

Status of Women Education in Rural India

Ms. Snigdha

Assistant Professor, Bhagini Nivedita College, University of Delhi

Abstract: Women education is an essential need to change their status in the society and also empowerment intellectually. Women education in India has been a most important preoccupation of both administrative and civil society because educated women can play a very important role in the society for socio-economic development, besides political, and legal. It is one of the opportunities for women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges; to confront their traditional role and change their life-style. Education eliminates inequalities and disparities as the means of recovering their status within and out of their families. The present study based on fully secondary sources collected on various issues obtained through Statistics of School Education (SSE), Ministry of Human Resource development, New Delhi and Census of India 2011. The study aims at the girl's enrolment in school education and analyse female literacy rate over the census years in India. We concluded that girls' enrolment in school education had been increased year by year in India. At the same time women literacy is low compared to the literacy rate of men. Even though the female literacy level is rapidly increasing, it could not achieve to the literacy level of in India.

Keywords: Women education, Statistics of School Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to some learned people, the word 'education' has been derived from the Latin term 'educatum' which means the act of teaching and training. A group of educationists say that it has come from another Latin word 'educare' which means 'to bring up' or 'to raise'.

All the meanings indicate that education seeks to nourish the good qualities in man and draw out the best in every individual. Education seeks to develop the innate capacities of man. By educating an individual we attempt to give him some desirable knowledge, understanding, skills, interests, attitudes and critical thinking.

BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM:

Majority of India still lives in villages and so the topic of rural education in India is of utmost importance. A survey named called Annual Status Of Education Report (ASER), shows that even though the number of rural students attending schools is rising, but more than half of the students in the fifth grade are unable to read a second grade textbook and are not able to solve simple mathematical problems. Not only this, the level of mathematics and reading is further declining. Though efforts are being made, they are not in the right direction.

Socialization of the girl child in India seems to have followed a set pattern where she has been trapped and molded by deep-rooted combined cultures of patriarchy and risk because of their limited access to resources and opportunities and their systematic exclusion from the position of decision making. What is more important is that the process of exclusion tends to start at the grass root, the family level. Herein a girl child is subjected to kind of languages and practices, which patronize experience of various natures at variety of levels. What could be more heinous than killing female fetus and infants? The female feticides and infanticides, the most horrendous of gender crimes increasing steeply. It is the most violation of the most basic human rights, the right to be born. Women with higher social status are likely to be more sensitive to female child's need and aspiration. Therefore, education brings economic liberation, which in turn facilitates social liberation.

Education seems to be the key factor, which only can initiate a chain of advantages to females. However, the access to education is differently perceived for male and female key indicators such as literacy, enrolment and years spent in school explain the situation in the access to education and each of these indicators reveal that the level of female education in India is still low and lagging behind their male counterpart. The low adult literacy rates for women are a reflection of past under investment in the education only confined to low enrolments, the girl's school attendance has also been found incredibly low. Rural girls belong to disadvantaged groups as if scheduled castes and scheduled tribes present the worst scenario. As per data, girl dropout ratio has tended to increase with the enhancement in the level of education. This clearly outlines the pattern of gender inequality in access to education, which seems to be deepening as we move from lower to higher educational attainment and from urban to rural and to disadvantaged group in the society. Education is one composite single variable which has the capacity to transform many odds turning in favor of girls more specifically so in the rural India. Therefore, an exclusive emphasis on girl's education is necessary. It is still not being realized that there is definite connection between education, good motherhood and efficient house management. The management of millions of households and the upbringing of millions of children is thus in the hands of illiterate women. It is here that a change is required if our democratic and socialist intensions not remain a mere pretense.

