

---

## Trends of Gender Parity and Women Education in India

Sanjib Kumar Roy

Assistant Professor ,A.C. Training College, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, India

---

**Abstract:** *Women in India constitute 50% of the human resources and their contribution are the vital for the nation's progress. Women's development is regarded as an important approach to raise the level of productivity and to break the vicious circle of poverty, for which better health and education are important. These factors not only improve the physical wellbeing of an individual's directly, but also enhance their productivity and ability to contribute to the 'National income. The constitution of India guarantees the right to equality to all Indian women without discrimination. In spite of certain outstanding examples of individual achievements, and a definite improvement in their general condition over the years, it remains true that Indian women still constitute a large body of under - privileged citizens. Women of course do not form a homogenous group in class or caste terms. Nevertheless, they face distinctive problems that call for special attention. And for the reason the aims of the present study is to discuss the present status and conditions of women education in India with special reference to their literacy rate, enrolment ratio, etc. Educational equality is another area of discussion in which women's equality has shown a major improvement as a result of adult literacy programs and higher participation of women in literacy campaigns. Simultaneously in this paper it will be highlighted the progress towards gender parity and equality in elementary and secondary education.*

**Keywords:** *Women education, literacy rate, educational equality, gender parity.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Indian Education Commission (1964 – 1966) observed that “for full development of human resources, the improvement of human beings and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of infancy the education of women is of greater importance than that of man.” Women in India constitute 50% of the human resources and their contribution are the vital for the nation's progress. Women's development is regarded as an important approach to raise the level of productivity and to break the vicious circle of poverty, for which better health and education are important. These factors not only improve the physical well-being of an individual's directly, but also enhance their productivity and ability to contribute to the 'National income.' In any society education is a reasonably good indicator of development. Spread and diffusion of literacy is generally associated with essential traits of today's civilization such as modernisation, urbanisation, industrialisation, communication and commerce. Moreover, the 'Human Right' concept also tells that each human being has right to live with human dignity.

### 2. METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY

This study is purely qualitative in nature and documentary analysis method applied by the researcher. So that we shall purposefully selected the related policy documents made by the governments and other apex bodies as primary sources. We shall try to critically highlight the major issues regarding the theme as enlightened in that policy documents. The data for the present study have been gleaned from the various sources which have been duly acknowledged. Information regarding literacy rate, gender gap, male and female ratio in education are obtained from Census Report of India- 2011, The Report on Selected Educational Statistics, Published by MHRD, Govt. Of India, 2014, and also from the 'EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013 - 2014' published by UNESCO.

### 3. WOMEN EDUCATION AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Women's education got a fillip after the country got independence in 1947 and the government has taken various measures to provide education to all Indian women. As a result women's literacy rate has grown over the three decades and the growth of female literacy has in fact been higher than that of male literacy rate. While in 1971 only 22% of Indian women were literate, by the end of 2001, 54.16% female were literate. The growth of female literacy rate is 14.87% as compared to 11.72 % of that of male literacy rate. The constitution of India guarantees the right to

equality to all Indian women without discrimination. The literacy rate before independence was 2.6% rose in 1961 to 15.3% and 50% by the year 2001. And now, according to the 2011 Census, the male literacy rate is 82.14% while female literacy rate is 65.46%.

#### **4. BARRIERS AND PROBLEMS AGAINST WOMEN EDUCATION**

In spite of certain outstanding examples of individual achievements, and a definite improvement in their general condition over the years, it remains true that Indian women still constitute a large body of under - privileged citizens. Women of course do not form a homogenous group in class or caste terms. Nevertheless, they face distinctive problems that call for special attention. The Backward Classes Commission set up by the Government of India in 1953 classified women of India as a backward group requiring special attention. The plight of women, in terms of education is further compounded by the negative attitude of parents toward female education. Some parents are usually reluctant to send their girl child for formal education especially to higher levels like their male counterpart. Another problem closely related to this is the reluctance to acquire western education and misunderstanding on the part of the girls themselves about the values of the acquisition of formal education. Other problems against women education include the familiar problems like lack of funds, inadequate facilities, inadequate manpower, sexual harassment, conflicting societal role expectations, government policies and lack of political will power to implement the entire educational programme.

#### **5. PRESENT POSITION OF WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA**

In spite of the forceful intervention by a bastion of female privilege, feminist critics, constitutional guarantees, protecting laws and sincere efforts by the state governments and central government through various schemes and programmes over the last 62 years and above all, the United Nation's enormous pressure with regard to the uplift of the plight of women in terms education is still in the state of an enigma in India for several reasons. The 2011 Census report indicates that literacy among women as only 65.46 percent it is virtually disheartening to observe that the literacy rate of women India is even much lower to national average i.e. 74.04. The growth of women's education in rural areas is very slow. This obviously means that still large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, the weak, backward and exploited. Moreover education is also not available to all equally. Gender inequality is reinforced in education which is proved by the fact that the literacy rate for the women is only 65.46% against 82.14% of men as per 2011 Census.

