

Education and Women Empowerment

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Education and Women Empowerment

By : *Dr. Savita Mishra*

Dr. Amit Bhowmick

PREFACE

“Woman is the builder and molder of the nation’s destiny. Though delicate and soft as lily, she has a heart, far stronger and bolder than of man. She is the supreme inspiration for man’s onward march, an embodiment of love, pity and compassion, she is no doubt, her commanding personality, nevertheless, is given by solemn.”

- *Rabindranath Tagore*

In Indian society there occurs a great disparity in the matter of economic resourcefulness between a man and a woman. Empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process that aids people gain control over their lives. To secure future generation and to establish social peace women’s education and empowerment both are important. We know that a mother is the first teacher of a child, so educating a girl means to ensure education for future generation. There is in the heart of an educated woman a spark of heavenly fire which lies dormant in the hours of prosperity but which kindles and blazes in the dark hours of adversity. Educated women are the weapon who yields positive impact on the Indian society through their contribution at home and professional fields. According to them the meaning of women empowerment indicates here are women developing them as more aware individuals, who are politically, economically and socially independent. She is able to make intelligent discussion in all matters, which affect them and society. Thus, there is an urgent need to educate women so that they know about their rights in the society and save themselves

from all the humiliations taking place against them. The humble attempt to publish this book is to introduce readers to the concept of women education and women empowerment and its various facets through research based articles. The book is hoped, will help the readers to understand and appreciate the issue and trigger debate and discussion in the society to reinstate the value of education and women empowerment in the 21st century in the education system and empower them. The editorial board wishes to acknowledge the contributions made by the authors for their in-depth study, publisher for readily accepting to publish the book, and a number of individuals whose name have not been mentioned for paucity of space. The book would not have seen the light of the day without their effort and hard work.

Dr. Savita Mishra
Dr. Amit Bhowmick

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15.

Gender Equality and Education

Monica Das*

Introduction

Gender inequality has been present throughout history and it still continues to be one of the main hindrances for development. Despite the numerous steps taken globally and nationally, gender parity is not yet achieved, the roots of which lies in the rigid, century old, 'patriarchal norms' of the Indian sub continent. It is found that women and girls are discriminated against in health, education, political representation, employment sector, etc. Even though studies have revealed that the situation has improved in the recent years, but women continue to suffer discrimination throughout their lives. However, proper education can be linked to encourage gender sensitization.

Men and women, though born equal, do not receive equal treatment throughout their life or in every sphere of their lives. Women constitute about half of the total population and neglecting the development of one half of a population would not bring about the necessary human development. History has been the witness to various customary

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atrocities against womenfolk. Even in the present era, many such discriminatory and derogatory practices continue to be considered normalized by the society. In response to these discriminations on the grounds of gender, several international commitments have been taken up which aims to bring down all forms of gender disparity.

International Interventions to Curb Gender Disparity

Equality of rights for women is a basic principle of the United Nations. “The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly is often described as an international bill of rights for women. The Convention provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women’s equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life -- including the right to vote and to stand for election -- as well as education, health and employment. State parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms.” (UN General Assembly, 1979)

The World Education Forum adopted the Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments. Of the six EFA goals, the fifth goal states about eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality. (UNESCO, 2000)

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals are eight goals that all 191 UN member states have agreed to try to achieve by the year 2015. The MDGs commits the world leaders to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women. The third goal is targeted here to promote gender equality and empower women. (WHO, 2000)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and

working to preserve our oceans and forests. They've picked their fifth goal to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. While some indicators of gender equality are progressing, such as early marriage, still, the ability to achieve this goal is undermined due to reasons like insufficient progress on structural issues at the root of gender inequality, such as legal discrimination, unfair social norms and attitudes, decision-making on sexual and reproductive issues and low levels of political participation. (UN, 2015)

The discussion of various global commitments towards promoting gender equality acts a comprehensive platform as to why educational reforms are necessarily a stepping stone for curbing gender disparity. Assessing the progress towards gender equality can be done basically by assessing the progress towards attaining quality education for everyone. In this light, India's educational expansion can also be considered to be reflective of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization program EFA, the MDGs as well as the SDGs.

