



## Educational Status of Women- Ancient India, Medieval India and Modern India

DR. KRISHNA KATARA

Assistant Professor,  
SAM, B. Ed. College, Vedchhi, Gujarat

### Abstract:

*Women comprise nearly half of the National Population. But social discrimination and economic deprivation on the basis on gender is common to all, irrespective of religion, caste, community, and state. Throughout history their lives have generally been confined to home, with restricted role of a home-maker, that of a mother and wives. There is no equality between men and women. Women receive only small share in development opportunities and are often excluded from education, better jobs, participation in political system and better health care, decision making, etc. Besides, they suffer from physiological, social and cultural barriers, which hinder their development. Thus, this is true of ancient, medieval and modern times.*

*All the ages' gender was the factor to discriminate women from social, political, economical and educational activities. The history of India would reveal that throughout history educational situation of women were low. Vedic age has been considered as golden age for women whereas medieval period has been called Dark Age. In modern period India has the lowest rates of female literacy. The growth of women's education in rural areas is very slow. After independence, the people of India gave themselves a new constitution of the new Indian Republic in 1950, which include universal franchise, and guarantee of equality, justice and non-discrimination and equal opportunities guaranteed as fundamental rights. The government has implemented various policies and programmes to develop the status of women especially in education. But despite the various efforts made by government and non-governmental organization not many changes have taken place with regards to the educational status of women. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to responds to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. It is the most powerful tool to change her position in the society.*

*The objective of the present paper is to discuss the educational status of women during historical perspective, medieval and Modern India.*

---

**Keywords:** Social discrimination, Economic deprivation, Women empowerment, Education

---

*"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".*

-Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru

### 1. Introduction

Education is an integral part of human life. It is the basic condition for the development of the whole man. It is the Education, which not only transforms the human animal into a rational human being, but also prepares and develops him to survive and adjust with surroundings so as to lead his personal as well as social life successfully. We may say that Education is anything which the individual acquires through formal and non- formal organization. Therefore, Education is an important input in human resource development and it is essential for the country's economic growth.



Women in India have been experiencing different socio-economic status, mainly because of illiteracy and denial of equal opportunities. They form almost half of the population in the world. But the hegemonic masculine ideology made them bear a lot as they were denied equivalent opportunities and importance as men. Access to education has been one of the most urgent and important demands of these women's.

In the present era, the Indian society has established a number of institutions for the Educational development of women and girls. These educational institutions aim for immense help and are concerned with the development of women. In the modern society, women in India have come a long way. Indian women is at par with men in all kinds of tasks like reaching the moon, conquering Mount Everest, and participating in all fields. All this is possible just because of education and the profound impact it has had on women.

## 2.Objectives of the study

The Objectives of the present study are as follow-

1. To study the educational status of women in Ancient India, Medieval India and Modern India.
2. To study the Barriers and Problems against Women Education.
3. To study the recommendations regarding improvement in Women Education.

## 3. Method

To study and understand the Educational Status of Women in Ancient India, Medieval India and Modern India the researcher had refer different websites from internet.

## 4. Educational status of women in Ancient India

In ancient India, women received less education than men. This was due to the set social norms. Interestingly, in the **Vedic period** women had access to education, but gradually they had lost this right. Women education in ancient India prevailed during the early Vedic period. In addition to that Indian scriptures **Rig Veda and Upanishads** mention about several women sages and seers. Women enjoyed equivalent position and rights in the early Vedic era. However, after 500 B.C, the position of women started to decline. The Islamic invasion played a vital role in restricting freedom and rights of the women. A radical change attended and there was a terrific constraint for women education in India.

## 5. Educational status of women in Medieval India

Women education in medieval India further weakened and declined with the introduction of **Purdah system**. Different customs and conventions of diverse religions like **Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity** further deteriorated and depreciated the state of women in the country. A range of socio religious movements contributed to the development of women literacy in the country. Many leaders took several initiatives to make education available to the women of India. The ordered form of women education in India was incorporated in the early centuries of the Christian era.

## 6. Educational status of women in Modern India

Women education in modern India is traced back to the years after the independence of India. Women Literacy rate seems rose in the modern days. This has actually helped women to achieve top positions at work place and also at society.

