



# Impact of School Education on Women Empowerment: In Rural Odisha

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## Abstract:

India is the second largest country in the world so far population is concerned. But so far as education concerned it is a backward country. Education is a third eye of human, without education human is like an animal which mean who has no idea about right and wrong even though without education who could not understand own religion as well as culture. Education is a right of every single person including men and women, it is said that if man get education it mean only one is going to be educated but when woman get education it means whole nation is going to be educated, because she is responsible for whole nation, she nourish the nations mind with care and love. Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. Empowerment of women is an essential component for strengthening and enhancing the authority by providing information, delegation of responsibilities and encouraging participation in decision making areas. Education therefore has direct impact on women empowerment as they become aware of their rights, their capabilities and to become independent. Education helps women to know their rights and to gain confidence so that she become proactive and competent and never gets discouragement from problems as compare to uneducated women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations. Education of women can be helpful in eradicating many social evils such as dowry problem, unemployment problem, etc. Investing in women education is one of the most effective ways to poverty. However, women's literacy rates are significantly lower than men's in most developing countries. Thus an educated empowered woman can open up the

possibility of unlimited exposure to new information and constructive thinking and can visualize new perspective on existing matters.

**Key Words:** Empowerment, Education, Literacy level, Women Empowerment.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Empowerment is a process to give power, to give some capacity to perform some physical or mental activity, to delegates' authority and to give legal rights. The term empowerment has different meanings depending on the socio-economic, political and cultural context in which it is presented. Overall empowerment can be perceived as a process or as outcome/goal and can take place at different levels. Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their own capacities. Thus Empowerment is an active and multidimensional process which should enable individuals or group of individuals to realize their strength and power in all spheres of life. Women's empowerment is another term that needs clarification. The word women empowerment essentially means that the women have the power or capacity to regulate their day- to- day lives in the social, political and economic terms -a power which enables them to move from the periphery to the centre stage. Women's economic and political empowerment was adopted as one of the strategies for advancing the agenda of gender equality. The empowerment occurs when women achieve increased control and participation in decision making that leads to their better access to resources, and therefore, improved socio-economic status. Empowerment for women in India requires a crosscutting approach and one which addresses the diversity of social structures that govern women's lives. Since the 1990's women have been identified



as key agents of sustainable development and women's equality and empowerment are seen as central to a more holistic approach towards establishing new patterns and processes of development that are sustainable. Women empowerment in India is a challenging task as we need to acknowledge the fact that gender based discrimination is a deep rooted social malice practiced in India in many forms since thousands of years. The malice is not going to go away in a few years or for that matter by attempting to work at it through half-hearted attempts. Formulating laws and policies are not enough as it is seen that most of the times these laws and policies just remain on paper.

Empowerment of women is an essential component of the overall development of society and the nation. The Govt. of India has made empowerment of women as one of the principal objectives of 9<sup>th</sup> Five year plan and declared 2001 as the "Year of Women Empowerment". Empowerment of women is the process of strengthening and enhancing their ability and power in decision making areas. It refers broadly to the expression of freedom of choice and action with control over resources. From the stand point of UNESCO's gender empowerment index, a woman becomes empowered when she is able to make decision for herself and for others socially, politically and economically. According to Kofi Anan, (U.N General Secretary) "there is no tool more effective for development than the empowerment of women". Therefore, women should be empowered to bring their vision and leadership knowledge and skills, views and aspirations into the development agenda from the grassroots to the international level.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

Education is the most important process in life. The importance of education has a different meaning to different people. That it was something that no one could ever take away. Knowledge is power and the power of knowledge helps us grow. Education is recognized as the cornerstone for sustainable development. Education is the greatest investment that the nation can make for the quick development of its economic, political, and social spheres. Having recognized education as "an instrument per-excellence for effective national development" as well as "a dynamic instrument of change," it is also the basis for the full promotion and improvement of the status of women. Education empowers women by improving their living standard. It is the starting point for women's advancement in different fields of human

endeavour. It is the basic tool that should be given to women in order to fulfil their role as full members of the society. It is crucial that girls and female adults should acquire or have formal education. Early history of education in Odisha showed that women lacked easy access to formal education. Further, the interconnectedness of women's literacy with family and society also highlights the important fact that attempting to improve women's literacy levels will not work if women's literacy efforts remain focused on women alone.

