
GIRLS' EDUCATION IN INDIA: STATUS AND CHALLENGES

Sanjukta Sahoo*

Article history:

Received July 25th, 2016;
Approved July 30th, 2016;
Available online: Aug 15th, 2016.

Keyword:

Girls' Education,
Status,
Challenges,
Suggestions.

Abstract

Girls' education is a big opportunity for India to be developed socially and economically. Educated girls' are the weapons who yield positive impact on the Indian society through their contribution at home and professional fields. They are the reason of improved economy in the country as well as society. The objectives of the paper are: 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 has been divided into four parts. The first part of the paper highlights about the historical background and importance of girls' education in India. The second part of the paper discusses about the recent status of girls' education in India. The third part of the paper elaborates about major initiatives have been taken by the Government of India for improving girls' education and different challenges of girls' education in India. The last part of the paper provides suggestions for overcoming the barriers of girls' education in India. 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.

2395-7492© Copyright 2016 The Author. Published by International Journal of Engineering and Applied Science. This is an open access article under the
All rights reserved.

Author Correspondence

*M. Phil. Scholar, Regional Institute of Education, Bhubaneswar, India

Introduction:

There was a time when people thought that it was not necessary to educate girls. Now we have begun to realize that girls' education is essential. The modern age is the age of awakening of girls.

They are trying to compete with men in all spheres of life. There are many people who oppose girls' education. They say that the proper sphere of girls is the home. So, they argue that the money spent on girl's education is wasted. This view is wrong, because girl's education can bring about a silent revolution in the society. Girls' education plays a vital role through up gradation of depriving Marginalized sections, especially girls in society. Because girls are the back bone of society, they are the mother of the race and guardian of future generation, so that education is very much necessary. Girls must be educated, for it is the Girls who mould the next generation and hence the destiny of the country. But present scenario is different girls are consist with 58.65% of the total population but the literacy rate of the girls is 65.5% where as the boys literacy rate is 82.1% (Census Report, 2011) and annual average dropout rate of girls in primary level is 4.14% and in upper primary level is 4.49% (DISE Data, 2014-15). Annual average dropout rate of girls in secondary level is 17.79% and in higher secondary level is 1.61% (U-DISE Data, 2014-15). Although Government has taken many initiatives to promote girls' education in our country, "Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme was launched in 2015 with the noble purpose to educate girls. 'Sukanya Samridhi Yojana' scheme was launched in 2015 to meet the expense of the Girl child's higher education and marriage" (Ministry of Women and Child Development Report, 2015). Government of India is also taking responsibility to make girls' toilet in every schools for the purpose of minimizing dropout rate in the schools. Because according to the Annual Status of Education Report (2014) "at middle and high schools, there is a correlation between the lack of toilets and drop-out rates." The purposes of the study are 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.

Historical Background of Girls' Education in India:

For more than 300 years ago, there was practically no education for girls in India. Only a few girls of the upper castes and upper classes were given some education at home. Literacy of girls at that time was looked upon as a disgrace. The notion of providing education to girl children never entered into the minds of parents. A superstitious feeling was alleged to exist in the majority of the Hindu families that a girl taught to read and write will soon become a widow after marriage. According to the report of National Committee on Women's Education (1959), "It cannot be denied that the general picture of the education of girls was the most unsatisfactory and girls received practically no formal instruction whatever, except for the little domestic instruction that was available to the daughter of the upper class families."

It was the 'American Mission' which first started a school for girls in Bombay (Now Mumbai) in 1824. By 1829 within five years as many as 400 girls were enrolled in that school. Then the first decade of 19th century with efforts of missionaries as well as the Indian voluntary organizations, some girls' primary schools particularly in Bombay, Bengal and Madras states, started (Mondal, 2015).

The government also took the responsibility to promote primary education in general and that of the girls in particular. However, government efforts could not go a long way due to the Indian War of Independence of 1857. After the war municipal committees and other local bodies were encouraged to open primary schools. In the year 1870, training colleges for women were established for the first time and women were trained to become teachers in girls' schools.

As a result of all these efforts, great progress was made in girl's education in the last quarter of the 19th century (Mondal, 2015).