**Table I :** Literacy Rate in India , Source: Census of India (2011)

Year	Persons	Males	Females
1901	5.3	9.8	0.7
1911	5.9	10.6	1.1
1921	7.2	12.2	1.8
1931	9.5	15.6	2.9
1941	16.1	24.9	7.3
1951	16.7	24.9	7.3
1961	24.0	34.4	13.0
1971	29.5	39.5	18.7
1981	36.2	46.9	24.8
1991	52.1	63.9	39.2
2001	65.38	76.0	54.0
2011	74.04	82.14	65.46

According to the Table I, the pre-Independence time literacy rate for women had a very poor figure in comparison to literacy rate of men. This is witnessed from the fact that literacy rate of women has risen from 0.7 % to 7.3 % where as the literacy rate of men has risen from 9.8 % to 24.9 % during these four decades. During the post-independence period literacy rates have shown a substantial increase in general. However the literacy rate of male has almost tripled over the period e.g. 25% in 1951 and 76 % in 2001. Surprisingly the female literacy rate has increased at a faster pace than the male literacy during the decade 1981 -2001. The growth is almost 6 times e.g. 7.9 % in 1951 and 54 % in 2001.

From this analysis one can infer that still the female literacy rate (only half of the female population are literates) is wadding behind male literacy rate (three fourth of the male population are literates).The rate of school drop outs is also found to be comparatively higher in case of women. This higher rate of illiteracy of women is undoubtedly attributing for women dependence on men and to play a subordinate role. The lack of education is the root cause for women’s exploitation and negligence. Only literacy can help women to understand the India’s constitutional and legislative provisions that are made to strengthen them. Thus promoting education among women is of great important in empowering them to accomplish their goals at par with men in different spheres of life.

## 6. EDUCATIONAL EQUALITY

Another area in which women’s equality has shown a major improvement as a result of adult literacy programs is the area of enrolment of boys and girls in schools. As a result of higher participation of women in literacy campaigns, the gender gap in literacy levels is gradually getting reduced. Even more significant is the fact that disparity in enrolment of boys and girls in neo-literate households is much lowered compared to the non- literate householders.

**Table II : State-Wise % of Female Literacy in the Country As Per 2011 Census**

Sl. No.	Name of the State	Female Literacy
1	Andhra Pradesh	59.7%
2	Arunachal Pradesh	59.6%
3	Assam	67.3
4	Bihar	53.3
5	Chattisgarh	60.6
6	Delhi	80.9
7	Goa	81.8
8	Gujarat	70.7
9	Haryana	66.8
10	Himachal Pradesh	76.6
11	Jammu and Kashmir	58.0
12	Jharkhand	56.2
13	Karnataka	68.1
14	Kerala	92.0
15	Madhya Pradesh	60.0
16	Maharashtra	75.5
17	Manipur	73.2
18	Meghalaya	73.8
19	Mizoram	89.4
20	Nagaland	76.7
21	Orissa	64.4
22	Punjab	71.3
23	Rajasthan	52.7
24	Sikkim	76.4
25	Tamil Nadu	73.9
26	Tripura	83.1
27	Uttar Pradesh	59.3
28	Uttarakhand	70.7
29	West Bengal	71.2
<b>Union Territories</b>		
1	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	81.8
2	Chandigarh	81.4

3	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	65.9
4	Daman & Diu	79.6
5	Lakshadweep	88.2
6	Pondicherry	81.2
	<b>All India</b>	<b>65.46</b>

