

# Role of Higher Education in empowering rural women for sustainable development in India

**Mrs. Teena Choudhary**

Supervised

**Dr. Rajkumar**

Jayoti Vidiyapeeth Women's University Jaipur

## ABSTRACT

India has been a country of villages and the Indian women are being treated as goddess but their present situation is very poor in all the ways. They are suffering with problems since their birth. Tradition and customs are also against to women. Many NGOs and government are trying to uplift their lives but these efforts are not sufficient. Education is key barrier in their growth and empowerment. Still the fact remains that our country is the home to the largest number of illiterate population in the world. About one-third of India's population is currently functionally illiterate and about 50% of the entire adult female population cannot read or write. The rate of illiteracy is particularly high in rural areas, especially among women. Women's education is critical to the largely development of any country. In India, though much emphasis is being laid on the gender equality in terms of education, yet discrimination in access to education does exist. There is a rural and urban divide in access to education for women. In this paper all these problem are being discussed and a suitable suggestions is being made to overcome the problem.

**KEYWORDS:** women, education, empowerment, rural, sustainable development.

*Article Received: 10 August 2020, Revised: 25 October 2020, Accepted: 18 November 2020*

## INTRODUCTION

Education in its general sense is a form of learning in which the knowledge, skills and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training or research. Education is characterized in two parts, i.e. formal education and informal education. Formal education is the learning of the skills which we get from schools and institutions whereas informal education is the learning that goes on in daily life. Naturally informal education persons learned from relatives, societies and their friends in other hand formal education is required for empowering the individual with some

special skills which make them distinguished in the society. Women constitute almost half of the human race but comparatively education level of women is lower than men. After the sixty years of independence India is so far to provide full formal education to all. In 2005 Indian government passes an act to provide education to all and definitely it is working and seeing in society. But still there are several barriers in case of women education, so they are lacking in different sector including employment. Urban women are in some better position in compare to rural women but they are beyond to men.

**Table 1.1**  
**Demographic profile of Education**

Gender	Urban	Rural
Male	92.56 %	85.56%
Female	75.34 %	57.43%

**Source: Ministry of human resource development**

Ministry of human resource development Women education in India has been a major preoccupation of both the government and civil society as educated women is very limited in the country. Women can play a very important role in the development of the country as they represented the half of population. This is believed that female education affected by of gender inequality, traditions of society which International Journal of Applied Research

International Journal of Applied Research pay as barrier in access of education to women and its resulted into increase in poverty and backwardness of the country. Educating girl leads to a number of social benefits including women empowerment. Presently women in India are facing several problems due to lack of education such as domestic violence, cruelty of men, gender prejudice, discrimination in the distribution of power and work, economic

exploitation, sexual exploitation etc. Education is the key for women empowerment, prosperity, social development, and welfare of community in all manners. Women are demoralized in all spheres of life, they need to be empowered in all walk of life. In order to fight against the socially constructed gender biases, women have to swim against the system that requires more strength. Such strength comes from the process of empowerment and this will come only with education. Rural areas are more backward in terms of conveniences, income generation, distribution of food and health so there is a huge need of education. Backwardness of rural areas is only because of lack of education of men and women. Somehow men community involve themselves in physical work employment but women do not involve themselves in any kind of income generate employment so as an watching statement it can easily said that rural development comes from women education and empowerment. Women empowerment also aims to find out the effect of education on SC and ST women in rural areas. Empowerment of women involves many things – economic opportunity, social equality and personal rights. Women are deprived of those rights, often as a matter of tradition. In rural areas, women are generally not perceived to have any meaningful income generation capacity and hence they are relegated mainly to household duties and cheap labour. Without the power to work and earn a good income their voices are silenced. The reality of rural life in India is difficult to comprehend. A majority of villages do not have sustainable economies and only through domination of women and caste system of society. In this situation the NGOs and government officials should hold to women education which can give a better life for them. Education is a path of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their customary role and change their life. Historical Development of Women Education The history of Indian women can be divided into three periods i.e. Ancient, Medieval and Modern. The East India Company ruled over India since 1757 to 1947, which is called modern period. During this period institutions were opened to promote the education of men in modernized way but nothing was done to promote women education. In 1858, the British government took upon itself the direct responsibility of the administration but in spite of this, they did not pay any attention towards the education of women of this country. Savitribai Phule ongoing the first girl's school way back in 1847 with just 13 girls. Later, she started an private school for 'untouchable' girls in 1852, braving the stiff opposition from vested interests and others elements, who believed that women should be confined to the

