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## EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR: A REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

*Education is one of the most valuable means in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women. Educated women not only raise their own socio-economic status, but they play an important role in increasing their children's intellectual horoscope, to enhance the social-economic status of their family and to enhance the status of their family. According to research by Chaaban and Cunningham, an educated female is a great benefit not just to herself, but to her community. Educating women has flowing benefits as it enables them to foster a value system which is beneficial in raising their status in society and even more importantly, as an agent for developing modern attitudes, values and rational outlook. 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 Jammu and Kashmir too, female literacy rate is quite low and there is a large gap in the male and female literacy levels in this border state. In the National Educational Scenario, J&K State is subsumed as educationally backward in reference to the established indices namely literacy rate, teacher pupil ratio, dropout rate and the absorption pattern of the educated persons. The disquieting features are low literacy rate, higher drop-out rate gender disparity, mismatch between education and employment As the 2011 census figure clearly shows that women have a literacy rate of 58.01 percent, which is 78.26 percent compared to male literacy. Due to this, the present paper will try to examine and interpret the Educational Status of Women in Jammu and Kashmir.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Women's Education, Problems, Empowerment, J&K*

### INTRODUCTION:

Education is essential to functioning and advancing in the modern world. It is also fundamental to self-awareness, self-identity, and self-development. Without it, mankind is reduced to instinct and the realm of animals. With it, males and females can improve their lives and learn about one another and the world. Jammu &

Kashmir State is one of the States of Indian Union. It is also well known as paradise on the earth. The UT of India with population more than one crore as per Census 2011, J&K comes in the way of rising satisfactory infrastructure and is further compounded by armed conflict and Militancy, which have taken a heavy toll of life and public property besides throwing normal life out of gear. Education system could not run away from this calamity as most of the schools and colleges in urban and rural areas were destroyed and loss of schooling hours enormously affected the learning outcomes. In the National Educational Scenario, J&K is considered as educationally backward state in reference to the established Indices like literacy rate, drop-out rate, teacher pupil ratio and the absorption pattern of the educated persons. The troubling features are low literacy rate, very high dropout rate, mismatch between employment and education. Education is one of the most precious means in achieving gender equity and empowerment of women. The literacy ranking of Jammu and Kashmir is 30 as per census report 2011. Lack of education among women hinders their ability to bring about economic development and social transformation of the community and of the nation as a whole.

Education of women is the most effective channel for reducing the inequalities between men and women and ensuring the maximum participation of women in the developmental process. Dr. Karve, a pioneer for the cause of women education, once said, "If you educate a man, you educate an individual, if you educate a woman, you educate the whole family". According to the University Education Commission (1949), "There cannot be an educated man without an educated woman. If education is to be limited to men or to women, that chance should be given to women, for then it would more surely be passed on to the next generations. It is perceived that women were ignored in the past during the process of development. Thus there is need for bringing improvement in the women's education which will consequently help in bringing them in the mainstream of society. At the international level, attempts have been made at various congregations to focus on aspects of education as a part of fundamental human right. According to the Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) "everyone has the right to education. The 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act 2002 made education in India a Fundamental Right for children in the age group of 6-14 years by providing that "the State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 6-14 years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine".

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE:**

Our literature review focuses on the work on gender inequity and biases in education. The main issue that our Research focuses is understanding and exploration of educational status of women in Jammu and Kashmir despite the intervention schemes for promoting gender equity in education. The matter of universal elementary Education has been debated time and again in the last six decades. In 2000 it became the center of concern once More among policy makers, practitioners, administrators, and the academia circle after the declaration of the Millennium Development Goals (Mishra, 2005). The decade since then has witnessed a considerable increase in the significance accorded to education, especially the education of women, at international, regional as well as National levels, with arguments being made for increasing financial investment and policy focus on education Provision (Herz, 2006). Investment in education is regarded as the main way through which nations and their citizens can move towards long-term development goals and improve both social and economic standards of Living. Education of the girls and thus the future of women are seen as key to securing intergenerational transfers of knowledge, and hence providing long-term gender equity, enhanced per capita income and social change (DFID, 2005). Global discourses on education highlight the instrumental value of education as central to this

debate for securing investments in female education (Subrahmanian, 2002). However, along with the Instrumentalist rationale, the intrinsic value of education for girls and women is also discussed (Sen, 2000). The latter regard the return of education, for individuals as equally important as the social rate of return.

