



Right to Education in India

Dr. Rakhi Sinha

Assistant Professor,

Faculty of Law,

M.S. University,

Baroda, Gujarat (India)

Since time immemorial, right to education has been considered as an absolute reality throughout the universe. Education is a self-enlightening process and an important component of life as well. It also gives us knowledge of the world around us. It develops in as a perspective of looking at life, building opinion in ourselves and have points of view of things in life. People debate over the subject of knowledge. Some say, education is a process of gaining information about the surrounding world while knowledge is something very different. They are right but then information cannot be converted into knowledge without the catalyst called education. Education makes us capable of interpreting things lightly. It is not just about lessons in text books; it is about the lessons of life.

Education is important as it teaches us the right behavior and good manners which makes us cultured and civilized as well. It teaches us how to live life. It is the hub of civilization and cultural activities. It functions as an instrument in the development of our values and virtues. It cultivates us into mature individuals who can be capable of better planning for future and taking the right decisions of life. Education gives us an insight into our lives and teaches us to learn from experience. It is also important for the economic growth of a country because it fosters principle of equality and socialism. It forms a support system for individuals to excel in life and hence we can say that education is the backbone of society.

Education is important because it equips us with all that is needed to make our dreams come true. It opens doors to brilliant career opportunities. It fetches better prospects in career and growth. Every employer today requires his/her prospective employees to be well educated. They must excel in their respective fields. So, education becomes an eligibility requirement for employment in any sector of the industry. We are rewarded for exercising the expertise required for the field we venture. We are weighed in the competitive market on the basis of our highly educational skills and how well we can apply them in practice.

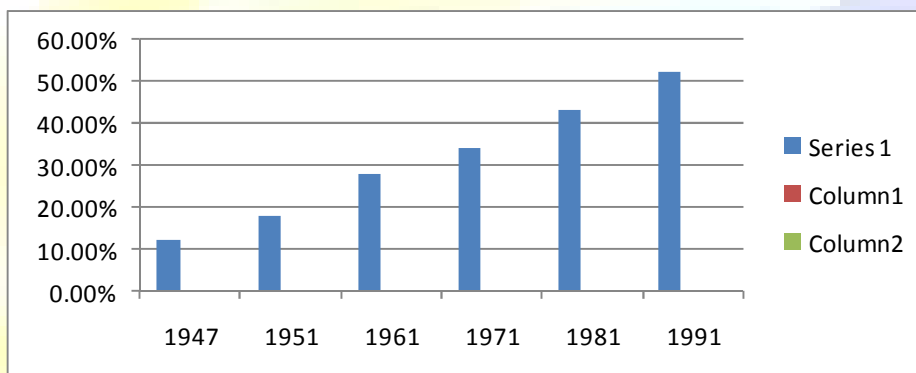
Education is essential as it paves the path leading to disillusionment. It wipes out all the myths or wrong beliefs from our mind. It helps to create a clear-cut picture of everything around us and we no longer remain in confusion about the things we learn. Education brings up questions and also helps us devise ways to find satisfactory answers to them. Education is about knowing that everything has a science to it, it's about learning to reason everything till every question meets its answer. Education can lead us to enlightenment. It is education that builds in every individual the confidence to take decisions, to face life and to accept successes and failures. It instills a sense of pride about the knowledge for better prospects of life in future. Hence it has become clear that for the progress of the nation and for the enrichment of the society in general, education is necessary and important.