four walls of the house and had no role or right in society. In 1904, Annie Besant established Central Hindu Girls School at Banaras and Prof. Karue recognized SNDT Women's University at Poona for the promotion of women education. After self-government, India's national government introduced some committee's and commissions for the development of women education in India, i.e. Radhakrishnan expenses or University education Commission (1948) Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh committee (1959), Smt. Hansa Mehta Committee (1962), M. Bhaktvatsalam Committee to look into the causes of Public Support particularly in Rural Area for girls Education and to public Corporation, Kothari Commission (1964-64), Resolution on the National policy on education (1968), Report of the Committee on the status of women in India (1974), Challenge of Education (1985), National policy on Education (1986), Programme of Action (1986), and (1992), etc. On the other hand, to develop the primary education and to achieve the aim of universalisation of primary education upto age level 6-14 years, some schemes or programmes like, OBB, DPEP, SSA, NLM, National Programme of Nutritional Support of Primary Education (NPNSPE) or (Mid-Day Meals), RTE Act 2009 and Knowledge Commission etc. were introduced to achieve the national goal i.e. hundred percent literacy. Despite these government efforts to the education, still women are lacking behind than men. Women of India generally remain uneducated as a result of ignorance; women become victims of man dominated society.

### Review of Literature

**Kabeer (1999)** and Rowlands (1998) analyze empowerment from relational and time and scale perspectives, respectively. Kabeer (1999: 436) defines empowerment as "the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability". She conceptualizes empowerment as a process of change from disempowerment to empowerment by expanding people's ability to make first order decisions that result in desired outcomes. The ability to make strategic choices incorporates three interrelated dimensions: agency, resources and achievements. The ability to define one's goals and act upon them determines someone's agency. However, this choice is only possible if alternative options exist, which enables the "emergence of a critical consciousness, the process by which people move from a position of unquestioning acceptance of the social order to a critical perspective on it" (Kabeer, 1999, p. 440 ). The idea of a critical perspective links to Freire (1996) and his writing on the importance of the critical consciousness to

overcome oppression. A pre-condition to exercise choice is the access to and control over material, human and social resources. As a further dimension, the achievements of choice must be understood in terms of well-being outcomes (e.g. nourishment, health, shelter) as this sheds light on the equality of, and not differences in, choices. The interrelation of these three dimensions models the process of how resources translate into the realization of choice as well as its impact. However, Kabeer (1999) does not provide a concrete operationalization of these three dimensions.

**Nazneen et al. (2011)** depict how the term empowerment evolved in Bangladesh from the initially instrumentalized logic of international donors to a more nuanced understanding with multiple discourses on divergent meanings. They have concluded in their review of documents by NGOs, political parties, women's groups and donors in Bangladesh that empowerment is seen mostly as an individual, and not a collective or institutionalized, mechanism, focused on material means, rather than greater structural change. The authors visualized this in a double continuum of empowerment from individual to collective and from economic to political empowerment (Fig. 2). Sultan (2015) has researched women's perception of empowerment in Bangladesh and concluded with the need to "move beyond seeing women as victims or heroines, and engage with their everyday realities... to do more than give individual women economic opportunities... to tackle deeper-rooted structural constraints that perpetuate inequalities."

In an attempt to uncover the meaning of empowerment, as it is used in the discourse and practice of development, Rowlands (1998), and also Charmes and Wieringa (2003), distinguish between different modes of power visibility, linked to the three dimensions of power by Lukes (1974). The "power to" is a generative or productive power, as in the one-dimensional perspective of power (Lukes, 1974), which addresses the exercising of power over the interests of others through force or rebellion. "Power over" refers to being able to control actions and resources to suppress certain conflicts from being discussed. This is related to the second dimension described by Lukes (1974), referring to a power within certain biases. In this scenario, to become empowered means to move from non-participation in decision-making to participation by making previously concealed grievances a subject within the economic and political structures of society. "Power within" refers to enabling personal qualities of self acceptance, self-respect or spiritual strength (Rowlands 1998: 14). "Power with" relates to

collective power that can be greater than individual power.