However, in spite of these, there was a great gap between the education of boys and girls. It was estimated that for every 1,000 boys at schools, the number of girls was only 46. At the beginning of the 19th century there was hardly any literate woman in the country excepting a few in the aristocratic houses. It astonishes that by the end of the century hundreds girls were enrolled in the newly opened institutions all over the country. Though girls and women have made much educational gains in recent years, but still have a long way to go before their historic educational disadvantage is eradicated. The education system of India, like many other social institutions, has long been discriminatory towards the women. In 1916 SNDT Women University in Bombay became the first institution of higher learning to admit female students (Mondal, 2015).

The proportion of girl students has increased steadily after independence and mostly in the last decade. The literacy rate of girls has gone up from 8.86 per cent in 1951 to 29.75 per cent in 1981, 39.29 per cent in 1991 to 54.16 per cent in 2001, and Now in 2011 census report it is 65.5% (Census Report, 1951-2011).

Enrolment of girls in higher education has also grown since 1995. The main hindrance in the girls education in India is rural residence, low caste, low economic standing combined with the traditional attitude towards girls' education as a whole. These factors tend to deny opportunities of education to a girl. While broadly speaking education of girl students has made strides and it is not surprising that today in many faculties and departments of universities and colleges, more girls than boys are seen.

Importance of Girls' Education in India:

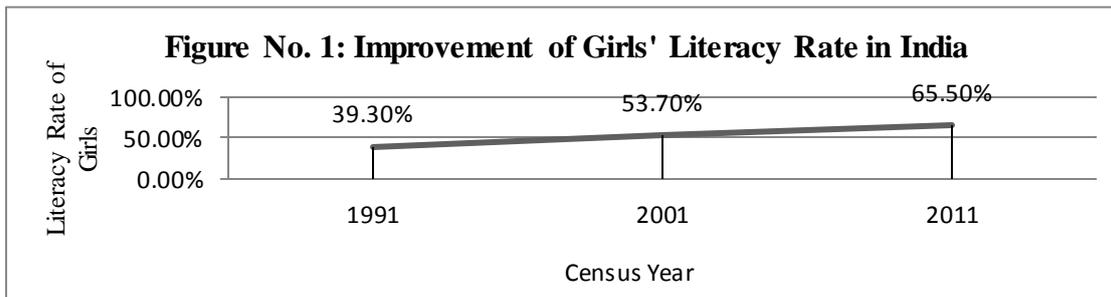
Girls' education is one of the most effective ways for ending poverty in developing nations. The benefits of their education are seen by individuals, their families, and throughout society. These benefits include: Reducing the number of babies women have; lowering infant and child mortality rates; lower maternal mortality rates; (Kumar, J. & Sangeeta-2013), protecting against HIV/AIDS infection (Latha,P.S.-2014); Increased number of women with jobs and higher earnings. Girl's education helps to eliminate illiteracy; develop self-esteem and self-confidence (Nanda, P; Das, P; Singh, A. & Negi, R. - 2013)

Education for girls can have the benefit of delaying marriage and pregnancy for young girls. Instead of a girl getting married before age 20 and often suffering abuse by her husband, girls who attend primary and secondary school are more likely to have a say in who they marry. Girls who attend school also are able to use more effective methods of family planning and therefore have fewer and healthier babies. An educated girl and woman will have learned about HIV/AIDS and know many different ways to protect herself from getting the disease. Every year of schooling helps a woman make better decisions for her and her family (King, E. & Winthrop, R.-2015). Women who attended school often have healthier families. These women are more likely to seek medical help from clinics or doctors. Because they can read, literate girls can understand a doctor's detailed instructions and follow up for help if needed. These women also

can read nutritional labels and provide their family healthy meals that promote growth and lower cholesterol. Education also teaches young ones the importance of keeping herself and her house clean and safe (World Bank Report, 2008).

Status of Girls’ Education in India:

In recent years, India has reportedly shown considerable improvement in girls’ education. The literacy rate has also increased than the past decades. In 1991 girls’ literacy rate was 39.3% and in 2001 girls’ literacy rate was 53.7%, but in 2011 girls’ literacy rate improved by 65.5%.



