



## Women Education from Traditional to Modernity

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**“EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON WE CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD”**

**- NELSON MANDELA**

**Abstract:** Education is globally acknowledged as the most powerful means of empowering girls and women and protecting them from the violation of their human rights. Investing in girls' and women's education can transform, and even save, lives—the lives of girls and women, and the lives of their families and communities. It is one of the most effective ways to achieve positive, sustainable change in the world, for everyone. Education sets in motion a virtuous spiral: girls and women gain greater knowledge, skills, self-confidence and capabilities, improving their own life prospects—and, in turn, an educated woman provides better nutrition, health care, and education for her family. Education enables a woman to take greater control of her life and gain inclusion in decision-making processes, which unleashes her potential to contribute socially and economically to her family's and community's wellbeing.

Yet, today, millions of girls and women across the world live in debilitating poverty and are denied their right to education and two thirds of the world's illiterate adults are women.

### KEY WORDS:

“Traditional” refers to those societies or elements of societies that are small-scale, are derived from indigenous and often ancient cultural practices.

“Modern” refers to those practices that relate to the industrial mode of production or the development of large-scale often colonial societies.

Empowering girls, Education, Women etc.

### 1.0 Introduction:

What does it mean to be a woman? First of all, a woman is a mother, a wife, a daughter, a friend. The woman is sensitive but also strong. The woman exudes beauty, sensuality, love. There is a woman standing behind any successful man and she experiences every feeling along him.

Women are true heroes who fight for their purposes, who go through life with their heads up and who love to be respected and appreciated. They are good friends and have compassion for each other. They are mothers

who fight for their children, who sacrifice themselves for them. Women are the smile, the finesse and the love in this world. They have enormous soul power. Most of the time, women prefer to ignore ranking themselves as personalities, because they are always taking care of the people around her. Without some education and encouragement, they devalue themselves, we decided to come to their aid and give them an educational base to help them fulfill their dreams and goals.

Education is one of the most critical areas of empowerment for women, as both the Cairo and Beijing conferences affirmed. It is also an area that offers some of the clearest examples of discrimination women suffer. Among children not attending school there are twice as many girls as boys, and among illiterate adults there are twice as many women as men. Offering girls basic education is one sure way of giving them much greater power -- of enabling them to make genuine choices over the kinds of lives they wish to lead. This is not a luxury. That women might have the chance of a healthier and happier life should be reason enough for promoting girls' education. However, there are also important benefits for society as a whole. An educated woman has the skills, information and self-confidence that she needs to be a better parent, worker and citizen.

An educated woman is, for example, likely to marry at a later age and have fewer children. Cross-country studies show that an extra year of schooling for girls reduces fertility rates by 5 to 10 per cent. And the children of an educated mother are more likely to survive. In India, for example, the infant mortality rate of babies whose mothers have received primary education is half that of children whose mothers are illiterate. An educated woman will also be more productive at work -- and better paid. Indeed, the dividend for educational investment is often higher for women than men. Studies from a number of countries suggest that an extra year of schooling will increase a woman's future earnings by about 15 per cent, compared with 11 per cent for a man.

## **2.0 Use of Education:**

Women have a very in-distinctive position in our economy and are an indispensable part of the society. Yes, education and knowledge empower women. The only way a society or nation can move forward, and aspire to economic growth and development is not just through education- but especially education among the women citizens.

*“To awaken the people, it is the women who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves.” - Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru*

Education is a milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life. Education is one of the ways to spread the message of women empowerment. Education not only educates a person but also helps her realize that she is a vital part to the society. Occupational achievement, self-awareness and satisfaction are among the many things that will be ensured by effective use of education. Guidance and counseling also provided through education, helps women select their jobs and build career paths. Education will help women to empower through the knowledge of science and technology to face the challenges of today's technological age. It also helps them in garnering information through the computer all over the world. Education not only educates a woman but enables her to take decisions and accept responsibilities at her home and outer world. Education helps a woman to understand her rights to equal treatment like a man in the society of this nation.

## **3.0 Women Education in Vedic Period:**

Most females were allowed to pursue education without significant constraints in the Vedic period. Women's education, unlike in the subsequent periods was not neglected. Female scholars were also present during this period. The educators of this period had divided women into two groups - Brahmavadinis and Sadyodvahas. The former were life-long students of philosophy and theology. Sadyodvahas used to continue

their studies until they got married. There were many women poets and philosophers, such as Apala, Ghosha and Visvavara.

