

Women Empowerment in India: Role of Higher Education

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Abstract: *First of all, I would like to congratulate every Indian one on being the part of a country having the second highest population approximately 128 crores. But my question to everyone is "What is women empowerment?" Is it just providing financial help to needy women or is it just providing means of livelihood to all women and after doing this can you satisfactorily say that; yes, I have contributed towards women empowerment. Or is it something else? My next question is "Whenever any discussion about women is done why we started comparing men with women does this reflects the image of men dominant economy?". "Shouldn't women empowerment go hand-in-hand with men?". India is a spiritual land. A land where concepts and philosophies have attained their culminating point and for the development of such a country women empowerment is must which can be done through increasing literacy rate of females and provide higher education to women so that they can become self-dependent.*

Keywords: Empowerment, Literacy rate, Higher education

1. Introduction

Dependent women are not empowered. If women think that just by being employed she is empowered than she is totally wrong. Let me explain you this with the help of a short story:- Once upon a time there lived a frog in the well of a village in rural India. Daily in the morning he used to run from one end of the well to the other end asking why does he do so the frog replied: "I want to see the whole world and I also need to be updated about the whole world so I do this". But one day that frog somehow managed to get out of the well and he saw a new world which was much bigger than his expectations but he did the same thing he started hopping from one end and after hopping for very long he got tired and sat down leaving the idea to see the whole world. After few days, he met a monk and asked the monk that what should I do in order to see the whole world the monk smiled and replied, "Increase your knowledge". So the crux of the story is that women are also well in the well of illiteracy, culture and tradition and the only way to dwell her is to provide knowledge. Without having an adequate amount of knowledge and just earning means of livelihood or just being employed they are unable to explore the opportunities around themselves such as controlling their life and claiming their rights, women are always treated less-than-equal to men in many ways. In many areas of our country till date women are not allowed to vote, own property, or work in many jobs.

2. Meaning of Women Empowerment

The Oxford American Dictionary defines "empowerment" as "to make (someone) stronger and more confident, esp. in controlling their life and claiming their rights."

But when we talk about women we want women taking more of an active participation in family discussions, giving their views in family matters and this is only possible when they are not only allowed to do so but also when their ideas

are valued their opinions are heard by others and paid heed. Ideas are valued by others when your suggestions are feasible and implementable and feasibility and implement ability comes in ideas through education.

If you compare women of Urban India with the women of rural India, then the women of urban India go hand-in-hand with men and perform such tasks which were once thought not their cup of tea. Whereas the absence of equality in rural India is contributing the slow progress in women empowerment. We should break the barriers of caste, creed, colour, religion or society in order to elevate the progress of women empowerment in such areas India and provide equal opportunities to the women also. Integrated development approaches started by the government of India have encouraged women's participation in development and social problem resolution and formed specialised activity groups as means of mobilisation of women. Identification of the poorest and most oppressed in a geopolitical area has provided an entry point for action. Women were encouraged to find a separate time and space for themselves. Therefore, the reason for slow progress in women empowerment is the lack of education or the lack of literacy rate in India.

3. Meaning of Literacy Rate

According to Indian census since 1991 Literacy rate stands for the total percentage of the population of an area at a particular time aged seven years or above who can read and write with understanding.

4. Meaning of Higher Education

Education is an art of imparting knowledge to others for the betterment of their life and preparing them for achieving their aim, as a profession. Whereas the term "higher education" means training of highly skilled specialists in the fields of economics, science, technology, and culture at various types of higher schools, which accept persons who

have successfully completed secondary general-education schools or secondary specialised education institutions.

5. Objectives

The main objectives of this research paper are: -

- 1) To identify the greatest hindrance in the path of women empowerment.
- 2) To know the relevance of higher education in women's life.

6. Research Methodology

This research paper is theoretical in nature. In this paper attempt has been made to investigate the greatest hindrance in the path of women empowerment as well as to analyse the importance of higher education for women in India. The data used in it is purely from secondary sources according to the need of this study.

7. Literature Review

- 1) Rupali Sharma, Zia Afroz (2014), Women Empowerment Through Higher Education. International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS), India.

This research paper helps in understanding that there is a great need of empowering Indian women through higher education, providing higher education doesn't mean providing women literacy but also making them educated to know their rights and duties.

