

## **Achievements of “PM-POSHAN SCHEME” - Fighting “Classroom Hunger & Exclusion”**

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***Abstract:** India’s philosophical tradition has tangled with the notion of education in manifold ways. Rabindranath Tagore, one of the first to take a wider and more liberal view of schooling, stressed school as being a place not just of learning but of undergoing all the wonders of life-music, art, literature. India is home to over 444 million children. It is one of the world’s largest children and adolescent populations. The constitution of India pledges fundamental rights to all children implemented by the states through directive principles of state policy. PM-POSHAN Scheme was started in India on August 15, 1995, under the name of ‘National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education. The Ministry of Human Resources and Development is the accredited body to implement the scheme. Serving 120 million children in over 1.27 million schools and Education Guarantee Scheme centres, the PM-POSHAN scheme is the largest school feeding programme in the world. This paper highlights the goals achieved by PM-POSHAN scheme in India since 1995.*

***Key Words:** PM-POSHAN, Achievement, Hunger, Exclusion, Beneficiaries, Malnutrition*

### **INTRODUCTION**

India was born with five major responsibility lines namely Religious diversity, Gender Discrimination, Economic imbalance, Linguistic objectives and Caste oppression. India remained united despite these responsibilities. Nobody thought India would be united this long and most thought Indian Independence was an inattentive political experiment. Most westerners viewed a Nation-State as having one religion, one language etc. Very few thought India would survive because it was too poor and diverse. Appreciations to

Indians and more importantly our founding fathers and their vision expressed in constitution, India remained united and started addressing each of these responsibilities.

A significant experience with injustice and caste-based prejudice influenced B. R. Ambedkar's philosophy of education, which promoted the idea that education may be a tool for social change. For him, education served as a tool for developing the rationality and criticality necessary to engage in discourse with the "other," persuading them of the value of reason and the danger of ignoring prejudice.

The main Objective of this paper is to identify the achievements and challenges of PM-POSHAN scheme after implementation of scheme in India. To write this paper, the data was primarily focused on textual approach, books written by eminent scholars and articles, papers written in various National and International Journals were considered to do the framework of this paper. As a result, secondary data was used to write this paper.

### **PM-POSHAN-HISTORICAL EXPANSION IN INDIA**

India's PM-POSHAN Scheme is the world's largest of its kind. All schoolchildren in India receive a free cooked meal as part of this programme. Since 1930, the Intermediate Lunch Program has been in place in the Union Territory of Pondicherry, which is administered by the French. In post-independence India, former Minister K. Kamaraj launched the Southern Tamil Nadu Supper Program for the first time in the early 1960s. When K. Kamaraj was Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, he had the idea for PM-POSHAN. But he didn't follow through. MG Ramachandran, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in the 1980s, implemented the PM-POSHAN scheme despite widespread scepticism and bureaucratic opposition. It had an immediate impact on Tamil Nadu's primary school enrolment. Following the success of Tamil Nadu, every state in India implemented a PM-POSHAN programme. Prior to the 1980s, primary school enrolment in India was less than 50 per cent. The PM-POSHAN scheme increased primary school enrolments in India, which is now in the mid-90s. Parents used to send their children to work because they needed money to feed their children. Parents began sending their children to school, if not for education, then for food.

The Government of India introduced the Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM-POSHAN) scheme which was earlier known as Mid-Day Meal Scheme, also recognized as the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP-NSPE), was launched as a centrally – sponsored scheme in the 49<sup>th</sup> year of the India's independence- on 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1995 under the Common Minimum Programme of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government. It has been strengthened all over the country for providing cooked meals to children in government and government aided primary school and education guarantee scheme (EGS) and Alternative and Innovative Education (AIE) Centres with a view to increase enrolment and improving attendance improving their nutritional status . In the month of September , 2004 the PM-POSHAN scheme was revised and commonly came to be known as cooked PM-POSHAN Scheme to provide hot cooked meals to children. The scheme was further revised in 2006. The Mid Day Meal Programme was also started in all upper Primary Schools from April, 2008.

According to NP-NSPE, its goals include addressing "classroom hunger," motivating underprivileged students from excluded groups to attend school regularly, and assisting them in focusing on their academic work. The Government of India's multifaceted PM-POSHAN programme, among other things, aims to address national challenges with food security, inadequate nutrition, and access to education. The scheme serves 120 million children in over 1.27million schools and Education Guarantee Scheme centres, the PM-POSHAN scheme is the largest school feeding programme in the world.

The objective of the programmes is:

- To boost universalization of primary education and upper primary education by improving enrolment, attendance, retention, and learning level of children, especially those belonging to disadvantageous sections.
- To improve nutritional status of students.

