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EDUCATION OF THE GIRL CHILD IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research paper is to understand the importance of girl child education in India. Girl child education is very important because education can shape a woman's life for the better. She can make good decisions about her career, marriage and family on her own. She will recognize her rights in the society and act according to her wishes. She will be confident enough to express her thoughts in front of her family and society. An African proverb, "Teach a man and you teach a people, but teach a woman and you teach a country," tells us about the importance of educating girls. Challenges facing girls' education in rural India: Girls' education in rural areas faces unique economic and social challenges. Yes, it's a big problem. Evidence suggests that policies such as half-day meals and free pocket money are effective ways to reduce the cost of educating girls. Education plays one of the most important roles in empowering women. It also helps to prevent gender-based discrimination. Education is the first step in enabling women to choose the lifestyle they want. This generation has left behind a period when sending girls to school was not considered. Today, women are competing with men in every aspect of life. Today, people not only know the importance of good education, but also send their girls to school. It is an undeniable fact that girls' education can lead to changes in the world community. Girls now work in many positions including writers, teachers, educators, lawyers, doctors, managers, politicians, scientists, etc.

Key words: Girl Child Education, Discrimination, socio-economic, socio-cultural, challenges, Quality of the Girl Child Education

INTRODUCTION

The word "girl" refers to women between the ages of 6 and 18 (Mukhtar et al., 2011). The National Child Protection Policy (1989), as cited by Ada (2001), defines a girl child as a woman under the age of 14. Of forma (2009) refers to a woman who has given birth from the age of eighteen (18). This period covers infancy, childhood, early adolescence and late development. Education is an important part of life, whether for girls or boys. Education helps people to become smarter, learn new things and understand the realities of the world. Education plays one of the most important roles in empowering women. It also helps to prevent gender-based discrimination. Education is the first step in enabling women to choose the lifestyle they want. Education helps women to

work more effectively. Experienced women have the knowledge, information, wisdom and confidence to be a good mother, employee and assistant. Women constitute almost half of our population. Men and women are like two sides of the same coin and need the same opportunity to contribute to the country. One cannot survive without the other. Girls' education in India is important for the development of the country because girls can be more successful than boys. Nowadays, girls' education is necessary and should be done because girls are the future of the country.

There was a time when people thought that it was not necessary to educate girls. Now we have begun to realize that girls' education is essential. The modern age is the age of awakening of girls They are trying to compete

with men in all spheres of life. There are many people who oppose girls' education. They say that the proper sphere of girls is the home. So, they argue that the money spent on girl's education is wasted. This view is wrong, because girl's education can bring about a silent revolution in the society. Girls' education plays a vital role through up gradation of depriving Marginalized sections, especially girls in society. Because girls are the back bone of society, they are the mother of the race and guardian of future generation, so that education is very much necessary. Girls must be educated, for it is the Girls who mould the next generation and hence the destiny of the country.

In ancient times it was believed that it is not necessary to educate girls. But in the modern age, all women and men are equal to each other and possess equal talents and skills. Then why there is still a concern about girl's education and equal opportunity for them. There is adequate scope for universalisation of education to one and all, including the girls. Malala Yousafzi, a Pakistani activist, was honored with a Nobel Prize for promoting education for girls in the world. If we look at the history of India, Savitribai Phule, the social reformer who is considered to be India's first modern feminist, and especially remembered for being India's first female teacher. She worked for the upliftment of women in the field of education and literacy.

Human rights advocates claim that every child has a right to education. This claim is based primarily on two promises. First, rights advocate endorse the right to education because they believe that if children receive basic primary education, they will likely be literate. Second, rights advocate recognize that despite this reorganization of education as a right by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), for example many children fail to benefit from even basic primary education. This gap between the positive recognition of the right to education and the negative reality facing many children has led rights advocates to conclude that education must be considered a human

right issue on a par with the right to food or the right to freedom.

Education for a girl child is very necessary to prevent child marriages and sexually transmitted diseases. As a result government has introduced many important strategies like "Five year plan" to achieve literacy level by providing free primary school for all children. All the plans by Government were not quite successful. For example "The pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act fails to understand the reason behind the discrimination against girls in India as well as the explanation behind gender biases. Simply putting ban on sex detecting technologies cannot help to change the traditional views of some societies and consequently girl child still faces the problems of malnutrition and infanticide. Education is far from their reach. It is really a duty of elected representatives to gap the bridge between customs and traditional beliefs of that society. It is also very important for Indian government to recognize the failure of anti-discrimination laws in general and the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (regulation and prevention of misuse) Act, in protecting the rights of a girl child in Indian society.