#### **4.0 Women Education in British Period:**

The Church Missionary Society tasted greater success in South India. The first boarding school for girls came up in Tirunelveli in 1821. By 1840 the Scottish Church Society constructed six schools with roll strength of 200 Hindu girls. When it was mid-century, the missionaries in Madras had included under its banner, 8,000 girls. Women's employment and education was acknowledged in 1854 by the East Indian Company's Programme: Wood's Dispatch. Slowly, after that, there was progress in female education, but it initially tended to be focused on the primary school level and was related to the richer sections of society. The overall literacy rate for women increased from 0.2% in 1882 to 6% in 1947.

In western India, Jyotiba Phule and his wife Savitribai Phule became pioneers of female education when they started a school for girls in 1848 in Pune. In eastern India, apart from important contributions by eminent Indian social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune was also a pioneer in promoting women's education in 19th-century India. With participation of like-minded social reformers like Ramgopal Ghosh, Raja Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee and Pandit Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, he established Calcutta's (now Kolkata) first school for girls in 1849 called the secular Native Female School, which later came to be known as Bethune School. In 1879, Bethune College, affiliated to the University of Calcutta, was established which is the oldest women's college in Asia.

In 1878, the University of Calcutta became one of the first universities to admit female graduates to its degree programmes, before any of the British universities had later done the same. This point was raised during the Ilbert Bill controversy in 1883, when it was being considered whether Indian judges should be given the right to judge British offenders. The role of women featured prominently in the controversy, where English women who opposed the bill argued that Bengali women, whom they stereotyped as "ignorant" and neglected by their men and that Indian men should therefore not be given the right to judge cases involving English women. Bengali women who supported the bill responded by claiming that they were more educated than the English women opposed to the bill and pointed out that more Indian women had degrees than British women did at the time.

#### **5.0 Independence India:**

After India attained independence in 1947, the University Education Commission was created to recommend suggestions to improve the quality of education. However, their report spoke against female education, referring to it as: "Women's present education is entirely irrelevant to the life they have to lead. It is not only a waste but often a definite disability." However, the fact that the female literacy rate was at 8.9% post-Independence could not be ignored. Thus, in 1958, a national committee on women's education was appointed by the government, and most of its recommendations were accepted. The cruxes of its recommendations were to bring female education on the same footing as offered for boys.

Soon afterwards, committees were created that talked about equality between men and women in the field of education. For example, one committee on differentiation of curriculum for boys and girls (1959) recommended equality and a common curricula at various stages of their learning. Further efforts were made to expand the education system, and the Education Commission was set up in 1964, which largely talked about female education, which recommended a national policy to be developed by the government. This occurred in 1968, providing increased emphasis on female education.

#### **6.0 Current Policies:**

Before and after Independence, India has been taking active steps towards women's status and education. The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2001, has been a path breaking step towards the growth of

education, especially for females. According to this act, elementary education is a fundamental right for children between the ages of 6 and 14. The government has undertaken to provide this education free of cost and make it compulsory for those in that age group. This undertaking is more widely known as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA).

Since then, the SSA has come up with many schemes for inclusive as well as exclusive growth of Indian education as a whole, including schemes to help foster the growth of female education. **The major schemes are the following:**

**Mahila Samakhya Program:** This program was launched in 1988 as a result of the New Education Policy (1968). It was created for the empowerment of women from rural areas especially socially and economically marginalized groups. When the SSA was formed, it initially set up a committee to look into this programme, how it was working and recommended new changes that could be made.

**Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme(KGBV):** This scheme was launched in July, 2004, to provide education to girls at primary level. It is primarily for the underprivileged and rural areas where literacy level for females is very low. The schools that were set up have 100% reservation: 75% for backward class and 25% for BPL (below Poverty line) females.

**National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL):** This programme was launched in July, 2003. It was an incentive to reach out to the girls who the SSA was not able to reach through other schemes. The SSA called out to the “hardest to reach girls”. This scheme has covered 24 states in India. Under the NPEGEL, “model schools” have been set up to provide better opportunities to girls.

#### **Other educational routes**

Newlyweds (women specifically) are educated on family planning, safe sex, and birth control in population control programs. In addition, the government has established rural health houses managed by local health workers. These health professionals travel to different areas in order to impart information about women’s health and birth control.

#### **Raising awareness**

The Canadian start-up Decode Global has developed the mobile game Get Water!, a game for social change focusing on the water scarcity in India and the effect it has on girls’ education, especially in slums and rural areas. In areas with no ready access to water, girls are often pulled out of school to collect water for their families.

