



## Development of Women Education in India

### KEYWORDS

Women Education, Literacy Rates, Census, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes

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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 development of the country. The literacy rate represents measure of educational status of any community. This paper examined the trends in women education. This paper analyses trends of women education in India during last sixty years. Literacy rates have been used for the data analysis on the basis of census years. 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 narrowing down. It was observed that the literacy rate of general women population was higher than that of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes women during the study period. Literacy rate increased during the study period due to effort by state government, central government and NGO. Though, there is still scope for further developing the literacy levels as the maximum achievable limit is 100. The government should encourage to girls for attending school. Government and voluntary organization should invest in infrastructure for increased female education.

### Introduction

Literacy is one of the important indicators of social development. Knowledge is linked with literacy and formal education. Economic growth is related to degree of literacy. Thus literacy is one of the important needs of life as well as future development of human being of the particular region.

According to Indian Census 'A person who can both read and write with understanding in any language is to be taken as literate.' (Census 2001)

Women constitute almost half of the population of the world. Education for women is the best way to improve the health, nutrition and economic development of the country. In this context, it can be urged that lack of women education can be an impediment to the country's economic development.

In India, women achieve far less education than that of male. As per census report 2001, the literacy rate of women is 54.16 percent and as per census report 2011 it was 58.75 percent. There has been a sincere effort to improve the education attainment of women by both government and voluntary organization. The changes in the policies and infrastructural supports on primary, secondary and higher education reflect the initiatives of the Government of India towards women education. Therefore it becomes important to study the development of women education in India. This paper examined the trends in women education in India.

The rest of the paper has been divided into three sections. Section II describes the methodology adopted in this research. Section III describes Data analysis and limitations of the study. Section IV describes the conclusion of the paper.

### Section II Methodology

The secondary data has been used for the study. Population and literacy data are available only for census years. First census year after independence is 1951. Therefore the period of study is confined to 1951 to 2011. The data regarding literacy rates of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) women are available from 1961 to 2001. So the study of women education in SC and ST is confined to 1961 to 2001.

### Section III

#### Data Analysis

#### Total Literacy Rates by Sex in India

The literacy rate represents measure of educational status of any community. Literacy rate is estimated as the percentage of people educated to the respective total population. Though literacy is very important for both males and females, there exists a wide gap between both sexes in India. The trends in total literacy rates by sex in India between the years 1981 and 2011 are given in table 1 and figure 1.

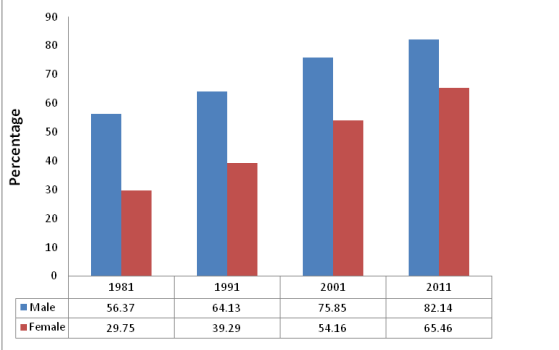
The total literacy rate in India during the year 1981 was 43.56% which increased to 74.04% by 2011. Though there is an increase in the literacy rate, it provides us a clue that there is still scope for further developing the literacy levels as the maximum achievable limit is 100. When we looked at the literacy rate by male and female respectively, interesting observations could be made. In all the years, male literacy rates very higher than that of female literacy rates. In the year 1981, the male literacy rate was 56.37% while same for female was only 29.75%. In the year 2011, the male literacy rate reached to 82.14% and female literacy rate to 65.46%.

**Table 1**  
Trends in literacy rates by sex in India (%)

Particulars	1981	1991	2001	2011
Male	56.37	64.13	75.85	82.14
Female	29.75	39.29	54.16	65.46
Total	43.56	52.20	65.38	74.04
Divergence (Male-Female)	26.62	24.84	21.69	16.68

Source: (i) Registrar General of India, Census of India, for relevant years (ii) Socio-Economic Review 2011-2012, Gujarat State, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Gujarat, Gandhinagar. (iii) <http://mpr.ub.uni-muenchen.de/20680>.

Figure 1: Literacy Rates By Sex India (%)



The divergences in the literacy rates between sexes indicate the difference in the growth rate of literacy levels between males and females over a period of time. As per table 1, the divergence in the literacy rates between the sexes showed a declining trend from 26.62 % to 16.68%, indicating the reduction in the gap between literacy rates between male and females over time. This can be attributed to the faster growth of female literacy rate compared to that of males during the period of reference. State wise literacy ratio is given in Annexure-1.

