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Rural Welfare:-

Educational development and other programmes in rural areas
(e-content)

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Saakshar Bharat Programme in Bihar

Introduction:

The President of India in her address to the Parliament on 4th June, 2009 stated that “Government will recast the National Literacy Mission as a National Mission for Female Literacy, to make every woman literate in the next five years.” The prime Minister of India in his address to the nation on Independence Day reiterated this policy initiative and declared that female illiteracy will be reduced by half in the next three years. Saakshar Bharat, the new variant of the National Literacy Mission, Launched by Prime Minister of India on 8th September, 2009 resonates the enhanced focus on female literacy in rural areas of low female literacy districts.

Saakshar Bharat aims to impart functional literacy to non literate and non-numerate adults in the age group 15 years and beyond. The Priority group of Saakshar Bharat is Women, SCs, and Minorities and other disadvantages groups in the rural areas. In addition, Saakshar Bharat also provides opportunities for basic education, skill development and continuing education to create a learning society. The specific objectives and targets of Saakshar Bharat have been described in the forthcoming paragraphs.

The central objective of environment building for literacy was to generate a positive, natural and spontaneous demand for literacy which does not exist uniformly in all parts of the Bihar.

Obejectives of Saakshar Bharat:

The Mission has four broad objectives, namely:

1. Impart functional literacy and numeracy to non-literate and non-numerate adults
2. Enable the neo-literate adults to continue their learning beyond basic literacy and acquire equivalency to formal educational system
3. Impart non and neo-literates relevant skill development programmes to improve their earning and living conditions
4. Promote a learning society by providing opportunities to neo literate adults for continuing education

Target Groups:

Saakshar Bharat has a principal target to imparting functional literacy to 70 million adults in the age group of 15 years and beyond. It has also auxiliary target of the mission is to cover 1.5 million adults under basic education programme and equal number under vocational (skill development) programme. The principal focus of the Saakshar Bharat is on women with priority to Schedules Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Minorities, other disadvantaged groups and adolescents in rural areas in low female literacy districts. To achieve the target of reducing the gender disparity, the mission has set a target of covering 60 million female

out of the total target of target of 70 million. National Literacy Mission Authority (NLMA) has given target of 14766427 adult illiterate persons. And Bihar achieved this target till

Factors behind launching of Saakshar Bharat:

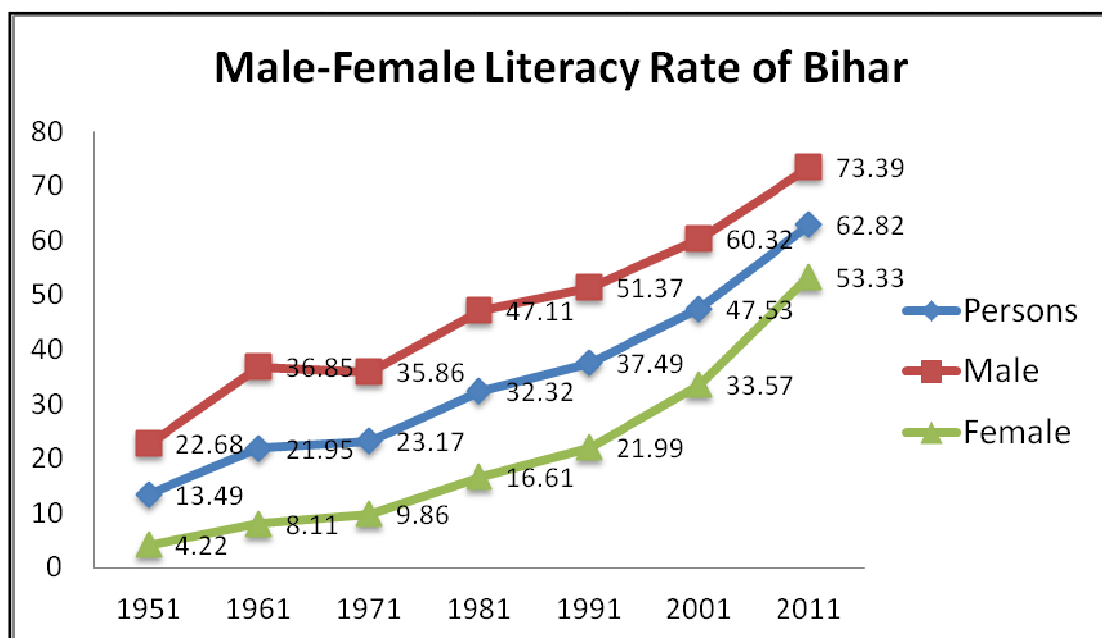
- In order to accomplish the targets of literacy, a series of programmes have been launched, the most prominent being the National Literacy Mission launched in 1988 to Saakshar Bharat in 2009.
- NLM launched in 1988 continued during IX & X Plan (upto March 2007) with priority on literacy.
- By the end of X Plan NLM had covered 507 districts under Total Learning Campaign (TLC), 485 under Post Learning Project (PLP) and 328 districts under Continuing Education Project (CEP). (Report of the review Committee on the National Adult Education Programme, Ministry of Education and Culture, Government of India, 1980, New Delhi.)
- Although 132.58 million persons became literate including more 60% female, illiteracy remained an area of national concern.
- Census, 2001 revealed 259.52 million (15+) illiterate adults in the country. Besides, wide Gender, Social & Regional Disparities in literacy also persisted affected was sanctioned in 2011-12.
- As per 2001 Census, there were 37 districts in the state of Bihar which has increased to 38 districts as per census 2011. Adult female literacy rate in 2001 was 50% below in 37 districts of the state. Of these 37 districts, 3 districts were covered under Saakshar Bharat during 2009-10 and 34 were sanctioned in 2010-11. The new districts of Arwal bifurcated from Jehanabad which is also leftwing affected was sanctioned in 2011-12. We know the Literacy Status of Bihar according to Census report i.e.
- The overall literacy rate of Bihar is 62.82%. There is an increase in literacy rate of 15.29% in 2011 from the last Census i.e. 2001, yet Bihar is behind the national literacy rate by 11.22%.
- Bihar stands number one among states in India in showing the growth of female literacy with 20.21%.
- It heartening to note that Bihar has travelled long in female literacy from 4.22% in 1951 to 53.33% in 2011, yet it has to go a long way too as its 46.73% female population is devoid of letters.
- Male literacy rate is 73.39% as compared to 59.68% in 2001.
- In spite of incredible growth rate in literacy rate in Bihar, it occupies last rank in the table of literacy among the states.

Table 1. Male-Female literacy of Bihar (1951-2011)

Year	Persons	Male	Female
1951	13.49	22.68	4.22
1961	21.95	36.85	8.11
1971	23.17	35.86	9.86
1981	32.32	47.11	16.61
1991	37.49	51.37	21.99
2001	47.53	60.32	33.57
2011	62.82	73.39	53.33

(Source: Census report- 2001&2011 and others Census report)

Chart 1. Male-Female literacy of Bihar (1951-2011)



(Source: Census report- 2001-2011 & others report)

Gap in Male-Female Literacy (India & Bihar):

