

Causes of Illiteracy and Backwardness of Women in India

Firdaus Bano

Research Scholar, Kolhan University, Chaibasa, Jharkhand, India

Abstract: - *An important goal of human civilization in today's world is gender equality. The realization of importance of gender equality and attempts to achieve it is a major achievement. Lately the journey of women's struggle for equality and emancipation has witnessed many milestones. Some of the remarkable ones include the right to property in 1870 (United Kingdom) to right to voting in 1920 (France). However, there is still much to be accomplished on social, economic, and legal fronts to achieve gender equality in all its unfeigned perspective.*

I. Introduction

Education is not only a fundamental right but also a vital tool to secure the other fundamental rights the first step to comprehend and appreciate their rights, duties, abilities, and dreams that promise to develop a cultivated self-awareness for women across the world. Education is one of the significant social indicators having bearing on the achievement and the growth of an individual as well as community. This is perceived to be highly suitable for providing employment and, thereby, improving the quality of life, the level of human well-being and access to basic social services.² the progress and all-round development of a country depends upon harnessing the skills and abilities of all sections of society, regardless of caste, creed, religion and sex. Women have been discriminated against for ages and they have not been given equal opportunities in many social, economic and cultural spheres. If we do not involve women in development activities, it not merely obstructs their own development, but also affects the progress of the entire nation. The status of women could be the best indicator of a nation's

progress. Women's active role is regarded as an integral part of a progressive social system.³

II. Literacy Rate Gender Disparity Since Independence

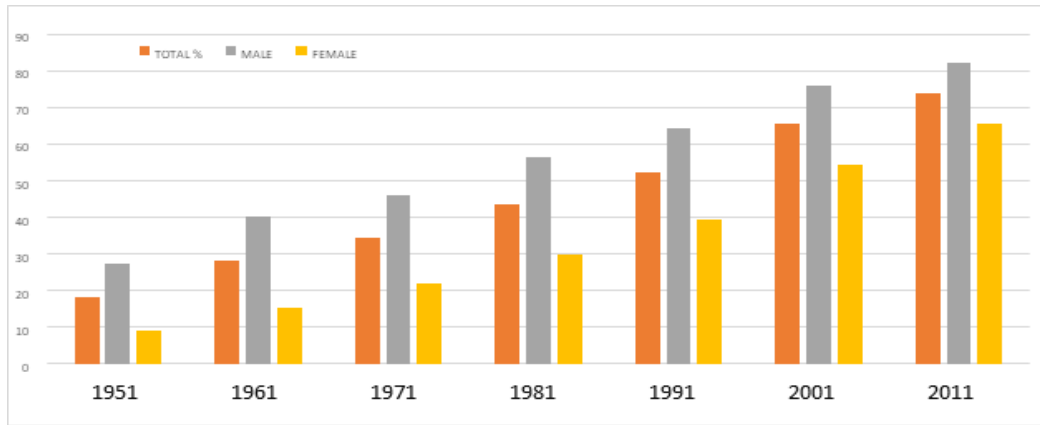
It is unanimously agreed that illiteracy is one of the major contributors to poverty in any socio-religious community. A person aged seven and above, who can both read and write with any understanding in any language, is treated as literate. As per 2011 Census, the overall literacy rate of India is 74.04%. The difference between the highest and the lowest literacy rate in India is very high. Kerala has the highest literacy rate which is 93.9%, while Bihar has the lowest with 63.8 %.

Literacy rate is one of the indices which are used by educationist, teacher and policy makers to evaluate the change in progress of general education. The change in literacy rate among males and females at national level has been studied through the census data collected from 1901 to 2011, the data collected during this intervening period, can be tabulated as follows:

Literacy rate since Independence

CENSUS YEAR	TOTAL %	MALE	FEMALE
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

