

POSITION OF WOMEN EDUCATION IN WEST BENGAL: A STUDY

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Received: 04 Aug 2018

Accepted: 14 Aug 2018

Published: 21 Aug 2018

ABSTRACT

Education is the key factor for women empowerment, prosperity, development, and welfare. In the present day, the empowerment of women has become one of the most important concerns. But practically women empowerment is still an illusion of reality. Girls face gender-specific barriers to access and achievement. They are socio-cultural, economic, political and structural. No doubt women education is the crucial instrument to expand women's ability to take the right decision for the next generation and to educate her children, who are the tomorrow's pillar of the country. The present paper discusses the current position of Women Education in West Bengal. Paper mainly based on secondary data and conclude that government have taken various measures for the proper development of women but still, they are not in the equal position with men in an educational aspect.

KEYWORDS: *Education, Women, Key Factor, Empowerment, Next Generation, Pillar*

INTRODUCTION

Women education in India is one of the foremost concerns of the government of India as well as society at large. It is a fact that educated women play a very important role in the overall development and progress of the country, women's power is also crucial to the economic growth of any country. Education of women is the most important means for bringing change in society; it is also helps them to improve their position in the family. Education for Everyone (EFA) programme is launched in India in 2002 by the government of India after the 86th amendment, and made education free and compulsory up to the children of 6 to 14 years of age, as the right of every child of India.. In West Bengal the condition of women is not good; the male member of their family oppresses them. Women mobility in West Bengal is constrained and their access in education is hindered, but in comparison to earlier, their position is quite good. According to census 2011 the literacy rate of women in India is 65.46% and in West Bengal is 66.57% that means women's education in West Bengal is quite good than in India.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The Objectives of the Study are as Follows

- To study the status of women in ancient age;
- To study the current status of women in West Bengal;.
- To know the role of West Bengal government in improving women education.

METHODOLOGY

Paper is mainly based on secondary data and data have been collected from various reputed government and other website and published research paper, documents, books, journal and newspaper.

HISTORY OF WOMEN EDUCATION

It is very important to know the history of women education, if we are interested to know the status of women education in India, so the history of women education discussed below.

Women Education in Ancient Period

It cannot be clearly stated that equal right between male and female has prevailed or not. In the Vedic period, with the available sources show that liberal attitude and practice pertaining in the Vedic period. They had the right to choose their life partner and widow was permitted to remarry. But when India start to take steps towards civilization; Social discrimination increased. Jainism and Buddhism emerged as potent religious reform movements. According to Buddha, women, spiritual capacities were equal to men's. Buddhism began as a religion that treated women an equal to men in their capacities for personal, spiritual development. The universal prejudices against women, who are said to be weak minded, fickle, treacherous and impured. Shared by the Jains and expressed in several passages of the canon and in the form of maxims. The high status that women were enjoyed during the early Vedic period that gradually started deteriorating in the late Vedic period. In this period the higher priority given to male members and son were the sole heirs to family property. It is during the age that code of conduct prescribing behavior norms for women was developed. This period shows the exclusion of women from both the religious and social sphere. During the period of Dhamashastra, child marriage was encouraged. The birth of a female child was treated as a curse and many parents went to the extent of killing the female infants. The practice of satipratha was also prevalent.

During the Rig Vedic period the access of women education in India was open, but gradually they lost this right. In cultural reality, the women enjoy a privileged position in the Vedic period. The men cannot interfere with special rituals and customs which women possess.

Women Education in Medieval Period

The condition of Women in society deteriorated more during the medieval period with the entrance of Muslims. At this point of time several evil practices like child-marriage, sati pratha, and female infanticide were practiced largely. `Purdah` system was started and Polygamy was common in Hindu kshatriyas. At the same time many women involved in Arts, Music, and Literature. At this time some women ruled in the medieval period, the women ruler name like Razia sultana the only monarch to rule the throne of Delhi. The Gond queen Durgabati ruled for 15 long years. Chand Bibi also fought the Mughals in 1590's and Nurjahan also considered as most effective ruler. But with this entire successful lady, the condition of other women was deplorable. At this time, girls were married at a very tender age. Sati pratha was also practiced. Devdasi tradition was common in southern India where girls were married to deity or trees the bhakti movement tried to restore women position. Mirabai was the important figure in bhakti movement. During this period education is not equal for all, only rich and famous families' women could achieve the basic and religious education.

Women Education in British Period

In the British period, there was the revival of interest in women's education in India. During this period, various socio-religious movements led by eminent persons like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar emphasized on women's education in India. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and Periyar were leaders of the lower castes in India who took various initiatives to make education available to India.