To achieve this objective, According to the revised norms, every child at the primary level is given MDM daily on all school days having 480 calories and 1 gram proteins (as compared to the earlier norm of 300 calories and 8-12 grams proteins). The additional quantity of calories and proteins are provided through addition of vegetables or other

ingredients. For upper primary schools children mid-day meal is provided with 720 calories and 20 grams proteins. The cooking cost per child per school day for Primary (1st to 5<sup>th</sup>) is at Rs.4.48 (Centre Share Rs.2.69 and State Share Rs.1.79) and, For Upper Middle (6th to 8<sup>th</sup>) is at Rs.6.71 (Centre Share Rs.4.03 and State Share Rs.2.68) per child per school day. The budget sharing for the project is the ratio of 60:40 between centre and state. The central government is to assist the local bodies'/ authorities such as Panchyats and Nagarpalikas in implementing the programme by providing wheat / rice (as may be required) at the rate of 100 grams per student per day free of cost to primary level and quantity given to per upper primary students 150 grams from the nearest Food corporation of India (FCI) go downs.

### CONSTITUTIONAL ACHIEVMENTS IN INDIA

Today's children are tomorrow's citizens. Article Six of United Nations Convention on the rights of the child states, "Every child has the right to life. Government must do all they can to ensure that children survive and grow up healthy". It implies every child has the right to be healthy with sufficient facilities for clean water, nutritious food and medical care

- The importance of education in achieving social justice goals has been recognised in various sections of the Indian Constitution. Article 39 of the Directive Principles of State Policy outlines the role of the state in fostering opportunities for social justice and welfare,
- While Article 45 expressly states that the state must strive to provide free and compulsory education to children as young as 14 years old.
- Article 19 of the Constitution guarantees the fundamental right to free expression and expression, which is also interpreted as the right to know. Similarly, minority and disadvantaged communities' educational interests are constitutionally protected.
- Article 29 of the Constitution protects minorities' educational and cultural rights,
- Article 30 allows minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.

- Article 46 of the Directive Principles also imposes a responsibility on the state to promote the educational interests of the weaker sections of society, particularly Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- The strongest support for education as a constitutional principle has come from Justice P. N. Bhagwati's interpretation of Article 21, dealing with the Right to Life. The fundamental right to life, which is the most precious human right and serves as the ark for all other rights, must therefore be interpreted broadly and expansively in order to bestow it with meaning. The right to life includes the right to live with human dignity and all that goes with it, such as adequate nutrition, clothing, and shelter, as well as facilities for reading, writing, and expressing oneself in various forms, freely moving about, and socializing with fellow human beings.
- This provided the basis for the inclusion of education in the list of fundamental rights and was given further credence in the landmark *Unni Krishnan vs. State of Andhra Pradesh* (1993): In this case, the Supreme Court upheld the expanded interpretation of the right to life & 'the right to free education up to the age of 14 years is a fundamental right'.
- The Indian Parliament passed the 86th Constitutional Amendment in 2002, which recognised education as a fundamental right of every child between the ages of six and fourteen.
- However, it was not until 2009 that Parliament passed legislation ensuring every child the right to free and compulsory education until the age of 14.
- The robust philosophical debates and the legal, political and moral background to democracy and equality and their relationship to education, the policies framed by the government over the years, as well as their implementation, have uplifted the Indian Education system as well the excluded section of the society from the roots.

#### **ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTION OF PM-POSHAN IN INDIA**

The children represent a vital segment of our population. They are nation's valuable human resources and will contribute to the bulk of our workforce in 21<sup>st</sup> century, their

health, nutritional status and education attainments will to a considerable extent, determine the quality of our nation in years to come. Many studies have shown that PM-POSHAN aid in preventing classroom hunger, increasing school participation, fostering social equality, and improving gender equity. The majority of the children and parents were pleased with the implementation of PM-POSHAN scheme. PM-POSHAN has improved their children's education, health, and nutrition, according to their parents. Sociologist such as **Jean dreze & Aparajita Goyal (2003)** stated that the PM-POSHAN meals have a lot of to contribute to the well-being and is a way forward for Indian children. As things stand, mid-day meal programmes have several flaws; however, there motive is to give a forward push the scheme and not backward. With adequate resources and quality safeguards, mid-day meals will play a major role in refining school, attendance, and fostering social equity, eliminating room hunger among different group of societies. It is rightly pointed by **Nandy S (2005)** that children are regarded as the most valuable human and natural resource for growth in every civilization. Schools are important for children's mental, emotional, and mental development. The study conducted by the **Planning Commission (2010)** shows that cooked Mid-Day Meal has created a platform for all social and economic backgrounds to take meals together, thereby facilitating achieving the objective of social equity. It has also been observed that the programme has resulted in the diversion of the attention of teachers and students on an activity related to it, rather than towards teaching and learning activities, which results in loss of studies.