Source: Census of India: 1951-2011



Source: Census of India: 1951-2011

The above table indicates that in 1951 the total literacy rate was 18.33 percent the literacy rate for male was 27.16 percent and for female it was 8.86 percent. After sixty years of independence, in 2011 the total literacy rate was 74.04 percent. The literacy rate for male was 82.14 percent and for female 65.46 percent. The analysis of literacy rate suggests some important findings, for example, literacy rate for the country as a whole increased from 18.33 percent in 1951 to 74.04 percent in 2011 and for male literacy

rate increased from 27.16 percent in 1951 to 82.14 percent in 2011 and for females it increased from 8.86 percent in 1951 to 65.46 percent in 2011. There is difference between literacy rates in males and females from 1951 to 2011. Surprisingly, the female literacy rate has increased at a faster pace than the male literacy during the decade 1981-2011. The growth is almost six times e.g. 8.86% in 1951 and 65.46% in 2011.⁴

Literacy Rate in India as per Census 2011 (States Ranking by Literacy Rate)

S. No	States & Union Territories	Literacy Rate	Male Literacy Rate	Female Literacy Rate
1	Andaman & Nicobar	86.3%	90.1%	81.8%
2	Andhra Pradesh	67.7%	75.6%	59.7%
3	Arunachal Pradesh	67.0%	73.7%	59.6%
4	Assam	73.2%	78.8%	67.3%
5	Bihar	63.8%	73.5%	53.3%
6	Chandigarh	86.4%	90.5%	81.4%
7	Chhattisgarh	71.0%	81.5%	60.6%
8	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	77.7%	86.5%	65.9%
9	Daman & Diu	87.1%	91.5%	79.6%
10	Delhi	86.3%	91.0%	80.9%
11	Goa	87.4%	92.8%	81.8%
12	Gujarat	79.3%	87.2%	70.7%
13	Haryana	76.6%	85.4%	66.8%
14	Himachal Pradesh	83.8%	90.8%	76.6%
15	Jammu and Kashmir	68.7%	78.3%	58.0%
16	Jharkhand	67.6%	78.5%	56.2%
17	Karnataka	75.6%	82.8%	68.1%
18	Kerala	93.9%	96.0%	92.0%
19	Lakshadweep	92.3%	96.1%	88.2%
20	Madhya Pradesh	70.6%	80.5%	60.0%
21	Maharashtra	82.9%	89.8%	75.5%
22	Manipur	79.8%	86.5%	73.2%
23	Meghalaya	75.5%	77.2%	73.8%
24	Mizoram	91.6%	93.7%	89.4%

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25	Nagaland	80.1%	83.3%	76.7%
26	Orissa	73.5%	82.4%	64.4%
27	Puducherry	86.5%	92.1%	81.2%
28	Punjab	76.7%	81.5%	71.3%
29	Rajasthan	67.1%	80.5%	52.7%
30	Sikkim	82.2%	87.3%	76.4%
31	Tamil Nadu	80.3%	86.8%	73.9%
32	Tripura	87.8%	92.2%	83.1%
33	Uttar Pradesh	69.7%	79.2%	59.3%
34	Uttarakhand	79.6%	88.3%	70.7%
35	West Bengal	77.1%	82.7%	71.2%
-	INDIA	74.04%	82.14%	65.46%

Source: Census of India (2011)

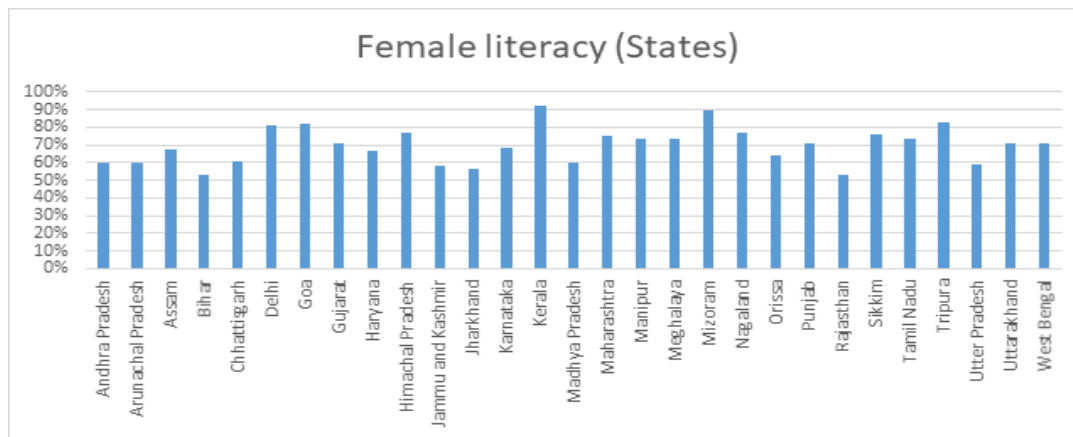
State with the highest literacy rate and lowest literacy rate is the southern state of Kerala with literacy rate of 93.91% and Bihar with a figure of 63.82% respectively. Government of India has taken several measures to improve the literacy rate in villages and towns of India. State Governments has been directed

