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## CHAPTER – 1

# RIGHT TO QUALITY EDUCATION FOR THE FARMING COMMUNITY IN INDIA: ADDRESSING DISPARITIES AND PROMOTING HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

The Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution of India, 1950, declared the right to a free elementary education to be non-justiciable. But via a number of decisions, the Supreme Court of India recognized the right as a fundamental one. In addition, the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002, passed by the Indian parliament, adds Article 21A, which recognises the right to education as a basic right. In order to effectively execute the right, the Parliament passed the Right to Education Act of 2009. The right to a quality education is not included in the Act, despite the fact that it mentions the right to education. However, the social justice principle dictates that the right to a quality education is particularly important for the society's outcasts, especially the farmers' offspring. In light of this, the study aims to support farmers' children's legal entitlement to high-quality education. Therefore, an attempt is made to thoroughly investigate the standards of international law, the Indian legal system, and the judicial decisions that continue to uphold the right of children of farmers to high-quality education. The study will further clarify the National Education Policy, 2020 in light of the conflicting demands of the right against child work and the right to basic education.

**Keywords:** Right to education, Quality Education, Farming Community, Farmers' right, Social Justice, Rural Development, Socio-economic Disparities, Policy Initiatives, Fundamental right, Human Rights.

***“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”-Nelson Mandela***

The farming community forms the backbone of India's economy, contributing significantly to food security and livelihoods. Despite their important role, rural farming families often encounter barriers to accessing quality education for their children. This article aims to shed light on the disparities in educational opportunities faced by the farming community and underscore the importance of addressing these disparities to promote holistic development.

Education is the most important thing that makes it possible for a person to reach his or her goal. Without adequate provision for education, the citizenry cannot be equipped to assist in the nation's overall development. Education became a human right through a number of international instruments and domestic laws. Additionally, the Indian Constitution has clauses requiring the government to educate its inhabitants. Initially ensuring education for children was in the nature of directives and so non-justiciable. The relevant Articles, Like Article 41 directs the state to enact

provisions that are effective. For the purpose of securing education on the basis of its economic capacity, Article 45 Required Provision for Children's Free and Compulsory Education. On The other hand, Article 46 speaks about the duty of the state to promote the educational interest of the people by taking special care in this regard. In the year 2002, The 86th Constitutional Amendment inserted Article 21A to our Constitution to protect the right to education as a basic right, though it had already been declared as fundamental right by the judiciary in *Mohani Jain v. State of Karnataka* (1992) 3 SCC 666 and *Unni Krishna v. State of Andhra Pradesh* (1993) 1 SCC 6 before inserting Article 21A. Another significant clause is Article 51 A(k), which requires every parent or guardian to give their kid or ward between the ages of six and fourteen the opportunity to pursue an education.

To give effect to the constitutional provisions, the Indian Parliament enacted the Right to Education Act 2009 and adopted various measures. The combined effect of the principle of social justice and Articles 14 and 21A can be purposefully interpreted to declare that the right to education means equitable, inclusive, quality education that is universally accessible to all children of 6 to 14 years.

Inclusive education means that everyone, regardless of social or economic background, should have access to elementary education. Equitable education implies that while children are unable to access education due to their families' economic and social circumstances, special provisions should be made to ensure that poverty and other disabilities do not become a barrier to their right to education. Quality education means that students should be taught up-to-date standard curriculum by qualified teachers with the tools they need to learn effectively and with purpose.

## **Farmers' Entitlement to Education**

The concept of farmers' right to access education refers to the idea that farmers, like all individuals, have a fundamental right to education, which is essential for their professional and personal development, as well as the development of their communities and society as a whole. Farmers' right to education encompasses the right of farmers and their families to access quality education without discrimination, and to obtain a high-quality education that is pertinent to their needs and interests. This includes access to basic education, such as literacy and numeracy skills, as well as vocational and technical education and training which is required to agriculture and related fields. The right of farmers to education includes the ability to take part in choices that have an impact on their education, such as decisions about school policies, curricula, and resources. It also encompasses the right to have their cultural and linguistic diversity respected in the educational process.

