

Female Child Education in India

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a dynamic process that starts from birth. Education is the mirror of the society and base of the socio-economic development. It transforms human beings from ignorance to enlightenment, from underdevelopment to faster economic and social development. Education is a process of character building and expansion of intellect. Women Education is one of the essential in building a prosperous society. Without educating the women of the country we can't hope for a developed nation. Women play a vital role in the all round progress of a country. If we want to make democracy successful, women must be educated. They are the real builders of happy homes.

HISTORY OF FEMALE CHILD EDUCATION

The history of female education in India has its roots in ancient Vedic age. "The home has, verily, its foundation in the wife" - The Rig Veda. During the Vedic age, more than 3,000 years ago, women were assigned a high place in society. They shared an equal standing with their men folk and enjoyed a kind of liberty that actually had societal sanctions. The ancient Hindu philosophical concept of 'shakti', the feminine principle of energy, was also a product of this age. This took the form of worship of the female idols or goddesses. In India even today people worship Goddess "Saraswati" as the Goddess of education. Vedic literature praises the birth of a scholarly daughter in these words: "A girl also should be brought up and educated with great effort and care." (Mahanirvana Tantra); and "All forms of knowledge are aspects of Thee; and all women throughout the world are Thy forms." (Devi Mahatmya). Traditional education in India served a very limited purpose of a particular section of the society belonging to certain cast. During medieval period education was elitist, favoring the rich. These pre-existing elitist tendencies were reinforced under the British rule. The modern education system of British Raj was first developed in the three Presidencies (Bombay, Calcutta, Madras). In the early 1900s, the Indian National Congress called for national education.

After India attained independence in 1947, the University Education Commission was created to recommend suggestions to improve the quality of education. However, their report spoke against female education, referring to it as: "Women's present education is entirely irrelevant to the life they have to lead. It is not only a waste but often a definite disability." However, the fact that the female literacy rate was at 8.9% post-Independence could not be ignored. Thus, in 1958, a national committee on women's education was appointed by the government, and most of its recommendations were accepted. The crux of its recommendations was to bring female education on the same footing as offered for boys. Soon afterward, committees were created that talked about equality between men and women in the field of education. For example, one committee on differentiation of curricula for boys and girls (1959) recommended equality and a common curricula at various stages of their learning. Further efforts were made to expand the education system, and the Education Commission was set up in 1964, which largely talked about female education, which recommended a national policy to be developed by the government. This occurred in 1968, providing increased emphasis on female education.

REQUIREMENT OF FEMALE CHILD EDUCATION

Female education is the need of the hour. Without educating the women of the country we can't hope for a developed nation. Women play a vital role in the all round progress of a country. If we want to make democracy successful, women must be educated. They are the real builders of happy homes. It is said that if we educate a man, we educate a man only, but if we educate a woman, we educate the whole family. This highlights the importance of female education. It is a fact that women are the first teachers of their children. It is in their lap that the children receive the very first lessons. Hence, if mothers are well-educated, they can play an important role in shaping and moulding of their sons and daughters. Napoleon was once asked, what the great need of France was. He simply answers, "Nation's progress is impossible without trained and educated mothers."

If the women of my country are not educated, about half of the people will be ignorant." Such was the opinion of Napoleon about educating the women-folk. Our opinion too must not differ from Napoleon. We must give up our conservative outlook and create an atmosphere in which not a single woman remains uneducated. Women have three major roles to perform in the course of their life. They have to discharge their duties as good daughters+, good wives and good mothers. Apart from these important duties, they have to prove themselves as good citizens of a free democracy. Hence, it is necessary to give women a different kind of education from the one given to boys. Their education should be such as may enable them to discharge their duties in a proper way.

From education they become fully matured in all the fields of life. Educated women are well aware of their duties and rights. They can contribute in the development of the country in the same way as men do. Society runs on two wheels, both the wheels must be equally strong to run smoothly. It is a good sign that today's women are not considered a weaker sex. They are being taught properly right from their childhood. As a result we see women working in almost every field. They work even in police and other departments. Our constitution grants them equal rights not more rights as compared to men.

SOME FACTORS AFFECTING THE WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA

- [1]. Undernourishment and malnutrition of the girl child
- [2]. Sexual harassment and abuse at early age
- [3]. Lower socio-economic status of parents
- [4]. Infections and low immunity power at childhood
- [5]. So many social restrictions and taboo in their life
- [6]. Forced to follow orders of elders in family whether at home of parents or parents-in-law
- [7]. Allowed to get only limited education

POLICIES FOR STRENGTHEN THE FEMALE CHILD EDUCATION

Before and after Independence, India has been taking active steps towards women's status and education. The 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002, has been a path breaking step towards the growth of education, especially for females. According to this act, elementary education is a fundamental right for children between the ages of 6 and 14. The government has undertaken to provide this education free of cost and make it compulsory for those in that age group. This undertaking is more widely known as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Since then, the SSA has come up with many schemes for inclusive as well as exclusive growth of Indian education as a whole, including schemes to help foster the growth of female education.

The major schemes are the following:

- [1]. Mahila Samakhya Programme: This programme was launched in 1988 as a result of the New Education Policy (1968). It was created for the empowerment of women from rural areas especially socially and economically marginalized groups. When the SSA was formed, it initially set up a committee to look into this programme, how it was working and recommend new changes that could be made
- [2]. Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGBV): This scheme was launched in July, 2004, to provide education to girls at primary level. It is primarily for the underprivileged and rural areas where literacy level for females is very low. The schools that were set up have 100% reservation: 75% for backward class and 25% for BPL (below Poverty line) females.
- [3]. National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL): This programme was launched in July, 2003. It was an incentive to reach out to the girls who the SSA was not able to reach through other schemes. The SSA called out to the "hardest to reach girls". This scheme has covered 24 states in India. Under the NPEGEL, "model schools" have been set up to provide better opportunities to girls.

CONCLUSION

Women education has been improved in all the urban and rural areas of the country however in the rural areas extra programmes of development of women have been included. In order to improve socio-economic status of women in the rural areas, awareness programmes are run to develop income generating activities. The most important challenge, if the ground reality is taken into account is the abject poverty coupled with population explosion emerges as the root cause of depriving the children their right to education. If our Government is really serious about effective implementation of RTE, then poverty has to be accepted as a biggest challenge. In addition to that, the spectrum of implementation issues covering finance, accountability and monitoring need to be addressed forthwith.

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