**Charmes and Wieringa (2003)** also differentiate between the mode of operation of power (oppressive, challenging, creative), and the mode of appearance (in speech acts/texts, institutions and daily practices). Based on the analysis of a women's educational program in Honduras from an empowerment perspective, Rowlands (1998: 23) constructs a model of empowerment in different spaces of women's lives by differentiating between personal and collective power. Rowlands also looks at the power of close relationships, particularly with husbands and immediate family members, as product of empowerment processes. The Women's Empowerment Matrix by Wieringa (1994) also includes the state, regional and global level and looks at the interconnections of each level with physical, sociocultural, religious, political, legal and economic spheres.

**Rowlands (1998)** takes different scales of agency into account and may gain value when linked to Kabeer's (1999) processual perspective (Fig. 1). The scale arrow extends from the individual to the household to the community level, while the time arrow demonstrates the sequence of investigating empowerment. Resources are seen as a pre-condition to agency, and achievements are the well-being outcome. This process can also be seen as cyclic, as well-being outcomes influence resources as well as agency.

### Historical Development of Women Education

The history of Indian women can be divided into three periods i.e. Ancient, Medieval and Modern. The East India Company ruled over India since 1757 to 1947, which is called modern period. During this period institutions were opened to promote the education of men in modernized way but nothing was done to promote women education. In 1858, the British government took upon itself the direct responsibility of the administration but in spite of this, they did not pay any attention towards the education of women of this country. Savitribai Phule started the first girl's school way back in 1847 with just 13 girls. Later, she started an exclusive school for 'untouchable' girls in 1852, braving the stiff opposition from vested interests and casteist elements, who believed that women should be confined to the four walls of the house and had no role or right in society. In 1904, Annie Besant established Central Hindu Girls School at Banaras and Prof. Karue established SNDT Women's University at Poona for the promotion of women education. After independence, India's national government introduced some committee's and

commissions for the development of women education in India, i.e. Radhakrishnan Commission or University education Commission (1948) Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh committee (1959), Smt. Hansa Mehta Committee (1962), M. Bhaktvatsalam Committee to look into the causes of Public Support particularly in Rural Area for girls Education and to public Corporation, Kothari Commission (1964-64), Resolution on the National policy on education (1968), Report of the Committee on the status of women in India (1974), Challenge of Education (1985), National policy on Education (1986), Programme of Action (1986), and (1992), etc. On the other hand, to develop the primary education and to achieve the aim of universalisation of primary education upto age level 6-14 years, some schemes or programmes like, OBB, DPEP, SSA, NLM, National Programme of Nutritional Support of Primary Education (NPNSPE) or (Mid-Day Meals), RTE Act 2009 and Knowledge Commission etc. were introduced to achieve the national goal i.e. hundred percent literacy. Despite these government efforts to the education, still women are lacking behind than men. Women of India generally remain uneducated as a result of ignorance; women become victims of man dominated society. Review of Literature According to Prof. M.K. Ghadoliya empowerment of the women can be done through Self Help Groups. He in his case study found that - in view of low literacy rate of women and the gigantic task of educating rural women a suitable strategy will have to be planned. The major task is to identify the areas where these groups in fact, are facing problems because at this stage only the problem solving adult

learning technique will attract these rural poor to improve their working and income. The success of any strategy of women empowerment depends upon the following factors:

1. Level of education, hard work
  2. Social custom
  3. Family planning, small family
  4. Health, medical services, cleanliness
  5. Environment, tree growing, kitchen gardening
- According to Robert Jensen, television is very helpful in increasing the status of women in India. In his paper "The Power of TV, Cable Televisions and Women Status in India" has found that the introduction of television appears in general to have had large effects on Indian society. This is particularly the case for gender, since this is an area where the lives of rural viewers differ greatly from those depicted on most popular shows. By virtue of the fact that the most popular Indian serials take place in urban settings, women depicted on these shows are typically much more emancipated than rural women.

#### **Present Status of Women in Rural India**

Women are the centers of the any family. It is an established fact that there are three evil in the social status of urban and rural women in India. Illiteracy, Poverty and Illness still provide huge challenges in rural areas and women are among the most vulnerable groups. Due to the circumstances women contribute to the economy and to the combating poverty through both remunerated and unremunerated work at home, in the community and at the workplace.

