

Female Literacy and the Health of a Nation

The first and foremost priority of any developing nation is to promote female literacy. Health and prosperity of a country remain intimately connected to female literacy. The spiritual leader Dada Vaswani made an enduring statement to support this sentiment:

“Educate a woman, and you have educated the entire family, society, community, and the entire nation.”

Educated women are critical to building healthy and progressive societies. Education enhances the social status of the women and the social standing of the entire nation in the world. Our reformist Prime minister Mr. Narendra Modi’s message to the country “Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao.” speaks loud and clear in support of women education movement. Moving forward on female literacy is a genuine political will of the current central government. The following data shows that India has made substantial progress on basic literacy in girls, but much more needs to be done to advance the level of higher education for social advancement.

Timeline	Women literacy (%)
British Raj	2-6
1961	15.3
1981	28.5
2011	65

Compulsory Education Policy in India got established in April 2010. The Policy mandated primary education in reading, writing, and arithmetic as a fundamental right to children between the ages of 6-14 years. The governmental efforts are to close gender-related literacy gaps considering the enormous impact of female literacy on socioeconomic progress of the nation concerning :

- Population Control- Low female literacy has a dramatically negative effect on family planning and population stabilization efforts. Literate mothers have a desire for smaller and smarter families with educated and healthy children. Currently, population stabilization is the need of the hour to save the planet earth, and female literacy can do it all.
- Compared to illiterate females, literate females will be more willing to learn and understand about Wellness Programs and participate in the grass-root movements to promote health via programs such as :
 - a) Healthy foods- What to Eat, What Not to Eat.
 - b) Balanced lifestyles –Literate women can promote sensible, healthy behaviors such as -When to eat, When not to eat, how often to eat, the value of healthy sleep, activity, and exercise.
- Literate women will be role models to promote literacy amongst girls.
- Literate women are perfect leaders to promote civic responsibilities addressing critical social issues such as :
 - a) Clean environments- no one knows better than a woman how to keep their surroundings clean and the value of sanitation including toilet facilities.
 - b) Grow tree movement – Starting with potted plants at home to the neighborhoods trees and motivating their children to do the same.

- c) Conserve water
- d) Promote active transport and physical activity in local communities – By appealing to local government and municipality legislators, and community leaders to create footpaths, park spaces, and green zones in the neighborhoods for safe walking, running, exercising, and bicycle riding.

Child marriage, religious bondage, and female literacy

A major obstacle to female literacy in the rural sector and some religious societies is child marriage. According to UNICEF (United Nations Children Fund Agency), 18% of girls in India are married off by the age 15 years, and 47% are married off by the age of 18 years. The patriarchal tradition of demanding the subservience of women in some backward cultures is the principal obstacle to higher education amongst females. The advocacy by literate women in families and societies can level the playing fields on the rights of the girls to higher education. Finally, literate women are vital players in promoting the grass-root movement of food lifestyle balance to build healthy societies.