

# Her Education, Nation's Future: Current Status, Challenges and Government Initiatives in India

Pragati Sharma

Gaur Brahman College of Education, Rohtak

Corresponding Author Email: [misspragatisharma02\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:misspragatisharma02[at]gmail.com)

**Abstract:** *This research paper comprehensively examines the current status of women's education in India, highlighting its paramount importance as a catalyst for gender equality and socio-economic development. It analyses the persisting obstacles that hinder women's educational access, encompassing cultural norms, economic disparities and geographical challenges. The paper critically evaluates various government initiatives and policies aimed at promoting women's education such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya and the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign, underscoring their significance in bridging gender gaps and enhancing educational opportunities. By exploring the current state of women's education in India, this research underscores the transformative power of education for women and the essential role it plays in advancing gender equality and fostering holistic development in the country.*

**Keywords:** Women Education, Gender Equality, Government Initiatives, Policies

## 1. Introduction

In the vibrant tapestry of India's social and cultural landscape, the empowerment and education of women stand as pivotal pillars of progress. The significance of women's education transcends boundaries for it is not only a matter of gender equality but also a catalyst for the overall development of a nation. India being a country of myriad diversities, is at the cusp of transformation with its educational policies and practices playing a crucial role in shaping the destiny of its women. This research paper delves into the multifaceted dimensions of women's education in India is shedding light on the challenges, opportunities and the transformative potential it holds.

The importance of educating women in India cannot be overstated. As the world's second-most populous nation, India's social and economic trajectory is inextricably linked to the education and empowerment of its women. The historical narratives of prominent women like Rani Lakshmi Bai, Savitribai Phule and many more have been catalysts for change exemplifying that the transformational power of education knows no bounds. However, despite the progress made in recent decades, there still exist stark gender disparities in access to quality education in India, perpetuating a cycle of inequality that hinders the nation's full potential.

This research paper seeks to explore the challenges women face in accessing education, the societal and cultural factors that contribute to these challenges, their current literacy status of women, the policies and initiatives aimed at bridging the gender gap in education. Additionally, it examines the far-reaching benefits of educating women, not only for their personal and professional growth but also for the socio-economic development of India as a whole. By examining the unique dynamics of women's education in India, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the path forward in creating a more equitable and inclusive society.

I hope that by illuminating the present challenges and opportunities, we can pave the way for a more inclusive, enlightened and equitable India, where women have the education and empowerment to shape their own destinies while contributing to the progress of their nation as well.

## 2. Objectives of the study

- 1) To understand the benefits/advantages of women education.
- 2) To know the present literacy status of women in India.
- 3) To understand the challenges faced by women in accessing education.
- 4) To explore the initiatives taken by the government of India for women education.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 1) Benefits/Advantages of Women Education

No family or nation can expect to advance if women are not educated and lead pitiful lives, according to Swami Vivekananda. Education for women is crucial for any nation to be completely prosper. India has a great opportunity to improve socially and economically by educating its women. The value of women receiving an education in India as per the perceptions of educators, intellectuals and prominent politicians has an optimistic effect on socioeconomic and health standards as addressed below:

- **Reduced social evils against women:** The solution to many social ills in Indian society such as the dowry system, female infanticide and workplace harassment, may lie in educating women. A well-educated woman influences subsequent generations.
- **Gender parity:** Education for women is crucial to achieving the global objective of gender equality. This objective is accomplished by empowering girls because they are better able to vie for position with male colleagues in contexts like administration, educational institutions and even executive positions.
- **Well educated society:** The world's literacy rate rises as a result of the education of women. This happens when

young girls receive an education that will enable them and their children to live better lives.

