

**GENDER AND EDUCATION:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF CLASSROOM PROCESSES
IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in Partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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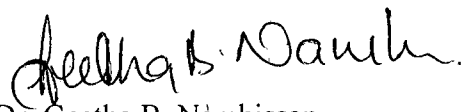
CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled **Gender and Education: An Exploratory Study of Classroom Processes in a Primary School** submitted by **Tripti Bassi** is in partial fulfilment of eight credits out of a total requirement of twenty-four credits for the degree of **Master of Philosophy** of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University and is her own work.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Geetha B. Nambissan for guiding me all through in spite of my drawbacks and shortcomings. If the present study can be called a piece of research work, it is only due to her critical, but inspiring, guidance and immense help.

I am also thankful to Prof. Karuna Chanana for valuable suggestions. Special thanks to the Chairperson, Prof. Deepak Kumar and the faculty of Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies for their comments on the topic.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Prof. C. S. Nagaraju, Head, Department of Educational Research and Policy Perspectives, NCERT. His concern and constant help facilitated this research in many ways.

I am also obliged to my teachers Prof. Virginius Xaxa and Prof. Tulsi Patel at Delhi School of Economics for cultivating in me an interest in gender and other sociological issues.

I am also indebted to the Principal, the Head Mistress and the teachers of the Kendriya Vidyalaya for their cooperation during the two-month long fieldwork.

I express my gratitude to Biji and Baba for being there for me always and providing me with all that I needed.

I cannot forget the support, help and encouragement I received from my friends Divya, Sweta and Chinmoy.

A special mention needs to be made of JNU Library, NIEPA library, NCERT library, Ratan Tata Libraray and Zakir Husain Centre library for giving me access to the essential readings.

At last, I must own up all the shortcomings of this work.

Tripti Bassi
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Education of girls is a growing concern among researchers, administrators and policy makers. Girls have suffered deprivation and negligence for a long time due to their gender. In India, the net enrolment ratio at the primary stage for girls was 64 and for boys it was 77.7, in the year 1997-98. This shows gender disparity in enrolment ratios (GOI 2000:36). Similarly, dropout rate for girls at the elementary stage was 57.7 percent, which is much higher than that for boys, 50.3 percent in the year 2000-01 (GOI 2002:69). Moreover according to the Human Development Report in South Asia in the year 2000, girls in India received only 1.2 years of schooling as compared to boys who received 3.5 years of schooling (2000:104). Thus, in terms of education the status of girls is yet not equal to that of boys.

Disciplines have also communicated male forms of knowledge and have not cared for women. Even within Sociology of Education, gender that is the social construction of biological differences between male and female into masculine/feminine categories, was not used to analyse concepts in education (Delamont 1980). For instance, Bernstein's 'Sociology of Pedagogy' did not have a gender dimension (Arnot 2001). The field of gender owes its origin to the work of Oakley (1972) and other feminists (Dillabough 2001). Gradually, gender as a category was used to study educational inequality. Various feminist frameworks such as liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism and post-structuralism attempted to provide an understanding on gender and education. While liberal feminists argues for 'equal opportunities' to women and men, radical feminists perceive patriarchy to be a system, which subjugates women. Socialist feminists in turn, try to draw a link between gender and class and explain the oppression of women in terms of capitalism. The post-structural feminism seeks to analyse in detail 'the various manifestations of patriarchy, focusing on ideological, institutional, organisational and subjective aspects' (Weiner, 1997: 150). However, it was only radical feminism that highlighted school processes. Concepts such as the 'hidden curriculum' and 'gender code' suggest the way teachers use gender as a category to organise children in the classroom/schools. The teacher attitudes also acquaint children with notions of gender appropriate behaviour.

