4TH UNIT

ISSUES OF INDIAN WOMEN

“If we educate a man, we simply educate an individual;
But if we educate a woman, we really educate a family.”

Education is the fundamental human right of every individual irrespective of gender. But some people in our society do not understand this and make such a simple thing extremely complicated. We must be aware of the fact that if she is uneducated then close to half of the population is uneducated. Educating a woman means educating the family and nation. “Education for all” is one of the major tasks being carried out by the Indian government but still we have the lowest female literacy rate in Asia. India is working but the pace is slow as we have not achieved what we should have been so far.

WOMEN EDUCATION

“When you educate a man, you educate an individual and when you educate a woman, you educate an entire family.” This declaration is multi-faceted, an educated woman has the self-confidence, skills as well as intelligence to understand the need to be a better daughter, sister, wife and mother and make a progressive family. Education is the only tool with which a girl or a woman can empower herself and eventually her family.

Education is a basic right and more importantly a catalyst for economic growth and human development. It is a crucial tool for breaking the barrier of poverty. Specifically, primary education is the critical enabler required to improve the economic and social scenario in many pockets of the nation. For any country to progress, one half of its population cannot be denied the right to education. This denial is also a gross violation of many rights enshrined in the Indian constitution, primary among them being the right to education and the right to equality. Global statistics reveal that 75% of the 130 million children who are out of schools are girls. Illiterate girls grow up to be illiterate women.
NEED FOR EDUCATION OF WOMEN

Here is an imperative need for education among women of rural areas and the backward section of the society. As they are unable to get benefits of various government programs due to lack of education, observed Prof. Alka Agarwal of economics department of Allahabad University while addressing a seminar at Uttar Pradesh Rajorshi Tandon open University. The topic of the seminar was Gender Bias and Role of Women in the social and economic development of rural India. She suggested that the open universities should give greater impetus to the courses related with development of women. Speaking on the occasion, director of women education center of Allahabad University Sumita Parmar observed that health facilities should be provided to women in rural areas so that the problems existing in them including low blood pressure, anemia, diabetes and loss of calcium can be solved. There is a need for educating rural women so that feeling of self confidence can be generated among them. Prof. Usha Kiran of Banaras Hindu University observed that it is a matter of concern that women are subjected to domestic violence. They are also given less wages as compared to men. She stressed that steps should be taken that discrimination against women should be completely stopped. She questioned that how many people know about the Indian women cricket team while most of the country men are acquainted with the members of male Indian cricket team. She said members of Indian women cricket team have to travel in the second class compartment of train while the males of Indian cricket team are given large sum of money and they travel through flights.

IMPORTANCE OF WOMEN EDUCATION

Educated women are capable of bringing socio-economic changes. The constitution of almost all democratic countries including India, grantees equal rights to both men and women. Primary education is now a fundamental right. When a woman or a girl is ensured of her rights, the society at large is ensured of its sustainability.

The importance of women education is briefly summarized below:

1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY: Education will empower women to come forward and contribute towards the development and prosperity of the country.
2. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT: So long as women remain backward and economically dependent on man, the helpless condition of them cannot be changed. Economic empowerment and independence will only come through proper education and employment of women.
3. IMPROVED LIFE: In our country, girls wait for marriage and after marriage they lost their entities. Their rights are trodden down, sometimes situation becomes insulting. If we do not take a broad outlook in the field of female education, the situation will be worse.
4. DIGNITY AND HONOUR: Educated women are now looked upon with dignity and honour. They become a source of inspiration for millions of young girls who make them their role models.
5. JUSTICE: Educated women are informed of their rights for justice. It would eventually lead to decline in instances of violence and injustice against women such as dowry, forced prostitution, child marriage, female foeticide etc.
6. **CHOICE TO CHOOSE A PROFESSION OF HER CHOICE:** Educated women can prove to be highly successful in the fields of life. A girl child should get equal opportunity for education, so that she can plan to become a successful doctors, engineers, nurses, air-hostesses, cook or choose a profession of her choice.

7. **ALLEVIATE POVERTY:** Women education is a pre-requisite to alleviate poverty. Women need to take equal burden of the massive task of eliminating poverty. This would demand massive contribution from educated women. There cannot be much social and economic changes unless girls and women are given their rights for education.

