



## EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

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### **Abstract:**

Women have a vital role in society and they may contribute to the socio-economic development of the society. It has been recognised that women are agents of sustained socio-economic growth and change. In Census of 2011, it was reported that female population constitutes near about half of the total population in the country but majority of them are not empowered to participate on socio-economics and political life in the country so that development of women is very crucial for the inclusive growth strategies, but the old culture and traditional mind of the people of our country doesn't permit them to go forward in the society and women in India have always remained a victim of discrimination and neglected. The need for women to work outside the home is getting increased day by day for maintaining a better living standard for the family and society as a whole. Moreover, chronic poverty, low social status, lack of self-confidence, lead to the condition of women both pathetic and precarious. As we know that educated people more contributed to efficiency growth, increased productivity and market reputation of an organisation. This study basically tries to analyse the trends and growth of women education in India. The study is based on secondary data. The study concluded that female literacy has been improved over the period.

**Key Words:** Education & Women

### **1. Introduction:**

Women have a vital role in society, and they may contribute to the socio-economic development of the society. It has been recognised that women are agents of sustained socio-economic growth and change. In fact, any national development strategy that emphasises human development essentially begins with the women education. It has been said that if you educate a man, means educating an individual only; but on the other hand, if you educate a woman, it is educating the entire family. Where women remain uneducated, not only is their contribution to society become limited, but the potential participation of the next generation is also limited by inadequate pre-school education. Therefore, illiterate mothers play a part in linking the chain of illiteracy to the next generation. In this manner, one can consider that investment in the education of women is a beneficial investment in human capital than investment in the education of men. Mahatma Gandhi Ji stated the importance of women education in these words “I am strong of the opinion that women should have the same facilities as men, even special facilities where necessary”. In Census of 2011, it was reported that female population constitutes 48.5 percent near about half of the total population in the country but majority of them are not empowered to participate on socioeconomics and political life in the country so that development of women is very crucial for the inclusive growth strategies but the old culture and traditional mind of the people of our country doesn't permit them to go forward in the society and women in India have always remained a victim of discrimination and neglected. The need for women to work outside the home is getting increased day by day for maintaining a better living standard for the family and society as a whole. The recent evidence shows that growth of women education generally encourages women to go in the labour market as well as increase their earnings. This kind of trend is to be good for their own status within society. The eleventh plan acknowledges women agencies and tries to ensure that their needs, rights and contribution are reflected in every section of the plan in the document. Education and skill development receive high priority in the eleventh plan both to fulfil the needs of a growing economy and to promote social equality by empowering those currently excluded because of unequal access to education and skill to participate fully in the growth process.

Women's wage work for necessary for economic growth and the well-being but restricted access to education and skill training heavy workload at home and in the non-paid domestic market often limits women's participation in paid economic activities lower their productivity and reduce their wage. Moreover, chronic poverty, low social status, lack of self-confidence, lead to the condition of women both pathetic and precarious. As we know that educated people more contributed to efficiency growth, increased productivity and market reputation of an organisation.

### **2. Review of Literature:**

Catalina H. Wainerman (1980) pointed out that formal education exerts a strong influence on labour force participation of women, over and beyond that of family situations, in both Argentina and Paraguay. The

implications of this study for both educational policy and human resource development are clear: the education of females has a definite relation to their entry into the workforce, and educating women, in this sense, will, in the long run, contribute to the development of national economies. Tilak (1987) evaluated the development of women education in India since independence relative to the educational development of men with respect to equality of educational opportunity. He found that there was significant progress in literacy and devolvement of women education in India since independence and continuous decline in inequalities between women and men at all educational level but vast differences still existing and also found a significant variation in disparities with respect to educational progress across the states and also observed that educational inequalities are large in economically backward states. He highlighted the factors which are obstacles to the growth of women education viz. Traditional attitudes, economic factors, discrimination in the labour market. Mathew (1995) examined the problem of educated unemployment in the state and identified proliferation in general higher education, changing expectations of the job, as well as a faulty educational system to be responsible for such phenomenon. Tilak (2007) states that education is the most powerful element in empowering people with skills and knowledge and giving them access to productive employment in the future.

**3. Objectives:**

- To analyse the trends and growth of women education in India.
- To ascertain the educational attainment of women in India.

