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GENDER EQUALITY AND ACCESS TO PRIMARY EDUCATION UNDER SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT:

Education plays important role in Gender equality and women empowerment. At global level, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have special focus on both the aspects. India as a party of this global initiative is also committed to address both the issues.

India has endeavoured to achieve universalisation of primary education since a long time. But a major breakthrough comes when the nation has launched Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in 2001 to Universalise Elementary Education (UEE) with special focus on girls' education.

Further, Right to Education (2009) has strengthened the effort to achieve the goal of UEE. In spite of that, there are still some issues regarding the girls' education like gender gap in enrolment, separate toilets for girls, social stigma etc. that create hurdles in way to gender sensitive environment.

The present paper is an attempt to review the status of girls education in India on selected indicators namely girls' enrolment, Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Drop Out Rate, Gender Parity Index at primary level of education in India.

KEYWORDS: Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), RTE, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Issue of girls education for a developing country like India is very critical because having a girl baby in our society considered as a 'bojh' or 'paraya dhan'. They nurtured in a very conservative socio cultural environment where they were not allowed to get formal schooling like boys children and take responsibilities with regard to fuel, fodder, water, sibling care and paid and unpaid work etc. Great economist and philosopher

Amartya Sen who see 'Development as Freedom' to the individuals has argued that-

"The capability of the girls will be severely restricted by the denial of education. If freedom is the goal of development, it will be substantial restricted by the fact that illiterate girls will become illiterate women".

Education plays an important role to ensure gender equality in a society especially primary education. Primary education is regarded as the foundation for the entire superstructure of children's moral, spiritual, intellectual and physical development. It is expected to help every child to understand and practice desirable social

relationships, critical thinking to develop his/her own desirable individual aptitudes and gain command of common integrated knowledge and skills.

After independence the pledge towards Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) came into existence when Constitution of India adopted on 26 November 1949. Article 45 of original Constitution clearly states that "The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years." Further, Article 41 mandated the State,

among other things, to make effective provision for securing the right to education “within the limits of its economic capacity and development.” These were non-justifiable because the Art. 41&45 come under the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP). Through 86th Constitutional Amendment in 2002, it becomes the fundamental right of children of same age to free and compulsory education under Art. 21A.

There have been taken many steps to ensure universalisation of education for children across the world. A general right to education was directly formulated for the first time in the Universal Declaration of Human Right (UDHR). Later, it was rearticulated in Article 13 of the International covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and Article 28 of the Covenant on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which both guarantee the right of everyone to compulsory and free primary education.

India as a party of the above mentioned international agreements has adopted a child friendly policy and made Elementary Education a Fundamental Right in its 86th constitutional amendment in 2002. Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) in India has accepted as a national goal since 1950 with the enactment of our Constitution. Article 45 of the Constitution under the Directive Principles Of State Policy (DPSP) outlined the free and compulsory education to all children. Constitution of India has guaranteed access to elementary education to all after 10 years from the date of adoption of the constitution. But India was far behind this goal and the situation was continued till the end of the 20th century.

At the turn of 21st century, there were two major international initiatives had been taken towards the universalisation of education in the year of 2000, namely:-

1. World Education Forum 2000 in Dakar. It was the continuation of UNESCO's Education For All (EFA) initiative taken in 1990 at Jomtien World Conference on Education for All.
2. Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The basic goals of both are to universalise the education for all. There are 2 goals out of 8 of MDGs that directly influences the elementary education. The MDG 2 on achieving universal primary education and MDG 3 on eliminating gender inequality in primary and secondary schools are relevant to education as a human right. Like MDGs there are 6 goals of EFA aim to provide quality basic education to all children, youth and adults.

Hence, EFA and MDGs are the two most important global policies on education, which give governments an incentive to fulfil their duties to provide universal compulsory and free education to all children.