- 2) Dr Suchi Loomba (2010), Role of Microfinance in Women Empowerment in India.

Microfinance plays a vital role in empowering women financially in India thereby maintaining long-term economic growth.

- 3) Tiyas Biswas (2002), Women Empowerment Through Micro Finance: A Boon for Development.

Micro finance is an answer to the question where both empowerment and sustainability aims may be accommodated. Microfinance solves the problem of inadequate housing and urban services as the main part of poverty alleviation programmes.

Censuses Since 1991

The literacy rate taking into account the total population in the denominator has now been termed as crude literacy rate while the literacy rate calculated taking into account the seven and above population in the denominator is called the

effective literacy rate. The formula for computing crude literacy rate and effective literacy rate are as follows.

- Crude literacy rate = $\frac{\text{Number of literate person} \times 1000}{\text{Total population}}$
- Effective literacy rate = $\frac{\text{Number of literate persons aged 7 and above} \times 1000}{\text{population aged 7 and Above}}$

Table 1: Crude Literacy Rate in Index by Sex: 1901-2011

Census Year	Persons	Male	Female
1901	5.35	9.83	0.60
1911	5.29	10.56	1.05
1921	7.16	12.11	1.81
1931	9.5	15.59	2.93
1941	16.1	24.9	7.30
1951	16.67	24.95	7.93
1961	24.02	34.44	12.95
1971	29.45	39.45	18.69
1981	36.23	46.39	24.82
1991	42.84	52.74	32.17
2001	54.51	63.24	45.15
2011	64.32	71.22	56.99

This literacy rate in India for women is very low as compared to the literacy rate of men which is the main factor for the powerlessness of women.

Table 2: Literacy rate in India: 1951 to 2011

Census Year	Persons	Male	Female	Male-Female gap in literacy rate
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.3	40.4	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.08
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.21	24.84
2001	64.83	75.26	53.67	21.59
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

Source: Registrar of Census, provisional population table

It is obvious from the above gathered data that as the female literacy ratio increased from 1951 to 2011 we saw a corresponding increment in women empowerment because of the emergence and acceptance of women in the field of arts, science, space, sports, culture and politics and have held high offices such as President of India, speaker of Lok Sabha, leader of the opposition, C.E.O.'s of MNC's for example:-Pratibha Patil, Kalpana Chawla, Sonia Gandhi, Indra Nooyi, Chanda Kochhar, P.T. Usha, Saina Nehwal, Jaya Bachchan etc.

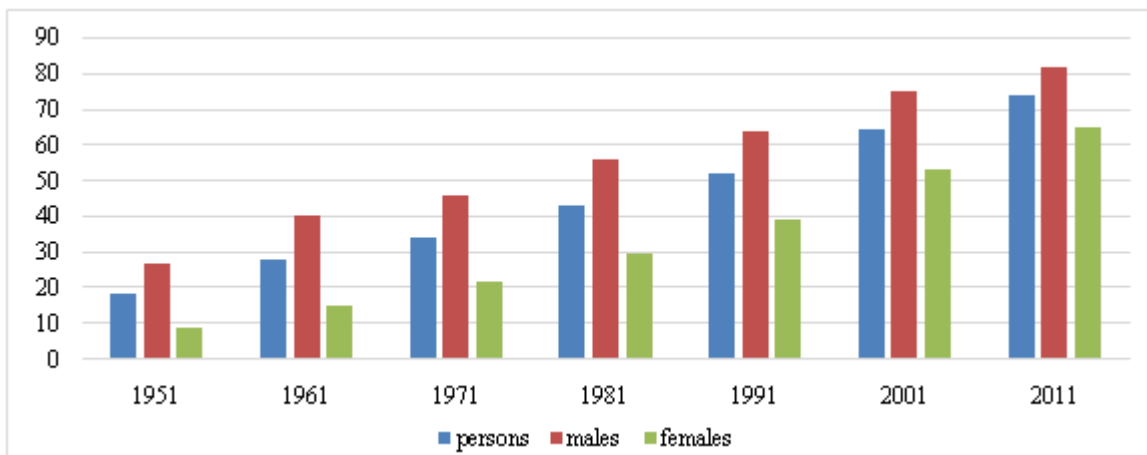


Table 3. State-wise Literacy Rates (1951-2011)

