

Social Exclusion, Deprivation and Marginalization of Females of Jammu and Kashmir

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ABSTRACT

This paper traces the trajectory of women's socio-economic and educational status in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Women constitute almost half of the total human resources (population) of Jammu and Kashmir. Unfortunately, denial of equal socio-economic opportunities and strong traditional bias against women have resulted in low human development indices over the years, as Jammu and Kashmir, like many other states, has lagged behind in upgrading the status of half of its women, in many respects. Education is universally accepted as a fundamental agent of socio-economic upliftment but women have not been fairly treated as far as access to education is concerned. It is needless to emphasize that education for women is synonymous to health, information, confidence, dignity, empowerment and independence. Conversely, illiteracy leads to their exploitation in all walks of life. Despite the fact that women's education in Jammu and Kashmir has been a major area of concern for both the government and civil society and some statistics have changed since independence, though many ground realities have not. Gender bias against women and hence, gender gap still persists in almost all aspects of women education and we are far behind a condition where 'educating women' is no longer a news. The present paper discusses the trail of progress and current educational status of women in the state.

KEYWORDS: Development, Education, Empowerment, Literacy, Women.

Introduction

The question of the Education of children cannot be solved unless efforts are made simultaneously to solve the women's education. The status of women in the Indian society has been subjected to many great changes over the past few millennia. From equal status with men in

ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India is pathetic. Education of women, therefore occupies top priority among various measures to improve the status of women in India. “Truly no argument is required in defense of women’s education. For my part, I have always been strongly of the opinion that while it may be possible to neglect men’s education it is not possible to neglect women’s education. The reasons are obvious if you educate the women, probably men will be affected thereby, and in any event children will be affected” (Jawaharlal Nehru). In India women education has been neglected so far. But now it has been realized that women’s education is equally important as of men. The University Grants Commission has rightly remarked about it “if general education had to be limited to men or to women, then opportunity should be given to women, for then it would more surely be passed on to the next generation”.

WOMEN EDUCATION AFTER INDEPENDENCE IN J&K

Literacy is an effective instrument for social and economic development and national integration. It is defined in census operations as the ability to read and write with understanding in many languages. In modern context, the word refers to reading and writing at a level adequate for communication or at level that let some understand and communicate ideas in a literate society, so as to take part in that society. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization (UNESCO) defined literacy as *‘the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential and to participate fully in the society’* Over the years, the females’ literacy rate in J&K has increased though not in the same way as that of males. According to the census of 2001 Jammu and Kashmir, literacy level is 54.46 percent. The state ranked 33rd amongst the 35 odd states and union territories of India.

Census year	Persons	Males	Females
1901	2.40	4.26	0.11
1911	2.67	4.84	0.13

1921	2.79	4.90	0.33
1931	4.28	7.34	0.67
1941	4.17	11.32	2.31
1961	12.95	19.75.	5.05
1971	18.58	26.75	9.28
1981	30.64	41.46	18.37
1991	38.00	46.00	29.00
2001	54.46	65.75	41.82

The Table below shows the literacy rate of both males and females in J&K (percent) from 1901-2001:

Source: 1901-2001 census survey

Despite intensive efforts by the state over the decades to improve the literacy level, achievement has not been satisfactory. The literacy rate has shown a substantial increase from 12.95 in 1961 to 54.46 in 2001. The literacy rate has grown at an annual rate of 10.99 percent during the post-independence period as compared to 4.95 percent during the pre-independence period. The sex differentials in literacy, however, have been throughout constant and pronounced. Over the last four decades (1961-2001) female literacy has gone up more than four times i.e. from 19.28 in 1961 to 41.82 in 2001. The male-female literacy gap has increased from 20.41 percent in 1981 to 23.93 percent in 2001, which indicates that females are still lagging behind males.