**CO-EDUCATION:**

Co-education is the integrated education of males and females at the same school facilities. Co-education refers to the integrated education system, where the education of both boys and girls are arranged in the same environment, mainly at Schools, Colleges and Universities.

The great Greek Philosopher, Plato had propagated the system of co-education in the ancient times. He believed that co-education will create a feeling of comradeship between boys to be educated with men in the same institutions. He felt that if men and women are taught together, it will develop their personality to the maximum. They will not feel any shyness from each other. He advocated that it was the only method in which both could become useful members of the society. Plato in reality was much influenced by the co-educational system of Sparta, a city of Greece. There the boys and girls were given both the academic and physical education together. The girls and boys studied and played together. They were both taught the art of fighting, horse riding, archery etc. Thus the women of Sparta were not in any inferior to men.

The term “co-ed” is a shortened version of “co-educational”, and is also sometimes used as an informal and increasingly archaic reference to a female college student, particularly in the United States. Before the 1960s, many private institutions of higher education restricted their enrollment to a single sex at some point in their history.

**CO-EDUCATION IN HISTORY:**

World history shows a clear preference for the education of boys over girls; the education of girls, when it existed, was usually informal and at home. In most ancient societies, such as Greece, India and Egypt organized educational systems only for boys. The education of women in general was rare; co-education even more so. Sparta, a Greek city state, was one of the few places in the ancient world with organized schooling for girls as well as boys. Although the two were separate, many historians believe that both schools were separate, many historians believe that both schools were similar in nature. Most education in Sparta was of a physical nature; the goal of a Sparta was of a physical nature; the goal of a Spartan education was to create ideal soldiers and strong young women who would bare strong babies.
Before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most schools were single-sex. In cases like one room school houses in frontier America, co-education was necessary from a practical standpoint; a single teacher was responsible for the education of all children in a given area and separation by age or sex was impractical. In England, the first public boarding school to become co-educational was Bedales school founded in 1893 by John Haden Badley and co-educational since 1898. The Scottish Dollar Academy claims to be the first coeducational boarding school in the UK (in 1818). In the 1960s, many Western countries shifted to co-education. Not only was coeducation a less expensive way of school children, but is also supported the thrust towards gender equality. In 1972, U.S. schools made coordination mandatory in public schools.

Institutions of higher education have also been historically for men only. In most countries, when women were given the option of a higher education, their only choice was to attend an all-female college.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF CO-EDUCATION:

Regarding educational implications, many educators, parents, and researchers have been asking is whether or not it is academically beneficial to teach boys and girls together or separately at school. Co-education has both advantages and disadvantages which are mentioned below.

ADVANTAGES OF CO-EDUCATION:

There are many advantages of co-education. If boys and girls are taught together there will not be any need for opening separate schools for boys and girls. Coeducation is an economical system, because both boys and girls can study in same schools and they can be taught by the same staff. In the future both boys and girls have to live together in the society and if they are taught together from the very beginning, they can understand each other well. The girls will not feel shy in the presence of boys. The boys will also not tease the girls. It will also create a sense of healthy competition among them. They both will work hard pay serious attention to their studies. A feeling of comradeship will also develop between the boys and girls.

1. Co-education broadens the outlook and personality of girls.
2. Co-education removes shyness from a girl and makes her bold and smart.
3. Co-education has some psychological benefits, when girls study with boys and take part in every activity side by side, they are psychologically cured of this disease of self-defeatism and self-created pessimism.
4. When both girls and boys get education in a safe environment, the need for separate education institutions for girls would get minimized.
5. Co-education enables the boys and girls to come in contact with each other. During this course, they are able to understand and develop respect for each other.
6. Co-educational schools better reflect the diversity of our society.
7. They better prepare students to succeed in post secondary education and to eventually enter the workforce.
8. Students at independent coeducational schools feel comfortable about who they are and have a healthy and positive attitude and self image.
9. Most students in coeducational schools indicate, “it is easy for students at my school to find a group that they fit in with”.
10. Students in coeducational schools are more likely to feel safe in their school environment.
11. Collaboration between the sexes in the classroom helps to develop confidence in students.
12. Working together in the classroom and on homework assignments provides boys and girls the opportunity to learn from each other intellectually as well as socially.
13. In a coeducational learning environment, students are exposed to both male and female role models in staff and senior students.

