

Women and Education: A survey of Recent History

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Abstract: By contesting and getting elected to Panchayati Raj Institutions, women have shattered the saga of their own submissiveness - that women are not willing to enter politics. For women, successful grassroots experience has meant a chance to form eloquent voice, to be heard and to make a difference in their communities. However, women's representation in the decision-making positions with monitoring power is still negligible. The present rules of the game and decision-making procedure do not allow a greater participation of women and in the absence of women, there is no effort to recognize or change the game. The very absence of women at these levels thus leads to preservation and reinforcement of male-oriented and male benefiting types of decisions. Women's low self-esteem at the household level and their new role in local politics where they are now expected to function as leader creates a contradiction between women's role at home and in local government.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, Reservation, Participation, Inclusion , Illusion

1. INTRODUCTION

The history of progress of the human race is the history of education. Hence it is necessary for every person, man or woman, to be educated. The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Women should be educated like men; otherwise there can be no peace or no progress. If you yoke an unbroken (untrained) horse with highly trained one, the carriage will be dashed to pieces and the occupants' lives will be destroyed. The family peace cannot be preserved with such ill-matched life-long companions.

Woman belongs to a weaker section of the society because she suffers from many handicaps due to rigid, outdated social customs and religious practices. But an educated woman cannot be exploited easily. She is aware of her rights and will go any length to defend them. Education of women can be helpful in eradicating many social evils such as dowry problem, unemployment problem, etc. Social peace can easily be established

2. NEED FOR WOMEN EDUCATION

Having experienced problems herself, she understands the difficulties faced by other women. She is therefore more sympathetic to their cause. Also, with the armor of education around her, she acts as a way a 'motivator and a leader of the movements to remove social malaise from the society. She can share very intimate relationship with other women and therefore, promote them to voice their grievances. She then acts as a carrier

of their aspirations and lets the people in power know it. Having studied history and politics herself, she understands the power of unity. So she can act as the force to unify the unprivileged section of the society and' then force leaders to accede to its demands. Of course, she acts as a grand role model for other women to follow. Not only in India, but 'even in the developed countries like US and UK, the right of vote was obtained by the women only when they themselves waged a struggle' under the leadership of those who were fortunate enough to get educated.

Women are the mothers of the future generation. If women are uneducated, the future generations will be uneducated. For this reason the Greek warrior Napoleon once said, "Give me a few educated mothers; I shall give you a heroic race." If the women in any country are not educated about half the people in that country will be ignorant. The result is that such a country will not be able to go along with other nations in development and progress in day to day life, the real problems are faced first by women and then the same problems are conveyed to men for solution. If the women are educated, they can solve all the problems of their houses.

3. DUTIES OF WOMEN

Women give life, love and care to children, help to build and take care of the home, and feed and clothe their loved ones. In most of the developing world, women are additionally responsible for the agricultural production and local trade that help sustain their local economies. Women also weave the social fabric of their communities – working together to support schools, organize community events and help to look after neighbours in need.

She is solely responsible for the health and well being of the family. She knows the importance of cleanliness and well balanced nutritious diet. So she produces children who are healthy and also conscious of their civic duties. She acts as a very good civic teacher. All the campaigns for following traffic rules, fighting diseases, hygiene etc. Will be a waste if the woman of the family is uneducated and they will be not only very effective but sometimes even unnecessary if the woman of the family is education.

4. NECESSITY OF GIRLS/WOMEN'S EDUCATION

4.1. Education is A Right

Everybody has the right to education, which has been recognised since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. The right to free and compulsory primary education, without discrimination and of good quality, has been reaffirmed in all major international human rights conventions. Many of these same instruments encourage, but do not guarantee, post-primary education. These rights have been further elaborated to address issues like quality and equity, moving forward the issue of what the right to education means, and exploring how it can be achieved. As a minimum: states must ensure that basic education is available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable for all. (4A scheme) The right of girls to education is one of the most critical of all rights – because

education plays an important role in enabling girls and women to secure other rights.

4.2. Cultural Changes

Cultural and traditional values stand between girls and their prospects for education. The achievement of girls' right to education can address some of societies' deeply rooted inequalities, which condemn millions of girls to a life without quality education – and, therefore, also all too often to a life of missed opportunities. Improving educational opportunities for girls and women helps them to develop skills that allow them to make decisions and influence community change in key areas. One reason for denying girls and women their right to an education is rarely articulated by those in charge: that is their fear of the power that girls will have through education. There is still some resistance to the idea that girls and women can be trusted with education. Education is also seen in some societies as a fear of change and now with globalization, the fear becomes even greater – fear to lose the cultural identity, fear of moving towards the unknown or the unwanted, fear of dissolving in the many others

4.3. Better Health

Basic education provides girls and women with an understanding of basic health, nutrition and family planning, giving them choices and the power to decide over their own lives and bodies. Women's education leads directly to better reproductive health, improved family health, economic growth, for the family and for society, as well as lower rates of child mortality and malnutrition. It is also key in the fight against the spread of HIV & AIDS.