OBJECTIVES:

Economical, and educational and health problems of the women. The study also suggests remedies for tackling their problems. The study also reveals various aspects of the families of women like marriage, birth of children, type of family, size of family, number of children, liking towards sons, daughters or both. Other major objectives of the study include:

- To analytically study their socio-economic and educational status in the society.
- To study their status among their own family members.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

India dreams of becoming a superpower by 2020, but quite ironical is the fact that the country, whose population has crossed one billion marks, has literacy rates quite comparable with the underdeveloped countries (and in some cases even less than these countries). The literacy rates for males and females stands at 76.85 percent and 55.16 percent respectively. Various programs initiated by the states like Total Literacy Campaign, The District Primary Education Program and National Program of Nutritional Support to primary education have done little to attain the goal. Further, the gap between the rural and urban areas and that between female and their male counterpart is quite substantial.

While the male literacy rate in the urban areas is about 86 percent, rural female literacy rate is just 46 percent, as per recent census and several plausible reasons explain this difference. The first and the foremost of course, is the way the parents perceive the female education. Since the very beginning the role of female is confined to domestic work and looking after children. The tradition of settling at husband's place after marriage, does not offer enough incentive to parents for spending on girl's education. A boy's education is far more important as it enhances the chances of his being employed. Another reason is the prevalent trend of early marriage in rural areas. In most villages, girl's education, rather than being seen as an incentive is seen as a liability. It is difficult to find a groom for an educated girl. These are not the only reasons responsible for the low level of female education. Though one cannot deny that gender inequality is, by and large, responsible for the situation, but several other factors also work in this direction. Very often, the parents who are willing to educate their daughters are discouraged by the absence of schools within the surrounding areas and it is not considered safe to send girls to another village to study. However, this not true for most of the villages now. But even in villages where there are schools, the standard of infrastructure is abysmally low, be it management of classes, student-teacher ratio, availability of textbooks, or even furniture, these schools lack in every sense. This discourages the parents to get their children enrolled in these schools. There are incidences of under qualified staff being employed in educational institutions. The meager salaries that are offered by the government do not provides enough incentive to attract the talent to these schools for employment.

Education, under nutrition and gender discrimination is all interrelated. For example, infant's health depends on the care taken by mother during pregnancy which in turn depends on her education and also the education in the community. Further, an educated mother is better equipped to help her children in studies. So there is a need for change in social attitudes of rural people towards women. Also, the standard of government school's infrastructures needs to be raised. The salaries of staffs should also be raised to make them more committed. Other states should learn from Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu so that the goal of achieving universal education does not remain a distant dream.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The study will deal with the educational status of rural women in villages in India along with their socio-economic status. The study will also reveal their position in the society. It will also help to understand the need for girl's education especially in the villages for brighter future of the rural girls and for the future generations as well.

The study will also enable us to move forward for the rural girls to change their status in the society in a better direction. It also provides a brief description of different barriers faced by rural and urban women in educational sector.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The work is based on sourced from the available secondary sources on the research theme. The qualitative research approach takes into consideration. The information for the study has been taken from the behavior of the society and their beliefs regarding women's position and their rights.

The data for the study has been collected through well-structured personal interaction and objective type questionnaire with women in the study area. Observations of the family attitudes and society regarding girl's education in rural area is also a part of the study, these observations and objective type questions helps us to understand not only the educational status but also the socio-economic and political status of rural women. Study of data from internet has also been used; internet has provided also the necessary information. In order to draw a comprehensive range of information about the educational status of rural women, the study has used the variety of resources and methods which are predominantly secondary in nature and includes books, journal articles and other documentary evidences.

Preliminary data and some background information has been gathered from census data, IGNOU books itself, governmental publications, websites and newspapers.

2. DEFINING WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Women education is a catch-all term for a complex set of issues and debates surrounding education (primary education, secondary education, and tertiary education and health education in particular) for girls and women. It includes areas of gender equality and access to education, and its connection to the alleviation of poverty. Also involved are the issues of single-sex education and religious education in that the division of education along gender lines as well as religious teachings an education has been traditionally dominant and are still highly relevant in contemporary discussions of educating females as a global considerations.