DISADVANTAGES:

Coeducation has its disadvantages too. Attraction, temptation increases towards opposite gender. Coeducation will create many problems not only for students but also for teachers. Temptation does not distinguish between the student and teacher. The real reason why some people support coeducation is that they like western culture. They want to be more English than English because West has co-education so they must have it.

Some people criticize the system of co-education, according to them, this system is against their tradition. They think that co-education will develop immoral relationships between boys and girls.

EDUCATION OF GIRL CHILD IN INDIA:

India holds a strong determination in educating all children, especially the girl child. By declaring education as a fundamental right, India ensures constitutional provisions for providing free and compulsory education to all the children between 06-14 years of age. This provision is widely known as “Sarva Shisha Abhiyan”.

Educate girls is a non-profit organization in India that aims to tackle issues at the root organization has its management and outreach office in Mumbai & operations in the Pali, Jalora, Sirohi, Ajmer, Bundi and Rajsanand districts of Rajasthan. Since 2007, Educate girls has worked with over 7000 government schools, where the introduction of creative learning & teaching techniques is claimed to have increased learning out comes by 35-60 percent.

Educated girls creates community ownership to help communities to prioritize girls education. The model includes the following elements:
1. TEAM BALIKA:

Team balika consists of over 4500 community volunteers who work as champions for girls education and catalysts for school reform. Members of Team Balika provide support and structure to the girl child in schools and also have a strong presence in the community, spreading awareness about girl child education. Their participation boosts enrollment, retention and learning outcomes for all girls. Educate Girls trains the SMC and provides them with the support to prepare and execute school improvement plans (SIPs) and conduct school assessments.

2. CREATIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING TECHNIQUES AND CLASSROOM SUPPORT:

Educate girls trains one teacher per school in Creative Learning and Teaching (CLT) techniques. Test is before and after training to assess learning levels. A girl is no less than a boy, if anything they are all the more diligent, hardworking and consistent in their efforts towards anything. A girl should be educated in order to ensure a better life for herself. If she is empowered she would be in a condition to add on the income of the family, and raising the living condition of her family.

3. MAHILA SAMAKHIYA PROGRAM:

It is a program that comes under the New Education Policy and was formed in the year 1988. This particular program focuses on the empowerment of the women who belong to the marginalized group.

4. NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR EDUCATION OF GIRLS AT ELEMENTARY LEVEL:

It was started in 2003 to ensure access to education to girls who could not benefit from the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Under this scheme model schools have been set up and it covers 24 states.

5. KASTURBA GANDHI BALIKA VIDYALYA SCHEME:

It was launched in 2004 in order to provide primary level education to girls. The scheme was especially designed for the underprivileged girls in the rural areas.

PROBLEMS OF WOMEN EDUCATION:

1. POOR ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF PARENTS: The greatest obstacle in the way of the development of women education is the poverty of the parents. On the part of poor parents, it is not easy task to make suitable arrangements for the education of their daughters.
2. CONSERVATION, ILLITERACY AND IGNORANCE OF PARENTS: Most of the parents of our country are illiterate. They have inadequate knowledge about the importance of education in life. Due to ignorance many of them believe that to provide more education to girls is to spoil them.

3. BAD OUTCOME LIKE EARLY MARRIAGE AND PURDAH: Many Indians are religious minded and God fearing. Their attitude towards women’s education is very narrow and rigid. They don’t like to provide much education to their daughters. They always think in terms of early marriage. Much emphasis is also given on purdah system.

4. INADEQUATE MEANS OF TRANSPORT IN RURAL AREAS: Lack of adequate transport facilities in rural areas is the main hurdle in the progress of women education. There are some rural areas, hills and remote places, where it is not easy to provide means of transportation. Women teachers can not go to these places on foot. Thus the progress of women’s education gets affected.

5. LACK OF QUALIFIED WOMEN TEACHER: There is shortage of qualified women teachers in our country. As a result of which, we have not been able to provide qualified, trained and experienced women teachers.

6. LACK OF PHYSICAL FACILITIES: Girl students do not get facilities like hostel, lavatories, transport arrangements. Lady students, who live in hostels do not have proper security measures. Therefore many parents do not admit their daughters at distant school and colleges.