In the ancient Indian literature, the importance of education has been well recorded. We know from the Mahabharata that education functions as an eye of the human beings. Education defends a man as his mother and supports as his wife. It helps human beings in his prosperity. It gives honor among the learned people. From the Vedic period to the advent of historical period in the Indian sub-continent, education played a vital role in the development of mankind as well as society. During the Vedic period, a person's first educator was his mother. The Taitriya Upanishad advises to pay regards to the mother as Goddess (1.11)1. We know from the Rig-Veda2 that there was a number of female scholars' viz. Shardha-Kamayani, Indrani, Vagambhrini ghosha etc. who composed a number of scholarly sutras (14.9.4.33). The Vedic people's next teacher was their father. Maharishi Bhrihu learnt Brahavidya from his father Verdun (Chandogya Upanishad, 5/ during the 3/1-3). The aforesaid description has cleared the fact that education was not a matter of right the Vedic period but merely a social obligation for merely the upper caste people whether male or female. During the later Vedic period, importance of education spread among the people. They began to take educational guidance to scholar outside their house (Satpath Brahman 14.5.5.20)3. Educational became more and more refined in the society during the historical period in this part of sub-continent. The mauryan period laid emphasis upon the various spheres of education. The author of Arthashastra, Kautilya went to Taxila University from Patliputra. It was during the Gupta period, we find a well-developed form of education. The Gupta administration was more vigilant upon the education of children and youth as well. A number of educational schools and universities were founded through the royal patronage among which the world famous University of Nalanda4 (Bihar) was most famous. Later on the growth of educational system was at its climax with the foundation of the Universities of Vikramshila5 (Bihar) and Somapuri (now in the Bangladesh). But with the advent of Muslim rule in India, the roots of Indian educational system were uprooted. Education in medieval India experienced a new perspective. The educational institutions such as Makhtabs (primary schools) and Madarsas (secondary schools) were free from state control. The Muslim rulers never claim any authority over these educational institutions nor interfered with their management. It is important



to note that during the Muslim period, the age of admission to maktab was fixed up. At the age of four years, four months and four days, Maktab ceremony or Bismillah was performed to indicate the beginning of the children's education. This was considered as an auspicious moment for starting education. The famous Persian Islamic philosopher and teacher Ibn Sina laid emphasis for the first time during the medieval period upon the importance of schools. He wrote that children can learn better if they are taught in class instead of individual tuitions from private tutors because the pupil can learn the value of competition and emulation through the group discussions and debates. The philosophy of Ibn Sina helped the European rulers in the establishment of the number of schools and colleges which paved the path of educational revolution and lead to the consciousness for right to education throughout the world.

Now it will be better to know the literacy rate in India during the British rule. In the year 1881, the literacy rate was approx. 3.2% which was increased to approx. 7.2% in the year 1931. Just before the Indian independence, the literacy rate was only about 12.2%. These data indicate that during the British rule in India, educational growth rate was very poor. The Indian people did not understand the about the Right to Education. But during the post- independence period in India, we can see a faster growth in education. The Directive Principles of State Policy in Article 45 laid down in Indian Constitution has provided a universal and compulsory education for all children in the age group of 6-14 years. The Indian Parliament has passed the 86th Constitutional Amendment in the year 2002 which inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution to make elementary education a Fundamental Right for each and every children of 6-14 years. In order to provide more funds for education, an Education cess of 2% has been imposed on all Direct and Indirect central taxes through the Finance (NO. 2) Act, 2004. If we look upon the literacy growth from 1947 to 2011, it is almost satisfactory.



Before going into discussion about fundamental lacunas in the implementation of rules and regulations regarding Right to Education, it will be better to study literacy rates in our neighboring countries. The present data dates upto the year 2002. The table below shows the Adult and Youth literacy rates. The Adult literacy rate is based on the 15 plus year age, while Youth literacy rate is for the 15-24 years age group.

Country	Year	Adult literacy rates	Youth literacy rates
China	2009	95.9%	99.4%
SriLanka	2007	90.8%	98.0%
Burma	2007	89.9%	94.4%
Iran	2007	82.4%	95.0%
India	2011	74.04%	82.0% (2001)
Nepal	2007	56.5%	62.2%
Pakistan	2007	62.2	73.9%
Bangladesh	2007	53.5	74.0%

In spite of various steps taken by the Indian Government to promote education, its low literacy rates⁶ is a serious concern. What are the reasons for this low literacy? The first and foremost reason is the absence of educate school infrastructure like improper facilities and inefficient teaching staffs affects low literacy rates in India. There is a shortage of class rooms to accommodate all the students in the year 2006-07. Further, there are no sanitation facilities in most of the schools. The study of about 188 government run primary schools in central and northern India revealed that 59% of the schools had no drinking water facilities and 89% had no toilets. It is also an important point to note that the large population of illiterate females in India is another solid reason for low literacy rates. These ill-literates female do not know the real value of education. There poverty added much in this phenomenon. The budget allocation for development of poor education system in India is very low. It was never above approx. 4.3% between the periods of 1951-2002. This complicates the literacy problem in India. The above mentioned reasons need to be removed. The Indian scholar Keshav Chandra Sen⁷ took this matter seriously and in as early as in year 1870. He delivered a lecture on education in India before a number of scholars. This shows awareness towards education among the Indian elites. Just to remove these reasons for low literacy rates in India, both the central as well as state governments took various steps to improve the educational system. A number of states in India have executed successful programmes to boost literacy rates. Over time a set of factors have emerged as being key to success, officials will to succeed, deliberate steps to engage the