According to the World Economic Forum, the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) ranking 2020, India ranks at 112 out of a total of 153 countries. It slipped from 98th position in the year 2006 to 112th position, fourteen years later. The GGGI examines the gap between men and women in four fundamental categories: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. The top three countries include Iceland, Norway and Finland, which also happens to be among the best countries for education, ranked on the basis of a perception-based global survey.

India as a Country of Diversity

India is a diverse country with an exceptionally high population. In fact, there exists much more diversity among the inhabitants of this country, linguistically as well as culturally. The native inhabitants, the various tribal groups as well as the people from all parts of India who have settled in this land live in peace and harmony here. India, however, still has certain evils at the societal level for girls and women like female feticide, female infanticide, child marriage, honor killing, rapes, dowry, menstrual stigmatization, etc. But owing to the ethnicity of the North Eastern region, such social evils against the female are comparatively lower than rest of India. However, superstitious believes are still rampant in some remote areas which results in horrible deeds like witch hunting.

In such case, education is the only weapon which can be used

to fight against all sorts of social evils. A society where everyone including the adults and the elderly is well educated, certainly reports zero to very little crimes records. However, after the British left India, the literate population was really low, and today even after more than 70 years of independence India haven't reached cent percent literacy. But, due to the numerous global and national commitments, today India has at least three-fourth of its total population as literate and the results are encouraging.

Comparison Amongst the States of North East India

- ❖ **Post Independence Literacy Growth:** From the census reports available for the first two decades after independence, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland had much lower literacy rates followed by Manipur and Tripura. Assam and Meghalaya stood near the national average. But Mizoram always had and still continues to have literacy rates which are higher than the national average. Also, during the course of these 7decades, Tripura, Sikkim, Nagaland and Manipur has really developed well to cross the national average. Meghalaya and Assam stands in the borderline, however Arunachal Pradesh still lags behind in this regard. (Reference- Table 1)
- ❖ **Gender Gap in Literacy Rates:** Despite higher female autonomy in the North Eastern region, none of the states had female literacy rates at par with that of male. In 1991, the gender gaps were quite considerable, yet all of the states had gender gaps much lower than the national average. In 2001 and 2011, as the national average for gender gaps decreased, the individual states of North East also were quite successful in bridging the gap between male and female literacy. Mizoram and Meghalaya have least gender gap in the literacy rates, followed by Nagaland, Tripura, Sikkim and Assam. However, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh have gender gaps almost near to the national average.

The female literacy rates stands highest in Mizoram and lowest in Arunachal Pradesh at 89.3 and 57.7 respectively. Meghalaya and Tripura have fastest percentage decline in gender gap of literacy rates at 47.3% and 45.4% respectively as compared to 24.7% as the national average. (Reference- table 2 and 3)

Gender Gap in Enrolment Rates

Gross enrolment ratio (GER) is defined as the number of students enrolled in a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to

the same level of education. For the tertiary level, the population used is the 5-year age group starting from the official secondary school graduation age.

- ❖ **Classes I-V:** the gender gap in lower primary school enrolment is 0.16 for India (2009-2010) which is near to that of Nagaland i.e. 0.74. However, among the North Eastern states, Mizoram, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh still have a considerable difference among GER of boys and girls. It is quite surprising to see that Assam and Meghalaya have a gap of '-2.48' and '-4.14' which means that more number of girls have enrolled in lower primary schools as compared to that of boys. A comparison of the gender gap in enrolment from 1999-2001 to 2009-2010 has shown that there is a positive decrease in the gap for all the states except Sikkim which had a gap of 0.84 in 1999-2001 but now has a wider gap of 5.16 (2009-2010).
- ❖ **Classes VI-VIII:** most of the states in North East has a negative gender gap in enrolment for upper primary schools, which denotes that more number of girls have enrolled in upper primary schools as compared to that of boys, namely in states of Sikkim, Meghalaya, Assam and Nagaland. Assam and Tripura has done considerably well in bringing down the gender gap i.e. from 16.39 and 9.70 in 1999-2001 to '-3.0' and 0.19 in 2009-2010 respectively. However, the gap has increased in case of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.
- ❖ **Classes IX-X:** all the eight states of North East India have gender gap which is considerably lesser than the national average (8.2 for the year 2010-2011). In states like Sikkim, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Meghalaya more number of girls are enrolled for high schools as compared to boys.
- ❖ **Classes XI-XII:** for the higher secondary stage, Meghalaya and Sikkim have a gender gap in which girls outnumber boys in terms of GER. In states like Nagaland, Mizoram, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh the gap is lesser than the all India average rate which is 6.1 for the year 2010-2011.