### WOMEN AND EDUCATION

Women literacy is an important input for the economic, social and political development of the civilised society and therefore, every segment of the society; especially the Institutions of learning have an important role in this venture. It is a matter of fact that socially important element in the education is that the Universities are the instruments of social regeneration and reconstruction. Education is an important aspect of developed nations and it is proved that nations without education cannot develop. Women education no doubt is vital for the growth and development of the family and society as whole, but it is a matter of fact that vast majority of women throughout the globe continue to be far below than men. In order to promote social, economic and political development, education of women is to be given top priority everywhere at every level. The women's equality is essential for the overall growth of the society. Further, the women's equality can be achieved through education so that they are in a position to develop the critical under-standing of all the things surrounding them. Women make almost half of the population of any country, thus their involvement in the development cannot be ignored. Educated mothers use their knowledge to improve the health of their children and other family members. They immunize their kids against major disease. Their knowledge about health risk protects their families against illness. Child mortality rate is much higher where mothers lack education than in families where mothers are educated. Girls' education is emerging as one of the top priorities of Indian society "educating girls is not an option it is a necessity", we all want to eliminate gender disparities in education. Much progress has been made in recent decades. The number of girls attending school is increasing but in some parts of India as well as in Odisha a number of girls still receive little or no education. Even today there are many girls which don't even have access to Primary education. In



some areas female literacy is even less than half that of males.

Educating girls brings many benefits to society. They give equal importance to education, health and increase the productivity of future generation. And if they are not educated then the productivity and capacity of future generation will be low. We have to keep this thing in mind if we will not invest now on girls education then we have to pay prices in future in the form of slow growth and less income. There are many cultural and economical reasons for girls illiteracy like verbal and physical abuse, lack of sanitation, long distances between home and school hazardous experience that deter parents from sending their daughters to school. Another barrier to education in India is the lack of adequate school facilities. Many states simply do not have enough classrooms to accommodate all of the school-age children. Furthermore, the classrooms that are available often lack basic necessities such as sanitary facilities or water. Promoting girls education therefore involves changing attitude across society merely spending money on girls education will not solve this problem.

### IMPACT OF EDUCATION

Education is the process of building capacities of women creating an atmosphere which would enable them to fully utilize their creative potential. Further, Education should not be confined to learning what is in books: rather it should build up the potentiality to judge issues critically and take decisions on them. Education is the most important process in life, passing on knowledge from one generation to another. Unfortunately in this modern society still women deprived from education. Hence the best way of bringing women empowerment is to educate the women for their livelihood with respect and dignity. Without educated woman a nation cannot see their distant dreams as woman are the mothers who write the future of a generation. In this ways, women education in India plays a very important role in the development of the country. In last few years there has seen considerable improvement in women education in India. Empowerment is therefore possible only with access to education and knowledge to overcome barriers, self motivated and promoting social development. Education therefore has direct impact on women empowerment as they become aware of their rights, their capabilities and to become independent. More and more women are coming out of houses and opt for education in India. That is the reason, why we are seeing lot of women on top positions in India.

They have done considerable improvement in all areas. Today we see women in education, in government, in teaching, in research and in forces. Today they are the CEO's of top companies. They are running International Educational Institute.

Raja Ram Mohan Ray, Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar was famous reformers who gave emphasis on the education of women. Man and woman are like the two sides of a coin. Without one, the other cannot exist. They help each other in every sphere. So education should be given to both man and woman. In India women are discriminated and marginalized at every level of the society whether it is social participation, economic opportunity and economic participation, political participation, access to education or access to nutrition and reproductive health. Self empowerment can begin by addressing day to day issues faced by individual women and tackling them with a mindset of improving the overall living conditions of women at every level and strata of the society.

But in rural areas, the women are still less favoured as far as the educational opportunity is concerned. Limited educational opportunity is a major factor in continuing deprivation of rural women as there is a close relationship between education and economic development. Further, absence of sufficient numbers of schools, lack of adequate numbers of teachers and location of school in faraway places are the main reasons behind the educational backwardness of rural women. Negative attitude of the parents towards women education is also accounted for the poor educational status of rural women. Because of these reasons also most of the girls leave schools after the primary level. When denied of education, the rural women often become the victims of abuse and are obliged to enter into early marriage, child prostitution and child labour. Hence it is the need of the hour that the women should be educated to gain empowerment and to exercise all rights and responsibilities, to make decisions on their own and to work shoulder to shoulder to their male counter parts in every sphere.

