



## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN INDIA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT:

This research paper is an attempt to analyze the status of women in India. The entire paper is about the women empowerment in our country. Women all over the world have been suffering from unequal treatment in terms of education, freedom, and religion. Data found in the literacy rate of 2022 shows that education level of women in comparison to men in India is quite less in majority of the states. Hence, education is also considered the main reason behind the problems face by the Indian Women. Lack of education and awareness are accountable for the poor condition of Indian Women. Further, measures taken by the Indian government to up lift the economic and social equality and gender equality among women in India will also be discussed.

### KEYWORDS:

**WOMEN, EMPOWERMENT, EDUCATION AND INDIA.**

### INTRODUCTION:

Women are the most important and powerful organ of the entire mechanism of the system called Universe. They are simply an extra ordinary gift to the world, however sad, they are totally neglected or taken for granted by the school of old thoughts where superstitions and false beliefs prevail which treat women as mere source of bearing and rearing of kids. The society has become a tough male dominating one so women are always sealed in the four walls of the house. Especially in India where women are always treated secondary.

In every era, women faced issues. Although in the Vedic period women had access to education in India, they had gradually lost this right. However, in the British there was revival of interest in women's education in India. During this period, various socio religious movements led by eminent persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vudhyasagar emphasized on women's education in India. Mahatma Gandhi, Jyotiba Phule, Periyar and Baba Saheb Ambedkar were leaders of the lower castes in India who took various initiatives to make education available to the women of India. However 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. As a result women's literacy rate has grown over the three decades and the growth of female literacy has in fact been higher than that of male literacy rate. While in 1971 only 22 per cent of Indian women were literate, by the end of 2001, 54.16 per cent female were literate. The growth of female literacy rate is 14.87 per cent as compared to 11.72 per cent of that of male literacy rate. As per the latest Census in the year 2011, the total female sex ratio in India is 940 per 1000 males. The census- 2011 also indicated a 2001-2011 decadal literacy growth of 9.2 per cent, which is slower

than the growth seen during the previous decade. There is a wide gender disparity in the literacy rate in India: effective literacy rates (age 7 and above) in 2011 were 82.14 per cent for men and 65.46 per cent for women. While in 2022, the literacy rate is 77.70 per cent, with males at 84.70 per cent and females at 70.30 per cent, according to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) and National Statistical Offices: NSO (2022).

Women education in India plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl children, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of the population.

Women empowerment is also defined as a change in the context of a women's life, which enables her increased capacity for leading a fulfilling human life. It gets reflected both in external qualities (viz. health, mobility, education and awareness, status in the family, participation in decision making, and also at the level of material security) and internal qualities (viz. self-awareness and self-confidence) [Human Development in South Asia (2000) as quoted by Mathew (2003)].

### WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND EDUCATION:

Women empowerment is although global issue and discussion on women political rights are at the fore front of many formal and informal campaigns worldwide. The concept of women empowerment was introduced at the international women conference at NAROIBI in 1985. Education is milestone of women empowerment because

it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. It was stated by PT.

Jawaharlal Nehru, "If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered".

So that we can't neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment in India is poised to becoming a superpower, a developed country by 2020. The year 2020 is fast approaching; it is just 3 year away. This can become reality only when the women of this nation become empowered. India presently accounts for the largest number of illiterates in the world. Literacy rate in India have risen sharply from 18.3 per cent in 1951 to 64.8 per cent in 2001 in which enrolment of women in education have also risen sharply 7 per cent 54.16 per cent. Despite the importance of women education unfortunately only 39 per cent of women are literate among 64 per cent of the man. Within the framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plan and programmes have aimed at women's advancement in difference spheres. From the fifth five year plan (1974-78) onwards has been a marked shift in the approach to women's issues from welfare to development. In recent years, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. The National Commission of Women was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1990 to safeguard the right and legal entitlements of women. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Amendments (1993) to the constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayats and Municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at the local level.

To see the development in women's education India is supposed to upcoming super power of the world in recent years. The increasing change in women education, the empowerment of women has been recognized as the central issue in determining the status of women. For becoming super power we have mostly to concentrate upon the women's education. By which it will force on women's empowerment. As per united national development fund for women (UNIFEM) the term women's empowerment means:

- Acquiring knowledge and understanding of gender relations and the ways in which these relations may be changed.
- Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life.
- Gaining the ability to generate choices exercise bargaining power.
- Developing the ability to organize and influence the direction of social change, to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

### LITERACY RATE IN INDIA 2022:

According to National Statistical Office (NSO) data, as of the year 2021 India's average literacy rate is 77.70%. The male literacy at the India level in 2021 stands at 84.70% & female literacy stands at 70.30%.

