

## Analysis of women's education in India and its impact

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### Abstract

*Women constitute almost half of the population of the world. Education for women is the way to improve the health, nutrition and economic status of the household that constitute the micro unit of a nation economy. In this context, it can be argued that lack of women education can be an impediment to the country's economic development. This paper aims to study the Development of women's education in India and its impact. Due to the lack of education, women for over thousand years have been marginalized and were silent and invisible in the public arena. Since female literacy is highly correlated with the health status of the population, lack of women education resulted in the increased infant mortality, maternal mortality, birth rate, death rate and decreased life expectancy at birth. At the same time, the lower Government initiatives and negative parental attitudes on women's education that prevailed in the past resulted in lower Gross Enrolment Ratio and higher drop-out rates for girls at schools compared to boys. But since independence, with the Government initiatives and changing parental attitudes on the importance of women's education, there is a rapid growth of female literacy rate in India. This increasing trends of female literacy over the decades resulted in the improved health status, higher Gross Enrolment Ratio and lower drop-out rates of girls at school.*

### Keywords

Female literacy, Indian Census, Health status, Gross Enrolment, Drop-out rate, Social development, Economic development.

## Introduction

Since the dawn of the human civilization, education has been a liberating force from darkness and ignorance to light and knowledge. It constitutes the major defining variable of human capital. It is a lifelong process. Education is thus co-extensive with life. The great Greek philosopher Plato was the first who advocated a state controlled system of compulsory education for both the sexes. He is, perhaps, regarded as the first feminist. To him, the function of education was to make a man and a woman socially, economically, intellectually and politically useful and fit. Hence, education for citizenship is ‘Gymnastics for the body and music for the soul.’ It is either the presence or absence of education that causes development or underdevelopment. Education has created a great divide between men and women. Therefore, women development/empowerment/liberation is integrally related to education. ‘More the education, greater the women’s empowerment and development.’

The Indian Government has expressed strong commitment towards education for all; however, India still has one of the lowest female literacy rates in Asia. There is a wide gender disparity in India’s literacy rate (Census, 2011). In India women achieve far less education than that of men. As per census report 2011, nearly 82.14 per cent of men were literate and nearly 65.46 per cent of the women aged 7 and above were literate in India. There is also a significant regional variation; female literacy rate in Kerala is 91.9 per cent, while in Rajasthan it is 52.6 per cent. This low level of literacy not only has a negative impact on women’s lives but also on their families’ lives and on their country’s economic development. Empowering women through education pays dividends by not only providing opportunities and choice to women but also uplifting the health status of the whole family and community (Islam, Hossain and Rahman, 2013; Sandiforda, Casselb, Montenegroc and Sanchezd, 1995; Pinto, 1985; Levine and Schnell,

2001). States and countries which have a higher percentage of literate women perform better on developmental and social indices, literate females enjoy greater autonomy and are more involved in decision making. Women's education has often been cited as one of the most valuable tools to reduce poverty (Dyson and Moore, 1983). Women who are educated tend to marry later and have smaller families (Gokhale, Kanade, Rao, Kelkar, Joshi and Girigosavi, 2004). Academic accomplishment results in greater participation in local councils and democratic institutions, educated women are more likely to assume leadership positions. They are more aware of their rights and are more likely to claim their rights (Jain, 1985). Female literacy is also said to have a positive influence on the health of their progeny. Numerous studies show that illiterate women have high levels of fertility and mortality, poor nutritional status, low earning potential, and little autonomy within the household. A women's lack of education also has a negative impact on the health and well being of her children. Additionally, the lack of an educated population can be an impediment to the country's economic development (Victoria, 1998).

According to Human Development Report (HDR) 2010, Human Development Index (HDI) for India was 0.519 in 2010 with an overall global ranking of 119 (out of the 169 countries) compared to 134 (out of 192 countries) in 2007 (HDR 2009). ('Indian Journal of Adult Education', 2015). Attainment of universal primary education is one of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations to be achieved by the year 2015. Closing gender disparity is also one of the U.N Millennium Developmental Goals ('United Nations Millennium Development Goals'). Planning Commission has also targeted in the eleventh Five Year Plan to increase literacy rate of persons aged 7 years or more to 85 per cent and reducing gender gap in literacy to 10 percentage points by 2011-12. Literacy rate and educational development are considered to be key variables affecting demographic indicators like fertility, mortality

(especially infant mortality) rate and migration. It greatly contributes in improving quality of life, particularly with regard to life expectancy, learning levels and nutritional levels of children. Better literacy and educational level definitely have a positive impact on the health parameter. Higher level of literacy and educational development lead to greater awareness on the one hand and help people in acquiring new skills on the other ('State of Literacy', 2011).

The Indian Government's commitment to education is stated in its constitution with an article promising 'free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14'. The National Policy on Education, which was updated in 1992 and the 1992 Programme of Action both reaffirmed the government's commitment to improving literacy levels, by providing special attention to girls and children from scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. (Sharma, 2012). There has been a sincere effort to improve the education attainment of women by both government and voluntary organizations. The changes in the policies and infrastructural supports on primary, secondary and higher education reflect the initiatives of the Government of India towards women education. The study begins with the 2011 census data on literacy followed by the importance of female literacy and the history of Government policies and programme to improve the educational status of women. After explaining the methodology of the study, the article examined the trends in female literacy and the impact of women's education.

### **Literacy Rate**

As per 2011 census, literacy rate in India has been reported as 74.04 per cent with a 14 per cent increase to that in 2001 whereas the hike is maximum for rural women at 26 per cent in the last decade, which may be attributed to the literacy mission of the Government of India. Overall female literacy rate in India is much lower than that of male literacy rate. The female literacy

level according to the 2011 census is 65.46 per cent whereas the male literacy rate is 82.14 per cent.

The highest male literacy rate is observed in Kerala (96.1 per cent), followed by Lakshadweep (95.6 per cent) and minimum for Bihar (71.2 per cent) and Arunachal Pradesh (72.6 per cent). Female literacy rate is maximum for Kerala (92.1 per cent), followed by Mizoram (89.3 per cent) and lowest for Bihar (51.5 per cent), followed by Rajasthan (52.1 per cent). A little more than half of the females are literate in these states (Census, 2011).

### **Literates and Illiterates**

The number of literates and illiterates aged seven and above in India as per the provisional population totals of Census 2011 is 77,84,54,120 and 27,29,50,015 i.e., 74.03 per cent and 25.96 per cent of the total number of persons aged seven and above (1,05,14,04,135). There has been marked improvement in the proportion of literates in the last decade. Literates in 2011 constitute 74 per cent of the total population aged seven and above as compared to 65 per cent in 2001. On the other hand, illiterates form 26 per cent of the total population in 2011 as compared to 35 per cent in 2001. The country has continued its march in improving the literacy rate by recording a jump of 9.21 percentage points. In absolute terms, 21,77,00,941 additional persons have become literate during the decade 2001 to 2011. The increase in literacy rates in male and female are in the order of 6.88 and 11.79 percentage points respectively. However, efforts are still required to achieve the target of 85 per cent set by the Planning Commission.

A significant milestone reached in Census 2011, is that the total number of illiterates has come down from 30,41,46,862 in 2001 to 27,29,50,015 a decline of 3,11,96,847 persons. One of the interesting features of Census 2011 is that out of total of 21,77,00,941 literates added during the

decade, female (11,00,69,001) out number male (10,76,31,940). A reverse trend was noticed during 1991-2001. The decadal increase in the number of literates among male is 31.98 percentage points while the corresponding increase in case of female is 49.10 percentage points.

A notable feature is that out of the total decrease of 3,11,96,847 in the number of illiterates, the female (1,71,22,197) out number male (1,40,74,650). The above two changes are a clear indication of the fact that the gender gap in literacy is shrinking in the country. The trend of rising female literates will have far reaching consequences on the development of the society.

An extremely positive development in the present decade is that the gap of 21.59 percentage points recorded between male and female literacy rates in 2001 census has reduced to 16.68 percentage points in 2011. Though the target set for the year 2011-2012 by the Planning Commission of reducing the gender gap to 10 percentage points has not been achieved, it is heartening that the reduction has been to the order of almost 5 percentage points ('Provisional Population Totals', 2011)

### **Importance of Female Literacy**

It is the education which is the right weapon to cut the social slavery and it is the education which will enlighten the downtrodden masses to come up and gain social status, economic betterment and political freedom – Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Jawaharlal Nehru had once rightly said, 'Educate a man and you educate one person. Educate a woman and you educate the whole family.' According to notable economist Lawrence Summers, 'investment in the education of girls may well be the highest-return investment available in the developing world.' (King Elizabeth and Annehill, 1998). Education, in reality, is the most valuable gift that parents can give to their daughter. If a girl is educated then she can also opt for

a job if the need arises. So she would not be considered as a burden on the family. This would check the social evil of female foeticide. As an educated wife she would be interested in family planning as well. Studies have shown that illiterate women have high fertility and mortality rate. Many women prefer to have more children so that they could look after her in old age. But being educated she would certainly understand the advantages of a small family. Also being educated she would be able to participate in the day-to-day proceedings of the family. (Suman Soni, 2012a)

When a female is educated the next generation is bound to be educated hence education has many folds impact on the social and economical development of any nation. Moreover education may spread through interpersonal motivation. When one family sends their child to school, their neighbour is likely to do so as well. Women's education too often spreads this way, more specifically through same sex effects i.e., an educated women is far more likely to send her daughter to school than an uneducated women. Also, she is likely to maintain better conditions of nutrition and hygiene in her household and thereby improve her family's health.

