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The Multifaceted Role of Education as a Catalyst for Empowering Women and Establishing a Paradigm Shift in Societal Norms in India

This long article is written by Dr. Kuldeep Singh Panwar, co authored by K. Livi Yephtho.

Abstract

Women make up half the population of the nation, and with education, they can be empowered to go on to contribute to the Indian economy. Empowerment of women through education will allow them to counter provocation, fight generational biases, and transform their suppressed reality. Even with continuous efforts to abolish gender inequality and the patriarchal nature of society, discrimination continues to exist. A lot requires action in the domain of education for women in order to do away with this prejudice. Naturally, women are built differently from men, but that should not hinder them from realizing their true potential because when it comes to proving their grit, women have always excelled, and sometimes even better than men. It is not to say that men should be demoted, but a fair and equal opportunity to both sexes on unbiased grounds would make a significant impact in ensuring a better nation tomorrow.

Empowering women through education is not solely about literacy; it is about creating a domino effect that impacts generations. A literate woman evolves into an informed mother, a competent worker, and an agile citizen who becomes a responsible citizen in moulding the sociodemographic essence of the nation. In the non-urban regions, especially, the existence of one educated woman can alter community practices concerning child care, hygiene, and nutrition, exhibiting that empowerment is both personal and collective. Therefore, edifying women should not be a representative gesture, but a fundamental amelioration that fuels the very foundation of democracy and development.

Keywords: *Women's Empowerment, Female Literacy Rate, United Nations, Participation, Patriarchal*

Introduction

“When women are educated, their countries become stronger and more prosperous.”

Michelle Obama

Empowerment is interpreted as *“the process of gaining freedom and power to do what you want or to control what happens to you,”*¹ as outlined in the Cambridge Dictionary. Knowledge is the essence of empowering women.² For centuries, the potent male doctrine successfully suppressed women and denied them any right on equal footing with men.³ Education emerged as the source of freedom that freed women in thinking, behaving, understanding, and standing up for their rights. The various components that broke women bit by bit and restrained their rights, all this while, are responsible for making them take second place in society. Their status is not being made a top priority as it should be.⁴

The establishment of women’s education is also emblematic of a cultural transition. Societies that are devoted to education for women exhibit robust civic participation, better governance, and decreased corruption. The advancements are not confined to economic growth alone but extend to enhanced public health, reduced infant death rates, and lessened harmful traditional practices. Thus, formulating education as empowerment spotlights that it is not an act of charity, but an act of justice that lines up with human rights and sustainable progress.⁵

Chronicle of Education of Women's in India

¹ CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/empowerment> (last visited May 22, 2024).

² *Women’s empowerment through education*, YOURDREAMBLOG.ORG (May 22, 2023; 01:30 PM), <https://yourdream.liveyourdream.org/2021/08/womens-empowerment-education/>.

³ M. Suguna, *Education and women empowerment in India*, ZENITHRESEARCH.ORG (May 22, 2023; 04:16 PM), http://zenithresearch.org.in/images/stories/pdf/2011/Dec/zijmr/15_VOL%201_ISSUE8_ZEN.pdf

⁴ Rouf Ahmad Bhat, *Role of Education in the Empowerment of Women in India*, FILES.ERIC.ED.GOV, (May 22, 2023; 0427 PM), <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1081705.pdf>

⁵ Tannista Banerjee, et. al., *Effective Governance, Female Educational Attainment, Leadership and Healthcare Outcomes*, 7 Theoretical Economics Letters 1223-1232 (2017), <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation?paperid=78070&>

The journey of women and their empowerment has been tumultuous, spanning centuries. The Vedic period effected a transpose in the scholastic milieu of women. During this period, Indian women enjoyed an elite repute. Literacy of women was considered essential as it promptly corresponded to the remunerative profitability, public harmony, their designated social situation, and affiliation with others. The time span between the 3rd and 4th Century B.C., every female was afforded learning, which assisted them to gain independence, confidence, and assertiveness. In primeval India, in regard to the quest for education, women indulged in neutral privileges and prerogatives as men in society.⁶

