1. Preamble:

First step towards education is literacy. Literacy is a reasonably good indicator of development in a society. Spread and diffusion of literacy is generally associated with essential trait of today's civilization such as modernization, urbanization, industrialization, communication and commerce. The role of education in the development of the traditional people has been very well stressed by educationists and sociologists. Education may mean formal or non formal education. Formal education means learning in the structured school setting. It is necessarily organized and is supported by state government partially or totally. Non formal education would be learning in any kind of setting which takes place apart from the specific school programme. Out of these two, which one is better is matter of opinion. It all depends upon the conditions under which people receive education. For all those who have crossed the normal age limits for formal education, non formal education remain as the only alternative. Hence non formal education can be viewed as an alternative to formal education; offer a way to devise an effective approach to learning and education. Education is the foundation on which rests the edifice of society and democracy. Illiteracy constitutes a major hurdle in the way of rapid social, political and economic development of the country.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has drafted a definition of literacy as the "ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society."

The United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP’s) Human Development report published every year, reflect that India is one of the least literate societies in the world with large rural-urban and male female disparities. The Constitutional amendment of 1976 included education in concurrent list (the official list of subjects for which the centre and states assume joint responsibility). This was an important step which called for a new sharing of responsibility between the union government and the states in this vital area of national importance.

A child’s education starts from his or her home. Parents are the first teacher of a child. But, the role of a mother is more important in the growth of the child. So a mother should be educated in this regard. As rightly said by Mahatma Gandhi “If you educate a
man you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman you educate an entire family”. So, we can say that Mahatma Gandhi was aware of the importance of educating women. But, in our country people are still not aware of women’s rights and importance of their education. In our country the birth of girl child is considered as a stigma on family. Women in India have always been regarded as the weaker sex as Indian society is basically patriarchal in nature. She has often been treated as a source of pleasure and at times been bought and sold as a market commodity. She has generally never been given any freedom but has been kept within the four walls of the house, deprived of all her rights. Even though women have been granted equal rights with men in principle by our Constitution, in practice, we find a large number of women being illiterate, ignorant and they continue to be dominated and exploited by their male counterparts.

There is rapid development in the field of IT, Media, Technology in our country. Yet it lags behind in issues of development of women. In many Indian villages, literacy rate of women is very poor. The development of a nation directly depends upon the development of women in that country. Education plays a major role in the development of a nation. If India wants to be in the list of developed countries and emerge as a super power then great attention needs to be paid to the education of women. The root cause of all the problems which women face today is illiteracy. If a woman is educated then, she will be aware of her rights which in turn help in uprooting problems such as dowry system, female foeticide, child marriage etc. If a wife is educated then she does not need to depend on her husband for her financial needs. If a woman is working then she will get the respect of her in-laws as she would be economically independent and contribute to the household expenses.

Mahatma Gandhi mentioned women as baronial. As he rightly said, “If she is weak in striking, she is strong in suffering.” Women are stronger than men in expressing their emotions, love and compassion. The development of a child is greatly influenced by the mother as compared to the father as he or she remains most of the time with his or her mother.
We are very proud of India as our motherland. All our rivers have feminine names. But we ill-treat women and do many injustices with them. Our society is male dominant; emphasis is given on the education of men rather than women. Many still believe that a woman’s life begins and ends in a household and within realm of reproduction. So they opine not to educate them. Due to illiteracy many women still think that they are here to serve their husbands and in-laws. Due to unawareness girls are married when they are under-age and give birth to children much before they reach maturity. This in turn cause many health related problems in them. They are also unaware of family planning due to which the size of their family increases and they can’t educate and feed their children properly. In contrast, if a girl is educated then she will be aware of the legal age for marriage and appropriate time for giving birth to children. An educated woman will be aware of various family planning schemes and she will have right number of children whom she is able to feed and educate. An educated mother understands the importance of educating a girl child. The education of women will help in reducing the population of our country which is the main hindrance in our development.

It has been noted that women are more dedicated than their male counterparts in various fields. They perform their allocated task/ job with more sincerity. If given a chance then women can rise to the top in their fields. If Kiran Bedi’s parents had not educated her, then she might not be the first IPS officer of India. Same is the case of Kalpana Chawla, first female astronaut, who brought laurels to our country. Today Sonia Gandhi (UPA Chairperson) is among the list of 50 most powerful women of the world. Indira Nooyi (Pepsico India CEO) and Chandra Kocher are both world’s most powerful women heading multinational companies in India.