- **Economic development:** The economic growth of the country will undoubtedly result from educating women as more women enter the workforce.
- **Poverty Mitigation:** Education for women additionally mitigates poverty. Additionally, this has a big impact on how well the family is doing. This is because they are able to save money and make investments for the benefit of their families which increase the probability that their children will receive a high-quality education.
- **Improvement in living standards:** One benefit of women's education is an improved standard of life for their families. It won't be a rocket science to understand that a family supported by two incomes is happier and more content than one sustained on single parent income.
- **Women in Politics:** Educating girls also helps attain equality in representation in politics. This is as a result of the girls' rising self-esteem to compete for positions of authority and political office. Women who have an education will also become political leaders and advocate the rights and justice of other women. Women in positions of authority in politics or government can combat injustice and other crimes against women more successfully which will ultimately lead to a society with greater equity.
- **Enhanced Health and Hygiene:** A well-educated woman is aware of the significance of hygiene and health. They are empowered to live a healthy lifestyle through health education. She recognizes the health hazards to her family and is aware of the ways to cope up with them as well. Women who have more education can better care for themselves and their children. She instructs her kids on proper and improper hygiene while feeding and nurturing them.
- **Dropping Ratio of Mortality:** Education increases a woman's likelihood of marrying later in life, increasing the likelihood that both the mother and child will survive. A low child mortality rate is a result of educated mothers taking better care of their children, who receive improved health, hygiene and nutrition and thanks to their increased awareness of their needs and nutritional requirements.
- **Family planning:** Women with education recognize the benefits of family planning. Due to their preference for getting married later than uneducated women, they can significantly help in reducing India's population. Educated woman knows small family can be raised up better and efficiently in terms of nutritional needs, education needs as well as emotional needs.

## 2) Current Literacy Status of Women in India

Different commission report had seen arguing about right to equality, right to freedom and right to education of all people. But the present literacy condition of women is different as illustrated in the following table:

Census	Total literacy rate	Male literacy rate	Female literacy rate
2011	74.04%	82.14%	65.46%

India's literacy rate as of 2021 is 74.04 per cent. According to Census 2021, the literacy rates for men and women are

82.14 per cent and 65.46 per cent, respectively. In the 2011 census the country's literacy rate stood at 74.04 per cent. With a literacy rate of 93.91 per cent, Kerala is the most literate state in India, while Bihar has the lowest literacy rate at 63.82 per cent.

This literacy rate is insufficient for us, and several policies, commissions, and 5-year plans are strongly advised regarding women's education and empowerment. The education of women is given the highest emphasis in the eleventh and twelfth five-year plans. But we discovered that women's educational rates are low.

## 3) Obstacles in Women Education

The researchers identified certain significant obstacles that make it difficult to promote women's education in independent India after reviewing various types of reports, articles, scholarly papers, publications, government websites, and internet-based materials. The following are some constraints when it comes to supporting women's education:

- 3.1 Poverty:** Even in the 21st century, India is a developing nation that relies on agriculture. Poverty has been a problem since independence. Particularly, the majority of families in rural areas are extremely poor. They struggle to make money to survive and rely on their daily pay checks. Girls and women are also expected to work alongside their parents, both within and outside the home. Therefore, they are unable to think independently about the education of their daughters given their precarious financial situation.
- 3.2 Parental preferences:** According to the World Bank, the main issue affecting a girl's ability to pursue education is parental preferences. Families are more inclined to send boys than girls to school if they cannot afford the cost of education. In comparison with 10 million boys, almost 15 million girls would never get the opportunity to attend school in the world.
- 3.3 Gender Discrimination:** The social status of women is lower than that of men since they are viewed as a weaker group. Children who are girls are increasingly being discriminated against. Due to the patriarchal structure of Indian homes, there is also discrimination against women in terms of power and at work. Women's health, education, employment, societal life and other fields are all impacted by gender discrimination.
- 3.4 Gender bias in curriculum:** Since the curriculum is the foundation of education, gender equality should be included as part of curriculum creation. The curriculum is the most effective means of conveying to students the culture, values and beliefs of the society in which they live. Whatever images of gender (male and female) are depicted in textbooks will have an impact on the personality of the kid because the curriculum is applied through the textbooks and learning materials. Without reinforcing gender prejudices and stereotypes, a textbook should be learner-centered and develop young people's thinking. Unfortunately, gender bias is pervasive in textbooks all throughout the world, which harms girls' motivation and academic success.