Women Education after Independence

Women's education got a new dimension after the country got independence in 1947 and the government has taken various initiatives to provide education to all Indian women. As a result, the women literacy rate increased tremendously and female literacy rate in 1951 was 8.86%, 1971 it reached to 21.97%; in 1981 it was 29.76%; in 1991 it was 39.29% and in 2001 it was 54.16 % and in 2011 census of India, it reached to 65.46%

Women Education in Modern Period

Kerala and Mizoram are the only states in India that have achieved universal female literacy rates. The improvement in the social and economic status of women is said to be one of the reasons for literacy. In these cities the literacy rate of male and female is equal but in rural areas, the female literacy rate is less than the male literacy rate. According to statistics of women education in India, today 0.3 million NFE centers have provided Primary education to 0.12 million girls out of 7.42 million children. However, in tribal areas, there is not much of a gender bias as compared to all other castes.

State Wise Literacy Rate

As per the below Table-01 (2011 Census) the state wise female literacy rate had an average of 65.46% in all India. High literacy rate is 92.0% in Kerala and least literacy rate is 52.7% in Rajasthan in 2011 census while comparing literacy rate of female of 2001 with 2011 then we get that there is around 11% improvement in female literacy, because the female literacy rate in 2001 was 54.16% and in 2011 it reached 65.46%.

Table 1

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.	Chattisgarh	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.	Uttar Pradesh	59.3%
28.	Uttarakhand	70.7%
29.	West Bengal	71.2%
Union Territories		
1.	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	81.8%
2.	Chandigarh	81.4%
3.	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	65.9%
4.	Daman & Diu	79.6%
5.	Lakshadweep	88.2%
6.	Pondicherry	81.2%
All India		65.46%

Source: Census of India - 2011

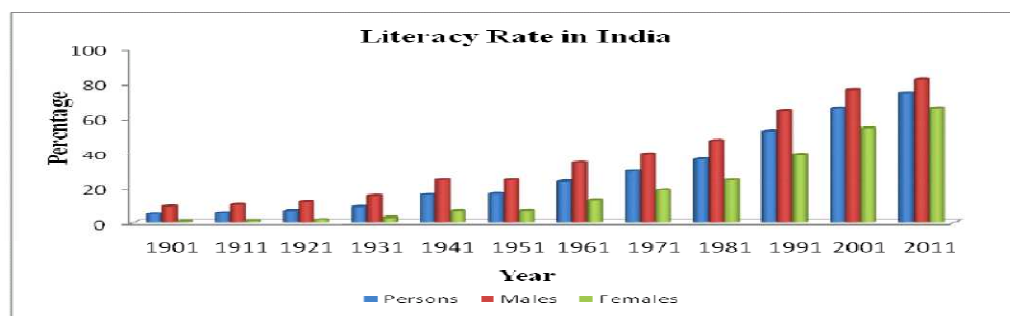


Figure 1: Literacy Rate of Male, Female in Different Census in India

STATUS OF WOMEN IN WEST BENGAL

The Report Gender Budgeting Study Of West Bengal analyze the status of women in West Bengal and stated that, the gross enrolment ratio for girls at elementary education level of education is (85.9%) is higher than the national average (79.3) but the gross enrolment but the Gross Dropout Rate of girls at the same time is higher for West Bengal (69.3 %) than the national average (53.4 %). At the level of Secondary and Higher Secondary education, the Gross Enrolment Ratio of girls in West Bengal (around 27 %) is lower than the national average (33.2%). We must note here that the very high Gross Dropout Rate of girls in school education (classes I-X) in West Bengal, at 80.6 % in 2002-03, raises a serious concern about the huge challenge confronting the State in improving the educational attainments of its women.

Table 2: Table Literacy Rate of Male and Female in West Bengal District

SL. No	Outcome Indicators in %	Year	West Bengal	India	Best Performing States	Worse Performing States
1	Female Literacy Rate	2001	59.6	53.7	87.7Kerala	33.1 Bihar
2	Gender Gap in Literacy Rate	2001	17.4	21.6	6.5 Kerala	31.8 Rajasthan
3	Ger for Girls in Elementary Education (classes i to vii)	2002-03	85.9	79.33	119.67 Maharashtra	49.25 Bihar
4	Gross dropout rate for girls in elementary education (classes I to viii)	2002-03	69.30	53.45	14.82 Haryana	80.78 Bihar
5	Ger for girls Secondary and Higher secondary Education (classes ix to xii)	2002-03	29.96	33.21	64.57 Kerala	11.39 Bihar
6	Gross dropout rate for Girls school Education (classes I to x)	2002-03	80.61	64.97	8.9 Kerala	85.8 Bihar

Progress of Female Literacy in West Bengal

The Progress of female literacy in West Bengal is rapid in speed, and this can be better understood by showing the literacy of female in the following census. According to census 1981, the female literacy was only 36.07% but in 1991 census it was 46.65% and in 2001 census the female literacy rate was 59.61% and in 2011 census it reaches to 71.2% respectively.