In India, early studies focussed on gender socialisation in families such as that of Dube (1988), Bhatta (1988). It was only later that school's role in socialising children to adopt gendered identities was identified and researched upon. This includes works of Paranjpe (1995), Nambissan (1995), Bhattacharjee (1999) and Ramachandaran (2002). Similarly, policy intervention in the field of girl's education has come a long way. According to the Committee on the Status of Women in India 1974, early government policies such as the Hunter Commission of 1882 and others differentiated education on the basis of gender. Women were expected to be good wives and mothers, and education was to help them adopt these roles. It was assumed that 'women were intellectually inferior, lacked aptitude and were physically weak' and thus had access to simpler and easier courses of study. Certain subjects such as home science, fine arts were considered to be 'womanly' subjects and others such as mathematics/science were considered to be 'difficult' for girls and were kept optional (1974: 274-275).

It was only the National Committee on Women's Education (1959) that suggested common curricula for boys and girls till class X. Following this, the Committee on the Differentiation of Curricula for Boys and Girls (1964) also rejected the position that 'mere biological difference of sex created different physical, intellectual and psychological characteristics between women and men which necessitated provision of different curricula for them' (Ibid: 275). The Education Commission (1964-66) also emphasised these provisions. These committees also suggest incentives to increase the participation of girls in schooling through mid day meals, scholarships, crèche facility and provision of sibling care in schools. The National Policy on Education 1986 with its Programme of Action 1992 marked a change in the policy outlook. Since it drew attention on the need to empower girls/women through education. A programme such as the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was initiated with a special focus on the girl child to increase their access and retention in schools.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

In India, there are not many research studies that focus on gender relations in the classrooms or schools. Though researchers have focused on the role of the family in socialising children in a gendered way, as mentioned already. The few studies that have

made an attempt to present an understanding of classroom interactions, processes and practices and the way they shape gender identities are Parthasarathi (1988), Paranjpe (1995), Bhattacharjee (1999) and Ramachandaran (2002). The present study seeks to explore gender relations within the school and to contribute in some manner to the existing research on girl's education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study feminist perspectives on gender and school education and evolve a framework for a study of gender relations in a primary school.
2. To conduct an exploratory study in a primary school in the city of Delhi to understand how the school's 'gender code' and 'hidden curriculum' influence gender relations, and the roles and identities that girls and boys adopt. This will be done by studying the following:
 - a) Teacher attitudes and expectations
 - Teacher attitudes and transaction of the text focussing on teacher attention and expectations in relation to boys and girls in the manner in which teachers differentiate between pupils on the basis of gender in terms of attention and expectation and so on.
 - Allocation of tasks both academic/non-academic between boys and girls
 - Gender distinctions in discipline and punishment of children.
 - b) To observe the organisational practices of the school and the classroom:
 - to study the seating arrangement within the classroom and formation of groups for different activities;
 - to study the kind of games that boys and girls play;
 - to study the nature of co-curricular activity and the participation of children, both boys and girls in it.

c) Peer interaction

- to study the pattern of peer interaction in the school in the context of gender relations.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

This study on gender and education is located in Delhi, the national capital of India. The indicators related to literacy and school education show that Delhi is educationally advanced as compared to many States of India. The overall literacy rate in Delhi that is 81.82 percent is far above the all-India literacy rate of 65.38 percent in the year 2001. Likewise, overall male/female literacy rates of Delhi 87.37 percent and 75 percent are much higher than overall national literacy rates of 76 percent for males and 54 percent for females in the same year.

In fact net enrolment ratios as shown in the table below, are marginally higher for girls than for boys in all age groups, in Delhi. The participation of children in schooling is indicated by the age specific attendance rates. The National Family Health survey shows that in the year 1998-99 the proportion of children attending schools in Delhi¹ 86.7 percent, was much higher than the national figure of 72.1 percent in 6-17 age group (see table.1).

The dropout rates indicate the percentage of children who leave school before completing a particular stage in schooling. When the drop out rates of Delhi are compared with national rates, Delhi appears to have relatively lower percentage of children dropping out from school. At the primary level, in India overall 40.67 percent children dropped out and at the elementary stage 53.67 percent of children dropped out in the year 2000-01. What is significant is that at the primary stage, the percentage of girls dropping out from schools in Delhi is marginally less than the percentage of boys dropping out. However, at the elementary stage the percentage of girls dropping out exceeds that of boys.