- 3.5 Girls' Harassment in School:** Despite the fact that both the Indian government and school authorities have grown aware of the problem, harassment of girls is still exists. Girls are subjected to mental and physical harassment in Indian schools on a wide range of levels, from elementary to high school. Women are subjected to harassment from campus politics and pressure to participate in political activities even in higher education. As a result, they feel unstable in their minds and hesitant to complete their studies.
- 3.6 Female in professional and technical education:** Women are advised to avoid from pursuing higher education, such as professional and technical education, which leads to India's low percentage of educated women, particularly in rural areas.
- 3.7 Inadequate facilities and menstrual hygiene at schools:** Girls are discouraged from going to school by inadequate facilities and bad experiences. Due to hygiene and health issues, it might be challenging for girls to attend school when there aren't working restrooms, separate restrooms for boys and girls, washing spaces or access to sanitary goods. Girls are also prohibited from attending school throughout their menstrual cycle due to societal taboos around the menstrual cycle.
- 3.8 Social and cultural values:** Household responsibilities, taking care of family members, getting married early and having babies are all reasons why girls fall behind in their educational pursuits. Girls' education falls lower on a family's priority list in Indian communities where such expectations are accepted as normal.
- 3.9 Lack of Female Teachers:** It is a reality that female educators are able to empathize with and comprehend the issues and desires that arise for females as they study. During school hours, female teachers are open to hearing from female students about their experiences and concerns with their studies and other matters. However, many schools lack the necessary number of qualified female elementary and upper primary instructors. They are having trouble connecting effectively and are experiencing conflict. Therefore, girls are afraid of consistently attending school.
- 3.10 Violence against Women:** Women are getting affected by the various violence almost every day which is disrupting the society. Women are being victims of violence at huge level day by day because of increasing crimes against women (according to the report of Crime Record Bureau of the Central Home Ministry). In 2021, there were 9.8% of all IPC crimes reported to have been committed against women. The rate of crime committed against women was 64.5 in 2021 per one lakh of female population. (MHA Annual Report 2022-23) They may face violence within the family (dowry related harassment, death, marital rape, wife-battering, sexual abuse, deprivation of healthy food, female genital mutilation, etc.) or outside the family (kidnapping, rape, murder, etc.). As a result, many parents in many different regions of the nation choose not to enroll their girl child in school due to concerns about gender-based violence. Gender-based violence can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including bullying, discrimination, and physical as well as sexual assault.
- 4) Initiatives for Women's Empowerment by The Government of India**
- The government of India has implemented various initiatives aimed at promoting women's empowerment in addition to educational policies. These initiatives encompass economic, health and social aspects of women's lives. Following are the key initiatives and their impact on women's empowerment in India:
- 4.1 Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (1987):** Established in 1987, the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh provided financial support and microcredit to women, helping them pursue education and income-generating activities which in turn promote the education of girl child.
- 4.2 Mahila Samakhya (1989):** Mahila Samakhya is a government program in India that was launched in 1989. It is primarily focused on the education and empowerment of women, particularly those in rural and marginalized communities. Mahila Samakhya aims to create awareness about women's rights, enhance their self-esteem and promote gender equality. (MHRD Annual Report 2014-15)
- 4.3 The National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL):** NPEGEL is a government scheme in India dedicated to enhancing girls' education at the elementary level. Launched in 2003, NPEGEL aims to bridge gender disparities by providing additional resources and support for girls' education in disadvantaged areas. The program includes initiatives to improve infrastructure, teacher training and the development of gender-sensitive educational materials. NPEGEL is a critical step towards empowering girls and promoting gender equality in the education system. (MHRD Annual Report 2014-15)
- 4.4 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV):** Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya is a government initiative in India focused on the education and empowerment of girls, particularly those from disadvantaged and marginalized communities. Launched in 2004, KGBV establishes residential schools that offer quality education, life skills training and support services to girls between the ages of 11 years and 14 years. These schools aim to bridge gender disparities in education and provide girls with opportunities for academic and personal development. KGBV focuses on improving girls' access to education in rural and remote areas and has been instrumental in addressing gender-based educational inequalities in the country. (MHRD Annual Report 2014-15)
- 4.5 The National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE):** NSIGSE launched in May, 2008 is an Indian government initiative that encourages girls, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds to pursue secondary education. It provides financial incentives including scholarships to cover educational expenses such as fees, books and uniforms, supporting girls' access and completion of secondary education. NSIGSE is a vital program that aims to reduce the gender gap in secondary education,

empower girls and improve their socio-economic prospects. (MHRD Annual Report 2014-15)