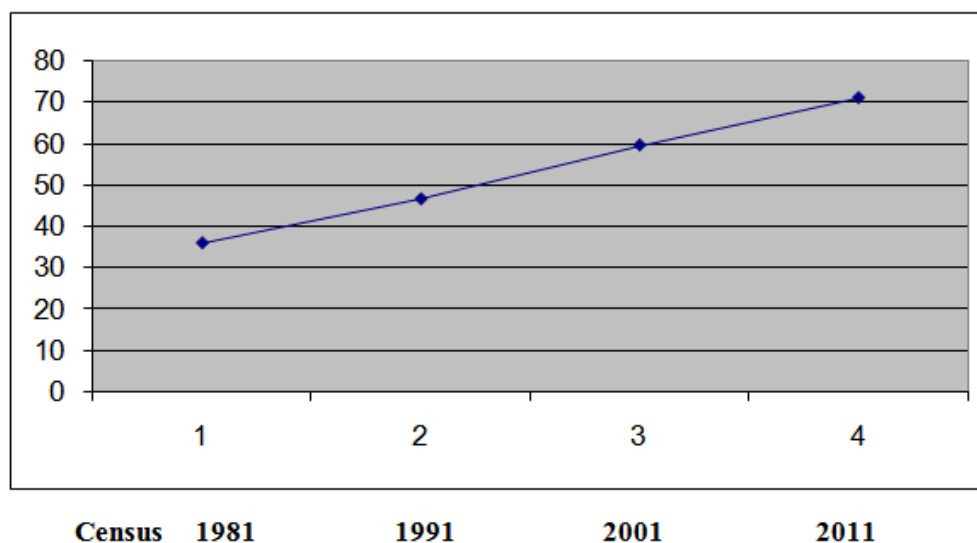


Figure 1: Female Literacy Rate as Per Different Census

INITIATIVE OF WEST BENGAL GOVERNMENT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN EDUCATION

The Following Schemes are Followed by West Bengal Government for Improvement of Women Education

The SISHU Siksha Karmasuchi (SSK) is a most important scheme for providing basic education to children, who cannot be a part of formal primary school system due to various problems. This programme envisages for the setting of SSK unit any village within twenty or more children in the age group 5 to 9 years. Each SSK unit has a nine-member managing committees of which three must be women and all teachers (Sahikas) are women above the age of 35 years. Currently, about 8 lakh children are being taught at more than 1100SSKs or child education center and girls accounting for about 50 percent of total students.

The literacy campaign passes through 3 successive stages: 1) Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), 2) Post Literacy Programme (PLP), 3) Continuing Education programme (CEP), eleven districts in West Bengal reached the CEP stage.

Presently two national programme address gaps in primary and secondary education in West Bengal, The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and Sarva Siksha Abhiyan. DPEP formally launched in 1997-98 and now covered about 2400 primary schools in 10 districts those are, (Bankura, Birbhum, Kochbehar, Mursidabad, Sout 24 pragnas, north 24 parganas, dakshin and utardinajpur, Jalpaguri, malda, and purulia) These district initially selected on the basis of low female literacy rates compare to national average.

- DPEP districts are reported to be making steady progress in enrolment, retention, and awareness building regarding the needs for girl's education and for the deprived and disabled children.
- Sarva siksha Abhiyan is dedicated to the expansion of elementary education.
- The National Programme for Education of Girls at primary level is functioning in 86 educationally backward blocks in 12 districts of the states.
- The school dress programme for all girls in primary schools aims to cover nearly 60 lakh children every year.

- More than 55000 primary school teachers have been sensitized on gender issues with
- The Midday meal programme, help in improvement of enrolment of children.
- The Kanyasree project of the government of West Bengal another important programme, which help in girls education.
- The Siksha Sree project, another important project that helps the SC, girls student for education

CONCLUSIONS

From the above discussion, it is clear that there is tremendous growth in women education and status of women. The government effort in the development of women education is inevitable but in spite of all this growth in women education, the women's are still backward in comparison to men, still today most of the girls are uneducated, they are totally dependent on the male member of the family, before marriage they dependent on their fathers and after marriage they dependent on their husband, but if they know the light of literacy they become independent and so there is a need by the government to give more and more attention to the education of women. It is also true that government introduce Education for all and many other programmes for the improvement of women education, and these entire programmes are very helpful in the improvement of women education. In all, we can say that the different type of effort taken by the government is very helpful in the improvement of Women education but still women are far in a backward position in the educational aspect compare to men.

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