### INITIATIVES

Special efforts will be made by Ministries of Education and Local Government Authorities information to encourage parents to send their daughters to school. Ministry of Human Resource Development, Dept. Of Human and Child Development, Govt. Of India has circulated the National Policy for the Empowerment of women in 2011. Our Indian government is making good efforts for promoting girls education like recently they have launched "Saakshar Bharat Mission for



Female Literacy". This mission aims to bring down female illiteracy by half of its present level. Women have fared better in literacy because of a number of entitlements provided by the State such as the "Sarva Siksha Abhijan". Further assessment of dropouts and new methods of bringing in the girl would bring them on an equal ground with the boys. For the implementation, Govt. Of India has prescribed certain goals and objectives The National Policy on Education (NPE) provides that education be used as a strategy for achieving a basic change in the status of women. The main features of the NPE are as follows.

- To gear the entire education system to plan a positive interventionist role in the empowerment of women.
- To promote women's studies as a part of various courses and encouragement to educational institutions to take up active programme to further women's development.
- To widen the access of women in programmes of vocational, technical and professional education;
- Strengthening legal system aimed at elimination of all forms discrimination against women.
- Equal access to participation and decision making of women in political and economic life of the nation.
- Equal access to women health care, equality of education at all levels, employment and safety.

Govt. Of India has also prescribed some policy prescription, judicial legal system, eradication of poverty, health, Nutrition, right of the girl child etc. In the recent year's empowerment of women has been recognised as the central issue in determining the status of women. The 73<sup>th</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> amendment (1993) of the constitution of India have provided for the reservation of seats in the local bodies of panchayats and municipalities for women, laying a strong foundation for their participation in decision making at local levels.

### **BENEFITS**

Although Govt. Of India has implemented various policies for the empowerment of women, but the full empowerment of women has been remained as dream. Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can

have ripple effects within the family and across generations. Investing in girls' education is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty. An investment in secondary school education for girls yields especially high dividends. According to International centre for research on women, the education that a girl receives is the strongest predictor of the age she will marry and it as would be a critical factor in reducing the prevalence of child marriage. Poverty is the whole sole biggest barrier to the access of education, so school fee abolition is absolutely necessary. Thus women's education should be taken as a serious issue and steps should be taken to bring awareness about importance of education among every woman both in urban and rural area. This way many of the social problems like poverty, begging, child labour, child marriage and child mortality will be controlled up to some extent. As the largest Government donor to UNICEF, the United States is supporting efforts to secure safe, rights-based, quality education for each and every girl and boy. For example, UNICEF's Child-Friendly Schools model which has been implemented in more than 50 countries, utilizes curricula that are specifically inclusive and gender-sensitive. Where barriers to gender equity exist, UNICEF works with governments to develop alternative education methods that promote gender inclusiveness in education.

To achieve empowerment through education, several concepts must be introduced at appropriate levels. When referring to primary and secondary schooling, empowerment should enable girls to develop their knowledge and skills. This paper deals with the role of education, particularly in research, as a key component of the role and mission of education in addressing the immediate and long-term search for Women's Empowerment. Overall empowerment can be perceived as a process or as outcome/goal and can take place at different levels. Women empowerment means the process through which women, who are currently most discriminated against, achieve gender equity. This will include support for men to change those aspects of their behaviour, roles and privileges which currently discriminate against Women. The extent of current disadvantage and inequality means that women's empowerment may require support by development agencies at household, community and also from macro levels, the 3rd MDG has rightly acknowledged that the key to this goal lies in educating women: "Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015". Though the timeframe is arguably too strict, the goal is





legitimate. Furthermore, Article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) specifically provides that “women shall not be discriminated against and shall have equal opportunities in the field of education.”

### **THE ROOT CAUSES FOR LOW LITERACY AMONG WOMEN IN ODISHA**

Women education is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. No single factor or cause can be held responsible for very low literacy rate of women in India. No single factor or cause can be held responsible for very low literacy rate of women in India. Subsequently it is associated with combination of many factors including social, cultural, economic, educational, demographic, political and administrative and so on. The following are the some of the important factors which could be attributed for the present poor state of affairs of womenfolk in education.