(Sen., 2000) Through his capability approach, suggests that both boys and girls should have access to „adequate“ education to enable them to develop their capacities for informed and rational choices and to have increased agency. This, Sen (2000) argues, will help individuals to lead the lives they value. Thus girls“ participation in education is considered a first step towards achieving equality

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:**

- ‡ To understand and explore the women level of participation in education in Jammu and Kashmir.
- ‡ To explore barriers and constraints to women education in Jammu and Kashmir.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

Keeping in view the importance of women’s education the study intends to study the Educational Status of Women in Jammu and Kashmir and to study the steps taken by the government towards improvement of women’s Education. The entire data used for present study has been obtained from secondary source, collected from census of India 2001 and 2011, Websites, Research articles and books as well. The Jammu and Kashmir UT has been purposively selected for the current study as literacy rate in Jammu and Kashmir has seen an upward trend in recent years to be 77.30%, female literacy rate is just 68% which is also lower than all-India level of 70.30%.

### **GIRLS LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR:**

The Article 46 of the Indian Constitution enshrined the provisions for a wide-ranging and specific welfare of the weaker sections of society, the disadvantaged and the underprivileged of India’s population. The Article states, “The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, and shall protect them from social Injustice and all forms of exploitation”. The gender concern runs through this. girls form an underprivileged or deprived section due to the cultural prejudice Involved in them. A girl becomes multiple disadvantaged when the gender gets compounded with the other disadvantages like poverty, Scheduled tribes and scheduled caste, minorities, or disability (Singh 2012). Among girls, those belonging to Scheduled tribes or Scheduled castes or of Muslim community become highly disadvantaged. Girls with Disabilities also spin into a highly vulnerable group. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) identifies the disadvantaged Girls and attempt to provide special provisions and incentives to promote their basic education. Because of SSA, there has been an astonishing growth in the enrollment of girls and decrease in gender disparity in enrollment and dropouts between girls and boys, still girls“ enrollment, transition and completion vary across regions and social groups. Girls are underprivileged because they are not been able to take the full benefit of the available opportunities and amenities due to several economic factors and social-cultural. There is a general indifference to education of girls mostly due to gender discrimination (Sen., 2007). There is the high occurrence of child labor among Girls belonging to the weaker section of the society. As we know that there is also some social confrontation arising out of misconceptions and fears that education might estrange girls from tradition and social values. Society too dispenses stereotyped roles

for girls like doing household chores, domestic work and looking after Siblings. Some of the school related barriers also prevent girls to attend school. These comprise: inflexible and Unsuitable timings of the school; inadequate provisions of female teachers in schools; lack of adequate toilet and sanitary facilities in schools; non-involvement of the community (Ahmad Gul and Khan, 2013); irrelevant Curriculum and teaching methods; lack of gender sensitivity of teacher in recognizing girl's educational needs.

### **INITIATIVES TAKEN TO IMPROVE GENDER EQUITY IN EDUCATION:**

Education of girls and gender equity has been a soaring priority with the Government and local bodies.

The National commitment to provide free and compulsory basic education to all children in the (6- 14) years is now a Fundamental Right of every child in India after the passing of the Constitution (86<sup>th</sup> Amendment) Act in December, 2002. Reaching out to the girl child is cherished to the efforts to universalize elementary education. SSA or „Education for the All“ program recognizes that ensuring girls“ education needs changes not only in the system of education but also in societal attitudes and norms. A two-sided gender measures has therefore been taken on, to make the system of education receptive to the requirements of the girls through targeted interventions which serve as a pull factor to enhance enrolment, access and retention of girls in schools and on the other side, to generate a community demand for girls“ education through training and mobilization.

