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## A Study of the Growth of Literacy among the People of Srinagar from Socio-economic from Gender Perspective

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### **Abstract:**

*Literacy and Education are the two most important indicators of development of a nation. Higher levels of literacy and education act as a catalyst for cultural, economic, political and social development equipping people with freedom to develop their capacities to their fullest. Analyzing and investigating the strategy in a historical context with an open mind, the women in Srinagar emerged from the state of ignorance and poverty through literacy interventions. This resulted in effecting among the women a position of economic prosperity along with social rejuvenation. Therefore, literacy and education has been considered as an agent of basic change in the status of women in the world, state and also in the district of Srinagar.*

*The present paper elucidates some aspects of impact of literacy on socio-economic conditions in terms of gender perspective in the course of which schooling leads to social and economic gains. Further, a proper understanding of the inter relationship between literacy and socio-economic development of women in Srinagar is constructed. This can help in improving the strategies to be developed to shape the perspectives and policies recommended for women.*

**Keyword:** Literacy, Srinagar, Socio-economic development, Gender Issues.

### **1. Introduction**

Jammu and Kashmir has justly a reputation for something distinctive as its position and form together are such that there is no parallel to it in the whole world of the Himalayas. It is a plain embedded among the mountains, a wide vale enclosed by mountain ranges, lying at such a height above the sea as on the one hand to be of a climate entirely different from that of India, being saved from the heat that parches its plains, and on the other hand to be free from the severity of cold that visits the loftier plateaus or wide valleys that are found more towards the centre of the mass of mountains. The valley of Kashmir occupies the topmost position in the map of India forming the State of Jammu and Kashmir<sup>1</sup>. The location of Jammu and Kashmir is between 32.17' and 37.06' North altitude and East to West, the State lies between 73.26' and 80.30' longitude. To its north lie Chinese and Russian Turkistan, on its east is Chinese Tibet, on the South and South-West lie the states of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. On the west is the North West Frontier Provinces of Pakistan, China and Russia. The geographical location of Kashmir is such that it is surrounded by a number of foreign countries which makes the valley very important from strategic angle. With its borders sealed on the east, west and north for the people of neighboring countries i.e., China, Afghanistan and Pakistan the state is accessible only from the south through the road, railway and air flights with the rest of the Indian union.

Srinagar<sup>2</sup> (*Yamraj*) as constituted at present is one of the most important city of the Himalayan mountain system<sup>3</sup>. Previously, the Valley was divided into two districts only \_ one with headquarters at Anantnag<sup>4</sup> (*Maraj*) and the other with headquarters at Baramulla<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The total geographical area of Jammu and Kashmir is 222236 square Kilometers out of which 78114 square Kilometers is under Pakistan, 5180 square Kilometers handed over by Pakistan to China, 37555 square Kilometers under the occupation of China in Leh (Ladakh) District and 101387 under India. Area occupied: India (46%), Pakistan (35%) and China (19%). The state is divided into three administrative divisions, i.e., Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.

<sup>2</sup> The dialect of *Kamraj*, the northern portion of Kashmir, differs from the dialect of *Maraj*, the southern portion, and both differ from that of *Yamraj*, Srinagar. Lawrence, W.R. (1967). *The Valley of Kashmir*. Srinagar: Kesar Publications.p.455.

<sup>3</sup> The Himalaya is a mountain range in the Indian subcontinent which separates the Indo-Gangetic Plain from the Tibetan Plateau.

<sup>4</sup> The name of Anantnag is from the great spring Ananta Naga. This is corroborated by almost all local historians including Kalhana according to whom the town has taken the name of this great spring of Cesha or Ananta Naga "land of countless springs". The spring is mentioned in the Neelmat Purana as a sacred place for the Hindus and Koshur Encyclopedia testifies it.

(Kamraj). Srinagar<sup>6</sup> occupies the central sector of the Kashmir Valley at 34.50 North longitude and 74.50 East longitude, on the banks of river Jhelum from south east to north west.

