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## Women Right To Education :A Review Of Educational Reforms In India

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### ABSTRACT

*Real advancement in any of the fields of human life, cannot be possible without women education. As Nehru said, "If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Woman empowerment means mother India empowered". India which is the largest democracy of the world has a long history of educational reforms for women. In India, the concept of universal education, of providing a minimum standard of education to every boy and girl, is as old as the beginning of civilization in the subcontinent. But the position of women education became low by about eighteen century A.D... In British period the British government took many steps for women education. After achieving independence women education made faster progress. Various committees and Commissions were appointed to analyse the problems of girl's education and suggest measures for its quantitative and qualitative development. The 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 has made elementary education a Fundamental Right for children in the age group of 6-14 years. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 has come into force with from April 1, 2010. The country's literacy rate in 1947 was only 14 per cent and female literacy was very badly low at 8 per cent. As per recently concluded census 2011, Literacy rate in India has significantly increased from 18.33% in the year 1951 to 74.04% in the year 2011. More women literates*

*added in the recent decade compared to men literates, so gap between men literates and women literates also reduced from 24.82 in 1991 to 16.68 in the year 2011 But in spite of these efforts the rate of women education is increasing but not in proper manner. This paper is an attempt to analyse the educational reforms in India for women in the pre and post independence, as well as achievements and problems which are being faced by the present Indian women. And study concluded with suggestions and measures to promote women education in future.*

***"If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Woman empowerment means mother India empowered".***

*Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru*

### INTRODUCTION

Real advancement in any of the fields of human life cannot be possible without women education. For happy and healthy homes, development of society, economic property and national solidarity, women education is a must. How can a society think itself cultured and civilized by keeping half of its population illiterate and un-educated?.<sup>1</sup> Men and women are just like the two wheels of a chariot. They

are equal in importance and they should work together in life. The one is not superior or inferior to other. Unlike ancient times, though currently in majority of rural areas of India women are treated well, but with the orthodoxy they are cut off from the main stream of social life. The rural society did not respect them and give them the due position. They have to suffer and work inside the houses. Thus they are completely depended on men.

Women constitute almost half of the population in the world. But the hegemonic masculine ideology made them suffer a lot as they were denied equal opportunities in different parts of the world. The feminist ideas has however, led to the tremendous improvement of women's condition through out the world in recent times. Access to education has been one of the most pressing demands of these women's rights movements. Women education in India has also been a major preoccupation of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country.

India is poised to emerge as one of the most developed nations by 2020, more literate, knowledgeable and economically at the forefront. No doubt, women will play a vital role in the contributing to the country's development. Women power is crucial to the

economic growth of any country. In India, this is yet to meet the requirements despite reforms. Little has been achieved in the area of women empowerment, but for this to happen, this sector must experience a chain of reforms.<sup>2</sup>

### **Women Education in India: Historical Background:-**

If we are to make study of the status of women education in India, it is important to know the historical background.

#### **Ancient Period:**

In India, the concept of universal education, of providing a minimum standard of education to every boy and girl, is as old as the beginning of civilization in the subcontinent. In the educational system evolved by the Vedic Aryans, a fairly long period of education was prescribed for all children, not on the basis of any State legislation-the concept of the State itself did not then exist-but through the more imperative form of a religious practice. The education of boys and girls began with the Upanayana ceremony which was performed by about the eight year and that introduced them into the home of the preceptor (guru). Here they spent a long period of apprenticeship, living a life of simplicity and hard work and pursuing their studies. The curriculum included not only the study of religious texts, but also all branches of culture and knowledge, as they

were known then. The period of study usually lasted till the age of 16 and, not infrequently, till the age of 24, when the student get married and became a *grahastha*. In modern terms, this educational system amounted to a period of at least light years of compulsory schooling for every child. That it was universal among the Aryans is certain; but to what extent this or a similar system prevailed among the non-Aryan people of the subcontinent are not known.

Unfortunately, this system of education disappeared almost completely due to the social changes that took place in later years. Women lost their social status, especially after the entry of the non-Aryan wife in the Aryan household. They were first denied the right to study the sacred texts. Later on, the Upanayana ceremony came to be prescribed for boys only and, ultimately, the right to all education was denied to women.<sup>3</sup>

### **Medieval Period:**

The position of women further worsened by about eighteen century A.D... The *Purdah* custom was practiced more widely among the royal classes and the middle classes. The revival of *Sati*, the prohibition of widow remarriage, the spread of *Purdah* and greater prevalence of polygamy made women's position very low. Thus, there was a great gulf between the status of the women and their

education in the early Vedic period and in the medieval period.<sup>4</sup>

### **British Period:**

In the British period there was revival of interest in the women education in India. During this period, various socio religious movements led by eminent persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasager emphasized on women education in India. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and Pariyar were the leaders of the lower caste in India who took various initiatives to make education available to the women of India.