Additionally, the rights of farmers to other basic human rights like the right to enough food, water, and healthcare, are interconnected with their right to education. Education can help farmers improve their farming methods, make their farms more productive, and make more money, all of which can help them realize these other human rights. Overall, the idea of farmers' right to education recognizes the importance of education for the growth and empowerment of farmers and their communities. It also asks governments and other groups to take steps to make sure that all farmers have equal access to education and opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Challenges hindering access to quality education for the farming community. It discusses issues such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of educational facilities, teacher shortages, seasonal migration, and socio-economic factors that create barriers to education.

## **Problems regarding Education Rights of Farming Communities**

There are issues that can limit their access to quality education and opportunities for skill development. Some of the basic problems are:

1. **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Many rural areas lack adequate infrastructure such as schools, colleges, and other educational facilities. This makes it difficult for farmers to access quality education and skill development opportunities.
2. **Financial Constraints:** The cost of education, including tuition fees, textbooks, and other materials, can be a significant financial burden for farmers. Many farmers may not be able to afford education, particularly higher education, which may restrict their chances of improving their skills and advancing their careers.
3. **Limited Access to Technology:** Technology plays an important role in modern agriculture, but many farmers in rural areas have limited access to technology, including digital tools and information. This can limit their ability to adopt new technologies and practices, limiting their productivity and income potential.

4. **Lack of Qualified Teachers:** Rural areas often face a shortage of qualified teachers, particularly in specialized fields such as agriculture. This can limit the quality of education and skill development opportunities available to farmers.
5. **Climate Change:** Climate change is a growing challenge for agriculture, particularly in rural areas. Extreme weather events, droughts, floods, and other environmental challenges can damage crops, disrupt livelihoods, and affect access to education and skill development opportunities.
6. **Cultural Barriers:** Cultural barriers, including gender and caste discrimination, can limit access to education for farmers, particularly women and marginalized groups.
7. **Lack of Information as well as Awareness:** The importance of education and skill development for farmers' livelihoods might go overlooked by many of them. They may not see the value of investing time and resources in education, which can limit their opportunities for growth and development.

## **Initiative of the Government in general**

To address this issue, the world's leaders at the international level have taken steps to promote education in rural areas. Likewise, the Indian government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with an aim to ensure that farmers in rural areas have access to education, have taken several initiatives.

The Indian government has taken a number of steps to respect, safeguard, and advance the right of children of farmers to an education. These measures include:

1. **Mid-Day Meal Scheme:** The Scheme of Mid-Day Meal was launched in 1995 to offer children attending public schools hot, cooked lunches. This programme attempts to enhance children's nutritional status and encourage regular school attendance. Particularly in rural areas where children of farmers are more prone to have dietary issues, the programme has been successful in raising enrollment and lowering dropout rates..
2. **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan:** In 2001, the initiative known as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan was launched in view of universalizing elementary education. The goal of the program is to make sure that all children, even those in rural areas, can get a good education. The SSA has been successful at increasing enrollment and keeping kids in school, especially for girls and kids from marginalized groups, like farmers' kids.
3. **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya:** In 2004, the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya programme was launched to facilitate girls from communities with limited resources, notably those in rural areas, access to school. The scheme provides residential schools with facilities for education, health, and hygiene. This program is especially important for girls from farming families because social and cultural norms frequently place restrictions on their ability to access education.
4. **National Scholarship Scheme:** The National Scholarship Scheme was launched in 2005 to provide financial assistance to children from economically disadvantaged families to continue their education. The scholarship programme has been successful in lessening the financial burden on agricultural families, allowing them to take their children to school. It offers scholarships for students from Class 1 through post-graduation.
5. **Digital Initiatives for promoting education:** The government has also started a number of online projects to advance education for the children of farmers. These initiatives include the Diksha platform, which provides digital content for students, and the e-Pathshala platform, which provides digital textbooks for students from Class 1 to 12.
6. **The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** The NEP 2020 has a strong emphasis on expanding the fundamental right to education in India. The policy recognizes education as a fundamental right of every individual and prioritizes the need to ensure universal access to quality education for all.

By 2025, the initiative aims to have all children ages 3-6 years old having access to early education and care of the highest calibre. It also prioritizes ensuring that every child attains foundational literacy and numeracy by grade 3.

