



Female Education and Literacy at Remote Zilla Parishad Schools surrounding the village Susri in Yavatmal District of Maharashtra

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Abstract: The paper presents the interpretation of the data received through survey of Zilla Parishad and other government run schools in the remote, under developed and small villages of the district Yavatmal of Maharashtra. The motto of the survey was to identify the issues pertaining with the school going girls of these villages and to verify the implementation of the Right to Education and Acts specified in Articles 21, 21A, 41, 45, 46, 47, and 15(3). Also, the effect of the overall culture on the school and its teaching learning process were examined.

Keywords: Girl Education, Literacy Issues, RTE Act, Zilla Parishad Schools, Article 21, 21A

1. Introduction:

A famous proverb states “Change is the end result of all true learning”. Importance of education cannot be defined since one feels it in form of achievements which are unachievable in absence of knowledge gained through it. An educated and inquiry oriented person is a lifelong learner. Knowledge achieved enhances the skillset and hence the chances of employment in these cut throat competitive era. Side effect of education is the transformation of the personality and attitude defining the approach towards issues, helping in leading quality life in a society. Value addition is the ‘mantra’ for success in any area and this is achieved only by educating oneself.

India’s about 30% population is of students. For long there has been a talks – necessary and unnecessary, political and all other kind of debates on the education system of India. India is a diversified country with multiple divides mainly owing to the culture being followed at different places of the country. Ideological divides too exist. General talk in the community is about getting the child admitted to the English convent schools without much background thought process. In urban areas the schools are being projected as brands and admitted student feel proud, leave apart the knowledge s/he gains there. Here, the school and

schooling is a business vertical with corporate structure and refined admission processes to increase the admissions. The focus has always been on the customers who are the students from pre-nursery level to class 12th. However, about 70% of Indian population resides in rural areas meaning approximately 20% of the population of the students of the country come from these areas and approximately half of the student population is that of the girls. In general, this entire student population is dependent on the government run schools or the government aided schools. This paper attempts to highlight the facility available to these students and the issues being faced by them, the issues being faced by girl students and the background ideology of the Government of Maharashtra based on which the school infrastructure is provided, developed and run.

Section 2 emphasis is on women falling in the purview of Right to Education and Right to Women, state of women education in Yavatmal district of Maharashtra and the issues being faced by them at various government run schemes of schools. Section 3 specifies the data collection methodology to check adherence to Articles 21, 21A, 41, 45, 46, 47, and 15(3) and other issues. Section 4 presents the extract of the study of the data collected through the survey carried out in the remotely located schools in the district of Yavatmal in the state of Maharashtra. Section 5 emphasizes the statutes of education being followed for women, socio legal effects of education received/not received and judicial approach to right to education on women. This is followed by the conclusion and suggestions.

2. Education for women in India

A women carries the responsibility of the household which includes three generations at any given time namely her in-laws, she and her husband and her children. It is important to realize the approach, the difference and its longtime impact which an educated woman will offer compared to an uneducated one. Glaring case study is that renowned social and educational reformer Savitribai Phule [1] from Maharashtra pre-independence era of India. She was a poet, studied after her marriage, regarded as a first school teacher, participated in India's independence struggle and established first all women school in Bhide Wada in Pune, Maharashtra in the year 1848 with her husband Mahatma Joytiba Phule. Her noteworthy work was to abolish discrimination and unfair treatment of people based on gender and caste. Fatima Sheikh [2] was colleague of Sindhutai Sapkal [3] in her school and amongst first woman teachers of India who used to teach dalit and backward students.