Source: Census Data, 1991 to 2011

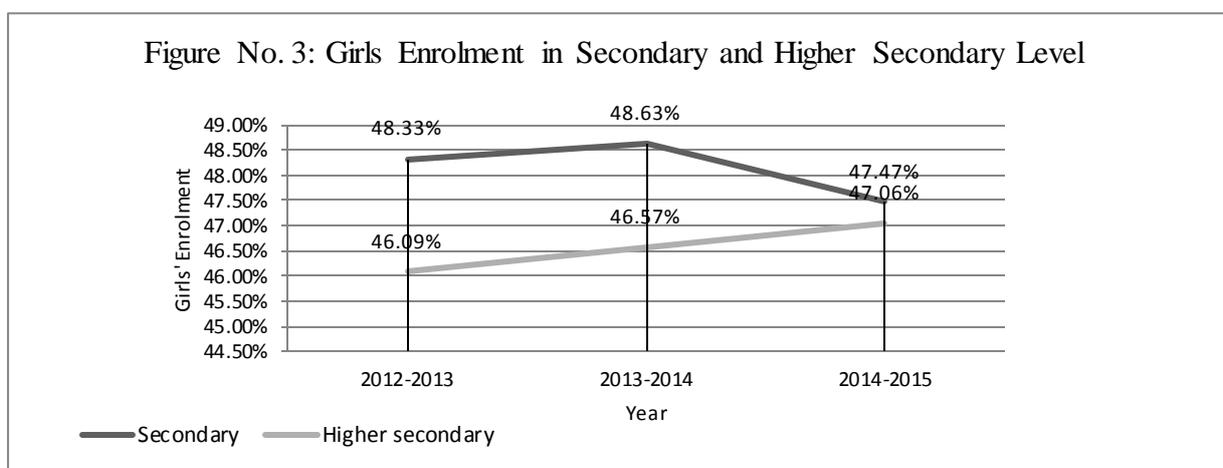
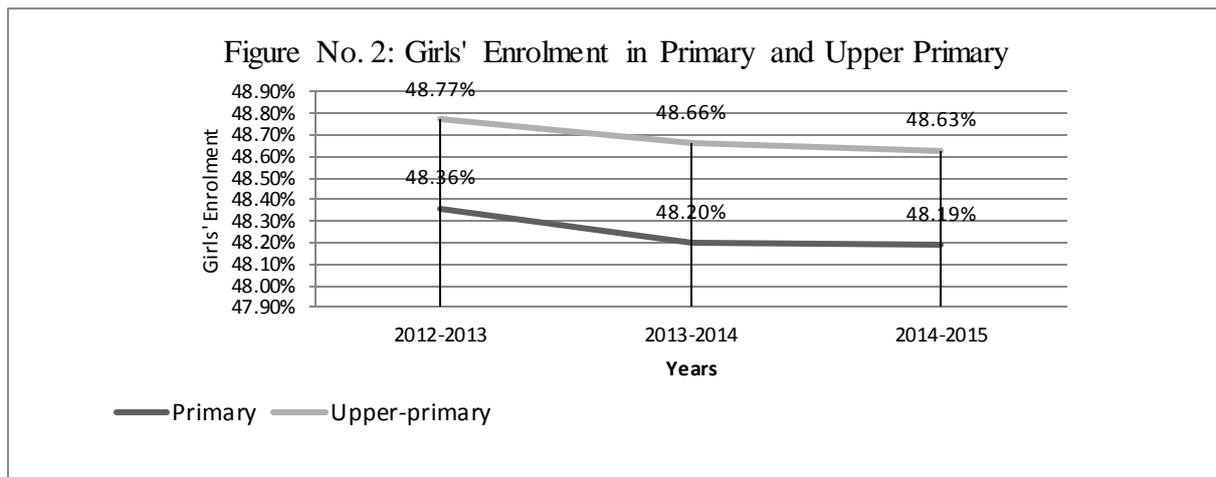
Along with improvements in literacy, India has witnessed a significant increase in primary, upper primary as well as higher education enrolments. The recent data (DISE and U-DISE data 2012-2015) suggests that there has been a considerable increase in the participation of girls in all level of education, i.e. Primary, Secondary and Higher Education because of an increase in enrolments and decline in drop-out rates over the years.

Table No. 1: Enrolment Status of Girls’ Education in India from 2012 to 2015

Years	Primary	Upper-primary	Secondary	Higher secondary
2014-2015	48.19%	48.63%	47.47%	47.06%
2013-2014	48.20%	48.66%	48.63%	46.57%
2012-2013	48.36%	48.77%	48.33%	46.09%

Source: DISE and U-DISE data 2012-2015

It is clear from the table no. 1 that girls’ enrolment status has been increased in the Higher Secondary level from 2012 to 2015. But the status of girls’ enrolment has not been improved from 2012 to 2015 in Primary and Upper Primary level. In Secondary level girls’ enrolment status was increased from 2013 to 2014, but it was decreased in 2015.