**TABLE- 1**

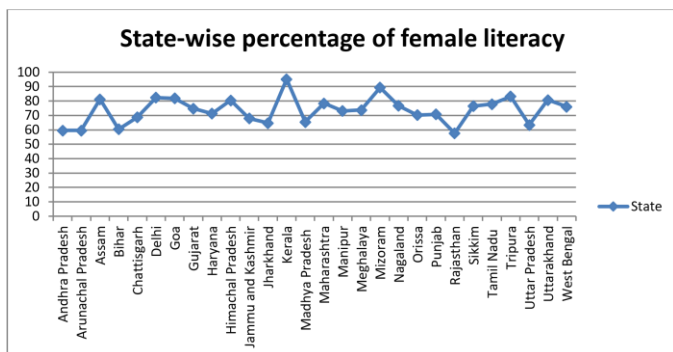
#### STATE-WISE PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE LITERACY IN THE COUNTRY (2022 CENSUS)

S. No	State	Female Literacy (Percent)
1	Andhra Pradesh	59.5
2	Arunachal Pradesh	59.57
3	Assam	81.2
4	Bihar	60.5
5	Chattisgarh	68.7
6	Delhi	82.4
7	Goa	81.84
8	Gujarat	74.8
9	Haryana	71.3
10	Himachal Pradesh	80.5
11	Jammu and Kashmir	68
12	Jharkhand	64.7
13	Karnataka	70.5
14	Kerala	95.2
15	Madhya Pradesh	65.5
16	Maharashtra	78.4
17	Manipur	73.17
18	Meghalaya	73.78
19	Mizoram	89.4
20	Nagaland	76.69
21	Orissa	70.3
22	Punjab	70.73
23	Rajasthan	57.6
24	Sikkim	76.43
25	Tamil Nadu	77.9
26	Tripura	83.15
27	Uttar Pradesh	63.4

28	Uttarakhand	80.7
29	West Bengal	76.1

Source: Survey by National Statistical Office (NSO).

**FIGURE- 1 STATE-WISE PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE LITERACY IN THE COUNTRY (2022 CENSUS)**



As per the National Statistical Office (NSO) data, Kerala ranked highest in the list with 95.2 per cent. Mizoram stood second with 89.4 per cent. While Rajasthan ranked lowest in the list with 57.6 per cent.

**CONSTRAINTS TO WOMEN EMPOWERMENT:**

There are several constraints that check the process of women empowerment in India. Social norms and family structures in developing countries like India, manifests and perpetuate the subordinate status of women. One of such norms is the continuing preference for a son over the birth of a girl child, which is present in almost all societies and communities. The hold of this preference has strengthened rather than weakened and its most glaring evidence is in the falling sex ratio (Seth, 2001). The society is more biased in favor of male child in respect of education, nutrition and other opportunities. The root cause of this type of attitude lies in the belief that male child inherits the clan in India.

Poverty is also the key element. Vast majority of women in India face problems due to poverty. It is another important factor that poses challenge in realizing women’s empowerment. In a poor family, female are the main victims; they are malnourished and are denied the opportunity of better education and other basic facilities. But what if women become financially independent. They may lead a better life both in their house and society and are no longer victims of poverty and other social inequalities. Once women become financially independent, no one can stop her to enjoy her rights. For instance, there are myriads of Indian women who shine like a star and also help other women to stand on their own feet.

**MEASURES TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR GENDER EQUALITY/SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN:**

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is administering following schemes for gender equality/socio-economic development/empowerment of

women:-

- i. Swadhar and Short Stay Homes to provide relief and rehabilitation to destitute women and women in distress.
- ii. Working Women Hostels for ensuring safe accommodation for working women away from their place of residence.
- iii. Support to training and employment Program for Women (STEP) to ensure sustainable employment and income generation for marginalized and asset-less rural and urban poor woman across the country.
- iv. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) to provide micro-finance services to bring about the socio-economic upliftment of poor women.
- v. National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW) to strengthen the overall processes that promotes all-round Development of Women.
- vi. Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers (including single mother) to provide day care facilities for running a crèche of 25 children in the age group 0-6 years from families having monthly income of less than Rs 12,000.
- vii. One Stop Centre to provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence.
- viii. Scheme for Universalization of Women Helpline intended to provide 24 hours immediate and emergency response to women affected by violence.
- ix. Sabla Scheme for holistic development of adolescent girls in the age group of 11-18 years.
- x. In order to strengthen the process of gender budgeting the Ministry of Women and Child Development has been undertaking various capacity building measures for the officials of the State Governments by organizing training programs/workshops regularly.

In order to improve employability a separate Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has been created.

Equal Remuneration Act, 1973 provides for payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers for the same work of similar nature without any discrimination. In order to ensure social security to the workers including women in the unorganized sector, the Government has enacted the Unorganized Workers’ Social Security Act 2008.

The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 regulates employment of women in certain establishments for a certain period (12 weeks) before and after childbirth and provides for maternity and other benefits.

Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) Scheme is being implemented as Conditional Maternity Benefit for pregnant and lactating women to improve health and nutrition status to better enabling environment by providing cash incentives to pregnant and nursing mother

to partly compensate wage loss both prior to and after delivery.

### CONCLUSION:

While discussing the status of women in India, various indicators of women empowerment are analyzed. It was found that education is essential to improve the condition of women in India. Women need to understand the significance of education. Only education can help them to live a better life where they can enjoy every right in the society equal to men. Once they educate and become economically empower, society' attitude towards them changed for forever.

Currently, women of India are relatively disempowered and they enjoy somewhat lower status than that of men. Highest literacy rate of women in India is found in Kerala (95.2), and we can see that women in Kerala are in better position in comparison to the areas where literacy rate is low like Rajasthan, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. However, government is taking initiatives to change the scenarios but despite of so many efforts undertaken by government and NGOs the picture at present is not satisfactory. Till then we cannot say that women are empowered in India in its real sense.

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