Moreover, the policy is committed to addressing the issue of educational inequality, and proposes various measures to ensure that all students, regardless of their social or economic standing, have access to a decent education. Some of these initiatives include building additional schools in underserved areas, expanding the number of financial aid and scholarship programmes, and raising the standard of instruction in public schools.

Additionally, the NEP 2020 attempts to incorporate technology and vocational education into the educational process in order to provide students the skills they need to prosper in the twenty-first century.

## **Specialized education for those involved in agriculture**

Further, keeping in mind the need for specialized education for those involved in agriculture, the government has taken various measures, like:

1. **Establishment of Agricultural Universities and Krishi Vigyan Kendras:** The government has set up several agricultural universities and Krishi Vigyan Kendras across the country to provide agricultural education and training to farmers. These institutions offer courses and training programs on a range of agricultural topics, including crop production, animal management, and farm mechanization.
2. **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana:** The Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana is a central government scheme aimed at enhancing the productivity and sustainability of agriculture and allied sectors. The scheme offers state governments financial support, among other things, for the creation of Krishi Vigyan Kendras, research institutes, and agricultural institutions.
3. **Krishi Vigyan Kendra Program:** The Krishi Vigyan Kendra program was launched by the ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research) in 1974. The program aims to provide vocational training and extension services to farmers through Krishi Vigyan Kendras, which are located in different districts across the country.
4. **Agricultural Education and Research:** The Indian government has made significant investments in agricultural education and research over the years. The National Academy of Agricultural Research Management (NAARM) and the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) are two institutions that were established by the ICAR (Indian Council for Agricultural Research), which is the country's top body for coordinating, directing, and managing agricultural education and research.
5. **Digital Initiatives:** The Indian government has also launched several digital initiatives aimed at promoting agricultural education and training. These include the Kisan Suvidha mobile app, which provides farmers with information on crop varieties, pest management, and weather forecast, among other things, and farmers can sell their produce online using the e-NAM (National Agriculture Market) platform.

## **The right to vocational training**

The right to vocational training is essential for farmers as it helps them acquire skills and knowledge that can improve their productivity and income potential. Vocational training provides practical skills and knowledge that can help farmers improve their agricultural practices, adapt to new technologies, and access new markets. Here are some of the benefits of vocational training for farmers:

**Improved Productivity:** Vocational training helps farmers acquire practical skills and knowledge that can improve their productivity. For example, training on modern farming techniques can help farmers produce more crops with less input.

1. **Increased Income:** Improved productivity through vocational training can lead to increased income for farmers. By adopting new farming techniques and technologies, farmers can increase their yield and sell their crops at a higher price.
2. **Access to New Markets:** Vocational training can also help farmers access new markets by providing them with knowledge of market demand and access to marketing channels.

## **Challenges in assuring farmers' access to vocational training.**

However, there are several challenges in ensuring the access to vocational training for farmers. Some of these challenges include:

1. **Barrier to Access:** Many farmers in rural areas do not have access to vocational training due to limited infrastructure, lack of training facilities, and long distances to training centers.
2. **Cost:** Many farmers might not be able to afford vocational training due to the cost.
3. **Limited Availability of Training Programs:** In some areas, there may be a limited availability of training programs that meet the specific needs of farmers.
4. **Lack of Trainers:** It may be difficult to find instructors who have the knowledge and experience required to give farmers vocational training.

To address these challenges and ensure the right to vocational training for farmers, governments and non-governmental organizations can invest in building training facilities, providing financial support for farmers to access training programs, creating tailored training programs that meet the specific needs of farmers, and recruiting and training more trainers with the necessary skills and expertise.

## **Importance of Right to Education to the farming communities**

Farmers need continuous learning to remain updated about rapidly evolving advancements in technology, science, business administration, and various other competencies and domains impacting agricultural activities. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), a federal agency within the United States, takes charge of guiding and financially supporting endeavors aimed at progressing agricultural sciences. NIFA undertakings enhance farmers' comprehension in these realms and facilitate the adoption of approaches that are economically viable, ecologically sustainable, and enhance overall well-being.