¹ The overall school attendance rates of Delhi are high. Still they are not the highest, such as that of Himachal Pradesh and Kerala. In Himachal Pradesh overall, 94.3 percent children attend schools while in Kerala 90.9 percent of children attend schools in the year 1998-99.

Table 1.1: Literacy and education of Delhi, India

	Female	Male	Total
1. Literacy Rate (2001)*			
Total	75 (54.16)	87.37 (75.85)	81.82 (65.38)
Urban	75.49 (72.99)	87.38 (86.42)	82.04 (80.06)
2. Net Enrolment Ratios (1994)**			
6-11 years	78.31 (57.15)	75.34 (70.84)	76.75 (64.22)
11-14 years	81.95 (44.84)	81.51 (37.47)	81.71 (64.03)
6-14 years	79.56 (50.43)	77.52 (64.03)	78.48 (57.51)
2. Attending Schools (1998-99)***			
(6-17 years)			
Total	87.2 (66.2)	86.2 (77.6)	86.7 (72.1)
Urban	86 (80)	87.6 (83)	86.7 (81.5)
3. Drop-outs Rates (2000-01)****			
I- V classes	37.69 (41.9)	37.78 (39.71)	37.74 (40.67)
I-VIII classes	52.44 (57.95)	49.62 (50.33)	51 (53.67)

Figures in Parenthesis Denote All India figures

* Selected Educational Statistics, 2002, pp.79.

** Sixth All India Educational Survey, 1999, pp.301.

*** National Family Health Survey, India, 2000, pp.33.

**** Selected Educational Statistics, 2002, pp.69.

The schools are classified into various levels such as primary schools, middle schools, secondary schools and senior secondary schools. According to the Sixth All India Educational Survey in the year 1993 overall there were 3710 schools. Of these, there were 498 schools with primary school attached to senior secondary schools (cited in Aggarwal 2000:49). At present primary education in Delhi is managed by a number of agencies (Ibid: 37). These are:

- Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD)
- Delhi Cantonment Board
- New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC)
- Management of private schools and
- Department of Central government and other agencies like Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, Indian Army.

The school facilities are of significance since they play a role in the overall development of the child. The school facilities in Delhi are much better than in India. For instance, the Sixth all India Educational Survey shows that the average number of classrooms available for instructional purposes in Delhi was 9.6 as compared to all India average of 2.3 in the year 1998 (cited in Aggarwal 2000:55-56).

However, facilities in schools vary across different managements. In a study of schools in Delhi Aggarwal observed that schools managed by local bodies (such as NDMC, MCD) have poor infrastructure and basic amenities in comparison to private unaided schools. Where pupil teacher ratios are concerned, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi schools have the highest pupil teacher ratio of 39. However, the schools that come under Delhi administration have a ratio of 38. Others, which include Kendriya Vidyalayas, have a ratio of 29 (Ibid 2000: 59-62).

The Central schools or Kendriya Vidyalayas are meant for children of Central government's civil servants. These are coeducational schools. They are 'prestigious and operate with far superior resources than those available to schools run by the State government in the same town', according to Kumar (1987:30). They follow NCERT textbooks and have a different pattern of examination. In Delhi, there were 58 Kendriya Vidyalayas with 76291 children enrolled, which includes 43216 boys (56.65 percent) and 33075 girls (43.35 percent) as on 31st March 2002 (Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan 2003: 44, 153).

One of the Kendriya Vidyalayas was chosen for a two-month long exploratory study, in the primary branch of the school. The study attempted to explore gender relations in school practices and classroom processes.

METHODOLOGY

In terms of the objectives stated, the method proposed for the study includes the review of available secondary literature, including National Family Health Survey 2000, Selected educational statistics 2002, Sixth All India Educational Survey, Annual Report of Ministry of Human Resource Development 2003 and the Annual Report of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan 2003 in order to understand the trend in the elementary education of girls.

For the purpose of fieldwork, a Kendriya Vidyalaya, primary school in New Delhi was selected. In this Vidyalaya, class IV (only one section) was observed for a period of 20-25 days using the method of non-participant observation. Other classes were also observed briefly in the remaining 20 days. In addition, content analysis of few lessons from class I and IV textbooks was done. Informal interviews with two teachers and the Head Mistress of this school were conducted. Discussions were also held with the teachers and groups of children.