- 4.6 Saakshar Bharat:** Saakshar Bharat was introduced in 2009; It strives to speed up adult education with a special emphasis on female literacy as an essential means for women's empowerment, especially for women (in the age range of 15 years and above) who do not have access to formal education. As a result, the percentage of women who are illiterate has increased from 53.67% (Census 2001) to 65.46% (Census 2011).
- 4.7 National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) (2010):** Launched in 2010, NMEW focuses on women's empowerment holistically, encompassing various programs and initiatives for women's development including education.
- 4.8 Udaan:** Udaan is a government program in India that was initiated in 2013 with the goal of providing special coaching and support to girl students from Jammu and Kashmir particularly for engineering entrance exams. The program aims to enhance educational opportunities for girls in the region and promote their participation in technical and professional fields. Udaan has played a pivotal role in empowering girls by offering them guidance and resources to pursue careers in science and technology, thus contributing to gender equality and skill development in the state. (MHRD Annual Report 2014-15)
- 4.9 PRAGATI:** PRAGATI (Providing Assistance, Guidance, and Training for Innovation) is a government initiative in India that was launched in 2014. It focuses on empowering and supporting female students pursuing higher education in technical fields such as engineering, technology and architecture. PRAGATI provides financial assistance, mentorship and training to enhance women's participation and success in these fields. This program plays a significant role in promoting gender diversity in technical education and professional careers contributing to India's socio-economic development. (MHRD Annual Report 2014-15)
- 4.10 The Swami Vivekananda Scholarship for Single Girl Child: SVSSGC** is a scholarship program in India initiated by the University Grants Commission (UGC), launched in the year 2014 to empower single girl children and support their pursuit of higher education, this scholarship provides financial assistance for their academic endeavours. It encourages and promotes the education of single girl children by covering their tuition fees and other related expenses. This initiative not only aids in reducing the gender gap in education but also highlights the importance of women's education in the country.
- 4.11 Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) (2015):** BBBP was initiated in 2015, aimed to improve the declining child sex ratio and promote the education of the girl child. (MHRD Annual Report 2014-15)
- 4.12 Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (2015):** Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana Introduced in 2015, this savings scheme encouraged parents to save for their daughters' higher education expenses.
- 4.13 Ujjwala Yojana (2016):** Launched in 2016, Ujjwala Yojana provided clean cooking fuel, indirectly

supporting women's education by reducing domestic workload and health hazards.

## 4. Conclusion

The changes in women's education, educational investments, and infrastructure assistance in India were all examined in this piece of research paper. The study found there hasn't been much advancement because of many forms of inequalities. However, women's education has rapidly increased as a result of diverse initiatives and recommendations during various eras. In every field today, the girls work side by side with the boys.

Since our independence, we have made great strides in the area of women's education but there is still much room for growth. If we wish to attain the objectives of socio-economic development, we must identify and eliminate the sociocultural and economic factors that are limiting the expansion of women's education in India.

## References

- [1] All India Survey on Higher Education, MHRD, Govt. of India: [www.aishe.gov.in](http://www.aishe.gov.in)
- [2] Censuses of India(2021). Literacy Rate of India: Government of India, New Delhi. Retrieved from [LiteracyRateOfIndia2021.com](http://LiteracyRateOfIndia2021.com) || State Wise Literacy Rate ([censusofindia2021.com](http://censusofindia2021.com))
- [3] Census of India. (2011). Literacy Rate of India. New Delhi: Government of India.
- [4] Census of India. (2001). Literacy Rate of India. New Delhi: Government of India.
- [5] Government of India – Selected Educational Statistics, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India, (Various Years).
- [6] Government of India (2022-2023) – Annual Report 2022-2023, Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India. Retrieved from [https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/AnnualReportEngLish\\_11102023.pdf](https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/AnnualReportEngLish_11102023.pdf)
- [7] Sahoo, S. (2016). Girls' Education in India: Status and Challenges. *International Journal of Research in Economics and Social Sciences (IJRESS)*, 6(7), 130-141, ISSN: 2249-7382.
- [8] Singh, N. (2008). Higher Education for Women in India—Choices and Challenges. *The Forum on Public Policy*. Retrieved from "...there is no tool for development more effective than education of girls

## Author Profile



**Pragati Sharma** has done Master's Degree in Agricultural Economics from Eternal University, Baru Sahib H.P. She has completed her bachelor's in Agricultural Sciences from Punjab Technical University, Kapurthala. Presently she is pursuing bachelor's in Education from Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak. A research paper titled "Dynamics of World Organic Farming" published in International Journal of Science and Research by her in May, 2023.