While the feminist movement has certainly promoted the importance of the issues attached to female education the discussion is wide ranging and by no means narrowly defined. It may include, for example, AIDS education. Improving girl's education level has been demonstrated to have clear impacts on the health and economic future of the young women, which in turns improves the prospects of their entire community. Infant mortality rate of babies whose mothers have received primary education is half that of children whose mothers are illiterate. In the poorest countries of the world, 50 percent of girls do not attend secondary school. Yet, research shows that every extra year of school for girl's increases their lifetime by 15 percent.

Improving female education, and thus the earning potential of women, improves the standard of living for their own children, as women invest more of their income in their families than men do. Female education is a need of the hour without educating the women of the country we cannot hope for a developed nation. Women play a vital role in the all-round progress of a country. Women must be educated as they are real builders of happy homes. Women have three major roles to perform in the course of their life. They have to discharge their duties as good daughters, good wives and good mothers. Apart from these important duties, they have to improve themselves as good citizens of a free democracy. Hence, it is necessary to give women a different kind of education from the one given to boys. Their education should be such as it may enable them to discharge their duties in a proper way. From education they become fully matured in all fields of life. Educated women are well aware of their duties and rights. They can contribute in the development of the country in the same way as men do.

In Asia, India has the lowest rates of female literacy. This is attributed to the fact the country has a biased outlook towards the education of women. The Indian society feels that a woman is a liability who will one time get married and will not contribute the economic and social development of the family. The society perceives a woman as somebody who cannot

do other duties apart from her traditional duties of cooking and housekeeping. As a result, the society considers home training more important as compared to formal education.

Educating an Indian woman creates a vital opportunity for the social and economic development of India. As educated Indian woman will yield a positive impact in the society by contributing positively to the economy of both the country and society. An educated woman reduces the chances of her child dying before the age of five. The chances of controlling the population are high as an educated woman is likely to marry at a later age as opposed to uneducated woman. The government has made it mandatory for an Indian child between the ages of six to fourteen years to attend school. In addition, the government has availed free food especially lunch across the country. Overall, educating a woman leads to the progression and development of the family in most instances.

India needs to take lessons from the world and promote the education of females in our country. Although it's not like that Indian women have not achieved anything so far we have Indian women as the CEO's of the top companies not just within Indian but also outside India, we have a Indian women as a winner of the world's championship of boxing, we have amazing female army officers. In fact the women today are much ahead of men in the world ranking when it comes to professional skills. India still has a long way to go. India's female literacy rate is still needs to be improved a lot. This will not just be possible by the making of government policies. We all need to wake up and make a move; we all should take a step towards promoting women education in India.

PAST OF RURAL FEMALE'S EDUCATION SYSTEM:

Education in India is provided by the public sector as well as the private sector, with control and funding coming from three levels: central, state and local. Under various articles of Indian constitution free and compulsory education is provided as a fundamental right to children between the ages of six and fourteen. Takshasila was the earliest recorded center of higher learning in India from at least 5th century BCE and it is debatable whether it could be regarded a university or not. Nalanda was the oldest university system of education in the world in the modern sense of university. Secular institutions cropped up along with Hindu temples, mutts and Buddhist monasteries. These institutions imparted practical education, for example, medicine.

Women have a much lower literacy rate than men. Far fewer girls are enrolled in the schools, and many of them drop out. In the patriarchal setting of the Indian family. Girls have lower status and fewer privileges than boy children. Conservative cultural attitudes prevent some girls from attending schools. The education of women in India plays a significant role in improving living standards in the country. A higher woman literacy rate improves the quality of life both at home and outside the home, by encouraging and promoting education of children, especially female children, and reducing the infant mortality rate. Several studies have shown that a lower level of woman literacy rates results in higher levels of fertility and infant mortality, poor nutrition, lower earning potential and the lack of an ability to make decision within a household.