The most recent technology tools and scientific developments can be incorporated into farming practices via training. By applying these technologies, efficiency is boosted, and there are additional advantages such as :

1. reduced environmental harm.
2. lower risk of food contamination
3. less need for crops to use chemicals and water
4. higher profits

For the purpose of agricultural production knowledge and information to the farmers about the various factors are absolutely essential. It is the responsibilities of the existing governments (State as well as Central) that is more important to provide and facilitate them to acquire that knowledge.

For the purpose of producing agricultural production farmers need to acquire the knowledge about resources and technology in agriculture. Resources include land (quality of soil), labor, water, use of chemicals like fertilizer and pesticides, energy for growth of seeds, climate, weather and geographic effect for different types of crops. Technological knowhow like Modern technology developments have completely changed the way agriculture is conducted, improving sustainability and efficiency. Utilizing GPS and remote sensing technologies, farmers may accurately manage resources such as water, fertilizer, and pesticides, reducing waste and adverse environmental effects. Real-time field monitoring is provided via drones and satellite imagery, allowing for early insect discovery and yield estimation. Robotic harvesters and sorting devices that use artificial intelligence (AI) streamline labor-intensive procedures. The health and growth conditions of crops are also improved by data-driven insights from sensors and IoT devices. The creation of drought- and disease-tolerant crop types as a result of genetic engineering and biotechnology has increased food security. Systems for producing food that are effective and sustainable are being developed in the modern period thanks to the confluence of agriculture and technology.

After completion of the production, they need to know the procedure of processing, quality control, storage, distribution and transportation of crops to the market and food processing industry.

## **Responsibilities of the welfare Governments and their initiative through the National Education Policy, 2020**

Farmers, particularly those in rural locations, should be educated by the government about contemporary farming practices, crop trends, and other government programmes designed to promote farmer welfare. National Education Policy, 2020 focuses on

### **1. Promoting inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all.**

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, the Mid-Day Meal Programme, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, the Right to Education Act, the Digital India Initiative, and the Reservation Policy are a few examples of programmes by both the state and central governments of India to promote inclusive, equitable, and high-quality education for everyone.

Despite these efforts, there are still a number of issues that need to be fixed. The realisation of inclusive and equitable education for everyone continues to be hampered by inadequate financing, a shortage of competent instructors, outdated curricula, regional differences, gender-based inequalities, and socio-economic hurdles. Additionally, there is still a lot of worry about how well education is being provided as seen by learning results.

In order to guarantee that every child, regardless of background, has access to a meaningful and transformative education, efforts to promote inclusive, equitable, and quality education necessitate constant monitoring, course correction, and collaboration between government bodies, civil society organisations, and educational institutions.

**2. Recognizes the importance of providing equal opportunities to all learners, including those from disadvantaged and marginalized communities.**

The Indian government has implemented reservation policies to ensure proportional representation and access to quality education for these communities. Various scholarship programs have been introduced to support economically weaker students to cover books, additional educational costs, and tuition fees. National Literacy Mission to promote adult education and reduce the illiteracy rate by creating opportunities for lifelong learning and skill development. But the deficiencies in providing equal opportunities are:

- a) Quality disparities among urban and rural communities as well as within the private and Government schools.
- b) Marginalized Communities are not getting proper infrastructure for education, like school building, sanitation facilities and transportation.
- c) Digital divide is another factor because lack of availability of devices with internet connection to all during and the post Pandemic period created a gap and disparities to obtaining educational opportunities to all learners.

Some other factors are economic constraints, societal pressures, and the need for child labor and lack of proper support systems increased dropout rates.

**3. It aims to offer all children a quality education, regardless of their socioeconomic status.**

Few instances of initiatives taken by both the Central Government of India and various state governments to provide quality education to all children, regardless of their socio-economic background are:

- a) in 2001, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan Focuses on increasing enrollment and retention rates and it aims to provide universal elementary education by improving infrastructure, teacher training, and learning materials in schools across the country.
- b) Mid Day Meal Scheme provides nutrition to ensure better attendance and retention rates and tries to reduce malnutrition.
- c) in 2009, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan focused on enhancing access to quality secondary education. It aims to improve infrastructure, provide teacher training, and encourage vocational education to equip students with relevant skills.

