

RURAL WOMEN'S EDUCATION: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS IN INDIA

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Abstract: *India constitution guarantees free primary school education for both boys and girls up to age 14. But the literacy rate for women is 39% versus 64% for men. Even in literate women in India 59% women have primary or less education. This displays disastrous picture of women in India. When we talk about rural area this picture becomes more horrible. This bad condition of women need shows a sense of emergency and alarm. Indian government need to construct very many appropriate and suitable policies so that the conditions of women can be improved significantly. There can be nothing better option than education to improve this alarmic situation of women.*

In this paper a sincere attempt has been made to capture the emerging picture with respect to girls and women education in India. This paper also provides possible solutions of problems of rural women education in India.

Key Words: *rural education, literacy rate, primary school education.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The history of female education in India has its roots in ancient Vedic age.

"The home has, verily, its foundation in the wife" - The Rig Veda during the Vedic age, more than 3,000 years ago, women were assigned a high place in society. They shared an equal standing with their men folk and enjoyed a kind of liberty that actually had societal sanctions. The ancient Hindu philosophical concept of 'shakti', the feminine principle of energy, was also a product of this age. This took the form of worship of the female idols or goddesses. In India even today people worship Goddess "Saraswati" as the Goddess of education. Vedic literature praises the birth of a scholarly daughter in these words: "A girl also should be brought up and educated with great effort and care." (Mahanirvana Tantra); and "All forms of knowledge are aspects of Thee; and all women throughout the world are Thy forms." (Devi Mahatmya).

Women, who so desired, could undergo the sacred thread ceremony or 'Upanayana' (a sacrament to pursue Vedic studies), which is only meant for males even to this day. The mention of female scholars and sages of the Vedic age like Vac, Ambhrni, Romasa, Gargi, and Khona in the Vedic lore corroborates this view. These highly intelligent and greatly learned women, who chose the path of Vedic studies, were called 'brahmavadinis', and women who opted out of education for married life were called 'sadyovadhus'. Co-education seems to have existed in this period and both the sexes got equal attention from the teacher. Moreover, ladies from the Kshatriya caste received martial arts courses and arms training

Women of the Vedic period (circa 1500-1200 BCE), were epitomes of intellectual and spiritual attainments. The Vedas have volumes to say about these women, who both complemented and supplemented their male partners. When it comes to talking about significant female figures of the Vedic period, four names - Ghosha, Lopamudra, Sulabha Maitreyi, and Gargi - come to mind.

Despite progress, girls and women continue to be discriminated against in accessing education and within education systems. 57 million children worldwide, including 31 million girls, are out of school and two thirds of illiterate adults are women. In developing countries, adolescent girls are more likely to drop-out of secondary school than boys, particularly in rural areas. **There are many reasons that prevent girls from going to school.** Poverty, pregnancy, school-based violence, child marriage and discriminatory gender norms are some of the major obstacles to girls' education worldwide. School fees, the threat of violence on the way to and in school, and the perceived benefits of girls' domestic work also keep girls out-of-school. Pregnancy and child marriage cut short adolescent girls' schooling before they have completed secondary school.

Socialization of the young lady kid in India appears to have taken after a set example where she has-been caught and formed by profound established joined societies of patriarchy and progressive system. Ladies all things considered can be named as a populace at danger in light of their constrained access to assets and opportunities and their orderly rejection from the position of basic leadership. In addition imperative is that the procedure of prohibition tends to

begin at the grass root, the family level. In this a young lady kid is subjected to sort of dialects and practices, which belittle avoidance of different natures at assortment of levels. What could be more intolerable than slaughtering female embryo and babies? The female foeticide and child murders, the most ghastly of sexual orientation wrongdoings, expanding steeply. It is the infringement of the most fundamental human rights, the privilege to be conceived. Ladies with higher societal position are liable to be more delicate to female kid's need and yearning. Accordingly, instruction brings monetary freedom, which thus encourages social freedom. Further, ladies' monetary rights as far as area proprietorship and legacy might be vital. The positive angle is that a decent blend of open strategy can impact all these. Meaning consequently, there are chances that the missing ladies can be saved..

2. POLICY PERSPECTIVES:

The strategy structure, procurement of instructive open doors for ladies and young ladies has been a vital part of the national try in the field of training since Independence. In spite of the fact that these attempts yielded noteworthy results, sexual orientation differences persevere, all the more so in provincial zones and among burdened groups. The National Policy on Education (NPE, 1986) as overhauled in 1992 was point of interest in the field of strategy on ladies' training in that it perceived the need to change customary sexual orientation uneven characters in instructive access and accomplishment. The NPE likewise perceived that upgrading framework alone won't change the issue. It perceived that "the strengthening of ladies is conceivably the most basic pre condition for the support of young ladies and ladies in the instructive procedure". The project of Action (POA, 1992), in the area "Instruction for Women's Equality" (Chapter-XII, pages. 105-107), concentrates on strengthening of ladies as the basic precondition for their support in the training procedure. The POA expresses that training can be a viable instrument for ladies' strengthening, guaranteeing parallel cooperation in formative procedures; The Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan weights on enhancing access to optional tutoring to all youngster as per standards through proximate area (say, Secondary Schools inside 5 KMs, and Higher Secondary Schools inside 7-10 kms) effective and safe transport plans/private offices, contingent upon neighbourhood circumstances including open tutoring and guarantees that no tyke is denied of auxiliary instruction of attractive quality because of sexual orientation, financial, inability and different boundaries., disability and other barriers.

