

# GENDERED EDUCATION BIAS: A CONTRAST IN URBAN AND RURAL INDIA

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## INTRODUCTION

Education empowers individual, broaden intellect and foster societal progress, benefiting both personal success and collective societal goals. An educated woman benefits the entire generation. The Right to Education was recognized under Article 21 in Mohini Jain vs State of Karnataka (1992) and Unnikrishnan vs State of Andhra Pradesh(1993), and became a Fundamental right via the 86<sup>th</sup> Amendment Act under Article 21A. Article 21A and the consequential legislature the Right To Education Act guarantee the right to education to children between six to fourteen years, targeting specially economic weaker sections. Initiatives like 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, CBSE Udaan scheme aids girl child education and cognitive development that encourages the parents to ensure that their daughters receive atleast elementary education.

But despite these initiatives the condition of female literacy is a point of concern. Where male literacy rate is at a consistent growth rate, female literacy rate is far from the target. The disparities between male and female literacy rate persist. There is a contrast of growth rate, where in urban areas the literacy rate shows exponential growth and the difference between male and female growth rate is negligible, the rural areas shows sign of mass disparity between male and female literacy rates. the literacy rate differs between states too.

S.NO.	STATE	MALE	FEMALE	AVERAGE
1.	Delhi	93.7	82.4	88.4
2.	Kerala	97.4	95.2	96.2
3.	Mizoram	93.72	89.4	91.58
4.	Andhra Pradesh	73.4	59.5	66.4
5.	Rajasthan	80.8	57.6	69.7
6.	Bihar	79.7	60.5	70.9

The female literacy rate by NSO(National Statistical Office) shows contrast in the literacy scenarios of India ,where states like Delhi, Mizoram, Kerala etc. show an exponential growth in the education of females ;states such as Andhra Pradesh , Bihar ,Rajasthan etc. are barely showing any improvement.<sup>1</sup> India's youth goals require overcoming literacy rate disparities and achieving consistent growth. Education is a fundamental right, supported by various government schemes. This research examines the reasons for low female literacy growth in rural areas despite these schemes, and offers recommendations to address state and urban-rural contrasts. It aims to highlight the current state of female child education, uncovering gendered biases and evaluating government aids' effectiveness in addressing the dynamic educational challenges faced by females, especially in remote rural areas.

Since India's independence in 1947, higher education for women has become more accessible, supported by the Right to Education and Article 45, mandating education for children up to fourteen<sup>2</sup>. Female literacy has grown exponentially but remains uneven. Some states like West Bengal and Mizoram show significant progress, while others like Bihar and Rajasthan lag behind. Urban areas have a higher female literacy rate (87.7%) compared to rural areas (73.5%)<sup>3</sup>. According to the World Bank, only 9% of girls were literate at independence, but this has risen to 77% today. Our government's mission is to achieve uniform female literacy growth nationwide.

## CURRENT SCENARIO

Literacy rate of a particular country is an important element in assessing the development of that country. As we have discussed earlier the condition of literacy was perturbing, after we got independence, consequentially the government came up with various plans and schemes for battling this situation. Somewhere these initiatives attained the objective , but in some parts of the country they couldn't serve the purpose. It has been mentioned

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/state-wise-literacy-rate-in-india/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hercircle.in/engage/get-inspired/trending/women-education-in-india-history-and-education-status-of-women-in-india-4031.html>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/womens-literacy-rate-increased-by-68-since-independence-report-11678863594186.html>

earlier that some states respond fairly to the initiatives of the government, but some don't. As per the 2011 Census, the total literacy rate in India stands at 74.00 per cent and the rate of literacy among women is 65.46 per cent. The percentage of female literacy in the country was 54.16 per cent in 2001. The literacy rate in the country has increased from 18.33 per cent in 1951 to 74.00 per cent as per 2011 census. <sup>4</sup>Despite this progression there are instances that are a point of concern for our nation, such as the literacy rate of girl child; especially in rural areas. Since independence, the literacy rate has increased by six times, but at the same time, it has the largest illiterate population of 287 million.<sup>5</sup> There exists a gendered educational bias; there is a contrast of literacy rate when it comes to urban and rural population of females. Where in urban areas the average literacy rate according to the NSO data is 87.7%, the rural areas stand at 73.5%. Including the female literacy rate is abysmally low in rural areas and in some pockets of urban areas. The literacy rate in rural India is 67.77% as compared to 84.11% in urban India.<sup>6</sup>The reasons for such contrast are many; low income rate, child marriage, poor female hygiene, limited knowledge about ongoing schemes and conditions, inadequate educational infrastructure etc.

### CAUSES OF LOW LITERACY RATE IN RURAL AREAS-

1. Poverty –Poverty is deeply rooted in rural areas; parents are usually not able to afford the education expenses and are forced to push their children towards rudimentary work to earn their livelihood. The study revealed that 32.5% of children went to work. In the rural area, the proportion of students who worked was 42.8%; in the urban area, the corresponding proportion was 24.8%.<sup>7</sup>
2. Low income - Almost 70% of Indian population depends upon agricultural sector, in rural India majority of people are either engaged in farming cultivating their own land or working on other's lands. Hence, most of the people in rural area belong to the low income group, for a parent of such condition; education of child is an expense rather than an investment.
3. Child marriage- Child marriage is also one of the reasons of low literacy rate of females. It was prohibited by the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929, which was replaced by Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006. In the year 2016, India had the highest number of child brides in the world with 223 million child brides, 102 million of which were married before the age of 15.<sup>24</sup> In comparison, only 4% of males in India were married by the age of 18.<sup>8</sup>
4. Lack of awareness- One of the reasons for low female literacy rate is the lack of awareness in people regarding the policies and schemes introduced for them.
5. Poor hygiene management - Every year more than 23 million girls in India drop out of school due to the lack of necessary products and hygiene education.<sup>36</sup> In a study of girls' school attendance in rural India, one out of five girls said that they missed school during their period.<sup>9</sup>

### Recommendation & Conclusions –

Female literacy rate has undoubtedly risen since the independence, and the credit goes to the initiatives that has been taken over by our government from time to time such as-

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao- it's a scheme by the central government that aids female education.
2. Mukhyamantri Rajshri Yojana- this scheme was introduced in Rajasthan that provided financial aids for female education.
3. CBSE Udaan Scheme - The goal of this scheme is to increase the student enrolment of girls in prestigious engineering and technical colleges across India<sup>10</sup>

Apart from these there are various other initiatives taken by the government to promote female education.

The research concludes that despite of various initiatives by the government there exists a contrast in female literacy rate between urban and rural India. Until this disparity is fixed our country won't be able to achieve the literacy rate its aiming for. There is lack of awareness in rural areas that has to be overcome. Until the implemented schemes reach the intended masses, the target will remain unmet.

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<sup>4</sup>[https://loksabhadocs.nic.in/Refinput/New\\_Reference\\_Notes/English/Girls%20Education%20in%20India.pdf](https://loksabhadocs.nic.in/Refinput/New_Reference_Notes/English/Girls%20Education%20in%20India.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/state-wise-literacy-rate-in-india/>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2784617/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/educational-disparities-among-girls-in-india#:~:text=The%20average%20female%20literacy%20rate,societal%20pressures%20or%20early%20pregnancies.>

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.creditmantri.com/top-10-government-schemes-for-girl-children-in-india/>

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