CHAPTERISATION

The discussion that follows is divided into five chapters. Chapter I that is the present chapter, provides a background for a study on the education of girls. Chapter II discusses the feminist theoretical frameworks on gender and education. It also presents the framework used in this study. Chapter II briefly reviews the existing literature on gender and education with a focus on family and schools as agencies of socialisation. It also attempts to understand the policy dimensions in relation to girl's education, especially in India. Along with this the present educational status of girls in India is discussed to show the progress and shortfalls in this arena. The third chapter presents the details of the study done in a primary school. It analyses gender relations in the context of school practices and classroom processes. The final chapter presents an overview on the education of girls and discusses major findings of the fieldwork. It also draws attention towards critical concerns related to the education of the girl child.

Chapter II

GENDER AND EDUCATION: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Feminists have focused on education as an instrument to empower women and have framed theories to bring them into focus. This chapter discusses these dimensions in three sections; the first section presents a brief introduction on feminism and feminist theoretical frameworks along with the manner in which they have categorised them. Then, the interlinkages of feminist frameworks with education have been highlighted. The next section presents the framework used in this study on account of these feminist theories.

I

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

Feminism is defined 'as a movement opposed to the systematic social injustice, which women suffer because of their sex' (Acker 1994:27). From a historical perspective, Offen considers feminism to be a 'concept that encompasses both an ideology and a movement for socio-political change based on male privilege and women's subordination within any given society'. Ideologically, feminism posits gender as the primary category for analysis. Debates relating to the family and its relationship to the State, historically inequitable distribution of political, social and economic power between the sexes, are examined within the feminist movement, which opposes women's subordination to men in the family and society. Offen observes that the 'feminist movement offers a frontal challenge to patriarchal thought, social organization and control mechanisms'. She also clarifies that it is to be remembered that 'feminism opposed masculinist hierarchy, not sexual dualism' (Offen 1988:151).¹

There has been criticism against the emphasis largely only on 'social equality with men' in the feminist movement. Hooks contends that feminism is not a movement to make women the social equals of men...and argues that this has led to a focus on 'discrimination, male attitudes and legalistic reforms'. She pleads for a broader perspective of feminism as a movement to end sexist oppression that directs attention to 'systems of domination and the interrelatedness of sex, race and class oppression... It is

¹ The origin of the word feminism is in fact French; it first appeared in the French language in 1872 and was used by Alexandre Dumas Junior as a derogatory designation for partisans of sexual equality. See Danielle et al. (eds) 2003.

basically a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that has permeated western culture on various levels, as well as a commitment to reorganise society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires' (Hooks 1984:18). For Dillabough and Arnot 'feminism is not only about women but also, for women' (2001: 32). Hooks believes that feminist thought is always a 'theory in the making open to re-examination and new possibilities' (cited in Weiner 1997: 144).

The distinction made between sex and gender is important, Oakley defines sex as 'the biological difference between males and females, the visible difference in genital organs and the correlative difference between their procreative functions'. Gender is described as 'related to culture, that is, the social classification into masculine and feminine' (Oakley 1972:16). Similarly, on one hand, Nicholson argues that 'gender refers to personality traits and behaviour, which are distinct from the body'. In these definitions, sex and gender are treated as two distinct categories. On the other hand, 'gender is also used to refer to any social construction having to do with male /female distinction, including those constructions that separate female bodies from male bodies'. This usage emerged when it was realised that 'society shapes personality, behaviour and also the way in which body appeared'. Nicholson cites Scott who described gender as social organization of sexual difference... 'Gender is the knowledge that established meanings for bodily difference' (Nicholson 1994: 79).

A number of theoretical frameworks address the issue of women's subordination to men as to 'how it arose, why it perpetuated and how it might be changed' (Acker 1994: 43-44). The main feminist frameworks include liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism and post-structuralism. The understanding of gender inequality and implications for action vary in different feminist theories.² To begin with, liberal feminism dates back to the late 18th century when Wollstonecraft, in her work 'A Vindication of the Rights of Women' 1792 stated that the right of women to education ought to be recognised and the schools must be made accessible to them (Dillabough and

²The framework used here to explain feminist theories is the one suggested by Acker (1994), thus liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism and post-structuralism would be explained and examined at length, focusing on implications for education, which is discussed subsequently in the following section.