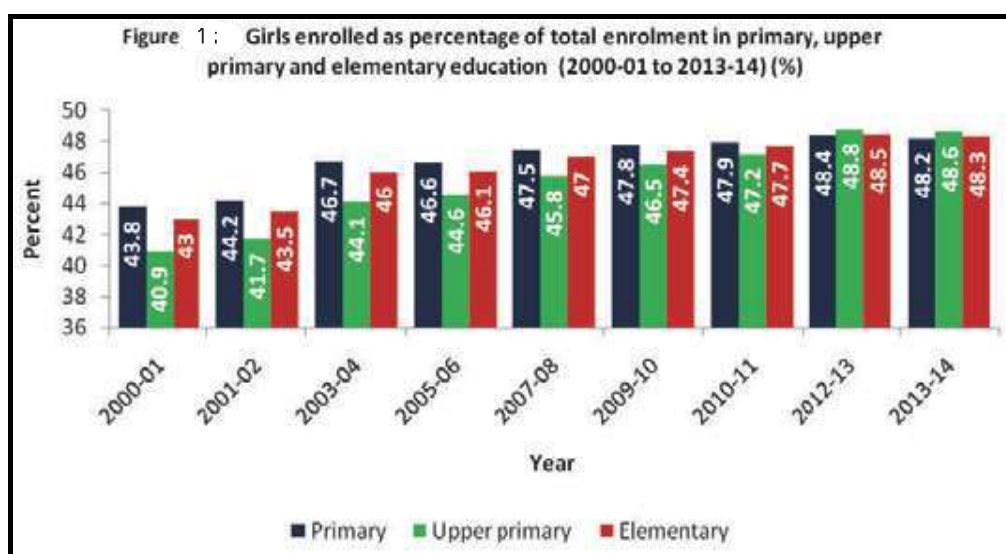
According to the Table II, the state wise female literacy rate had an average of 65.46% in all India basis in 2011 census the high literacy rate is 92.0% in Kerala and least literacy rate is 52.7% in Rajasthan in 2011 census while comparing literacy rate of female 11% increased in 2011 census is increased from 54.16% to 65.46%. Women’s are growing well in the last 10 years. Government of India has been taken various steps and plans especially for women in every movement.

**7. PROGRESS TOWARDS GENDER PARITY AND EQUALITY IN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION (ALL CATEGORIES OF STUDENTS)**

Between 2000-01 and 2013-14, substantial progress has been made towards gender parity in elementary and secondary education. Progress in regard to some of the key indicators of gender parity is indicated in the following sections:

***Girls enrolled as percentage of total enrolment in primary, upper primary and elementary education***

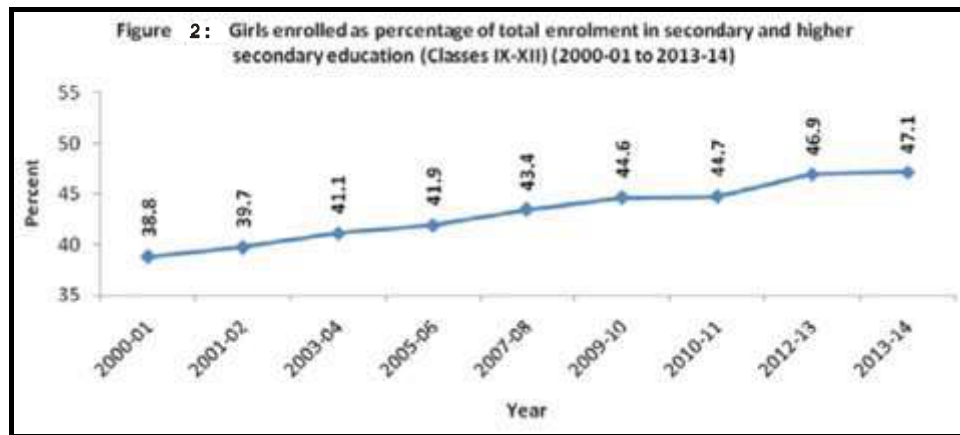
Between 2000-01 and 2013-14, the enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment registered substantial improvement at all levels of school education. The enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment in primary education (Classes I-V) increased from 43.8 % in 2000-01 to 48.4 % in 2012-13 and then marginally declined to 48.2 % in 2013-14. The overall increase in the enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment in primary education was 4.4% during the period 2000-01 to 2013-14. The improvement has been more pronounced at the upper primary stage. The enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment in upper primary education (Classes VI-VIII) increased from 40.9 % in 2000-01 to 48.8 % in 2012-13 and then marginally declined to 48.6 % in 2013-14. The overall increase in the enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment in upper primary education was 7.7 percentage points during the period 2000-01 to 2013-14. The enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment in elementary education (Classes VI-VIII) increased from 43 per cent in 2000-01 to 48.5 % in 2012-13 and then declined to 48.3% in 2013-14. The overall increase in the enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment in elementary education was 5.3 percentage points during the period 2000-01 to 2013-14.



***Girls enrolled as percentage of total enrolment in secondary and higher secondary education:***

The enrolment of girls as percentage of total enrolment in secondary and higher secondary education (Classes IX-XII) registered substantial improvement during the past few years. Between 2000-01 and 2013-14, the enrolment of

girls as percentage of total enrolment in Classes IX-XII (secondary and higher secondary education) increased by 8.3 percentage points from 38.8% in 2000 – 01 to 47.1% in 2013-14).