The period from 500 A.D. – 1500 A.D., which is the Medieval period, was when the position of women started declining. It was labelled as the ‘dark age’ for Indian women in society.⁷ During this period, Indian women faced a huge deterioration in education due to nefarious customs and prejudices like vetoing girls from acquiring education, the Purdah System, child marriage, the practice of Sati, etc.⁸ Educating girls was not regarded as a priority by society at this time. Women were confined within the enclosure of their homes. Both the Muslim and Hindu communities heavily practised early marriage of girls, which further contributed to the block in acquiring education for girls. A fraction of the elite families of those days made accommodations to educate their girls in the innermost chambers of the house, customarily referred to as Zenana Schools. The outcome was the existence of a scant number of literate women during the ‘Dark Ages.’ Marriage became the most common reason for the denouement of girls' education in both the Muslim and Hindu communities. In comparison, women belonging to the lower class or families did not even have the opportunity to acquire an education, so they remained illiterate.⁹

As a consequence of numerous inequities that were meted out to women over the centuries, the concepts of freedom, independence, and liberation were not known to women. Following several mutinies and communal redressal throughout the modern epoch, the status of women had begun

⁶ Santosh Kumar, *Vedic Women's Educational Conditions and their Social Status*, 10 (9) IJSR, 1480 (2020).

⁷ Dr. K.V. Sobha Rani, *A Study on Women Empowerment in India*, 7(11) IJMTST 120-124, (2021).

⁸ Geet Chawla, *Education as a tool to women empowerment*, INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH (IJR) (Apr. 12, 2016, 23:40:52+ 0530), <https://internationaljournalofresearch.com/2016/04/12/education-as-a-tool-to-women-empowerment/>.

⁹ Diksha Kashyap, *Education of Women in Medieval India: Hindu and Muslim*, YOUR ARTICLE LIBRARY (May 23, 2023, 09:42 PM), <https://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/education/indian-education/education-of-women-in-medieval-india-hindu-and-muslim/63503#:~:text=Usually%2C%20the%20education%20of%20girls,have%20education%20of%20proper%20standard.>

to recover and was reevaluated by their abilities, strengths, and skills.¹⁰ Despite that, women's position in modern India was exposed to discordance. In the modern era, on the one hand, Indian women excelled in certain domains, and on the other hand, they endured the brutality of a male hegemonized society.

Following the period of Indian independence, the highest precedence was specified to educating women. It became the utmost task of both the civil and government heads, since literate women may execute an essential part in the nation's progress. The educational structure in India was amended, and the process of a three-level guide was started. The two vital systems fell into place, that is:

- i.) Formal Education Programme, and
- ii.) Non-formal Education Programme.

Additionally, other academic initiatives were also commenced, like:

- i.) Online education programmes, and
- ii.) Distance education programmes.

The essence of all the various academic schemes was to ensure that every female child in the society was educated. It further led to the elevation of involvement of women in various fields of study, like medicine, engineering, law, and in prestigious universities etc.¹¹

United Nations Initiatives for Women's Empowerment Through Education

All throughout, the United Nations (UN) has tried to support and uplift women in every sphere of society. So far, global conventions on women by the UN have been held four times, namely in Beijing, 1995, Nairobi, 1985, Copenhagen, 1980, and Mexico, 1975, Nairobi.¹² In July 1985, the Third World Conference on Women, by the UN was held in Nairobi, it became the first to pioneer the notion of women's empowerment. It was expounded as a reposition of economic and

¹⁰ Rahul Pagare, *Women's Empowerment: History and Policy*, ROUND TABLE INDIA (Aug. 23, 2017), <https://www.roundtableindia.co.in/progress-of-society-progress-of-women/>

¹¹ INDIA NETZONE, https://www.indianetzone.com/39/women_education_modern_india.htm#:~:text=The%20period%20and%20after%201948,the%20development%20of%20the%20country. (last visited May 23, 2024).

¹² UN WOMEN, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women> (last visited May 23, 2024).

social competence and command of assets approved for women.¹³ Of the four World Conferences, the most historic convention remains to be the 1995 Beijing, China Conference. It multiplied on the diplomatic accord, which was accomplished by the three preceding world Conventions on Women, which included education for women as an utmost need and concern. Further, it merged five decenary of licit progress directed at obtaining parity for women just like men in legislation and its implementation.¹⁴

The rationale of empowering women, according to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNDFW), incorporates factors like:

- Obtaining discernment and awareness of gender association and the strategies in which to alter these associations.
- Establishing a feeling of dignity, a credence in one's adroitness to obtain the coveted developments and the entitlement to command one's entity.
- Possessing the potential to create alternatives to utilize negotiating potentials.¹⁵

