

## **WOMEN EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA**

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**Key Concepts:** Economic Development, Empowerment,  
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Women's education in India has been one of the major issues of concern of the Government of India as well as the society at large. It is because of the fact that today the educated women play a vital role in overall development and progress of the country. Women hold a prominent position in the Indian society as well as all over the world. Women Education in India is the consequence of such progress and this led to the tremendous improvement of women's condition throughout the world. Nevertheless eradication of female illiteracy is considered as a major concern today.

As India is the second largest country of the world in respect of population, and is fast progressing steadily, the importance of women's education in India is certainly immense. Proper and prolific women's education in India, will support the country in every good and bright respect, and will result ultimately in better standards of living, financial opulence, and rapid economic growth and development of rural areas.

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. Education in India falls under the control of both the Union Government and the State Governments, with some responsibilities lying with the Union and the states having autonomy for others.

The various articles of the Indian Constitution provide for education as a fundamental right. Most of the universities in India are controlled by the Union or the State Governments. India's education system is divided into different levels such as pre-primary level, primary level, elementary education, secondary education, undergraduate level and postgraduate level.

India has made progress in terms of increasing the primary education attendance rate and expanding literacy to approximately three quarters of the population in the 7-40 age group, by 2011. India's improved education system is often cited as one of the main contributors to the economic rise of India.

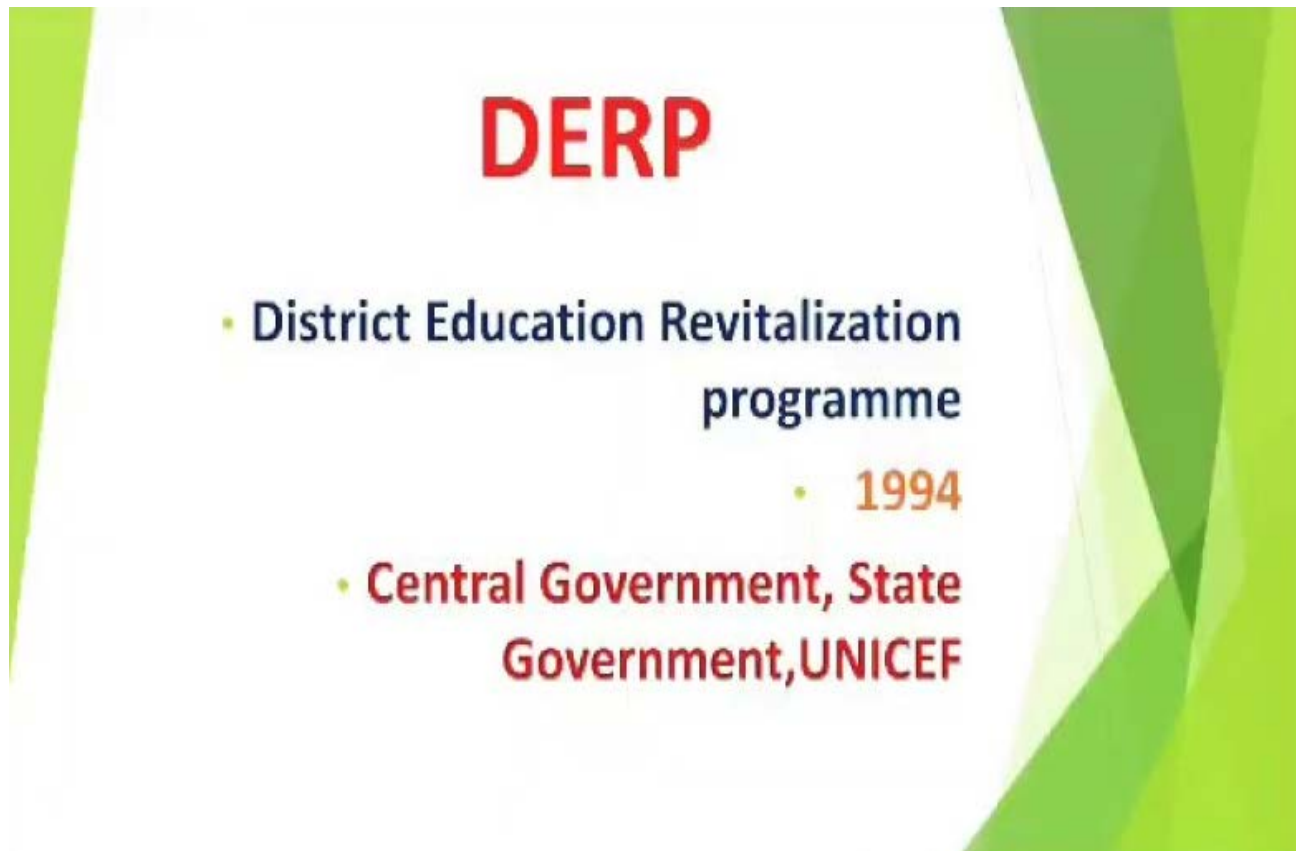
India's education system, a significant number of seats is reserved under affirmative action policies for the historically disadvantaged Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. In universities/colleges/institutions affiliated to the federal Government there is a minimum 50% of reservations applicable to these disadvantaged groups, at the state level it can vary. Andhra Pradesh had 83.33% reservation in 2012, which is the highest percentage of reservations in India.