Source: DISE and U-DISE data 2012-2015

Table No. 2: Gross Enrolment Ratio of Girls in Higher Education Level

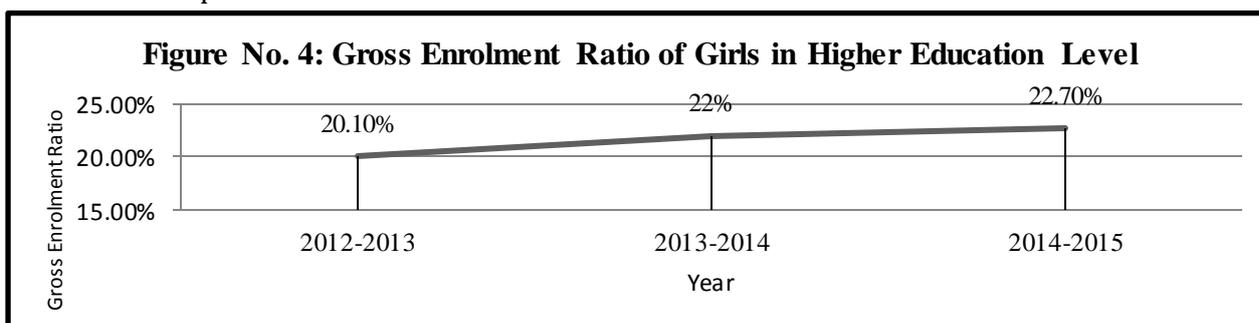
Years	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Higher Education	20.1%	22%	22.7%

AISHE,

Source:

2012-2015

Table no. 2 indicates that in Higher Education level girls' Gross Enrolment Ratio has been increased from past two decades.



Source: AISHE, 2012-2015

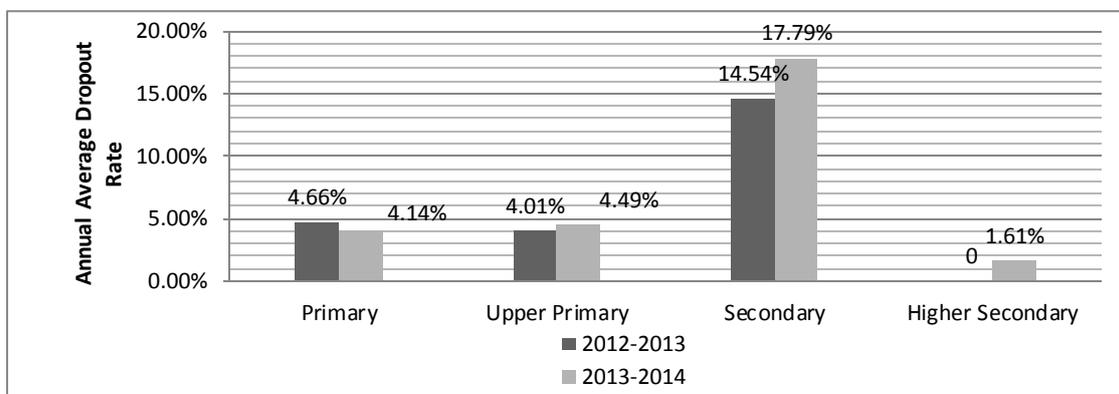
Table No. 3: Annual Average Dropout Rate of Girls in Elementary and Secondary Level

Years	2012-2013	2013-2014
Primary	4.66%	4.14%
Upper Primary	4.01%	4.49%
Secondary	14.54%	17.79%
Higher Secondary	Not Available	1.61%

Source: DISE and U-DISE data 2012-2015

Table no. 3 reveals that annual average dropout rate was decreased in 2014 at primary level. But annual average dropout rate was increased in 2014 at upper primary and secondary level. In higher secondary level annual average dropout rate was not so much in 2014.

Figure No. 5: Annual Average Dropout Rate of Girls in Elementary and Secondary Level



Source: DISE and U-DISE data 2012-2015

Table No. 4: Top Five States/UT's By Female Literacy Rate: 2011

Name of the State/UTs	Female Literacy Rate (%)
Kerala	92.0%
Mizoram	89.4%
Lakshadweep	88.2%
Tripura	83.1%
A & N Islands	81.8%

Census Report mentioned that in all over India female literacy rate is far better in Union Territories than the other States. Female literacy rate is very good in South Indian states than the other parts of India. Kerala ranked top in female literacy, i.e. 92.0 %.