Further, UNESCO, through its multiple initiatives, has tirelessly tried to make education a vital part of women's empowerment. One of UNESCO's extensive schemes was the "Education for All" project, which intends to widen minor education and care, avail gratis education for every youth, improve adult education, and establish the levels of reading at universal learning quality for subjects like math and reading.¹⁶ Further, the three obelisks of the Strategy for Gender Equality in and through Education (2019-2025),¹⁷ under UNESCO, centers on having quality statistics to notify measures for gender parity with education; superior legislation and mapping out structures to promote rights; and a stellar level of education to empower women.¹⁸

Exigency and the Gravity of Women's Education

¹³ UNITED NATIONS, <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/nairobi1985> (last visited May 23, 2024).

¹⁴ UNITED NATIONS, <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/beijing1995#:~:text=The%20Fourth%20World%20Conference%20on%20Women%20in%20Beijing%2C%20China%20was,legal%20advances%20aimed%20at%20securing> (last visited May 23, 2024).

¹⁵ UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN, https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/unpd-cm7-2008-11_p06_unifem.pdf (last visited May 29, 2024).

¹⁶ NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/unesco/> (last visited May 23, 2024).

¹⁷ UNESCO DIGITAL LIBRARY, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000369000> (last visited May 23, 2024).

¹⁸ UNESCO, <https://www.unesco.org/en/gender-equality/education/her-education-our-future> (last visited May 23, 2024).

Educating women translates to boosting their self-worth and empowering them. The Indian society, even today, believes and practices the patriarchal system in their communities, and this has led to oppressing women and their rights. Education is a boon that teaches women to learn life skills and provide for themselves rather than depending on the male members.¹⁹ Nationwide growth is possible through the education of Indian women. It is also responsible for the progress of almost all of the human assets and ameliorating the standard of life outside and at home.²⁰

According to UNICEF, financial provision to educate girls can remodel societies, nations, and even the whole world. There are fewer chances of girls getting married early and a higher probability of such girls managing a robust and high-yielding life. Further, it can lead to such girls acquiring higher salaries, taking part in the adjudication that distresses them greatly, and creating a worthy destiny for themselves and their people. Provision of education to girls is beyond mere entry into schools.²¹

Female Education in India

Subsequent to the Independence of 1947, women were disenthralled from the consuetude of imparting education in in-house. The Government of India was on a mission to educate India and its women to empower them. With time and various legislations, amendments, and Acts were enacted to ensure women's education.²²

The world population of women was estimated at 49.7%, while the world population of men was 50.42% as of 2021.²³ The live population of females in India stands at 48.4%.²⁴ During the last four decenary, the literacy growth of India has been notable. According to the 2011 Census of

¹⁹ HERCIRCLE, <https://www.hercircle.in/engage/get-inspired/trending/women-education-in-india-history-and-education-status-of-women-in-india-4031.html> (last visited May 24, 2024).

²⁰ M. Suguna, *Education and Women Empowerment in India*, 1(8) ZIJMR 198-204 (2011).

²¹ UNICEF, <https://www.unicef.org/education/girls-education#:~:text=Girls%20who%20receive%20an%20education,strengthen%20economies%20and%20reduces%20inequality> (last visited May 24, 2024).

²² Pallavi Pradeep Purbey, *Women Education in India – An Complete Analysis*, GETMYUNI (Jan. 25, 2023), <https://www.getmyuni.com/articles/women-education-in-india#:~:text=Importance%20of%20Women%20Education,-Education%20for%20all&text=As%20per%20the%20report%2C%20India's,to%20the%20country's%20entire%20development>.

²³ THE WORLD BANK, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS?end=2021&start=1960&view=chart> (last visited May 22, 2024).

²⁴ COUNTRYMETERS, <https://countrymeters.info/en/India> (last visited May 22, 2024).

India, the national rate of literacy stands at 74.04%. The Indian extent of female literacy level was 65.46% and the rate of literacy among men was 82.14%. It is essential to understand the overall year-wise educational attainment level among the population of females and males in India. The female literacy rate saw an increase over the years; however, it continued to quiver throughout.