An educated mother would be more conscious about the health and hygiene of the family than her illiterate counterpart. Studies have proved that lack of education affects the general health of the family. More educated women tend to decrease infant mortality rate by reducing their fertility. Improving women's health and social status is one way to ameliorate infant mortality (Norton, 2005). Also infant mortality is inversely related to the educational level of mother. For example, in Kerala female literacy ratio is highest and has the lowest infant mortality rate with highest life expectancy. On the other hand in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar where female literacy ratio is lowest, life expectancy is also lowest. Besides general health inculcating good moral values in her children would be one of the top priorities of an educated mother. In the long run, well

brought up children is an asset which any society would love to possess. Moreover, the more educated a women is the more likely she is to seek out care, give birth in the presence of a skilled attendant, breastfeed, and understands the consequences of HIV/AIDS (Andrews and Brouillette, 2003a).

An analysis completed in 2000 showed the connection between malnutrition in preschool children and uneducated mothers. Child malnutrition goes hand in hand with uneducated mothers. Education for females significantly improves a child's nutrition. Good nutrition is the basis for a good future. The best way to reduce hunger is to educate the mother. The mother's educational attainment and literacy are correlated with the age of first pregnancy, and probability that the mother attain prenatal and postnatal care. Mothers with a secondary education have a higher probability of waiting until a later age to get pregnant. Once pregnant, they are also more likely to get prenatal and postnatal care, and deliver their child in the presence of a skilled attendant. Women who finish at least a primary level education have improved nutrition, medical care, information access, and economic independence. Infants reap benefits such as healthy environments, improved nutrition, and medical care. Mothers with some level of education have a higher probability to breast feeding (Andrews and Brouillette, 2003b; Jorgenson, 2004; Fuse, 2006a).The duration of breastfeeding has the potential to influence the birth space (Rutstein, 2005a). Women without any educational background tend to have children at an earlier age, thus their bodies are not yet mature enough to carry and deliver a child (Andrews and Brouillette, 2003c). Providing women access to family planning centres can educate mothers on how to plan ahead for their families. Educational means can also teach mothers on the beneficial health practices such as breastfeeding. Family planning should be taught to every family. All forms of contraceptives should be able to choose whether or not to use birth control and what forms of it



to use, once they are educated about it. The couples should never have unwanted and dangerous operations forced upon them. For India to impede population growth, people must be educated about birth control and be offered options. Government recognizing birth space as a possible health interventions is now working towards making affordable contraception available (Rutstein, 2005b).

In modern society, education is one of the necessary channels for achieving high class, status and power. It is not the only channel for mobility and the provision of educational facilities does not equalize all opportunities. Status should rise for females seeking out education. Granting women employment raises their status and autonomy. Having a gainful employment can raise the perceived worth of females. This can lead to an increase in the number of women getting an education and a decrease in the number of female infanticide (Fuse, 2006b). Further, women's education can also bring about changes in the family size, fertility, decision-making and participation in every walks of life, etc.

In this context, Prof. Ghose writes:

Better education of women generally results in increased life option such as marriage choices, increased sharing of authority within the family, low fertility patterns, greater participation in social and political activities and increase in economic power. Economic power is usually accepted as the most influential factor in determining power and privilege. So the overall impact of inequalities, in and barriers to education are difference in the status of men and women.

In the social modernization perspective, education leads to development. Higher number of skilled workers means more earning and further economic growth. According to the economic

modernization perspective, this is one type of economic growth viewed as the driving force behind the increase in development and standard of living in the country. As economy rises, so do technological advances and thus, medical advances in access to clean water, health care facilities, education and diet. These changes may decrease infant mortality (Shandra, 2004; Fuse, 2006c).

Education is the essential process through which women are gaining confidence, self-esteem and the skills to equip themselves in the struggle for equal rights. Women's lack of confidence has been, and is still, an obstacle to development. Education has been increasingly regarded as a tool in promoting equality, development and peace, as an agent of social change and an important input for development. Education is a lifelong process and is essential for human resources development at all levels. Not only this, education also brings about reduction in inequalities in society (Suman Soni, 2012b)

There is a famous Chinese saying: 'If you want to plan for a year, plant 'wheat', if you wish to plan for 10 years, grow 'Tree' but if you want to plan for 100 years, educate your Women'.

### **Government Policies and Programmes to Improve the Educational Status of Women**

Women constitute almost half of the total population in the country. But the degree of their participation in different walks of life have been limited or it has been invisible, and therefore, unacknowledged at the different levels of society. There are number of structural and cultural reasons responsible for this. As a result of which, the development of women in particular and the development of society in general has been affected negatively. Although in the Vedic period women had access to education in India, they had gradually lost this right. However, in the British period there was revival of interest in women's education in India. Since independence and over a century of striving for a better status of women, India has developed several

initiatives for guaranteeing education, because education was perceived as one of the important inputs for the development of women, national integration and social change. And the content of education during those days was not very much capable of dealing with the problems and challenges of free India.

The nineteenth century was watershed for women's history. There were both political and social movements, which impacted on their situation. The first step for women's education was established during Lord Dalhousie, the British Governor General in India in the year 1848-56. But it was Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the great reformer and pioneer for women's cause who tried his level best to eradicate the social evils like 'sati', 'child marriage' and also introduced 'widow remarriage' because these were the issues, which were creating problem in the way of women's development. The contribution of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was also immense for the development of status of women in the society. He gave stress on spread of female education. He was of the opinion that education is the key to the all-round development of women.

Besides these, some strong movement also emerged during those days, popularly known as 'Bramho Samaj'. The members of the Bramho Samaj have worked with profound zeal for the growth of female education in India. The effort of 'Arya Samaj' was also splendid, because it gave emphasis not only on the female education but also strengthening it by opening special schools for girls. Arya Samaj also had a female wing known as 'Arya Mahila Samaj' founded by Pandita Pramabai, who urged the government to give higher education to women and also stress on training courses, which will make women self-reliant and economically independent.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a number of women's movements emerged to fight against the evils in the society on women and to improve and change the status of women in India. Under the able leadership of Mahatma Gandhi thousands of women were united irrespective of

caste, class, religion, illiterate and literate and joined the National movement for independence. This was the turning point for Indian women to be united in such a huge number for the first time, which also proved that they are no way inferior to the men folk. And Gandhiji also visualized that without education if women can organize in such a significant manner, education definitely will shape their status in a better way. That's way he gave more stress on spreading of education by introducing a scheme on basic education in 1937, which recommended compulsory, universal, seven year's education in mother tongue for all children including girl children. Government of India Act 1935 implemented this scheme in all the provinces of India. Not only this, the scheme ultimately got its due place in the Directive Principles of State Policy under Article 45 of Indian constitution, which says 'state shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, free and compulsory education for all children until they have completed the age of fifteen years.'

After independence education was for the first time perceived as an important impact for human resource development. It was also perceived as an important agent of national development, national integration and social change. Again, right from the independence, every now and then, many committees and commissions were appointed by the central government to suggest ways and means to spread education among women. Some of such committees/commissions are: (1) University Education Commission, 1948-49, (2) Secondary Education Commission, 1952-53, (3) National Commission on Women's Education, 1958, (4) National Council for Women's Education, (5) Hansa Mehta Committee, 1962, (6) Bhakatvatsalams Committee, 1963, (7) National Committee on Women's Education, 1970, etc.

In the year 1958 another committee was set-up under the leadership of Mrs. Durgabai Deshmukh as National Committee on Education especially for the education of girls at the primary and

secondary level. Later on in 1968 a resolution were issued to form 'National Policy on education' which recommended that state level and national level councils be set-up for the promotion of female education. The committee on Status of Women, 1974 was also a milestone on the position of women. The National Policy of Education of 1968 was modified in 1986 which emphasized on facilities for girl children was further revised in 1992 and the Programme of Action reflected an unqualified priority to Universal Elementary education, total literacy and the change of gender differentials. A fundamental mandate of the National Policy on Education is to educate for women's equality. This goes beyond merely ending gender gaps in educational attainments: it seeks to alter the very process and content of education so that it changes people and societal mindsets. For that it is necessary to prepare a gender sensitive curriculum and removal of sex bias from the text books both at the primary and secondary level of education.

Not only this, even almost all 5 years have emphasized on female education. The Beijing declaration also affirmed that national governments that were participants at the conference which included India, were globally committed to equal rights and inherent human dignity of women and men and other purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of United Nations to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments, in particular the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and Convention on the Rights of the Children, as well as Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the Declaration on the Rights to Development.

(Suman Soni, 2012c).

Education to women is the most powerful instrument of changing their position in the society. Education also brings about reduction in inequalities and also acts as a means to improve their status within the family. In order to encourage education of women at all levels and to dilute

gender bias in the provision and acquaintance of education, schools, colleges and universities were established exclusively for women in the country. To bring more girl children, especially from marginalised Below Poverty Line (BPL) families, into the mainstream of education, Government has been providing a package of concessions in the form of free supply of books, uniform, boarding and lodging, clothing for hostilities, mid-day meals, scholarships, free by-cycles and so on. Many universities such as Mother Teresa Women University have been established for the development of women studies and to encourage higher education among women and their social mobility.

### **Methodology**

Data on literacy rates (Male and Female) in India were collected from the census reports of 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 census (Source of table 1). Divergence in literacy rates between male and female literacy rate were calculated from the census reports. Data from two states, Assam and Jammu & Kashmir were not included in the study because the census could not be conducted in Assam in 1981 and Jammu & Kashmir in 1991.