**8. IMPROVEMENT IN RATIO OF GIRLS’ ENROLMENT TO BOYS’ ENROLMENT IN PRIMARY, UPPER PRIMARY AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION**

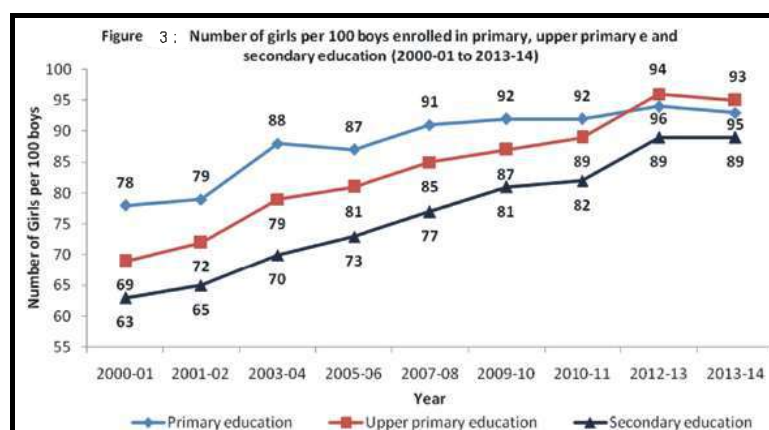
Between 2000-01 and 2013-14, the ratio of girls’ enrolment to boys’ enrolment registered substantial improvement at all levels of school education . The ratio of girls’ enrolment to boys’ enrolment increased from 0.78 to 0.93 in primary education, from 0.69 to 0.95 in upper primary education, and from 0.75 to 0.94 in elementary education. During the period 2000-01 to 2013-14, the number of girls per 100 boys enrolled in primary education increased from 78 to 93, while the number of girls per 100 boys enrolled in upper primary education increased from 69 to 95 (Table 2.5.1 & Figure 2.5.3). During the year 2013-14, there was only a marginal difference in the ratio of girls’ enrolment to boys’ enrolment in primary education (0.93), upper primary education (0.95) and elementary education (0.94).

**9. IMPROVEMENT IN RATIO OF GIRLS’ ENROLMENT TO BOYS’ ENROLMENT IN SECONDARY AND HIGHER SECONDARY EDUCATION**

Between 2000-01 and 2013-14, there has been considerable improvement in the ratio of girls’ enrolment to boys’ enrolment in secondary and higher secondary education .The number of girls per 100 boys enrolled in secondary education increased from 63 to 89 during this period. The ratio of girls’ enrolment to boys’ enrolment in higher secondary education also improved from 0.63 to 0.89 during the period 2000-01 to 2013-14 .

**10. GENDER PARITY INDEX FOR GER IN PRIMARY, UPPER PRIMARY, ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION**

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) for GER in primary/upper primary, elementary and secondary education has been improving steadily since 2000-01 ( Figure 3 and 4 ).

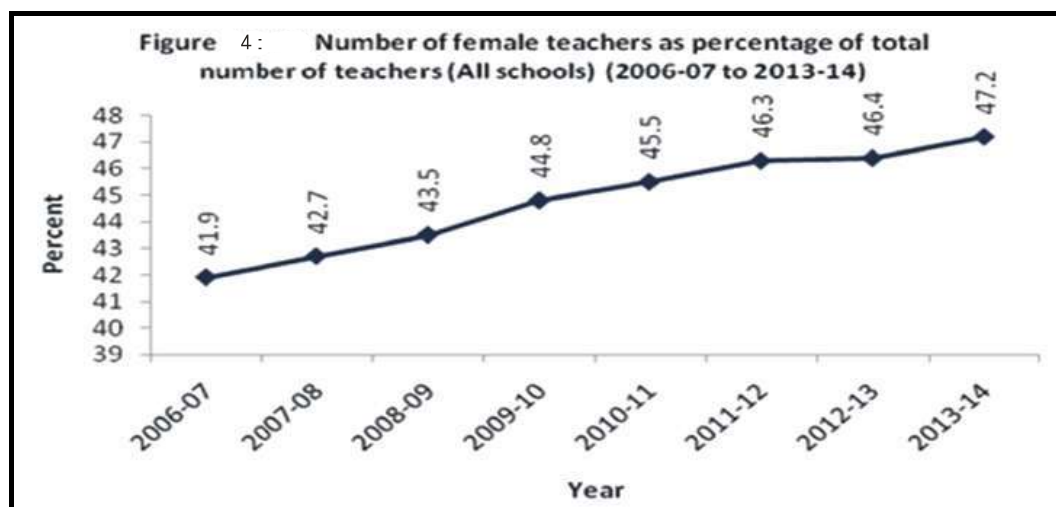


## 11. GENDER PARITY AMONG TEACHERS

Specific measures have been undertaken to recruit female teachers for Government-managed schools at elementary level during the past few years. The norm of 50 per cent of all teachers recruited under SSA to be female teachers has resulted in considerable improvement in the proportion of female teachers in schools and in the number of female teachers per 100 male teachers.