**Female Literacy Rates in India by Region**

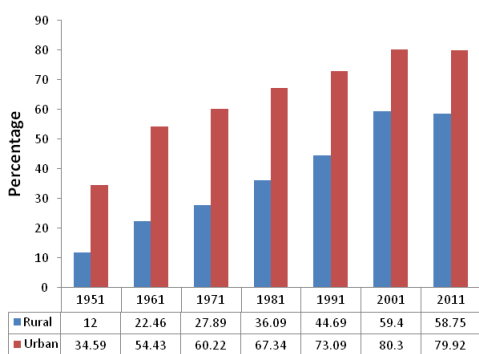
Another area of concern is to reduce the gap between the rural and urban female literacy rate. Table 2 and Figure 2 provide the trends in female literacy rates in India by rural and urban region since independence.

Table 2 Trends in Female Literacy Rates in India by Regions (%)

Year	Female Literacy Rate	
	Rural	Urban
1951	12.00	34.59
1961	22.46	54.43
1971	27.89	60.22
1981	36.09	67.34
1991	44.69	73.09
2001	59.40	80.30
2011	58.75	79.92

Source: (i) Registrar General of India, Census of India, for relevant years (ii) Socio-Economic Review 2011-2012, Gujarat State, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Gujarat, Gandhinagar. (iii) <http://mpr.ub.uni-muenchen.de/20680>.

Figure 2: Literacy Rates in India by Region (%)



It indicates that there is a steady growth of female literacy rates in both rural and urban regions in India. In the year 1951, the rural female literacy rate was 12% and urban female literacy rate was 34.59%. This situation had remarkable improved within sixty years and reached to higher levels of 58.75% and 79.92% in rural and urban regions respectively. But it was decreased compared to 2001.

Though there has been a steady upward trend in both the rural and urban female literacy rates, it was observed that the rural female literacy rate was increased much faster than that of urban during the study period.

**Trends in Female Literacy Rates in India by Castes**

Trends in female literacy rates in India by castes are given in table 3 and figure 3.

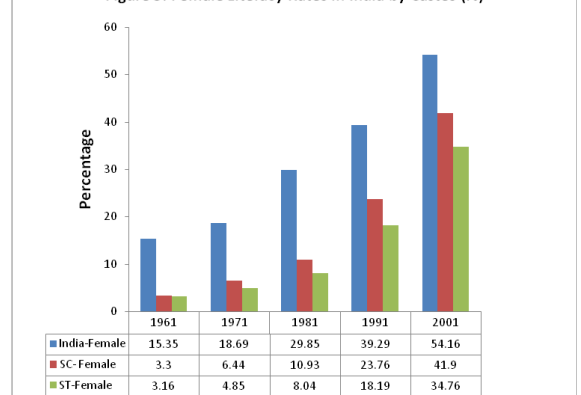
The total literacy rate of Female in India year 1961 was 15.35% which increased to 54.16% by 2001. Though there is an increase in the literacy rate, it provides us a clue that there is still scope for further developing the literacy levels as the maximum achievable limit is 100. When we looked at the female literacy rate by SC and ST female respectively, interesting observations could be made. In all the years, female literacy rates in SC and ST very lower than that of total female literacy rates in India. In the year 1961, the female literacy rate in India was 15.35% while same for female literacy rate in SC and ST 3.30% and 3.16% respectively. In the year 2001, the female literacy rate has reached to 54.16% and female literacy rate in SC and ST to 41.90% and 34.76% respectively.

Table 3 Trends in Female Literacy Rates in India by Castes (%)

Year	Female Literacy Rate				
	India-Female	SC-Female	Gap between SCs and General Female	ST-Female	Gap between SCs and General Female
1961	15.35	3.30	12.05	3.16	12.19
1971	18.69	6.44	25.25	4.85	13.84
1981	29.85	10.93	18.92	8.04	21.81
1991	39.29	23.76	15.53	18.19	21.10
2001	54.16	41.90	12.26	34.76	19.40

Source: Planning Commission Government of India (2011) Mid-term Appraisal 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan 2007-2012, Oxford university Press, New Delhi, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition, pp 167 and 174.

Figure 3: Female Literacy Rates in India by Castes (%)



The divergences in the literacy rates between sexes indicate the difference in the growth rate of literacy levels between general females and SC and ST females over a period of time. As per table 3, the divergence in the literacy rates between the General females and SC and ST females showed a declining trend during the study period. The divergence in the literacy rates between the General females and SC fe-

males was 15.53% in 1991 and it was decreased to 12.26% in 2001. The divergence in the literacy rates between the General females and ST females was 21.10% in 1991 and it was decreased to 19.40% in 2001. Reduction in the ratio was indicating the reduction in the gap between literacy rates between general female and SC, ST females over time. This can be attributed to the faster growth of female literacy rate in SC and ST compared to that of general females during the period of reference.

#### Limitation of the Study

Only Literacy Rates of Male, Female and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Women have been used. Further study can be done on expenditure on female education, available infrastructure facilities for education, drop out ratio of girls in India and comparative study of women education between different states of India.