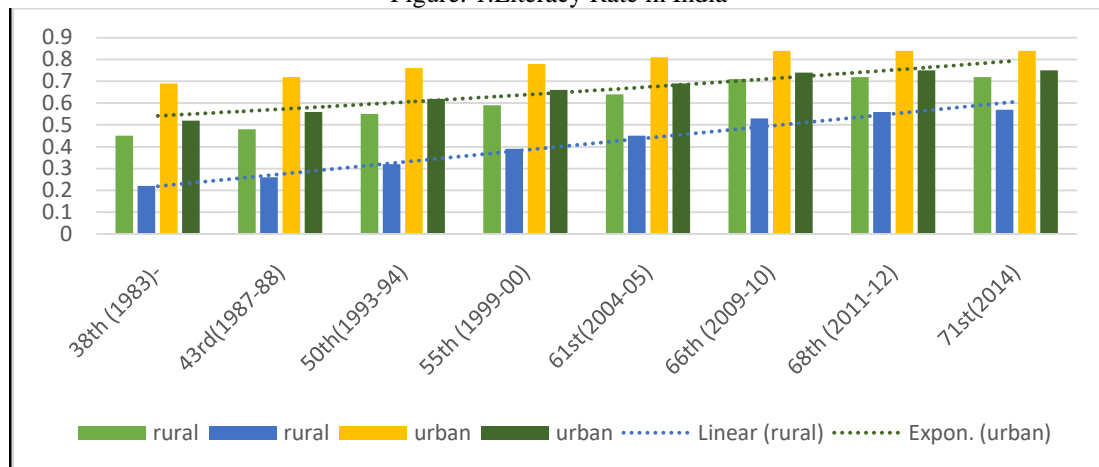
**4. Data Source and Methodology:**

The study is based on secondary data. The relevant secondary data have been accessed from Planning Commission, NSSO Survey reports, educational reports and surveys of Ministry of Human Resource Development (Department of Higher Education), University Grants Commission Annual Reports, Government of India and Directorate General of Employment & Training, Ministry of Labour. The period of the study is 2000-01 to 2014-15. In this study, we have applied a simple percentage and CAGR for the analysis of the growth of women education and employment.

**5. Women Education in India:**

It is observed from existing literature that women education in India has been continually in progressing mode. Education empowers female to understand the economics of managing resources and grab the opportunities for value generation in a micro (household) and macro (societal) level. Educated women have multiple advantages (tangible and intangible) as far as families' and social needs are concerned.

Figure: 1. Literacy Rate in India



Source: NSSO Various Rounds Reports

The above figure depicts that the literacy rate of urban-rural population has increased from 1983 to 2014. The data shows that male literacy rate has been growing and rural-urban male literacy gap narrowed down over the period and the female literacy rate also increasing. As data shows in 2014, the urban female literacy rate is 75 percent while rural female literacy rate is 57 percent. It has been observed that in figure rural female literacy has been increasing year by year, but a persistent gap still exist in rural-urban female literacy.

Table 1: Distribution of Population (15 years and above) by Educational Attainment in India: (In percentage terms)

Rural	Male			Female			Persons		
	2007-08	2011-12	2014	2007-08	2011-12	2014	2007-08	2011-12	2014
Not Literate	28.2	25.3	24.2	52.5	47.5	45.7	40.3	36.3	34.8
Below Primary	28.2	24.7	24	23	21.3	20.9	25.6	23	22.5
Upper Primary	19.9	19.7	20.1	12.3	13.8	14.2	16.2	16.8	17.2
Secondary/ Senior Secondary	19	23.9	24.5	10.3	14.6	15.7	14.6	19.3	20.2
Diploma/Certificate	0.8	1.2	1.5	0.3	0.4	0.7	0.6	0.8	1.1

Graduate and Above	3.1	5.1	5.7	1.6	2.4	2.8	2.7	3.8	4.3
<b>Urban</b>									
Not Literate	11.3	9.9	10.1	25.4	22.6	21.8	18	16.1	15.8
Below Primary	19.7	16.5	16.9	20	17	17.8	19.8	16.7	17.4
Upper Primary	18.8	16.9	16.9	15.9	15.1	14.9	17.4	16.1	15.9
Secondary/ Senior Secondary	30.5	32.7	32.1	25.6	28.8	28.1	28.1	30.7	30.2
Diploma/Certificate	2.4	3.1	3.6	0.8	1.3	1.7	1.7	2.2	2.7
Graduate and Above	17.2	20.8	20.4	12.3	15.2	15.7	14.9	18.1	18.1