Rural areas have an even lower rate of literacy among women. It is a sign that there is still a huge number of the female population in India who are still uneducated, which translates to being intellectually weak, underdeveloped, and oppressed. Furthermore, there is inequality in the distribution of education. The Census of India 2001 is an example enough to understand that gender inequality is further deepened in regard to education, by its harrowing data, which shows women's literacy rate is barely at 54% in comparison to the increasing male literacy rate at 76%.²⁵

In spite of the government guidelines and constitutional safeguards, the gap in educational access between rural and urban women remains a challenge. Girls in remote villages often walk several kilometers to reach schools, which discourages attendance and increases dropout rates.²⁶ Inadequate infrastructure, safety concerns, and lack of sanitation facilities further dissuade parents from sending their daughters to school.²⁷ Even when enrolled, many girls are burdened with domestic chores, resulting in irregular attendance and poor academic performance. These structural barriers reveal that education for women must be supported with parallel social reforms addressing gender stereotypes, safety, and poverty.²⁸

The table below will demonstrate the comparison between male and female literacy rates throughout the Deca centennial.

TABLE

²⁵ Suguna, op.cit., P.200.

²⁶ Pavan Kumar, *Bridging the Rural-Urban Divide: A Study on Educational Inequality in India*, 12 TIJER, 149-151 (2025), <https://tijer.org/tijer/papers/TIJERD001045.pdf>

²⁷ Sulochana Pednekar, et. al., *Monitoring WASH and school dropouts in India: Is there adequate data? An assessment of four national databases*, 14 Journal of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for Development, 56-68 (2024), <https://iwaponline.com/washdev/article/14/1/56/99802/Monitoring-WASH-and-school-dropouts-in-India-Is>

²⁸ Premachandran P, *Girls' Education in Rural India: Barriers, Challenges, and Policy Interventions*, 2 IJTERS, (2025), <https://www.eduresearchjournal.com/index.php/ijters/article/view/86>

SL. No.	CENSUS YEAR	LITERACY RATE % (PERSON)	MALE LITERACY %	FEMALE LITERACY %
1.	1901	5.3	9.8%	0.6%
2.	1911	5.9	10.6%	1.0%
3.	1921	7.2	12.2%	1.8%
4.	1931	9.5	15.6%	2.9%
5.	1941	16.1	24.9%	7.3%
6.	1951	18.33	21.16%	8.86%
7.	1961	28.3	40.40%	15.35%
8.	1971	34.45	45.96%	21.97%
9.	1981	43.57	56.38%	29.76%
10.	1991	52.21	64.13%	39.29%
11.	2001	64.83	75.26%	53.67%
12.	2011	74.04	82.14%	65.46%

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The above table demonstrates the literacy rate between males and females over the years from 1901-2011. The indicator shows female literacy rate gradually picking up pace from 2001 onwards, from 52.67% in 2011, where it hiked to 65.46%. At least in comparison to where it started from in 1901 with a meagre 0.6%.

The framers of the Constitution have also put in much thought to provide protection and assurance to women, whether that is to educate them or to empower them.

- Under **Article 14**, both women and men should be given fair opportunities with privileges within the political, social, and economic domains.
- Under **Article 15(1)**, forbid inequality toward any individual by virtue of race, belief, caste, sex, etc.

²⁹ CENSUS OF INDIA 2021, <https://censusofindia2021.com/literacy-rate-of-india-2021/> (last visited May 25, 2024).

- Under **Article 15(3)**, phenomenal provisions permitting approbative biases approved for females by the State.
- Under **Article 16**- Fairness of scope regarding the common employment for every national.
- Under **Article 23**, veto the smuggling of humans and coerced drudgery.
- Under **Article 39(a)**, the government must administer its procedure in the direction of acquiring the legal mechanism of subsistence for both women and men.
- Under **Article 39(d)**, equivalent remuneration to ensure balanced labour across categories of women and men.
- Under **Article 42**, the authorities must avail amenities to frame an impartial and compassionate maternity aid and state of occupation.
- Under **Article 51 (A)(e)**, repudiate customs disparaging upon the gravitas of the womenfolk.
- Under **Article 300(A)**, provision is made for the female population's ownership rights.
- Under the **73rd and 74th Amendment Act, 1992**, 1/3rd seats of the municipal bodies of Municipalities and Panchayats are reserved for females.

Apart from the Constitution of India, there are other sources through which women's empowerment was exercised.

- Under the **Hindu Succession Act, 1956**, it entitles women to have a claim in the familial assets.