In this background, India has taken a great step as **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** in 2001 for achievement of Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) in a time bound manner. This free and compulsory education to children between the age group of 6-14 years is now their fundamental right under Article 21A of the Constitution by 86th constitutional amendment in 2002. It is felt that formal education system is not sufficient to fulfil the noble objectives, and recognised that informal education along with existing system of formal one, can improve the general living standard of the people by imparting essential ingredients of education.

SSA is being implemented in partnership with state governments to cover the entire country address the need of 192 million children in 1.1 million habitations. The programme seek to open new schools in those habitations which do not have schooling facilities and strengthen existing school infrastructure through provision of additional class rooms, toilets, drinking water, maintenance grant and school improvement grants. Existing school with inadequate teacher strength are provided with additional teachers, whole the capacity of existing teachers is being strengthened by extensive training, grants for developing teaching learning materials and strengthening of the academic support structure at a cluster, block and district level.

OBJECTIVES OF SARVA SHIKSHA ABHIYAN:-

1. All Children in school, Education Guarantee Centre, Alternate School, to School camp by 2003.
2. All children complete five years of primary schooling.
3. All children complete eight years of elementary schooling.
4. Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life.
5. Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level.
6. Universal retention.

Elementary Education (I-VIII) comprises two parts namely-

- Primary Education from Grades I-V for 6-11 age group and
- Upper Primary from Grades VI-VIII for 6-14 age groups.

In spite of given prescribed age group, there is provision in SSA and RTE to admit children of any age in appropriate class by their ability who cannot get enrolled due to any reason, and provide special training for these children.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP): -

This is latest scheme of Govt. of India for improving the status of girls' education and Child Sex Ratio and it was launched on 22nd January, 2015.

The major objectives of the Scheme are as under:-

- Prevent gender biased sex selective elimination;
- Ensure survival & protection of the girl child;
- Ensure education of the girl child.

It has encouraged people to send their girls children in schools and tackle the issue of low CSR in the country

Objectives of the Study:-

Since the government's ambitious scheme to Universalize Elementary Education (UEE), Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched in 2001. The objectives of the present study are basically dealt with the overall status of primary education in Pre SSA and Post SSA period with special reference to girls' education.

The following objectives have been taken:-

1. To analyze the status of girls education in Pre and Post SSA period.
2. To examine the gender gap in both Pre SSA and Post SSA period.
3. To identify the strategies for creating the

Hypothesis:-

To fulfil the objectives of the study following hypotheses have been formulated: -

1. **H01:** There is no significant relationship between GER of girls at primary education (Class I-V) in Pre and Post SSA period.

HA1: There is significant relationship between GER of girls at primary education (Class I-V) in Pre and Post SSA period.

2. **H02:** There is no significant relationship between Drop out Rate of girls at primary education (Class I-V) in Pre and Post SSA period.

HA2: There is significant relationship between Drop out Rate of girls at primary education (Class I-V) in Pre and Post SSA period.

METHODOLOGY:

The paper is based on the secondary data taken from different government reports and other sources. The findings of the study are shown by appropriate tables, statistical tools. The analysis of the paper is based on Pre and Post SSA period. For Pre SSA period the data from 1990-91 to 2000-01 and for Post SSA period data from 2001-02 to 2013-14 have been taken. Data comprise four important indicators of SSA namely *Total Enrolment*, *Gross Enrolment Ratio*, *Drop-Out Rate* and *Gender Parity Index*.

Analysis:-

Given hypotheses have been tested with the help of SPSS software. As a statistical method **Independent t-test** has been applied on the data given in Tables. For Pre SSA period, data has been taken from 1990-91-2000-01 and for Post SSA period 2001-02 to 2014-15. the result is following:-

- H01:** There is no significant relationship between GER of girls at primary education (Class I-V) in Pre and Post SSA period.

Group Statistics					
	SSA time period	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
GER of Girls at Primary Level of Education (Class I-V)	Pre SSA (1990-91 to 2000-01)	11	79.0636	5.12919	1.54651
	Post SSA (2000-01 to 2013-14)	13	105.2154	8.78036	2.43523

Source: Author's calculation based on table no.2.