The Indian Government lays emphasis on primary education up to the age of fourteen years, referred to as elementary education in India. The Indian government has also banned child labour in order to ensure that the children do not enter unsafe working conditions. However, both free education and the ban on child labour are difficult to enforce due to economic disparity and social conditions. 80% of all recognized schools at the elementary stage are Government run or supported, making it the largest provider of education in the country.

However, due to a shortage of resources and lack of political will, this system suffers from massive gaps including high pupil to teacher ratios, shortage of infrastructure and poor levels of teacher training. Figures released by the Indian government in 2011 show that there were 5,816,673 elementary school teachers in India.

As of March 2012 there were 2,127,000 secondary school teachers in India. Education has also been made free for children for 6 to 14 years of age or up to class VIII under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 (Singh and Nath 2013, 172-175).

There have been several efforts to enhance quality made by the government. The District Education Revitalization Programme (DERP) was launched in 1994 with an aim to universalize primary education in India by reforming and vitalizing the existing primary education system 85%



of the DERP was funded by the central Government and the remaining 15 percent was funded by the states. The DERP, which had opened 160000 new schools including 84000 alternative education schools delivering alternative education to approximately 3.5 million children, was also supported by UNICEF and other international programmes.



This primary education scheme has also shown a high Gross Enrollment Ratio of 93–95% for the last three years in some states. Significant improvement in staffing and enrollment of girls has also been made as a part of this scheme. The current scheme for universalization of Education for All is the “*Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*” which is one of the largest education initiatives in the world. Enrollment has been enhanced, but the levels of quality remain low.


According to current estimates, 80% of all schools are Government schools making the Government the major provider of education. However, because of poor quality of public education, 27% of Indian children are privately educated. With more than 50% children enrolling in private schools in urban areas, the balance has already tilted towards private schooling in cities even in rural areas; nearly 20% of the children in 2004-05 were enrolled in private schools. According to some research, private schools often provide superior results at a multiple of the unit cost of government schools. However, others have suggested that private schools fail to provide education to the poorest families.

A significant feature of India's secondary school system is the emphasis on inclusion of the disadvantaged sections of the society. Professionals from established institutes are often called to support in vocational training. Another feature of India's secondary school system is its emphasis on profession based vocational training to help students attain skills for finding a vocation of his or her choosing. A significant new feature has been the extension of SSA to secondary education in the form of the *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan*.

### Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)



A special **Integrated Education for Disabled Children** (IEDC) programme was started in 1974 with a focus on primary education. But which was converted into Inclusive Education at Secondary Stage. Another notable special programme, the *Kendriya Vidyalaya* project, was started for the employees of the Government of India, who are distributed throughout the country. The Government started the *Kendriya Vidyalaya* project in 1965 to provide uniform education in institutions following the same syllabus at the same place regardless of the location to which the employee's family has been transferred.



सत्यमेव जयते

Indian educational institutions by 2004 consisted of a large number of technology institutes. Distance learning is also a feature of the Indian higher education system. The Government has launched ***Rashtriya Uchchattar Shiksha Abhiyan*** to provide strategic funding to State higher and technical institutions. A total of 316 state public universities and 13,024 colleges will be covered under it (Times Higher Education, 1 September 2010).

Following India's independence a number of rules were formulated for the backward Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes of India, and in 1960 a list identifying 405 Scheduled Castes and 225 Scheduled Tribes was published by the central government. An amendment was made to the list in 1975, which identified 841 Scheduled Castes and 510 Scheduled Tribes.

The total percentage of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes combined was found to be 22.5 percent with the Scheduled Castes accounting for 17 percent and the Scheduled Tribes accounting for the remaining 7.5 percent. Following the report many Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes increasingly referred to themselves as *Dalit*, a Marathi language terminology used by B. R. Ambedkar which literally means *Oppressed*.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are provided for in many of India's educational programmes. Special reservations are also provided for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India, e.g. a reservation of 15% in ***Kendriya Vidyalyaya*** for Scheduled Castes and another reservation of 7.5% in *Kendriya Vidyalyaya* for Scheduled Tribes. Similar reservations are held by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in many schemes and educational facilities in India. The remote and far-flung regions of North East India are provided for under the Non Lapsable Central pool of Resources (NLCPR) since 1998–1999. The NLCPR aims to provide funds for infrastructure development in these remote areas.

Women from remote, underdeveloped areas or from weaker social groups in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, fall under the *Mahila Samakhya Scheme*, initiated in 1989. Apart from provisions for education this programme also aims to raise awareness by holding meetings and seminars at rural levels. The government allowed ₹340 million (US\$5.6 million) during 2007–08 to carry out this scheme over 83 districts including more than 21, 000 villages.

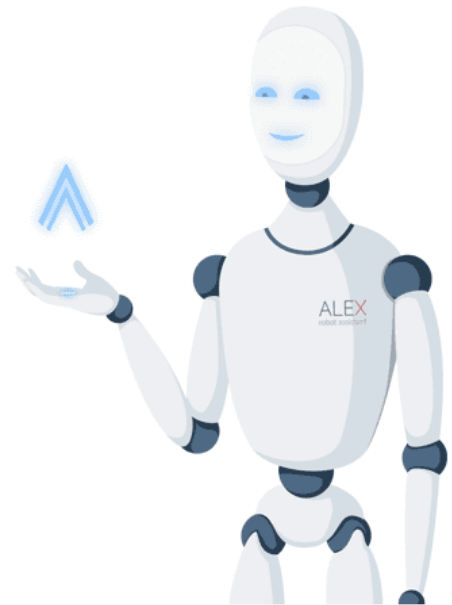
Currently there are 68 *Bal Bhavans* and 10 *Bal Kendra* affiliated to the *National Bal Bhavan*. The scheme involves educational and social activities and recognising children with a marked talent for a particular educational stream. A number of programmes and activities are held under this scheme, which also involves cultural exchanges and participation in several international forums.

India's minorities, especially the ones considered 'educationally backward' by the government, are provided for in the 1992 amendment of the Indian ***National Policy on Education*** (NPE).<sup>\*</sup> The government initiated the Scheme of Area Intensive Programme for Educationally Backward Minorities and Scheme of Financial Assistance or Modernisation of Madarsa Education as part of its revised Programme of Action (1992). Both these schemes were started nationwide by 1994. In 2004 the Indian parliament passed an act which enabled minority education establishments to seek university affiliations if they passed the required norms.