- Under the **Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961**, practice of economic transaction in marriage is an illicit custom, which translates to the circumvention of oppressing women.
- **Equal Remuneration Act, 1976**- Stipulates equal wages for equal work irrespective of whether the work is dispensed by men or women.
- Under **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971**, reproductive termination under specific conditions is legitimized and regulated, and female empowerment rights are acknowledged.
- Under **Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983**, the laws under this legislation aim to prevent different forms of gendered violence and discrimination.
- Under **Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986**, it regulates the portrayal of women in the media to prevent indecent or objectionable representation in newspapers, television, radio, and other platforms.
- Under **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005**, it lays down solid security in relation to constitutionally guaranteed rights of women in India..

Further, the Indian Government has been at work to initiate more legislation to provide protection and safeguard the rights of women.

- Under the MHRD (Ministry of Human Resource Development),³⁰ the DWCD (Department of Women and Child Development),³¹ was initiated to execute various policies concerning the advancement and legal protection of women.
- Between 2011-12, the NMEW (National Mission for Empowerment of Women) came into operation, aiming to achieve female empowerment universally. Further, it aims to assist in the procedure of amalgamating all schemes for the prosperity and

³⁰ MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, <https://www.education.gov.in/e-content#header> (last visited May 25, 2024).

³¹ MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT, <https://wcd.nic.in/> (last visited May 25, 2024).

encouragement of women endeavoured by the different departments and central ministries.³²

- Under National Resource Centre for Women (NRCW) is another initiative by the central Government through the NMEW (National Mission for Empowerment of Women). It poses as the intermediary for all schemes implemented for women.³³
- A nationwide initiative known as the National Literacy Mission was launched to address the problem of illiteracy among individuals in the age bracket of 15-35 years.³⁴
- During the years 1975-76, a programme known as Functional Literacy for Adult Women (FLAW) was initiated and introduced illiterate adult females to ensure practical dexterity and to awaken awareness for health and child care customs.³⁵

As is evident, today, there are numerous initiatives implemented by the central government to promote empowerment and the educational advancement of women. The Indian Government has initiated a number of schemes to encourage, improve, and empower the reputation of female education in the country through various schemes and policies:

- The **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)** programme was launched on 22nd January 2015 to bring about the acknowledgment among the Indian folks to educate their girl child in the nation. The administration was able to endorse this policy by creating the Block Task Force and District Task Force. Its main objective is to abolish female aborticide and avail suitable education to women.³⁶
- A scheme titled **Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)** was initiated to promote empowerment and skill awareness among women

³² INDIA SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION, <https://www.indiascienceandtechnology.gov.in/st-visions/national-mission/national-mission-empowerment-women-nmew> (last visited May 25, 2025).

³³ PIB, <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/printrelease.aspx?relid=101171> (last visited May 25, 2024).

³⁴ HIGHER EDUCATION, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, <https://www.education.gov.in/nlma> (last visited May 25, 2024).

³⁵ DSEL.EDUCATION.GOV.IN, [HTTPS://DSEL.EDUCATION.GOV.IN/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/2023-01/DRAFT_GUIDELINES_OF_NILP.PDF](https://dsel.education.gov.in/sites/default/files/2023-01/DRAFT_GUIDELINES_OF_NILP.PDF) (LAST VISITED MAY 25, 2024).

³⁶ MINISTRY OF WOMEN AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT, GOI, <https://wcd.nic.in/bbbp-schemes> (last visited May 25, 2024).

belonging to the 16 years and above age group to be independent or grow as entrepreneurs in the diverse spheres of society.³⁷

- In 2016, **Mahila-E-Haat** was launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, which is an online platform designed to support and promote women's entrepreneurship. It lays out an online-based agora for small-business holders and businesswomen to trade or display their services and products.³⁸
- The **SABLA** scheme, implemented in 2011 by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, was originally known as the RGSEAG or SABLA (Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls). It plans to issue dietary elements and meals.³⁹

The 1986 National Policy on Education highlighted women's empowerment by incorporating dedicated sections emphasizing on "*Education for Women's Equality*". It has two facets, firstly, empowering through self-approval, which translates to women aiding themselves, on account of how much they are able to gather from what is communicated to them and utilize it to self-empower. Secondly, women should be capable of using such knowledge to empower others as well.⁴⁰