Historical Background of Girls' Education in India:

Women/girls have the right to study the Vedas and make sacrifices. Upanayana or Vedic initiation is common for girls as well as boys. Boarding schools for students probably came into being with women teachers. Girls are free to participate in upanayana rituals, wear the sacred thread and live the life of the sexes. In those days they were free to study the Vedas, Vedas and other subjects with students. During the Vedic period, girls were given divine initiation (upanayana), they were one of the upper classes of people and were used to getting education. The period between 200 BC and 1200 AD During this period, women's education suffered greatly due to the poor religious practices of women and the lowering of the marriageable age. Girls gradually lost the

privilege of Vedic initiation (upanayana) and were not considered fit to recite Vedic mantras or perform Vedic sacrifices. During the Vedic period, the marriageable age of girls was around 16-17, but during this period, it was reduced to 12, but in the rich royal family and the royal family, girls still received good education.

During the British period, many Indians, influenced by the work of missionaries and philanthropists, supported the establishment of girls' schools and broke the struggle of women. Among them, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Pandit Ishwachandra Vidasagar played important roles. By 1850, changes had already begun in the state's policies on women's education. The establishment of towns and the provision of primary education from local funds between 1854 and 1882 AD helped establish private schools for girls between 1870 and 1882. Among the issues, public funds should be provided for girls' schools, free boats, scholarships should be provided and private schools for girls should be opened. Support a group of women to educate girls through various activities. Between 1921 and 1947, the number of girls receiving education increased from 1.22 million to 4.28 million. Female literacy was 0.7% in 1881-82 and 6% in 1946-47.

More than 300 years ago, Indian girls had almost no education. Only a few college and university girls were educated at home. At that time, it was considered a disgrace for a girl to be illiterate. The idea of educating girls had never occurred to parents. It is said that in most Hindu families, there was a superstition that girls who were taught to read and write would become widows after marriage. According to the report of the National Council for Women's Education (1959), "It cannot be denied that the educational status of girls is extremely inadequate. Except for some important information, girls do not receive formal education." The girl received an education for the family.

It was the 'American Mission' which first started a school for girls in Bombay (Now Mumbai) in 1824. By 1829 within five years as many as 400 girls were enrolled in that school. Then the first decade of 19th century with efforts of missionaries as well as the Indian voluntary organizations, some girls' primary schools particularly in Bombay, Bengal and Madras states, started (Mondal, 2015).

The government also took the responsibility to promote primary education in general and that of the girls in particular. However, government efforts could not go a long way due to the Indian War of Independence of 1857. After the war municipal committees and other local bodies were encouraged to open primary schools. In the year 1870, training colleges for women were established for the first time and women were trained to become teachers in girls' schools.

As a result of all these efforts, great progress was made in girl's education in the last quarter of the 19th century (Mondal, 2015).

Despite this, there is still a huge gap between the education levels of boys and girls. It is estimated that there are only 46 girls in school for every 1,000 boys. Surprisingly, by the end of the century, hundreds of girls were being accepted into new homes all over the country. Although girls and women have made significant gains in education in recent years, there is still a long way to go to eliminate their historically poor education. India's education system, like many other social institutions, has long discriminated against women. In 1916, SNDT Women's University in Bombay became the first university to admit women students (Mondal, 2015).

IMPORTANCE OF THE GIRL CHILD EDUCATION:

There was a time when people thought that it was not necessary to educate girls. Now we have begun to realize that girls' education is essential. The modern age is the age of awakening of girls. They are trying to compete with men in all spheres of life. There are many

people who oppose girls' education. They say that the proper sphere of girls is the home. So, they argue that the money spent on girls' education is wasted. This view is wrong, because girls' education can bring about a silent revolution in the society. There is several advantage of girls' education. Grown up educated girls can play an important role in the development of their country. They can share the burden of men in the different walk of life. When girls are well-educated, not forced to marry during childhood, they will be able serve the society as writers, educators, teachers, lawyers, doctors, administrators, politicians, scientists, and much more. They can work at banks, hospitals, government offices and large businesses. They can play an important role during war.

Girl child education is an instrument of power, prestige, survival, approval, greatness, and advancement for men and women. Women are the nucleus of the family, society, and the nation. How a nation can be called a developed nation without the development of its women? There are several health benefits an educated girl can get rather than the uneducated one. It includes reducing infant and child mortality rates, reduces women's fertility rates, decreases maternal mortality rates, and also it decreases early child marriage, improves communication between couples and a sense of control over one's life, and protecting HIV and other related infections.⁴ Educating girl children will help in improving the health of the women if she has the proper knowledge. The future of the girl, her family, society, and the nation will be brighter and better. It will also help in growing the economy of the country if more women will participate in financial activities. The major problems like unemployment and poverty will be eradicated.