Arnot 2001:34). The classical or libertarian liberals of 19th century differ from welfare or egalitarian liberals of 20th century. The classical liberals state that the ideal state protected 'civil liberties' as voting rights, freedom of speech, property. The differences between men and women are considered to be of little significance and reforms are introduced in the public arena to enable women to be active social citizens. The private sphere is not taken into account (Tong 1989: 12). The welfare feminism describes the approach of social reformers such as Webb in the early 1900s (Watson and Doyal 1999:3). For welfare liberals, the ideal state focuses on 'economic justice rather than civil liberties'. They suggest 'positive government intervention' in the economy such as school loans, low-cost housing, legal services, and social security so that the market does not perpetuate huge inequalities (Tong 1989:12). They perceive the differences between women and men as given, women's biology is perceived to be their destiny and motherhood is revered. They emphasise the private sphere and seek to enhance women's position within it. Overall, the role of social policy is to provide reforms to ease women's lives as wives and mothers by providing family allowances and other provisions as maternity benefits (Watson and Doyal 1999:3).

A major focus of the liberal feminists is reforms through state intervention where the State is to be mobilized to represent and respond to the 'interests of women'. These progressive reforms were adopted in United States, Scandinavia and Australia far earlier than in Britain (Watson and Doyal 1999: 5). In the case of Britain, the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) functions to prevent violations of Sex Discrimination Act. The EOC also puts informal pressure on schools and Local Educational Authorities to act against sex discrimination (Acker 1994:46).

For the radical feminists, patriarchy is central in their analysis of women's oppression. The term patriarchy describes the overall subjugation of women by men. It follows that, 'if all men oppress women, women are the oppressed class, though there are disagreements about how patriarchal relations are created and sustained' (Weiner 1997:146). Men exercise power over women and this is a universal phenomenon.

Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic form of domination. All other forms of exploitation and oppression...are extensions of male supremacy...All men have oppressed women.

(Redstockings Manifesto, quoted in Bouchier, 1983, *cited in* Weiner, 1997, p.146)

The radical feminists underscore the relationship between 'patriarchy and female sexuality and their complementary links to subordination of women' (Dillabough and Arnot 2001:36). Mitchell (1986) pointed out that radical feminism not only 'seeks to challenge contemporary sexual relations and politics; it also produces a new language and a new discursive framework based on liberation and collectivism' (cited in Weiner 1997:147). Similarly, Acker contends that 'the process of women-focused education or re-education known as consciousness-raising' emphasised by radical feminists aims 'to make women aware of the effects of male domination and encourages them to share information about female experience. It educates women in the absence of a comprehensive knowledge base on women. It contends what is being reproduced is 'domination of men over women and denial of full access of knowledge to girls/women' (Acker, 1994:50). Two strategies suggested are a critical confrontation of facts of 'patriarchal domination' whenever they are encountered and 'degrees of separation, as women withdraw into women-run businesses, communities and household' (Liengermann and Niebrugg-Brantley 1992: 475).

As suggested earlier, women are encouraged to share their personal experiences. The slogan *personal is political* relates to the radical feminists and was first used to emphasise that woman's everyday reality is informed and shaped by politics and is necessarily political. Overall, women are encouraged to share their experience of discrimination, exploitation or oppression, which in turn give an understanding of ideological and institutional apparatus that shape one's social status. Thus, according to Hooks, with the examination of 'personal that is political, the politics of society and global revolutionary politics', broader perspectives emerge (Hooks 1984:24).