3. GENDER INEQUALITY IN ACCESS TO EDUCATION:

Education seems to be the key factor, which only can initiate a chain of advantages to females. However, the access to education is differently perceived for male and female. Key indicators such as literacy, enrolment and years spent in school explain the situation in the access to education and each of these indicators reveal that the level of female education in India is still low and lagging far behind their male counterpart. The low adult literacy rates for women are a reflection of past underinvestment in the education of women and thus do not necessarily capture the recent progress. The problem is not only confined to low enrolments, the girl's school attendance has also been found incredibly low. Rural girls belong to disadvantaged groups as if SC and ST present the worst scenario. As per the data, girl dropout ratio has tended to increase with the enhancement in the level of education. This clearly outlines the pattern of gender inequality in access to education, which seems to be deepening as we move from lower to higher educational attainment and from urban to rural and to disadvantaged group in the society.

4. WHY WOMEN REMAIN UNDEREDUCATED?

What explains the gender differentials in educational attainment? What makes women to remain outside the preview of change? Studies have tried to answer these questions on various planes. Economic benefits of education and the costs involved in undertaking such educational attainment have been perceived differently for men and women. Parents who bear the private costs of investing in schooling for girls and women fail to receive the full benefits of their investment. This is largely true because much of the payoff in educating women is broadly social in nature rather than economic. This endures the gender differentials.

Guardian's impression of current expenses of instruction and future advantages there from impacts the choice whether young lady tyke ought to keep taking training or not. Expenses are frequently measured regarding separation to class and other direct costs included, for example, charge paid, books purchased, dress made and so on. On occasion, the support to child is made in instruction as well as in assignment of nourishment at mealtime, conveyance of legacy and even the dialect utilized. Aside from monetary expenses and advantages, there are costs required at mental planes well. The differential access in view of the mental discernments is all the more firm and genuine risk. The elements in this incorporate every single such rationale, which tend to make a guardian hesitant to send girls to class. One of the glaring elements is the sympathy toward the physical and good wellbeing of a young lady kid which makes guardians

unwilling to give them a chance to travel separations to class every day. Religion and socio-social variables impact guardians' decision they may tend to hunt down a school where just young ladies are conceded and the one where ladies educators are utilized. The worry emerges when young ladies achieve adolescence even instruction past the level of education for young ladies might be seen as risk for their potential outcomes for marriage. Ponders recommend that in Indian family's seven-to-nine year old young ladies function upwards of 120-150 for each penny a larger number of hours than young men do. Normally, young ladies who might work more than their siblings at home will have less likelihood of going to class. In a joint family, the likelihood of expanded open door costs in these terms will be more. Does this mean when opportunity expenses of teaching young ladies and young men are indistinguishable, both will have rise to odds of going to class? The answer, tragically, is no. Guardians still keep young ladies at home to work and send their children to class.

5. CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS:

There is not obviously any single good answer, nor is there conclusive data to show us which factors relatively impact girls the most. However we can identify a range of possibilities that could suggest specific reasons for the marginalization of girls from the schooling system.

1. Expectations of Domesticity

To start with, girls are expected to contribute to the household far younger than boys are – the implicit understanding being that a girl is being trained for a role as a wife, mother and daughter-in-law, whereas boys are being trained for an occupation. Girls get married younger than boys do – a Harvard School of Public Health survey conducted studies in Gujarat looking into rates of child marriage, and found that of girls aged 14-17, 37% were engaged and 12% married. On the other hand, for boys in the same age range, only 27% were engaged and 3% married. The same study found strong correlation between marital status and school attendance rates (in which married children were over twice as likely to not attend school as single children), but also marriage proved to be worse for the educational prospects of girls than boys.

Besides, families often think that the cost of education, both monetary and psychological is wasted on a girl because of her decreased earning potential and this selfsame expectation of domesticity. The economic benefit thereof is not immediately apparent to most families. Overall, the expectation of the girl child's participation in family life seems to be a hindrance in her participation in schooling.

2. Safety

Safety of girls travelling alone is a major concern for Indians – the prevalent discourse surrounding recent events has brought to the forefront a longstanding problem. We also see a fear that educating girls causes excessive independence, and this is seemingly manifested in the attitude that parents take to a girl's education.

In a recent article, the Guardian told the story of a girl in Delhi who was being taunted by boys on the way to school. She was afraid to tell her parents, for she thought that they would prevent her from attending school if she did. She was right – her family was, in the words of the author, 'worried about the effect on their "honour" if she was sexually assaulted.' These stories are not isolated; rather, this is an endemic and very gendered problem in economically disadvantaged India, be it rural or urban.