7. PROBLEM OF WASTAGE: In the education of girls a lot wastage is caused. It is due to the negative attitude of parents towards the education of girls. Though a lot of money is being spent on women’s education, only a small percentage get benefit out of it.

PRESENT STATUS OF WOMEN EDUCATION IN INDIA:

In 21st century, women education has changed from independence of India to till date. Social activists, educationists and government policies worked for women education in India. Women education in India has also been a major pre-occupation of both the government and civil society as educated women can play a very important role in the development of the country. Education is the milestone of women empowerment because it enables them to respond to the challenges, to confront their traditional role and change their life, so that we cannot neglect the importance of education in reference to women empowerment.

Women constitute almost half of the population of the World. Education for women is the best way to improve the health, nutrition and economic status of a household that constitute a micro unit of a nation’s economy. In this context, it can be argued that lack of women education can be an impediment to the country’s economic development. In India women achieve far less education than that of men. As per the census report 2001, the literacy rate of women is 54.16% and that of men is 65.38%. There has been a sincere effort to improve the education attainment of women by both government and voluntary organisations. The growth of women’s education in rural areas is very
slow. This obviously means still large womenfolk of our country are illiterate, weak backward and exploited. Education is the most powerful tool of change of women’s position in society.

KASTURBA GANDHI BALIKA VIDYALIYA:

Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalya scheme was launched in 2004 in order to provide primary level education to girls. The scheme was especially designed for the underprivileged girls in the rural area, girls belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes, minority communities and families below the poverty line in Educationally Backward Blocks.

OBJECTIVES:

Gender disparities still persist in rural areas and among disadvantaged communities. Looking at enrollment trends, there remain significant gaps in the enrollment of girls at the elementary level as education is feasible & accessible to the girls of disadvantaged groups of society by setting up residential schools with boarding facilities at elementary level.

SCOPE:-

1. Concentration of tribal population, with low female literacy and/or a large number of girls out of school.
2. Concentration of SC, OBC, and minority populations, with low female literacy and/or a large number of girls out of school.
3. Areas with low female literacy.
4. Areas with a large number of small scattered habitations that do not qualify for a school.
5. An additional 316 educationally backward blocks with rural female literacy below 30%.
6. 94 Towns/cities having minority concentration (as per the list identified by Ministry Of Minority Affairs) with female literacy rate below the national average (53.67% census 2001).

METHODOLOGY:-

Based on the number of girls and the type of residential school to be provided, the selection of the model of the school to be selected would be done by a State Level Committee based on the recommendation of the District Committee for the purpose. The proposal shall be forwarded to the Cell at the National level who shall appraise them with the help of external agencies/consultants, where necessary. Finally, the project Approval Board of SSA will approve these plans.
GIRLS EDUCATION IN SSA AND RMSA:

Sarva shiksha Abhiyan, the first ever nation-wide programme for Universal Elementary Education, was launched to reach every child in every hamlet in the country in a prescribed time frame. The constitution was amended in 2002 to make education a fundamental right of every child. SSA is an effort to universalize elementary education by community ownership of the school system. It is a response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is:

- A programme with a clear time frame for universal elementary education.
- A response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country.
- An opportunity for promoting social justice through basic education.
- An effort at effectively involving the Panchayati Raj Institutions, School Management Committees, Village and Urban Slum-level Education Committees, Parent-Teacher Association, Mother-Teacher Associations, Tribal Autonomous Councils and other grassroots-level structures in the management of elementary schools.
- An expression of political will for universal elementary education across the country.
- Cooperation among the Central, State and Local governments.
- An opportunity for States to develop their own vision of elementary education.
- An effort to bridge social, regional and gender gaps, with the active participation of the community in the management of schools.

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan has limited financial provisions for girls education in the form of free textbooks and innovations at district levels. Thus, National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL) has been formulated for providing additional support for education of under privileged/disadvantaged girls at elementary level.

OBJECTIVES OF SSA:

1. All children to be enrolled in school.
3. All children to complete five years of primary schooling by 2007.
4. All children to complete eight years of schooling by 2010.
5. Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010.
7. Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.