to ensure and improve literacy rate in districts and villages where people are very poor. There has been a good improvement in literacy rate of India in last 10 years but there is still a long way to go. Going by previous growth rate, India will be able to achieve its universal literate target not before 2060.⁵

State-wise Percentage of Female Literacy in the Country as per 2011 Census

S.no.	Name of the state	Female literacy
1.	Andhra Pradesh	59.7%
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	59.6%
3.	Assam	67.3%
4.	Bihar	53.3%
5.	Chhattisgarh	60.6%
6.	Delhi	80.9%
7.	Goa	81.8%
8.	Gujarat	70.7%
9.	Haryana	66.8%
10.	Himachal Pradesh	76.6%
11.	Jammu and Kashmir	58.0%
12.	Jharkhand	56.2%
13.	Karnataka	68.1%
14.	Kerala	92.0%
15.	Madhya Pradesh	60.0%
16.	Maharashtra	75.5%
17.	Manipur	73.2%
18.	Meghalaya	73.8%
19.	Mizoram	89.4%
20.	Nagaland	76.7%
21.	Orissa	64.4%
22.	Punjab	71.3%
23.	Rajasthan	52.7%
24.	Sikkim	76.4%
25.	Tamil Nadu	73.9%
26.	Tripura	83.1%
27.	Utter Pradesh	59.3%
28.	Uttarakhand	70.7%
29.	West Bengal	71.2%

Source: Census of India, 2011.

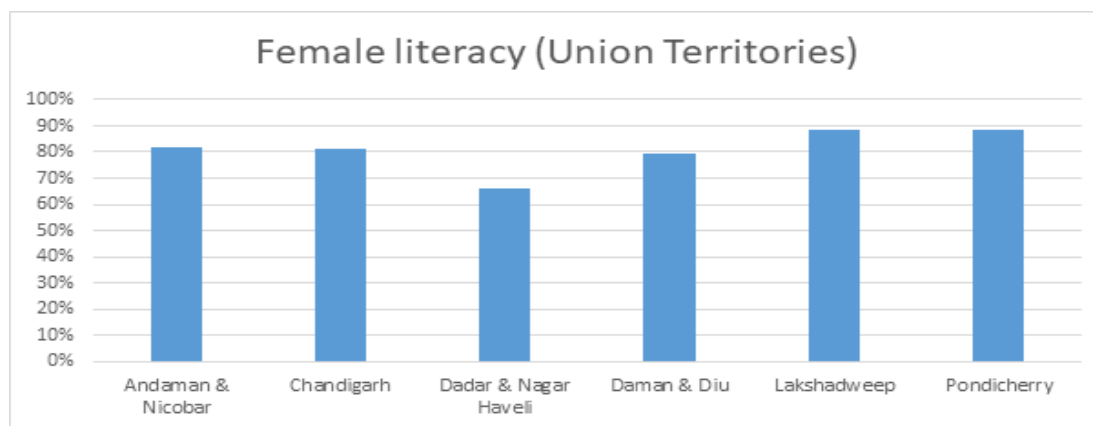


Source: Census of India, 2011.

Union territories

1.	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	81.8%
2.	Chandigarh	81.4%
3.	Dadar & Nagar Haveli	65.9%
4.	Daman & Diu	79.6%
5.	Lakshadweep	88.2%
6.	Pondicherry	88.2%
All India		65.46%

Source: Census of India, 2011.



