

Bridging Educational Disparities through Scholarship Schemes

For centuries, the struggle for inclusive education has been a constant motive championed by visionaries like Mahatma Jyotirao Phule. As we traverse through time, the echoes of Phule's advocacy for education resonate even today, finding resonance in the transformative initiatives undertaken by the Hon'ble Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy in Andhra Pradesh.

Mahatma Phule envisioned a society where education would be the great equalizer, transcending caste and class barriers. His pioneering efforts led to the establishment of the first school for girls in India and laid the foundation for inclusive education by advocating for the education of all, irrespective of gender or social status.

Fast forward to the present, and we witness a similar ethos driving the policies of the Andhra Pradesh government under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri. YS Jagan Mohan Reddy. Earlier, there used to be partial fee reimbursement which was limited to a maximum of 35000/- resulted unfulfilled dreams and compromised ambitions. Hon'ble Chief Minister has noticed that the downtrodden sections are bound to pay the balance amount from their pocket to complete their higher education, they were compromising on pursuing the type of education due to earlier partial fee reimbursement and were forced to choose courses that come to them at cheaper prices or discontinue their education.

Recognizing the barriers faced by economically disadvantaged students in accessing higher education, the government introduced groundbreaking initiatives like Jagananna Vidya Deevena (JVD) to reimburse complete tuition fee, Jagananna Vasathi Deevena (JVAD) to provide maintenance charges, and Jagananna Vidheshi Vidya Deevena scholarship to study overseas. He envisioned a future where every student in the state could pursue their desired education without any financial constraints.

This complete tuition fee reimbursement under JVD benefited the poor students who were earlier compromising on the type of programme and college due to higher tuition fee have started joining the best colleges. Now there are more than 12 lakh students in AP are pursuing higher education at free of cost.

Before JVD Scheme, the cut off ranking in various categories in the colleges was very high. Now, after JVD, the cut off ranks have come down considerably. For example, in the year 2018, a student could get admission in CSE up to a rank of 16521 where as in the year 2020 all the CSE seats were filled in that college with a rank below 9332. This clearly means though the student was meritorious he couldn't join due to financial constraints because the earlier fee was partially reimbursed. Now, with this full fee reimbursement, the students are taking options and joining the institution without any compromise because the government has taken complete responsibility in ensuring that the students choose to study the courses of their own choice.

Whenever a policy is changed with regard to fee reimbursement the batch admitted during that year when the policy is changed, will only be applied to the batch admitted during that year. Whereas, Hon'ble Chief Minister has extended total tuition fee reimbursement to all the batches i.e., to the students belonging to senior classes though it was not a commitment. This is the bold step he has taken to prove that there are no barriers/limitations set for the youth of

Andhra Pradesh. His only aim is to ensure no student should step back due to their financial background because he believes that the future belongs to them.

Earlier, the maintenance scholarship was Rs.12000 per annum for the Hostellers and Rs.4000 to per annum to the day scholars. Sometimes, though the admission is free, I have seen several families being afraid of spending maintenance expenses. This led to students especially female students discontinue their education. However, With Jagananna Vasathi Deevena, without distinction from hostellers and day scholars, an amount of Rs.20000 is being paid to all the eligible students. It's a huge amount for the students to embrace being independent and focus only on their education. We are going to witness many women entrepreneurs/leaders in future.

In the year 2018-19, there were 83000 students who passed intermediate (10+2) didn't join any higher education institution, which implies that they discontinued their education at the intermediate itself. However, by the year 2022-23, this figure significantly declined to 22,000. This indicates that the schemes are attractive and supportive to all the students to continue their education. Students are now pursuing higher education without any financial constraints they were facing earlier.

Jagananna Vidheshi Vidya Deevena Scheme, granting financial assistance of 100% of tuition fee or Rs. 1 crores whichever is less (Rs. 1.25 crores in case of SC/ST/Minority whichever is less) to encourage students pursue their higher education in the top 50 QS or Times Higher Education ranked global universities. Over the last 10 months, Rs.107.08 Crores was extended, empowering 408 students to pursue quality overseas education for free. This speaks volume for his concern for the youth of this state. Opportunities and options are unlimited, students just need to choose their path.

The Gross Enrolment Ratio in the year 2018-19 was 32.3 and has increased to 37.2 by the year 2020-21, all thanks to JVD and JVaD. It is important to note that the growth of GER of AP is 14.81% whereas the all India average is only 3.8%. What is more interesting is the **growth of Female GER of AP is 24.13%** whereas the national average is only 5.68%. The growth of **SC GER and ST GER are 16.26 and 20.45%** respectively whereas the national average is 0.43% and 9.88% respectively. All this growth has happened within a period of 2 years of rolling out these schemes. The GER speaks out loud about more equitable and inclusive education as promised by the HCM. His actions speak louder than words.

Andhra Pradesh's Gender Parity Index (GPI) improved from 0.81 to 0.94 in 2020-21 under the current government, signaling a commitment to equal opportunities in education. The government aims to achieve a perfect GPI of 1.0 within the next 2 years, emphasizing its dedication to fostering gender inclusivity and eliminating societal barriers to higher education. This positive shift reflects a visionary approach toward promoting equal participation of boys and girls in college admissions. In the year A.Y 2022-23, the women admission outnumbered men admissions into Higher Education Institutions. The future looks very bright

Prof. K. Hemachandra Reddy