S.No.	Division	Sq. Km	Percentage
1.	Jammu	26293	26%
2.	Kashmir	15948	16%
3.	Ladakh	59146	58%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>101387</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1: Division wise area occupied by Jammu and Kashmir State

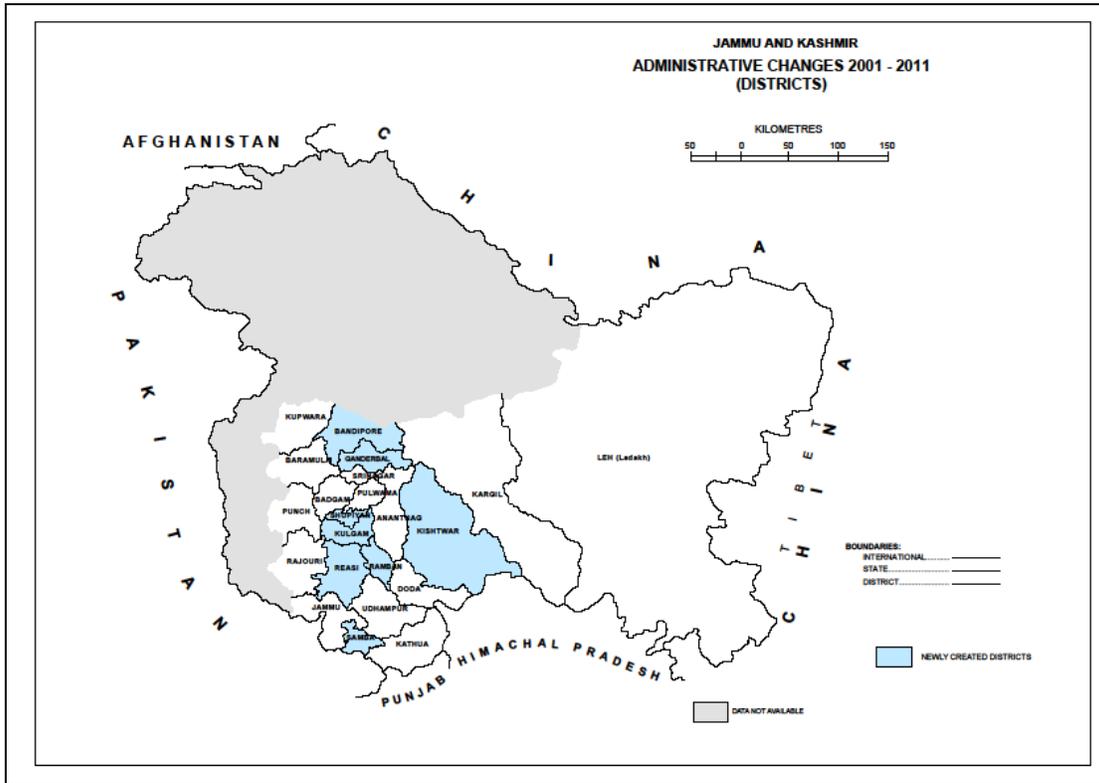


Figure 1

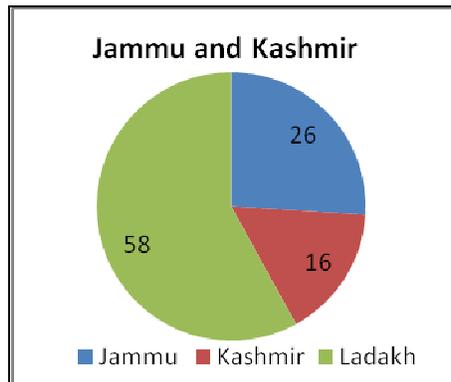


Figure 2

Source: Department of Census, Jammu & Kashmir

<sup>5</sup> Baramulla district is one of the 22 districts in Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. According to Census 2011, there are 22 districts in Jammu and Kashmir. Presently it is about 55 km away from the capital city of Srinagar.

<sup>6</sup> Srinagar is the summer capital of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. It is situated in the centre of the Kashmir valley on the banks of Jhelum River and is surrounded by five districts.

