

Inclusive Growth of A Nation Through Education

(An Overview of Gender Equality through Education in India)

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ABSTRACT

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Nelson Mandela

Gender disparity has been a vital issue in India since centuries and achieving the goal of universal education is a bigger challenge. Equal educational opportunities have repeatedly proven successful for socio-economic equity, racial-equity and gender equity in a country like India. India accounts for 30% of the world’s total illiterate population and around 70% of these illiterates are women. As per 2001 Census data, women constitute 48% of the total population in India, but around 46% of women are still found to be illiterate. Gender inequality in education is a persistent problem in Indian society, especially for girls from rural lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Women not only acquire knowledge and skills through education, but education would also improve their health, fight against human trafficking, and enhance their civic participation. Problems of gender disparity begin with access to schooling. So we must break down the walls that prevent girls from receiving quality education, as in a knowledge economy education is the new light by which we can maintain economic competitiveness and prosperity. During the past decades India has achieved success in moving toward universal school enrolment and in enacting policies to address educational inequalities based on gender. However, educational gaps still exist.

The paper attempts to focus on the role of education in eradicating gender inequality in society. The data and facts for the research work have been collected from secondary sources. The researcher with its overview analysis will try to find out the relationship between Education and Gender Equality.

KEY WORD: Education, Gender Equality, Gender Disparity, Empowerment, National Policy on Education, Millennium Development Goal.

INTRODUCTION

Education:

Education is the foundation of peace and prosperity. We can't imagine a better world without a global commitment to providing better education for men and women. Access to basic education is very essential for all-round development. Considering the importance of education, India has enacted 'Right to Education' to ensure free and compulsory Education for children in the age group 6-14 years. Lack of; educational access, acquired knowledge and skill lead to poverty, and a means for its diminution. Sustained access to meaningful learning; results into improvements in productivity, reduction of inter-generational cycles of poverty, demographic transition, preventive health care, empowerment of women, and reductions in inequality.

Gender Equality:

Gender equality is an issue which needs to be addressed in all development fields and at all stages of the programming cycle. Achieving gender equality is not a 'women's concern' but the responsibility of all in society. Empowering women and girls towards greater participation in development means working towards more balanced and equal power relations between the sexes.

However, the promotion of gender equality does not imply giving more power to women and taking away power from men. The promotion of equality between women and men is empowering for all. It allows both men and women to take part fully in social and economic life and leads to a win-win situation for both.

Gender Disparity:

It is equally important to understand how this process of gender role identity formation based on differential and discriminatory treatment, which leads to the formation of low self-concept in girls. There are some general perceptions regarding gender roles.

- We not only observe the differences among girls and boys and also believe that these are natural and inherent in two sexes. We come to the conclusion that they are biological and hence unchangeable.
- The social roles of men and women, being cultural artefacts, vary across space and time.
- These differences are a result of ages of social experiences of the two sexes are socially created and determined, and therefore changeable.
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- The present day human civilization both demands and creates new possibilities for the social roles of the two sexes as complementary and equal.

Gender roles are learnt in the family, from parents, older siblings, and other members who provide role models appropriate to the sex of a person.

Education and Gender:

Education is an investment, and one of the most critical investments we can make. It is the key to eliminating gender inequality, to reducing poverty, to creating a sustainable planet, to preventing needless deaths and illness, and to fostering peace. And in a knowledge economy, education is the new currency by which nations maintain economic competitiveness and global prosperity.

It is important to ensure that the education system must play a positive role in the empowerment of people and removal of all kinds of biases which are basically man made. The Constitution of India visualizes development of a multicultural, open society, based on the principles of equality and social justice. The gender discrimination is the result of human practice. The efforts to eliminate gender discrimination are continued. In this direction, various provisions under the constitution and statutes have been incorporated and implemented with little success.

The National Policy on Education (NPE): India has a clear policy on undifferentiated curricula for both sexes. The NPE emphasizes the core values such as equality between sexes, ending social evils and practices derogatory to women, small family norm, etc. The NPE and Program of Action (PoA) highlight the need to improve the social, nutritional, and health status of the girls and also to strengthen support services such as drinking water, fodder, fuel, and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as an integral component of the Universal Elementary Education.

Education is chosen as the main target to attain the third Millennium Development Goal. Literacy and level of education are basic indicators of the level of development achieved by a society. Higher levels of education and literacy, particularly of female literacy, lead to a greater awareness and also contributes as a key factor in empowering them. Their sound education will contribute to their households and national economies. Further more educated women will be less likely to fall victim to the scourge of human trafficking, forced child marriages, and will be able to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases like HIV.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Madhumita Bandyopadhyay and Ramya Subrahmanian through their inter-linked analysis of gender and social inequality present new perspectives in understanding the continued educational deprivation that the girl-child in India faces. They also point to several successful experiences within the country, which hold lessons to take forward the agenda of making education more inclusive and gender sensitive.