SSA AND GIRL CHILD EDUCATION:

Since independence the Indian Government has been trying to improve the situation of girls. The National Policy on Education (NPE) says:
Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralise the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The National Education System will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, the training and orientation of teachers, decision-makers and administrators, and the active involvement of educational institutions. This will be an act of faith and social engineering. The removal of women’s illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access to and retention in, elementary education will receive overriding priority, through provision of special support services, setting of time targets and effective monitoring. [NPE 1986]

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) along with the Education For All provided an agreed international framework for achieving gender equality in education. Although admission of girls in schools has gone up significantly over the past few years (because of SSA), attendance and retention rates are still low. Approximately 2000 Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (residential schools under the KGBV Scheme) were set up for underprivileged girls in difficult-to-reach areas. The National Programme for Education of Girls at the Elementary Level (NPEGEL), launched in September 2003, provided additional provisions for enhancing the education of underprivileged/disadvantaged girls at the primary level through more intense community mobilisation, the development of model schools in clusters, gender sensitisation of teachers, development of gender-sensitive learning materials, early child care and education facilities and provision of need-based incentives for girls. All Educationally Backward Blocks have been included under NPEGEL and KGBVS. The latter scheme was merged with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan in the Eleventh Plan with effect from April 1, 2007.

Despite such ambitious plans, the harsh reality is that government-run schools are hardly in a position to act as agents of progressive social transformation—even when most of them have a larger presence of girls than of boys. Government schools suffer from a variety of problems ranging from lack of facilities for girls. What most of schools suffer from is an non-conducive environment for learning, particularly for girls. Most of the time there exists a gender-bias. In some schools, they are denied access to games and sports facilities which the boys enjoy. Some teachers address their lessons exclusively to boys, paying no attention to the girls. In addition, girls alone may be allotted works like sweeping and cleaning the school premises, or sometimes cooking of mid-day meals.

Some of the key issues that effect girls education in rural areas are discussed below.

1. Mid-day Meals
The National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education, commonly known as the Mid-day Meals Scheme, was launched to give a boost to universalisation of primary education by increasing enrolment, retention and attendance, and simultaneously improving the nutritional status of students in primary classes. Mid-day meals were started by the Indian Government as a step to promote child development. Undoubtedly school attendance has improved since its inception; however, the programme with all its noble intentions has always faced criticism at the ground level. The reasons vary from state to state. Whether it is the supply, quality, cooking places or storage, all of it is a problem in government schools. In many schools teachers spent lot of teaching time in distributing mid-day meals, and in some schools girl students are involved in cooking these meals in rural areas.
2. **Teacher Absenteeism**
According to a World Bank Report, 25 per cent of teachers in India’s government primary schools absent themselves from work on any given day and only 50 per cent of those present in schools are actually engaged in teaching. Primary school teachers in Bihar’s government schools spend less than two months a year in the classroom, according to a report by the UNICEF. Teacher absenteeism also leads to student absenteeism.

3. **Ratio**
The framework for the implementation of SSA envisaged providing one teacher for every 40 primary school students and at least two teachers in every primary school. In the 2007 study PRIA5 observed that out of 29 gram panchayat schools in Haryana this requirement was fulfilled only in 11. In seven of the schools the ratio was more than 50 students per teacher. This revealed a considerable gap in the deployment of teachers in schools. According to the CAG report (2006), 675,884 primary schools in 15 States/Union Territories were operating with only one teacher. Also it has been seen recruitment of less female teachers in schools makes girl child feel less comfortable.

4. **Drop-out Rates**
Primary education in even unrecognised private schools is becoming increasingly popular, leading to a decline in enrolment in government schools. This is significant in terms of girls’ enrolment where most of the families who can afford private schools prefer to send at least their male child to those schools, sparing government schools for poor boys and for girls (who may or may not be poor).

Instances of double enrolment and fake enrolment figures are often witnessed. This is generally due to pressure on the teachers to achieve enrolment targets for the every year. A worrisome fact is that still the proportion of girls who are out of school is much higher than boys.

The pressure to maintain 100 per cent enrolment in primary schools often leads to neglect of the quality aspect of education. A Citizens’ Report (2005-06) by the NGO Pratham reflects upon issues of quality and enrolment, where 40 per cent of school children studying in standard V could not read a story of standard II level, though 93.4 per cent of children in the age group 6-14 were enrolled in school.

