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## Women's Perceptions of the Value of Literacy

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### **Abstract**

*Women own perception of the value of literacy in their lives in order to understand the diverse ways in which they interact with literacy. Against the base line of these perceptions, we examine the nature of literacy interventions being provided both by the government adult education programme using self help group, as well as those being implemented by sponsoring extent and nature of interventions.*

**Key Words:** *Women, Literacy, Intervention, Adult Education*

### **Introduction**

Several articulations related to literacy by women were familiar to us as practitioners and researchers working in the area of woman's literacy. There is a need for standard articulations about literacy to be decoded and located in relations of power, be it the power inequalities between the literate and the non-literate, literacy's role in empowering new roles that women could enter into, the greater need for literacy as self help groups and microcredit change social and economic interactions and the role that literacy plays at a barrier of access to these roles.

### **Research Method**

In regard to women's literacy Problem, this paper is written by Utilizing secondary data from survey and research journals.

### **Literacy of Indian Women**

Economically, India is new developing country marked by recent development in so many sectors. However, Poverty and employment are not equally get by all the citizens especially women who lived in remote and rural area of India. The unexpected situation of illiterate women

not only shall affect their life but also their family life both their family members. There is a famous proverb "behind the successful man there is a great wife". However, if women are illiterate, how can they support their husband? Even for their own life they still illiterate. For children, if their children go to school, they will find difficulty in tutoring their children when they have homework. This fact often found around us. One of the reasons may be affected by the level of education that women get. This is in line with ASPBAE (2012) Survey reports which in India are higher than men. This fact indicates that females are dropping out of School in their secondary school (UNFPA – India, 2015).

### **Why women Literacy Matter?**

Some People think that literacy is translated into the ability to read, to write and to count. There is nothing wrong with that meaning but widely, literacy is the ability to implement the abilities such as reading, Writing and counting in the real life. Therefore, literacy is deeply important for every human including women. According to UNESCO (2014) "Since the adaption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), education has been recognized as human right". The illiterate women can be categorized uneducated and can get their right since in education, whether formal or informal, will change women to be literate.

Morgan et al (2011) propose a view in looking at broadening the conceptualization of literacy in the lives of adults with intellectual disability. Seeing the abilities of adults in writing, reading, and counting may less strong since the real life not only need that kinds of skill. They suggest that idea that qualitative research such as participatory study may be good for investigating the wider concept of literacy.

Moreover, illiterate women can be serious problem since the role of women are indeed important when their role as a mothers and as the independent individual. UNESCO (2014, P.13) also stated that "the link between learning and such outcomes cannot be claimed to be causal but rather strong association between literacy learning and wider outcomes have been evidenced".

The roles of women inside and outside house are clearly depending on their skill and knowledge. In this case, education can be a pledge solution to provide an opportunity for women to take role in wide area. The education for women in labour market has been studied by Arani and Mobarakeh (2011) that the current employment of educated women in Private sectors especially language institutes and travel agencies are still low, By utilizing in-depth interview, they found that education is marginalized and has been put on the top of the agenda for the employers. It indicates that education is considered important for women. In order to participate in wider scope such as labour market with high paid job, literacy is a top requirement for women.

## **Findings & Discussion**

Literate women were perceived to be important in terms of their ability to access and provide information to non-literate women. Non-literate women of self help groups encourage literate women to share information that they had received at meetings, trainings etc. Unlike other resources such as land, with literacy we find that women speak of it as a resource which they consider with their reach. This also resonates with the dynamic referred to above whereby non-literate women feel comfortable demanding that literate members of the group provide them with information.

### **A Buffer against Exploitation**

A common statement on literacy was, "If we are literate no one can misguide us, we can avoid exploitation". Again literacy acquires a symbolic value as part of which it is imbued with ability to ward off exploitation by those who are powerful. It also relates to non-literate women's clear perception of the power-laden constructions of their non-literacy.

A women member of the self help groups said, we were seen as illiterate, not able to argue when the trader would pay us less than the value of our produces or we would not get the right wages and would be unable to see the muster roll to see how much had been recorded against our wages. But now with our self help groups and the leaders becoming literate we are know and feared even by the government contractors and no one dares to fool us anymore.

### **Enabling Checking**

Women were clear in their articulation of the linkages between literacy, power and transparency. This was reflected for example, in what neo-literate women said about no longer being cheated by the shopkeepers. Women also articulated such linkages between power and literacy in the context of the household. A self help group member said that if husband is educated and we are literate, we can understand his calculations. Otherwise when he goes to the market, whatever he says, we have to believe.

Similarly, in the context of the self help groups, the value of literacy was expressed in terms of the security of knowing that those who were in position to handle money were not cheating them. Self help group member said that we trust the bookkeeper and accountant, but it is better if literate women go to federation. A literate leader is better, but we don't have illiterate people, what can we do? Even if they do something wrong we have to listen. If the leader was literate, she could have noted down points and told us correctly.

We have found that with neo-literate self help group members, who have participated in the women empowerment programme and in the book keeper training, even if they could not perform the role of a bookkeeper, were able to check accounts. One such participant said that

she kept an eye on accounts. She also mentioned on instance of questioning the book- keeper, who gave her a receipt for her saving deposit, but did not enter the amount in her passbook and receipt book, I have waited to see whether everything is written correctly or not

Although self help group members mostly spoke of the value of literacy for checking with respect to book-keepers and accounts.

### **Literacy as a basis for Leadership**

The qualitative study confirmed the importance of literacy in the selection of leaders. Self help group members said that they had chosen their leader because she can speak in meetings as an educated person and will also lead us and do something good for women, they also said that because she is educated she is capable of maintaining accounts. She does not have to wait for somebody to write and application, to read a word and had to depend on another educated person.

The perception of the importance of literacy as a qualification for leadership varied depending on the level of leadership. The relative importance placed upon literacy vis-a-vis levels of leadership is also reflected in the actual level of literacy at the different level of federation. At the level of the federation, a neo-literate member can be a President but transaction that the secretary had to deal with. The preference of the women members for literate leaders was strength evened by a similar preference on the part of the staff members of the sponsoring organizations.

### **Conclusion**

Many of the claims made about the value of literacy quoted do not manifest themselves in a literal way. It is not as though the shopkeeper stops cheating the women because they acquire literacy, it is also not as though if women had literacy skills they would achieve the level of autonomy vis-a-vis the sponsoring agency that they hope for. It is important, however, that the acquisition of literacy brings such changes into the realm, of the possible.

Evidence from the study suggests that, other than the symbolic use of literacy, there is also a need to examine its usage and value in specified and nuanced ways. The neo-literate person might not be using a particular literacy skill that has been imparted in the complete manner in which it might intend to be used by the providers. She might however, still be using and perceiving aspects of her literacy in ways that are significant and empowering.

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