Source: NSSO 71<sup>st</sup> Round Education in India 2014

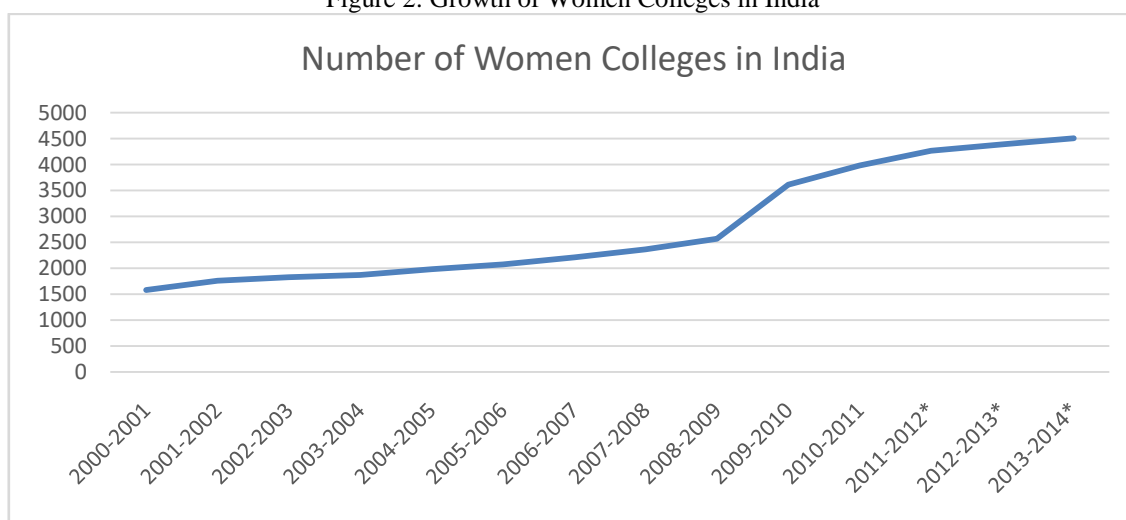
The above table shows the percentage of the rural-urban population in India by educational level. In rural and urban areas, percentage of the female illiterate population decreased continuously over the period 2007-08 to 2014 and also shows that the share of the female population educated upto primary level reduced in the said areas. As it is seen that the percentage of the female who has completed level of upper primary and diploma/certificate did not change much in both areas but the percentage of the female population who have secondary and higher secondary education increased during the above said period. The percentage of the female who has graduation and above degree was around 6 times more in urban areas than the rural counterparts. In spite of the fact percentage share of the female population with graduation and above degree in rural India had significantly increased to 2.8 percent in 2014 from 1.6 percent in 2007-08.

Table 2: Girl's Enrolment at all Level of Education (In millions)

Year/Level of Education	Elementary Class (I-VIII)		Secondary Class (IX-X)		Senior Secondary (XI-XII)		Higher Education	
	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total	Girls	Total
2000-01	67.3	156.6	7.4	19.0	3.8	9.9	3.1	8.6
2001-02	69.0	158.7	7.9	20.1	4.2	10.5	3.7	9.5
2002-03	77.9	169.3	9.0	21.8	4.7	11.4	4.0	10.7
2003-04	81.4	177.1	9.6	23.3	4.8	11.7	4.1	11.2
2004-05	83.8	182.0	10.1	24.3	5.3	12.7	4.8	13.0
2005-06	84.9	184.3	10.5	25.0	5.6	13.4	5.5	14.3
2006-07	87.2	188.2	11.0	25.9	6.0	14.0	6.0	15.6
2007-08	90.6	192.8	12.3	28.2	7.0	16.3	6.6	17.2
2008-09	91.7	193.7	13.0	29.4	7.4	16.9	7.3	18.5
2009-10	91.7	193.1	13.8	30.7	7.9	17.8	8.3	20.7
2010-11	93.8	196.7	14.3	31.9	8.6	19.5	12.0	27.5
2011-12	97.1	202.9	15.5	34.1	9.4	21.0	13.0	29.2
2012-13	96.9	199.8	16.3	34.6	9.3	20.0	13.5	30.1
2013-14	96.1	198.8	17.6	37.3	10.5	22.3	14.8	32.3
2014-15	95.6	197.7	18.2	38.3	11.1	23.5	15.7	34.2
<b>CAGR(Percent)</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>8.0</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>10.3</b>