During the Financial Year 2011-12, the Central Government of India has allocated Rs 389.57 billion for the Department of School Education and Literacy which is the main department dealing with primary education in India. Within this allocation, major share of Rs 210 billion, is for the flagship programme '**Sarva Siksha Abhiyan**'. However, budgetary allocation

of Rs 21,0000 is considered very low in view of the officially appointed Anil Bordia Committee recommendation of Rs 35,659 for the year 2011-12.

NCMP  
is an acronym for  
National Common  
Minimum Programme  
by allacronyms.com



Government of India legislated ***Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009*** and several major announcements were made for developing the poor state of affairs in education sector in India, the most notable ones being the ***National Common Minimum Programme*** (NCMP) of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government. The announcements are

- (a) To progressively increase expenditure on education to around 6 percent of GDP.
- (b) To support this increase in expenditure on education, and to increase the quality of education, there would be an imposition of an education cess over all central government taxes.
- (c) To ensure that no one is denied of education due to economic backwardness and poverty.
- (d) To make right to education a fundamental right for all children in the age group 6–14 years.
- (e) To universalize education through its flagship programmes such as ***Sarva Siksha Abhiyan*** and ***Mid Day Meal***.

However, even after five years of implementation of NCMP, not much progress has been seen on this front. Although the country targeted towards devoting 6% share of the GDP towards the educational sector, the performance has definitely fallen short of expectations. Expenditure on education has steadily risen from 0.64% of GDP in 1951-52 to 2.31% in 1970-71 and thereafter reached the peak of 4.26% in 2000-01. However, it declined to 3.49% in 2004-05. There is a definite need to step up again. As a proportion of total government expenditure, it has declined from around 11.1 per cent in 2000–2001 to around 9.98 per cent during UPA rule, even though ideally it should be around 20% of the total budget.



A policy brief issued by *Network for Social Accountability* (NSA). Response to Education Sector Interventions in Union Budget: UPA Rule and the Education Sector provides significant revelation to this fact. Due to a declining priority of education in the public policy paradigm in India, there has been an exponential growth in the private expenditure on education also. As per the available information, the private out of pocket expenditure by the working class population for the education of their children in India has increased by around 1150 percent or around 12.5 times over the last decade (Geeta, 2012).

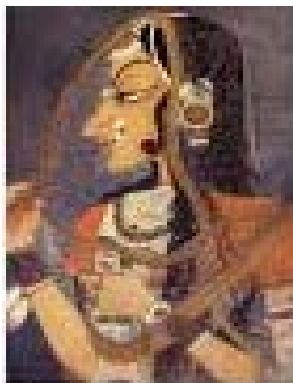
### **WOMEN EDUCATION:**

As India is the second largest country of the world in respect of population, and is fast progressing steadily, the importance of women's education in India is certainly immense. Proper and prolific women's education in India, will support the country in every good and bright respect, and will result ultimately in better standards of living, financial opulence, and rapid economic growth and development of rural areas.

Women's education in India has been one of the major issues of concern of the Government of India as well as the society at large. It is because of the fact that today the educated women play a very significant role in overall development and progress of the country. Women hold a prominent position in the Indian society as well as all over the world. However, since the prehistoric times women were denied opportunities and had to suffer for the hegemonic masculine ideology. Thus, this unjustifiable oppression had resulted into a movement that fought to achieve the equal status of women all over the world.

Women Education in India is the consequence of such progress and this led to the tremendous improvement of women's condition throughout the world. Nevertheless eradication of female illiteracy is considered as a major concern today. In the recent era, the Indian society has established a number of institutions for the educational development of women and girls. These educational institutions aim for immense help and are concerned with the development of women. Women's Education in Ancient India in ancient India, women and girls received less education than men. This was due to the set social norms.

