

## Women's Literacy And Social Change

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### Abstract

*Literacy is a key to social and economic development of a country. Access to literacy is a basic step towards achieving the general well being of women. Literacy is key to sustainable development. Hence, literacy is considered as a major tool in building a developed and peaceful society in the 21st Century. Socially, however, there is poverty, displacement and insecurity, and psychological effects which include depression and other disorders.*

### Introduction

Women's literacy is essential for the progress of the society. Through literacy, women can improve and enhance their personalities and contribute towards the progress of the Society. It is a birth right of every human being. It is not only a means of liberation but also an instrument of social change. Socially, it can bring about changes in social organization, which is the structure and functions of society. Culturally, it can bring about changes in any branch of culture, including art, science, technology, philosophy, belief, etc. as well as changes in the forms and rule of social organization. Thus, literacy plays a tremendous role in the all round development of an individual as well as the society. It is the foundation of human resource

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development through which one attains self realization and self actualization by exploiting one's innate potentialities fully through the process of education. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi "literacy is neither the beginning nor the end of education, which is one of the means where by men and women can be educated". Of course, it is impossible to become an educated one without literacy. Literacy is not the mere acquiring of the knowledge and skills of 3R's as some people think it is kindling a thirst for knowledge and it opens up greater potential of the masses for self development. It helps inculcate dignity and self respect among the people.

The National Literacy Mission has conceived literacy, as an active and Potent instrument of change and for creation of a learning society. Instead of bare literacy, the NLM aims to impart 'Functional Literacy' to non literate adults in 15 - 35 age groups.

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#### **Status of women in Manipur**

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Literacy is indeed an effective way for economic and social development as well as national integration. It's defined as census operation, as the capability to write and read with understanding in various languages. Any formal minimum education or education standards are not required to be considered as a literate person.

Though people and parents know the importance of education but still they are not sending their children to study because they do not have to fill the fees of school and many poor people think that if they have more children they have more earning hands. This is the reason they usually avoid sending their children especially girls to school. The female literacy rate is hence down in comparison to the male literacy rate. They send their girl child to work in houses and debarred them from studies. [View Profile](#)

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Though there has been an increase in the female literacy rate but still there are many rural areas where girls are not sent to school for studying in comparison to boys. Boys are given all importance in comparison to girls and they are treated as the heir of the family. Girls literary rate in rural areas are degrading day by day. Parents need to be more vigilant. Its manifestly true that Female literacy rate in India is more respect to developed company

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In Manipur, women are in no way different from the rest of India. In the late nineteenth century, a number of social reform programmes especially for women was organized in Manipur to give them awareness about their rights in the society. As a result there is increase in the status of women in the society which has made them to enter into all walks of life. Most of the family members have send their children to school. In spite of all these, the rate of female literacy appears to be quite low and miserable in Manipur.

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The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan recognizes the need for special efforts to bring the out-of-school girls, especially from disadvantaged sections, to school. This would require a proper identification of girls who are out of school in the course of micro planning. It also calls for involving women through participatory processes in the effective management of schools. The provision for girls' education would have to be designed to address learning needs of girls and relating education to their life. The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is committed to making these interventions possible.

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It is said that Manipuri women is far better than their counterparts elsewhere, both socially as well as economically. The history of Manipur has proved that Manipuri women can take important roles in any situation at the individual level as well as in groups. Manipuri women are playing different roles at their best. Some of the role can be mentioned:

**Domestic Aspect:**

Women irrespective of their profession have their priorities in the domestic chores, whether they are working women, women leader, labourer.

**Economic Aspect:**

Women in Manipur are economically independent by engaging themselves in handloom and handicrafts, kitchen gardening, silk rearing and yarn making, farming, pottery, fishing, animal husbandry, pan shop, tea and snack stall etc. Ima Market is the women markets where the buyer and seller are mostly women.

**Games and Sports:**

The women in Manipur have contributed immensely in various events. They won many medals both at national and international levels.

**Social & Cultural Aspect:**

Manipuri women are actively involved in fighting against violation of human rights and other social evils. Customs of Manipuri women varied different occasions reflecting the cultural heritage of the state.

Women are primarily seen in their roles as mother and wives and not as women in their own right. The status of women is identified by their parents, husband and children. Widow of drug addict or alcoholic or HIV/AIDS, patients is outcast by the society for no fault of theirs. Due to various reasons such as deteriorating law and order situation, poverty, unemployment, low rate of education, lack of infrastructure for development and lack of awareness women are facing problems.