community in advertising the program, educate funding for infrastructure and teachers and provisioning additional services which are considered valuable by the community.

Now it will be better to look upon the state- wise educational system and percentage of literacy since independence. Kerala is the most literate state in India with almost 100% literacy, followed by Lakshadweep at 92.28%, while Bihar is the least literate state in India having only 65% of the literate people. Six Indian states account for about 70% of all ill-literates in India: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. About less than half of all Indian ill- literates (48.12%) are in six Hindi- speaking states. Large variations in literacy exist even between contiguous states.

The Government of Himachal Pradesh underwent a 'Schooling Revolution' in the years between 1961-2001. This effort has been called even more impressive than Kerala's educational achievement. Kerala has led the nation in literacy rate since the 19th century and seen sustainable initiative for over 150 years. Whereas Himachal Pradesh's literacy rates in 1961 were below the national average in every age group. During the last three decades that is since 1961-1991 period, female literacy in the 15-19 years age group went from 11% to 86%. School attendance for both boys and girls in the 6-14 years age group stood at over approx.97%, each when measured in the 1998-1999 school years. This educational achievement of this hilly state in India is very remarkable.

The state of Bihar has a low literacy rate. But the census report for the last decade (2002-2011) in respect of educational development is surprising. Bihar has significantly raised the literacy rate which has risen from 39% to 47% in 2001 to 63.8% in 2011. The Government of Bihar has launched several programmes to boost literacy and its Department of Adult Education even won a UNESCO Award in 1981. To incentivize students to attend, the Government announced a Rupee 1 per school – day just to increase the school attendance.

The above mentioned data clearly show the fact that even educationally backward state in India is trying their best to develop the education and give proper right to education. The Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly advocates for right to education to everyone. It mentions that Education should be free at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. This Universal Declaration (1948) encourages Government of India to pass the Right of children to free and compulsory Education Act 1999 (RTE Act) unanimously in the year 2009. This Act became effective on 1st April 2010. This Act consists of 7 chapters and 38 Sections. Under this Act, Section 3 specifically says about free and compulsory education. According to the Act all the children in the age group of 6-14 years will be provided 8 years of elementary education in an appropriate classroom in the vicinity of his neighbourhood and the cost of facilitating education to a child will be borne by the state. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was created to be the authority to monitor the proper implementation of this historical amendment in the Indian Constitution.

To conclude, it may be recorded that the right to education will not be in force without an individual's literacy. So we should come forward in implementation of right to education (RTE) Act with sincerity. The former United Nations Special Rapporteur on right to education, Katarina Tomasevski assessed that for fulfillment of the right to education, it must be available, assessable, acceptable and adoptable which should be the prime duty of the government's to throughout the world. Firstly the availability of the fund for free and compulsory education is of prime importance because a proper infrastructure, safe and good sanitary standards, provision of clear drinking water and well trained teaching staff need it. Secondly, all children should have equal access to school services regardless of gender, race, religion, ethnicity or socio- economic status. There should be no forms of segregation or denial of access to any students, schools must be within a reasonable distance for children within the community. Education must be affordable to all with text-books, supplies and uniforms provided to students at no extra cost. Further the acceptability of students to schools without any discrimination of caste and religion has been advocated by Katarina Tomasevski. Methods of teaching should be objective and unbiased. Material available should reflect a wide array of areas and beliefs. Lastly the adaptability factor has been emphasized in which a flexible educational programme according to the needs of the society is needed time to time. The success of right to education will be hundred percent if we implement the above mentioned foremost important clues. But still, it is a brutal truth that laws and bills do not make children go to school. It will be possible when each and every parent understand the social responsibility to send their children to school.

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