Source: Census of India, 2011

Kerala is the most literate state in India, with 93.91% literacy, followed by Lakshadweep at 92.28%. Bihar is the least literate state in India, with a literacy of 63.82%. Every census since 1881 had indicated rising literacy in the country, but the population growth rate had been high enough that the absolute number of illiterates rose with every decade. The 2001–2011 decade is the second census period (after the 1991–2001 census period) when the absolute number of Indian illiterates declined (by 31,196,847 people), indicating that the literacy growth rate is now outstripping the population growth rate.

Bihar is the only Indian state in the 2011 census where less than 65% of the population was literate. It is also only one of two states where less than 75% of the male population (the other being Arunachal Pradesh) was literate and only one of two states where less than 55% of the female population (the other being Rajasthan) was literate. Six Indian states account for about 70% of all illiterates in India: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. Slightly less than half of all Indian illiterates (48.12%) are in the six Hindi-speaking states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.⁶

III. Reasons For The Educational Backwardness Of Women

Education is a crucial social factor that initiates the process of social, economic and cultural development of communities.

IV.I Lack of female education

This is an undeniable fact that woman's role in a child's education and training is very important and that is why a mother's lap is called the first school of a child. In this school, the real foundation of a child's education and training is laid on which the structure of future life is built.⁷ Female community comprises about half of the population, it is the demand of the time to promote proper climate for fostering education among females. It is found that majority of male have very conservative outlook towards females. They do not provide education to them. The result is that half of the population is denied education. The curbs on females or girls imposed by their male guardians hinder the growth of mental development. They lose their curiosity, observation and initiative, which are essential for development of education of women.⁸

IV.II Lack of interaction between parents/guardian's teachers and school management

The guardians get their wards admitted to the institutions owned by their community. They understand that their duty is over. They do not bother to have any contact with college officials and management to know the performance and

achievement. Even college management and officials do not have any contact with the guardians of the students. A gap is created the result of which students are not cared up to the mark for proper growth of their mental development and their good performance in the class. The students need to develop curiosity towards the subjects to make arguments, to think and observe independently, and to create rationality. This can be achieved at least partially with the encouragement of the teachers.

IV.III Early Marriages

Reasons for low enrolment and retention of girls are early marriages. 4.3% of girls between 10 and 14 and 35.3% of girls between 15 and 19 are married. In urban areas, it is recognized that education increases a girl's marriageability while in rural areas; education implies that a girl lacks domestic skills and will make a bad wife. The opportunity costs of a girl's time are also very high as she has domestic responsibilities of sibling care etc., especially if her mother is working.

IV.IV Low Standard of Institutions

Institutes lack the facilities of good libraries with good books on science. Laboratory and other scientific instruments, apparatus and computers would be helpful in developing scientific outlook among students. It is a fact that scientific facilities create environment in which the students may get proper attitude developed for science and technical education. The promotion of modern education cannot be made in the absence of scientific facilities.⁹



One of the major factors contributing to this relatively low literacy rate is the lack of proper school facilities as well as the complete inefficiency

of teaching staff across the government run education sector. There is a shortage of classrooms to accommodate all the students. In addition, there is

no proper sanitation in most schools. The study of 188 government-run primary schools in central and northern India revealed that 59% of the schools had no drinking water facility and 89% no toilets. In 600,000 villages and multiplying urban slum habitats, “free and compulsory education” is the basic literacy instruction dispensed by barely qualified 'Para teachers'. The average Pupil Teacher Ratio for All India is 1:42, implying teacher shortage. Such inadequacies resulted in a non-standardized school system where literacy rates may differ. Furthermore, the expenditure allocated to education was never above 4.3% of the GDP from 1951 to 2002 despite the target of 6% by the Kothari Commission. This further complicates the literacy problem in India.¹⁰

IV.V Poor school environment for girls

In general, the school environment for girls in rural India is not interesting and encouraging. There are still many schools with poor basic amenities such as drinking water, and toilet facilities, improper building and inadequate number of teachers especially female teachers preferable for any parents for safety of their girl children from different types of exploitation and abuse.