From the above discussion, it is clear that in primary, upper primary and secondary level girls' education status was not so good in last few decades. In primary, upper primary and secondary level girls' enrolment was decreased from 2012 to 2015 and drop out status was increased from 2012 to 2014. The condition of girls' education is far better at higher secondary level. In higher education (college/university) level it was also satisfactory. So, in grass root level the status of girls' education is in very poor condition than higher level.

Major Initiatives for Improvement of Girls' Education in India:

Government of India has taken different initiatives for improvement in girls' education. These are given below:

Article 15: prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth.

Article 45: The State shall endeavor to provide early childcare and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.

Mahila Samakhya Programme: Mahila Samakhya (MS) is an ongoing scheme for women's empowerment that was initiated in 1989 to translate the goals of the National Policy on Education into a concrete programme for the education and empowerment of women in rural areas, particularly those from socially and economically marginalized groups. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGBV): This scheme was launched in July, 2004, to provide education to girls at primary level. It is primarily for the underprivileged and rural areas where literacy level for girls is very low. The schools that were set up have 100% reservation: 75% for backward class and 25% for BPL (below Poverty line) girls. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL): This programme was launched in July, 2003. It was an incentive to reach out to the girls who the SSA was not able to reach through other schemes. The SSA called out to the "hardest to reach girls". This scheme has covered 24 states in India. Under the NPEGEL, "model schools" have been set up to provide better opportunities to girls. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE) was launched in May 2008 with the objective to establish an enabling environment to reduce the dropouts and to promote the enrolment of girl children belonging mainly to SC/ST communities in secondary schools. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

Indira Gandhi National scholarship scheme: is provided for single girl child for pursue both higher and technical education. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

Swami Vivekananda Scholarship for Single Girl Child: The dropout ratio at various levels of education for girls is much higher than that of boys. Keeping Swami Vivekananda ideas of women education and to promote girls education, UGC has introduced the Swami Vivekananda Scholarship for Single Girl Child for research in Social Sciences with an aim to compensate direct costs of higher education especially for such girls who happen to be the only girl child in their family. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

Saakshar Bharat: The National Literacy Mission was recast with its new variant, Saakshar Bharat launched in 2009. It aims to accelerate adult education, especially for women's (in the age group of 15 years and above) who have no access to formal education, targeted female literacy as a critical instrument for women's empowerment. This has led to an increase in literacy, amongst women, from 53.67% (Census 2001) to 65.46% (Census 2011). It is also for the first time that of the total of 217.70 million literates added during the decade, women (110.07million) outnumbered men (107.63million) (source: Ministry of Women and Child Development Government of India (XII th Five Year Plan)).

Udaan: The Scheme is dedicated to the development of girl child education, so as to promote the admission of girl students. The aim is to address the teaching gap between school education and

engineering entrance examinations. It seeks to enhance the enrolment of girl students in prestigious technical education institutions through incentives & academic support (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

Pragati - Scholarships for Girl Child for Technical education. It aims at providing encouragement and support to girl child to pursue technical education (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao: This is newly announced Scheme of the Govt. of India for enhancing girls' education in India. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

Mid-Day Meal Scheme: The gender gap in school participation tends to narrow, as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme helps erode the barriers that prevent girls from going to school. Mid-Day Meal Scheme also provides a useful source of employment for women and helps liberate working women from the burden of cooking at home during the day. In these and other ways, women and girl children have a special stake in Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

From the above discussion, it is clear that Government of India has taken so many initiatives for the improvement of girls' education. In spite of that the status of girls' education has not been increased in expectation level because these initiatives have not been reached to the grass root level. So, Government of India must have to take responsibility to implement these schemes and provisions at grass root level.

Challenges of Girls' Education in India:

It is generally accepted by many that schooling has innumerable benefits for the child. But the irony of the fact is that even after 62 years of its independence, a vast majority of Indian children, especially girls are deprived of these benefits. Girls are often taken out of school to share the family responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings (Das, 2010 & Sivakumar, M.A.-2012).

(1) Negative parental attitude towards educating daughters is one of the important challenges to promote girl's education in India. (Hickey, M.G. & Stratton, M. – 2007 & Kumar, J. & Sangeeta -2013).

(2) Lack of female teachers is another potential barrier to girls' education (Latha, P.S.-2014). Girls are more likely to attend school and have higher academic achievement, if they have female teachers. Currently, women account for only 47.70 % of teachers at the Elementary level (U-DISE, 2014-2015).