### 1.1. Need and Scope

Literacy and Education are the two most important indicators of development of a nation. Higher levels of literacy and education act as a catalyst for social and economic development equipping people with freedom to develop their capacities to their fullest. Literacy and education has been considered as a component of change, modernization and development<sup>7</sup>. The Central and the State Governments have appointed different commissions from time to time with a hope to improve education quantitatively as well as qualitatively giving special reference to women education. Women confined to the domestic arena have a right to become equal participants in the development process. It suggests that the improvement in literacy rates would directly influence socio-economic status of women \_ the underprivileged section of the society. For development of the country and egalitarian society, the education of women is important. Keeping in view the policies of government, it is very important that socio-economic development can be achieved through the increase in literacy and education.

Education is the fundamental enabler of the knowledge economy. Well-educated and skilled people are essential for creating, sharing, disseminating, and using knowledge effectively. The knowledge economy of the twenty-first century demands a new set of competencies, which include not only ICT skills, but also such soft skills as problem solving, analytical skills, group learning, working in a team-based environment, and effective communication. Women have to be provided with the changing skills necessary to be competitive in the new global economy.

### 1.2. Objectives

The objectives for the present study have been developed with a view in mind to change perceptions of literacy from traditional schooling to functional education. Following objectives have been formulated for the present study:

1. To study growth of literacy among the people of Srinagar;
2. To study the impact of literacy on socio-economic development;
3. To study the impact of literacy on gender issues; and
4. Based on the above, to suggest strategies for the future.

## 2. Methodology

In order to achieve the objectives of the study, a well planned historical along with descriptive methodology with a sound logical basis was of utmost importance in the present study. History provides a meaningful record of human achievements. Since historical observations cannot be considered in isolation; therefore, a truthful integrated account of relationship between persons, events, times and places needs to be recognized. It is to understand the past along with present and to try to comprehend the future in light of past events and developments.

The study is based on primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources of data have been collected through questionnaire based interviews that has been prepared during the year 2012-13 along with some literary works of Kashmir History reflecting on the education and socio-economic conditions of women. The secondary source of data has been collected through the Department of Census (J&K), Directorate of Economics and Statistics (J&K), Statistical Unit of the University of Kashmir (Srinagar), State Education Department (J&K), State Archives (J&K) and Deputy Commissioner's Office (Srinagar), SPS Library (Srinagar).

## 3. Discussion

A literate person is one who has acquired all the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all those activities in which literacy<sup>8</sup> is required for effective functioning in his group and community and whose attention in reading, writing and numeracy make it possible to use these skills towards his/her own and his/her community's development. It is clear that literacy equips a person with the power of rational thinking, a power which recognizes no discrimination based on sex, language, creed, race, colour and heritage.

Women's education which can affect the other goals much more than men's education as she plays a vital role as that of being herself, as a wife and a mother. Hence education has been one of the major issues of concern of the government as well as the society at large due to which today the educated women in Kashmir hold a prominent position in the society as well as all over the world. Education is an effective tool for women's empowerment not only from the point of view of literacy, but has inter-linkage with other social parameters viz. health care, education of children etc. It enables women to acquire new knowledge and technology, required for improving and developing their tasks in all fields.

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<sup>7</sup> Development has been considered as the process that increases the capacities and well-being of the average citizen especially women and therefore literacy and education are the ways to meet the family and social needs.

<sup>8</sup> Literacy is defined by UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization) as "A literate person is one who can with understanding both read and write a short simple statement relevant to his everyday life.

It is not the simple reading of word or a set of associated symbols and sounds, but an act of critical understanding of man's situation in the world. It is not an end in itself but means of personal liberation and development and extending individual's educational efforts, involving overall inter-disciplinary responses to concrete problems."

Kashmir has a diverse typology ranging from rough terrains to scenic beauty. The historical studies on Kashmir show rigorous attempts to overthrow one political regime<sup>9</sup> after another. Historically, women from upper class received education, but on the whole masses were ignored.