Along with the Central Government initiative some state governments also have taken some initiative to provide quality education to all. For example, Kerala's Literacy Mission, Rajasthan's Bhamashah Yojana, Tamil Nadu's Samacheer Kalvi, Maharashtra's Bal Sangopan Yojana etc.

**4. To bridge the digital divide by giving all students access to digital learning resources.**

Central Government Initiatives like the:

- a) Bharat Net project, aims to provide high-speed broadband connectivity to rural areas, enabling access to digital learning resources.
- b) e-Pathshala initiative by the National Council of Educational Research and Training provides free access to textbooks, audio, video, and interactive resources for school students in multiple languages.
- c) The Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) is an online platform that offers free courses and study materials from higher education institutions. It covers a wide range of subjects and levels.
- d) National Digital Library is a digital repository that provides access to a vast collection of learning resources including books, articles, theses, and multimedia content from various educational institutions.

State Government Initiatives are Kerala's Hi-Tech School Project aims to provide laptops and digital resources to students and teachers, Maharashtra's Direct Benefit Transfer Portal ensures that students receive scholarships and educational aid directly in their bank accounts, Mana Badi (Our School) initiative by the Andhra Pradesh government focuses on providing digital resources, smart classrooms, and e-learning tools to enhance the quality of education in government schools. Rajasthan Knowledge Corporation Limited Project implemented by the state of Rajasthan, which offers computer education and digital literacy to bridge the digital divide in both rural and urban areas. Tamil Nadu provides digital versions of textbooks and learning materials for students through the Samacheer Kalvi Online portal.

**5. Focuses on promoting teacher training and development to improve the quality of education**

The Ministry of Education Launched a National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers Holistic Advancement. It aims to provide comprehensive training to over 42 lakh teachers across the country. It focuses on developing teachers' competencies in various aspects of pedagogy, classroom management, and student assessment.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching initiative focuses on enhancing the quality of teaching in higher education institutions. It emphasizes the training and professional development of faculty members through workshops, seminars, and research projects.

Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing is a digital platform developed by the Ministry of Education, it offers interactive course content, teacher training modules, and resources for professional development. It aims to empower teachers with modern teaching techniques and practices.

Other than these, various state governments also have taken some initiatives. Gujarat's state government launched the Shala Siddhi Prohatsan initiative to evaluate and improve the quality of education in schools. It focuses on teacher training, school leadership, and the overall school environment. Kerala's government has implemented Comprehensive Intervention for Transforming Schools to enhance the quality of education through teacher training, curriculum development, and school management improvements. Maharashtra's State Council of Educational Research and Training conducts regular training programs for teachers to update their pedagogical skills and introduce them to innovative teaching methodologies.

## **Conclusion & Recommendations**

It is recommended that

1. **Investment in Infrastructure:** Governments should prioritize investment in educational infrastructure in rural areas to ensure that farming communities have access to quality educational facilities. This includes the setting up of schools, provision of necessary resources, and improvement of transportation networks to facilitate access to schools.
2. **Teacher Training and Recruitment:** Efforts should be made to address teacher shortages in rural areas by providing training and incentives to attract qualified teachers. This can be done through partnerships with educational institutions, offering scholarships or incentives for teachers to work in rural areas, and providing professional development opportunities.
3. **Awareness and Outreach:** Governments and organizations should conduct awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of education for farmers and their communities. This can help change perceptions and encourage farmers to prioritize education for themselves and their children.
4. **Seasonal Migration Support:** Measures should be taken to support the education of children from farming communities who engage in seasonal migration. This can include setting up temporary schools or providing distance learning opportunities to ensure continuity in education.
5. **Collaboration and Partnerships:** Collaboration between government agencies, educational institutions, and non-governmental organizations is necessary to address the challenges faced by the farming community in accessing quality education. Partnerships can help to avail resources, expertise, and innovative approaches to overcome barriers and improve educational opportunities.
6. **Promotion of Agricultural Education:** Governments should promote agricultural education and vocational training programs tailored to the needs of farmers. This can equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to adopt modern farming techniques, improve productivity, and enhance their livelihoods.

By implementing these recommendations, governments and stakeholders can work towards reducing the disparities in educational opportunities for the farming community and promote holistic development. Education plays a vital role in empowering farmers, improving their livelihoods, and contributing to overall societal progress.

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