The radical feminists share an "uncomfortable relationship" with the state. Radical feminists believe that the state does not act in the interests of women and reinforces relations of power through criminal justice system, the courts and others, for instance, MacKinnon argues that the question for feminism for the first time in its own

terms is, 'what is the state from women's point of view? ...[t]he state in power institutionalises the male power, if male power is systemic, it is regime' (MacKinnon cited in Watson and Doyal 1999:5). Millet (1977) maintains that patriarchal ideology resides at the core of the state and amplifies the traditional divisions between the public (rationality/work/male-centered) and private sphere (domesticity/female-centered). Radical feminists construct a 'politically functional category known as the girl with the implication that girls' in a real sense must rely upon radical politics within feminist movement for their liberation' (cited in Dillabough and Arnot 2001:36).

Towards the end of 1970s, socialist feminism surfaced to challenge the 'hegemonic position' of radical and to some extent liberal feminism (Weiner 1997:147). For socialist feminists, 'gender and class play an approximately equal role in any explanation of women's oppression' (Tong 1989:39-40). However, all these feminist theoretical frameworks are 'challenged and criticised for being preoccupied with privileged, Western, white women's concerns', according to Acker (1994:44). The black feminists feel that they are 'triplely oppressed because of sex, colour and class and criticise this movement for ignoring economic and social differences between women in its attempt to articulate an overarching female experience...Thus, they challenge the idea that a feminism, which ignores racism, can be meaningful', said Weiner (1997:147). Similarly, 'a feminist theory will have much to offer, if it shows women ways, in which racism and sexism are immutably connected rather than putting one struggle against the other or blatantly dismissing racism', mentioned Hooks (1984:52).

By the end of 1980s, post-structuralism brought new insights into the understanding of gender relations. Post-structuralism is a term applied to a set of ideas about 'meaning, power and identity'. It explains how meanings are made, circulated, struggled over; and studies their impact on identities and actions. Post-structuralism is particularly interested in the connection between 'meaning and power, meaning is influenced by power and vice-versa thus, meaning, power and identity are always in flux...They shift as different linguistic, institutional, cultural and social factors move and stabilise together' (Kenway and Willis 1998:xvi-xvii).

Earlier, 'feminist accounts took women and men as unified categories, each with their shared interests, rather than recognizing that interests are constructed in the process of engagement with the arenas of state', state Pringle and Watson. A post-structuralist approach to the state assumes that the state is 'erratic and disconnected rather than contradictory...the practices and discourses, which construct the state, are not structurally pre-given but are a historical product of struggles and interventions, which are partial and temporary' (Pringle and Watson cited in Watson and Doyal 1999:6).

Scholars have attempted to group these feminist theories into broad groups. Acker groups feminist theories into fundamental and implementary approaches. The fundamental category includes theories that seek basic, universal explanations for women's subordination in features of 'human nature' or 'social organization' that require women to be subordinate (Acker 1984: 66). Acker further divides these theories into two sub-groups; the first includes those approaches that use a 'sex difference' framework and assumes gender relationships to be based on human nature, especially biology. This sub-group includes some of the functionalist theories, maintaining that the stability of society requires a sexual division of labour. The second approach contains theories that postulate the feature of 'social structure' as the basic constraint on human possibilities, especially on the life chances of women. For instance, capitalism or patriarchal structures explain the oppression of women. (Acker 1994: 86). The radical/socialist feminists rely on structures such as patriarchy/capitalism to explain oppression of women and form a part of fundamental theories.

The implementary approaches address 'reasons underlying domination/subordination patterns and ascertain the way in which individuals in a given culture perpetuate such arrangements' (Acker 1984: 66). These approaches are better described as 'how' theories. Acker says that they focus on 'how the subordination of women is perpetuated through processes such as socialisation, sex discrimination or role conflict, which also explain gender inequality'. They lack the fundamental quality of the theories that outline everything back to 'human nature or social structure'; the implementary approaches are 'situation specific or culture specific' (Acker 1994: 86). Acker says that 'the implementary approaches are more hopeful than fundamental approaches as they assume that educational solutions can be obtained for the largely

educational problems... If in the past girls are socialised to move away from science, then by consciously changing methods, girls can be socialised towards it' (Acker 1984: 74). The liberal feminist framework forms a part of implementary approach.