## 12. FEMALE TEACHERS AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL NUMBER OF TEACHERS

The number of female teachers as percentage of total number of teachers in schools has been increasing steadily during the past decade. U-DISE data relating to all schools indicate that the number of female teachers as percentage of total number of teachers in all schools has increased from 41.9 per cent 2006-07 to 47.2 per cent in 2013-14.



Promoting girls' education and achieving gender equity and equality have been accorded high priority in the XIIth five-year Plan. Interventions to promote girls education are guided by the principle that gender equality in education is both a quality issue and an equity issue. Gender is recognised as a critical cross-cutting equity issue which implies not only making efforts to enable girls to keep pace with boys, but viewing education from the perspective spelt out in the National Policy on Education 1986/92, i.e. a decisive intervention to bring about a basic change in the status of women. Special emphasis is placed on developing gender-sensitive curricula, pedagogical practices, teacher training and evaluation. A key approach to promoting girls' education is to develop all schools to be inclusive and safe places for girls and ensuring increased and more targeted investments for girls' education through strengthened systems for local service delivery that ensure gender equality in elementary education. The specific measures to promote girls' education include strengthening and expanding the special schemes for girls such as the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) scheme (which provides for setting up residential school at the upper primary level for girls) to provide one more KGBV in educationally backward blocks, with special focus on locations/wards with high migration rates in urban and semi-urban areas, and educationally backward blocks with high concentration of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Muslim populations; strengthening the National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) which is a focused intervention to reach the 'hardest to reach' girls, especially those not in school; training of members of the School Management Committees on gender and equity issues; and continuation of the Mahila Samakhya (MS) programme which has been recognized as an effective strategy for creating circumstances for girls' education and empowerment.

## 13. CONCLUSIONS

Recently education has received greater priority as planners and policy makers finally recognized it as a key factor in determining the pace of development. Education being the most powerful instrument for empowering women assumes special priority in the recent plans and programmes of National and International action. Concerted efforts are also made to bring more women into the purview of education. In spite of these many provisions, still there is a

wide gap between male and female literacy levels in India. Keeping this in view the programme of action for future has to be formulated so as to reduce the gender gap as well as literacy rate among the girls and women.

### REFERENCES

- [1] Desai. Neera and Maithreyi Krishnaraj, *Women and Society in India*, New Delhi, Ajanta Publications, 1990.
- [2] Government of India, *Census of India 2001*.
- [3] Government of India, *Census of India 2011*.
- [4] Gupta. N.L. *Women's Education Through Ages*, New Delhi, Concept Publications, 2003.
- [5] Harriet. B. Presser and Gita Sen (Ed.), *Women's Empowerment and Demographic Processes: Moving Beyond Cairo*. Oxford University Press, 2000.
- [6] Karat. B, *Survival and Emancipation: Notes from Indian Women's Struggles*, Gurgaon, Three Essays Collective, 2005
- [7] Mahajan. V.D, *Modern Indian History*, Delhi, S. Chand Pub., 2010.
- [8] Nair. J, *Women and Law in Colonial India: A Social History*, Delhi, published in collaboration with the National Law School of India University, Bangalore, 1996.
- [9] Nussbaum. Martha, '*Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defence of Reform in Liberal Education*' in *Women's Studies*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- [10] Rao. R.K, *Women and Education*, Kalpaz Publications, Delhi, 2001.
- [11] Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, *Selected Educational Statistics (2003-04)*.
- [12] Agarwal. S.P, *Women's Education in India (1995-98) Present Status, Perspective, Plan, Statistical Indicators with Global View*, Vol. III Concept Publications Co, New Delhi, 2001.
- [13] Tilak, Jandhyala B. G. (Ed.), *Women's Education and Development*. New Delhi: Gyan Publications, 2007.

### AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY



**Dr. Sanjib Kumar Roy**, Assistant Professor, A.C. Training College, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal, India, is engaged in teaching profession from the year 2003. He completed his M.A. (History) from Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, M.Ed. and Ph. D. (Education) from Kalyani University, West Bengal. As a secondary teacher educator his area of interest is in the field of Indian history of education, educational technology, and environmental education.