woman's critical role as a mother. Her own education makes her a passionate advocate for the education of her children, which in turn makes her a nation's greatest asset in the effort to produce a generation of educated, productive citizens. Literate women living in poverty are poised to play the same influential role for their children by instilling an appreciation for the power that literacy and education will play in their lives. The cause for female education has attracted the efforts of many organizations and governments, and different initiatives have proven the importance of financial incentives, non-formal training, the hiring of women in the education sector, and community engagement. Financial incentives have been used both to encourage educators to enter the field of girls' education and to encourage girls to become students. Literacy is an essential tool for all women, since it can be effectively wielded to further the diverse goals that women everywhere are already pursuing. The effort to raise female literacy levels has been executed through small and large scale projects the world over.

All educational efforts experienced success based on how well they cultivated solidarity amongst women, provided mentorship for fe-

male students, offered financial incentives to educate girls, effectively established literacy skills, and practiced equality in the school environment. A significant initial investment is necessary at the outset of the women's literacy challenge, but such a push is essential to establish the womanpower that will carry women's literacy and education forward. A generation of literate women translates in the immediate future to an effective army of literate mothers at home, female teachers in schools, and women's advocacy groups in communities. If governments give these women the resources to establish themselves, future generations will see greater equality and improvement on myriad social welfare measures, which women have a disproportionate potential to shape. The development of women's groups and organizations alludes to one of the most difficult to quantify but certainly most valuable results of female literacy: solidarity among women. Regardless of situation, the connection of women to women through education and literate action is the Holy Grail of women's advancement.

Education may not automatically lead to empowerment as each woman's situation, context, country, culture and custom also influence whether she is able to exercise her knowledge and understanding. Women are less likely than men to participate in community decision-making, including parent associations and school management committees. They are less likely to take on roles of leadership and management in the workplace. Such participation is not only linked to education but also to cultural attitudes towards women. Women have identified areas where they feel that more support is needed. These include public speaking, deeper knowledge of what is expected of them when they get elected to roles of responsibility, and greater understanding of policies and procedures.

Education is an essential means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to fully participate in the development process. Sustainable development is only possible when women and men enjoy equal opportunities to reach their potential. Women and girls experience multiple and intersecting inequalities. Structural barriers in the economic, social, political and environmental spheres produce and reinforce these inequalities. Obstacles to women's economic and political empowerment, and violence against women and girls, are barriers to sustainable development and the achievement of human rights, gender equality, justice and peace.

### Why is female literacy rate low in India?

The negative attitude of parents towards the girl child and her education is one of the major reasons of low female literacy rate in India. In most of the families, boys at home are given priority in terms of education but girls are not treated in the same way. Poverty is the root cause of many problems in India and also of low female literacy rate. More than one-third of population in India is living below the poverty line. Though government is putting efforts to make the primary education free but still parents are not ready to send their girls to school. Another barrier to female education in India is the lack of female teachers. As India is a gender segregated society, it is a very important factor in the low female literacy rate in India.

But in spite of all reasons, women must understand and realize that education can actually end the vicious cycle of poverty, their misfortune, so that they can live a life with pride. In case of any misfortune in life, it is education that would help her, not anything else.

#### Low female literacy rate and its impact on our society

Low female literacy rate means an overall sluggish growth of India, as it impacts every arena of the development. India is struggling hard to stabilize its growing population through family planning programs. But if females are illiterate, then this has a direct and negative impact on these initiatives. When a girl or a woman is not educated, it is not only she who suffers but the entire family has to bear the consequences of her illiteracy. In such a scenario not only women but their kids also go through the same conditions. She, who does not know the importance of education in life, does not emphasize the same for her kids. This hampers the family as well as the nation's progress as a whole. Lack of education means lack of awareness. Illiterate women are not aware of their rights. They know nothing about initiatives taken by the government for their welfare. Illiterate women keep on struggling hard and bear harshness of life, family and even their husbands.

#### IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA

Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl children, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population. 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.

#### WOMEN EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

Women Empowerment is a global issue and discussion on women political right are at the fore front of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. The concept of women empowerment was introduced at the international women conference at NAROI in 1985. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond 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 India is poised to becoming superpower, a developed country by 2020. The year 2020 is fast approaching; it is just 13 year away. This can become reality only when the women of this nation became empowerment. India presently account for the largest number of illiterates in the world. Literacy rate in India have risen sharply from 18.3% in 1951 to 64.8% in 2001 in which enrolment of women in education have also risen sharply 7% to 54.16%. Despite the importance of women education unfortunately only 39% of women are literate among 64% of the man. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plan and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in different spheres. From the fifth five year plan (1974 – 78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission of Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the right and legal entitlements of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local level.

#### Gaps in Male and Female Literacy Rate

There a considerable rate of gap between male and female literacy rates in India. It has been estimated that at the current rate of progress, India will be able to attain universal literacy only until 2060. As per the census of 2011, an effective literacy rate for men was 82.14% whereas for women it was 65.46%. Though there has been seen a substantial increase in the number of literate women and this gap is narrowing, it still persists. Among such figures, there exists a ray of hope as well. According to the 2011 census, since year 2011, 110 million additional women had become literate as compared to 107 men that mean that the number of literate women is increasing. But this current difference in literacy rate has a serious impact on economic development. The points to support this line are as follow:

- The gap in literacy rate has a direct impact on the increase in income of male as organizations prefer to select employees who are competent enough to work. The male literacy rate is very high as compared to female. This leads to a gap in income of male and female.
- There is a dramatic difference in the female literacy rate based on various regions in India. Female literacy rate in urban areas is higher as compared to rural India.
- The big factor which affects the financial development of the country is the gap in availing credit facility from banks. As female are illiterate they will not be able to understand banking terminology and ultimately will not avail any credit facility. In the long term this will increase the gap of male female entrepreneurial skill and enterprises.
- Low female literacy rate means an overall sluggish growth of India, as it impacts every arena of the development. India is struggling hard to stabilize its growing population through family planning programs and other measures. But if females are illiterate, then this has a direct and negative impact on these initiatives.
- Better education facilities for male is leading our country towards male dominance in productive skill and ultimately organization also pay more to people who are skilled i.e. male.
- Lack of education means lack of awareness. Illiterate women are not aware of their rights. They know nothing about initiatives taken by the government and other NGOs for their welfare. Illiterate women keep on struggling hard and bear harshness of life, low income family and even their husbands. Illiteracy leads female to feel low in their self esteem level.
- The Indian society tends to be a male dominant society where male have been given a different status and this trend of literacy gap will amplify its effect and male will receive increased status in society.

#### Conclusion

According to the Country Report of the Government of India, "Empowerment means moving from a weak position to execute a power." Education of women in the education of women is the most powerful tool of change of position in society. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. To encourage the education of women at all levels and for dilution of gender bias in providing knowledge and education, established schools, colleges and universities even exclusively for women in the state. To bring more girls, especially from marginalized families of BPL, in mainstream education, the government is providing a package of concessions in the form of providing free books, uniform, boarding and lodging, clothing for the hostilities midday meals, scholarships, free circles and so on.

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