II

FEMINISM AND EDUCATION

Feminist intervention in the field of education is an outcome of recognition of male bias in organising knowledge. According to Acker, feminist theories contribute to education 'by filling gaps in knowledge about girls /women, reinterpreting findings from past studies which relate to girls /women or gender differences, examining how schooling shapes the lives of women and replacing the 'deficit models of women' that is, the approaches which hold women responsible for not having the desirable quality which men possess' (1994:37), for instance, women teachers are held liable for the low standing of teaching as an occupation; correspondingly, it is often asked why girls do not have the same point of reference in science as boys, however no attention is given to the manner in which science estranges girls (Ibid: 131).

Liberal Feminism and Education

The educational objectives of liberal feminists emphasise 'equal opportunities' for girls and boys as also for men and women. It tries to facilitate girls in reaching their full potential by removing barriers in the school, the individual psyche, or the labour practices. The conceptual base includes themes such as equal opportunities, socialisation, sex stereotyping, and sex discrimination. With regard to equal opportunities, 'equal is to mean same', as separate educational provision for girls lead to inferior facilities (Acker 1994:45).

Socialisation or internalisation of sex roles is seen as an important aspect, for instance girls and boys are socialised to follow traditional roles by the family, media and the school. This, in turn orients them to sex-stereotyped occupations and family roles. The socialisation theories are concerned with the 'construction of sex', that is how children learn to behave according to a given culture's ideas of masculinity and femininity. Acker points to theorists such as, Delamont who suggest that 'even before

birth, the child's sex is a matter for speculation and the sex label attached to the child at birth relates to a pattern of social apparatus, in the form of names, clothes, toys, beliefs and behaviour' (cited in Acker 1984:72). In relation to family, Acker asserts that liberal feminists show how even within inter-personal relationships females gain an unfavourable position and are encouraged to be dependent. Similarly, males do not get enough space to express their 'caring potential' (1994:45).

Drawing attention to the role of schools in socialising children, Acker says that in the late 70s and early 80s, liberal feminists argued that the schools overtly and covertly discriminate against girls, from the earliest years itself. The school's constant strengthening of boundaries between what is suitably masculine and what is suitably feminine contributes to the shaping of 'gender-differentiated self-concepts' and eventually, 'gender-differentiated futures'. In fact, it is suggested that 'schools favour tradition and are more traditional than the outside world' (Acker 1984:73).

Notions of discrimination, rights, justice and fairness are also central to liberal feminism. These three themes emphasise attitudes and the liberal feminists believe that generally the attitude of teachers contributes to sex-stereotyped subject-choices and sex-stereotyped occupations. Acker contends that the use of these terms by liberal feminists is effective in bringing about a 'change in the structures'. This comes closer to accepting the 'impact of structures than confining to a sex role or sex differences approach' (Acker 1994:46). This seeks to claim for revision of policies framed and suggests new policies to be framed to rectify injustice or unfair treatment met to girls in schools, family and in the occupational arena through the intervention of the state (Ibid: 46).

Strategies for educational change emerge from the conceptual base itself, according to Acker. The liberal feminists emphasise that there is a need to 'alter socialisation practices, change attitudes, use legal processes and share information (Acker 1994:46). They believe that a 'just society is a fair meritocracy' and suggest that such a stage in society can be reached if 'rational argument is used along with legal measures to

attain equality of opportunity'. They are in favour of preferential treatment along with the need to establish a 'counterfactual meritocracy'³ (Jaggar 1983:193).

Weiner presents liberal feminist, 'girl friendly strategies' that aim to alter attitudes of teachers and children. These include 'reviewing aspects of school organisation, such as timetable, analysing curriculum materials for sex-stereotyping and persuading girls not to drop science and technology subjects, the teachers in training are also acquainted with ideas to combat sexism' (cited in Acker 1994:47). Within schools, four kinds of strategies are identified by Deem. These include teacher initiated changes, action research projects, teacher contact networks, and teacher union initiatives (1992: 84). To illustrate, Girls into Science and Technology (GIST) was 'an innovative action research programme initiated in Britain, which covered ten schools and lasted for a period of four years that is, 1979-84. This project was designed to find out causes of underachievement of girls in science and technology at the secondary level and to alter the situation' (Whyte 1986:1). The project introduced VISTA⁴ programme where women scientists, technicians were invited to speak to the students (Ibid: 67). Other intervention methods tried to make teaching methods sensitive to girls, likewise women's role was discussed in science /crafts' lesson and parents' counseling was also done so that they agree to girls' choice of non-stereotypical subjects (Ibid: 252-253). The findings of the project suggested that more girls started opting for physics, chemistry and technical crafts. In addition, girls/boys in GIST action schools began to view science as a 'gender-neutral' subject; and overall, the likelihood of girls/boys aspiring for non-stereotypical professions, became greater than before (Ibid: 202, 245).