### **Women Education after Independence:**

Women's education got a fillip after the country got independence in 1947 and the government has taken various measures to provide education to all Indian women.<sup>5</sup> After independence, to look into the problems of University education, the University Education Commission was appointed by the Government of India in 1948 under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. RadhaKrishnan.

Dr. RadhaKrishnan recommended for provision of necessary facilities in the co-education colleges, expansion of educational opportunities for girls, establishment of right status for girls, provision of some kinds of special education for girls and provision for equal remuneration in case of female teachers

as males. After the of introduction of Indian Constitution Articles 45 states: the state shall make an endeavor to provide free, compulsory; universal primary education for the age group of 6-14. Article 16 imposed non-discrimination on the ground of sex in public employment and Article 15(3) empowered the state to make special provisions for the welfare and development of women and children, Article 42 deals with the provisions to made by the state for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief.<sup>6</sup>

A National Committee on education for girls was set up in 1958 under Mrs. Durgabai Deshmukh who recommended concentrated attention on this important problem and allocation of resources for greater facilities to girls at primary and secondary levels. It also recommended the setting up of national- and state-level councils for the promotion of female education.<sup>7</sup>The Kothari Commission (1964-66), which discussed at great length almost all the aspects of education, on the issue of women's education, endorsed all recommendations made by the previous commissions on girl's education. In addition the commission recommended that education of women should be regarded as major programmes for some years to come and bold and determined effort should be made to face

difficulties involved and to close the existing gap between the education of women and women in a short time as possible.

Based on the broad recommendations of the Kothari Commission the Government declared a National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1968 whose aim was to achieve economic and cultural development of the country for national integration and for realizing the ideal of a socialistic pattern of society. The policy committed for a continuous efforts for the expansion and equalizations of educational opportunity, sustained effort to raise quality, emphasis on development of science and technology and cultivation of moral and social values. Regarding girls education the policy stated "the education of girls should receive emphasis not only on grounds of social justice but also because it accelerates social transformation"<sup>8</sup>

Until the late 1970s, school education had been on the State List of the Indian Constitution, which meant that States had the final say in the management of their respective education systems. However, in 1976, education was transferred to the Concurrent List through a constitutional amendment, the objective being to promote meaningful educational partnership between the Central and State Governments.<sup>9</sup>

A new thrust was provided to girls education in the National Policy on Education 1986, (as modified in the 1992) which provided a holistic vision for education of women and girls and recognized the cross cutting issues that inhibited the realization of this goal. It aims at using education as an agent of basic change in the status of women in society.

### **Education is a Fundamental Right to all:**

The 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002 has made elementary education a Fundamental Right for children in the age group of 6-14 years by providing that “the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children to all children of the age of 6-14 years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine”. This has been a path breaking legislation in India, where such a major commitment to the cause of elementary education has bound governments, community based organizations and civil society into a common resolve to achieve universal elementary education.<sup>10</sup>

### **Education for All (EFA)**

Education for All (EFA) means not only having access to schooling but also having quality of education for all children. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programmes of Government of India is provide quality education for Children’s between 6 and 14 years has increased the literacy rate of girls and boy

(Primary Level Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is going on). In the past two decades, women’s participation in primary, middle and secondary level has increased considerably. The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) of central Government has reduced dropout rates to less than 10% and reduced gender gaps to less than 5%. One of the main objectives of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (2001) was to bridge gender gaps in primary and secondary education by 2010. Since even after secondary education girls may not continue, “Extension Education”, a policy providing job related knowledge, was introduced for those unable to proceed with for Secondary level.<sup>11</sup>

The National Literacy Mission (NLM) was set up in 1998 aimed to mobilize dropouts, introduce mass and functional literacy and involve the community in educating women to the secondary level.