The idea of women empowerment was introduced at the International Women Conference at Nairobi in 1985. Education is milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to responds to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. So that we can't ignore the significance of education in reference to women empowerment India is poised to becoming superpower, a developed country by 2020. This can became reality only when the women of this nation became empowerment. India presently accounts for the largest number of illiterates in the world. Despite the significance of women education unfortunately only 39% of women are literate among 64% of the man. Within the



framework of a democratic polity, our laws, development policies, plan and programmes that have focused at women's progression in different 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 accepted as the vital concern in determining the status of women in the Indian society. 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 73rd and 74th Amendments (1993) to the Constitution of India have provided for reservation of seats in the local bodies of Panchayat and Municipalities for women.

Moreover, the Central Government of India has recently launched the Saakshar Bharat Mission for Female Literacy, which aims to reduce female illiteracy and spread education and awareness even in the most remote and rural parts of the nation.

Kerala and Mizoram are the only states in India that have achieved universal female literacy rates. The improvement in social and economic status of women is said to be one of the reasons for literacy. In cities the literacy rate is almost equal between girls and boys in the country however the rate in rural areas continues to be less than the boys. 40% of the centers under NFE, non formal education programs are set apart for women.

According to statistics of women education in India, today 0.3 million NFE centers have education to 0.12 million girls out of 7.42 million children. However, in tribal areas there is not much of a gender bias as compared to all other castes, tribal community statistics show lower male ratio in spite of much low income, literacy, education and other facilities efforts are being made towards women education and empowerment. The government is taking steps to increase the rate of women education and employment. A special focus should be laid on empowering girls and women, since it will lead to a change in the society which would be sustainable and will be in effect for ages to come.

## **7. Women Education after independence**

After independence the status of Indian women has changed. Both structural and cultural changes provided equality of opportunities to women in education, employment and others. The Govt. of India has already been formulated various policies and programmes in all aspects like education, social, economical, political etc. for the betterment of women. A high literacy rate, especially of women, can improve several socio-economic indicators, namely low birth rate and increase in life expectancy. The recognition of this fact has created awareness on the need to focus on improving literacy and improving universalizing elementary education. The task of providing basic education to all, with concrete plans of action, gained greater momentum only after the National Policy of Education (NPE) was adopted in 1986 and revised in 1992. The Supreme Court of India, in 1993 declared primary education to be a Fundamental Right. In the view of the declaration by Supreme Court constitution was amended. The Constitution (86th Amendment) Act 2002 was enacted by the Parliament of India making education a fundamental right. The Right to Education Act was enacted in 2006 to provide free and compulsory education to all children in the age group 6-14 years. The nation is firmly committed to providing education for ALL, the priority areas being free and compulsory primary education, covering children with special needs, eradication of illiteracy, vocationalisation, education for women's equality and special focus on the education of SCs\STs\OBCs and Minorities. Major programmes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, District Primary Education Programme, National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level, Prarambhik Shiksha Kosh, National Institute of Open Schooling, Jan Shikshan Sansthan, Mahila Samakhya, National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, development of women studies, post doctoral fellowship for women, incentives to Girls for Secondary Education, scheme for construction and running hostels for girls, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, and other schemes at primary education to higher education level.



## 8. Barriers and Problems against Women Education

In spite of certain outstanding examples of individual achievements, and a definite improvement in 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 face distinctive problems that call for special attention. The Backward Classes Commission set up by the Government of India in 1953 classified women of India as a backward group requiring special attention. The Ministry of Education club's girls with Scheduled Castes and Tribes as the three most backward groups in education. The educational, economic, political and social backwardness of women makes them the largest group hindering the process of social change. It is inevitable that when this 'backward' group has the major responsibility of bringing up future generations the advancement of society cannot be rapid or take any significant form of development. The barriers and Problems against Women Education are as following.