Data on female literacy rates in India by regions (rural and urban) were collected from the census reports of 1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 census (Source of table 2). Overall growth index number of rural and urban female literacy revealing the disparity between the rural and urban female literacy rate were calculated. Decadal growth rate (2001-2011) of rural and urban female literacy rate was also calculated from the census reports of 2001 and 2011 census (Source of table 3)

Data on Gross Enrolment Ratio for girls and boys at different stages of education were collected from the census reports of 2001 and 2011 census (Source of table 4). Decadal Growth rate

(2001-2011) of Gross Enrolment Ratio for girls and boys at different stages of education were calculated from the census reports of 2001 and 2011.

Data on Gender Parity Index (1951-2011) at different stages of education were calculated from the GER for girls and GER for boys (i.e.) by dividing girls GER by boys GER at a given level of education (Source of table 5).

Data on Drop-out rates of girls and boys in school education were collected from the census reports of 2001 and 2011. Decadal growth rate of drop-out rates of girls and boys in school education were calculated (Source of table 6)

Data on Trends (1951-2011) in Infant Mortality Rate, Maternal Mortality Rate, Birth rate, Death rate and Life expectancy at birth were collected (Source of table 7). Female literacy is compared with Infant mortality, maternal mortality, birth rate, death rate and life expectancy at birth during 1951 to 2011. Major states with highest and lowest female literacy is compared with the Infant Mortality, Maternal Mortality, Birth rate, Death rate and Life Expectancy at birth during 2011 (Source of table 8). Impact of women's education on Infant Mortality, Maternal Mortality, Birth rate and Death rate and Life expectancy at birth is determined from the above data.

Data on Number of teachers (male and female) by type of school during 2001 and 2011 were collected (Source of table 9). Decadal Growth rate (2001-2011) of number of male and female teachers was calculated from 2001 and 2011 Educational Statistical reports.

### **Trends in Literacy Rates in India by Sex**

Literacy represents a measure of educational status of any community. Literacy rate is estimated as the percentage of people educated to the respective total population. Though literacy is very

important for both male and female, there exists a wide gap between both the sexes in India. Although literacy levels are low, there has been progress in improving the educational attainment for both sexes in India over the last several decades. The trends in total literacy rates by sex in India between the years 1951 and 2011 have been shown in the following table:

**Table 1:** Trends in Literacy Rates by Sex in India: 1951 – 2011

Particulars	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Male	27.16	40.40	45.96	56.37	64.13	75.85	82.14
Female	8.86	15.35	21.97	29.75	39.29	54.16	65.46
Total	18.33	28.30	34.45	43.56	52.20	65.38	74.04
Divergence (Male-Female)	18.3	25.05	23.99	26.62	24.84	21.69	16.68

**Source:** Census of India 2011, Provisional Population Totals, India.

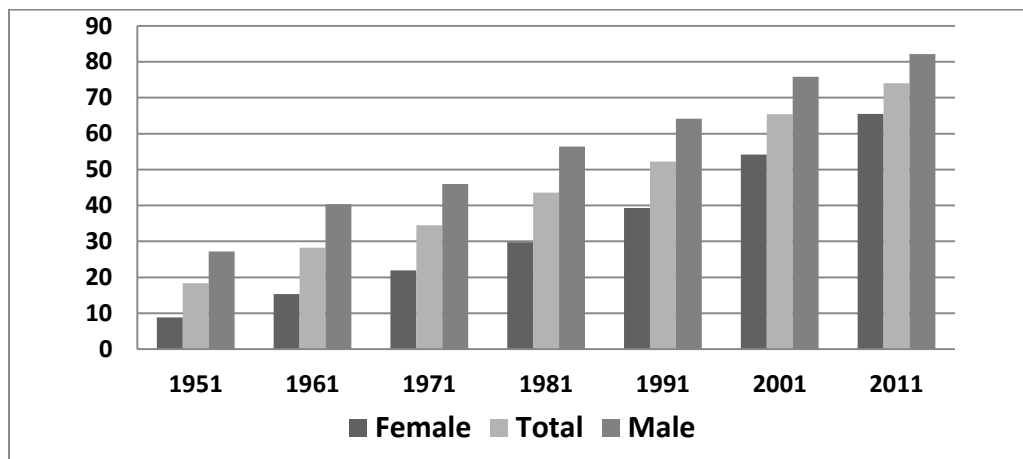
**Table 1** provides the male and female literacy rates and divergence in the male and female literacy rates since independence from 1951 to 2011. The literacy rate has quadrupled from 1951 to 2011. The total literacy rate in India during the year 1951 was 18.33 per cent which increased steadily and reached to 74.04 per cent by 2011. Male literacy rate has increased from 27.16 per cent in 1951 to 82.14 per cent in 2011 and the female literacy rate has increased from 8.86 per cent in 1951 to 65.46 percent in 2011. Despite such improvement, 27 per cent people of the country are still illiterate. If we look at the gender wise distribution, nearly 20 per cent males are illiterate while nearly one third females are still illiterate as per 2011 census.

The total growth in literacy rate and annual average growth of literacy rate is 54.67 per cent and 0.91 per cent per annum during 1951 to 2011. If we look at the gender wise distribution, the growth for male is 53.74 per cent during 1951 to 2011 which implies that the growth rate is 0.90 per cent per annum. The growth for female is 55.74 per cent which implies that the growth rate is 0.93 per cent per annum.

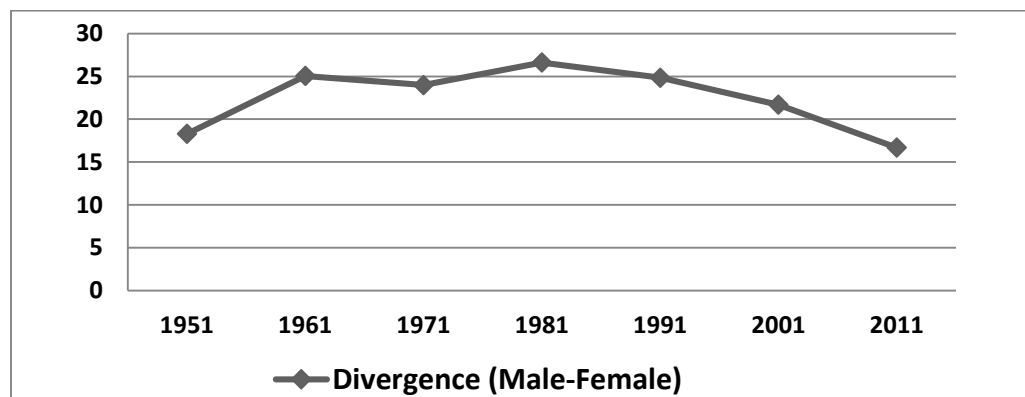


**Figure 1** shows that the literacy rates of male between 1951 and 2011, has trebled while of female, it has increased sevenfold. In all the years, male literacy rates were higher than that of female literacy rates. In the year 1951, the male literacy rate was 27 per cent while the same for female was only 8.86 per cent (Census Provisional Population Totals, 2011). In 1971, only 22 percent of women and 46 percent of men were literate (RGCC, 1977)<sup>1</sup>. By 1991, 39 percent of women and 64 percent of men were literate (RGCC, 1993)<sup>2</sup>. Thus, there has been a large increase in the proportion of women who are literate in just 20 years. In the year 2011, the male literacy rate has reached to 82.14 per cent and female literacy rate has reached to 65.46 per cent. Despite the improvements in literacy, there continues to be a large gap between the literacy levels of men and of women.

**Figure 1: Literacy Rates by Sex in India (1951 – 2011)**



The divergence in the literacy rates between sexes indicates the difference in the growth rate of literacy levels between male and female over a period of time. In our analysis, **figure 2**

**Figure 2: Divergence in Literacy rate by Sex in India (1951-2011)**

(RGCC- Registrar General and Census Commissioner)

<sup>1</sup>These rates refer to the population aged 5 years and above

<sup>2</sup>These rates refer to the population aged 7 years and above

indicates the divergence in the literacy rates between the sexes that showed an oscillating trend from 18.33(1951) to 25.05(1961) to 23.99(1971), and a continuous declining trend from 26.62 to 16.68 between 1981 and 2011, indicating the reduction in the gap of literacy rates between male and female over time. This can be attributed to the faster growth of female literacy rate compared to that of male during the period of reference. Though the target set up by the Planning Commission of reducing the male-female gap to 10 percentage points by the year 2001-2011 was not achieved; the gap of 21.59 percentage points recorded between male and female literacy rates in 2001 census has been reduced to 16.68 percentage points in 2011. The State/Union Territories which have achieved male-female gap in literacy rate of 10 percentage points or less are Punjab, Chandigarh, NCT of Delhi, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya, Lakshadweep, Kerala and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

### Trends in Rural Urban Distribution of Female Literacy Rates in India

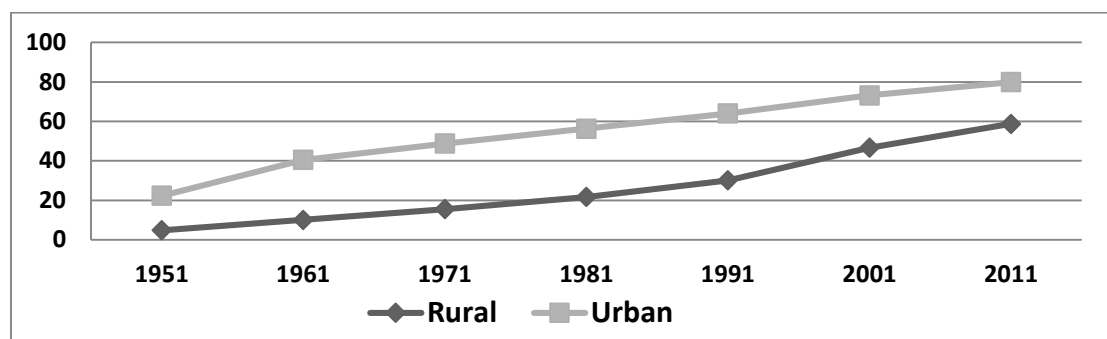
Another area of concern is to reduce the gap between the rural and urban female literacy rate. The trends in female literacy rates in India by rural and urban regions since independence are as follows:

**Table 2** shows that though there are dramatic differences in literacy rates by place of residence, with rates in rural areas lagging behind the rates in urban areas, the decadal growth of literacy rate from 1951 to 2011 in rural areas is higher than the decadal growth of literacy rate in urban areas. There is a steady growth of female literacy rates in both rural and urban regions in India. In the year 1951, the rural female literacy rate was 4.87 per cent and urban female literacy rate was 22.33 per cent. This situation had remarkably improved with in sixty years (2011) and reached to higher levels of 58.75 and 79.92 per cent in rural and urban regions respectively. Thus the female literacy rates in rural areas during 1951 to 2011 trebled while in urban areas, it became more than 1.5 times during the same period which reveals that the growth of female literacy rate in rural areas is double than the urban areas.

