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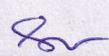
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## Skill Development is the Need of the Hour

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched his pet project Skill India Campaign in New Delhi on the occasion of the first ever World Youth Skill Day which included the launch of the National Skill Development Mission and unveiling of the new National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015.

According to the 2015 Report of National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, India faces an acute crisis in Skill Development. The report goes on to say that the percentage of youth who have undergone formal skill training in countries like Japan, South Korea, UK, Russia are 80%, 96%, 68% and 75% respectively. In India, even after so many skill development schemes since 2009, only 4.69% of the workforce has undergone formal training. But before analyzing statistics on Skill Development one needs to know the meaning and the importance of skill development.

Skill Development is the process by which Newton finds his apple again and again till the time he realizes that it is gravity that is causing the fall. This means, Skill Development is the way to acknowledge the skills, which youth acquire, and to certify it to make it more professional and formal. This means a house electrician may have learnt her skills through trial and error method but by developing her skills, the work is given more formality and respect. Similarly, the case of the sons of Georai farmers which I presented in the introduction, would not have returned to their farmlands if they would have got opportunities to learn the skills of a ward boy or a nurse. With more staff in the hospital, there would be better services, which would lead to lesser patients and a healthier workforce and better job prospects.

Anirudh Krishna in his book 'The Broken Ladder' talks about the progress ladder one gets in life to move up. This ladder of opportunities is available for every rich student but when it comes to poor students, the ladder is broken or sometimes the ladder is not there. This means when you are poor there is no way you will grow beyond a certain point because of the broken ladder like the returning youth of Georai and sometimes, there is no aspiration to move up or progress because of the social

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conditions like a Dalit girl in India's heartland. With skill development, a step in the ladder for upward mobility is created. Shri Mahila Griha Udyog's Lijjat Papad is a shining example of a women's cooperative who have leveraged their traditional skills of making papads which is a success story in the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector.

According to a National Skill Development Corporation report on domestic work, there is a rising need for domestic helps in India because of a rise in double income families where both the husband and wife go out for work. This creates an acute need for domestic help in the household to look after children, aged parents etc. But the reality is that Indian domestic workers face abuses, low wages and most importantly informality in their jobs, which means the aspiration ladder is broken in the first or second rung itself. However, if formal training is imparted and a certification is provided after training on domestic household work, then a certain dignity and legitimacy is attached with household work which removes it from the realm of the informal sector. It provides a ladder which according to the NSDC report shows a clear progression from being a household helper in the kitchen, to a cook, to securing employment in the hospitality industry, and so on and so forth. Thus, there is a clear ladder for a person to climb on the realize her aspirations form life.

Skill Development should not be limited to the apparent 'menial' jobs of the country. It has to spread throughout colleges and universities, even schools to realize its potential. If schools and colleges taught say, Carpentry then there would be more carpenters in the market and according to the basic rule of business, more carpenters would mean more competition and better results. When a candidate gets selected in a bank there is a 6-7 month training period in which the new employee is made 'skilled'. This is one of the countless examples to show that skill training for jobs has been going on since ages. Sadly, this is only limited to the middle and upper class to benefit from. The jobs of the lower classes have never witnessed any formal training. This has also to do with a very deep down social barrier in the heart of the society for the poor. The barrier is that generally people believe that the labour class jobs are menial and do not require any teaching for the process.

This belief may hold true but as easy as they seem, these jobs are also inevitable. I see Skill Development not only as the way to improve the financial position of a person but more importantly, the social position. If I am a certified electrician then my daughters will see the amount of respect given to me in the society and will also aspire to be an electrician. This makes me conclude with an encounter I had with an Australian couple in one of my trips. They had come to explore India and in the conversation, they told me about their love for travelling and how they have travelled many other countries. International travel requires money and looking at their attire, I assumed they must be in





some corporate or any other MNC only to realize from the husband that he was a carpenter and the wife was an insurance agent. And this luxury became possible because Australia focused on Skill Development as much as India does in producing college degrees only.

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