4.4. Poverty Reduction

Educating girls and women is an important step in overcoming poverty. Inequality and poverty are not inevitable. "The focus on poverty reduction enables the right to education to be a powerful tool in making a change in the lives of girls and women. Poverty has been universally affirmed as a key obstacle to the enjoyment of human rights, and it has a visible gender profile. The main reason for this is the fact that poverty results from violations of human rights, including the right to education, which disproportionately affect girls and women. Various grounds of discrimination combine, trapping girls in a vicious downward circle of denied rights. Denial of the right to education leads to exclusion from the labour market and marginalisation into the informal sector or unpaid work. This perpetuates and increases women's poverty." (Tomasevski, 2005)

5. SOME OF THE PROGRAMMES TAKEN FOR WOMEN'S IN INDIA

1. Sarwa Shiksha Abhiyan
2. Balika Samridhi Yojana
3. Indira Mahila Yojana
4. Mahila Samridhi Yojana

5. Employment and Income Generating Training-cum-Production Centres
6. Rashtriya Mahila Kosh
7. Short Stay Home for Women and Girls
8. Programme of Development of Women & Children in rural areas.

5.1. Problems Affecting Women Education

- (a) Undernourishment
- (b) Malnutrition
- (c) Sexual harassment and abuse
- (d) Lower socio-economic status
- (e) Infections
- (f) Forced for uncontrolled reproduction
- (g) Limited education

6. SARWA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN CONDUCTED BY GOVT OF INDIA

It is a national mission which provides quality education for 8 years between 6 and 14 years. It has following targets to achieve

- (a) By the year 2002, all districts are to be covered by the programme.
- (b) By the year 2003, all children are to be taken to school, education guarantee centers and alternative school or back-to-school campus.
- (c) By the year 2007, all children must complete 5 years of education.
- (d) By the year 2010, all children must complete 8 years of quality elementary education.

6. WOMEN EDUCATION AND HOW IT BENEFITS SOCIETY:

Women have been for long considered as those in charge of the home, while men go out to get the food on the table. While some believe, a woman's patience and determination is what is required to give the home stability and the children a strong family foundation, there is nothing that stops women from going to colleges and educating themselves. Women's education has many benefits for the society, which is why it is really important.

6.1. Educated Women will Have a Different Take From Men

Being a different gender, women will have a different perspective of things than men. This way, every issue will have multiple solutions and perspectives, which will benefit society greatly. The solutions from men alone could get mundane or routine and we might be missing a tangential take on things entirely.

6.2. Educated Women will Offer Diversity at Workplace

It is not for no reason, that reputed universities and companies are trying to hire as much diversity as possible. The diverse a group, the greater the depth of the solutions and richer will be the perspectives offered. People from different classes of society and upbringing have their own way of looking at things. The solutions required at office, the orientation with clients and the way of dealing with other people, will all be different between men and women. This workplace diversity will start resembling society in a better manner, offering a good reason for women's education.

6.3. Educated Women Represent a More Balanced World

There was a time, when all important decisions were taken only by men. Strategies, relations between countries, decisions about people and population were all at the mercy of men who ruled. However, women's education is slowly changing that. More the number of educated women in the world, greater will be the balance it lends to society. A balanced society always has better chances to succeed, evolve and develop than one where one gender calls all the shots. In fact, if men were indeed taking all the decisions, a lot of considerations could have been missed, purely because men aren't really involved with certain aspects of family, the way women are. Educated women will also bring harmony in the sense, there would be someone to question the authority, and competition is always healthy. As two genders look to outperform each other and yet learn to develop harmonious, society will grow. That is the biggest benefit of women's education.

6.3. The Challenges Today for Girls Education

The Challenge Today

There are 600 million girls living in the developing world. Two-thirds of the world's uneducated children are girls, and two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women. Around the world, girls and women continue to suffer from a lack of economic opportunity, inadequate health care and education, early marriage, sexual violence, and discrimination. Numerous studies have demonstrated that educating women and girls is the single most effective strategy to ensure the well-being and health of children, and the long-term success of developing economies.

