

**WOMEN AND EDUCATION IN INDIA: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY****Deepak Kumar**Lecturer in Commerce,  
GSSS, Baragudha (Sirsa)**ABSTRACT**

In simple words, getting education is the fundamental human right of every individual irrespective of gender. But some people in our society do not understand this and make such a simple thing extremely complicated. We must be aware of the fact that if girl is uneducated then close to half of the population is uneducated. Educating a woman means educating the family and the nation. This paper presents the findings of some recent research on the social and the economic benefits of female education and considers the pathways through which women's schooling leads to social gains. These findings may provide insight as to the importance of women's education.

**Keywords:** women education, social gain, economic benefits, etc.

**➤ INTRODUCTION**

Education is a universal right. Girls are still in the minority in schools in low-income countries, accounting for 54 per cent of the children who do not attend primary school. 'Education for all' is one of the major tasks being carried out by the Indian government but still we have the lowest female literacy rate in Asia. India is working but the pace is slow as we haven't achieved what we should have been so far. At the start of British Raj till independence just 2-6% of females were literate. The percentage went up to 15.3% in 1961 and 28.5% in 1981. Literacy rate crossed 50% in 2001. By 2011 female literacy rate in India stood at 65.46%. So there is an obvious increase in the female literacy rate but India is far behind as compared to other countries at global level. Female illiteracy rate varies with the state. In Kerala 86% of women are literate whereas literacy rate in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh is just between 55-60%. Shockingly the rural areas of India have the lowest female literacy rate. Rural Rajasthan has less than 12% female literacy rate.

Sex based discrimination is prevalent in India. Thus you must have seen or heard that many parents especially in lower strata of society send their male child to school but not the girl child. This is one problem where parents do not send their daughters to school. Secondly, it is also common to see that parents especially in urban areas often send their male child to better schools. Even if girls are enrolled, their dropout rate is very high. We must understand the consequences of not educating our girl child. When a woman is not educated then it not only affects her but the entire family as well as the nation. In many studies it has been found out that illiterate women have high fertility as well as mortality rate. It has been seen that infant mortality rate reduces to half in case women have received primary education as compared to illiterate female. Apart from this children, of illiterate woman are malnourished. Illiteracy also reduces the overall earning potential of the family. Women must be educated for a healthy and a happy life. An educated woman can be a better human being,

successful mother and a responsible citizen. Educating women will definitely increase the living standard both at and outside home. An educated woman will force her kids to study further and wish them to live a better life than hers. Educating women results in promoting self respect and also helps in raising the status of women. An educated woman will be aware of her rights. She can fight against social evils such as domestic violence, dowry demand, low wages etc.

USA former President B. Obama said, if a country is educating its girls, if women have equal rights, that country is going to move forward. Education is a silver bullet for empowering women and girls worldwide. When girls are educated, their families are healthier, they have fewer children, they wed later and they have more opportunities to generate income. One extra year of primary school boosts a girl's future wage 10 to 20 percent and an extra year of secondary school increases that earning potential by 15 to 25 percent. Education also helps moms take better care of their kids. According to the World Bank, each additional year of female education reduces child mortality by 18 per thousand births.

### ➤ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The East India Company's Programme 'Wood's Dispatch' recognized the employment and education of women in India in 1854. Initially only the richer sections of the society and primary level of education were focused under this programme. With the help of this, female literacy rate in India raised from 0.2% in 1882 to 6% in 1947. After independence, the University Education Commission was created with an aim to improve the quality of education through suggestions. But it was against female education and considered educating women irrelevant. The commission regarded female education as the waste of time. However number of educated females were increasing in number and created a need of a body to work towards this. Therefore, in 1958 government appointed a national committee on women's education. In one of its recommendations it said that female education must be brought to the level of boys' education. Such talks resulted in many such committees and ultimately led to the formation of the Education Commission in 1964. Though many steps have been taken so far to improve the education level of women in India but the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 has been a commendable step in this regard. Under this act elementary education was made free and compulsory for the children belonging to the age group of 6-14 years. This initiated Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). SSA is the main programme to achieve Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner.

### ➤ CHALLENGES FOR THE GIRLS SCHOOLING

Here are some of the reasons why some girls do not start school at all while yet others do not complete their schooling:

**Poverty:** Poor families often decide their priorities at the expense of their daughters' schooling.

**Child marriage:** It is estimated that every day approximately 40,000 girls under the age of 18 are married off.

**Early pregnancy:** Girls who become pregnant and have children often do not return to school.

**Gender-based violence:** Girls are exposed to sexual harassment and violence on the way to school or at the school. Teachers and other school staff are often involved.

**Gender stereotypes and gendered attitudes:** Traditional perceptions of gender roles that characterize society often mean that educating girls is not regarded as being equally relevant and valuable as educating boys.

**Lack of female teachers:** Some parents in a number of countries or regions do not want to send their daughters to school, or remove them from school when they reach puberty, unless the school has one or more female teachers.

**Sanitary facilities:** Many girls who begin at school leave when they reach puberty due to a lack of sanitary facilities.

### ➤ **LOW FEMALE LITERACY RATE 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. Right from the beginning, parents do not consider girls as earning members of their family, as after marriage they have to leave their parents' home. So their education is just considered as wastage of money as well as time. For this reason, parents prefer to send boys to schools but not girls.

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. To this is connected the accessibility to schools. In most of the rural areas lack of easy accessibility to school is another reason for low female literacy rate. Parents do not prefer to send girls to schools if these are located at a far distance from their village or home. Even if schools are there then lack of adequate school facilities becomes a hurdle. Some of the schools are really in pathetic conditions and do not have even basic facilities. As per a survey, 54% of schools in Uttar Pradesh do not have water facility and 80% do not have latrine facilities. Even some schools do not have enough rooms to accommodate all the students. 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. The government should really work towards the number, distance and quality of schools in rural as well as urban India. We should encourage the girl child in getting education to create a balanced and an educated society.

### ➤ **WELFARE SCHEMES FOR WOMEN**

#### **Mahila Samakhya Programme:**

New Education policy of 1968 led to the launch of Mahila Samakhya Programme in 1988 for the empowerment of rural women belonging to socio-economical weaker section.

#### **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme(KGBV):**

Girls are educated to primary level through KGBV. It basically works in rural areas where female literacy is low.

**National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL):**

Girls who are not incentivized through SSA are covered by NPEGEL.

**Saakshar Bharat Mission for Female Literacy:**

This mission was launched with an objective to bring down the female illiteracy.

Apart from this there are midday meal schemes, free distribution of uniforms and books for girls. But still we have to work towards many issues such as infrastructure, teacher to student ratio, safety of female children at school, better curriculum, sanitation facilities so that more and more girls can be educated. Moreover parents must understand the importance of education and must not differentiate their male and female child. We must understand that an educated woman is able to play all her roles with greater responsibility than uneducated one.

➤ **CONCLUSION**

The present study concluded that governments and other organisations should attempt to educate people about the equity and efficiency benefits of female education and that public policy should encourage girls' access to schooling by extra subsidies in order to compensate for the asymmetry in parental incentives to educate sons and daughters in poor societies. It is clear that societies which have achieved universal education are currently extremely deficient socially despite their economic prosperity. The next step in the evolution of secular thinking will, it is hoped, be in the important area of the content of education.

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