Independent Samples Test								
		t-test for Equality of Means						
		t cal (value of t calculated)	Degree of Freedom	Significance (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
GER of Girls at Primary Level of Education (Class I-V)	Equal variances assumed	8.686	22	.000	-26.15175	3.01075	-32.39567	-19.90783
	Equal variances not assumed	9.065	19.772	.000	-26.15175	2.88480	-32.17378	-20.12971

Source: Author's calculation

As the result shows, $|t_{cal}| = 8.686 > t_{tab} = 2.074$ at 5% level of significance for 22 degree of freedom. Hence, Null Hypothesis (H01) may be rejected and Alternative Hypothesis (HA1) may be accepted. Therefore, there is statistically significant relationship between Pre and Post SSA's Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER).

It implied that Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan scheme incentivise enrolment rate of girls in primary education at large scale (as shown in Table 1 and).

- H02:** There is no significant relationship between Drop out Rate of girls at primary education (Class I-V) in Pre and Post SSA period.

Group Statistics					
	SSA time period	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Drop Out Rate of Girl at Primary Level of Education (Class I-V)	Pre SSA (1990-91 to 2000-01)	11	43.6545	2.28708	.68958
	Post SSA (2000-01 to 2013-14)	11	27.3909	5.39286	1.62601

Source: Author's calculation

Independent Samples Test								
t-test for Equality of Means								
		t cal (value of t calculated)	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Drop Out Rate of Girls at Primary Level of Education (Class I-V)	Equal variances assumed	9.208	20	.000	16.26364	1.76619	12.57943	19.94784
	Equal variances not assumed	9.208	13.484	.000	16.26364	1.76619	12.46191	20.06537

Source: Author's calculation

Here, $|t_{cal}| = 9.208 > t_{tab} = 2.086$ at 5% level of significance for 20 degree of freedom. Hence, Null Hypothesis (H_0) may be rejected and Alternative Hypothesis (H_A) may be accepted. It shows that there is statistically significant impact of SSA scheme to reduce Drop out Rate in Pre and Post SSA period.

The indicators GER and Drop out Rate are considered as the best measurement for progress of schooling.

**From the given tables, following findings can be drawn:
Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER):**

$$\text{Gross Enrolment Rate} = \frac{\text{Total Enrolment in Primary Grades (I-V)}}{\text{Population of age 6-11 years}} \times 100$$

It is clear from the table 1 that GER of girls and boys shown from 1990-91 to 2013-14 have increasing trends. But the gap between both the groups was much larger before 2001 (the year in which SSA has been launched). Further the gap has been narrowed down and even GER of girls children equal or surpass to the GER of boys since 2008-09. This is a healthy trend and big success of SSA. It also reflects change in mindset of the society towards the education of girls' children.

Drop – Out Rate:- It is defined as

$$\text{Drop - Out Rate} = \frac{\text{No.of Students dropping out from primary Grades (I-V) in year } t}{\text{Total No.of students in primary Grades (I-V) in year } t} \times 100$$

From table 2, it can be shown that before 2001 – 02 falling rate in drop out was moderate for both boys and girls but from 2001-02 it gathers momentum and sharp declines follows the trend and falling rate of girls is faster than boys.

Enrolment:-

Table 3 reflect the no. of enrolment (in million) from 1990-91 to 2013-14. As the table shows that differences between enrolment of boys and girls before SSA is highly skewed but after 2001, skewness deteriorates gradually. But enrolment of girls' children still lower than boys, it may be due to low sex ratio (943) in the country.

Gender Parity Index (GPI):-

$$\text{Gender Parity Index} = \frac{\text{Girls' Enrolment in Primary Grades (I-V) in year } t}{\text{Boys' Enrolment in Primary Grades (I-V) in year } t} \times 100$$

GPI approaches to 1 shows a healthy indicator for girls education.