Higher Education

When calculated for 5 years post higher secondary education, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Mizoram have a gender gap for enrolment which is lesser than the national average of 3.2 for the year 2008-2009. States like Manipur and Tripura has a gap of 3.4 and 3.6 respectively. But Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Tripura exceeds

the national average quite clearly. (Reference- table 4 and 5)

Discussion

In the above analysis and interpretation of the data, an attempt was made to study the status of women in all the eight North Eastern states of India with a special emphasis on their education because proper education is considered as the foundation stone for development and upliftment of oneself and the society at large. Then, the states were compared with the national average figure to check where it stands.

Since independence, although most of the states, namely Tripura, Sikkim, Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh started with much lower literacy rates, except Mizoram and Assam, now they stand at par and even ahead of the national average (except Arunachal Pradesh). Mizoram always had a literacy rate above the national average and still continues to be at the 3rd position in the country. However, Assam has slipped its position, probably owing to infiltration from Bangladesh as well as political negligence.

The female literacy rates are higher than the national average in all the North Eastern states except Arunachal Pradesh.

The gender gaps in literacy rates are very low in states like Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland.

After estimating the gender gap for enrolment in various levels of Primary, Secondary and Higher education, it was found that Meghalaya always had a negative value which meant that enrolment of girls always outnumbered that of boys in almost all the stages of education except lower primary education. The remaining North Eastern states had mixed type of results regarding gender gap in enrolment, however, most of them were better than the rest of India and showed lesser gender disparity.

Conclusions

India is rich in various kinds of natural resources like coal, petroleum, limestone, natural gas, etc and also has abundance of forest covers, agricultural land, tea production, muga silk rearing, orchids, etc. However, being rich in these resources solely is not sufficient, in order to maintain sustainability, the development of human resource is equally important. But development of human resources calls for focusing on both the male and female population equally. Ignoring one half of the population cannot usher development of any sort to the society. Still, social exclusion and under-representation can nowadays be seen at various other levels like at the healthcare,

political and employment sectors. Having autonomy alone and no empowerment would result in crippled development. Quality education for all can definitely act as the fundamental factor to bring about development in a society. The academic achievements of the girls and women is by and large dependent on the socio-cultural and socio-economic factors, the traditional value system which places due importance to education of girls. Also, the aspiration of a girl is shaped mostly by the family values and the society. Therefore, it is imperative that they receive the best form of education. For such intricate system of education, women's political participation is a fundamental prerequisite. It would facilitate women's direct engagement in public decision-making and act as a means of ensuring better accountability to women. Hence, for gender equality and genuine democracy, gender norms should be redefined.

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Appendices

Table 1:

State wise literacy rates of the Northeastern states of India (post independence)

States	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Mizoram	31.14	44.01	53.8	59.88	82.26	88.8	91.58
Tripura	-	20.24	30.98	50.1	60.44	73.19	87.75
Sikkim	-	-	17.74	34.05	56.94	68.81	82.20
Nagaland	10.52	21.95	33.78	50.28	61.65	66.59	80.11
Manipur	12.57	36.04	38.47	49.66	59.89	70.5	79.85
Meghalaya	-	26.92	29.49	42.05	49.1	62.56	75.48
Assam	18.53	32.95	33.94	-	52.89	63.25	73.18
Arunachal Pradesh	-	7.13	11.29	25.55	41.49	54.34	66.95
India	18.33	28.3	34.45	43.57	52.21	64.84	74.04

(Source: Census of India, 2011)

Table 2:

State wise literacy rates (male and female) in North East India (last 3 decades)

State	1991			2001			2011		
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total
Mizoram	78.6	85.6	82.2	86.8	90.7	88.8	89.3	93.3	91.3
Tripura	49.7	70.6	60.4	64.9	81.0	73.2	82.7	91.5	87.2
Nagaland	54.8	67.6	61.7	61.5	71.2	66.6	76.1	82.8	79.6
Sikkim	46.7	65.7	56.9	60.4	76.0	68.8	75.6	86.6	81.4
Meghalaya	44.9	53.1	49.1	59.6	65.4	62.6	72.9	76.0	74.4
Manipur	47.6	71.6	59.9	60.5	80.3	70.5	72.4	86.1	79.2
Assam	43.0	61.9	52.9	54.6	71.3	63.3	66.3	77.8	72.2
Arunachal Pradesh	29.7	51.5	41.6	43.5	63.8	54.3	57.7	72.6	65.4
India	39.3	64.1	52.2	53.7	75.3	64.8	65.5	82.1	74.0

(Source: Office of Registrar General, India.)