**Table 2:** Trends in Female Literacy Rates in India by Regions: 1951 – 2011

Year	Female Literacy Rate		Index Number	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1951	4.87	22.33	100	100
1961	10.1	40.5	207.39	181.37
1971	15.5	48.8	153.47	120.49
1981	21.7	56.3	140	115.37
1991	30.17	64.05	139.03	113.77
2001	46.7	73.2	154.79	114.29
2011	58.75	79.92	125.80	109.18

**Source:** Census2011, Provisional Population Totals, India

**Figure 3:** Female Literacy rates in India by Regions (1951 – 2011)

**Figure 3** shows that though there has been a steady upward trend in both the rural and urban female literacy rates, it is observed that the rural female literacy is increasing much faster than that of urban female literacy. This fact is clearly evident from the index numbers, revealing that the disparity between the rural and urban female literacy rates is narrowing down in recent years. Overall growth index number of rural female literacy rate from 1951 to 2011 is 1206.37, whereas, the overall growth index number for the urban female literacy rate is 357.90. Thus, the rural female literacy rate has grown 3.37 times higher than the urban female literacy rate.

**Table 3:** Decadal Growth Rate of Female Literacy Rates by Regions: 2001-2011

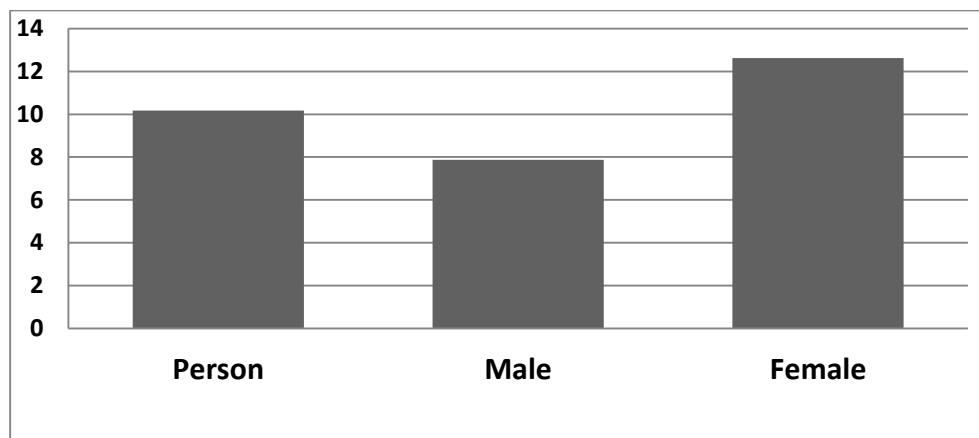
Residence	Sex	2001	2011	Decadal Growth (%)
Rural	Persons	58.74	68.91	10.17
	Male	70.70	78.57	7.87
	Female	46.13	58.75	12.62
Urban	Persons	79.92	84.98	5.06
	Male	86.27	89.67	3.4
	Female	72.86	79.92	7.06

**Source:**

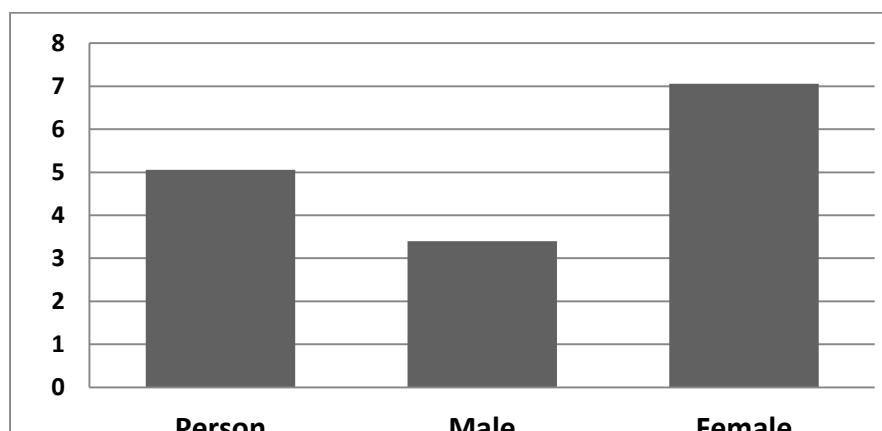
1. Census 2011, Provisional Population Totals, India
2. Census of India 2011, *Rural Urban Distribution of Population*, 'Provisional Population Totals', Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi.

**Table 3** shows that more number of females has become literate compared to males in the decade 2001-2011. In rural areas, the male literacy was 70.70 per cent and 78.57 per cent during 2001 and 2011, whereas the female literacy rate was only 46.13 per cent and 58.75 per cent during the same period. Similarly in urban areas, the male literacy rate is higher than the female literacy rate during 2001 and 2011. Though the male literacy rate is much higher than the female literacy rate during 2001 and 2011 in both rural and urban areas. The decadal growth rate (2001 to 2011) of female literacy in rural area (12.62 per cent) is much higher than the decadal growth rate of male literacy (7.87 per cent).

**Figure 4:** Rural Decadal Growth rate of literacy by Sex (2001-2011)



**Figure 5:** Urban Decadal Growth rate of literacy by Sex (2001-2011)



Similarly, the decadal growth rate of female literacy in urban area (7.06 per cent) is much higher than the decadal growth of male literacy (3.4 per cent). Thus, **figure 4** and **figure 5** shows that the decadal growth rate of female literacy is more than the decadal growth of male literacy in both the rural and urban areas. On the other hand, the decadal growth rate of literacy (both male and female) in rural areas (10.17 per cent) is much higher than the decadal growth rate of literacy in urban areas (5.06 per cent). The gender gap in literacy has come down from 24.6 per cent in 2001 to 19.8 per cent in 2011 in rural areas and from 13.4 per cent in 2001 to 9.8 per cent in 2011 in urban areas.

Thus, it is clearly evident from **table 2** and **table 3**, the growth of female literacy is much higher than the male literacy in both rural and urban areas. Similarly, the growth of literacy rate (male and female) in rural area is higher than the literacy rate in urban area.

### **Large Difference in Female Literacy among the States**

The differences in literacy rates among the states are also extreme. As per census 2011, Kerala has the highest female literacy rate of 92 per cent followed by Mizoram with 89.4 per cent. On the other hand, there are several states that have literacy rates of less than 60 per cent, with poor literacy rate being seen in Rajasthan (52.7 per cent) including Bihar (53.33 per cent) and Uttar Pradesh (59.26 per cent), the two most populous states. With regard to the rural literacy rate, Kerala has reported the highest female literacy rate of 90.7 per cent and Rajasthan has reported the worst literacy rate of 46.3 per cent. The figures reported from the urban areas show that Mizoram has registered the highest female literacy rate of 97.5 per cent and Jammu & Kashmir the lowest at 70.2 per cent. These literacy levels are highly correlated with the health status of the population. Kerala has the lowest infant mortality rates and highest life expectancies

of all the states. Conversely, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have some of the lowest life expectancies found in India (RGCC, 2011).

### **Status of Gross Enrolment Ratio and Drop-Out Rates of Girls in School Education**

A new study has found that time spent on domestic chores can impact education. Data collected from 952 children and their communities in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana has shown that 12-year-olds who spend three hours or more on household chores in a day are 70 per cent less likely to complete secondary education. These findings came to light through the data gathered by Young Lives longitudinal study of childhood poverty to determine the factors impacting children's participation in and progress through secondary education-grades 9 and 10. They tracked the progress of these kids through for over a decade starting 2002, when they were aged eight to 2013 when they were 19.

Considering the high correlation between drop-out rates and time spent on errand-running, the study's authors have pushed for safeguards to be worked into the amendment of the Child Labour Act that proposes to allow kids under 14 to work in non-hazardous family enterprises.

Of the 952, 680 completed grade 10 successfully and 48.8 per cent were continuing their education in vocational studies or higher education. The variables considered were classified into four categories -socio-demographic factors, household characteristics, pre-schooling and 'individual (child) characteristics' which includes nutrition status, 'self-efficacy', reading and writing ability all at age 8 and time spent on domestic chores and participation in paid work at age 12.