ISSUES OF PRIMARY EDUCATION:-

In spite of the success of SSA, that is shown by the criterions taken in the study. These criterions are basically quantitative in nature. SSA guarantees to provide '**Quality Education**' to the children, but the recent study paints a gloomy picture as far as the matter of Quality Education is concerned. These qualitative aspects along with some quantitative one hinder the success of this flagship scheme. These issues are very critical from the point of view of girls' education along with boys'.

- Low quality of education and its falling trend in which learning achievement level of education and high teacher absence rate (25% nationally) are the major reasons.
- As per Unified-District Information System on Education (U-DISE) Report, after four year of the implementation of RTE Act from 2010, public schools rose by 13,498 till 2014 in the country while in the same period total enrolment in such schools declined by 1.13 crore and enrolment in private schools rose by 1.85 crore. While the situation improved in 2018.
- Another report of U-DISE on School Education in India 2014-15, only 79% of teachers are professionally qualified in the country.

Taking into account the gender bias, which is rampant across most section of the society, a **Digital Gender Atlas for Advancing Girls Education in India** was launched on International Women's Day in March 2015 by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MoHRD).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION:-

Study of the paper shows that there is a success of SSA in Universalising the goal of Elementary Education at some extent but after 18 years of implementation of the scheme, many issues regarding the girls education unanswered. There are still differences at regional and national level. Major limitation of the scheme is that success reflected only in quantitative terms. Mere increase in number of GER and decline in DoR can not reflect the actual success; SSA is still far away from its goal of Quality Education to both boys and girls.

So there is urgent need to take action that able to tackle the qualitative aspects like ensure the accountability of teachers towards providing quality education and special attention for girls children in classroom. Government also need to ensure lesser burden of non teaching works for teachers. Gender sensitive environment should be created throughout the country. Initiatives should be taken at individual level by parents to promote girls' education. If these policy actions have taken as early as possible, India can successfully reap its 'Demographic Dividend'.

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Appendices:-

Tables :-

The each table divided into two parts Pre SSA that cover the period 1990-2000 and Post SSA cover the period 2001-2013.

Table 1. Gross Enrolment Ratio in pre and post SSA

Year	All Categories - Classes I-V (6-10 Years) – Boys	All Categories - Classes I-V (6-10 Years) – Girls	All Categories - Classes I-V (6-10 Years) – Total
Pre SSA	Pre SSA	Pre SSA	Pre SSA
1990-91	94.8	71.9	83.8
1991-92	97.2	75	86.5
1992-93	95.5	73.8	85
1993-94	83.6	73.1	81.7
1994-95	96.6	78.2	87.7
1995-96	97.1	79.4	88.6
1996-97	97	80.1	88.8
1997-98	99.3	82.2	91.1
1998-99	100.9	84.1	92.8
1999-00	103.3	86	94.9
2000-01	104.9	85.9	95.7
Post SSA	Post SSA	Post SSA	Post SSA
2001-02	105.3	86.9	96.3

2002-03	97.5	93.1	95.3
2003-04	100.6	95.6	98.2
2004-05	110.7	104.7	107.8
2005-06	112.8	105.8	109.4
2006-07	114.6	108	111.4
2007-08	115.3	112.6	114
2008-09	114.3	114.4	114.4
2009-10	115.5	115.4	115.5
2010-11	115.4	116.7	116.0
2011-12	106.8	109.3	108.0
2012-13	104.8	107.2	106
2013-14	100.2	102.7	101.4
2014-15			100.08
2015-16			99.21

Source:- <https://data.gov.in/> and *Statistics of School Education, 2007-08; MHRD, GoI; Educational Statistics at a Glance, 2011, MHRD, GoI; Statistics of School Education, 2010-11, MHRD, GoI; U-DISE, NUEPA.*