Another current noteworthy case study is that of Sindhutai Sapkal of the village Wardha district of Maharashtra who was nicknamed 'Chindhi' meaning a torn piece of cloth, since being an unwanted child, married at the age of 12 and abandoned at the age of 20 by her husband. She spent time with her new born girl child in crematorium and begged on railway platforms to save herself from savages of the society. She established herself as a social reformer, human and educational right protector and fighter while living with adivasi people in Chikhaldara village in Amravati district of Maharashtra. Later she went on to establish orphanages for the abandoned adivasi children to support their human

and educational rights. She established Sapthasindhu Mahila Adhar Balsangopan and Shikshan Sanstha, Pune and Vanvasi Gopal Krishna Shikshan Krida Prasark Mandal, Amravati. She boasts 750 awards, 207 son-in-laws and 36 daughter-in-laws through her orphanages. Other few noteworthy educational reformers in the state of Maharashtra are Vinoba Bhave, Dhondo Keshav Karva, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Nanaji Deshmukh, Sindhutai Sapkal and Baba Amte. Few reformers at national level are Asima Chatterjee, Meghna Ghai President of Whistling Woods School, Chandraprabha Saikini, Vimla Kaul, Ramabai Ranade, Mahadevi Verma and Mukti Dugli.

After independence, the Government of India has worked proactively towards enhancing the reach of knowledge to the last person of the society by establishing schools through various schemes enacted in the Constitution. Education is now the fundamental right of each individual and protected through Constitution by the laws framed in the Articles 21, 21A, 41, 45, 46, 47, Special mention Article 15(3). Special laws have been framed for the girls. The government of India has reserved 40% seats for girl students in schools.

The governance in the state of Maharashtra is broadly categorized in two categories i.e., urban and rural local governance. The urban local governance runs through the Municipal Acts and comprises of municipal corporations, municipal committees and ward committees while rural local governance comprises of Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat. Panchayat samiti is a local government body at the Taluka, sub-district level in India. It works for the villages that together are called a Block. The Panchayat Samiti is the link between the Gram Panchayat and Zilla Parishad. There are 351 panchayat samitis or block panchayats in Maharashtra. Gram panchayat are local self-government bodies at the village level. They are a cornerstone of the panchayati raj system. A gram panchayat can be set up in villages with a population of more than five hundred. There is a common gram panchayat for two or more villages if the population of these villages is less than five hundred, whereupon it is called a group-gram panchayat. There are 28,813 gram panchayats in Maharashtra. Zilla Parishad schools are established, supervised and funded by Zilla Parishad which is a district level local authority of the state. In state of Maharashtra backbone of school education in the remote areas and also otherwise is the Zilla Parishad [4] schools established at each gram panchayat. Other schools running are residential Ashram Shala [5] especially for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities and the schools running under the scheme by the name Savitribai Phule Shala [6]. Apart from there are various other schemes of schools running in the State of Maharashtra.

3. Data collection methodology

The data collection methodology includes the following though process:

Historical aspect

In early times, the villages used to be self-sufficient, self-dependent and were the pivots of the culture and economy of the nation. The women were intelligent, aware at self-consciousness level and sharp to detect the difference between good, bad and worse just out of basic daily conduct of individuals in everyday life. Men on the other hand, was hard working and believer in the daily societal norms in consultation with the females of the household and hence used to lead a happy and contended life while generating cultural wellbeing for next generation. Disputes were solved, accepted and followed respectfully in consultation with elderly body of the villages consuming a small amount of time depicting highest level of maturity which is absent at a larger level mainly owing to disconnect and understanding between humans and deprivation of core fundamental values of humanness. Old examples of case study are the epic resistance provided, under the guidance of their gurus, by Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi, Maharana Pratap Singh, Shivaji Maharaj to name a few. In modern times, the wars are indirect, well thought of, preconceived with long term implementation strategy without a human face, technological in nature having no national boundaries, the narrative of which is understood after heavy loss is inflicted. Also, no one is the seer of the near and far future owing to confusions prevailing at all the societal levels. Recent example cases are Pegasus hack which is out of ambit of normal human to understand. Also, the implications of development in the areas like Artificial Intelligence and Robotics is less understood at scientific levels so again normal human being is out its ambit and is a mute spectator of the result, be it positive or negative. Importantly, in India even now over 65% of population happens to reside in villages. In simpler terms the side effect of modernization has increased the sufferings of the villages owing to dependency on nearby towns and cities, which can at times be severe and relatively detrimental at the basic levels like, availability of everyday material needed for daily living, leaving apart the cultural homogeneity and well-being which they once used to enjoy. Also, there is clash of ideological values mainly owing to disconnect and adjustment issues along with unwillingness to adopt to the positives of the rapid changes. The comprehension has become too much complicated.