The targeted provision for girls and for promoting gender equity in education under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan includes:

1. To provide free textbooks to all girls up to class VIII
2. Separate toilets for girls
3. Back to school camps for out-of-school girls
4. Bridge courses for older girls
5. Recruitment of 50% women teachers
6. Early childhood care and Education centers in/near schools/convergence with ICDS program etc.
7. Teachers“ sensitization programs to promote equitable learning opportunities
8. Gender-sensitive teaching-learning materials including textbooks Intensive community mobilization efforts
9. Innovation fund“ per district for need based interventions for ensuring girls“ attendance and retention.
10. In addition, to target pockets where girl's education is lagging behind to boys, the Government of India has launched focused interventions for girls as under;

National Program for Education of Girls for Elementary Level (NPEGEL), started in Sept. 2003, is an essential but distinct component of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. It offers additional provisions for enhancing the education of disadvantaged/underprivileged girls at the elementary level through more intense community mobilization, the development of model schools in clusters, gender sensitization of teachers, early development of gender sensitive learning materials, child care and education facilities and provision of need-based initiatives like escorts, stationery, work books and uniforms etc. for girls. All Educationally Backward Blocks have been included under NPEGEL.

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) is a scheme started in July 2004, for setting up residential schools at upper primary stage for girls belonging predominantly to the ST, SC, OBC and other minority communities. The program is being implemented in educationally backward blocks of the country where the female rural literacy is below the national average and gender gap in literacy is above the national average. The scheme provides for a minimum reservation of 75% of the seats for girls belonging to ST, SC, OBC or minority communities and priority for the remaining 25%, is accorded to girls from families below the poverty line. Kishori Shakti Yojana (KSY) aims at addressing the requirements of self development, nutrition and health status, literacy, numerical skills and vocational skills of adolescent girls in the age group of 11-18 years. It looks for to empower adolescent girls, so as to enable them to take charge of their lives. It is observed as a holistic initiative for the development of adolescent girls. The program through its initiatives aims at bringing about a difference in the lives of the adolescent girls. It seeks to provide them with an opportunity to realize their full potential.

Pre-matric scholarship by the State Government is provided to girls to improve their level of literacy and to decrease the burden on the parents to sustain education.

To reduce gender bias in education access and to promote women empowerment nine women it is and twelve Women Wings in the existing it is had been established under the Prime Ministers' Reconstruction Program (PMRP).

Instead of the above interventions and initiatives the state ranked 32 numbers in female literacy rate as per census 2011. The table 2 below shows the ranking of states as per female literacy:

**Table 1: Ranking of States and Union territories by female literacy rate: 2011**

Ranking	Females		Literacy Rate
	India/ Territory	State/Union	
1	Kerala		91.98
2	Mizoram		89.40
3	Lakshadweep		88.25
4	Tripura		83.15
5	Goa		81.84
6	Andaman And Islands	Nicobar	81.84
7	Chandigarh		81.38
8	Puducherry		81.22
9	NCT Of Delhi		80.93
10	Daman And Diu		79.59

11	Nagaland	76.69
12	Himachal Pradesh	76.60
13	Sikkim	76.43
14	Maharashtra	75.48
15	Tamil Nadu	73.86
16	Meghalaya	73.78
17	Manipur	73.17
18	Punjab	71.34
19	West Bengal	71.16
20	Gujarat	70.73
21	Uttarakhand	70.70
22	Karnataka	68.13
23	Assam	67.27
24	Haryana	66.77
25	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	65.93
26	Orissa	64.36
27	Chhattisgarh	60.59
28	Madhya Pradesh	60.02
29	Andra Pradesh	59.74
30	Arunachal Pradesh	59.57
31	Utter Pradesh	59.26
32	Jammu and Kashmir	58.01
33	Jharkhand	56.21
34	Bihar	53.33
35	Rajasthan	52.66