Though in India, several initiatives have been taken by the government to reduce the major problem of educating the girl child. Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (2001-2002), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (2009), Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (2015), Sukanya Samridhhi Yojana

(SSY), Balika Samridhhi Yojana (BSY), to name a few. Women assume a significant role in creating a society. Many philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Rousseau, and Karl Marx also emphasized educating all men and women without any discrimination. It is known by all that education helps an individual to think freely and develop naturally without constraints imposed on them by society. In today's modern world, where nothing is free of cost and competition is very tough, it is very difficult for a man in the family to fulfill the needs of the family alone. If the woman also works to support the finances of the family, then it will be very easy to run the family for both of them. An educated woman can also take part in the decision-making process for the family and society. She would have her own opinion. Education has widened the thought process of the people in the society to that extent that girls have started to perform the cremation rites of their folks in many places in India, despite the fact that they are not allowed to do such activities in Hindu culture.

Challenges of girl child education in India:

1. Negative parental attitude towards educating daughters is one of the important challenges to promote girls' education in India. (Hickey, M.G. & Stratton, M. – 2007 & Kumar, J. & Sangeeta –2013)
2. Lack of female teachers is another potential barrier to girls' education (Latha, P.S.-2014). Girls are more likely to attend school and have higher academic achievement, if they have female teachers. Currently, women account for only 47.70 % of teachers at the Elementary level (U-DISE, 2014-2015).
3. Lack of infrastructural facility in schools is one of the major problems in development of girls' education in India (Sivakumar, M.A.-2012). Annual Status of Education Report (2014) agreed that due to lack of girls' toilet facility, dropout rate at elementary and secondary levels

have been increased than the past decades.

4. Parents often complain about insecurity for girls attending schools. Instances of abduction, rape and molestation of girls dampen the enthusiasm of parents and girl students in pursuing education beyond a certain age; thereafter they remain bound to their homes (Kumar, J. & Sangeeta -2013).
5. In many parts of the country, the nearest primary school to a particular community might be a 4 or 5 hour long walk away. On top of that, girls may face dangers or violence on the long way to school; so many parents select to keep their daughters at home and out of harm's way. (Latha, P.S.-2014).
6. When girls are forced to marry young, they are often pulled out of school at a very critical age in their development. The transition from primary to secondary education is key for girls to gain the life skills they need to escape the cycle of poverty. Yet, this is often the same time that many girls leave school due to early marriages. (King, E. & Winthrop, R. -2015)
7. Lack of enthusiasm and interest of the officials in charge of education is another problem for promoting girls' education.
8. Lack of awareness among implementing agencies and community members to implement different schemes and provisions of girls' education at grass root level.

Factors affecting girl child education in India:

The major factors that are responsible to affect girl child education can be a poor family background, religious isolation, disability, early marriage, gender-driven violence, pregnancy, cultural dimensions, and attitude against women's status and roles. The problems of the girl child education start from home. In rural villages in India, the problem of early marriage and poor family background is the main reason for the severe condition of girls. They think girls

are liabilities and boys are assets who are the ones to improve the poor condition of the family in the future. This sick mind set has to be changed for the better condition of girls. In villages, the people are not literate enough to understand the importance of education. Girls lack proper guidance from their parents and elders. From an early age, they get involved in household works like cooking, fetching water, washing clothes/utensils, look after their animals, etc. they don't even get to know why education is important? The poor mentality that boys are more intelligent and responsible than girls is illogical. Both girls and boys are born and brought up together at home and within the same community, and then having such poor mind set is not appreciated at all. There are still restrictions imposed upon girls and they are forced to grow up differently in society. They are not able to possess the same abilities as boys, only because they're being provided with fewer resources and opportunities as compared to boys. Had they been provided with proper education and opportunity like boys, they would have stood equally in the society and taking care of their whole family by themselves.

CONSTITUTION OF INDIA AND MAJOR INITIATIVES FOR GIRL CHILD EDUCATION:

The constitution of India ensured education right to all citizen without any discrimination.

Article 15 (1) of the Constitution provides that "the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on ground only religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. The provision has enabled the state to make special provisions for women/girls.

Article 16(2) forbids discrimination in respect of any employment in office under the state on the grounds of "religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth residence or any one of them". All these have assured normatively a significant position and status to Indian women. Thus positive discrimination in favour of women is permissible and any action taken by the State cannot be held violative of Article 14. But the rule of Equality before the law in Article 14 means

that amongst equals law should be equal and should be equally administered and the like should be treated alike.