**Table 1.2**

**Status of Indian Women In Comparison with the Women of other Developing Countries**

India	China	United States	Pakistan	United Kingdom
43.5%	58.5%	82.5%	28%	74.5%

#### **Ministry of human resource development**

The Government of India launched a Centrally Sponsored Scheme "Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education" in 2008-09. According to the scheme, a sum of ` 3,000/- is deposited in the name of the eligible girls as fixed deposit, who are entitled to withdraw it along with interest thereon on reaching 18 years of age and she should have already passed

10th class examination. The scheme covers (i) all girls belonging to SC/ST communities, who pass class VIII and (ii) all girls who pass VIII examination from Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (irrespective of whether they belong to SC/ST) and enroll in class IX in Government, Government-aided and local Body schools.

**Table 1.3****Rate of increase in literacy rate (females)**

S.N	State/India	Rate of increase in literacy rate (females)	
1	Andhra Pradesh	17.71	9.31
2	Chhattisgarh	24.33	8.74
3	Haryana	15.26	11.04
4	Himachal Pradesh	15.16	9.18
5	Karnataka	12.53	11.26
6	Madhya Pradesh	20.94	9.73
7	Maharashtra	14.71	8.45
8	Orissa	15.86	13.81
9	Punjab	12.95	7.98
10	Uttar Pradesh	17.85	17.04
11	Rajasthan	23.41	8.81

**Discussion and Suggestion**

It is challenges to providing higher education to rural Indian women must be put in the context of the demographics and cultural traditions of the country. The Indian Government has made heroic efforts to provide universal literacy and primary education. The literacy rate (ages 5 & up) of India increased to 62% in 1997 from 52.21% in 1991, but the 1997 female literacy rate was just 50% and the rural female literacy rate was just 43%. The adult rates (ages 15 and up) were 54% total, 40.7% for women. The total enrolment in secondary schools in 1997-98 was still only 50% of the eligible population of which 44% were girls in primary school, 40% in middle school and 37.1% in secondary school. So the percentage of students who qualify for higher education is still small, particularly among female students. On the other hand, as of 1997-98 there are 229 universities in the country, 16 central universities and remaining operated by the states. And there are some 9,274 colleges, 7,199 of them colleges for general education and 2,075 colleges for professional education. Together they enroll some 7 million students and employ 331,000 teachers. In addition the Indira Gandhi National Open University provides flexible higher education opportunities to large segments of the population who have no access to the colleges and universities. Established in 1987, it now has 47 programs consisting of 553 courses and 1999, it reached over 172,000 students.

**Generate Community Demand for Girls' Education**

1. Motivation and mobilization of parents and community
2. Enhance the role of woman and mothers in school related activities
3. Ensure people's participation in school committees
4. Strengthen links between the school, teachers and community

Women Education is the need of the today in rural area. 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. 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.

**CONCLUSION**

Men and women complement each other. If men were supposed to handle outside stuff then women were more responsible for internal affairs. The only difference in this notion is, today women are equally competent behind the veils and outside world. They are more confident and one can find them in every possible sphere of human's life. No male bastion is untouched by females and that's a wonderful sign of strides made by women. Education is one composite single variable, which has the capacity to transform many odds turning in favour of girls more specially so in the rural India. Therefore, an exclusive emphasis on girls' education is necessary. Education for adolescent girls is constraint due to many factors.



## REFERENCES

1. Krishna A, Uphoff N, Milton J. Esman, 'Reasons for Hope: Instructive Experiences in Rural Development', Kumarian Press. 1996.
2. McCalla AF, Ayres WS. World Bank Group Rural development: from vision to action. 1997.
3. Coherence of Agricultural and Rural Development Policies. 2006.
4. Diakosavvas D. Oecd Workshop on the Coherence of Agriculture, Coherence of Agricultural And Rural Development Policies: The Development Dimension, 2006.
5. Basu P. Improving Access to Finance for India's Rural Poor (Directions in Development), Word Bank. 2006.
5. Navaratnam, Kathiravelu K. Role of Education in Rural Development: A Key Factor for Developing
6. Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30, 435-464.
7. Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with patriarchy. *Gender and Society*, 2(3), 274-290.
8. Nazneen, S., Hossain, N., & Sultan, M. (2011). National Discourses on Women's Empowerment in Bangladesh: Continuities and Change. *IDS Working Papers*, 2011(368), 1-41
9. Rowlands, J. (1998). A word of the times, but what does it mean? Empowerment in the discourse and practice of development. In H. Afshar (Ed.), *Women and empowerment: illustrations from the third world* (pp. 11- 34). London: Macmillan.
10. Charmes, J., & Wieringa, S. (2003). Measuring Women's Empowerment: An assessment of the Gender-related Development Index and the Gender Empowerment Measure. *Journal of Human Development*, 4(3), 419-435.
- Rupali Sharma, Zia Afroz (2014), Women Empowerment Through Higher Education. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS)*, India.