### **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009-**

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 has come into force with from April 1, 2010. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) frameworks of implementation of norms for interventions have been revised to correspond with the

provisions of the RTE Act. The includes interventions, inter alia for:

- 1) notified by state Government in the RTE Rules,
- 2) Support for residential schools for children in areas which are sparsely populated, or hilly or densely forested with difficult terrain, and for urban deprived homeless and street children in difficult circumstances,
- 3) Special training for admission of out-of-school children in age appropriate classes,
- 4) Additional teachers as per norms specified in the RTE Act,
- 5) Two sets of uniforms for all girls, and children belonging to SC/ST/ BPL families,
- 6) Strengthening of academics support through block and cluster resources centres, schools, etc.<sup>12</sup>

**Educational Provisions in Centrally Sponsored Schemes in School Education (CSS) Major Schemes for Elementary Education:**

1. Operation Black Board
2. Teacher Education

3. Education Guarantee Scheme and Alternative and Innovative Education (EGS & AIE)
4. Mid-day Meal Scheme
5. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
6. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV)
7. Shiksha Karmi
8. Mahila Samakhya
9. District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)
10. National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)
11. Lok Jumbish
12. Janshala Programme
13. Padhe Bitiya Badhe Bitiya
14. Ladli Scheme

**Majors Schemes for Secondary Education:**

1. Access and Equity
2. Quality Improvement in Schools (QIS)
3. ICT in Schools
4. Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC)

5. Vocationalisation of Education.<sup>13</sup>

**Achievements in Women Education in India:**

Post-independence India inherited a system of education which was characterized by large scale inter and intra-regional imbalances. The country's literacy rate in 1947 was only 14 per

cent and female literacy was very badly low at 8 per cent. As per recently concluded census 2011, Literacy rate in India has significantly increased from 18.33% in the year 1951 to 74.04% in the year 2011 (Table No.1). More women literates added in the recent decade compared to men literates, so gap between men literates and women literates also reduced from 24.82 in 1991 to 16.68 in the year 2011 (Table No. 1).

**Table No. 1: Literacy Rate in India**

Census Year	Persons	Male	Female	Gender Gap
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.98
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.82
2001	64.83	75.26	53.67	21.59
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46	16.68

*Source: Census of India – 1951 to 2011.*

From the table 2, it was evident that the number of literates increased by 117%, Male 94% and Female 158% during the reforming period from 1991 to 2011. Effective Literacy rate has been increased by 21.83 points, Male 18.01 points and 26.17 points (Table 3) in

2011 when compared to 1991. Eradication of illiteracy has been one of the major national concerns of the Government of India since Independence. A number of significant programmes have been taken up since independence to eradicate illiteracy.

**Table No. 2: LITERATES IN INDIA (REFORM PERIOD)**

	1991	2001	2011	Difference	% Growth
<b>POPULATION</b>	84,63,02,688	1,02,87,37,436	1,21,01,93,422	36,38,90,734	43
<b>PERSONS</b>	35,84,02,626	56,07,53,179	77,84,54,120	42,00,51,494	117
<b>MALE</b>	228,983,134	33,65,71,822	44,42,03,762	21,52,20,628	94
<b>FEMALE</b>	129,419,492	22,41,81,357	33,42,50,358	20,48,30,866	158

*Source: Census of India 1991, 2001 and 2011.*

**TABLE NO. 3: EFFECTIVE LITERACY RATE (%) (REFORM PERIOD)<sup>14</sup>**

	1991	2001	2011	Increase/ Decrease
<b>PERSONS</b>	52.21	64.83	74.04	+21.83
<b>MALE</b>	64.13	75.26	82.14	+18.01
<b>FEMALE</b>	39.29	53.67	65.46	+26.17

*Year 1991 is taken as base year for calculation of points of Increase/Decrease*

**Table – 4**

**State wise Percentage of Female Literacy in the Country as per 2011 Census**

S. No.	Name of the State	Female Literacy
1.	Andhra Pradesh	59.7%
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	59.6%
3.	Assam	63.7%
4.	Bihar	53.3%



5.	Chattisgarh	53.3%
6.	Delhi	60.6%
7.	Goa	80.9%
8.	Gujrat	70.7%
9.	Haryana	66.8%
10.	Himachal Pradesh	76.6%
11.	Jammu and Kashmir	58.0%
12.	Jharkhand	56.2%
13.	Karnatka	68.1%
14.	Kerala	92.0%
15.	Madhya Pradesh	60.0%
16.	Maharashtra	75.5%
17.	Manipur	73.2%
18.	Meghalaya	73.8%
19.	Mizoram	89.4%
20.	Nagaland	76.7%
21.	Orissa	64.4%
22.	Punjab	71.3%
23.	Rajasthan	52.7%
24.	Sikkim	76.4%
25.	Tamil Nadu	83.1%
26.	Tripura	59.3%
27.	Uttar Pradesh	70.7%
28.	Uttarakhand	71.2%
<b>Union Territories</b>		