(3) Lack of infrastructural facility in schools is one of the major problems in development of girls' education in India (Sivakumar, M.A.-2012). Annual Status of Education Report (2014) agreed that due to lack of girls' toilet facility, dropout rate at elementary and secondary levels have been increased than the past decades.

(4) Many girls desirous of pursuing education above middle level, facilities for which are available away from their homes, cannot avail themselves of these facilities due to lack of hostel arrangements. (Worah, H.-2014)

(5) Parents often complain about insecurity for girls attending schools. Instances of abduction, rape and molestation of girls dampen the enthusiasm of parents and girl students in pursuing education beyond a certain age; thereafter they remain bound to their homes (Kumar, J. & Sangeeta -2013).

(6) Though education should be free, there are a lot of costs associated with sending children to school. The cost of uniforms, textbooks or bus fare can be too much to bear for a family living in poverty (Latha, P.S.-2014). Too often, parents choose to keep their girls at home and send the

boys to school instead.

(7) In many parts of the country, the nearest primary school to a particular community might be a 4 or 5 hour long walk away. On top of that, girls may face dangers or violence on the long way to school; so many parents select to keep their daughters at home and out of harm's way. (Latha, P.S.-2014).

(8) Typically, girls are asked to fetch the water, take care of their younger siblings and to help their mothers cook and clean (Sivakumar, M.A.-2012). Due to this, girls may not have the opportunity to attend school because their contributions to the household are valued more than their personal education.

(9) In many parts of the country, children's health is a big concern, especially if they're facing poverty. If there's not enough food or sufficient clean water to keep girls nourished and healthy, they may not be well enough to attend school.

(10) When girls are forced to marry young, they are often pulled out of school at a very critical age in their development. The transition from primary to secondary education is key for girls to gain the life skills they need to escape the cycle of poverty. Yet, this is often the same time that many girls leave school due to early marriages. (King, E. & Winthrop, R. -2015)

(11) Lack of enthusiasm and interest of the officials in charge of education is another problem for promoting girls' education.

(12) Lack of awareness among implementing agencies and community members to implement different schemes and provisions of girls' education at grass root level.

Suggestions' for Overcoming the Barriers of Girls' Education in India:

The education of girls is an integral part of national development. We can help girls get the education they deserve by supporting the following:

(1) Equal Access to Education: Plan supports community initiatives that promote positive attitudes towards equal access to education, and that raise awareness on its importance for both boys and girls. Plan also supports the creation of gender-sensitive learning environments to ensure both boys and girls enjoy their right to education.

(2) Educating Boys about Gender Equality: Gender equality is good for everyone; boys and girls, women and men. Plan engages boys in solutions to achieve gender equality to help change social norms in entire communities.

(3) Girls' Scholarships: Scholarships help girls with tuition fees, school uniforms, school supplies and safe transportation.

(4) Challenging Gender Roles: Raising awareness at family and community levels will promote positive attitudes towards education for girls. It's also important to engage parents in open dialogue regarding commonly held gender stereotypes.

(5) Preventing Violence in Schools – Plan works with communities to ensure that their schools are violence-free and that they provide a safe learning environment for girls. Plan also

works with schools to build networks of peers, role models and mentors, train female teachers, and offers social support to help create a safe space for girls to learn.

(6) No Fixed Schooling Hours: Fixed schooling hours do not suitable for girls in rural areas, as they are needed for domestic work at home or in farms and fields during these hours. This is one of the causes of lower participation rates of girls in education. The enrolment rates of girls and their retention can be improved if educational facilities are made available to girls during periods suitable to them when they are free from domestic chores. Flexible school timings have been tried in Rajasthan through the Shiksha Karmi Project and Lok Jumbish, and the results are encouraging (Khan, 2004).

Higher authorities, community members, NGOs and all people of India must have to take responsibility to eradicate different barriers related to girls' education from our society. Each and every citizen of our country must have to remember that national development cannot be achieved without girls' education.

Conclusion: Before drawing conclusion it may be mentioned that the task of the school authorities in India is to prepare the girls for the triple role she will have to play in adult life. First, as the founder and fashioner of a happy home, secondly to be able to earn her livelihood independently an honourably if circumstances demand her to do so and thirdly to discharge her duties as a responsible and enlightened citizen. The Indian Education Commission 1964-66, rightly emphasized, "For full development of our human resources, the improvement of homes and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of their infancy, the education of girls is of greater importance than that of boys". However, the change in the attitude of the public towards girls' education would go a long way in improving the situation.

