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## WOMEN ENROLMENT IN DISTANCE EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF Dr. BRAOU, HYDERABAD

**Dr. V.V.Kanaka Durga**

Deputy Director,GRCR&D, Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Open University, Hyderabad, Telangana, India

### Abstract

This paper attempts to outline the role of distance education in upgrading the status of women in India. In a large and developing country like India, distance education is not only cost-effective but can also reach out to all sections of society, including the marginalized and the dispossessed. In spite of the fact that women's participation in all spheres of life has increased in post-independence India, there has been no concomitant change in their status. This is partly because the thrust of our policies has been not to change relations of production which also subsume gender relations, but only to commiserate with the lot of women and to "improve" it with subsidies and other "discriminatory compensation." Such ad-hoc solutions provide short-term remedies but fail to diagnose the basic problem. Instead of liberal humanist reformism, a more radical approach is needed so that the gender problem can be tackled not only in relation to its internal dialectic but also in relation to the economic, ideological, and political factors that constitute its wider context. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to undertake such a wide-ranging analysis a specific focus on how the Dr.BRAOU, Hyderabad can devise effective educational strategies that can bring about social change.

**Key Words:** Distance Education, Women, Discriminatory Compensation, Global Skills, Women Empowerment.

### Statement of the Problem

*“If you educate a man, you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a whole family. Women empowered means mother India empowered”*

**Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru**

Education is the medium and a multi-dimensional process through which women emancipation and empowerment can be made a reality. It can lead women towards progress and prosperity and enjoying an independent status with the gaining of knowledge. It is only through education that a woman can have a better decision-making power, can have information and resources to take better decision and can have self-confidence which is most important. Women emancipation and empowerment is utmost important for the progress of any society. A society is a conglomeration of both the male and female sexes. So to ensure the progress of the society, both the sexes are supposed to play the equitable role. Education is the only mean through which both the sexes can make equal progress. In a society like India which is patriarchal in nature, women enjoy a degradable status since centuries ago. A woman is not considered as much important as men. Women have faced discrimination since ancient time.

So many obstacles blocked the way of women emancipation during ancient and medieval periods like practice of polygamy and child marriage. Indian society does not allow women to go out of home to get education. So it is only with the initiation of education through distance mode that women status in India got a major boon. But there is always a major difference between theory and practice. Even India like any other society is two-wheeler with one as male and another as female. We cannot aspire two wheeler running on a single wheel. What status women enjoy through the mechanisation of distance education is different from what women exactly have being a one wheel of the society which is a two wheeler. A society cannot progress unless it runs on both the wheels viz, male and female. What we need to answer here is the effect of distance education on women and the obstacles created by society for the same purpose. It is so because the Indian society is very much patriarchal in nature where women enjoy very low social status as compare to men. In spite of enjoying equal rights under law of the land, a woman is still backward on all walks of life.



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It is not an issue of discussion that women do not contribute in the wellbeing of society. Women do a lot of work being a one wheel of the chariot. Women do a lot of house-hold which is considered as unproductive especially in Indian society which is an important issue of discussion here. So to make her work valuable, women will have to be educated. The psyche of the Indian society regarding the image of women in India is required to be changed with the help of scientific and technical education. The difference between theory and practice regarding women education will have to be removed for the progress of India. The status of women in Indian cities is much better than the status of women in Indian villages. Most of the population in India lives in villages. So the special focus is needed to be given to education of women residing particularly in villages.

### Need of women education

Both men and women are the two wheels of the same chariot which is society. So we cannot imagine a society to go on the path of progress without the two wheels running at the same speed. Women education and emancipation is needed not only for the wellbeing and progress of the women but also for the entire society. Educating the women is educating women is educating the coming generations. The women education and emancipation is needed for the following purposes:

1. It would empower them to know and ask for their rights to education, health, shelter, food clothing etc.
2. It would empower them to fight against every form of discrimination against their folk, assert themselves about their right to equal treatment with their men counterpart as bonafide citizens of this nation.
3. It would enable the women take decisions and accept responsibilities for taking such decisions concerning themselves.
4. It would give economic power to the women and there by enable them to contribute their quota to the economic growth of the nation.
5. It would empower the women scientifically through exposure to science and technological education for the challenges of the present technological age and information computer technology break through unfolding worldwide.
6. It would help women to reduce maternal and infant mortality through improved nutrition, improved child rearing practice, health care and prevention against killer diseases.
7. It would avail women with the opportunity of participating keenly in the world of sophisticated politics and governance as enlightened citizens.