Interestingly, in the Vedic education, but gradually they had lost ancient India prevailed during the that Indian scriptures Rig Veda and women sages and seers. Women rights in the early Vedic era. position of women started to decline. role in restricting freedom and rights attended and there was a terrific India. Women education in medieval introduction of Purdah system and of diverse culture. The arrival of the British helped in revival of women education in India.



period women had access to this right. Women education in early Vedic period. In addition to Upanishads mention about several enjoyed equivalent position and However, after 500 B.C, the The Islamic invasion played a vital of the women. A radical change constraint for Women education in India further deteriorated with the different customs and conventions

During the British period, a large number of social reformers like *Raja Ram Mohan Roy*, *Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar* gave emphasis on women education in India. Some other leaders like

*Jyotiba Phuley, Dr. Babasaheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar* held various programs to make education accessible to every woman of India. After the independence, the Government of India has taken a lot of measures to offer education to all women of India. As a consequence, the literary rate of Indian women has increased and rising up.

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 school.



The number of literate women among the female population of India was between 2–6% from the British Raj onwards to the formation of the Republic of India in 1947. Concerted efforts led to improvement from 15.3% in 1961 to 28.5% in 1981.\* By 2001 literacy for women had exceeded 50% of the overall female population, though these statistics were still very low compared to world standards and even male literacy within India. Recently the Indian government has launched “**Saakshar Bharat Mission for Female Literacy**”. This mission aims to bring down female illiteracy by half of its present level (Sen and Shiv Kumar 2006).

Since 1947 the Indian Government has tried to provide incentives for girls’ school attendance through programmes for midday meals, free books, and uniforms. This welfare thrust raised primary enrolment between 1951 and 1981. In 1986 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 the improvement of women’s condition.

The new policy aimed at social change through revised texts, curricula, increased funding for schools, expansion in the numbers of schools, and policy improvements. Emphasis was placed on expanding girls’ occupational centres and primary education; secondary and higher education; and rural and urban institutions. The report tried to connect problems like low school attendance with poverty, and the dependence on girls for housework and sibling day care. The National Literacy Mission also worked through female tutors in villages. Although the minimum marriage



age is now eighteen for girls, many continue to be married much earlier. Therefore, at the secondary level, female dropout rates are high.

The education of women in India plays a vital role in improving living standards in the country. A higher women literacy rate improves the quality of life both at home and outside of home, by encouraging and promoting education of children, especially female children, and in reducing the infant mortality rate. Several studies have shown that a lower level of women literacy rates results in higher levels of fertility and infant mortality, poorer nutrition, lower earning potential and the lack of an ability to make decisions within a household.

Women's lower educational levels are also shown to adversely affect the health and living conditions of children. A survey that was conducted in India showed results which support the fact that infant mortality rate was inversely related to female literacy rate and educational level. The survey also suggests a correlation between education and economic growth. Indian women workforce maintains professionalism; the men outnumber them in most fields and, in some cases, receive higher income for the same positions (Dube 1988, 166-192).

In India, it was found that there is a large disparity between female literacy rates in different states. For example, while Kerala actually has a female literacy rate of about 86 percent, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh have female literacy rates around 55-60 percent. These values are further correlated with health levels of the Indians, where it was found that Kerala was the state with the lowest infant mortality rate while Bihar and Uttar Pradesh are the states with the lowest life expectancies in India. Furthermore, the disparity of female literacy rates across rural and urban areas is also significant in India. Out of the 24 states in India, 6 of them have female literacy rates of below 60 percent. The rural state Rajasthan has a female literacy rate of less than 12 percent (Shivani 2005).

In India, higher education is defined as the education of an age group between 18 and 24, and is largely funded by the Government. Despite women making up 24-50% of higher education enrolment, there is still a gender imbalance within higher education. Only one third of science students and 7% of engineering students are women. In comparison however, over half the students studying education are women.

Women play a pivotal role in the overall progress of a country as they constitute half the human resources of a nation. The Government of India has decided to involve women in various development activities and has initiated several schemes and programmes to bring them into the mainstream development to change the socio-economic condition of women.