### **7.0 Women Education in Modern Society:**

After independence the scope for women increased and Women Education in Modern India widened. The period and after 1948 in India, highest priority was given to women education. Women Education in Modern India became the major concern for both the government and civil society as educated women can play a vital role in the development of the country. Thus there was a great upsurge in awareness regarding women’s rights among all sections of society. Various developmental programmes and policies were introduced in order to improve the social status of women. Education is creditable as it is beneficial for women as this reduces female infant mortality and child mortality rates.

In India the educational system was modified and three-tier instruction process was developed. All citizens of India are offered the right to education and Women Education in Modern India was opened to a new vista. The structure of Indian education system came into being. Two important structures came into being: formal and Non-Formal Education programme. Various other educational programmes such as online education and

distance education were also launched. The main aim of all the educational programmes is to make every girl child of the society literate.

At present, Women Education in Modern India has achieved a new height. Currently, entrance of women in engineering, medical and other professional colleges is overwhelmingly elevated. Most of the professional colleges in the country keep thirty percent of the seats reserved for females. In urban India, girls are opened to a far wider scope than the rural girls. In cultural reality, the women enjoyed a privileged position in the Vedic period. The women had special customs, rituals and spirituality, with which men were not allowed to interfere. In medieval period though women had to suffer because of various foreign interferences, yet in modern times the condition of women developed gradually. Moreover, Women Education in Modern India increased the intellectuality of the Indian women. Indian history produces famous women saints, healers and priests. For instance Andal, a 6th century A.D. sage and Jnanananda Ma of the 20th century have contributed to the society.

### **8.0 Effect on Social Development:**

Women's education leads to significant social development. Some of the most notable social benefits include decreased fertility rates and lower infant mortality rates, and lower maternal mortality rates. Closing the gender gap in education also increases gender equality, which is considered important both in itself and because it ensures equal rights and opportunities for people regardless of gender. Women's education has cognitive benefits for women as well. Improved cognitive abilities increase the quality of life for women and also lead to other benefits. One example of this is the fact that educated women are better able to make decisions related to health, both for themselves and their children. Cognitive abilities also translate to increased political participation among women. Educated women are more likely to engage in civic participation and attend political meetings, and there are several instances in which educated women in the developing world were able to secure benefits for themselves through political movements. Evidence also points to an increased likelihood of democratic governance in countries with well-educated women.

There are also benefits relating to the woman's role in the household. Educated women have been found to experience less domestic violence, regardless of other social status indicators like employment status. Women with an education are also more involved in the decision-making process of the family and report making more decisions over a given time period. In particular, these benefits extend to economic decisions. Besides the intrinsic value of increasing a woman's agency, having women play a more active role in the family also brings about social benefits for family members. In a household where the mother is educated, children and especially girls are more likely to attend school. In households where a mother is not educated, adult literacy programs can indirectly help to teach mothers the value of education and encourage them to send their children to school. There are also a number of other benefits for children associated with having an educated mother over an educated father, including higher survival rates and better nutrition.

### **9.0 Women Education Effect on Economic Development:**

Both individuals and countries benefit from women's education. Individuals who invest in education receive a net monetary gain over the course of their lifetime. According to Harry Patrinos, lead education economist at the World Bank, "the profitability of education, according to estimates of private rate of return, is indisputable, universal, and global." The principle holds particularly for women, who can expect a 1.2% higher return than men on the resources they invest in education. Providing one extra year of education to girls increases their wages by 10-20%. This increase is 5% more than the corresponding returns on providing a boy with an extra year of schooling.

This individual monetary gain creates an increase in the overall economic productivity of a country. Girls are underrepresented in schooling, meaning that investments aimed specifically at educating women should produce bigger dividends. Although investment in women's education is not present everywhere, David

Dollar and Roberta Gatti have presented findings that show that this decision, along with other failures to invest in women are not “an efficient economic choice for developing countries” and that “countries that under-invest grow more slowly.” Looking holistically at the opportunity cost of not investing in girls, the total missed GDP growth is between 1.2% and 1.5%. When looking at different regions, it is estimated that 0.4–0.9% of the difference in GDP growth is accounted for solely by differences in the gender gap in education. The effect of the educational gender gap is more pronounced when a country is only moderately poor. Thus the incentive to invest in women goes up as a country moves out of extreme poverty.

In addition to total economic growth, women’s education also increases the equitability of the distribution of wealth in a society. Increased women’s education is important for achieving this as it targets the impoverished women, a particularly disadvantaged group. There is also evidence that lower gender disparity in educational attainment for a developing country correlates with lower overall income disparity within society.