IV.VI The lower enrolment due to family responsibilities

The major educational problem faced by girls, especially girls from rural areas, is that although they may be enrolled at the beginning of the year, they do not always remain in school. Girls are often taken out of school to share the family responsibilities. Children belonging to low caste families are forced to learn skills and work and not encouraged to go to school due to various factors in the sphere of strict instruction from high caste communities for their selfish motives of keeping them as domestic servants. The data on school attendance collected by the World Bank shows the proportion of girls attending school decreases with age while for boys it remains stable.¹¹

IV.VII Dowry system

In rural India, dowry refers to the durable goods, cash and real or movable property that the bride's family gives to the bridegroom, his parents or his relatives

as a condition of the marriage. The dowry system is thought to put great financial burden on the bride's family. Dowry system and other social act as main causes of the neglect of the girl child and discrimination against girl child including the deprivation of right to education. In some cases, the dowry system leads to the crime against women ranging from emotional abuse, injury to even deaths.

IV.VIII Priority to son's education compared to daughter's education

Many parents view educating sons as an investment because the sons will be responsible for caring for aging parents. On the other hand, parents may see the education of daughter a waste of money as daughter will eventually live with their husband's families and the parents will not benefit directly from their education.

IV.IX Poverty

Poverty happens to be the single biggest cause of illiteracy in rural India and a precursor to all other effects. Rural women are found to be economically very poor all over the state. A few women are engaged in services and other activities. So, they need economic power to stand on their own legs on par with men. Poverty is considered the greatest threat to peace in the world.

IV.X The large proportion of illiterate females

The famous saying, “Educate a man and you educate an individual educate a woman and you educate a family”. The large proportion of illiterate females is another reason for the low literacy rate in India. Inequality based on gender differences resulted in female literacy rates being lower at 65.46% than that of their male counterparts at 82.14%. Due to strong stereotyping of female and male roles, Sons are thought of to be more useful and hence are educated. Females are pulled to help out on agricultural farms at home as they are increasingly replacing the males on such activities which require no formal education. Fewer than 2% of girls who engaged in agriculture work attended school.¹²

IV.XI Lack of adequate number of Female teachers

Another barrier to female education is the lack of female teachers. As India is a gender segregated society, it is a very important factor in the low female literacy rate. It is one of the barriers to girls' 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.¹³

IV. Opinions Of Parents About Women Education

S. No.	Statement	Yes	No
1	They ignore girl's education because of household works.	75.00%	25.00%
2	They don't know about RTE Act.	92.50%	17.50%
3	They hesitate to send their girls at distance place for education.	82.50%	17.50%
4	They gave more important to boy's education instead of girl's education.	81.25%	18.75%
5	They didn't aware of scholarship scheme for girls.	76.25%	23.75%
6	Parents and children all are working.	60.00%	40.00%
7	Only aim of sending school is Mid-Day Meal.	63.75%	36.25%
8	Secondary School is far away from their home, so they didn't send their girl child there.	81.25%	18.75%
9	Secondary School is far away from their home, so they didn't send their girl child there.	70.00%	30.00%
10	There is no female teacher in schools.	52.50%	47.50%
11	There is an only primary school in a village.	88.75%	11.25%

I met the parents of different area and village of Maskandargah, Rudauli and try to know their opinion about Women education and empowerment. Then I made a questionnaire for parents. In this questionnaire there are 11 statements and they have to give their response in 'Yes' or 'No' form. I have taken their response and find out percentage for analysis.

V. Conclusion

We all know the importance of Women education. Not only the government, but every literate citizen should contribute in battling with the demon of illiteracy. Our motto should be 'each one teaches one, if we are to become a developed nation. One of the initiatives is 'Teach India', whose aim is to provide a platform to educated Indians to aid in basic education to the unprivileged children. 'Teach India' will connect educated individuals with the specialist education providers. It's now turn of the youth to step up and take the responsibility on their shoulders to take this nation towards the light of literacy. In the words of the

President of the United States, *Barack Obama* 'Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek'.¹⁴

VII. References

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