There are compelling benefits associated with girls' education:

- Reduction of child and maternal mortality
- Improvement of child nutrition and health
- Lower birth rates
- Enhancement of women's domestic role and their political participation
- Improvement of the economic productivity and growth
- Protection of girls from HIV/AIDS, abuse and exploitation

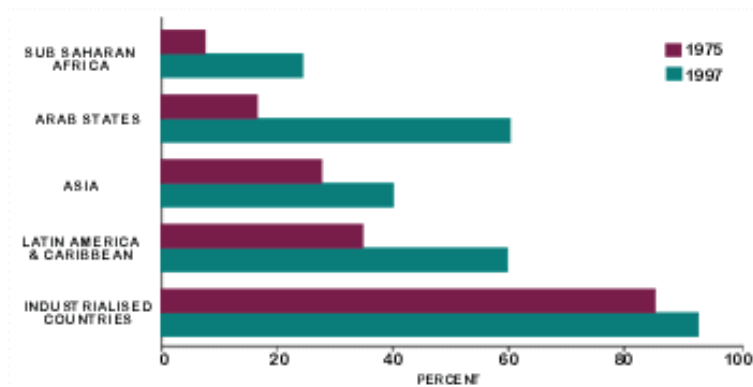
Girls' education yields some of the highest returns of all development investments, yielding both private and social benefits that accrue to individuals, families, and society.

7. GLOBAL PATTERNS OF EDUCATION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

7.1. Secondary Education

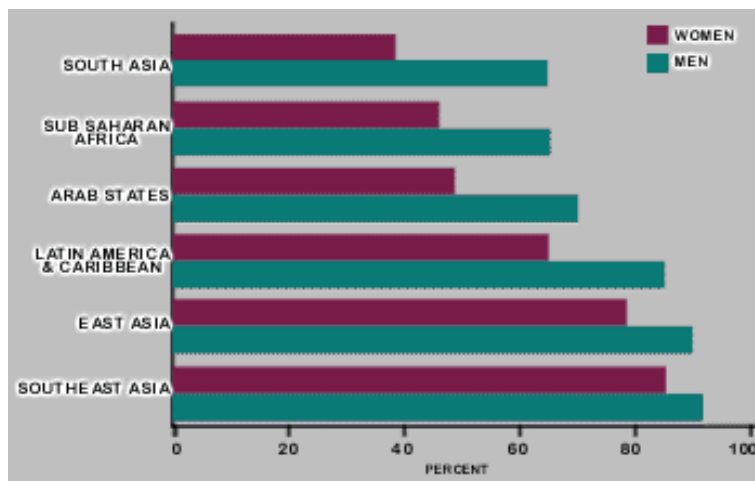
This graph shows the percentage of females enrolled in secondary school in different parts of the world, and how the numbers increased between 1975 and 1997.

[Note the marked differences in enrolment rates between countries in the North and the South.]



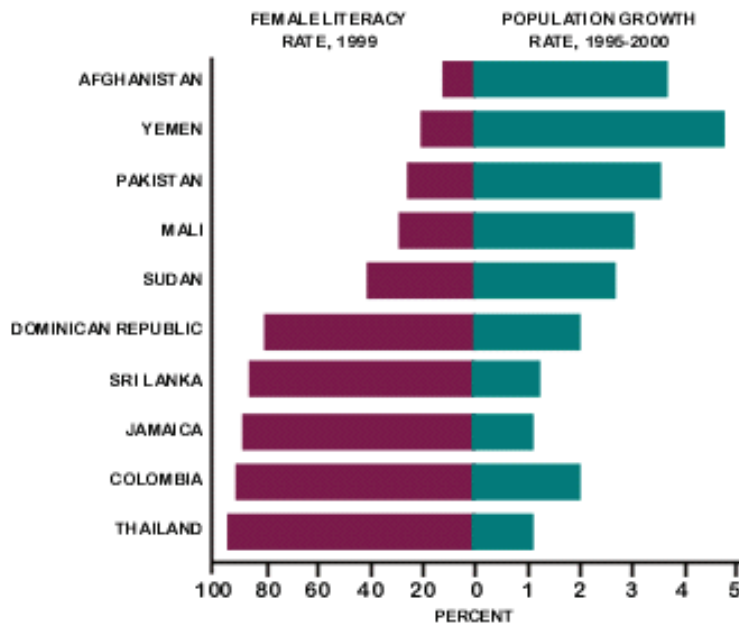
7.2. Adult Literacy

This graph compares female and male adult literacy rates in six areas of the world in 2000.



7.3. Female Literacy and Population Growth

This graph shows the relationship between female literacy rates and projected population growth rates for 10 countries in different parts of the world.



8. CONCLUSION

The right of every individual to education is one of the first provisions of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. But education is often neglected in societies struggling to meet the many needs of their people. Recently education has received greater priority as Planners and Policy makers finally recognized it as a key factor in determining the pace of development. Creating educational opportunities for girls and women is strongly emphasized in the work of the UN. CEDEW suggests 'encouraging co-education' as one way of eliminating the stereotyping of women. Education, being the most powerful instrument for empowering women assumes special priority in the recent plans and programmes of National and International action. Concerted efforts are also made to bring more women into the purview of education. In spite of these many provisions, still there is a wide gap between male and female literacy levels in India. Keeping this in view the programme of action for future has to be formulated so as to reduce the gender gap as well as illiteracy rate among girls and women.

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