It is an undeniable fact that gender disparity in education continues to exist in spite of many efforts. Several challenges are faced by girls in accessing education, gender discrimination, limited access to education and significant urban-rural divide in provision of educational facilities. Dr. G. Saroja (2008), lists in her article on ‘Distance Education for Women Empowerment’ the reasons for non-enrolment of women in HEIs, as restrictions by families, religious practices and economic problems. The rural nomadic lifestyle of certain families also imposes restraints on educational pursuits of women. Referring to educational statistics of enrolment of women in Dr. BRAOU, she points out that women enrolment was as low as 15.01% in 1983, but showed a gradual increase over the years and by 2004-2005, the enrolment of women in the university grew to 36.44%.



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Chauhan (2022) discussed some of the common problems faced by girl students in higher education include gender discrimination at home, financial problems, transportation problems, co-educational problems and physical harassment problems. These challenges have a significant impact on enrolment, academic performance and overall well-being of women.

### In The Indian Scenario

After many studies by different committees and commissions and implementation of policies and programs on women education by Government of India, the educational status of women has been uplifted to a certain extent. The interventionist role of government has provided access to education and has enhanced the self-esteem of women, fostered decision making and critical thinking abilities and an understanding about their rights and entitlements. This has also enabled them a positivist role in contribution to society and its economy. This was made possible by creating necessary awareness in society regarding the necessity of educating women for effective contribution to the socio-economic development of the country. This requires adequate educational provision which Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are not able to provide completely due to the limitation in resources. The ODL system stepped in here by providing access and flexibility with regard to study hours and local conditions. For women learners who cannot pursue education through formal educational institutions due to various reasons, the ODL system provided panacea.

The inequality of educational opportunities prevailing in society and access to education for socially, economically and geographically disadvantaged women was provided by ODL institutions. Further, besides increasing the access to education, additional new programs and special training programs which have direct relevance to the livelihoods of women are conducted by ODL institutions (Saroja, 2008). In such a scenario, the role of ODL institutions becomes very significant in providing access, equity and inclusion in higher education.

### The Present research Study

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University came into existence in 1982 and in more than forty years of its history has helped to create a setting for women to get educated irrespective of their social and economic setting and realises their ambitions. It has established 10 women Learner Support Centres (LSCs) across the states of Telangana and AP at district headquarters to serve the women learners exclusively, besides providing access to education(co-education) in 169 Learner Support Centres. Married women, women from minority communities and women from socially deprived sections enrol themselves at these women study centres. The 10 exclusive women centres and other 169 LSCs offer a chance to women to get education.

Across the years, the number of women enrolling in the university has gradually increased. Nearly 3,03,025 women enrolled in different programs of the university. In the academic year 2021-2022, out of 1,25,463 learners enrolled for different programs, 37,174 were women.

#### Enrolment statistics of women in Dr. BRAOU from 2017-2021

Year	Female Enrolment	Total Enrolment	% of Female Enrolment
2017-18	70128	148071	47.4
2018-19	64159	133264	48.1
2019-20	58188	119591	48.7
2020-21	53363	116405	45.8
2021-22	57685	126889	45.5



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Women enrolment in Dr. BRAOU was 47.4% in 2017-2018 and there was a general upward trend in the next few years. In 2020, however, there is around 3% dip in the enrolment of women indicating that COVID-19 had impacted women education in ODL systems too. It also evident that this downward trend continued even in the next year, i.e., 2021-2022.

## Summing up:

NEP- 2020 stresses on inclusive education and provision of quality education to women. In India the gross enrolment ratio for males is 26.3% and for females it is 26.4% in the year 2017-18. Education is the greatest tool to bring equality and equity. The Government of India is supposed to constitute a 'Gender Inclusion Fund' (NEP-2020) to increase educational access, enrolment, retention and learning output of female students. It was thought that policies are to be implemented to the maximum through concerted efforts in order to change the educational landscape (NEP-2020). ODL system can enhance GER in higher education and also bring the hitherto neglected women education to the fore-front by repositioning its social commitment for equity in education.

The opportunity for ODL institutions to transform the society by providing effective education to women is rich. Dr. BRAOU plays a major part by providing much needed services for women education.

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