5. **School Environment/ Infrastructure**
Many schools still do not have a building of its own and classrooms are held in all seasons in a temporary shed or in the open ground.

Cleanliness is a matter of concern in most primary schools, especially those in villages in interior areas. Drinking water, sanitation facilities and electricity is a big problem.

Besides, the absence of proper access roads to schools and the long distance students have to travel to reach school means that girls, particularly those at puberty, drop out because of their parents’ concerns about their safety. National data indicates that around 10.21 per cent of habitations or villages do not have a school or an alternative school facility within a one kilometer radius.
6. Incentives
Although it is claimed each year that free textbooks for girls students are provided yet various reports suggest that in most places the timely supply of an adequate number of books is not achieved. Same is the case with uniforms. SSA has funds for scholarships but they are not generously given.

In UP, in some villages for example, scholarships for Muslim girls were being provided by two different departments in 2008. Scholarships for Muslims belonging to general category are given through the Minority Welfare Department, whereas Muslims belonging to the OBC category get the benefit from the Social Welfare Department. So subcategories are being created, leading to confusion and chaos.

7. Outlook towards Girls
The girl child is one of the poorest and most marginalised categories of Indian society, who finds it hard to exercise her rights. There is a lack of understanding and a negative attitude towards girl child education at all levels of society. In India, very few girls have access to primary education.

The SSA framework pays special attention to the education of the girl child, noting that mere changes in the education system are inadequate to ensure that every girl goes to school. It has to be backed up with a transformation in societal norms and attitudes as well. For this, SSA lists several measures such as providing free textbooks to girls till class VIII, organising teacher-sensitisation programmes to promote equitable learning opportunities and mobilising the community in awareness about the importance of education for girls. Even after National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level (NPEGEL), and the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme (KGBVS) were launched yet the condition of girls has not improved significantly.

Over the past two decades, much emphasis has been placed by the Indian government on enrolment. As a result, it has indeed increased, but related structures such as schools, classrooms, trained teachers, books and learning materials—all things crucial to the delivery of meaningful education—have not kept up with the numbers registering for school.

Even among those enrolled, many studies and statistics have noted very clearly that there is gender discrepancy in participation—it is heavily biased in favour of boys. Private schools see high numbers of boys coming in, while girls are mostly registered in government schools. This suggests that parents believe that quality education is more important and beneficial to their sons than to their daughters, although the perceived substantive difference in quality between public and private schools may be questionable in reality. Many other cultural and economic constraints also make parents hesitant to send their daughters to school: abject poverty, girls’ security, marriage, perceived and real complaints about schooling, and so on.

Gender sensitivity is not, in many cases, a mainstream area of concern for teachers and others engaged in the area of education. It is not a subject of inquiry that has been given much special attention over more practical issues of pedagogy and method.
At home, girls are expected to do household chores and take care of siblings, important factors that result in their not being enrolled at school or in their frequent absence and eventual dropping out.

It doesn’t help the situation that there’s no qualitative discourse on girl’s education. Far too much attention is focused on numbers, in trying to ensure that as many girls are enrolled as boys, without giving thought to issues such as the quality of education and the practices to be followed to ensure gender equality inside and outside the classroom. How girls are seen and treated in school is another important contributor in their education.

Conclusion

Thus SSA needs to be viewed critically as most its goals remain unaccomplished even after its target years have passed and India still has a very long way to go towards girls education. Sadgopal7 says that after the Jomtien Conference, India unfortunately gave up its progressive policy on women’s education in favour of the international framework that was guided more by the considerations of market than by women’s socio-cultural and political rights.

Similarly Kumar8 mentions that the slogan of autonomy and empowerment is narrowed down to certain decontextualised categories like work participation rate and literacy without considering the multiple variables that constitute the paradigm of empowerment. Indian education history, which is replete with failures in achieving educational goals, surely requires a deeper understanding of its fractured reality, asserts Sadhna Saxena,9 but this task is beyond the purview of this article.

Thus one can say that girls education must not be seen as an add-on. To achieve both participatory and inclusive growth we need today the Rawlsian approach and Amartya Sen’s discourse on development as an expansion of opportunities.10 While Rawls emphasises equitable distribution of resources, Amartya Sen wants those resources to be converted into actual freedoms by enhancing the capabilities of individuals. The Indian State has to aim at both—increasing resources and capacity-building through education.