58 kids reported working over three hours at home. Of the rest, 299 kids didn't work at all; 398 kids worked one hour; 195 worked two. The sections dropping out from these groups are 19.4 per cent, 25.1 per cent and 39.0 per cent respectively. The drop out percentage for the three-hour

category was 65.5 per cent; with all other parameters factored in, the likelihood of kids working over three hours dropping out is estimated to be 70 per cent. (Times of India)

### **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Different Stages of Education**

Although literacy rates in India are low, there has been a concerted effort to encourage girls to attend school, which should lead to higher literacy rates in the future. Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is the total student enrolment in a given level of education, regardless of age expressed as percentage of the corresponding eligible official age group population in a given school year. In 2011-12, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) stood at 105.8 per cent for boys and 107.1 per cent for girls at primary level, 82.5 per cent for boys and 81.4 per cent for girls at upper primary level, 69 per cent for boys and 63.9 per cent for girls at secondary level, 47.6 per cent for boys and 43.9 per cent for girls at senior secondary level respectively. There were 93 girls per 100 boys in primary classes, 95 girls per 100 boys in middle classes and 90 girls per 100 boys in secondary classes during 2013-2014 against lesser ratios in the earlier decade (Secondary Education and School Education 2010-11, 2013-14).

**Table 4:** Decadal growth rate of Gross Enrolment Ratio in Different Stages of Education during 2001-2011

Year	Primary (I-V) 6 - 10 Years		Upper Primary (V-VIII) 11 - 13 Years		Secondary & Senior Secondary (XI-XII) 14 – 17 Years		Higher Education 18 – 23 Years	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
2001	104.9	85.9	66.7	49.9	38.2	27.7	9.3	6.7
2011	114.9	116.3	87.5	82.9	55.7	48.5	20.8	17.9
Decadal Growth % (2001 -2011)	10	30.4	20.8	33	17.5	20.8	11.5	11.2

**Source:**

(a) Educational Statistics at a Glance, '*Publication Statistics of School Education*', Ministry of Human Resource Development, Bureau of Planning, Monitoring &

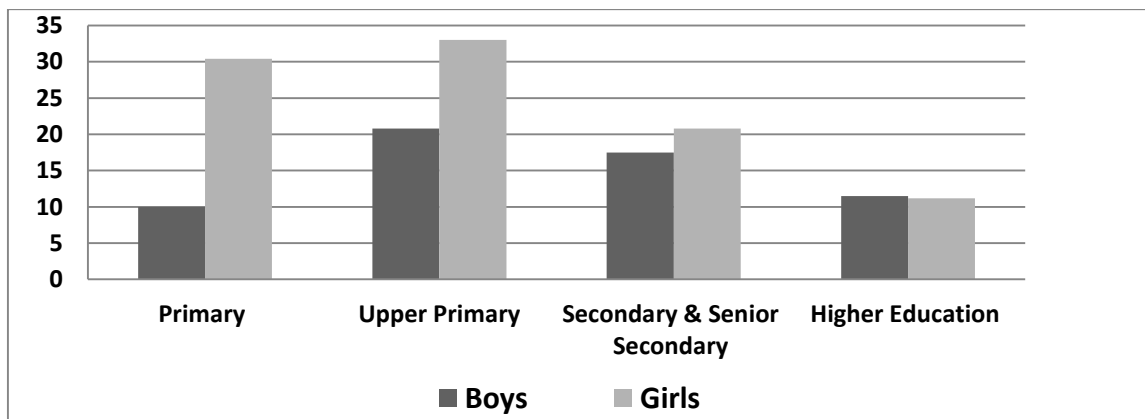


Statistics, Government of India, New Delhi, 2014.

(b) Educational Statistics at a Glance, '*Statistics of Higher and Technical Education Publication*', Ministry of Human Resource Development, Bureau of Planning, Monitoring & Statistics, Government of India, New Delhi, 2014.

**Table 4** shows that the GER for girls is lower than the GER for boys during 2001 and 2011 at all stages of education, except at primary stage where the GER for girls (116.3 per cent) is higher than the GER for boys (114.9 per cent) during 2011. At primary stage, GER for girls is 85.9 per cent and 116.3 per cent during 2001 and 2011 whereas it is 104.9 per cent and 114.9 per cent for boys during the same period. At Upper Primary stage, the GER for girls is 49.9 per cent and 82.9 per cent and it is 66.7 per cent and 87.5 per cent for boys during 2001 and 2011. At the Secondary and Senior Secondary stage the GER for girls is 27.7 per cent and 48.5 per cent and it is 38.2 per cent and 55.7 per cent for boys during 2001 and 2011.

**Figure 6:** Decadal growth rate of GER at different stages of education (2001-2011)



Though the Gross Enrolment Ratio for girls is lower than the boys during 2001 and 2011, it is clearly evident from **figure 6** that the decadal growth rate (2001-2011) of Gross Enrolment Ratio is higher for girls than boys at all stages of education except at higher education, where the decadal growth of GER for girls (11.2 per cent) is slightly lower than the decadal growth of GER for boys (11.5 per cent). At the primary stage, the decadal growth rate of gross enrolment ratio

for girls is 30.4 per cent and 10 per cent for boys. It is 33 per cent for girls and 20.8 per cent for boys at the upper primary stage and it is 20.8 per cent for girls and 17.5 per cent for boys at the secondary and senior secondary stage.

Thus, it is clearly evident from **table 4** and **figure 6**; there is a rapid increase in the enrolment of girls than boys at all stages of education.

### **Gender Parity Index**

Gender Parity Index (GPI) is calculated by dividing Girls GER by Boys GER of a given level of education. It measures the progress towards the gender equity in education. When the Gender Parity Index shows a value equal to 1 at any level of education it shows that there is no gender disparity at that level and learning opportunities are available for girls equally to that of boys.

**Table 5:** Gender Parity Index (1951-2011) at different stages of education

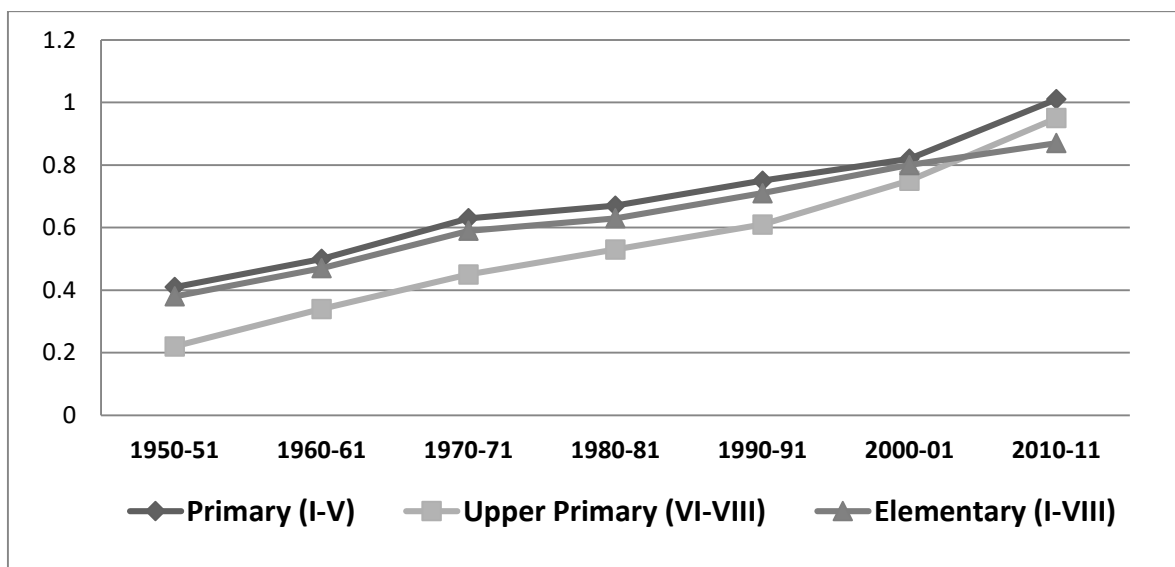
Year	Primary (I-V)	Upper Primary (VI – VIII)	Elementary (I – VIII)
1950-51	0.41	0.22	0.38
1960-61	0.50	0.34	0.47
1970-71	0.63	0.45	0.59
1980-81	0.67	0.53	0.63
1990-91	0.75	0.61	0.71
2000-01	0.82	0.75	0.80
2010-11	1.01	0.95	0.87

**Source:** Educational Statistics at a Glance, '*Publication Statistics of School Education 2010-11*', Ministry of Human Resource Development, Bureau of Planning, Monitoring & Statistics, Government of India, New Delhi, 2014.

**Table 5** indicates the gradual increase in the Gender Parity Index in primary and upper primary stages of school education. It has increased from 0.41 in 1950-51 to 1.01 in 2010-2011 at primary stage; it increased from 0.22 to 0.95 and from 0.38 to 0.87 at upper primary and

elementary stages respectively during the same period. Gender Parity Index is higher at the primary stage than at the upper primary stage. It shows that the gender disparity is higher at the upper primary stage than at the primary stage. Thus it is clearly evident from **table 5 and figure 7**, the gender disparity in education started declining gradually and thereby there is a rapid progress towards gender equity in education.