3. Infrastructure Barriers

The Right to Education bill has set forth some norms and standards in this regard – it codifies expectations and requirements of norms and standards relating inter alia to pupil-teacher ratios buildings and infrastructure, school-working days, teacher-working hours. Therefore we do see legislators are at the very least, considering this area of concern further. It is also one of the easier aspects to tackle, as it falls within the purview of Education Departments in the Centre and in States. However, it is commonly perceived that girls suffer for various reasons from the lack of infrastructure much worse than boys do—for instance, as of 2012 40% of all government schools lacked a functioning common toilet, and another 40% lacked a separate toilet for girls. This in fact creates even more reluctance to allow for girls to be educated.

Although including girls in the scheme of Indian universalized education, these causes seems to make one thing clear – the causes are ingrained in systems that are larger than education. While temporary solutions are rampant and

popular, it will take attention on the long-term scale to ensure that girls across India are able to freely, safely, and consistently attend school and access an education.

6. FACTS & FINDINGS:

Literacy in India

The 15th official census in India was calculated in the year 2011. In a country like India, literacy is the main foundation for social and economic growth. When the British rule ended in India in the year 1947 the literacy rate was just 12%. Over the years, India has changed socially, economically, and globally. After the 2011 census, literacy rate India 2011 was found to be 74.04%. Compared to the adult literacy rate here the youth literacy rate is about 9% higher. Though this seems like a very great accomplishment, it is still a matter of concern that still so many people in India cannot even read and write. The numbers of children who do not get education especially in the rural areas are still high. Although the government has taken so many steps to improve the rural women education but still the problem persists.

Now, if we consider female literacy rate in India, then it is lower than the male literacy rate as many parents do not allow their female children to go to schools. They get married off at a young age instead. Though child marriage has been lowered to very low levels, it still happens. Many families, especially in rural areas believe that having a male child is better than having a baby girl. So the male child gets all the benefits. Today, the female literacy levels according to the Literacy Rate 2011 census are 65.46% where the male literacy rate is over 80%. The literacy rate in India has always been a matter of concern but many NGO initiatives and government ads, campaigns and programs are being held to spread awareness amongst people about the importance of literacy. Also the government has made strict rules for female equality rights. India literacy rate has shown significant rise in the past 10 years.

Here are some facts about different states literacy rate, Kerala is the only state in India to have 100% literacy rate. It is followed by Goa, Tripura, Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh, and Maharashtra, Sikkim. The lowest literacy rate in India is seen in the state of Bihar. We also need to think why is the literacy rate is low here in India compared to other developed countries. Basically the population in India is very high. Being the 7th largest country its population stands 2nd in the world after China. There are over 1 billion people in India. The number of schools and educational centers especially in rural areas is less. Even today many people are below the poverty line. Also people aren't aware that children should get free education according to the law.

7. CONCLUSION:

Any developmental process is the expansion of assets and capabilities of rural women to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold the institution accountable that affect their lives. Skill development among rural women is the need of the hour so as to make them confident, self-reliant and to develop in them the ability to be a part of decision making at home and outside. Indeed it may not be wrong to say that still rural women are the most disadvantaged and neglected section of the society for they are economically backward. Therefore there is a need on the part of the government and civil society to enable improvement in the quality of life of such vulnerable sections of the Indian population.

More importantly the developmental process in India should give priority to welfare schemes and programmes meant for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes" including women. These are the people who are economically backward; therefore, there is a need for sincere efforts on the part of the government to help improve the quality their life. The Social Assessment for the training and skill development clearly reflected that rural landless (mostly SCs and STs) form an integral part of poverty-ridden and marginalized groups. By empowering rural woman through education can thus enable them to live with dignity and self-reliance cutting across the barriers of customary biases and prejudices, social barrier of caste, class, gender, occupation and institutional barriers that prevent them from taking actions to improve their state both at the individual and collective level. Therefore, free education and necessary and employable skill development programmes must be launched for rural students and women so as to make them self-reliant and economically independent. Furthermore, right to vote is meaningless unless rural women are made aware, educated and imparted skills to understand the order of the day and this can bring change in their lives, in the family and lastly transform the holistic tribal landscape of India, through education, legal awareness, and socio economic independence. Thus, there is no doubt that the rural women can acquire any developmental milestones (skills) only through education and thus can change their own destiny.

Education is the only one instrument which has the capacity to transform many odds turning in favour of girls more specially so in the rural India. So an exclusive focus on girls' education is necessary. Education for teen age girls is a major problem due to various factors; the most important of them is non-availability of infrastructure and schools. Secondly, the travel time taken in reaching school, fear of crime and unknown eventuality would rise therefore provision of public transport exclusively for girl child is necessary. A legal provision would help rescue girls from the early marriages and open doors of development for them. Awareness programme are needed which would focus on the dynamics of nutrition in physical and mental growth. However, it is to be reiterated at the end that girls need a lot of compassionate treatment and favour to enable them to lead a respectable and meaningful life, and in ensuring this, the role of family members and society is undoubtedly crucial and of prime significance and the change attitude of elders towards girls is urgently called for.

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