Following independence, India viewed education as an effective tool for bringing social change through community development .the administrative control was effectively initiated in 1950s, when in 1952, the government grouped villages under national programs which could control education in up to hundred villages. A block development officer oversees a geographical area of 150 square miles (990 Km²) which could control a population of as many as 70,000 people. The formal education system in India is highly centralized with both public and private schools following a common curriculum and operating on common procedures.

Since 1947 the Indian government has tried to provide incentives for girl's school attendance through programs for midday meals, free books and uniforms. This welfare thrust raised primary enrollments between 1951 and 1981. In 1968, the national policy on education decided to restructure education in tune with the social framework of each state, and with larger national goals. It emphasized that education was necessary for democracy and central to improvement of women's condition. The new policy aimed at social change through revised texts, curricula, increased funding of schools, and policy improvements. Emphasis was placed on girl's occupational centers and primary education, secondary and higher education, and rural and urban institutions. The report tried to connect the problems like low school attendance with poverty, and the dependence on girls for housework and siblings day care. The national literacy mission although the minimum marriage age is now eighteen for girls, many continued to be marry much earlier. Therefore, at the secondary level, female dropout rates are high.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURES:

Indian economy is predominantly rural. According to 1981 census, 76.3 percent of country's population lives in rural areas and according to 2011 census 72.18 percent of country's population lives in rural areas while 27.82 percent of population lives in urban areas. These figures are only indicative of the vast difference between rural majority and urban minority in India. In this study it is proposed to analyze a few dimensions of inequality in depth.

Particularly the following hypothesis is examined:

- Internal rates of return to education in urban areas exceed those in urban areas.
- There exists inequality in human capital formation between rural and urban areas, the distribution being skewed against the former.
- There also exists wide inequality in earnings between rural and urban workers.

These hypotheses are obviously not completely independent of each other. Study of the latter two would provide some sort of explanation to inequality in rates of return to education, as human capital is mainly assumed in terms of costs of education, while the latter is concerned with inequality in earnings. There are a few major studies on rates of return to education in India. But no study has so far paid any attention to the problem of unequal returns to education between rural and urban population. On the other hand, many studies deliberately ignored the rural society and were confined to urban population only. But educational levels, earnings and related aspects like employment, voluntary vary between rural and urban areas in India, as in many other countries. Nevertheless, this aspect did not receive any attention of the researchers. The unequal returns to education between rural and urban areas may not be adequately revealed in any comparison of average rural and urban incomes (Byerlee and Eicher, 1972).

The present study can be seen as a modest attempt in this direction. It estimates internal rate of return to education in rural and urban areas, separately and analyses the equality between them. Literacy rate in rural areas was pegged at 71 percent last year, compared to 86 percent in urban areas, while among the age group of seven years and above, male literacy rate was found higher than the female literacy rate, according to NSSO survey. Among the age group of seven years and above, the male literacy rate was registered at 83 percent vis-à-vis the female literacy rate of 67 percent. 'Similarly, it was found in the rural areas, nearly 4.5 percent of males and 2.2 percent of females completed education level of graduation and above, while in the urban areas 17 percent of males and 13 percent of female completed this level of education. According to several findings, literacy rate among age group of seven years and above in the country was 75 percent. In rural areas, it was 71 percent compared to 86 percent in urban areas. Adult literacy (age 15 years and above) rate in India was around 71 percent for adults also, literacy rates in rural areas was lower than that in urban areas in rural areas, adult literacy rates was 64 percent compared to 84 percent in urban areas.

No significant difference between rural and urban India existed in terms distance of physical access to primary schooling. In both rural and urban areas, nearly 99 percent households reported availability of primary schools within two kilometers from the house. For accessing difference urban and rural India existed in terms of distance for physical access to primary schooling. In both urban and rural areas, nearly 99 percent households reported existence of such facilities within two kilometers.