Source: Census of India 2011



## COMPARISON OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR LITERACY RATE WITH ALL INDIA LITERACY RATE:

Though, the level of literacy in the state is well short of the literacy level recorded at the national level, yet figures let slip that the rate of increase in the literacy in the state is more rapidly than at the national level. During 1961-2011, while the literacy rate in the State increased by 56 points, it recorded an increase of 46 points at the national level. Category-wise also, the rate of increase in the literacy of females is better in the State than the country.

**Table 2:**

Census year	J&K			All India			Increase in literacy %age over the preceding census	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	J&K	All India
<b>1961</b>	19.75	5.05	12.95	40.39	15.33	28.30		
<b>1971</b>	31.01	10.94	21.71	45.95	21.97	34.45	8.76	6.15
<b>1981</b>	41.46	18.73	30.64	56.38	29.76	43.57	8.93	9.12
<b>2001</b>	66.60	43.00	55.50	75.26	53.67	64.84	24.86	21.27
<b>2011</b>	78.26	58.01	68.74	82.14	65.46	74.04	13.24	9.20

Source: Census of India 2011

In spite of the number of restraining factors, the State has been able to make a significant progress in the field of education as is clear from the above figures. Even though, the outcomes of investment in education are no doubt quite visible, yet the State is committed to achieve universalization of education. A number of steps in this way have been taken like easy access of schooling by way of opening and up gradation of Schools, development of infrastructure facilities, provision of education manpower, establishment of Seasonal Camps at various Behaks, nutritional support for the children up to elementary level, Scholarships, free text Books etc.

### MALE-FEMALE LITERACY:

A glimpse at the table 3 below shows that there is male-female gap in literacy rate in the state. According to census 2011, the literacy level climbed up from 12.95 per cent in 1961 to 68.74 per cent in 2011 but it still lags far behind the national average of 74.04 per cent (census, 2011). Further analysis of the data shows that the male literacy rate is higher than the female literacy rate in all the years. The male literacy rate reached 78.26 per cent in 2011 which was only 19.75 per cent in 1961 whereas the female literacy rate increased from 5.05 per cent in 1961 to 58.01 per cent in 2011. The male-female gap in literacy rate has increased from 14.7 per cent in 1961 to 20.25 per cent in 2011. In the delineation of the above figures, it can be argued that though there is a considerable progress in the female literacy rate but the gender disparity in literacy rate still exists in the state.

### BARRIERS TO GIRLS' EDUCATION:

Factors responsible for the barriers to girls' education in Jammu and Kashmir can be categorized according to how one perceives and defines barriers. Barriers take different forms – e.g., Barriers to access, barriers to quality services and barriers to relevant curricula and/or pedagogy. There are many religious, socio-cultural, economic

and educational barriers in Jammu and Kashmir, which hinder their participation in education. Some of these barriers are discussed below:

- † **Poverty:** The rate of illiteracy is closely linked to poverty. Due to the poverty or low family income, if parents are not in a position to send both boys and girls to school, they usually send boys to schools and retain girls at home to do house-hold work (Virender, 2012).
- † **Parental Illiteracy:** The high level of parental illiteracy among also constraints the education of girl children. Lack of parental support and poor learning environment at home makes learning for them very difficult. The present education system does not fit their needs, which lead to stagnation and wastage among them (J & K SRC Report 2009).
- † **Number of children:** In poor families generally, there are many children. According to the priority list of parents, girls' education is not compulsory and boys get a high chance of receiving education (Bose, 2000).
- † **Child Marriage:** Many girls in many districts of J&K still get married at an early age, which affect their education to a great extent (Dabla, 2007).
- † **Customs and cultural practices:** Many customs and cultural practices hinder the higher education of girls. For examples many parents do not send their daughters to schools when they attain puberty. Purdan system is also affecting education of girls (Dabla, 2007).
- † **Nature of Habitat:** Most of the tribes live in difficult terrain, forests and remote areas. The dearth of schools in these areas leads to absenteeism among the tribal girl children. Study of Virender Koundal, shows that tribal girl children walk 3-4 km on foot to reach school every day (Virender, 2012).
- † **Female teachers in schools:** Girls are more interested in going to schools if female teachers are there in the schools. They are more comfortable and more vocal with female, thus actively focusing and participating in the learning processes. In rural areas also, parents are interested in sending their girl children to school if female teachers are present. If qualified female teachers are teaching in the school, they feel more secured towards their girl children. They may be hesitating to send their girl children in male environment-based school (Ahmad Gul and Khan, 2013).
- † **Transport facility:** One of the barriers for girl education may be the location of schools which are far away from their homes, particularly in rural areas. Adequate transport system is needed for girl to attend the schools. It will be more convenient for them if school buses take responsibility for pick and drop facility for the girl children. In rural areas, other modes may be tried out.
- † **Molestation/abuse in school:** Most of the parents feel in secured towards their girl children as instances of abduction, rape, sexual harassment and molestation of girl dampens the enthusiasm of parents and girl students in pursuing their education beyond a certain age.
- † **Inappropriate school timing:** In rural areas morning time is not suitable for girl education, as they are engaged in domestic work at home or in farms and field during these hours. The enrollment and retention rate may be high when educational facilities are made available during periods suitable to them when they are free from domestic chores (Bose, 2000).



- † **Toilet facility:** This may be one of the reasons of lower participation rates of girls in education especially at upper primary level. The separate toilet facilities for girls must be created in the school premises. This must also cover the security aspect for girl. At the same time, toilet facility is needed for female teachers also (Ahmad Gul and Khan, 2013).
- † **Lack of girls' schools:** Many parents do not want to send their daughters to coeducational schools especially at upper primary level. There is an urgent need to open separate schools for girls especially at upper primary level as a powerful strategy for bringing to a conclusive girl's school environment. There must be strong provision of good quality schools for girls if demand is there (Ahmad Gul and Khan, 2013).
- † **Lack of hostel facilities:** One of the obstacles in girls' education is that schools are away from their homes, they cannot avail themselves of this facility due to lack of hostel arrangement. The girls belonging to SC/ST category would continue their education particularly in rural areas, if they are provided with free or inexpensive residential facilities nearer to the school.

### CONCLUSION:

Education is a key indicator of socioeconomic development. It also increases the knowledge and vision of a person. Equally, it is considered as an essential element in bringing change in social, political, economic fields in a society. Emancipation and upliftment of people can be achieved only through education. Indeed, the country's progress and development largely depend upon the educational attainment of its people. Despite considerable progress, sharp disparities continue to exist between male and female literacy levels. There is an urgent need to bridge the gender gap in education in the state because no society and civilization can move forward without the education of its half population as well said by Swami Vivekanand, "There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved".

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that the position of education among the women of Jammu and Kashmir reflects pathetic scenes. Their level of education is very low. Women of Jammu and Kashmir are educationally backward when compared to women at national level. It is a matter of serious concern and problem for the entire country as it affects every individual of the society. The constitution of India promises every support and assistance in mainstreaming the disadvantaged sections of the society and to eliminate histories of discrimination. However, in reality, given the opportunities were not exploited fully. Gender disparity exists both in rural and urban areas, but it is higher in the rural areas. This can be endorsed to a number of factors like Social dogmas, engagement of girl child in domestic activities and other agricultural activities etc. To conclude, education is an important avenue for improving the social and economic condition of the women of Jammu and Kashmir. Hence, there is a need for quick checks and proper supervision of implementation of the education policies in the State.

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