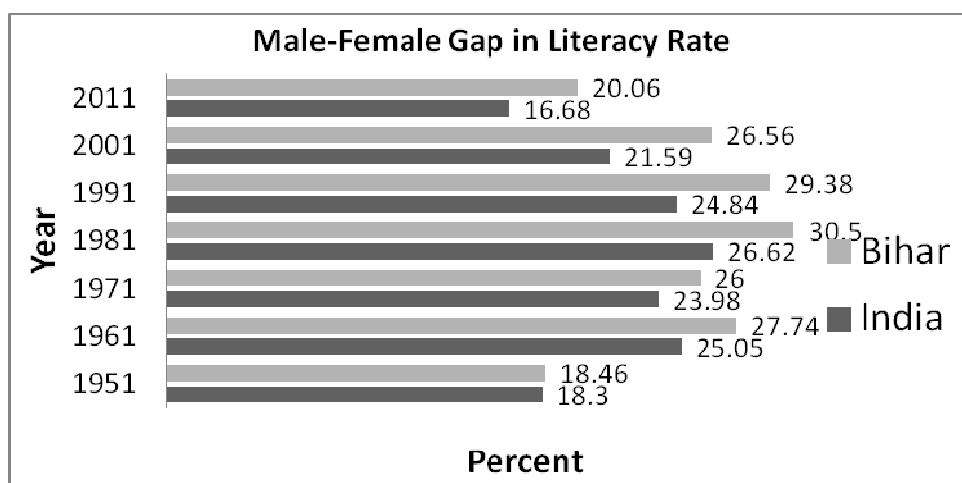
- One of the interesting features of Census 2011 is that out of total 217,700,941 literates added during the decade, females (110,069,001) outnumber males (107,631,940).
- Gap in male and female literacy rate in Bihar has been decreased by 20.06% as compared to 26.56% in the year 2001. This, however, more than national gap i.e. 16.68%

Table 2. Gap in Male - Female literacy rate (Bihar & India)

Year	India	Bihar
1951	18.3	18.46
1961	25.05	27.74
1971	23.98	26
1981	26.62	30.5
1991	24.84	29.38
2001	21.59	26.56
2011	16.68	20.06

(Source: Census report- 2001-2011 & others report)

Chart 2. Gap in Male - Female literacy rate (Bihar & India)



(Source: Census report- 2001-2011 & others report)

The above two changes are clear indication of the fact that the gender gap in literacy is shrinking in the country. This trend of rising female literates will have reaching consequences of the development of society.

After Implementation of the Saakshar Bharat Programme in Bihar, hopeful with the decadal increasement and Gap in male and female literacy rate in Bihar has been decreased.

Programme Framework:

The programme entails identification of non-literates through a survey, area wise mapping of their learning needs and imparting them Volunteers teacher based teaching of about 300 hours spread over 3 months or beyond, depending on motivation of the learner and local conditions. Successful completion of the 300 hours of learning would enable the learner to read and comprehend unknown text (news paper headings, road signs etc); apply skills of writing in day to day activities like writing applications and letters and filling up of application forms, etc., and compute simple problems involving multiplication and division.

Basic Literacy in Bihar is given to illiterate person, age group of 15-35 with the help of Preraks and VTS (Students of 9th& 10th) in two phases, through 8439 Adult Literacy Centers (AECs) (in Bihar used the Term for AECs to Lok Shiksha Kendra).

Lok Shikha Kendras (Adult Education Centres):

Well equipped multiple functional Lok Shikha Kendras (Adult Education Centers [AEC]) have been set up at Middle School, Gram Panchayat level to provide institutional, managerial and resource support to literacy and lifelong education at grass root level. One AEC has been set up in a Gram Panchayat's middle School. The adult education centre has been manned by two paid coordinators (Preraks) to be engaged on contractual basis. Preraks should preferably be from marginalized groups (SCs/STs/ Minorities) and at least one of them should be a woman. A Prerak should be at least a matriculate. To implement the programme, 8439 Lok Shiksha Kendras (Adult Education Centers) had been established in MIDDLE School in Panchayat grams of the districts covered under the programme. A Lok Shiksha Kendra has been act as a centre for registration of learners for all teaching learning activities in their jurisdiction; Nerve center for literacy campaign including identification of the learners and volunteers, batching and matching of the learners with suitable Volunteers as well as their training, providing literacy kits to learners and volunteers, keeping track of the progress made by each learner-volunteer group; Nodal centre for mass mobilization.