**Figure 7: Gender Parity Index (1951-2011)**



### **Drop-Out Rates in School Education**

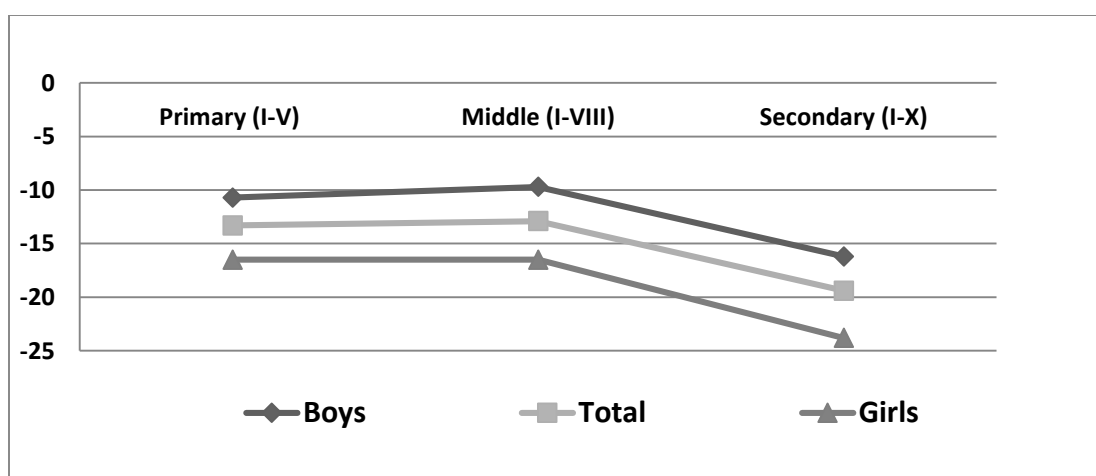
A major educational problem facing both boys and girls in India is that although they may be enrolled at the beginning of the year they don't always remain in school. It is estimated that during 2011-12, 23 per cent of boys and 21 per cent of girls drop out of school at the primary stage (class I-V), 42 per cent of boys and 40 per cent of girls at the middle stage (classes I-VIII) and 49 per cent of boys and 52 per cent of girls at the Secondary stage (classes I-X). (IIPS, 1995).

**Table 6:** Decadal Growth Rate of Drop-Out Rates in School Education during 2001-2011

Gender	Primary (I-V)	Middle (I – VIII)	Secondary (I – X)
Boys	-10.7	-9.7	-16.2
Girls	-16.5	-16.5	-23.8
Total	-13.3	-12.9	-19.4

**Source:** Educational Statistics at a Glance, ‘*Publication Statistics of School Education 2010-11*’, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Bureau of Planning, Monitoring & Statistics, Government of India, New Delhi, 2014.

**Table 6** shows that, at the primary stage the decadal growth of Drop-Out rate is (-16.5 per cent) for girls and (-10.7 per cent) for boys. At the middle stage it is (-16.5 per cent) for girls and (-9.7 per cent) for boys and at the Secondary stage it is (-23.8 per cent) for girls and (-16.2 per cent) for boys. Thus, it is clearly evident from **table 6 and figure 8**; the decadal growth (2001-2011) of drop-out rate for girls is higher than the decadal growth of drop-out rate for boys at the primary, middle and secondary stages of education. Thus, the number of girls dropping out of school is getting reduced every year rapidly compared to boys.

**Figure 8:** Decadal Growth rate of drop-out rates in school education (2001-2011)

### Female literacy and Health Status

The trends in Infant mortality rates, Maternal Mortality Rates, Birth rate, Death rate and Life Expectancy at Birth since independence are as follows:

**Table 7** clearly indicates that there is a steady growth of female literacy rate in India since independence. On the other hand, there is a continuous declining trend of Infant Mortality Rate in India since independence (except 1961) from 116 per 1000 live births in 1951 to 44 per 1000 live births in 2011. With the reduction of infant mortality rates over the years, the death rate got declined considerably from 22.8 per cent in 1951 and reached to 7.1 per cent in 2011. On the other hand due to the decline of death rate, the life expectancy at birth started increasing over the decades from 32.5 years for male and 31.7 years for female in 1951 to over 67.3 years for male and 69.6 years for female in 2011. Increasing life expectancy is leading to increasing number of elderly persons in the population, for which specific health facilities will need to be provided. Similarly, the birth rate started declining from 41.7 per cent in 1951 to 21.8 per cent in 2011.

**Table 7:** Trends in Infant Mortality Rates, Maternal Mortality Rates, Birth Rate, Death Rate and Life Expectancy at Birth in India (1951 – 2011)

Year	Female Literacy Rate	IMR	MMR	Birth Rate	Death Rate	Life Expectancy at Birth	
						Female	Male
1951	8.86	116	NA	41.7	22.8	31.7	32.5
1961	15.35	146	NA	41.2	19	40.6	41.9
1971	21.97	129	NA	37.2	15	44.7	46.4
1981	29.75	110	NA	33.9	12.5	54.7	54.1
1991	39.29	80	266	29.5	9.8	58.6	58.1
2001	54.16	66	301	25.4	8.4	63.9	62.3
2011	65.46	44	178	21.8	7.1	69.6	67.3

**Note:** (IMR- Infant Mortality Rate, MMR- Maternal Mortality Rate)

N.A Not Available

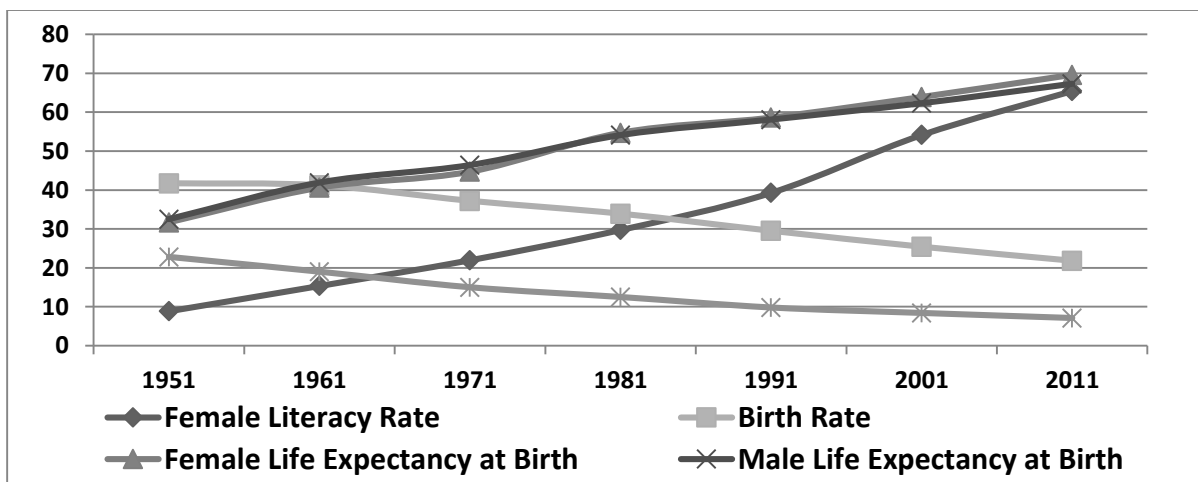
IMR (per 1000 live births)

MMR (per 1, 00,000 live births)

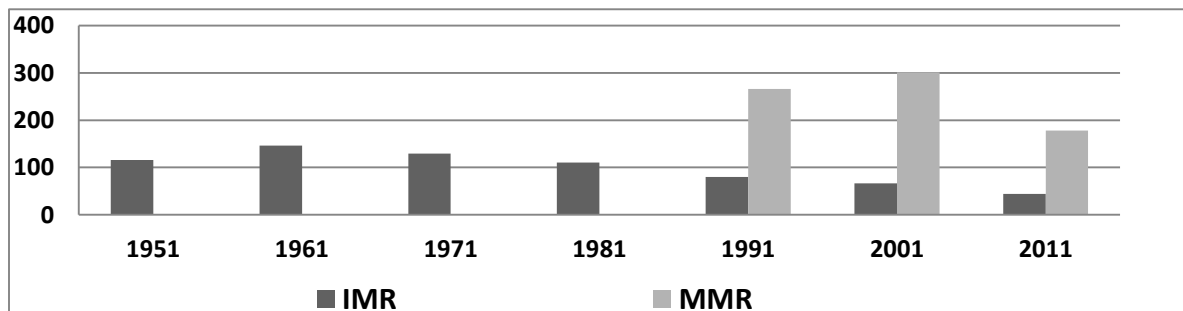
**Source:**

- (a) Sample Registration System, Office of the Registrar General, India, Ministry of Home Affairs
- (b) SRS, based Abridge Life Tables, 2002-06
- (c) Census 2011, Provisional Population Totals, India

**Figure 9:** Comparison of Female literacy with Birth rate, Death rate and Life Expectancy at birth (1951-2011)



**Figure 10:** Comparison of Female Literacy with IMR and MMR (1951-2011)



Thus it is clearly evident from **table 7, figure 9 and figure 10**, with the increasing female literacy over the years, the infant mortality, maternal mortality, birth rate and death rate got declined and the life expectancy at birth got increased.

**Table 8** shows that the major states with the highest female literacy rates like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra has the lowest infant mortality, maternal mortality, birth rate and highest life expectancy at birth. On the other hand, major states with the lowest female literacy rates like Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh has the highest infant mortality, maternal mortality, birth rate and lowest life expectancy at birth. With regard to the death rate, though there is no much difference between the highest and the lowest female literacy states, the overall death rate of India got declined steadily from 42.6 per cent in 1901 to 7.1 per cent in 2011.

