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GIRLS' EDUCATION IN RURAL INDIA: PROBLEMS AND THE WAY FORWARD

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Introduction

India is considered the land of villages. Almost 68 per cent of the country's population resides in rural areas. Many previous scholarly studies indicate that rural India is suffering from many problems, girl education is one of them. Although in recent decades, rural parts of the country are undergoing a considerable change. However, the status of girls' education in rural India is not satisfactory even in today's time. It has been observed in recent decades that governments and civil societies have discussed a lot about the importance of girls' education. Despite this, millions of girls in today's time are out of schools. Many occasions come in a year when we worship girls and women as goddess and when the occasions end, we consider them inferior and abuse them. Education is the most powerful tool through which one can use to develop his/her life. It has been observed that governments across the world are trying hard to educate their citizens by investing more money on this sector because they know that education paves the path of development for a country (Vaish et al., 2019). It is regarded a very important sector as economic, social and political development of any nation depend upon education. Over the past few years, India has taken several initiatives for the development of its educational system. Both the central and state governments and other stakeholders are taking various initiatives to provide education and enhance the skills of children in different parts of the country. In recent years, much emphasis is being given on girl's education. Today, a number of schemes are running across the country by the union and state governments. Such schemes are very popular and they play an important role; Mid - day meal programme is one among them. In recent years, the urban India has seen historical development in the context of girls' education but a lot of works need to be done in rural areas.

According to Census of India 2011, the gap between urban and rural area is almost 16 per cent and the gap between male and female in rural area is almost 20 per cent. After the execution of Right to Education Act, although the education status of the girl child is gradually getting better as compared to previous status but we still have to work hard in this direction, especially in rural areas. In today's scenario, this is the hard fact that girls are doing wonderful jobs in different sectors. The constitution of India gives us equal status with respect to gender but there are many people in rural society who still discriminate between boys and girls. It is often seen in rural parts that boys are given more priority than girls in imparting education. Sometimes, it also happens that due to lack of money and awareness, poor villagers are not able to provide education to all their children. In such a situation, whenever it come to providing education of one or two children, they mostly prefer to boys rather than girls. Since Indian rural society is still considered to be a patriarchal society so several times such discrimination also happens due to this mentality. In this regard, we have to sensitise to rural people regarding girls' education.

Problems Faced by Girls in India

There is no doubt about it that girls have been facing numerous problems for centuries. They are now facing discrimination in different sectors. In today's time apart from such discrimination, there are several other problems which affect the girls' education in India, particularly in rural areas. Attention should be given to girls' education for an inclusive society. We should stop our discriminatory behaviours towards girls because such practices hinder the development of our country and make girls inferior. The main problems which hinder the girls' education are given below:

(A) Gender Discrimination: There are many families in rural society who still discriminate between boys and girls. It is often seen in villages that boys are given more priority than girls. In rural areas, there are almost some families in a village who have the stereotypes mentality that education is important for only boys. Many prior studies proved with ample evidence that girls are doing better than boys in education in different parts of the country (Shah & Mittal, 2019). This biasness has also been observed during COVID-19 situations. During pandemics, when the education turned into online mode, communication tools became imperative to attend the online classes. In this situation, many parents started giving communication tools such as mobile phones and laptops to boys rather than girls. In this situation, girls' education suffered a lot due to lack of such facilities.

(B) Poverty: After the execution of RTE Act, taking education in government schools are free but we all know that financial conditions matter to provide well and further education to girls. It is always said that educational deprivation and poverty go hand in hand, especially when it comes to providing education to girls. Millions of poor people live in rural India whose income are very less. Many uneducated and even some educated families in rural India think that education is only for boys because they go outside for doing jobs but girls do household chores so they do not need education.



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(C) Early Marriage: Over the past few decades, rural India has witnessed millions of girls' marriages at early age. In rural India, girls are regarded other's wealth so they do not get much value from their parents and society as compared to boys. There are many families in rural India who do not follow the government's rule regarding the appropriate age of marriage.

(D) Unsafe Environment: The violence against girls has now become a grave problem in different parts of the country. Over the past few years, we have seen a number of cases related to violence against girls across the country. Such issue is not the violation of human rights but also it plays a big role in denying girls' education. Almost every day we hear and read in newspapers about hundreds of cases related to violence against girls. Such frequent incidents show that to what extent our environment has become unsafe for girls.

(E) Household Chores: It has been observed that household workload is also a major problem for many girls in rural areas. Several research studies have clearly identified that girls have higher domestic workloads than boys. In rural areas, many families are joint families so there is a burden on female members along with girls to carry out domestic works. In this case, many girls often miss classes or reach late to their schools. Sometimes, it has been seen that girls are involved in domestic works for earning moneys. In this case, they spend every day a good amount of time in chores and hardly find the time to go to schools.

(F) Lack of Toilet Facility: In rural areas, many schools even in today's time do not have separate toilet facilities. It has been noticed that girls do not feel comfortable in schools due to lack of girls' toilet facilities. Menstruation is the natural process of a girl's monthly cycle that may start anywhere at any point of time. When a girl gets her menstruation at school so in this tough situation, everyone expects that there should be a separate girl's toilet or bathroom facilities. This is the hard reality that many schools situated in villages either do not have toilet facilities or do have so dirty toilets. Many girls do not go to schools because of lack of insufficient access to water and hygiene facilities. It has been seen that many schools situated in rural areas still have only mixed toilets and girls do not feel comfortable to use it due to lack of privacy and comfort.