Adopted in 2001, the National Policy for the Empowerment of Women seeks to promote the advancement, development, and empowerment of women across various sectors. The Policy talks about ensuring fair ingress for girls and women in education. It further emphasized, "*Special measure will be taken to eliminate discrimination, universalize education, eradicate illiteracy, create a gender-sensitive educational system, increase enrolment and retention rates of girls, and improve the quality of education to facilitate life-long leanings as well as development of occupation/ vocation/ technical skills by women. Reducing the gender gap in existing policies will be achieved, with a special focus on girls and women, particularly those belonging to*

³⁷ DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN & CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL WELFARE, http://wbcdwdsw.gov.in/User/scheme_STEP (last visited May 25, 2024).

³⁸ MAHILA E-HAAT, <https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/Mahila%20E-haat%2024012017.pdf> (last visited May 25, 2024).

³⁹ PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU, <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=133064> (last visited May 25, 2024).

⁴⁰ EDUCATION.GOV.IN, https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/npe.pdf (last visited May 25, 2024).

weaker sections including the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/ Other Backward Classes/ Minorities. Gender sensitive curricula would be developed at all levels of educational system in order to address sex stereotyping as one of the causes of gender discrimination."⁴¹

Significance of female participation

Participation of various nature is essential for women to adhere to at this juncture. They can become a contributor to the different spheres of society, formally, informally, directly or indirectly, in the social, political, economic, and administrative domains. By participating in the Panchayat Raj institutions, women can contribute and also be a part of the policy-making process of the society.⁴² The representation of women is a sad affair, as only 14.94% are represented in the Lok Sabha, and a meagre total of 14.05% are represented in the Rajya Sabha.⁴³

Contribution of Education to Female Empowerment

The ICDAW (International Convention on all forms of Discrimination Against Women) stated that among the leading ways of empowering women can be viewed as education through knowledge, skills, and the willingness to take part wholly in the progressive process.⁴⁴ Educating women has an additional notable effect on poverty and progress than educating men. Educating women is another prominent feature boosting child well-being and lowering newborn mortality rates.

The rationale of a literate woman is prodigious, as they are responsible and holds an essential part in moulding the intellectual form and conduct of the future generation. Learned women are at an advantage and in a position to always be careful when it comes to medical care and be aware of the ways to get the right medication for their child and themselves. Apart from being self-aware, knowledge acquisition further assists them to participate within the framework of governance and the protection of their rights. As an educated person, a mother will be in a

⁴¹ WCD.NIC.IN,
<https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/National%20Policy%20for%20Empowerment%20of%20Women%202001.pdf>
(last visited May 25, 2024).

⁴² Dr. Mahalinga K, *Women Empowerment through Panchayat Raj Institutions*, 3(3) PIJR 152-154 (2014).

⁴³ MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1882226> (last visited May 25, 2024).

⁴⁴ UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS,
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women> (last visited May 25, 2024).

position to administer the academic development of their children, which can result in a better future for the next generation.⁴⁵

Hindrances in women's education

Apart from societal ethics and parental partiality, there are other aspects that contribute to the blockade in women's education. It all boils down to the antiquated mindset that girls need to be trussed within the four walls of the home rather than getting an education. While their boys, on whose shoulders all the burdens and responsibilities of the family rest, should be the ones to go out there and get the best possible education. In most rural areas, families expect to educate their girls just enough to write their name, read a little, and know how to count, which for them is a huge milestone of a duty well done. Certain hurdles stopping women from achieving the best potential education are:

- Expected to serve as the family helper
- Ineffectual regulatory supervision and administration
- Pedagogue proficiencies
- Lack of women educators
- Deficiency of attempts to assemble funds
- Sanctified and societal morals
- Shortcomings in the domain of tutelage
- Excessive dropouts and poor maintenance
- Primary learning resources
- Gender prejudices in the educational syllabus
- Insufficient school supplies
- Poverty
- Parental partiality.⁴⁶

A deeper look at these hindrances reveals that women's education is not just blocked by poverty or lack of infrastructure, but also by psychological and cultural conditioning.⁴⁷ Girls are often

⁴⁵ Dr. K.P. Meera, Jumana. M.K, *Empowering Women through Education*, 4(10) IJHSSI, 61 (2015).

⁴⁶ *Id.* at 60.