Srinagar and its citizens, through the passage of time, has always shown a leading path to the people of the region and stood a centre of trade, education, arts and crafts etc. and has functioned as a central place in socio-economic life. Due to rise in consciousness<sup>10</sup> among the people, women have been realizing the existence of their personal rights, changed socialization practices, heightened self-confidence, increased assertiveness, awareness of legal and administrative procedures. Women have been empowered through education leading to financial stability, to be confident enough to face the society and to gain prestige in the society. As in case of economic activities in general, investment and expenditure on education services influence income generation, distribution and consumption in the economy. Women education is essential for higher and better standards of health along with rise in her economic productivity. The expansion of literacy services results in a demand for educated human power, raw-material and consumable goods. In turn that leads to income generation, distribution and consumption through the agents engaged in education and at the same place women are empowered to outgrow social evils and elevate their place in the social set up.

Literacy<sup>11</sup> as planned by learners with the help of State breaks away from traditional imposed literacy programs, patriarchal thought, religious prescription and constructs a philosophy of development, education and personal rights that is inclusive and empowering.

#### 4. Findings of the Study

Findings of the study are based on the primary and secondary data.

Year	Srinagar			Jammu & Kashmir			All India Average		
	Literacy Rate (T)	Male	Female	Literacy Rate (T)	Male	Female	Literacy Rate (T)	Male	Female
1961	16.80	23.70	8.52	12.95	19.75	5.05	28.30	40.40	15.35
1971	24.91	33.49	14.67	21.71	31.01	10.94	34.45	45.96	21.98
1981	33.90	41.97	24.66	30.64	41.46	18.37	43.57	56.38	29.76
1991	Not recorded due to turmoil						52.21	64.13	39.29
2001	59.18	68.85	47.97	54.46	65.75	41.82	65.38	75.85	54.16
2011	71.18	77.95	63.48	68.74	78.26	58.01	74.04	82.14	65.46

Table 2: Literacy Rate from 1961 to 2011

Source: Census of Jammu and Kashmir & Census of India<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The Kashmiris divide their history into four periods: the early period of the Hindu kings chronicled in the famous Rajatarangini; the period of Musalmans, known as the Salatini-Kashmir; the period of Mughals, known as the Padshahi-i-Chagatai or Shahan-i-Mughlia, and the period of the Pathans, known as the Shahan-i-Durani. Chak Dynasty ruled Kashmir from 1560-1586 and Yusuf Shah from Chak Dynasty ruled first in 1579. After an exile of a year and a half, Yusuf Shah Chak reestablished himself on the throne from 1580-1586. Kashmir was under the Afghans from 1752 to 1819. Kashmir was under the Sikhs from 1819 to 1846. Jammu and Kashmir state came into existence in 1846, after the first Anglo-Sikh war of 1845-46, with Maharaja Gulab Singh as its first ruler. Until then, there was no such distinct political entity. The State was not the personal creation of Gulab Singh but was rather the outcome of an agreement between him and the representatives of the British East India Company by signing the Treaty of Amritsar in 1845.

<sup>10</sup> There was the emergence of more than a hundred different separatist organizations (*tanzeems*) in 1990s with different agendas and goals. Most of the young men turned into militants and the women have always joined men in protests. Survival became politicized as women were pushed into the public sphere by the synergetic collapse of the division between the public-private spheres. According to H.-P. Gasser, it is generally admitted that "*non-international armed conflicts are armed confrontations that take place within the territory of a State between the government on the one hand and armed insurgent groups on the other hand. [...] Another case is the crumbling of all government authority in the country, as a result of which various groups fight each other in the struggle for power*" H.P. Gasser, *International Humanitarian Law: an Introduction*, in: *Humanity for All: the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*, H. Haug (ed.), Paul Haupt Publishers, Berne, 1993, p. 555.

Even while facing the manifestations of stigma and seclusion, women (half widows) have assumed new multifarious responsibilities and are changing from being a 'dependent to a provider' in the household. There is thus a change in their gender role, as they take on the role of a man. However, this sudden transformation in their role, as an outcome of personal tragedy, puts a heavy burden on them especially when formal and informal means of help are lacking.

The women now find themselves adapting to the roles earlier considered as male.