Indian polity, implementation and review system

Approximately 30 percentage of our country's population is student. Hence, polity, their thinking, policy making and its implementation is a very important aspect. As per the Constitution of India each state government decides the mode of implementation of the education policy independent and in a way unanswerable to the central government. It has its positives in case good and beneficial decision are to reach the last student. In minimum, the government need to provide free education, uniform, midday meals, incentives to girl students, etcetera. The benchmark for education and its governance is based on RTE Act, Article 21, 21A and other acts enacted in the Constitution of India. Other important aspects includes zero tolerance against discrimination and harassment, methodology to address grievances, safe and secure facilities for girl students like separate toilets, washrooms, mensuration facility, guidance and protection from surrounding environment, guidance on mental

wellbeing and hygiene, adjustment in the social environment. The above issues and the concept of structure and governance of government schools run in district Yavatmal, Maharashtra were kept in mind while designing the survey questions.

Teacher's mindset, Education and Salary structure

In general, the luxury of time, secured government job and pension after retirement is the silver lining of attraction towards the job a teacher. Also, the salary structure is in accordance of government implemented 7th pay commission, in which the teacher earns well above the median salary and enjoys a good life with average responsibilities. General trend observed was that teacher intends to keep his/her family in a nearby well established town or a city where all facilities of leading a good lifestyle are available. This results in increase in his/her travel time to remotely located schools and the general trend adopted is convening with fellow teacher of the same school to conduct the proceedings of the school by attending as per their convenience, which in general is attending the school on alternate days. This compromises the teaching learning process and its quality. On the other hand, there are few motivated teachers who understand the very nature of the problem and go to the extent of convincing the parents of bright students for sponsorship and even adoption [] for the student's career growth. Few students from Zilla Parishad School, Grampanchayat Sunna are now pursuing courses like B.Sc Microbiology, nursing, police entrance while few are preparing for entrance examination for MBBS course. However, the government has mandated admission of minimum of 20 students in a school for sanction of two posts of teacher. This makes teachers of each Zilla Parishad school to motivate the villagers to admit their wards to the school. This helps in increase of enrollment and spread of education. The general education prescribed for selection as a teacher in government school is B.Ed (Bachelor of Education) after graduation. M. Ed (Master of Education) is the requirement for higher secondary schools. Very few teacher had a Ph.D. degree and were not inclined to obtain one.

Mindset of the students to look at the school and the way it functions

School is a unique experience for each individual student. Also, a child take up schooling as a just another activity like playing, eating etcetera and in the process learn various subjects irrespective of the background or the upbringing. Some common binding grounds for the students to attend the school are that going to school must be a taken for granted activity which is beneficial in long term. With time, they find it refreshing and new activity away from a mundane daily life. Other factors are to avail free midday meal facility, school a way out to shy away from daily chores of work, especially the female students, no financial burden, incentive of Re. 1 per day for girl students to attend the school regularly. However, few bright students indeed like to learn the subjects and are motivated to lead a good life after the schooling.

