



Educational Sustainability for Gender Equality

Abstract

In Indian society, woman has received status of Shakti and creator of entire world. In Indian scriptures, women have received higher status than male but in reality the scenario is different. Woman is considered as second citizen in the society. The Indian constitution has granted equal rights to women in terms of freedom & opportunities. Education is the appropriate instrument which can bring change in the society. The government has initiated by providing free education to girls with other incentives which resulted positively. The female literacy rate has increased over period time but still there is a gap between male and female literacy. On one side, Indian women have proved themselves in various fields such as science & technology, politics, management, education, etc. and on the other hand, still her social status doesn't improve much. Day by day, crimes against women are increasing rapidly which indicates there is need to bring change in attitude of the society. This also indicates that present education system is lacking somewhere. There is need to rethink about the aim of education. Does the education aim for literacy or for holistic development of individual? In this the author has made an attempt to highlight lacuna in present education system with the suggestive measures.

Key words: Gender Equality, Educational Sustainability, Government initiatives, Women empowerment, Girls Education

Introduction

“It is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing.” — Swami Vivekananda

Development of society depends on its citizens. To make holistic development of the society, contribution of each member of the society is essential. Male & female members of the society are its pillar & their development directly affects the development of the society. Indian society is considered as male dominating society & women are considered as the second citizen. To remove gender discrimination and improve status of women, Indian Constitution has granted equal rights to women in terms of freedom & opportunities. Education is considered as a milestone for women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their lives.

Since the independence, government has taken many initiatives improving condition of women in India. The number of schemes and programmes are initiated by the government. These initiatives are not only in the field of education but also in other field too.

Government Initiatives for Women Empowerment

With the changing time and as per the requirement of the society, the government has introduced various schemes and programme for empowering women and bring gender equality in the society. Few of these initiatives are as follows:

- **Girls Education:** Various initiatives are taken by the government for girls education. Few of these initiatives are
 - **Sakshar Bharat Mission for female literacy:** This was launched in 2001, to prevent the alarming drop in female education. Its aim was to reduce the illiteracy rate of women by half.

- **Indian Shiksha Karmi Project:** The aim of it is to raise women status by gaining education.
- **Training of female teachers:** Its aim is to provide platform to women by gaining training related to teaching profession and in future can be earning member of the society.
- **Scholarships for girls:** To promote girls education by sharing financial liability of parents for girls education, scholarship is provide to the girl child.
- **Mahila Samakhya Program:** This initiative was taken by the government in 1988, in accordance with the New Education Policy 1968. This group was launched as a rural wing of the SSA. It was mainly aimed to help & empower the weaker section of rural women.
- **Kusturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme:** It was introduced in 2004 with aim to serve girls from backward classes & those having financial difficulties.
- **National Program for Education of Girls Elementary Level:** It is another wing of SSA. It aims to provide elementary education to girls of remote places.
- **Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao Abhiyaan:** It aims to save girl child and promote girl's education in the society.
- **Sukanya Samridhi Account:** This scheme is introduced to make girl child economically independent.
- Under Ministry of Women and Child Development following schemes for gender equality, socio-economic development is launched:
 - i. **Swadhar and Short Stay Homes:** It aim is to provide relief and rehabilitation to destitute women and women in distress.
 - ii. **Support to Training and Employment Program for Women (STEP):** It is provided to ensure sustainable employment and income generation for marginalised and assetless rural and urban poor women across the country.
 - iii. **Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK):** It aim is to provide micro-finance services to bring about the socio-economic upliftment of poor women.
 - iv. **National Mission for Empowerment of Women (NMEW):** It is started to strengthen the overall processes that promote all-round Development of Women.
 - v. **Rajiv Gandhi National Creche Scheme for Children of Working Mothers:** It provides day care facilities for running a crèche of 25 children in the age group 0-6 years from families having monthly income of less than Rs 12,000.
 - vi. **Women Helpline:** It started with intended to provide 24 hours immediate and emergency response to women affected by violence.
- **Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY) Scheme:** It is being implemented as Conditional Maternity Benefit for pregnant and lactating women to improve health and nutrition status to better enabling environment by providing cash incentives to pregnant and nursing mothers to partly compensate wage loss both prior to and after delivery.

Apart from certain schemes and programmes, various policies and Acts are implemented for bringing gender equality in the society. Few Acts related to women welfare are as follows

- **Equal Remuneration Act, 1973:** It provides for payment of equal remuneration to men and women workers for the same work of similar nature without any discrimination. In order to ensure social security to the workers including women in the unorganised sector, the Government has enacted the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act 2008.
- **The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961:** It is to regulate employment of women in certain establishments for a certain period (12 weeks) before and after childbirth and provides for maternity and other benefits.
- **The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013:** It has been enacted, which covers all women, irrespective of their age or employment status and protect them against sexual harassment at workplaces both in public and private sector, whether organised or unorganised sectors.

These initiatives are taken by the government to bring gender equality in the society. Help the women to upgrade their status in the society. As a result of such initiatives by the government change in the society is observed.