It is believed by scholars such as **Sheikh Kalimoddinaziz (March 2013)** that the world's largest school feeding programme, known as the PM-POSHAN programme, served nearly 11 million children in India. This scheme aided primary and upper primary education by effectively alleviating classroom hunger, and poor families were given incentives to send their children to school. Daily attendance, particularly for girls and children from lower-income families, reduces dropout rates, improves retention, learning ability, and achievement, and generates employment opportunities for over ten million people. For **Patel PP (2016)** the children who receive PM-POSHAN do not have the financial means to eat a nutritious and healthy diet at home. PM-POSHAN is important in

avoiding classroom hunger, resolving malnutrition, and increasing beneficiary enrolment and attendance. There is a clear link between lower socioeconomic status and children attending PM-POSHAN schools. Adolescents who received PM-POSHAN were more malnourished than their non-PM-POSHAN counterparts from higher socioeconomic strata, according to the study. Government agency **Niti Ayog (2019-2020)** pointed that according to the 2018 global nutrition report, India bears one-third of the global burden of malnutrition. The report also highlighted state disparities in malnutrition. According to the study, the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 target of eradicating all forms of malnutrition. A body has been established to develop policies and oversee all nutrition-based monitoring schemes. It is quite evident that the number of studies on the various aspects of PM-POSHAN scheme, particularly its implementation & achievements has been conducted in various states of the Indian Union since decades.

Findings of the studies from various sociologist and scholars in various states indicate the following impacts of PM-POSHAN in achieving goals are:

- The Scheme has many impending benefits: It attracted children from disadvantaged sections to school, improved their consistency in school, nutritional benefits, socialisation benefits and benefits to women who work as a cook-cum-helper in school. Our collective lifelong learning capacities and productivity are boosted by adequate nutrition in childhood. Therefore, investing in child nutrition is reflected one of the most effective entry points for human development. This makes nutrition welfare schemes such as the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and PM-POSHAN Scheme-with children as their beneficiaries, integral to human development, and thus, socioeconomic development of the country.
- In the schools that have benefited from it, the cooked meal programme has been effective in addressing "classroom hunger." This scheme helps to overcome "classroom hunger," as many children arrive at school with an empty stomach and are thus unable to concentrate on their studies, but with the provision of meals, they concentrate more on their studies.

- PM-POSHAN scheme has also aided poor families who, despite struggling to eat one square meal a day, are unable to send their children to school. The assurance of a free lunch every day for their children is important to poor households, such as those headed by widows or landless labourers.
- The school feeding program is a very effective mechanism for enhancing the socialization process. It aids in the dismantling of caste and class barriers.
- As the PM-POSHAN Meal Scheme helps to break down the barriers that keep girls from attending school, the gender gap in school participation is closing. The PM-POSHAN Scheme also provides a valuable source of employment for women, relieving working mothers of the burden of cooking at home during the day. Women and girl children have a unique stake in the PM-POSHAN Scheme.
- According to the most recent report from the National Council of Educational Research & Training, students who receive midday meals have higher achievement levels than students who do not, according to the Learning Achievement of Students at the End of Class-V.
- The has also inculcated manifold daily good habits in the beneficiaries of PM-POSHAN, such as good hygiene, washing hands before and after having meal, usage of soap etc.
- The PM-POSHAN is widely regarded as one of the most successful government schemes in India, according to Supreme Court commissioners. Following the implementation of PM-POSHAN, there was an increase in primary school enrolment and attendance.

Since long, India has faced serious challenges such as unemployment, poverty, hunger, malnutrition, and illiteracy. Many poor children work for their families at a young age, sacrificing their childhood. As a result, several children's childhoods vanish before they reach adolescence and adulthood. This has become not only an obstacle to achieving Universal Elementary Education goal, but also a serious threat to human development. Food insecurity impedes children's health, education, and overall development. In this context, the provision of free and nutritious meals in schools has played a crucial role in eradicating the major issues to some extent. Despite this initiative, India remains the



world's leading provider of malnourished children. Therefore, Children, who are considered the country's potential human resources, can be freed from hunger with the added benefit of leading a healthier and happier life through targeted interventions and relevant policy reforms.

### CONCLUDING REMAKRS

To conclude, it needs to be noted that the country's PM-POSHAN programme is the largest in the world, and every effort must be made to ensure its success. In the end, the program's success will be determined by continued public participation and vigilance, as well as sustained political interest in the scheme. By educating every child in the country, it is possible to eliminate the distinctions between rural and urban India, as well as to realize the concept of "inclusive growth. "Comprehensive, periodic, and systematic orientation is required to sensitise all stakeholders, including policymakers, implementers, teachers, centre-level officials, and community members, so that they fully understand the scheme. This would enable them to become more efficient and active participants in the programme, which would undoubtedly improve its performance.

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