Sudarshan (2000) argues that the two driving motivations for education in India are linked to aspirations for salaried occupations and to the marriage market, where wide gaps between the educational qualifications of males and females are considered to constitute a risk to the stability of the marriage. Structural changes in both these types of market, for employment and marriage, are likely to have attendant changes in the demand and length of female schooling (Subrahmanian, 2003).

Reasons for parental under-investment in female education are diverse and well-known (Subrahmanian, 2005). The deeply embedded undervaluation of female labour, identified primarily with the reproductive or household sphere, underlies the belief in many communities that educating females bring low returns, as skills required in the reproductive sphere require domestic socialization and not many years of schooling.

The gender division of labour continues to reward women less in the workplace (Kingdon, 1998b). This has resulted in relatively lower female education and work participation reflecting the ideological bias against considering women as household bread-winners. Low valuation of female labour in the market place and association of female labour with fulfilling domestic responsibilities including child rearing has led to a deep-seated cultural association of women with the institutions of marriage and family.

Jha and Jhingran's (2002) detailed study of schooling in communities across 10 districts of India shows the continued belief in the importance of marriage for girls at an early age, and of maintaining asymmetries between men and women in educational attainment as a marker of relatively greater male social status.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

NATURE OF THE STUDY: The paper attempts to focus on the role of education in eradicating gender inequality in society. The data and facts for the research work have been collected from secondary sources like journals, articles, research papers and related websites. The researcher with its overview analysis will try to find out the relationship between Education and Gender Equality.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

The objective of the study is to find out the correlation between education and gender equality. Through the study we will try to know that, to what extent education play a role in eradicating gender inequality and what measures could be adopted to overcome this social evil of gender biasness.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY:

The findings of the study will emphasis on the role of education in eradicating gender disparity and help people to know the importance of education for all the sections of society. The study hopes to promote education as a weapon against gender inequality in all dimensions.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The paper encounters some limitations like the findings and the conclusion are based on data and information obtained from secondary sources and the paper simply provide an overview analysis of the title. Moreover only men (male) and women (female) are taken into consideration while discussing the gender equality.

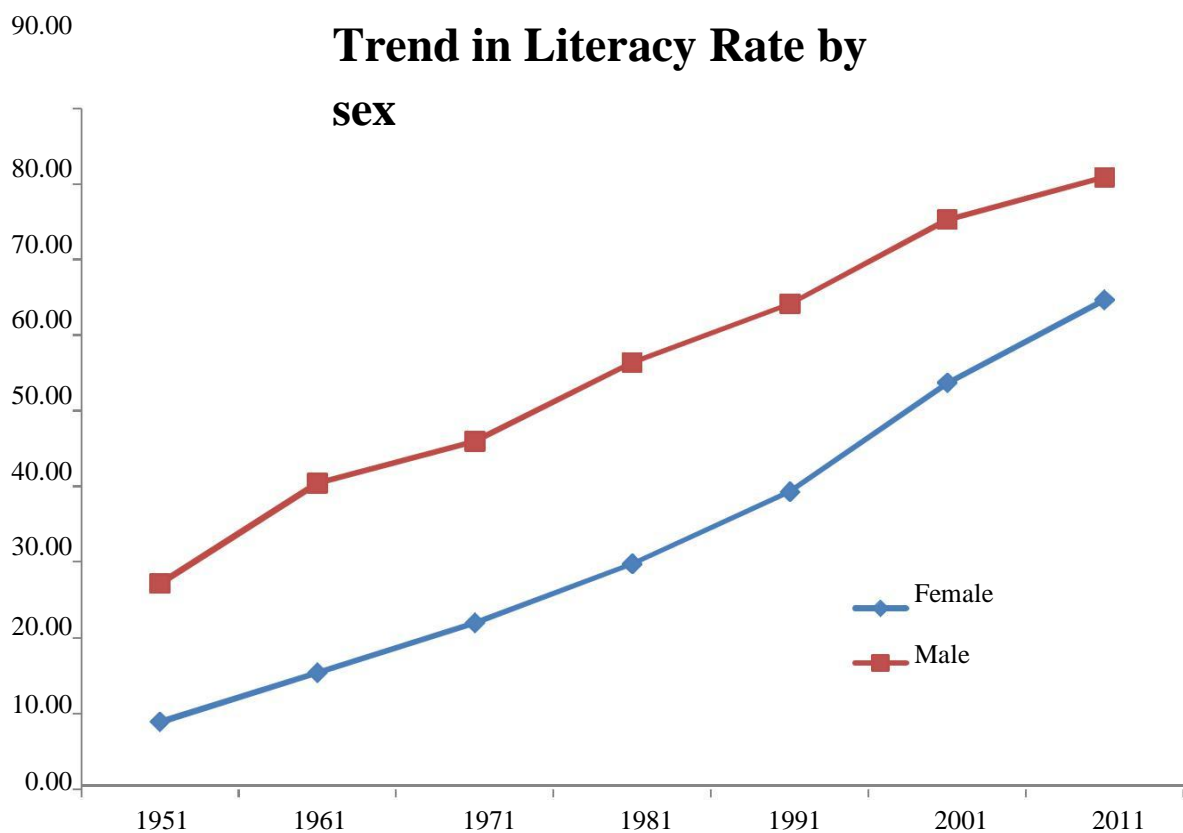
FINDINGS OF THE STUDY:

India is ranked 131 of 189 countries listed in the United Nations Development Programme's latest Human Development Report 2016. Categorised as having achieved 'medium human

development', India's HDI value has increased 46 per cent between 1990 and 2015. India is ranked 125 of 159 countries in the Gender Inequality Index (GII). The ratio of maternal mortality is 174 against every 100,000 live births. Only 12.2 per cent of Parliament seats are held by women. 26.8 per cent of women above the age of 15 years are part of India's labour force — compared to 79.1 per cent men.

Trend in Literacy Rates in Post Independent India

Year	Rural			Female	Urban		Female	Combined	
	Female	Male	Total		Male	Total		Male	Total
1951	4.87	19.02	12.10	22.33	45.60	34.59	8.86	27.15	18.32
1961	10.10	34.30	22.50	40.50	66.00	54.40	15.35	40.40	28.31
1971	15.50	48.60	27.90	48.80	69.80	60.20	21.97	45.96	34.45
1981	21.70	49.60	36.00	56.30	76.70	67.20	29.76	56.38	43.57
1991	30.17	56.96	36.00	64.05	81.09	67.20	39.29	64.13	52.21
2001	46.70	71.40	59.40	73.20	86.70	80.30	53.67	75.26	64.83
2011	57.93	77.15	66.77	79.11	88.76	84.11	64.63	80.88	72.98
% Increase in 2011 over 2001	24%	8%	12%	8%	2%	5%	20%	7%	13%



Source: Census of India, Office of Registrar General, India.

The literacy rate at all India level has steadily increased from 18.32% in 1951 to 72.98% in 2011 and the increase in literacy rates for females and males were from 8.86% and 27.15% to 64.63% and 80.9% respectively as per population censuses. Though the progress is positive but the rate of female literacy is incompetent compared to male literacy, showing a gender inequality in education still persists. **Comparison of Literacy Rates**

State/Union Territory	2011		
	Female	Male	Total
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	82.4	90.3	86.6
Andhra Pradesh	59.1	74.9	67.0
Arunachal Pradesh	57.7	72.6	65.4
Assam	66.3	77.8	72.2
Bihar	51.5	71.2	61.8
Chandigarh	81.2	90.0	86.0
Chhattisgarh	60.2	80.3	70.3
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	64.3	85.2	76.2
Daman & Diu	79.5	91.5	87.1
Delhi	80.8	90.9	86.2
Goa	84.7	92.6	88.7
Gujarat	69.7	85.8	78.0
Haryana	65.9	84.1	75.6
Himachal Pradesh	75.9	89.5	82.8
Jammu & Kashmir	56.4	76.8	67.2
Jharkhand	55.4	76.8	66.4
Karnataka	68.1	82.5	75.4
Kerala	92.1	96.1	94.0
Lakshadweep	87.9	95.6	91.8
Madhya Pradesh	59.2	78.7	69.3
Maharashtra	75.9	88.4	82.3
Manipur	70.3	83.6	76.9
Meghalaya	72.9	76.0	74.4
Mizoram	89.3	93.3	91.3
Nagaland	76.1	82.8	79.6
Odisha	64.0	81.6	72.9
Puducherry	80.7	91.3	85.8
Punjab	70.7	80.4	75.8
Rajasthan	52.1	79.2	66.1
Sikkim	75.6	86.6	81.4
Tamil Nadu	73.4	86.8	80.1
Tripura	82.7	91.5	87.2
Uttar Pradesh	57.2	77.3	67.7
Uttarakhand	70.0	87.4	78.8
West Bengal	70.5	81.7	76.3