<sup>11</sup> No society can claim to be 100 percent literate. More than 90 percent literacy is considered totally literate. Developed countries claim in certain cases even 95 percent literacy. Karlekar, Malavika, Ed. (2000). *Reading the World Understanding the Literacy Campaigns in India*. Mumbai: ASPBAE Publications. p. 66

As per 2011 census, the units of administration from fourteen districts and fifty-nine tehsils have been reorganized into twenty-two districts and eighty-two tehsils. The current position of educational development in Kashmir is important to explore because it demonstrates how the State manages an education system after a significant amount of violence. According to census 2011, female literacy in Srinagar district is 63.48 per cent showing an increase in female literacy in Srinagar that was 8.52 per cent as per census 1961 and 47.97 per cent as per census 2001. These statistics are representative of State that is recovering from conflict, and moving towards developing their education system.

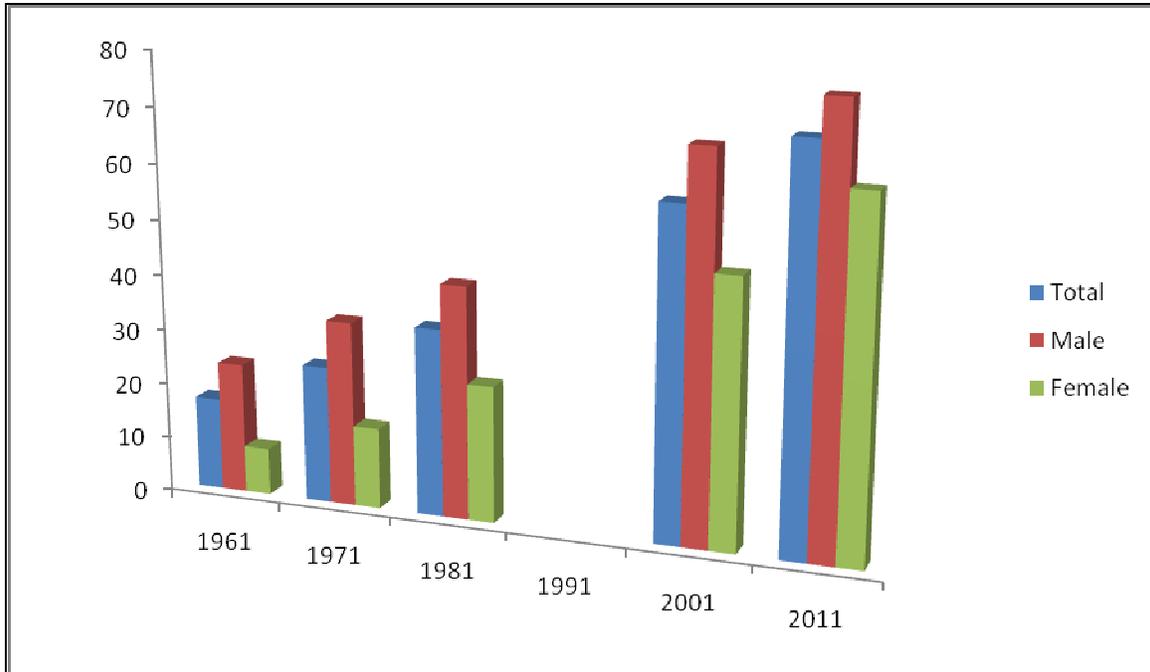


Figure 3: Literacy Rate of Srinagar district from 1961 to 2011  
 Source: Census of Jammu and Kashmir