Mindset of the parents sending their children to the government schools

Uneducated parent take their uneducated status as a personal loss and wish for wellbeing of their children by sending to school to get educated. They feel happy and understand the importance of education from their own experience. Other major motivating factors are to obtain the benefits of the government sponsored and implemented schemes like to avail free education under Article 21A, to avail various annual scholarship which help them temporarily with their finances and at times to free themselves up from the responsibilities of children for some time of the day so that they can utilize it for their own low paying and physically straining professions like working on daily wages in the fields, going for household chores in affluent families, etcetera. Problems associated with schooling of the children of these families are the nature of work they do which involves migration for months from one place to another. This migration is done by the people belonging to Bharadi community dominant in Yavatmal district of Maharashtra which lead almost a nomadic lifestyle even in these days. They face two problems during migration. One, they don't have anyone behind to look after the needs of their children who are attending the school and secondly an extra helping hand makes them earn more. Also, their migration period is small but coincides with the peak learning period of the schools. Caste equations and trends is also a major hurdle in which almost all the schools surveyed had negligible admission of students belonging to upper caste. In Zilla Parishad, Kelapur School running up to class ten, there were only three students belonging to Brahmins []. The girl of an uneducated family has to get married off early and in many cases before the legal age of the marriage, bringing an abrupt end to the aspirations related to education. Conversely, the rich Reddy community also gets their daughter married off early owing to the age long tradition. Marriages in Reddy community are very expensive event and involves dowry in form of land parcels, plots, cars, gold, and verbal assurance for many other things depending on the status and job profile of the groom. Birth of a girl in Reddy community brings tears to the eyes of the parents owing to financial obligations it brings [].

Summary of Article 21, 21A, 41, 45, 46, 47, and 15(3)

- Article 21[]: Protection of life and personal liberty. No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law.
- Article 21A[]: Right to Education act 2009, also known as the RTE Act 2009, was enacted by the Parliament of India on August 4, 2009 and included in Constitution as Article 21A and became effective on April 1, 2010. It describes modalities of the importance of free and compulsory education for children aged between 6 to 14 years in India. By this India entered the pool of 135 countries to have made education a fundamental right for every child. The act prescribes minimum norms for elementary schools, prohibits unrecognized schools from practice and advocates against donations fee and interviews of the children at the time of admission. The RTE Act keeps a check on all neighborhood through regular surveys and eligible for receiving education but not having the means to. Education challenges have been prevalent at both the center and states for many years in India. The RTE Act 2009 maps out roles and responsibilities for the center, state and all

local bodies to rectify gaps in their education system in order to enhance the quality of education in the country.

- Article 41[]: Right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases
- The state shall, within the limits of economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement and cases of underserved want.
- Article 45[]: Provision to early childhood care and education to children below the age of 6 years. The state shall endeavor to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of 6 years.
- Article 46[]: Promotion to educational and economic interests of schedule caste, schedule tribe and other weaker section. The state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people in particular of schedule caste and schedule tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
- Article 47[]: Duty of the state to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health. The state shall regard the rising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and in particular the state shall endeavor to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for the medicinal propose of intoxicating drinks and of drugs are injurious to health.
- Article 15(3)[]: Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.
- Article 51A(k): It shall be the duty of every citizen of India who is a parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education to his child, or as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years.

Based on this back ground and in general, I decided to stick to the basics. My first few question pertained to collecting details like name of the School, Principal/School in-charge, school address followed by the names of the teachers and the subjects they taught. Next, I thought of understanding the teaching learning module adopted by the school and delivery of the subject fundamentals to the students by the teachers. Also, the entire world went through very unique and rare disruption owing to Covid-19 pandemic resulting in extreme strict lockdown imposed by the government. Especially, owing to extra caution the schools were closed for more than a year, hence the natural question aroused was about the mitigation techniques adopted by these schools for dissemination of the subject fundamentals that too using remote technology to already deprive and under privileged students of these sort of distant and isolated villages. Also, included here is the summary of challenges posed by school going female children.

4. Outcome of the survey

The outcome of the survey is depicted in form of Fig. 1.