In order to empower women we need to focus more on education, health, income generating facilities and women welfare programme in particular.

With this concept, Residential camps were organized for girls of different communities with the resource persons of

different items/ activities. Demonstration, practical activities and exercise were held in the following during 2006-07:

1. Health and Hygiene
2. Food and Nutrition.
3. Some vocational based activities like needle works, flower making, incense stick making.
4. Participation, Interaction, News reading, singing and other cultural programmes etc.

At present, there is no much difference among the boys and girls in the schooling scenario. However, more than 50% are out of the school at Upper Primary level. In order to retain these children in school at least upto elementary level Education programme may be of such option.

**1. Work Education Programme in formale schools and in AIE centres :** Most of the girls are engaged in household works and other income generating activities at home as the women takes a major roles in the family economy. In order to enhance the children, short term vocational training course on local based activities may be given along with the education.

**2. Incentives like text books, exercise books and materials for works education:** At present, children in Government & aided schools are of under privilege/ poverty families. To retained them in school system at least upto class VIII and to achieve minimum level of learning, learning materials may be provided to encourage the children in education.

**3. ECCE centre in the school premise:** Girls are absence from school due to the siblings care, they will be attending school if the ECCE centre is open in the school premise as well as the working women.

**4. Income Generating Programme:** The vocational training imparted to the students should be a local suit and the products are of the day to day life of the community, family and student

like basketry, weaving, tailoring, knitting, needle works, pottery, plantation and other handicrafts etc.

**5. Manual and practical activities:** School is the centre of activities of the community. The activity of the community is reflected to the school. Along with the classroom teaching other activities like social service, sports, painting, cultural and educational programmes etc. It will help in discipline, integrity, friendship, physical fitness, participation and interaction.

The literacy rate amongst the females had gradually increased over the decades. For instance, in 1951 only 2.38percent females were literate which has increased to 73.1percent in 2011 which is not a small achievement. This is an indication of the speed in which women progressed in the field of education.

**Table no. 1: Census report 2001 and 2011 (Literacy Rate)**

Country/ State/ District	Literacy Rate						Gender Gap (%)	
	2001 census			2011 census			2001	2011
	Male%	Female%	Person%	Male%	Female%	Person%		
India	75.90	54.20	65.10	82.14	65.48	74.04	21.70	16.66
Manipur	80.30	60.50	70.50	86.49	73.17	79.85	19.80	13.32
Senapati	67.90	51.20	59.80	80.85	68.80	75.00	16.70	12.05
Bishnupur	68.70	49.00	59.20	76.74	63.76	70.40	19.70	12.98
Tanenglong	77.70	63.10	70.60	88.34	80.13	84.29	14.60	8.21
Churachandpur	79.60	55.70	67.60	85.52	67.29	76.35	23.90	18.23
Thoubal	80.40	52.50	66.40	85.90	67.57	76.66	27.90	18.33
Imphal West	89.20	71.30	80.20	92.93	80.71	86.70	17.90	12.22
Imphal east	85.50	65.30	75.40	89.86	75.92	82.81	20.20	13.94
Ukhrul	80.10	56.40	73.10	86.05	77.47	81.87	14.70	8.58
Chandel	64.30	48.00	56.20	77.93	63.26	70.87	16.30	14.67

Source : Census report 2001

From the table it is clear that Imphal west District has the highest literacy rate with male literacy 92.93 percent and female literacy 80.71 percent. The lowest District is Chandel with male literacy 77.93 percent and female literacy 63.26 percent.

So far many strategies were adopted by the government in order to eradicate illiteracy and also to enhance the status of women literacy in the society. It include i. Adult Education Programme

ii. Non Fornal Education

iii. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

Literacy is one of the most important things that everyone should get. People who are poor usually do not send their children to study as they do not have enough money to survive. The rate of literacy is quite low in India as children are not getting proper education especially girls. They are forced to marry at the tender age and the burden of work is put on their shoulders to bear. Literacy rate in India is rising gradually but anyway the female literacy rate in India is lower than that of male.

### **Conclusion**

Women Literacy is the basic tools of progress in the society. It can improve and update the status of the society and other developmental works. The literacy rate of Manipuri women is still not in a leading position, but we need to take certain initiative and action in order to increase the female literacy as well as to reduce the male and female gap so as to make a literate society. A literate woman can take a rational attitude in order to limit the size of her family. The success of family welfare and other developmental programmes depends largely on the quality of women. So women literacy is a much for a literate society.

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