Nearly 86 percent of rural households and 96 percent of urban households reported upper primary schools within a distance of two kilometers from the house while nearly 60 percent of rural households and 91 percent of urban households reported secondary schools at such a distance revealed. The proportion of persons having completed higher level of education, say graduation and above, was more in the urban areas than in the rural areas, in the rural areas, nearly 4.5 percent of males and 2.2 percent of females completed education level of graduation and above, while in the urban areas 17 percent of males and 13 percent of female completed this level of education. In rural areas, majority of the students were attending government institutions predominantly up to higher secondary levels, whereas completely different picture was observed in urban areas.

In rural areas, 72 percent of the students at primary levels, 76 percent of upper primary level and 64 percent at secondary level attended government institutions. While in the urban areas, 31 percent at primary level, 38 percent at upper primary level as well as secondary and higher secondary level, attended government institutions.

THEORETICAL CONCERNS OF RURAL WOMEN'S EDUCATION:

Woman; the word sounds so powerful. Since eternity women have played a role more important than men and that is no exaggeration. The world would not have been the same lovely adorable and livable place without wonderful contribution so selflessly made by women. It has been said that, you teach a female and you build up a nation and truth cannot be closer than that. Women have always carried the burden of being a wife, mother, sister all on their own and we need not to explain how magnificently they have carried this position.

Men and women complement each other. If men were supposed to handle outside stuff than women were more responsible for internal affairs. The only difference in this notion is, today women are equally competent behind the veils and outside world. They are confident and one can find them in every possible sphere of human's life. No male bastion is untouched by females and that's a wonderful sign of strides made by women.

Urban women in India always had more advantages and opportunities than women residing in rural places. Better education, better economic resources and more availability of required things for urban women and yet rural women have made rapid improvements despite lacking in basic facilities. No, we have yet attained the state of complete empowerment but signs of gradual improvement are definitely there. India in last few decades has remained more of a male-dominated society. Women used to command acute power and importance in our ancient culture. The proof of this fact can be found in all the scriptures and even our mythological stories. We worship goddess Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati and many others. That shows how Indian civilization had revered the female form.

The social-urban difference in female literacy levels continue to exist but these are reducing more so during the last two decades. During the last fifty years, the literacy levels have improved in rural areas at the rate of 1 percent per annum. Gross enrollment ratio and dropout rates of girl students are some of the important concerns of development in India. Over time, the drop-out phenomenon has been reducing while enrollment has been exhibiting a rising trend. Considerable proportion (46percent) of women workers are marginal workers. Almost 90 percent of women workers are depend upon agriculture and 98 percent of rural women workers are participating in unorganized sector. Nearly 85 percent of rural female workers are either illiterate or educated up to primary level. Work participation rates of females in rural areas are either declining or stagnant. Casualization among female workers is high and is on rise. The Major Flagship Program of Ministry of Rural Development (MORD) livelihood security is MGNREGS and female workers participation is remarkably high in Kerala, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu in MGNREGS.

The concept and phenomenon of education based on schooling going is of modern origin in India. Education in the past was restricted to upper castes and the content taught was also restrictive. However, today, to lead a comfortable life in this fast-changing world, education is seen as the most influential agent of modernization. The educational attainments in terms of enrollment and retention in rural India generally correspond to the hierarchical order. While the upper castes have traditionally enjoyed and are enjoying these advantages, the scheduled castes and other backward castes children have lagged behind in primary schooling. Studies have revealed that children of backward castes are withdrawn from school at an early age, by about 8 or 9 years. An important reason for withdrawal of children from school is the cost and work needs of poor households. Income and castes are typically correlated with lower castes having lower incomes and higher castes having better endorsements in terms of land, income and other resources. Thus, one fact is certain that there is a clear divide in the village, along caste lines, regarding access to schools.

Women education in rural areas is very important for the proper social and the economic growth of the country. Both men and women are like two sides of the coin and run equally like two wheels of the society. So both are important element of the growth and development in the country thus requires equal opportunity in the education. If anyone of both goes down side, social progress is not possible. The female education in rural areas is highly necessary for the future of the country as women are the first teacher of their children means future of their society and also of our nation. If education of the woman is getting ignored, it would be the ignorant of bright future of the nation. An uneducated woman cannot actively participate in handling the family, proper care of children and thus weak future generation. We cannot count all the advantages of the women education. An educated woman may easily handle her family, make each family member responsible, infuse good quality in children, participate in the social work and all would lead her towards the socially and economically healthy nation.