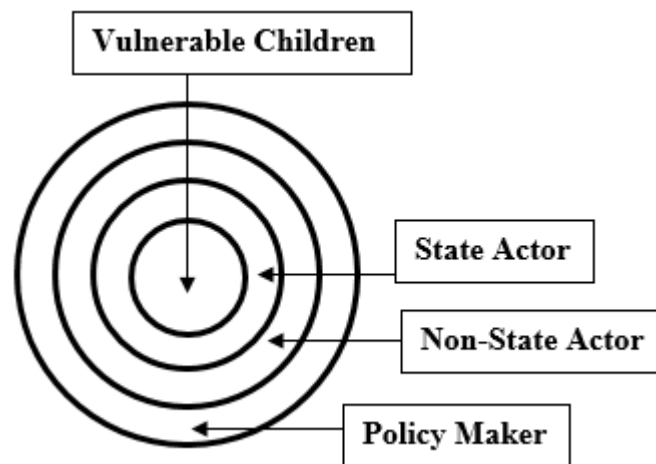


Figure. 1 The hierarchy of school system

The policymaker is the government. It was observed that the Acts enacted in the Constitution of India were implemented in the schools mainly relating to free education up to the age of 14. Free midday meals were provided which included boiled pulses and rice, khicadi, daliya, jiggery (gud) and grams and other eatables for growth of stamina and overall health. Nutritional medicinal tables, and medicines for anti-malaria, Lymphatic Filariasis (Hatti Rog), Dengue, Chicken Gunia, diarrhoea, egest, etc are provided free of cost. Free school uniforms and books are also provided as per the government rules and regulations. Necessary arrangements for girls were adopted in maximum of the schools which included mental and hygiene awareness. State actors are the Zilla Parishad responsible for providing proper infrastructure of the schools. At each gram panchayat a school up to Class V is provided. Zilla is district equivalent. Gram panchayats with higher population have multiple Zilla Parishad schools up to Class X. In general the student strength is 20 up to Class V and large school had adequate number of students running in few hundred. All the Acts of the Constitution of India were adhered to in these schools.

Non state actors influencing the atmosphere on daily basis were villagers of the villages where these school existed. Owing to the remoteness the schooling culture is intermix of the daily living style which is very different compared to that existing in the semi urban and urban areas. Pre and post school activities are oriented to daily chores stipulated only for the school going children which they carry out as a thoughtless routine. Government bodies carry out routine check-up of these facilities and NGOs carry out surveys and their findings become a reality check for corrective actions. There are many research papers citing the wellness and issues with these schooling infrastructure raised by the government. In the centre of the policy makers, state and non-state actors are the vulnerable children standing at the crossroad with the aim of a bright future but blurred path always for a genuine helping hand as a guide. There are numerous examples of success and failures form these schools. Few success stories includes students pursuing PhD from institute of repute like BITS, Pilani and IITs and becoming scientists, lawyers, doctors, teachers, professors, management gurus and professionals in other prominent areas and businesses. Conversely, there are sad stories in which the students have

left schools at young age owing to inroads in crime, murders, thieving, rape, and social violence related incidences. However, there are also the cases in which these deranged students were counselled back into profession based on their expertise with the help of seed money from government organizations and other agencies. The professions being pursued are that of an electrician, plumber, welding, farming and farming hand with few returning back to main education and are pursuing courses like M.Sc Microbiology, B.Ed, Engineering Diploma after class X, ITI in various skill enhancing trades, etcetera.

5. Conclusion and suggestions

Overall, it was observed that all the stakeholders pertaining to providing education in these remotely located areas have their own share positives and negatives. There are challenges in form of remoteness and reach to these schools but the infrastructure does exist so education is being delivered. The teaching learning process has its unique set of issues due to unexposed children to the global village environment available to the children residing in semi urban or urban areas. This is being addressed by providing digital classroom in each Zilla Panchayat school by the government. The visits of the authorities, NGOs and premier institutes like TIFR has impacted the deliverance of the fundamentals of the subjects to these students. The accountability of the teachers has increased owing to the reach of the technology. However, each school had its unique set of issues like blockage of roads due to flooding in rainy seasons, transportation issues in some villages, reluctance of girl students to accompany boys to school each day, reach of school teacher to help students on various issues outside the course curriculum. In general the schools are located in serene and green village environment with adequate space for sport activities. It was observed that the issues pertaining to female students have overcome the taboo orientation and the understanding and acceptance has increased. The regular awareness campaigns drives by government and other agencies have impacted positively and are delivering the results.

However, the facilities are a far cry from that required and is in need of major changes from grass root level to achieve the success at par with any developing or a developed nation of the world because it is these children who are the future of our country and their upbringing and wellness will determine the everything for us in spheres of life.

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