(At percent)

Sr.	States/Union Territories	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
1	A & N Island	30.30	40.07	51.15	63.19	73.02	81.30	86.27
2	Andhra Pradesh	-	21.19	24.57	35.66	44.08	60.47	67.66
3	Arunachal Pradesh	N.A.	7.13	11.29	25.55	41.59	54.34	66.95
4	Assam	18.53	32.95	33.94	-	52.89	63.25	73.18
5	Bihar	13.49	21.95	23.17	32.32	37.49	47.00	63.82
6	Chandigarh	-	N.A.	70.43	74.80	77.81	81.94	86.43
7	Chhatisgarh	9.41	18.14	24.08	32.63	42.91	64.66	71.04
8	Dadra & N. Haveli	-	-	18.13	32.90	40.71	57.63	77.65
9	Daman & Diu	-	-	-	-	71.20	78.18	87.07
10	Delhi	NA	61.95	65.08	71.94	75.29	81.67	86.34
11	Goa	23.48	35.41	51.96	65.71	75.51	82.01	87.40
12	Gujarat	21.82	31.47	36.95	44.92	61.29	69.14	79.31
13	Haryana	-	-	25.71	37.13	55.85	67.91	76.64
14	Himachal Pradesh	-	-	-	-	63.86	76.48	83.78
15	Jammu & Kashmir	-	12.95	21.71	30.64	N.A.	55.52	68.74
16	Jharkhand	12.93	21.14	23.87	35.03	41.39	53.56	67.63
17	Karnataka	-	29.80	36.83	46.21	56.04	66.64	75.60
18	Kerala	47.18	55.08	69.75	78.85	89.81	90.86	93.91
19	Lakshadweep	15.23	27.15	51.76	68.42	81.78	86.66	92.28
20	Madhya Pradesh	13.16	21.41	27.27	38.63	44.67	63.74	70.63

Sr.	States/Union Territories	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
21	Maharashtra	27.91	35.08	45.77	57.24	64.87	76.88	82.91
22	Manipur	12.57	36.04	38.47	49.66	59.89	70.53	79.85
23	Meghalaya	N.A.	26.92	29.49	42.05	49.10	62.56	75.48
24	Mizoram	31.14	44.01	53.80	59.88	82.26	88.80	91.58
25	Nagaland	10.52	21.95	33.78	50.28	61.65	66.59	80.11
26	Orissa	15.80	21.66	26.18	33.62	49.09	63.08	73.45
27	Pondicherry	-	43.65	53.38	65.14	74.74	81.24	86.55
28	Punjab	-	N.A.	34.12	43.37	58.51	69.65	76.68
29	Rajasthan	8.50	18.12	22.57	30.11	38.55	60.41	67.06
30	Sikkim	-	-	17.74	34.05	56.94	68.81	82.20
31	Tamil Nadu	-	36.39	45.40	54.39	62.66	73.45	80.33
32	Tripura	N.A.	20.024	30.98	50.10	60.44	73.19	87.75
33	Uttar Pradesh	12.02	20.87	23.99	32.65	40.71	56.27	69.72
34	Uttarakhand	18.93	18.05	33.26	46.06	57.75	71.62	79.63
35	West Bengal	24.61	34.46	38.86	48.65	57.70	68.64	77.08
	All India ²	18.33	28.30	34.45	43.57	52.21	64.84	74.04

Source : Economic Survey, 2012-13; Office of the Registrar General " 2012 India. M/Home Affairs

8. Relationship between Higher Education and Women Empowerment

No doubt that majority of women in our country are uneducated that is the reason for their downfall education can change the scenario as a whole. Education can help in bringing following changes in women:-

- Education helps in changing the mindset of an individual.
- Education can enhance their confidence
- Raising the status in the family and society
- Reducing dependability

All these above-mentioned parameters are an indicator of the empowerment process.

9. Conclusion

On the basis of above-detailed analysis and secondary data gathered from various sources, it could be concluded that there is no doubt about the essential need of empowering women through higher education. Now it is cleared that only literacy is the ultimate solution for empowering women and not only this but women should provide higher education so that they can be able to make their own decisions, they should be able to differentiate between good and bad. But it is also necessary that government of India should make plans and policies regarding women empowerment.

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