Scenario of Gender Equality in India

After independence, changes in the society have been observed. These changes are observed in various aspects of society where participation of women has improved. Education has played vital role in women empowerment. Its aim is not limited for developing 3Rs but it is aimed to bring change in the society by changing attitude of society towards women. The changes are also observed related to social evils which prevailed earlier in the society.

Literacy rate of women has increased but still there is gap between literacy rate of male & female. As per 2011, total literacy rate is 74.04%. Male literacy rate is 82.14% and Female literacy rate is 65.46% which indicates gap of 15.46 %. Still in India, more numbers of girls are deprived from education.

As a result of education, women are more independent compare to earlier. Women are participating in various sectors of the society. Now female is not only housewife but also performing role of administrator, doctor, teacher, leader, etc. To some extent society has accepted her new role, still there is need to change mentality of people. There is discrimination on base of gender for assigning task to women at workplace. In India, women are less preferred candidate for higher level administrative positions (Chaudhary, R.2010). Even the women are forced to make selection of her profession based on family responsibility. ILO reported that social factors play a very significant role in repressing women's labour force participation in India. These include the restrictions imposed on women's movements outside the household as discouraged by the husband and in-laws. However, it is striking that the proportion of females attending to domestic duties is relatively high in urban areas and among the better educated – the very segments of the female population that are likely to face less social constraints on labour participation. In 2009–10, among urban females with graduate degrees, those who were reported to be attending to domestic duties were close to 60 %, which was almost twice the corresponding proportion for rural females with primary or middle-school education (Thomas, 2012). In the case of working women, her family members are not ready to help her in domestic work. Society still feels that its responsibility of female to take care about family as society has pre-defined her as daughter in law of the family.

In spite of various Act for the welfare of women, crime rate against her has increased day by day. Sharda Act which was passed in the 1950s to raise the marital age limit for girls, child marriage particularly in North India is quite prevalent though the average age at marriage for females was increased to 18.

The Dowry Prohibition Act was finally passed in 1961, to protect women and promising severe punishment, but as part of rituals dowry is demanded and if their demand doesn't fulfill then female becomes victim of domestic violence. The cases of dowry deaths have increased by 4.6% during the year 2014 over the previous year (8,033 cases).

With the increase in literacy rate girl child birth rate has reduced. It found that educated parents are not interested to give birth to girl child and adopt illegal ways to kill girl child in mother's womb. It has created imbalance in the society as birth rate of female is lower than male birth rate.

Gap in female and male members in the society has gave birth to new problems like rape, molestation, kidnapping, female traffic, etc. Total of 3,37,922 cases of crime against women (both under various sections of IPC and SLL) were reported in the country during the year 2014 as compared to 3,09,546 in the year 2013, it shows an increase of 9.2% during the year 2014. Incidents of incest rape (rape by blood relation like father, brother etc.) in the country have increased by 25.7% during 2014 over the previous year (from 536 cases in 2013 to 674 cases in 2014). Out of 36,735 total rape cases in the country, 197 cases were reported as custodial rapes during the year 2014. A total of 57,311 cases were reported under kidnapping & abduction of women during 2014. These cases have shown an increase of 10.5% during 2014 over the previous year 2013 (from 51,881 cases in 2013 to 57,311 cases in 2014). Domestic violence, the cases of cruelty by husband or his relatives in the country have increased by 3.4% during 2014 over the previous year 1,18,866 cases.

These reveals that education has bring changes in the society by educating female but still attitude of society has not fully changed. Society is still not ready to accept gender equality. Still there is need to

change attitude of society by educating them regarding women rights and making them to understand that women is not second member of the society but is having same status as male member is having in the society.

Education for Gender Equality

In present education system, at various stages of education & through various mode gender equality is introduced. The government schemes are more supportive for gender equality.

- For gender equality, subject textbooks are prepared by using name of both gender while describing any lessons. Even gender specified role & tasks almost nullified from the content of textbook. But whenever teacher has to assign task to students then she assigns task as per gender. So, it is essential that first school stops discriminating child base on gender. It should provide equal opportunities to both.
- Gender specific curriculum is also designed. Vocational courses are more gender specific at school level. In few schools, at the time of subject selection, girls are discouraged for selecting technical courses. There should not be discrimination based on gender for the selection of subject or even carrier path.
- The educational institution has to encourage girls to participate in various school activities. So that she gets scope for the developing her skills & contribute in the society.
- There is need to bring change in attitude of the society. To change attitude of society, at the school boy should be educated in such a way that he respects female. Through various curricular & co-curricular activities, developing positive attitude in which he respects feelings of female not only at school but also at the home & in the society.
- Awareness is not sufficient for upbringing change in the society. There is a need to take proper action against it. To reduce, rape and other violence against women it's necessary to debate out such issues in the school so that new generation can sensitise regarding such social evils prevailing in the society.
- To improve birth rate of girls, it is necessary to sensitise parent by organising counselling sessions for them at institutional level.

Conclusion

Gender equality is essential for the development of the society. Education can play vital role as after family maximum time child spend at school. Through education much change brought in the society but still there is need to bring few modifications. Apart from creating awareness about the gender equality there is need to bring change in attitude of society. Education has to frame such kind of curriculum and learning experience which develop positive attitude of the child and who can bring change in the society.

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