### **10.0 Women Education: All Round Development:**

Women education is an aspect that has been emphasized in our society and across the globe for several decades. It is a process of developing the knowledge and skills of the girl children and women in the society. This includes educating them through regular schooling system so that they acquire basic literacy but also includes development of skills and knowledge of girl children to make them more employable in the future. This emphasized to promote gender equality and harmony around us. The benefits of this would be immense.

- i) **Encourage gender equality:** Educating women will promote equality between males and females in the society.
- ii) **Improve financial position of women:** Educated women will in future seek employment which in turn improves their financial position.
- iii) **Increase employability:** improves the chances of women engaging in gainful employment.
- iv) **Gender parity in pay:** Often the lack of skills is cited for the gender differences in pay but by educating the girl child equally as the boy child would ensure parity in pay.
- v) **Attack poverty:** This is higher incidence of poverty among women and women headed households and education can help fight poverty.
- vi) **Management of resources:** Women generally take up the position of management of household resources and educating women would ensure efficient allocation and use of resources within the households.
- vii) **Improving health outcomes for children:** Women play an important role in raising children and education would enable them to make better health choices for their children.
- viii) **Reduced incidence of illness:** Education of women improves sanitation and health outcomes for them and their families, thereby reducing the incidence of illness.
- ix) **Improves decision making:** Educated women are in a position to take better decisions for their future.
- x) **Reduce risk of violence against women:** Education along with employment increases the awareness and access to resources for women making them less vulnerable to violence within the household and outside.

- xi) Bring out their talents and develop them:** Education and going to school helps girls to identify and develop their talents.
- xii) Comprehensive policy making incorporating female perspectives:** Educated women would be able to put forward their issues and perspective in public discourse which in turn would influence policy making.
- xiii) Social welfare:** It is a just policy that promotes social welfare and ensures social justice in society.
- xiv) Economic empowerment:** It contributes to the economic prosperity of the nation by including the neglected portion of society into the talent and knowledge pool.
- xv) Undertake a professional career:** Educated women have an increased chance of getting into professional careers.
- xvi) Social benefit from improved contribution:** It increases social benefit because women will be in a position to contribute better to the society and the family.

### **11.0 Advantages of Women/ Female Education in modern India:**

Following is the brief description of the advantages of women/female education in India-

#### **1) Social Development**

Educating women could be the key to remove many social evils of Indian society- dowry system, female infanticide and workplace harassment etc. An educated woman changes the future generations.

#### **2) Economical Development**

Educating women will definitely lead to the economical development of the nation as more women join the work force.

#### **3) High Living Standard**

An educated woman will contribute financially for the needs of her family and relatives. Two earning parents provide better growth prospects for the children as well as a raised living standard of the family.

#### **4) Social Recognition**

A family with educated women enjoys a good social status and is honored more than others. An educated woman conducts appropriately in the society earning laurels for the family and making it proud.

#### **5) Improved Health and Hygiene**

An educated woman recognizes the health hazards to her family and knows how to deal with them. She knows how to feed and nurture her children, telling them about good and bad hygiene.

### **12.0 Conclusion:**

Today the modern woman is totally different from what she used to be. She tries to constantly improve her position in society, she is preoccupied with her looks, and what is very important, she is trying to have a normal life without being constrained by anyone or anything. She has the right to express her opinion without fearing that someone will punish her for that. The modern woman wants good education and a blooming professional life, a way of life that allows her to have a baby and she can do it alone if she does not find the right man to support her. Over the years, there have been several women who are now considered to

have made revolutionary changes in the global development. Strong and characterful have become role models and ideals for all feminine generations of all time. Everyone has noticed something different either that they have something to say, to accomplish, to show they have managed to mark forever the evolution of women in society.

India is now a leading country in the field of women education. History of India is never blank of brave women however it is full of women philosophers like Gargi, Viswabara, Maritreya (of Vedic age) and other famous women are like Mirabai, Durgabati, Ahalyabi, Laxmibai, etc. All the famous historical women in India are inspiration for the women of this age. We never forget their contributions to the society and country.

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**Citation:** Barman, B. (2024). “Women Education from Traditional to Modernity”. *Bharati International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research & Development (BIJMRD)*, Vol-2, Issue-2(1) March-2024. <https://doi-ds.org/doi/10.24243/BIJMRD/Vol2-Issue2-1-2024-71735914>