Accordingly the same or uniform treatment of un equals is as bad as unequal treatment of equals. Hence the Government should endeavor to bring equality between sexes by taking special measures in favour of women who is deprived a lot.

Article 39 stipulates that the state shall direct its policy towards providing men and women equally the right to means of livelihood and equal pay for equal work. The Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV of the Constitution incorporate the policy goals of welfare state. Some article these deal with women indirectly while a few others concern women directly and have a special bearing on their status. Together with the Chapter III on Fundamental Rights they concretize constitutional vision of a new Indian socio-political order based on the principle of equality.

The Constitution of India has granted women equal rights but in practice or reality these rights are not sufficient because their voice is hardly given any weight age. However Right to education in the original constitution was provided in general and in a imperative terms under Article 45, that state shall endeavour to provide free and compulsory education within a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution to all children up to the age of 14 years. However it could not come into practice due to governments delaying tactics in implementing the constitutional obligation of providing elementary education.

As far as 1993 the Supreme Court of India declared education as a Fundamental Right of the children. The parliament has also brought an amendment to the Constitution and inserted Article 21A which provides that, "there should be free and compulsory education to all children of the age between 6 to 14 years in such a manner as the state may be law determine." In order to enforce the right to education as a fundamental right, the parliament has enacted the law called

'Right of the Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009.

The objective of this law is to ensure the elementary education with essential norms and standards for the children from the age group of 6 to 14 years.

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 girls is very low. The schools that were set up have 100% reservation: 75% for backward class and 25% for BPL (below Poverty line) girls. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

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. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

National Scheme of Incentive to Girls for Secondary Education (NSIGSE) was launched in May 2008 with the objective to establish an enabling environment to reduce the dropouts and to promote the enrolment of girl children belonging mainly to SC/ST communities in secondary schools. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

Indira Gandhi National scholarship scheme: is provided for single girl child for pursue both higher and technical education. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

Udaan: The Scheme is dedicated to the development of girl child education, so as to promote the admission of girl students. The aim is to address the teaching gap between school education and engineering entrance examinations. It seeks to enhance the enrolment of girl students in prestigious technical education institutions through

incentives & academic support (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao: This is newly announced Scheme of the Govt. of India for enhancing girls' education in India. (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

Mid-Day Meal Scheme: The gender gap in school participation tends to narrow, as the Mid-Day Meal Scheme helps erode the barriers that prevent girls from going to school. Mid-Day Meal Scheme also provides a useful source of employment for women and helps liberate working women from the burden of cooking at home during the day. In these and other ways, women and girl children have a special stake in Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MHRD Annual Report, 2014-15).

From the above discussion, it is clear that Government of India has taken so many initiatives for the improvement of girls' education. In spite of that the status of girls' education has not been increased in expectation level because these initiatives have not been reached to the grass root level. So, Government of India must have to take responsibility to implement these schemes and provisions at grass root level.

Girls Education in five year plans:

The neglect of women/girls education was noted with concern as girls constituted only 28 percent on the total number of children enrolled in primary and middle stage in 1949-50. The constitution adopted in 1950 directive the state to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of fourteen. By 1960 girls enrolment ratio was only 24.6 percent at the primary level and 4.5 percent at the middle. All boys institutions where now open to girls. Co-education was on the increase and 70.7 percent girls were studying in boy's institutions. Steps were advocated to increase the girl's enrolment by motivating parents to send them to co-educational schools. Emphasis was on expansion of educational facilities for girls and diversification of secondary education by

introducing vocational training for boys through schools.

In the second five years plan (1956-61)-the plan emphasized the need to provided greater education opportunities to girls. It was observed that special efforts were needed to educate parents on the importance of a girl's education. Short to women teachers were seen as an impediment. To encourage women to take up teaching, women teachers were to be provided housing facilities in villages. Special schemes for girls to take up different occupations such as nursing, health visitor, teachers and so on were recommended. However enrolment of girls did not pick momentum.

Third plan (1961-66) was to expand facilities for girls at various stages. During this plan enrolment of girls went up from 41.4 percent to 61.5 percent at the primary stage and from 11.3 percent to 16.5 percent at the upper primary stage. Provisions were also made to fund some special schemes to support the general programmes related to girl's education.

The fourth plan emphasis on women's education and followed the basic policy to improve women's welfare within the unit of family.

During fifth plan(1974-79) high priority was given to free and compulsory education for all children to the age of 14 years in pursuance of the constitutional directive. To that effect every state introduced freed education for children in the age group 6-11 years.