Table2 Drop-Out Rate

Year	All Categories - Classes I-V – Boys Pre SSA	All Categories - Classes I-V – Girls Pre SSA	All Categories - Classes I-V – Total Pre SSA
1990-91	40.1	46	42.6
1991-92	41.5*	46.3*	43.8*
1992-93	43.8	46.7	45
1993-94	43.2*	45.8*	44.2*
1994-95	42.6*	44.8*	43.5*
1995-96	41.4	43	42.1
1996-97	39.7	40.9	40.2
1997-98	37.5	41.5	39.2
1998-99	40.9	42.3	41.5
1999-00	39.8	41	40.3
2000-01	39.7	41.9	40.7
Post SSA	Post SSA	Post SSA	Post SSA
2001-02	38.4	39.9	39
2002-03	35.9	33.7	34.9
2003-04	33.7	28.6	31.5
2004-05	31.8	25.4	29
2005-06	28.7	21.8	25.7
2006-07	24.6	26.8	25.6
2007-08	25.7	24.4	25.1
2008-09	29.6	25.8	27.8
2009-10	31.8	28.5	30.3
2010-11	29	25.4	27.4
2011-12	23.4	21	22.3
2012-13			
2013-14			

Source:- <https://data.gov.in/> and *Statistics of School Education, 2007-08; MHRD, GoI; Educational Statistics at a Glance, 2011, MHRD, GoI; Statistics of School Education, 2010-11, MHRD, GoI; U-DISE, NUEPA.*

Table 3 Enrolment (in millions)

Year	All Categories - Class I-V – Boys Pre SSA	All Categories - Class I-V – Girls Pre SSA	All Categories - Class I-V – Total Pre SSA
1990-91	57	40.4	97.4
1991-92	58.6	42.3	100.9
1992-93	57.9	41.7	99.6
1993-94	55.1	41.9	97
1994-95	60	45.1	105.1
1995-96	60.9	46.2	107.1
1996-97	61.4	46.8	108.2
1997-98	62.3	48	110.3
1998-99	62.7	49	111.7
1999-00	63.6	50	113.6
2000-01	64	49.8	113.8
Post SSA	Post SSA	Post SSA	Post SSA
2001-02	63.6	50.3	113.9
2002-03	65.1	57.3	122.4
2003-04	68.4	59.9	128.3
2004-05	69.7	61.1	130.8
2005-06	70.5	61.6	132.1
2006-07	71.0	62.7	133.7
2007-08	71.1	64.4	135.5
2008-09	70.0	64.5	134.5
2009-10	70.8	64.8	135.6
2010-11	70.5	64.8	135.3
2011-12	70.8	66.3	137.1
2012-13	69.6	65.2	134.8
2013-14	68.6	63.8	132.4
2014-15	67.6	62.9	130.5

Source:- <https://data.gov.in/> and *Statistics of School Education, 2007-08; MHRD, GoI; Educational Statistics at a Glance, 2011, MHRD, GoI; Statistics of School Education, 2010-11, MHRD, GoI; U-DISE, NUEPA.*

Table 4 Gender Parity Index

Year	Classes I-V (6-10 Years) – All Pre SSA
1990-91	0.76
1991-92	0.77
1992-93	0.77
1993-94	0.87
1994-95	0.81
1995-96	0.82
1996-97	0.83
1997-98	0.83
1998-99	0.83
1999-00	0.83
2000-01	0.82
Post SSA	Post SSA
2001-02	0.83

2002-03	0.95
2003-04	0.95
2004-05	0.95
2005-06	0.94
2006-07	0.94
2007-08	0.98
2008-09	0.99
2009-10	1
2010-11	1.01
2011-12	1.01
2012-13	1.02
2013-14	1.03

Source:- <https://data.gov.in/> and *Statistics of School Education, 2007-08, MHRD, GoI; Educational Statistics at a Glance, 2011, MHRD, GoI; Statistics of School Education, 2010-11, MHRD, GoI; and U-DISE, NUEPA.*



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