**Table 8:** Comparison of Highest and Lowest Female Literacy states with IMR, MMR, Birth Rate, Death Rate and Life Expectancy at Birth during 2011

States	Female Literacy	IMR	MMR	Birth Rate	Death Rate		Life Expectancy	
					Male	Female	Male	Female
<u>Highest female literacy:</u>								
Kerala	92.5	12	66	14.2	7.7	6.3	71.4	76.3
Tamil Nadu	73	22	90	14.6	8.4	6.8	65	67.4
Maharashtra	75.5	25	87	16.9	7	6	66	68.4
<u>Lowest female literacy:</u>								
Rajasthan	52.7	52	255	21.7	7.2	6.2	61.5	62.3
Bihar	53.3	44	219	21.6	7.1	6.6	62.2	60.4
Uttar Pradesh	59.3	57	292	26.1	8.6	7.5	60.3	59.5
Madhya Pradesh	60	59	230	23.2	9.1	7.6	58.1	57.9

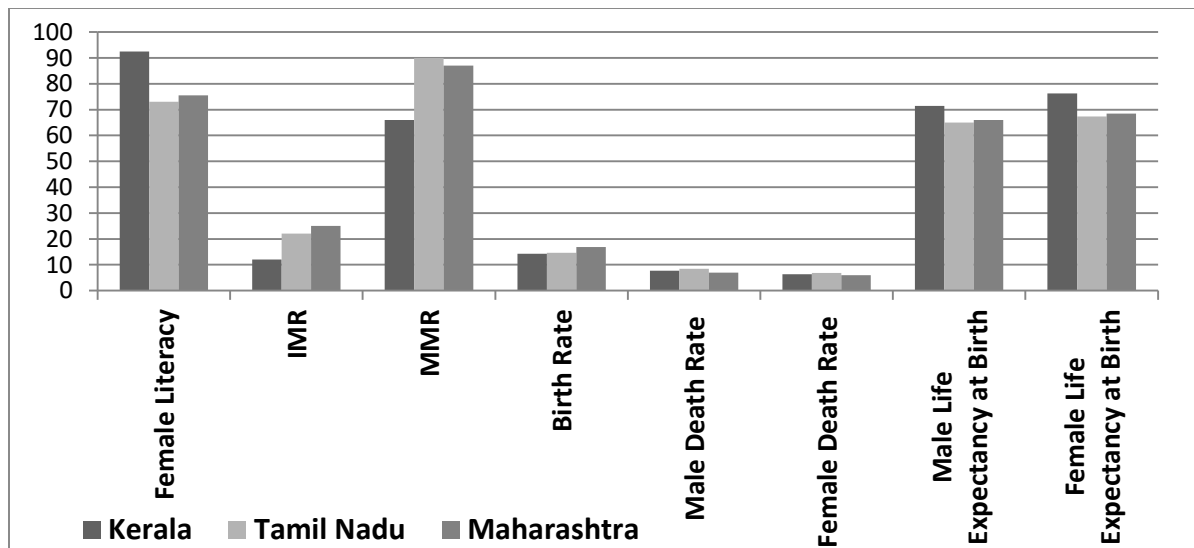
**Note:** (IMR – Infant Mortality Rate, MMR – Maternal Mortality Rate)  
 IMR (per 1000 Live Birth)  
 MMR (per 1, 00,000 Live Birth)

**Source:**

- (a) Report of the Technical Group on Population projections May 2006, National Commission on Population/MOHFW
- (b) Office of Registrar General of India, SRS, 2010-12
- (c) Central Statistics Office, Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation, Government of India

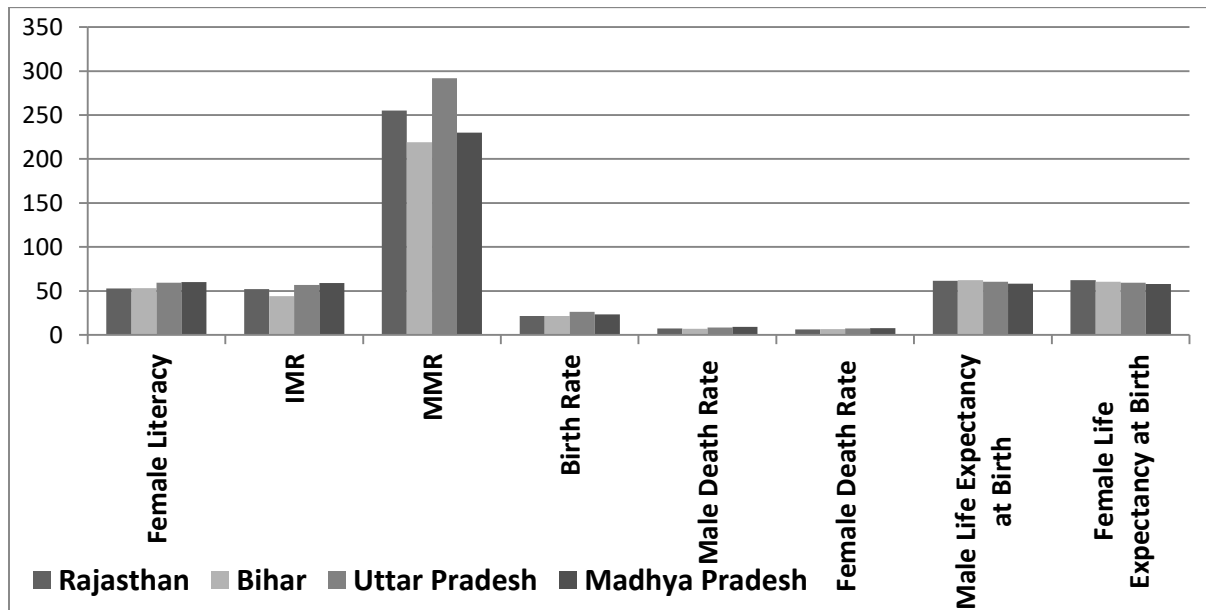
For instance, a survey made in India during 1995 found that the infant mortality was inversely related to mother's educational level (IIPS, 1995).

**Figure 11:** Highest Female literacy states with IMR, MMR, Birth rate, Death rate and Life expectancy at birth (2011)





**Figure 12:** Lowest Female Literacy states with IMR, MMR, Birth rate, Death rate and Life Expectancy at birth (2011)



Thus, it is clearly evident from **table 8, figure 11 and figure12**, major states with highest female literacy has the lowest infant mortality, maternal mortality, birth rate and highest life expectancy at birth on the one hand and the major states with lowest female literacy has the highest infant mortality, maternal mortality, birth rate and lowest life expectancy at birth on the other hand. Thus, the main reason behind the relationship between the female literacy and the infant mortality rate, maternal mortality rate, death rate, birth rate and life expectancy at birth is that, the literate women start possessing more medical and nutritional related knowledge and awareness from their education which automatically resulted in the reduction of the infant mortality, maternal mortality, death rate, birth rate and increasing life expectancy at birth.

## Reasons for the growth of Female Literacy

### 1. Government initiatives on Women's Education

After independence, the Government of India appointed several commissions and committees to improve the educational status of women. They are as follows:

- a. University Education Commission (1948-49)
- b. Secondary Education Commission (1952-53)
- c. National Committee on Women's Education (1958-59)
- d. Committee on Differentiation of Curricula for Boys and Girls (1961)
- e. Committee to look into the causes for the lack of public support, particularly in rural areas, for girls education and to enlist public cooperation (1963)
- f. Education Commission (1964-66)
- g. Committee on the Status of Women (1971-74)
- h. National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector (1987-88)
- i. National Policy on Education (1986) and Programme of Action (1992)
- j. National Commission for Women (1992)

Apart from the above, Government of India also introduced several schemes for girl's education, and they are as follows:

**Elementary Education:**

- a. Sarva Siksha Ahiyan (2000-2001)
- b. Mid-Day Meal Scheme (1995)
- c. National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL)
- d. Mahila Samakhya Programme (1988)
- e. Scheme for Infrastructure Development in Minority Institutes (IDMI)
- f. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya

**Secondary Education:**

- a. The Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (2009-10)

- b. Incentives to Girls at Secondary Stage (2008)
- c. National Means Cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme (2008)
- d. Scheme for setting up of 6000 Model Schools at Block Level (2009-10)
- e. Scheme for Construction and Running of Girls Hostel for students of Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools (2009-10)
- f. Scheme for Vocationalisation of Secondary Education at +2 level (1988)
- g. Scheme of ICT at School (2004)
- h. Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme

### **Adult Education:**

- a. Saakshar Bharat (2009)
- b. Jan Shikshan Sansthan
- c. Adult Education and Skill Development Schemes (2009)
- d. Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Teacher Education (1987) ('Central Government Schemes for School Education', 2013)

### **2. Changing Attitude towards Girl Child**

The birth of a daughter in the Indian society is considered a misfortunate but there is a certain shift in attitude towards girl child among the highly educated working couples. Some sociologists attributed that this change of attitude is due to the increasing awareness in the society that the educated women are doing quite well for themselves and their family and they do not expect their daughters to lead a suppressed life. Some other sociologists are also in the opinion that such changing attitude towards girl child is due to the varied factors like the erosion of the traditional attitudes and a more mature attitude of the girls and the parents desire to strike a

balance between the traditional and the modern values to equip the girl child to cope with any eventuality.

Science has proved that the male and the female children are equal as far as their intellect and mental capabilities are concerned. Girls are showing equal, and in many cases, better business mind than boys to carry on the family business and they are venturing into many field which was earlier considered totally as a male domain. Many people feel more secure in a daughter's love and want to grow old close to her. Some people with male child longed to have daughters. The myth that it is easier and safer to bring up a boy is broken and accepting hospitality at a married daughter's house is no more a taboo. Girls are preferred more because they continue to maintain the emotional ties with the parents.

### **3. Changing Parental Attitudes in educating daughters**

Several negative parental attitudes prevailed in the past. Many parents viewed educating sons as an investment because the sons will be responsible for caring for ageing parents. In most of the families, boys at home are given priority in terms of education but girls are not treated in the same way. Right from the beginning, parents did not consider girls as earning members of their family, as after marriage they have to leave their parents home and will eventually live with their husband's families, and the parents will not benefit directly from their education. So their education is just considered as wastage of money as well as time. Also daughters with higher levels of education will likely have higher dowry expenses as they will want a comparatively educated husband. Apart from this, Girls were often taken out of school to help with the family responsibilities such as caring for younger siblings and also when they reach puberty as a way of protecting their honour. But nowadays with the improved growth of female literacy and the changing parental attitudes, girl's enrolment in school education started increasing and their

drop-out rates in school were declining gradually. With the improving literacy level among women, the girl's education lowered the dowry expenses as it is viewed as an asset by the husband's family.