Source: Statistics of School Education, EAG 2016, MHRD

Figure 2: Growth of Women Colleges in India



Source: UGC Annual Reports

Table 2 depicts the number of girl's enrolment at all level of education in India. It is seen from the table that in elementary education enrolment of girls has been increased from 67.3 million in 2000-01 to 95.6 million in 2014-15 and growth of girl's admission at elementary level has been observed at 2.5 percent over the period. At the secondary level, 7.4 million girls enrolled in 2000-01 which was increased to 18.2 million in 2014-15 and compound annual growth of enrolment of girls in secondary classes was 6.6 percent during the above said period. It is also observed that enrolment of girls in senior secondary classes increased to 11.1 million in 2014-15 from 3.8 million in 2000-01 and CAGR at 8.0 percent during the period. Comparatively higher education

observed highest growth rate among all level of education during the period, that was 12.1 percent and enrolment of girls increased from 3.11 million in 200-01 to 15.7 million in 2014-15 which was almost half of the total enrolment.

The above figure 2 exhibits growth of women colleges in India and indicated that in 2000-01 there were only 1578 colleges existed and during more than a decade there had been a phenomenal growth in the number of women colleges. From the following figure 2, we can find during XI plan, as many as 2058 new women colleges were established as compared to the number of colleges (2208) at the end of X Plan, thus resulting in 93 percent increase in the number of women colleges established during XI plan. It is also found that as many as 240 women colleges have so far been established during two years of the XII Plan as compared to the figure at the end of XI Plan (4266). The CAGR of women colleges during 2000-01 to 2013-14 was 8.41 percent. As a consequence, we can say that there is a tremendous increment in the infrastructural expansion of women colleges in India.

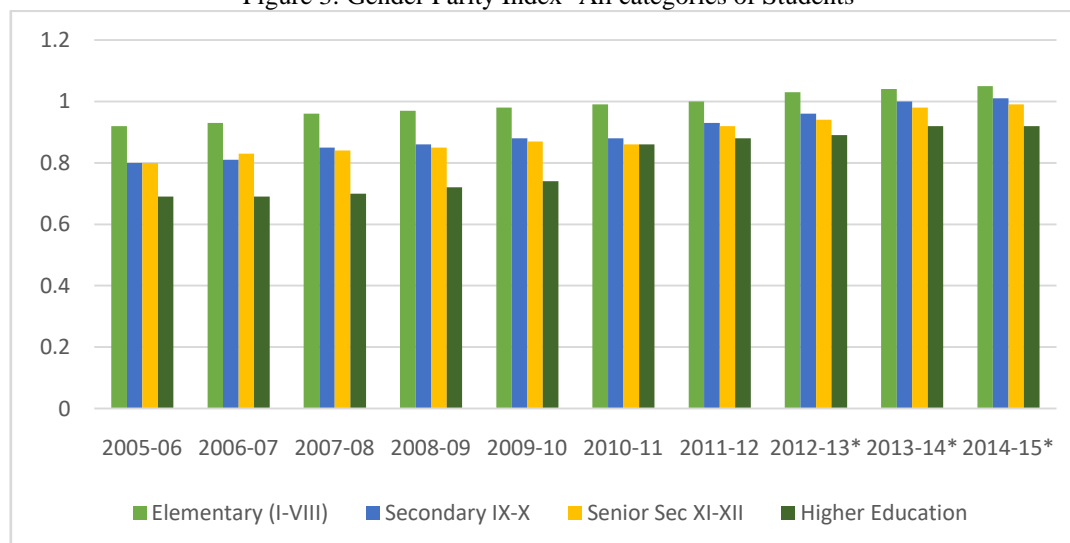
Table 3: Women Enrolment in Higher Education Faculty-wise: 2005-06 to 2015-16