India	64.6	80.9	73.0
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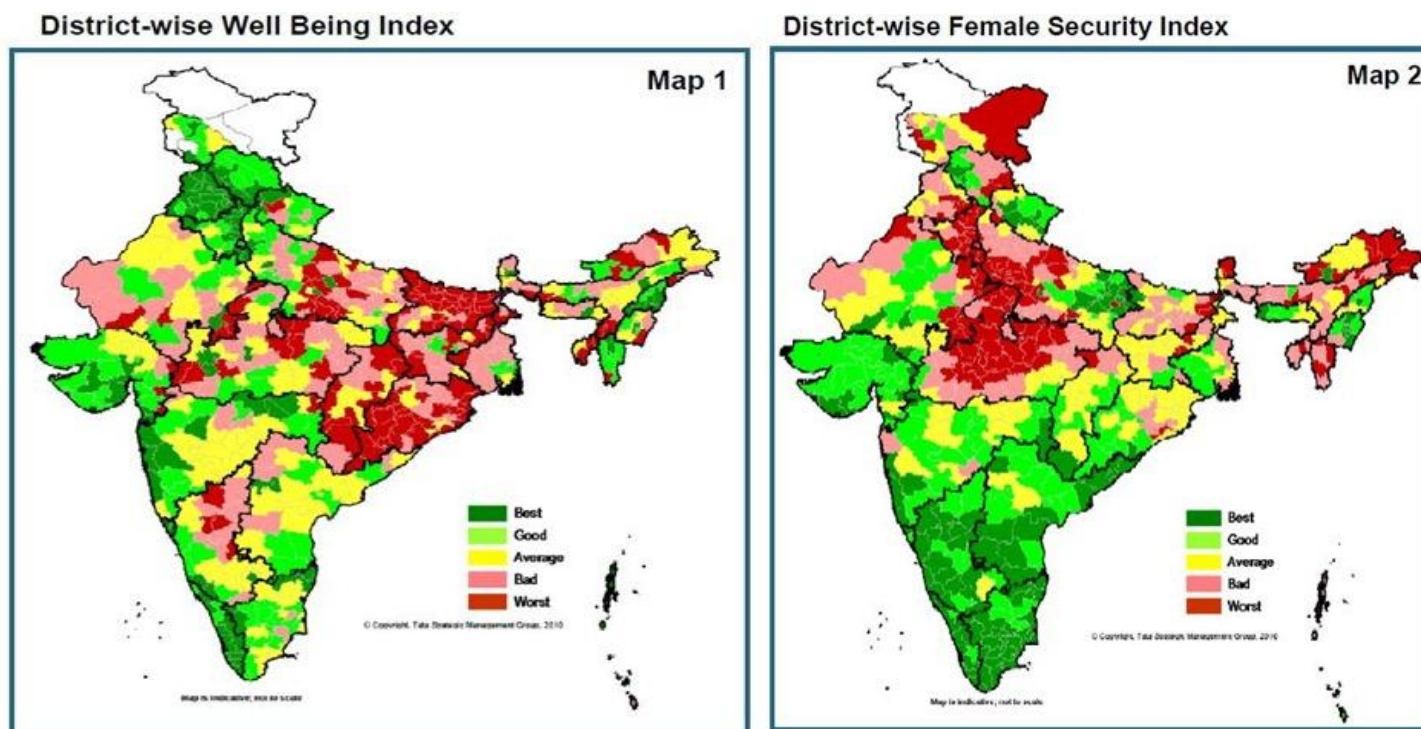
Source: Office of Registrar General, India.

Notes: Literacy rates pertain to the population aged 7 years and above.

In 2011, among the State/ UTs, the highest literacy rate of 94% is in Kerala (male : 96.1, female : 92.1) and lowest is 61.8% in Bihar (male : 71.2, female : 51.5).

Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Goa, Tripura and Delhi have a good literacy rate while Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Jammu and Kashmir are among the poor ones. It is simply clear from the above table that male literacy rate in India is 80.9 while the female literacy rate is only 64.6. It can also be observed from the table that only those States/UTs has high total literacy rate where female literacy rate is good. So education could be a good indicator for gender disparity and it could play a significant role in eliminating gender biasness in family and society.

Well Being Index and Female Security Index of India



Source: Tata Strategic Management Group

The Well Being Index has been created using eight critical categories carefully selected to form the index broadly covering all aspects of well-being like Home amenities, Kitchen Facilities, Education, Hygiene, Entertainment, Communication, Transportation and Healthcare. While the WBI captures all major material and social parameters, it does not include a very important reality of Indian society – the well-being, status and treatment of women. Using Gender Ratio and data on Crime against women, a scoring methodology was used to compute the FSI for each district in India.