By educating a man, only a man educated however educating a woman, whole country can be educated. Lack of women education weakens the powerful part of the society. So, women should have full rights for the education and should not be treated as inferior to man.

3. STAGES OF EDUCATION IN INDIA

Education in India follows a uniform structure of school education which is known as the 10+2 system. This system is being followed by all Indian states and union territories but not all of them follow a distinct pattern as per the system.

- **Pre-primary stage:** - pre-primary education in India is provided to children between 3-6 years by kindergarten, playschool or play ways. These schools varying terminology for different levels of classes, beginning from pre-nursery, nursery, KG, LKG (lower kindergarten) and UKG (upper kindergarten). Most of the pre-primary education in India is provided by private schools.
- **The primary stage:** - primary education in India offered by both private and government schools usually consists of students aged between 5-12 years. The duration of study in this stage is 4-5 years. Common subjects include English, Hindi, mathematics, environmental science and general knowledge. Sometimes also termed as elementary education, it is free in government schools but it is paid in the private schools. The government has made elementary education compulsory for the children between the age group of years 6 and 14.
- **The middle stage:** - middle stage of education covering 3-4 years of academic study is formed by 5th – 8th class consisting of students aged between 12 to 14 years. The schools which impart education up till 8th class are known with various names like high school, senior school. Some of the states/ union territories which follow 5th-7th class of middle stage are Assam, Goa, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Lakshadweep etc. some of the states/UTs which follow 6th-8th class of middle stage are Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Andaman and Nicobar islands, Chandigarh, Delhi etc.
- **The secondary stage:** - secondary stage of education covering 2-3 years of academic study starts with classes 8th-10th, consisting of students aged between 14-16 years. The schools which impart education up till 10th class are known as secondary school, high schools, senior schools etc.
- **Senior secondary stage:** - senior secondary education in India is of only two years. There is uniformity on this level of education in terms of duration and classes i.e. all the states/UTs follow this 10+2 pattern. Senior secondary schools in India include 11th to 12th, consisting students aged between 16-18 years. At this level of education students have the freedom to choose their preferred stream and subjects.
- **Undergraduate stage:** - undergraduate education in India is of 3-4 years. Undergraduate stage of education is also known as higher education in India. Students studying in this level, generally being their education from 18 around as per estimate 88 percent of undergraduate education is provided by colleges in India.
- **Post graduate stage:** - post graduation in India is of 2-3 years. Post graduate stages of courses are known as master's courses or doctor courses. Master courses are usually two years during and doctorate (research) courses are of three years duration. Also referred as higher education, 56 percent of post graduate education is important through colleges.
- **Adult education in India:** - Adult education in India comes under the purview of the department of school education and literacy. The bureaucracy of adult education and National Literacy Mission under the department functions as the secretariat of the NLMA. It was set up on 5th may, 1988 to impart a new sense of urgency and seriousness to adult education. The directorate of adult education provides necessary technical and resource support to the NLMA.
- **Distance education in India:** - distance education provided by institutes is controlled by the distance education council of India. Distance education is helpful to those who cannot join regular schools or colleges. At the school level, national institute of open schooling offers education through distance learning. While, at the college or university level, Open University provides distance education. Distance education can also be pursued online where via internet.
- **Homeschooling in India:** - homeschooling is not widespread in India and neither is it widely accepted. This type of alternative education is considered for handicapped or for those who are unable to attend regular schools due to various factors. While some use Montessori Method, schooling, radical schooling, waldorf education or school at home. Other prefer CBSE, NIOS, or NOS and IGCSE prescribed syllabus.