- 1. The Lower enrolment:** The lower enrolment of girls in schools is one of the foundational factors which stand as stumbling block for women empowerment in India. According to the latest statistics, two out of every ten girls in the age group of 6-11 are still not enrolled in schools.
- 2. Girl child as second mother:** In many families girl children play the role of second mother by shouldering the responsibilities of household work such as looking after the sibling, fetching water, collecting firewood, bringing fodder for cattle, cleaning and cooking etc. in rural India especially.
- 3. Caste system as a barrier;** Children belonging to low caste families are forced to learn skills and work ways and not encouraged to go to school due to various factors and threat from high caste communities for their selfish motives of keeping them as domestic servants and child labourers in the farms or factory.
- 4. Child labour practice:** A large segment of child population in India is engaged in child labour practices. According to UN sources India is the most child labour populous nation in the globe with more than 50 million child labourers indulged in beedi works, carpet making, bricks, mining, match and fireworks, domestic works, construction etc. In most of these industries girl children are preferred for high productivity and low cost.
- 5. Poverty as a barrier:** In much poverty stricken families, children especially girls are considered as economic assets as they bring income for livelihood as well to save from economic crises due to death or incapacity of parents (sick/ handicapped/aged).

### **REMEDIAL MEASURES FOR IMPROVING THE LITERACY LEVEL OF WOMEN IN INDIA**

In India enrolment of girls in schools causes women’s education and empowerment. The enrolment can be made even mandatory for every girl by the government in the realm of compulsory education. The Ministry of Education both at Centre and State level should work out strategic steps to stop firmly the ongoing high drop –outs among girls especially in rural areas. The Govt. should provided necessary poverty alleviation services to strengthen the income thereby to enable the families to send their children to schools and colleges without much financial difficulties. Appropriate steps should be taken by the educational authorities with the participation of communities in order to bring the girl children to the main stream of education and development at every level including family and community. Every family irrespective its socio-cultural and economic background can take it a challenge to bring up their girl children as dignified human being with empowerment in physical, mental, economic and social dimensions of life. The electronic and print media can play significant role in changing the society’s attitudes towards girls and their roles to treat every girl or woman as human being with self respect and dignity. Government, NGOs and public should work hand in hand to implement the minimum age at marriage (21and above) Awareness.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and ministry for human resources development (MHRD) drafted a 'National vision for Girls' Education in India - Roadmap to 2015' with an aim to building a comprehensive approach towards girls' education.

The plan of action for the next one year is the Shiksha Ka Haq Abhiyan which will be the cornerstone for the implementation of RTE. The government will engage with the community, media, states, and other stakeholders to create an environment and mechanism to ensure implementation at every level for girls' education. Implement strong legislation outlawing child labour, gender based violence, and harassment of girls provide residential facilities, transport and other incentives to attract qualified female teachers to particularly rural and remote schools address safety issues of girls Gender-friendly classrooms and separate toilets.



## II. CONCLUSION

Despite all these efforts, surprisingly, a large number of girls still remain outside the education system. According to Karin Hulshof, UNICEF India representative, out of 81% girls joining school at the primary level, around 50% drop out at the secondary level because of factors such as child marriage, child labour, etc. R Govinda, vice-chancellor, National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), feels "We must not look at girls as a liability but as an asset. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Right to Education (RTE) Act are tools that can empower the girl child. The RTE has made education a fundamental right. After 25 years of prioritising girls' education, we have seen a tremendous change. The right to be admitted to a class appropriate to her age inclusion of women in school management committees through 50% representation. This can be done through massive publicity campaigns to exhort parents, teachers and women interact to get together, organise and register them with the District Authorities. As the number of educated women grows and as the level of education increases, the expectations become greater but at the same time more liberating. Women today still face discrimination in the form of income disparity, the "glass ceiling," and the notion of female professionalism as being unwomanly, but education is now a means of self-sufficiency and an opportunity to be seized with purpose. Only half of Indian women fall into category of empowered, later defined in terms of having higher education, exposure to mass media, decent job and freedom of movement. Still, a large part of them don't have sufficient autonomy regarding the value choices for their own life. However there is variety of potential connections and the various forms of linkages among these variables to explain the overlapping areas among the various dimensions of empowerment. Women are an integral part of our society. Women in the holy books have been bestowed with a very high status and have been adored with various adjectives.

Women in the urban set-up works shoulder to shoulder with male counter parts in every sphere of life. In most of the sectors women excel their male counter parts and have proved very successful in their endeavour. Women literacy is an important input for the economic, social and political development of the civilised society and therefore, every segment of the society; especially the Institutions of learning have an important role in this venture. It is a matter of fact that socially important element in the education is that the Universities are

the instruments of social regeneration and reconstruction. Women education no doubt is vital for the growth and development of the family and society as whole, but it is a matter of fact that vast majority of women throughout the globe continue to be far below than men. It is rightly believed that education of a man means education of one individual, but education of a woman means education of the entire family.

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