- A. 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 in household work. Most of the young girls from the rural areas are made to drop out of school and made to work as domestic servant. This is why there is such a high rate of drop-out from school.
- B. The resources of the rural are limited. If resources are available, it is the 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 a housewife. They have very little motivation to send their children to school. It is still not being realized that there is definite connection between education, good motherhood and efficient house management. The management of millions of households and the upbringing of millions of children is thus in the hands of illiterate women.
- C. 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 to this is the reluctance to acquire western education and misunderstanding on the part of the girls themselves about the values of the acquisition of formal education. In education, equity means equal access to good schooling.
- D. 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 ways to limit women's access to formal education when compared with their male counterparts. It has been observed that Indian women are lagging behind their counterparts in developed and some developing nations due to the late start in educating them. This is caused by our traditions and culture which are hostile to women.
- E. Gender based inequalities is highly prevalent in India. Women and girls are not treated on par with the men and boys. The mind set of a people that a girl-child is a burden has to be changed.
- F. Other problems against women education include the familiar problems like lack of funds, inadequate facilities, inadequate manpower, conflicting societal role expectations, government policies and lack of political will power to implement the entire educational programme.
- G. 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.

## 9. Recommendations to improve Women Education in India

**A. Need to be Change in the attitude of men in the society:** To increase the literacy rate of women it is very essential to change the attitude of men towards the education of women. From the very beginning an attitudinal change in the mindset of men is necessary towards the concept. Men and boys have a critical role to play in reversing the pandemic of violence against women. They have to strengthen women's security in crisis.



**B. Change in the attitude of women in the society:** Women's own perception on their empowerment should be changed. They should strive to change their image as weak, dependent, passive and docile persons to independent, active, strong and determined human beings.

**C. Change in the attitude of parents towards female Education:** The parents should have positive attitude towards female Education in family. They must allow to send their girl child for formal education especially to higher levels like their male counterpart.

**D. Change in the academic level:** It is important to create awareness about education among the younger generation especially among the female students and the youth.

**E. Change in the administrative level:** Empowerment of women is a necessity for the sustainable development of a nation. So, policy of the government should be women friendly in its various schemes. It should try to implement the following:

- a) Expand women's citizenship, participation and leadership, and advance women as decision-makers.
- b) Strengthen women's security in crisis and stop violence against women.
- c) Laws to protect women's rights must be included and enforced within legal frameworks.
- d) Include women's issues on the national agenda.

**F. Role of government:** The government of India take measures to provide education to all women of the country. The government should take the responsibility on his shoulder to provide basic necessity for women education like sufficient funds and adequate facilities.

## 10. Result of the study

After careful analysis of the history of educational status of women in India would reveal that throughout history educational situation of women were low. Vedic age has been considered as golden age for women whereas medieval period has been called Dark Age. After independence, the people of India gave themselves a new constitution in 1950. The government has implemented various policies and programmes to develop the status of women education. But despite the various efforts made by government not many changes have taken place with regards to the educational status of women.

## 11. Conclusion

Women form almost half of the population in the world. Access to education has been one of the most urgent and important demands of these women's. It brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family. An analysis of the history of India would reveal that throughout history educational situation of women were low. Vedic age has been considered as golden age for women whereas medieval period has been called Dark Age. After independence, the people of India gave themselves a new constitution of the new Indian Republic in 1950, which include universal franchise, and guarantee of equality, justice and non-discrimination. And equal opportunities guaranteed as fundamental rights and Directive Principles of State policy the guarantees and opportunities provided by the state will be accessed by everyone who wanted. The government has implemented various policies and programmes to develop the status of women especially in education. But despite the various efforts made by government and non-governmental organization not many changes have taken place with regards to the educational status of women.

Women education in India has also been a chief preoccupation of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country. Educating a woman creates a vital opportunity for the social and economic development of the country and society. To encourage the education of women at all levels and for dilution of gender bias in providing knowledge and education, established schools, colleges and universities even exclusively for women in the state.

## References

- 1.[http://members.tripod.com/global\\_india1/current.htm](http://members.tripod.com/global_india1/current.htm)
- 2.[http://www.indianetzone.com/39/women\\_education\\_india.htm](http://www.indianetzone.com/39/women_education_india.htm)
- 3.<http://www.womenempowermentinindia.com/status-of-women-in-india/>
- 4.Rao, R.K. (2001). Women and Education, Kalpaz Publications, Delhi.