1.	Andamana & Nicobar Islands	81.8%
2.	Chandigarh	81.4%
3.	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	65.9%
4.	Daman & Diu	79.6%
5.	Lakshdweep	88.2%
6.	Pondicherry	81.2%
<b>All India</b>		65.46%

*Source: Census of India - 2011*

According to the table 4, the state wise female literacy rate had an average of 65.46% in all India basis in 2011 census the high rates in 92.0% in Kerala and least literacy rate in 52.7% in Rajasthan in 2011 census while comparing literacy rate of female 11% increased in 2011 census is increased from 54.16% to 65.46%. Women's are growing well in the last 10 years. Government of India has been taken various steps and plans especially for women in every movement.<sup>15</sup>

### **Barriers and Problems against Women Education:**

In spite of certain outstanding examples of individual achievements, and a definite improvement their general condition over the years, it remains true that Indian women still constitute a large body of under - privileged citizens. Women of course do not form a

homogenous group in class or caste terms. Nevertheless, they three distinctive problems that call for special attention.<sup>16</sup>

1. Inadequate education or no education is the most important factor contributing to the backwardness of our masses, especially women. The low literacy among women brings down the national literacy. This gap which exists between the literacy rates of the two sexes also exists between the enrolment of girls and boys at all levels of education. Right from the primary school to the university, we find that the number of girl students is considerably lower than boys.

2. According to Article 45 of the Constitution, universal Compulsory and free education until the age of 14 was to be achieved by the year 1960. Looking at the present condition of primary education in villages, it is doubtful

whether we can achieve 100% enrolment of girls. It is unfortunately true of our society that children are sent to school not according to their intelligence or aptitude but according to their sex. The reasons for not sending girls to school are both economic and social. In rural areas, girls are required to help its household work. The resources of the rural poor are so limited that they do not have anything to spare for children's education. If resources are available, it is time boy who is sent to school first. Parents also do not see the value of educating especially a daughter who would get married and remain it housewife. Since they cannot see any direct relationship between education and economic betterment, they have very little motivation to send their children to school.<sup>17</sup>

3.The plight of women, in terms of education is further compounded by the negative attitude of parents toward female education. Some parents are usually reluctant to send their girl child for formal education especially to higher levels like their male counterpart. Another problem closely related in this is time reluctance to acquire western education and misunderstanding on the part of the girls themselves about time values of the acquisition of formal education. In education, equity means equal access to good schooling.

4.Restricted access to education by women in this country is profoundly rooted in history, religion, culture, the psychology of self, law, political institution and social attitudes which interact in several is ways to limit women's access to formal education when compared with their male counterpart, It has been observed that Indian women are lagging behind their counterparts in developed and some developing nations due to time late start in educating them. This is caused by our traditions and culture which are hostile to women. This tradition reduces them to kitchen manageresses and producers of babies. Thus their education on ideally, is expected to end in kitchen a condition it which ironically is detested by many parents thereby discouraging their investment in girl-child education.

5.Other problems against women education include the familiar problems like lack of funds, inadequate facilities, inadequate manpower, sexual harassment, conflicting societal role expectations, government policies and lack of political will power to implement the entire educational programme.

6.The inferiority complex observable in Indian women can be attributed to the influence of environmental manipulation. Through the traditional socialization process of the typical society, women are made to accept negative self-fulfilling prophecy, stereotyping and

stigmatization that they are members of a weaker sex. At present, the forces which combine to hamper women education and development in India could be viewed broadly to include denial of access to education, early marriage, confinement to solitary living, subjugation by culture to accept choices forced on them, discrimination and harassment at work, political disenfranchisement from elective and political appointment and exposure to cruel mourning rites upon the death of their husband.<sup>18</sup>

#### **Conclusion:**

Education is one of the most important elements for social, economic and political development. Education for women is more essential, which constitute half of the population of the country. Since independence the government of India has launched many programs and appointed many commissions for enhancement of women education. If we compare the present scenario with that of 1950s, there is lot of improvement in the renaissance of the women. But still there are certain hindrances like, parents attitude towards girls education, inadequate education, sexual harassment of women, historical, religious and cultural bondage and socio-economic factors etc..

Thus, to encourage the women education, it is important to establish more educational institutions, bringing out changes in the attitude of parents, and the governmental programs should be implemented in manner that it encourages women education.

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