Literacy rate in Jammu and Kashmir-2011:

Census year	Total persons	Males	Females	Literacy rates	Males	Females
2011	7245053	437064	2874449	68.74%	78.26%	58.01%

Jammu, Samba and Leh district have the highest literacy rates of over 90 percent while Bandipora, Ganderbal, Budgam, Ramban, Kulgam and Reasi have a literacy rate of less than 60 percent (Census, 2011).

The districts which have a low level of literacy are primarily mountainous, have low level of urbanization and non- primary sector work force as also less number of schools in relation to their population. The opposite is true for the districts with relatively higher literacy. These districts occupy either relatively plain areas or have a major concentration of their settlements in the plain areas. Secondly, these districts have higher urban population and workforce in non-primary sector as also more number of schools. The government of Jammu and Kashmir has taken various steps to lower the gap between rural- urban and male- female literacy rate.



District wise literacy rate of the state Jammu and Kashmir

Districts	Literate Population			Literacy Rate (%)		
	Persons	Males	Females	Total	Male	Females
Kupwara	454076	284397	169679	66.92	77.10	54.79

Baramula	571348	352289	219059	66.93	77.35	55.01
Srinagar	793139	462049	331090	71.21	78.01	63.47
Badgam	338297	209724	128573	57.98	68.18	46.60
Pulwama	307088	184609	122479	65.00	75.41	53.81
Anantanag	555608	325964	229644	64.32	74.13	54.15
Leh (Ladakh)	108885	77619	31266	80.48	89.39	64.52
Kargil	91604	61123	30481	74.49	86.73	58.05
Doda	223343	141684	81659	65.97	80.36	50.34
Udhampur	330421	203248	127173	69.90	79.93	58.22
Punch	269744	168435	101309	68.69	81.04	54.80
Rajouri	343196	210006	133190	68.54	78.38	57.20
Jammu	1147663	652302	495361	83.98	89.77	77.41
Kathua	393611	231417	162194	73.50	81.40	64.56
Samba	231434	132552	98882	82.48	89.76	74.39
Reasi	153839	96036	57803	59.42	69.93	47.55
Kishtwar	112348	71847	40501	58.54	71.75	44.13

Ganderbal	147835	93222	54613	59.99	70.74	47.62
Kulgam	212693	126572	86121	60.35	70.59	49.74
Ramban	130054	86852	43202	56.90	71.97	40.04
Shopian	141038	82587	58451	62.49	71.86	52.77
Bandipore	187789	116070	71719	57.82	68.41	46.24
Total	7245053	4370604	287444			

Within the state, the spatial variations in literacy are quite wide. The gap between the highest (Jammu, 77.44 percent) and lowest (Badgam, 46.60 percent) literacy districts for instance, is almost 25 percent. Only 6 districts out of a total of 14 have literacy rate higher than the state average figure the remaining 8 have almost two-fifths of their population without the ability to read and write (Census, 2001). These educationally, most backward districts viz. Kupwara, Baramula, Pulwama, Anantnag, and Badgam in the valley and Doda, Udhampur and Punch in Jammu province form a contiguous belt in middle of the state covering the mountainous and forested region which separates two clusters of high literacy rates- one in south and the south-west comprising Jammu, Rajouri and Kathua and the other in the north- east comprising Srinagar, Kargil and Leh.

It is a well-known fact that about 80 percent of the people in Jammu and Kashmir live in rural areas, where the educational facilities beyond the mixed primary schools are hardly sufficient.

Percentage of Male- Female Literacy in Total/Rural/Urban Population in 1981 and 2001

TOTAL/RURAL/URBAN	PERSONS		MALES		FEMALES	
	1981	2001	1981	2001	1981	2001
TOTAL	30.64	54.46	41.46	65.7	18.	41.
RURAL	25.01	48.22	36.35	60.3	12.	35.
URBAN	51.12	72.12	59.87	80.3	41.	62.

Rural-Urban differentials in literacy are also wide. The above Table reveals that educational development has remained urban-centric both among males and females in the state. The literacy rate for rural areas is 48.22percent against 72.17 percent for urban areas according to 2001 census. Again female literacy in rural areas at 35.09 percent is very low and is less than half of the literacy in urban areas.