Faculty/Year	Percentage of Total Women Enrolment		Total Women Enrolment		CAGR 2005-06- 2015-16
	2005-06	2015-16*	2005-06	2015-16*	
Arts	51.01	41.13	2278286	5539097	10.4
Science	20.18	19.94	901309	2685403	12.9
Commerce/Management	16.46	15.91	735160	2141673	12.6
Education	1.85	5.06	82627	680953	26.4
Engineering/Technology	4.16	10.1	185800	1360021	24.8
Medicine	3.64	5.02	162575	676162	17.2
Agriculture	0.24	0.49	10719	65640	22.3
Veterinary Science	0.08	0.07	3573	9879	12.0
Law	1.64	1.18	73248	159216	9.00
Others	0.74	1.1	33051	147707	18.1
Total	100	100	4466348	13465751	13.0

Source: UGC, Annual Reports, Various Issues. \*Provisional

Table 3 shows that in 2015-16, women enrolment had been the highest in the faculty of Arts (41.13 percent), followed by Science faculty (19.94 percent) and Commerce/Management (15.91 percent), constituting 76.98 percent in these three non- professional faculties, while the remaining 23.02 percent was in all the professional faculties. The maximum percentage share of women enrolment in professional faculties had been observed in the faculty of Engineering/Technology (10.10 percent). It is also found from the table the percentage of women enrolment in arts stream is consistently decline from 51.01 in 2005-06 to 41.13 in 2015-16 but in terms of absolute number, it has been increasing during the said period. The table also shows that almost half the percentage of women enrolled in arts faculty followed by science and commerce stream and veterinary science registered the lowest percentage of enrolment in total enrolment through the entire said period. Saraswati Raju (2008) said that in view of the gender disparities in higher education, the societal biases enter in yet another form. That is, women are disproportionately represented in what can be termed as 'soft options' - humanities as compared to sciences and other technical fields such as engineering and so on. However, women enrolment increasing in education, engineering/ technology and medicine and their share has been growing in total enrolment over the year. Women enrolment in education stream has accounted highest CAGR that is 26.4 percent followed by engineering 24.8 percent, agriculture 22.3 percent and medicine 17.2 percent and total enrolment increased by 13.0 percent CAGR over the said period.

Figure 3: Gender Parity Index- All categories of Students



Source: Education at Glance, MHRD New Delhi

Education is a significant factor to ensure gender equality and empowerment. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is the ratio of the number of female students enrolled at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education to the corresponding number of male student enrolled in each level. Thus GPI (based on GER) which is free from the effects of the population structure of the appropriate age group, provides a picture of gender equality in education. The above figure shows that from 2005-06 to 2014-15, substantial progress has been achieved towards gender parity in education as revealed by GPI. At present, in elementary and secondary school, the enrolment is favourable to females as the corresponding GPI has crossed the limit 1, while senior secondary and higher education does not pass the threshold during the said period.

### **7. Findings and Conclusion:**

From the following study, we have come across the present situation of women education in India. We have observed that female literacy has been increased and the gap in male-female literacy is minimised through the period but not up to the satisfactory level. It has been found that educational attainment of the female population increased during the period 2007-14, because of girls enrolment at all level of education has been growing, and government also take this progressive mode of women education seriously; as a result, new colleges and universities were established mainly for women population. The study also analysed the equality of educational opportunities and observed inequality in education at a lower level of education has been reduced but at a higher level of education, inequality is still persistent. From the previous studies, it has been known that if an individual possesses the specific skill, he has a relative advantage in the labour market but in India particularly at the higher educational level, a higher proportion of the female population still receiving general education. Therefore, their chances of getting unemployed have been more significant because the typical employer is more demanded specific skilled people.

Ignoring the education of women, who constitute nearly half of the population, does not auger well for the development of any country. Education will not only ensure more contribution in developmental processes but also create awareness of rights and entitlements in society so that women can extend their participation in society on an equal footing in all areas. Although there is much work to be done to improve education in India, particular attention is needed for women's access to education. An attempt has to be made to remove the social, psychological and structural barriers, for the participation of the majority of women in education. The state must play a prominent role in preventing gender stereotyping and segregation in education, and providing stipends, scholarships, loans, transport facilities, guidance and counselling services to women and their families, mainly belonging to the lower and marginalised sections of society, and with required regulation and intervention, whenever necessary, to correct the imbalances in education access.

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