RMSA SCHEME FOR GIRLS:

RMSA is a major scheme launched in March, 2009 with the vision of making secondary education of good quality available, accessible and affordable to all young persons in the age group 15-16 years.

The objective of the scheme is to enhance access and improve quality of education at secondary stage, while ensuring equity. The scheme envisages enhancing the enrollment for classes IX-X by providing a secondary school within a reasonable distance of every habitation, improving quality of education imparted at secondary level through making all secondary schools conform to prescribed norms, removal of gender, socio-economic and disability barriers, universal access to secondary level education by 2017, and universal retention by 2020.
The Centrally Sponsored Schemes viz ICT at schools, Girls’ Hostel, Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage and Vocational Education were subsumed from 2013-14 under the RMSA. The subsuming of these schemes under the RMSA, would lead to significant financial savings and administrative rationalization of the provisions under the schemes which, on the one hand would add to the fund availability under RMSA and on the other hand, since interventions under these schemes extend to aided schools as also cover the segment of higher secondary, their subsuming under RMSA will in effect provide for convergence based implementation of RMSA with the inclusion of aided schools and higher secondary segment. These are now integrated component of RMSA

Though the benefits to aided schools as of now will be limited to the current interventions under the other schemes and to the exclusion of the core components of the existing RMSA provisions, at the State level the convergence would lead to integrated and inclusive (aided schools and higher secondary classes) planning and implementation.

**IMPORTANT PHYSICAL FACILITIES PROVIDED UNDER THE SCHEME ARE:-**

1. Additional class rooms.
2. Laboratories.
3. Libraries
4. Art and Craft room
5. Toilet Blocks
6. Drinking water provisions
7. Residential hostels for teachers in remote areas

**IMPORTANT QUALITY INTERVENTIONS PROVIDED UNDER THE SCHEME:-**

1. Appointment of additional teachers to reduce PTR to 30:1.
2. Focus on science, Math and English education.
3. In-service training of teachers.
5. ICT enabled education.
6. Curriculum reforms.
7. Teaching learning reforms.
Important equity interventions provided in the scheme are:

(i) special focus in micro planning (ii) preference to Ashram schools for upgradation (iii) preference to areas with concentration of SC/ST/Minority for opening of schools (iv) special enrolment drive for the weaker section (v) more female teachers in schools; and (vi) separate toilet blocks for girls.

Implementation mechanism of the Scheme

The scheme is being implemented by the State government societies established for implementation of the scheme. The central share is released to the implementing agency directly. The applicable State share is also released to the implementing agency by the respective State Governments.

Revision of certain norms of the Scheme

The Government of India has approved the following revised norms of RMSA, with effect from 01.04.2013:

- To permit State/UT Governments to use State Schedule of Rates (SSOR) or CPWD Rate, (whichever is lower) for construction of civil works permissible under the RMSA.
- To increase the Management, Monitoring Evaluation and Research (MMER) from 2.2 percent to 4 percent of the total outlay under the programme, with 0.5 percent of the 4 percent earmarked for national level and the rest of the 3.5 percent as part of the State allocation. In cases of States where even with this enhanced allocation of 3.5 percent MMER would not be adequate and would hamper the activities under the head, within the 3.5 percent of the overall State MMER component; variations across State/UTs can be approved by the PAB, subject to a maximum of 5 percent of the outlay in any particular State/UT.
- To subsume the other Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Secondary Education—Information and Communication Technology (ICT)@ School, Girls’ Hostel, Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) and Vocational Education (VE) in their existing form under the Umbrella of RMSA.
- To extend the benefits of RMSA to aided Secondary Schools (excluding infrastructure support/core areas, i.e. Teacher’s salary and Staff salary) for quality interventions as per RMSA umbrella schemes components for aided schools.
- To continue existing fund sharing pattern of 72:25 for the remaining of the 12th Plan the period for non-NER States and 90:10 for NER States (including Sikkim).
To authorize the RMSA Project Approval Board (PAB) of the Ministry of Human Resource Development to consider for approval Integrated Plan of the umbrella scheme of RMSA, including the four subsumed Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Secondary Education.

PREPARED BY

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(LECTURER)

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