The sixth plan (1985-85) onwards the focus shifted to consolidation and quality improvement. It is interesting to see that the main focus was on the higher education right from first time. To boost enrolment in primary classes, Early Childhood Education Centers for children in 3-6 years age group were set up as adjuncts to primary schools for the first time in this plan for the rural poor and backward areas. These centers should also provide crèche facilities for younger siblings of girls attending primary schools.

In the Seventh Plan (1985-90) the developmental programmes for women continued with the major objective of raising their economic and social status and to bring them into the main stream of national development.

The eight plan (1992-97) thrust in the field of education for the both the sexes. Universalization of elementary education, eradication of illiteracy in the age group of 15-35 and strengthening of vocational education so as to relate it to the emerging needs in the urban and rural settings.

The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) provided special incentives to the mother and the girl's child so that the birth of a girl child in a family was rejoiced. To this effect in the year 1997 Balika Samridhi Yojana a 100% centrally sponsored scheme was launched where by a special package consisting of Rs. 500/- to mother at the birth of a girl child and annual scholarship ranging from Rs.300/- to Rs. 1,000/- for education of girl children from class 1 to 10 was provide to all those families living below the poverty line to ensure that all girl children went to schools.

Tenth Plan (2002-07) streamlined the immediate need to enhance the level of girl's participation in education if the country has to achieve universal elementary education in the stipulated timeframe.

The Eleventh five years Plan (2007-12) termed as India educational plan is laying special focus on education as a central instrument for achieving rapid and inclusive growth. It presents a comprehensive strategy for strengthening the education sector covering all segments of the education pyramid.

The Twelfth five year plan was the last five year plan (2012-2017) its theme was faster, more inclusive and sustainable growth it aimed to reduce gender and social gap in school enrolment to enhance access to higher education to reduce malnutrition.

New Education Policy:

The NEP was passed by the Indian government on 29th July 2020. That outlines the vision of India's new education system.

The New Education Policy will bring more inclusivity for the girls. It will help in exploding the prevalent gender stereotypes in the society. For example, there are new subjects that will be added in the NEP like carpentry and coding from the 6th grade itself. It may seem like a normal course to many, but girls are never considered to do works like carpentry in our society. It has always been associated with manly profession.

Secondly, there is a concept of gender that is to be introduced at a very young age. The children have to be taught the difference between gender and biological sex at the earliest. Education is the key to cure any curiosity in adolescence age.

The New Education Policy mainly focuses on girl children and women. By looking at the dropout rates of girls from school in India, it targets to lay out more support and comfort to girls. The main focus of this policy is the dropout rates at higher education level. This policy mentions the GER for grades 6-8 was 90.7% while for grades 9-10 and 11-12 was only 79.3% and around 50% respectively.

Menstruation is one of the major reasons that lead to girls dropping out. These statistics are startling and should be taken as a wakeup call to talk openly about menstrual health in the society.

To ensure the increment in literacy rates among girls, teachers should form small groups of students to engage them in a discussion about health, gender identity, menstrual health, sex education etc. this will help them to become more self aware.

Conclusion:

India is now a leading country on the basis of women education. Indian History is not devoid of talented women. It is full of women philosophers like Gargi, Viswabara and

Maitreya. Other renowned women include Mirabai, Durgabati, Ahalyabi and Laxmibai. All the legendary and historical women in India are an inspiration and motivation for today's women. We can never overlook their contributions to the society and country. The progress of a country depends on girls' education. So, girls' education should be encouraged. Quality learning is important for the future lives of girls and boys, but it is also an especially important ingredient in the virtuous circle of development that comes from girls' education.

Education plays a vital role in the socio-economic and political aspects of woman's development. Through the use of education, the world has become a better place to live in. There has been the formulation of several policies and plans to improve the literacy rate in the country. RTE has brought some positive changes in gender disparity in schooling. But it focuses more on primary level of schooling that is the major reasons for dropping out drastically after ending their basic education. NEP is considered to play a vital role to tackle this problem. For the faster development of females, we all must recognize the significance of education for girls. Gender inequality is one of the biggest challenges today. This can be tackled by eradicating poverty, providing free and compulsory education to girls, proper counseling, parenting enlightenment, and enhancing their safety. To ensure the enrollment of girls in schools government should take proper measures to implement the policies on the ground level. The task of undisputable girl-child education should be given priority. Though, the increment can be seen in the literacy rate among girls since independence. It is because of the steps taken by the government for the development of the girl child. It is hard to imagine the development of a society where the condition of girls is poor. Girls make up a family that makes a society which further helps in nation-building.

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