#### **4. Increasing Number of Female Teachers by Type of School**

Lack of female teachers is another potential barrier to girl's education. Girls are more likely to attend school and have higher academic achievement if they have female teachers. This is particularly true in highly gender-segregated societies such as India (Bellew and King, 1993; King, 1990). Currently there are about 88 female teachers per 100 male teachers at the primary level, 83 female teachers per 100 male teachers at the upper primary, 74 female teachers per 100 male teachers at the Secondary level, 96 female teachers per 100 male teachers at the Senior Secondary level and 64 female teachers per 100 male teachers at the higher education (U DISE-2013-14 (Provisional) and AISHE-2012-13 (Provisional) Report).

**Table 9** shows that at the primary stage, the number of male and female teachers is 1221 and 675 during 2001; 1194 and 905 during 2011. At the upper secondary stage it is 820 and 506 during 2001; 1048 and 839 during 2011. At the secondary stage it is 654 and 352 during 2001; 776 and 471 during 2011. At the senior secondary stage it is 531 and 225 during 2001; 766 and 496 during 2011. Decadal Growth Rate (2001-2011) of Male and Female teachers at the primary stage is (-21) and 230. It is 228 and 333 at the upper primary stage; 122 and 119 at the secondary stage; 235 and 271 at the senior secondary stage.

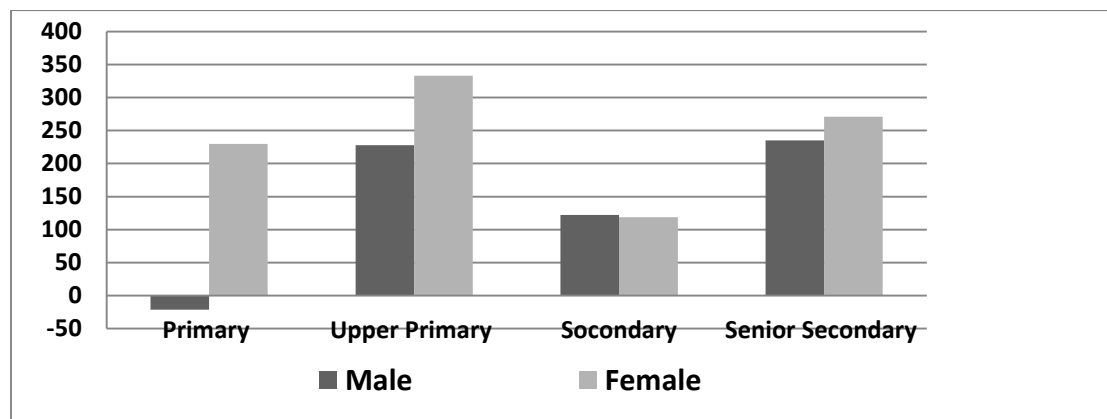
**Table 9:** Decadal Growth Rate of Number of Teachers by Type of School during 2001-2011 (in thousands)

Year	Primary (I-V)		Upper Primary (VI-VIII)		Secondary (IX-X)		Senior Secondary (XI-XII)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2001	1221	675	820	506	654	352	531	225
2011	1194	905	1048	839	776	471	766	496

2001	1221	675	820	506	654	352	531	225
2011	1194	905	1048	839	776	471	766	496
Decadal Growth (2001 -2011)	-21	230	228	333	122	119	235	271

**Source:** Educational Statistics at a Glance, ‘*Publication Statistics of School Education 2010-11*’, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Bureau of Planning, Monitoring & Statistics, Government of India, New Delhi, 2014.

**Figure 13:** Decadal Growth rate (2001-2011) of Number of Teachers by type of school



Thus it is clearly evident from **table 9 and figure 13**, though the number of male teachers is more than the number of female teachers at all the stages of education during 2001 and 2011, the decadal growth rate (2001-2011) of the number of female teachers is higher than the decadal growth rate of male teachers at all stages of education except at the Secondary stage, where the decadal growth of female teachers (119) is slightly lower than the decadal growth of male teachers (122). This improvement in the female teachers automatically resulted in the increasing Gross Enrolment and declining drop-out rates of girls in school education.

### **Socio-Economic Impact of women's education**

#### **Effects on social development**

Women's education leads to significant social development. Some of the most notable social benefits include decreased fertility rates, lower infant mortality rates and lower maternal

mortality rates. Educated women are more aware about the medical facilities and started using the improved and advanced medical facilities. They have become more health conscious and begun to take nutritious and complete foods. Educated women started understanding the importance of family planning and are also very much aware about the family planning methods. Moreover the use of contraceptives is increasing among the educated women. The age of marriage in our country has been raised due to the Child Marriage Protection Act and expansion of educational facilities. Young persons, both male and female, prefer to educate themselves and make a career in order to have a decent living rather than marry early. Girls marrying at a ripe age give birth to fewer children resulting in lower birth rate and the mortality rates of both mother and children are also on the decline.

Reduced gender gap in education also increases gender equality which is considered important both in itself and because it ensures equal rights and opportunities for regardless of gender. Women's education has cognitive benefits for women as well. Improved cognitive abilities increase the quality of life for women and also lead to other benefits. Educated women are better able to make decisions related to health, both for themselves and their children. Educated women are more likely to engage in civic participation and attend political meetings, and there are several instances in which educated women in the developing world were able to secure benefits for themselves through political movements.

Initially a woman without a child is looked down by the society. Generally, her husband remarries. Moreover, the Hindus believed that everyone must have at least one son otherwise the parents are supposed to be deprived of certain benefits in the next world. Parents having many daughters want to have a male child. This tendency resulted in high birth rate in India before 1960's. But after 1960's due to the educational development and government awareness

programmes on the importance of female education, women stopped believing in the social customs and religious superstitions and started improving their educational level. This resulted in the reduced number of birth of child.

There are also benefits relating to the women's role in the household. Educated women have been found to experience less domestic violence, regardless of other social status indicators like employment status. Women with an education are also more involved in the decision-making process of the family. In particular, these decisions extend to economic decisions. In a household where a mother is educated, children and especially girls are more likely to attend school. In households where a mother is not educated, adult literacy programs can indirectly help to teach mothers the value of education and encourage them to send their children to school. There is also number of other benefits for children associated with having an educated mother over an educated father, including higher survival rates and better nutrition.

### **Effects on economic development**

Our economy has been developing since independence. Both individuals and countries benefit from women's education. Individuals who invest in education receive a net monetary gain over the course of their life time. Recent research shows that investment in female education can yield a 'growth premium' in GDP trends and that narrowing the gender gap in employment can boost per capita income.

Recent reports from the World Bank, World Economic Forum, and the OECD point to the key economic role played by women as they become more productive citizens through education. As Chief Japan Strategist and Co- head of the Asia economies, commodities, and strategy research for Goldman Sachs (GS),



‘I have been studying ‘womenomics’ since 1999. The benefits to societies and economies have become obvious. Educated women contribute to the quality, size, and productivity of the workforce. They can get better paying jobs, allowing them to provide daily necessities, health care and education to support the family’ (Kathy Matsui, 2013)

We are not self-dependent in food-grains but also capable of exporting them. That is why; famines have become events of the past. If women have no opportunities for paid jobs, then they are dependent for their sole wealth and security on their offspring, especially the male children, and this consequently produces high birth rates and puts a strain on food supplies. On the other hand, educated mothers can earn money to provide more resources for the children and they have fewer children, leaving more money and resources to spend on each child.

Education for women is the best way to improve the family health and nutrition. With education, women are prone to marry later and have fewer children. Educated women are better at managing their own and their family’s health issues, thereby reducing infant and maternal mortality as well as health-care costs and improving demographic structure. Women’s education increases the income of women and leads to growth of GDP. This is the real benefit in a world crowded by people, and limited in resources.

### **Conclusion**

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

Only education enables the girl child for further development and achieves the desired results. A concerted effort from the parental side and from the governmental part should be required to ameliorate the conditions and education of the girl child. There is also greater need for health and nutritional programme for the school-going children especially for the girl child. Community Development Programme can integrate all these activities for the development of girl child in Indian society. The traditional attitude and practices should be re-modified so that these do not impose constraints over the advancement and development of girl child and she be denied her basic rights. To bring about social change, change in attitude is very important. Therefore, the dual development and legislative policies may be adopted to eliminate gender disparity and discrimination against girl child. A holistic approach to the developmental programme for the girl child should be made into an effective policy and a major effort be made to educate parents and all the members of Indian society to accept boys and girls as equal. There should be continuous equality, justice and parity between the children of the two different sexes.

To combat poverty, women should be given the opportunity to work for money and own businesses. If women were offered the same salary and job opportunities as men, then they could be a source of income for the family. India has a huge population problem, and educating women would be the deciding factor in reducing the population in coming years, since women are less likely to have many children if they are educated and have the ability to compete in a job market with men. The international community must help women in every way, so women can soon be considered equal to men.

Thus, to build a new and resurgent India that continues to maintain its strong democratic and spiritual traditions, that remains secure not only militarily but also socially and economically, it is important to empower Indian women to define the inner strength of India. If properly

implemented, the educated and empowered women can truly uplift the Indian people and indeed all humanity of our world.

### Note

1. In our study, Literacy rates for 1951, 1961 and 1971 censuses relate to population aged five years and above. The literacy rates for 1981, 1991, 2001 and 2011 censuses relate to the population aged seven years and above. The 1981 literacy rates exclude Assam where the 1981 census could not be conducted. The 1991 census literacy rates exclude Jammu & Kashmir.
2. Table 8 does not contain Maternal Mortality Rates for 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1981 as the rates are not available for those years.

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