#### Section IV

##### Conclusion

This paper examined the trends in women education. 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. The literacy rate of women in India was 29.75% in 1981 and it was increased to 65.46% in 2011. It was also observed that the gaps between rural and urban female literacy rates narrowing down. The rural literacy rates were low as compared to urban literacy rates of total population due to degree of educational facilities is higher in urban areas. It was observed that the literacy rate of general women population was higher than that of SC and ST women during the study period. It is due to lack of awareness and importance of education. However, literacy rates of SC and ST women were significantly increased during study period due to a sincere effort to improve the education attainment of women by both government and voluntary organizations. The changes in the policies and infrastructural supports on primary, secondary and higher education reflect the initiatives of the Government of India towards women education. The government should encourage to girls for attending school. Government and voluntary organization should invest in infrastructure for increased female education.

Sr No.	India/State/ Union Territory	Literacy Rate (%) (Persons)			Literacy Rate (%) (Males)			Literacy Rate(%) (Females)		
		Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
	INDIA	74.04	68.91	84.98	82.14	78.57	89.67	65.46	58.75	79.92
1	ANDHRA PRADESH	67.66	61.14	80.54	75.56	70.24	85.99	59.74	52.05	75.02
2	ARUNACHAL PRADESH	66.95	61.59	84.57	73.69	68.79	89.45	59.57	53.78	79.04
3	ASSAM	73.18	70.44	88.88	78.81	76.51	91.84	67.27	64.09	85.71
4	BIHAR	63.82	61.83	78.75	73.39	71.90	84.42	53.33	50.82	72.36
5	CHHATTISGARH	71.04	66.76	84.79	81.45	78.20	91.63	60.59	55.40	77.65
6	GOA	87.40	84.26	89.31	92.81	91.71	93.47	81.84	76.84	84.96
7	GUJARAT	79.31	73.00	87.58	87.23	83.10	92.44	70.73	62.41	82.08
8	HARYANA	76.64	72.74	83.83	85.38	83.20	89.37	66.77	60.97	77.51
9	HIMACHAL PRADESH	83.78	82.91	91.39	90.83	90.48	93.72	76.60	75.33	88.66
10	JAMMU & KASHMIR	68.74	64.97	78.19	78.26	75.51	84.90	58.01	53.36	70.19
11	JHARKHAND	67.63	62.40	83.30	78.45	74.57	89.78	56.21	49.75	76.17
12	KARNATAKA	75.60	68.86	86.21	82.85	77.92	90.54	68.13	59.60	81.71
13	KERALA	93.91	92.92	94.99	96.02	95.29	96.83	91.98	90.74	93.33
14	MADHYA PRADESH	70.63	65.29	84.09	80.53	76.64	90.24	60.02	53.20	77.39
15	MAHARASHTRA	82.91	77.09	89.84	89.82	86.39	93.79	75.48	67.38	85.44
16	MANIPUR	79.85	77.15	85.98	86.49	84.14	92.05	73.17	69.95	80.21
17	MEGHALAYA	75.48	71.15	91.33	77.17	72.83	93.17	73.78	69.45	89.49
18	MIZORAM	91.58	84.31	98.10	93.72	88.35	98.67	89.40	80.04	97.54
19	NAGALAND	80.11	75.86	90.21	83.29	79.49	92.11	76.69	72.01	88.10
20	ORISSA	73.45	70.78	86.45	82.40	80.41	91.83	64.36	61.10	80.70
21	PUNJAB	76.68	72.45	83.70	81.48	77.92	87.28	71.34	66.47	79.62
22	RAJASTHAN	67.06	62.34	80.73	80.51	77.49	89.16	52.66	46.25	71.53
23	SIKKIM	82.20	79.82	89.26	87.29	85.42	92.94	76.43	73.42	85.19
24	TAMIL NADU	80.33	73.80	87.24	86.81	82.08	91.82	73.86	65.52	82.67
25	TRIPURA	87.75	85.58	93.61	92.18	90.86	95.80	83.15	80.06	91.38
26	UTTAR PRADESH	69.72	67.55	77.01	79.24	78.48	81.75	59.26	55.61	71.68
27	UTTARAKHAND	79.63	77.11	85.20	88.33	87.63	89.78	70.70	66.79	80.02
28	WEST BENGAL	77.08	72.97	85.54	82.67	79.51	89.15	71.16	66.08	81.70

	Union Territories									
1	A & N ISLANDS	86.27	84.39	89.60	90.11	88.53	92.96	81.84	79.58	85.79
2	CHANDIGARH	86.43	81.69	86.56	90.54	86.68	90.65	81.38	74.17	81.55
3	DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	77.65	65.89	90.86	86.46	78.18	94.81	65.93	51.36	84.86
4	DAMAN & DIU	87.07	81.51	88.87	91.48	89.71	91.95	79.59	71.97	82.94
5	LAKSHADWEEP	92.28	91.92	92.38	96.11	95.06	96.40	88.25	88.66	88.13
6	NCT of DELHI	86.34	82.67	86.43	91.03	90.04	91.05	80.93	74.03	81.10
7	PUDUCHERRY	86.55	81.02	89.09	92.12	88.49	93.80	81.22	73.82	84.60
Source: Census of India-2011.										

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