This research paper helps in understanding that there is a great need of empowering Indian women through higher education, providing higher education doesn't mean providing women literacy but also making them educated to know their rights and duties.

2) Dr Suchi Loomba (2010), Role of Microfinance in Women Empowerment in India.

Microfinance plays a vital role in empowering women financially in India thereby maintaining long- term economic growth.

3) Tiya Biswas (2002), Women Empowerment Through Micro Finance: A Boon for Development.

Micro finance is an answer to the question where both empowerment and sustainability aims may be accommodated. Microfinance solves the problem of inadequate housing and urban services as the main part of poverty alleviation programmes.

Censuses Since 1991

The literacy rate taking into account the total population in the denominator has now been termed as crude literacy rate while the literacy rate calculated taking in to account the seven and above population in the denominator is called the effective literacy rate. The formula for computing crude literacy rate and effective literacy rate are as follows.

•Crude literacy rate=Number of literate person \*1000/  
Total population

•Effective literacy rate=Number of literate persons aged 7 and above\*1000/population aged 7 and Above

Table 1: Crude Literacy Rate in Index by Sex: 1901-2011

This literacy rate in India for women is very low as compared to the literacy rate of men which is the main factor for the powerlessness of women.

Table 2: Literacy rate in India: 1951 to 2011

Source: Registrar of Census, provisional population table

It is obvious from the above gathered data that as the female literacy ratio increased from 1951 to 2011 we saw a corresponding increment in women empowerment because of the emergence and acceptance of women in the field of arts, science, space, sports, culture and politics and have held high offices such as President of India, speaker of Lok Sabha, leader of the opposition, C.E.O.'s of MNC's for example:-Pratibha Patil, Kalpana Chawla, Sonia Gandhi, Indra Nooyi, Chanda Kochhar, P.T. Usha, Saina Nehwal, Jaya Bachchan etc.

#### Literature Review

Rupali Sharma, Zia Afroz (2014), Women Empowerment Through Higher Education. International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies  
This research paper helps in understanding that there is a great need of empowering Indian women through higher education doesn't mean providing women literacy but also making them educated to know their rights and duties.

Dr Suchi Loomba (2010), Role of Microfinance in Women Empowerment in India.

Microfinance plays a vital role in empowering women financially in India thereby maintaining long-term

Tiyas Biswas (2002), Women Empowerment Through Micro Finance: A Boon for Development.

Micro finance is an answer to the question where both empowerment and sustainability aims may be accommodated. Microfinance solves the problem of inadequate housing and urban services

Rupali Sharma, Zia Afroz (2014), Women

Empowerment Through Higher Education. International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS), India.

This research paper helps in understanding that there is a great need of empowering Indian women through higher education, providing higher education doesn't mean providing women literacy but also making them educated to know their rights and duties.

2) Dr Suchi Loomba (2010), Role of Microfinance in Women Empowerment in India.

Microfinance plays a vital role in empowering women financially in India thereby maintaining long-term economic growth.

3) Tiyas Biswas (2002), Women Empowerment Through Micro Finance: A Boon for Development.

Micro finance is an answer to the question where both empowerment and sustainability aims may be accommodated. Microfinance solves the problem of inadequate housing and urban services as the main part of poverty alleviation programmes.

Rupali Sharma, Zia Afroz (2014), Women

Empowerment Through Higher Education. International Journal of Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies (IJIMS), India.

This research paper helps in understanding that there is a

great need of empowering Indian women through higher education, providing higher education doesn't mean providing women literacy but also making them educated to know their rights and duties.

2) Dr Suchi Loomba (2010), Role of Microfinance in Women Empowerment in India.

Microfinance plays a vital role in empowering women financially in India thereby maintaining long-term economic growth.

3) Tiyas Biswas (2002), Women Empowerment Through Micro Finance: A Boon for Development.

Micro finance is an answer to the question where both empowerment and sustainability aims may be accommodated. Microfinance solves the problem of inadequate housing and urban services as the main part of poverty alleviation programmes.