Table 3:

State-wise Gap in the Literacy rates of Males and Females over decades

State/ Country	Gender Gap			% decline in gap	
	1991	2001	2011	1991-2001	2001-2011
Meghalaya	8.3	5.8	3.1	29.6	47.3
Mizoram	7.0	4.0	4.1	43.4	-2.8
Nagaland	12.9	9.7	6.6	24.6	31.6
Tripura	20.9	16.1	8.8	23.0	45.4
Sikkim	19.1	15.6	10.9	17.9	30.0
Assam	18.8	16.7	11.6	11.5	30.5
Manipur	24.0	19.8	13.7	17.6	30.9
Arunachal Pradesh	21.8	20.3	14.9	6.7	26.8
India	24.8	21.6	16.3	13.1	24.7

(Source: Office of Registrar General, India.)

Table 4:

Gross Enrolment Ratio in Primary Education in NE States

States/ Country	Classes I-V (6-10 Years)						Classes VI-VIII (11-13 Years)					
	1999-2001			2009-2010			1999-2001			2009-2010		
	Boys	Girls	Gap	Boys	Girls	Gap	Boys	Girls	Gap	Boys	Girls	Gap
Ar. Pradesh	126.14	108.55	17.59	169.99	163.42	6.57	72.42	66.68	5.74	106.14	96.21	9.93
Assam	124.25	105.36	18.89	91.67	94.15	-2.48	81.02	64.63	16.39	67.32	70.32	-3.00
Manipur	101.87	87.41	14.46	189.66	182.26	7.40	79.62	71.34	8.28	107.21	99.19	8.02
Meghalaya	119.46	111.64	7.82	169.95	174.09	-4.14	57.42	62.28	-4.86	80.45	91.44	-10.99
Mizoram	121.84	107.52	14.32	173.95	162.2	11.75	78.77	76.17	2.60	100.83	94.98	5.85
Nagaland	92.21	87.78	4.43	99.63	98.89	0.74	58.67	61.14	-2.47	59.13	60.70	-1.57
Sikkim	139.32	138.48	0.84	157.91	152.75	5.16	70.96	76.59	-5.63	70.89	86.59	-15.70
Tripura	118.28	100.86	17.42	146.81	143.72	3.09	69.96	60.26	9.70	93.33	93.14	0.19
India	104.08	85.18	18.90	115.55	115.39	0.16	67.15	49.66	17.49	84.53	78.30	6.23

(Source: www.indiastat.com)

Table 5:

Gross Enrolment Ratio in High School and Higher Education in NE States

States/ Country	Classes IX-X (14-15 Years) Year 2010-11			Classes XI-XII (16-17 Years) Year 2010-11			Above Class XII (18-23 Years) Year 2008-09		
	Boys	Girls	Gap	Boys	Girls	Gap	Boys	Girls	Gap
Ar. Pradesh	73.3	67.9	5.4	49.1	45.7	3.4	15.5	11.4	4.1
Assam	52.0	46.9	5.1	18.2	14.6	3.6	10.7	5.7	5.0
Manipur	83.5	80.1	3.4	39.0	32.1	6.9	14.5	11.1	3.4
Meghalaya	49.0	49.9	-0.9	13.7	17.3	-3.6	15.4	17.0	-1.6
Mizoram	75.4	78.3	-2.9	41.2	40.2	1.0	25.0	22.4	2.6
Nagaland	27.4	29.5	-2.1	18.3	16.7	1.6	13.4	11.6	1.8
Sikkim	44.9	50.3	-5.4	27.6	29.5	-1.9	25.2	19.5	5.7
Tripura	73.0	73.3	-0.3	31.9	25.0	6.9	19.4	15.8	3.6
India	69.0	60.8	8.2	42.2	36.1	6.1	12.3	9.1	3.2

(Source: www.indiastat.com)