Overlooking some exceptions, from the above Maps it is clear that the areas like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur has a good

WBI and FSI. In these States/UTs the female literacy rate is also comparatively good, so it could be that the areas where women are more educated have access to greater sources of well being and female safety as they feel more confident and self-dependent. Education is a prerequisite for promoting women's economic empowerment, health and well-being. Education is crucial in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS and in promoting women's sexual and reproductive health.

Moreover, it is also important for women's political and civic participation, and in preventing gender based violence, insecurity and biasness. Despite strong economic and social evidence of the high returns to female education, most communities continue to under-invest in female education relative to male education. India has the highest number of child brides in Asia and inevitably there is this dogma surrounding young girls that educating them is a waste of time and money as they are born only to be married off and manage the household. Sexual harassment and violence also continue to be major constraining factors preventing parents from freely sending their girls to school. Similarly, while initiatives to teach girls self-defence or cycling have been widely hailed as critical components of gender-sensitive education, they have not really been taken up and promoted widely through the education system.

CONCLUSION:

It is beyond doubt that the gender discrimination is existence for long time. The education sector could certainly play a pivotal role in eliminating this gender inequality. It is very much essential to bring awareness among people about the benefit of gender equality. It is important to know that the inclusion of the concept of gender equality in the curriculum and making of laws to remove gender inequality have significant impact on the need to achieve constitutional goal of establishing egalitarian society. Ultimately, it is the change in social mindset and involvement of all sections of society is required to achieve the ends. While there is no single solution to the issues of gender disparity, it is imperative that all stakeholders take the steps necessary to create a world that allows women, men, girls and boys to thrive and realize their full potential.

SUGGESTIONS:

"If you educate a man, you educate an individual. If you educate a woman, you educate a family."

- A fundamental reason we have not yet achieved gender equality in every realm is that women and girls' voices are too often excluded from global and national decision-making. When programmes and policies are designed without women's needs central to their foundation, we're setting ourselves up to fail.
- The majority of girls in India don't have access to using basic technology such as phones and computers because of infrastructure related challenges and economic reasons. Increasingly we see bans on girls using mobile phones.
- Child marriage is a major impediment to girls' education. If we want girls to be able to complete education we have to end child marriage. We also have to seriously address sexual harassment of girls. Insecurity is one of the reasons parents give for marrying their daughters. It is also a major barrier to girls' full participation in education.

- There has been much progress in increasing access to education, but progress has been slow in improving the gender sensitivity of the education system, including ensuring textbooks promote positive stereotypes. This is critically important for girls to come out of schools as citizens who can shape a more equal society.
- One of the key strategies must be to change how girls, families and society imagine what girls can be and can do. We need to give girls images and role models that expand their dreams. We also need parents to see that there really are opportunities for their daughters that their only security is not just to be good wives and mothers.
- We have learned that through empowering women on the community level you will also enhance girl's education. When mothers are educated and empowered to make choices in their lives, they enable their daughters to go to school.
- The unpaid work women and girls do provide the foundation for the global economy. This fact needs to be highlighted more in the media, with the private sector and in communities. More research and data for messaging on this point could be useful in promoting the key role and contributions women and girls make to the economy and the need for proper recognition and compensation. We also need a concerted campaign for equal pay for equal work worldwide.
- A proven way to overcome many systemic barriers to a woman's success has been increased participation by women in local, regional and national legislation as empowered change agents. A woman's voice and her ability to become a leader in her community are fundamental to empowering women.
- Supporting women in non-traditional jobs is crucial in not only making long-lasting change in their lives but also help break social taboos.
- Gender inequality allows for violence against women to continue unabated. The UN has found that globally, one in three women will experience violence in her lifetime, with most violence against women perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner. The World Health Organisation, London School of Health and Tropical Medicine, and the World Bank Group have done a lot to consolidate and expand on what we know about the prevalence of violence against women, and effective prevention and response strategies, but there is still a lot we do not know.
- One of the realities that we need to remember and address is that, when women "trespass" in spaces that were previously completely male-dominated there is often a penalty. In education and in the workplace that backlash often takes the form of sexual harassment, humiliation, violence. Looking at a local level or specific situation we can see how that slows the pace of women's entry to that sector or opportunity.
- Through raising awareness, funding, or directly participating in projects, it is a social and global duty for every person, individual or business, to show solidarity. Gender equality is not only about breaking the glass ceiling; sometimes it is about entering the door, through education for all.

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