Government Schemes for Girls

Considering the various problems that come in the way of a girl child, the Union and State Governments have introduced a number of important schemes for the empowerment of girls in India. In today's time, such schemes are now playing important roles in girls' life. Several important schemes have mentioned below:

1. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao

Our Indian Government initiated Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme in Panipat, Haryana, on January 22, 2015. The motive of this program is to protect girls from social discriminations, such as gender-based abortion and to promote girl child education throughout the world.

The main motive of this program is to change socioeconomic attitudes. The below are the main objectives of the BBBP.

- To guarantee girl child safety and welfare in infancy.
- To stop selective Gender-based abortions.
- To give safe atmosphere for Girls.

Balika Saridhhi Yojana

The Balika Sam Riddhi Yojana is a scholarship program which main motive is to provide financial support to poor families. The aim of this program is to raise Girl's social status, increase their marriageable age, and increase enrollment for school studies. This program is available in both Rural and Urban areas. When a girl baby is born, the mother of the baby is rewarded by cash, Later, in school, a girl child will earn annual scholarship ranging from Rs. 300 to Rs. 1000.

The eligibility of this scheme is that the girl's child needs to belong to a Family BPL. The children need to be born on and after 15th August 1997.

Ladli Scheme and the Kanya Kosh Scheme

In 2011, Haryana had very low sex ratio at birth in India, 834 girls out of every 1000 people, The state government takes various steps to change the condition.

Then they introduced the Ladli Scheme, it provides a financial reward of Rs. 5000/- every year for up to 5 years to all parents whose second girl child is born on and after 20 August 2005, regardless of caste, religion, wages, and the number of sons.

In 2015, the Manohar Lal Khattar-Led Haryana government unveiled the "Kanya Kosh" program, it includes the first sibling. When the first girl child is born, a total of 21,000 will be deposited. When the girls reach the age of 18, The balance will rise to 1 Lakh.



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The eligibility of this scheme is that the girl child must be born on and after 30 August 2005.

Remedies: It is truly tag that every problem gift but to a new solution or provide effective remedies. This problem has some remedies too which are

- Educate the society: we have to educate the society; we tell them that education is important for all but it is very important for girls. We educated girl that means we educate the whole society, so we l then the importance of goal education. If we tell them that is will be helpful. If we educate a girl then she will use her skills and potential in improving their status of answering the society. Educated people monks take these responsibilities that the go to google and urban areas and tell them the importance of girl education as it takes a village do educator girl childhood you getting society also involves purifying the mentality of society and animals keep bacteria of gender bias ness from their minds and even thought, then only they encourage girls to be educated.
- Provide safe environment: government and our society should take some appropriate steps to ride safe environment to the girl’s government to take initial measurements like in installing CCTV cameras in school premises and in Syria around, making friendly environment that schools. Opening school in 1 kilometer of the version of girls and to appoint female bodyguard and educators conductors in school buses and school premises , providing facilities of machines for safety and hygiene of the major girls , separate washroom for girls and boys other than this school must take initiative to add self-defense schools in the curriculum as a subject which must be made compulsory for girl students so that they must be capable to protect them themselves leading to woman empowerment, special training session and workshops must be organized on regular basis . It can even be taking as sport or tournament to give opportunity to more deserving girls
- Reducing workload: then we talk about reducing workload of girls of household work we can divide work between girls and boys both so automatically girl’s workload would also be reduced. Because if a house belongs to both whether it is in case of domestic work or in income generation to make it run. Then only equality will come. For that we must teach boys that doing housework is not an inferior work.

Even all educational policies and commissions like NEP 1986, Kothari Commission they have introduced concept of work education including skills of doing household work which is tough to both girls and boys. So, if the follow all these remedies completely, all problems in girl’s education will be removed. And girls will shine like a lamp- lamp of enlightenment, strength, confidence, and overall make a bright future.

Conclusion: It has been proved from several previous studies that girls are facing a number of problems when it comes to taking education in rural areas. Every day, girls in rural areas face major problems such as gender discrimination, household chores, unsafe environment, poverty, early marriages and lack of toilet facilities. Such problems affect girls’ education badly and make their life pathetic. Although the educational status of girl child in rural areas is getting better day by day but we still need to do a lot in this direction. We must understand that we cannot make an inclusive society without educating girls. Although considering such major problems that come in the way of a girl child, the Union and State Governments have introduced a number of important schemes and programmes for the empowerment of girls in India. In today’s time, such schemes like Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Sukanya Samridhi Yojana, Balika Samridhi Yojana, Mukhyamantri Kanya Suraksha Yojana are now playing important roles in girls’ life. We should educate our society so people who live in rural areas can easily understand the value of education. We should also provide the safe environment to our girls for the betterment of society. In addition, the local administration and the government should arrange clean and separate toilet or bathroom facilities for girls so they can feel comfortable at school. As a responsible citizen of the country, we should give up our discriminatory and patriarchal thoughts related to girls that hinder their progress. We must understand that better educated girls can make the entire society better and they can educate others too. An educated girl can bring her life towards progress.



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