Assessment & Certification of the Learners:

Learner Assessment for evaluating core competencies of basic literacy include reading, writing and arithmetic is one of the important quality indicators of the Saakshar Bharat Programme. There is a provision for assessment of each individual learner enrolled for Basic Literacy Programme under Saakshar Bharat. For assessing and certification of literacy skills, a memorandum of Understanding was signed between National Literacy Mission authority (NLMA) and National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) on March 25.2010. Learner assessment tests are conducted twice a year i.e. March and August every year. State Literacy Mission Authority, Bihar (SLMA) and State Resource Center ADRI & Deepayatan (SRC) are also involved to provide necessary support to SLMA, Bihar in conducting the Assessment Test. SRC and Local school teachers may be engaged as evaluators as well as the Answer Sheets. NIOS certificates have also been provided to the successful candidates by NIOS by the state administration. On successful completion and assessment, the learner has to be issued a certificate.

Success of the Mission has been depended on creating a social environment conducive to literacy by addressing the whole society, both educated and the non-literate, especially the women.

Table 3. Progress Report of Saakshar Bharat, Bihar

Sr.No.	Examination Date	Learners Appeared	Learners Passed
1	March,11	2021612	1576799
2	March,12	3888215	3283770
3	March,13	607104	524743
4	August,13	640611	523980
5	March,14	887429	745001
6	August,14	193854	169134
7	March,15	1112306	964886
8	August,15	1469504	1299293
9	March,16	1591710	1291792
10	August,16	1219745	1061570
11	March,17	2036531	1650336
12	September,17	1998852	1615458
13	March,18	828775	673204
	Total	18496248	15379966

(Source: Basic Assessment Test, National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) Portal)

A total No. of 18496248 enrolled Learners appeared in Assessment Test till now, conducted by NIOS twice in a year and 15379966 Neo Literates certified in the assessment Test.

Findings:

There was an overwhelming response and enthusiasm was noticed among the VTs in regard to their enrollment in the Saakhar Bharat Programme. They were very energetic and participative to impart the training to their elder ones and it has joyfully reminded their days of learning the basic things on the one hand and some sort of revising the erstwhile learnt things on the other.

Suggestions:

The success of the Saakshar Bharat Mission largely depends on two aspects viz.,

- Effective Co-ordination amongst the functionaries; and
- Whole heart participation of the Voluntary Teachers

As a researcher on the given subject matter, I wish this Mission accomplishes its defined goals and eradicate the menace of illiteracy from our society. Nonetheless, I would like to place on some suggestions for fetching more positive results for the programme going on or any such programmes which will be launched in future.

1. The Prerak of this programme have been given the task of co-coordinating with Voluntary Teachers as well as with other functionaries. He is also been given the task to run the Lok Sikhsan Kendras where a variety of activity will take place such as identification of the learners and volunteers, batching and matching of the learners with suitable Volunteers as well as their training, providing literacy kits to learners and volunteers, feeding the data into Computer, keeping track of the progress made by each learner-volunteer group. In view of the nature of task assigned to a Prerak, the minimum qualification of the Prerak should be Graduate with working knowledge of Computer. If no graduate person is found in the locality then other matriculate or intermediate person should be engaged.
2. The Prerak should preferably be a young unemployed person between 25-35 years of age. This may help in giving some kind of employment to the needy and this age group people can contribute immensely.
3. If the Preraks are not computer literate, proper arrangement of their training should be made so that they can feed the data in to the Computer and also can send the data to the concerned agency in an orderly manner.

Reference:

- Govenment of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development, National Literacy Mission Authority, Adult Education Bueru, 2013, New Delhi.
- (<http://Saakshar Bharat.nic.in>)
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- (Report of the review Committee on the National Adult Education Programme, Ministry of Education and Culture, Government of India, 1980, New Delhi.
- Census report- 2001-2011 & related others reports.
- Basic Assessment Test, National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) Portal.