References:

- AISHE, (2012-13). All India Survey Report in Higher Education. Department of Higher Education. MHRD. Government of India. New Delhi.
- AISHE, (2013-14). All India Survey Report in Higher Education. Department of Higher Education. MHRD. Government of India. New Delhi.
- AISHE, (2014-15). All India Survey Report in Higher Education. Department of Higher Education. MHRD. Government of India. New Delhi.
- ASER, (2014). Annual Status of Education Report. Pratham. New Delhi.
- Census Data (1951). Govt. of India, Ministry of Home Affairs. Office of Registrar General and Census Commissioner. India. Website: <http://www.censusindia.gov.in/1991-common/census1991.html>.
- Census Data (1991). Govt. of India, Ministry of Home Affairs. Office of Registrar General and Census Commissioner. India. Website: http://www.censusindia.gov.in/1991-common/census_1991.html
- Census Data (2001). Govt. of India, Ministry of Home Affairs. Office of Registrar General and Census Commissioner. India. Website: http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2001-common/census_2001.html

- Census Data (2011). Govt. of India, Ministry of Home Affairs. Office of Registrar General and Census Commissioner. India. Website: http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011-common/census_2011.html
 - Das, P (2010). Process of Girls' Dropout in School Education: Analysis of Selected Cases in India. In Engendering Empowerment: Education and Equality e-Conference. 12 April – 14 May. United Nations Girls' Education Initiative: New York. Available from URL: <http://www.e4conference.org/e4e>
 - DISE Report. (2012-13).Elementary Education in India Progress towards UEE. NUEPA. New Delhi.
 - DISE Report. (2013-14).Elementary Education in India Progress towards UEE. NUEPA. New Delhi.
 - DISE Report. (2014-15).Elementary Education in India Progress towards UEE. NUEPA. New Delhi.
 - Hickey, M.G & Stratton, M.(2007). "Schooling in India: Effects of Gender and Caste". *Scholarly Partnership Sedu*. Vol.2 (1), P.P. -59-85.
 - Indian Education Commission Report, (1964-66). Education and National Development.
 - Khan, W. H. (2004). Barriers to girls' education: An Essay. IGNOU. New Delhi. Website: <http://indiatogether.org/barriers-education>.
 - King, E. & Winthrop, R. (2015). Today's Challenges for Girls' Education. Global Economy and Development Program at Brookings.
 - Kumar, J. & Sangeeta (2013). Status of Women Education in India. *Educationia Confab*. Vol. 2(4); P.P. 165-176
 - Latha, P.S. (2014). Women Literacy and Development. *Global Journal for Research Analysis*, Vol.3; P.P. 1-3
 - MHRD Annual Report, (2014-15). Higher and Technical Education. Ministry of Human Resource Development. Government of India.
 - Ministry of Women and Child Development Report, (2015). Empowering Women India: Towards a New Dawn. Government of India.
 - Mondal, P. (2015). Education in India: An Essay. PP. 1-8 Website: <http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com>
 - Nanda P, Das P, Singh A & Negi R (2013). Addressing Comprehensive Needs of Adolescent Girls in India: A Potential for Creating Livelihoods. New Delhi, International Centre for Research on Women. P.P. 1-57
 - National Committee on Women's Education Report, (1959). National Committee on Women's Education. Ministry of Education, Government of India.
 - SEMIS (2012-13). Secondary Education Management Information System. School Report Card U-DISE. NUEPA. New Delhi.
 - SEMIS (2013-14). Secondary Education Management Information System. School Report Card U-DISE. NUEPA. New Delhi.
 - SEMIS (2014-15). Secondary Education Management Information System. School Report Card U-DISE. NUEPA. New Delhi.
 - Sivakumar, M. A. (2012). Education and Girl Children in Puducherry Region: Problems
-

and Perspective. *International Journal of social science & Interdisciplinary Research*. Vol.1, P.P.- 175-184 .

- Worah, H. (2014). Best practices by the States for girl child education. *The prosperity and welfare of India*. P.P. -1-50
- World Bank Report, (2008). Girls Education in the 21st Century. Human Development. PP. 23-305

GIRLS' EDUCATION IN INDIA: STATUS AND CHALLENGES

*Sanjukta Sahoo**