DIFFERENT PHASES OF WOMEN'S STATUS IN INDIA:

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From the equal status with men in ancient times, through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of the equal rights by many reforms, the history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have held high offices in India

including that of the president, prime minister, speaker of the Lok Sabha and leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha (lower house of the parliament) were women. However, women in India continue to face numerous problems, including violent young girls.

- **Ancient India:** - According to scholars, women in ancient India enjoyed equal status with men in all aspects of life. Work by ancient Indians grammarians such as Patanjali and Katyayana suggests that women were educated in the early Vedic period. Rig Vedic verses suggest that women married at a mature age and were probably free to select their own husbands. Scriptures such as Rig Veda and Upanishads mention several women sages and seers, notably Gargi and Maitreyi.

- **Medieval period:** - Indian women's position in society further deteriorated during medieval period, when child marriages and a ban on remarriage by widows become part of social life in some communities in India. The Muslim conquest in the Indian subcontinent brought Purdah to Indian society. Among the Rajputs of Rajasthan, the Jauhar was practiced. In some parts of India, some Devadasis were sexually exploited. Polygamy was practiced among Hindu Kshatriya rulers for some political reasons. In many Muslims families, women were restricted to Zenana areas of the house. In spite of these conditions, women often became prominent in the field of politics, literature, education and religion.

- **Historical practices:** - traditions such as Sati, Jauhar and Devadasis among some communities have banned and are largely defunct in modern India. However, some instance of these practices is still found in remote parts of India. The Purdah is still practiced by Indian women in some communities. Child marriage remains common in rural areas, although it is illegal under current Indian law.

- **Sati:** sati is an old, almost completely defunct custom among some communities, in which the widow was immolated alive on her husband's funeral pyre. Although the act was supposed to be voluntary on the widow's part, it's practice is forbidden by the Hindu scriptures in kali yuga, the current age. After the foreign invasions of Indian sub-continent, this practice started to mark its presence as women were often raped or kidnapped by foreign forces.

- **Jauhar:** jauhar refers to the practice of voluntary immolation by wives and daughters of defeated warriors, in order to avoid capture and consequent molestation by the enemy. The practice was followed by the wives and defeated Rajput rulers, who are known to place a high premium on honor. Evidently such practice took place during the Islamic invasion of India.

- **Purdah:** purdah is the practice among some Muslim communities requiring women to cover themselves so as to conceal their faces and form from males. It imposes restrictions on their mobility of women, curtails their right to interact freely.

- **Devadasis:** devadasis is often misunderstood as religious practice. It was practiced in southern India, in which women were 'married' to a deity of temple. The ritual was well-established by the 10th century A.D. by 1988; the practice was outlawed in the country.

- **British rule:** - European scholars observed in the 18th century that Hindu women are 'naturally chaste' and more virtuous than other women. During the British raj, many reformers such as Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Jyotirao Phule fought for the betterment of women. Peary charan jarkar, a former student of Hindu college, Calcutta and member of 'young Bengal' set up the first free school for girls in India in 1847 in Barasat, suburb of Calcutta. Chandramukhi basu, kadambini ganguly and Anandi gopal joshi were some of the earliest Indian women to obtain a degree. In 1917, the first women's delegation met the secretary of state to demand women's political rights, supported by the national congress. The all India women's education conference was held in Pune in 1927, it became a major organization in the movement for social change. In 1929, the child marriage restrict Act was passed, stipulating 14 as the minimum age of marriage for a girl. Though Mahatma Gandhi himself married at the age of 13, he later urged people to boycott child marriages and called upon young men to marry child widows. Women also played an important part in India's independence struggle.