According to the latest census conducted in 2011 there is about 9 percent increase in the overall literacy rate in Jammu and Kashmir with Jammu District leading the way with 77.02 percent. The total literacy rate registered in the state was 68.74 percent (males-78.26 percent and females-58.01 percent) compared to 54.46 percent in 2001. While the literacy rate in urban areas

shot up to 78.19 percent compared to 72.12 percent in 2001. Rural areas, because of lack of infrastructure, were lagging much behind. According to the census, rural literacy has touched 64.97 percent.

Percentage of Male-Female Literacy in Total/Rural/ Urban population 2011

TOTAL/RURAL/URBAN	PERSONS	MALES	FEMALES
TOTAL	68.74	78.26	58.01
RURAL	64.97	75.51	53.36
URBAN	78.19	84.90	70.19

The Table above shows that there exists a huge gap in rural-urban female literacy rate in the state and also the gender gap in the literacy according to the census 2011 is 20.25.

Out of the total 200 blocks in the state 109 blocks are identified as educationally backward blocks in Jammu and Kashmir. Rural literacy rate of J&K is 42.93 percent (2001) which is below the national average. In respect of female literacy rate, it is less than national average and Gender gap is higher than national average in 109 blocks. Besides, ST female literacy rate is below 10 percent in 62 predominant ST blocks (as per 1991 census). The SC female literacy rate is below 10 percent in 34 predominant SC blocks (1991 census). This shows clear gender disparity. Besides, girl's participation in enrolment and retention at upper primary level from the disadvantaged groups and caste that of SC&ST is a big challenge.

The Education Commission (1964-66) fully endorsed the recommendations of National Committee on the Education of Women. The Commission emphasized on the following points; Appointing women teachers; Popularizing mixed primary schools, and opening separate school for girls at the higher primary stage, wherever possible and demanded, Providing free books and writing material and if needed clothing also. Towards an Enlightened and Humane Society NPE, 1986- A Review Committee for Review of National Policy on Education, 1986 in 1990 upheld the need for adequate support services (water, fuel, fodder and child care) to the promotion of girls' education and more provisions of schooling facilities like atleast one primary school in each habitation with a population of 300 or more and atleast one middle school in each

habitation with a population of 500 or more. The National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000) recommended for women's education on the top priority basis so that women can attain a comparable level of education by 2000. The plan suggested that: Educational programmes need to be restructured and school curricula to be modified to eliminate gender bias. Awareness needs to be generated among the masses regarding the necessity of educating girls. Fifty percent posts in elementary schools should be reserved for women teachers. In every school, at least one woman teacher should be there.

CONCLUSIONS

Women constitute almost half of the total human resource of Jammu and Kashmir India but always lag behind males as far as education is concerned. In the early decades of nineteenth century, women were almost completely excluded from the formal system of education but towards the end of the nineteenth century, the position of women in the society improved a lot due to the social reform movement launched by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and similar movements of Phule in educating women of the *shudra* and *atishudra* girls by opening the first school for these girls. It is now recognized fact that education is the major instrument which can be used to direct the process of change and development towards desired goals. The movement for improving women's status all over the world has always emphasized education as the most significant instrument for changing women's subjugated position in society.

Although literacy levels are low, there has been progress in improving educational attainment for both sexes in India over the last several decades. In 1971, only 22 percent of women and 46 percent of men were literate (Registrar General and Census Commissioner RGCC, 1977). By 1991, 39 percent of women and 64 percent men were literate (RGCC, 1993). This shows that there has been an increase in the proportion of women literates in just 20 years. But the condition is still far from satisfactory. There is a wide disparity in the education of boys and girls in the state of J&K as gender gap in the literacy of males and females is wide. The rural-urban gap in terms of literacy is also there, but rural areas despite the lack of infrastructure were not lagging much behind. The problem of women education has been examined by a number of Committees

and Commissions after independence and various recommendations were made for women education.

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