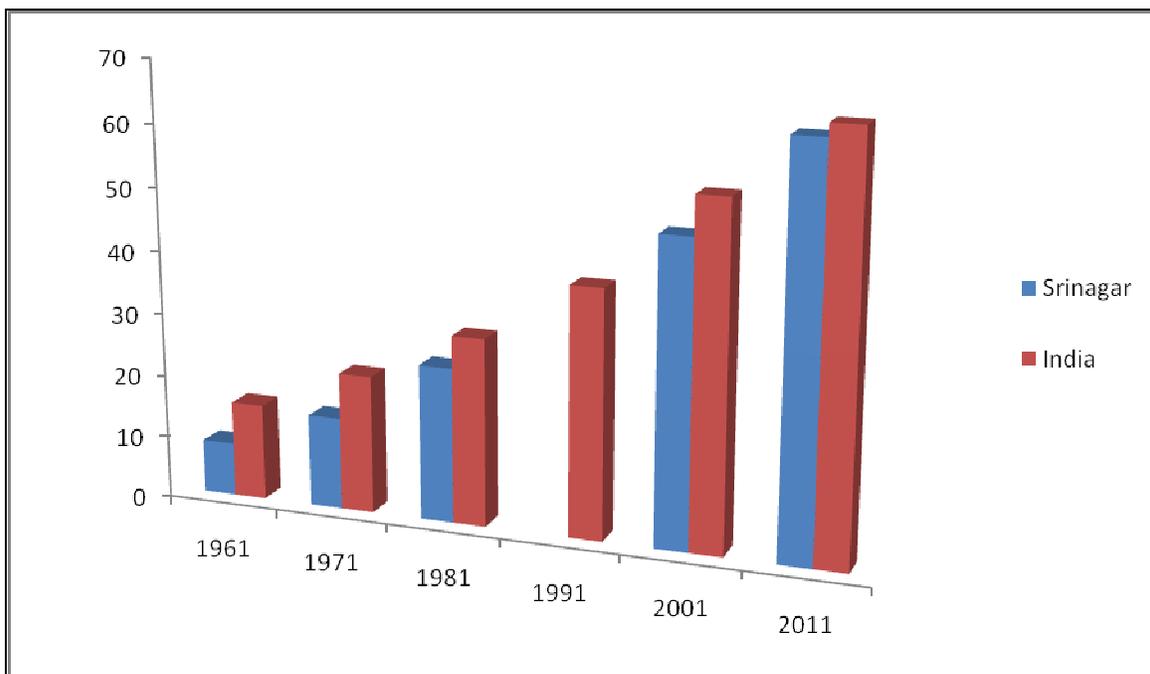


Figure 4: Literacy Rate of Srinagar district and India from 1961 to 2011  
 Source: Census of Jammu and Kashmir  
 Census of India

<sup>12</sup> The data concerning literacy was collected from the Department of Census, Jammu and Kashmir.

The literacy rates obtained at the census gives a reflection of the government policies and programmes. "As per 2011 Census, Jammu and Kashmir State has recorded a literacy rate of 68.74 per cent. The literacy rate among females has been reported to be 58 per cent while as it is 78 percent among males. On the whole, there has been an improvement in education of women in Srinagar and literacy is increasing.

From 8.52 per cent of women in 1961 to 47.97 per cent of women in 2001 to 63.48 per cent of women in 2011 should not be a discouraging figure of literacy in Srinagar district. It may be as a result of general awareness, social pressure, status consciousness, international or global intervention, individual or collective persuasion that has pushed women inside the school.

Efforts should be made to enroll all the girls in the relevant age-group in the schools. Arrangements for non-formal and part-time education should be made for those girls who might not be able to attend the whole time formal schools for one reason or the other. It is an established fact that women remain poorly represented in the work force throughout Asia \_ more so in South Asia \_ resulting in a loss of potential economic growth in these countries. The lack of an enabling environment for women's career advancement and empowerment has resulted in their under representation in decision-making and in top executive jobs, especially in the spheres of business and science. To alter this trend, more women are required in leadership positions in politics and business. Higher education is crucial to empowering women to become active members in their respective domain, something that can bring about a positive change in society. Education is increasingly important for strengthening the economy as well as the health of our societies. In the newly emerging knowledge economy, human capital is the most precious resource, there is thus a greater imperative to educate women to help nations to reduce the gender gap in employment and improve their productivity. With the changing role of women in society, and considering their significant contribution to national and economic development, the need for women's university is becoming increasingly significant. Women's university can address these challenges by providing focused, relevant and need-based education. Students at women's university can think about themselves and their life course through Women's Studies and other women related courses.

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