- **Independent India:** - women in India now participate fully in areas such as education, sports, politics, media, art and culture, service sectors, science and technology and etc. Indira Gandhi, who served as a prime minister of India for an aggregate period of fifteen years, is the world's longest serving common prime minister. The constitution of India

guarantees to all Indian women equality (Article 14), no discrimination by the state, equality of opportunity (Article-16), and equal pay for equal work (Article-39). In 1990s, grants from foreign donor agencies enable the formation of new women-oriented NGOs, Self-help groups and NGOs such as self-employed association (SEWA) have played a major role in the advancement of women's rights in India. Many women have emerged as leaders of local movements; for example, Medha Patkar of the Narmada Bacho Andolan. On 9th March 2010, one day after International Women's Day, Rajya Sabha passed the Women's Reservation Bill requiring that 33 percent of seats in India's parliament and state legislative bodies be reserved for women.

EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

There was a time when people thought that it was not necessary to educate girls. Now we have begun to realize that girl's education is essential. The modern age is the age of awaking girls. They are trying to compete with men in all spheres of life. There are many people who oppose girl's education. They say that the proper sphere of girls is the home. So, they argue that the money spent on girl's education is wasted. This view is wrong, because girl's education can bring about a silent revolution in the society. However, in rural India girls continued to be less well-educated than boys. According to the national sample survey data of 1997, only the states of Kerala and Mizoram have approached universal female literacy.

- **Welfare participation:** - contrary to common perception, a large percentage of women in India work. National data collection agencies accept that statistics seriously understate women's contribution as workers. However, there are far fewer women than men in the paid workforce. In urban India, women participate in the workforce in impressive numbers for example; in the software industry 30 percent of the workforce is female. In rural India in the agriculture allied industrial sectors, female accounts for as much as 89.5 percent of the labour force. In overall farm production, women's average contribution is estimated at 55 percent to 66 percent of the total labour. Women accounted for 94 percent of total employment in dairy production in India. Women also constitute 51 percent of total employed in forest-based small-scale enterprises.

- **Land and property rights:** - In most Indian families, women do not own property in their own names and do not get a share of parental property. Due to weak enforcement of laws protecting them, women continue to have little access to land and property. In fact, some of the laws discriminate against women, when it comes to land and property rights. The Hindu personal laws of 1956 (applying to Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains) gave women rights to inheritance. However, sons had an independent share in the ancestral property, while the daughter's shares were based on the share received by their fathers. Hence, a father could effectively disinherit a daughter by renouncing his share of the ancestral property, but a son would continue to have a share in his own right. Additionally, married daughters, even those facing marital harassment, had no residential rights in the ancestral home. Thanks to amendment of the Hindu laws in 2005, women now have the same status as men.

4. CONCLUSION

The dissertation began with that time when people thought it was not necessary to educate girls. Around the world girls and women are treated as number two citizens—all luxuries, comforts and even necessities must first be provided for boys and men, and only then if available, can percolate to girls and women. This is true to some extent though out the world but more so and very conspicuously so in India.

For the past few centuries in India, the girl has been completely neglected even as a human being and she lives as if only to support and satisfy men. In every home even today the boys are still pampered and given the best of everything and the girls of the same family are almost completely ignored. Education is a boon to girls in this age of economic crisis. Gone are the days of plenty and prosperity. Now days it is difficult for the people of the middle class to make both ends meet. After marriage, educated girls can add to the income of their husbands. If a woman is educated, she can earn a living after the death of her husband.

Girl's education is necessary for making our homes happy places. Our home life would be brightened if we had well-educated wives and mothers. Education of girls can brighten the future of their country by the good upbringing of their children. Education gives a woman freedom of thought. It broadens her outlook and makes her aware of her duties and responsibilities. Education empowers a grown up girl to become economically independent. They will be able to stand up

for their rights. Girls have all the rights to get educated. Empowerment of girls and women is necessary to fight against the problem of gender inequality.

Education of rural girls is equally important. The rural girls are not getting ample opportunity for education. Education of these girls would have positive impact on both economy and society. Many people say that girls should not go in for degrees. They are wrong, because girls have already proved their worth in all walks of life. There is no reason why girls should not get the same kind of education as men. But they should not neglect their duties at the home. So, girls must have knowledge of domestic science and child psychology. The progress of the country depends on girl's education. So, girl's education should be encouraged.

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