⁴⁷ *Recasting social norms to universalize education for adolescent girls: The Mamidipudi Venkatarangaiya Foundation experience* (2024),

told from childhood that their ultimate duty is marriage and household management. Such conditioning reduces their own aspirations and internalizes a belief in their secondary role.⁴⁸ Teachers' attitudes also matter; where educators themselves hold patriarchal biases, they may unintentionally discourage girls from pursuing higher studies.⁴⁹ Hence, women's empowerment must involve re-educating society at large, so that parents, teachers, and community leaders actively support female education. Additionally, structural inequalities like wage disparity and limited career opportunities for women also act as indirect barriers. For example, in India, women continue to receive considerably lower wages than men for work of an equivalent nature.⁵⁰ When families see limited returns from investing in girls' education, they prioritize the education of sons. Overcoming this requires not just literacy campaigns, but also labor market reforms and affirmative actions that ensure educated women have visible and rewarding career paths.⁵¹

Conclusion

Empowerment has to begin from a tender age. It is the entire ecosystem, morals, and values that a child grows up in that influence their psyche. Education, on the other hand, is another very vital aspect through which a girl can realize their true power and own it. Women are considered sacred in many communities around the world, for their unique ability to bring life to earth, a nurturer, and as a huge asset to any society. However, for centuries, women have endured the brunt of male chauvinism and society's prejudice towards such actions. Gradually, with time, the position of women improved, but at the pace of a tortoise.

The initiatives of the various organizations and heads like the United Nations (UN), UNICEF, UNESCO, etc., on international level and the Indian Government on home grounds have tried to implement numerous schemes, policies, and enacted laws and provisions to uplift and empower

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/12/discussion-paper-recasting-social-norms-to-universalize-education-for-adolescent-girls>

⁴⁸ Anuradha Acharya and Tapan Adeshara, *Exploring Educational Inequality and Gender Gaps in India: A Comprehensive Review and Analysis*, 2 CLAREUS SCIENTIFIC SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING (2025), <https://clareus.org/pdf/csse/CSSE-02-031.pdf>

⁴⁹ Sonali Rakshit & Soham Sahoo, *Biased teachers and gender gaps in learning outcomes: Evidence from India*, 161 JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS, 103041 (2023), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/366910848_Biased_teachers_and_gender_gap_in_learning_outcomes_Evidence_from_India

⁵⁰ Jenna Cook, *Educational Disparities Among Girls in India*, BALLARD BRIEF (2020), <https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/educational-disparities-among-girls-in-india>

⁵¹ Anuradha, *supra* note 48.

women. Education has been the most essential subject that was taken into account because an educated woman can fend for themselves and raise a generation of educated and cultured leaders. Educating women also helps them to develop the concepts of being a part of the Panchayats, government administration, public issues, etc., to remove gender partiality.

Though the status of Indian women has faced many trials and tribulations over the years, today, their position has substantially improved. It is not exactly ideal, but the progress is one that is moving. A study of the comparative chart showing the literacy rate between women and men is enough to understand just how little women's education was made a priority. Fast forward to the present, where women are taking up challenging roles in their careers and have ventured into other spheres of society on par with men. Educating women is empowering them. There is still more that needs to be done in order to ensure the complete elimination of female illiteracy, particularly in rural regions. All the factors that pose as a hindrance, like poverty, child marriage, and parental preference, need to be addressed. The practice of child marriage may have been abolished, but in reality, some communities in the remote areas of the country still practice it in hiding; the same goes for evil practices like the dowry system. Education is one of the most essential weapons that a woman can equip herself with to fight societal stigma, patriarchal partiality, and instead encourage others to follow suit in the quest for women's liberation and empowerment.

Looking ahead, the vision for women's empowerment through education should not be restricted to numbers and statistics alone. It should focus on qualitative aspects such as leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurship among women. Empowered women must be seen as future policy makers, scientists, teachers, engineers, entrepreneurs, and social reformers who will shape India's trajectory towards becoming a developed country. Unless education translates into actual participation and representation in every sector of society, empowerment will remain incomplete. Thus, empowering women through education is not just about eliminating illiteracy, but about equipping half the population to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with men in every sphere of life. Unless education translates into actual participation and representation in every sector of society, empowerment will remain incomplete. Thus, women's education is not merely an act of social reform but the cornerstone of a paradigm shift in India's societal norms, enabling equality, participation, and sustainable national progress.

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