#### **RAJIV GANDHI NATIONAL CRECHE SCHEME FOR THE CHILDREN OF WORKING MOTHERS**

(RGNCS) provides day care facilities to the children in the age group 0-6 years from families with monthly income of less than 12000/-. In addition to being a safe space for the children, the crèches provide services such as supplementary nutrition, pre-school education and emergency health care, etc.

## **CENTRAL SOCIAL WELFARE BOARD**

The main women welfare related schemes and programmes being implemented by CSWB are family counselling centres, awareness generation programme and condensed courses of education for women.



## **NATIONAL MISSION FOR EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN**

NMEW is an initiative of the Government of India for empowering women holistically. It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme sanctioned in April 2011 and acts as an umbrella Mission with a mandate to strengthen inter-sect oral convergence (Press Information Bureau 2014).

## **WORKING WOMEN'S HOSTEL**

WWH Scheme envisages provision of safe and affordable hostel accommodation to working women, single working women, women working at places away from their home-towns and for women being trained for employment.



## **Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)**



## **SUPPORT TO TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME**

(STEP) for Women was launched as a Central Sector Scheme during 1986-87. It aims at making a significant impact on women by upgrading skills for self and wage employment. The target group includes the marginalized asset less rural women and urban poor.

## **RASHTRIYA MAHILA KOSH**

(RMK) with a corpus of Rs.100 crore extends micro-finance services to bring about the socio-economic upliftment of poor women.



**SWADHAR SCHEME**

The Ministry of Women and Child Development had been administering Swadhar scheme since 2001 for Women in difficult circumstances. Under the Scheme, temporary accommodation, maintenance and rehabilitative services are provided to women and girls rendered homeless due to family discord, crime, violence, mental stress, social ostracism. Another scheme with similar objectives/target groups namely Short Stay Home (SSH) is being implemented by Central Social Welfare Board (Press Information Bureau, 2014).

In Andhra Pradesh, literacy rate is above 60%. But women literacy is around 50% only. Poverty and religious fundamentalism both are reasons for low rate of literacy in women. Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, these 3 religions advocate gender discrimination. In some areas, women who go to colleges are very less. People must leave religious fundamentalism and think about welfare of women. Government must also giving full fees concession for girls of poor families in colleges.

To sum up, Women in India are not yet strong enough and they surely won't be so in near future without the enhancement of Education for all. It is pitiful to note that in a country like ours' education isn't a necessity but a luxury for girls. The thought that education is a privilege for girls could make anyone feel sick who wishes to see The Developed India rather than The Developing India.

Women Education is the need of the moment the need in rural area. We dream big of the great future ahead but what if the roots aren't strong to hold and nurture the tree. Even if leave the thought of all the women turning to working women it still doesn't change our need for education. A mother is the first and best teacher of a child. If she is not educated how well the child can do. She can nurture the brain and talent of her child better than any mentor in the world.

Education is something which helps everywhere and is never wastage of time efforts or money. It will always pay you back. When education reaches rural area's women it leads to eradication of the evils present in the society. Child marriage, female infanticide, poor health and sanitation, superstitions, crime, unemployment, domestic violence and the like are all results of lack of proper education to women. When they are educated they know that child marriage is wrong and they can stop others or at least themselves. It empowers them to fight against female infanticide. They are aware of their health and sanitation leading to a healthy world. The superstitions and crimes could be reduced to a great extent. The best part is that educating the girl makes her

independent to lead a life with the head held high, she can be the support to her family, and she can protest against dowry, she is less prone to domestic violence or threats to left alone.

The Government comes up with various program, schemes and policies for the improvement of education for girls. What is needed is cooperation of the people. If the support the cause and send the girls for studies to school and for higher education, a huge difference can be easily created. ***“Our daughters- prepared for school today, prepared for society tomorrow”.***

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