There are a number of criticisms directed against liberal feminism. Weiner argues that the 'girl friendly strategies only cause moderate interventions and do not try to change anything fundamental in the education system' (cited in Deem 1992:84). The liberal feminists do not examine the 'gendered nature of hierarchical structure in schools and the role that society plays in developing gender identities...For example, the political

³'Counterfactual meritocracy' advocated that in a society jobs and offices were to be awarded to those people who would have the minimum qualifications compared to men and who would have had the best qualifications had they not been victims of previous unjust discrimination; this was a temporary way to a fair meritocracy (Jaggar 1983).

⁴ VISTA is the short title for a programme of visits to schools by women working as scientists, technicians, and craftspeople in industry, scientific research and educational institutions.

and economic structures, forms of power, which constrain women's social and political agency in education, in the family and in the state' are not considered (Dillabough and Arnot 2001:34-35). Liberal feminism even ignores racism, class hegemony and the impact of patriarchy, power and systematic subordination of women by men. Similarly, the liberal feminist theory 'regards girls as, simply girls and ignores class and ethnicity distinctions' (Acker 1994:47). Thus, little is learnt about the ways in which the opportunities in education are limited for minority, ethnic women and girls. In this way, the importance of both 'identity politics' and 'difference' is lost in liberal feminism (Dillabough and Arnot 2001:35).

In addition, liberal feminism does not challenge the capitalist system. They assume the state to be the only 'legitimate authority for enforcing justice, in general and women's rights, in particular' (Jaggar 1983:200). They do not emphasise the need to eradicate the 'politics of domination' and believe that 'women can achieve equality with men of their class without challenging and changing the cultural basis of group oppression... This belief reduces the realisation of potential radicalism of liberal feminism for instance, Saffioti emphasises that bourgeois feminism is fundamentally and unconsciously a feminism of the ruling class, the liberal feminists try to expand the existing social structures and never want to challenge the status quo' (cited in Hooks 1984:20-21).

Although, liberal perspectives on feminism suggest 'reforms that would have radical implications for society if they are implemented, yet these reforms are resisted and the society is more responsive to those feminist demands that are not threatening or that help in maintaining status quo' (Hooks 1984:20-21). With regard to methodological concerns and research, it is pointed out that much of the liberal feminist research such as, 'the study of gender roles, gender differences and gendered subject preferences is premised upon a male-centered rationality where formal quantitative tools as self-esteem scale, student response checklists are used to identify gender inequality' (Dillabough and Arnot 2001:34-35).

Radical Feminism and Education

The radical feminist framework in education states that two dimensions are important; these are 'the male monopolisation of culture and knowledge, and sexual politics of everyday life in schools', according to Acker. For example, Spender shows how 'decisions and activities of men are depicted as human knowledge; she reveals the way schools perpetuate the logic of male dominance by allowing men to dominate the decision-making and silencing women, in educational contexts'. This further affects the school curriculum, girls' and women teachers' access to power and policy-making within education. With regard to the second dimension, two aspects are highlighted; Spender states that 'teacher attention' is unequally divided between boys and girls, usually to the benefit of boys. In addition, the positive aspects of single-sex schooling are realised, as here the dominance of males over females does not happen, as in mixed settings. The perspective mentioned above gives an example of radical feminist dictum *personal is political* (cited in Acker 1994:50-51). This is unlike the approach followed by liberal feminists who advocate coeducational schools, sameness and equal opportunities.

The strategies for educational change emphasise the notion of 'liberation through a collective critique of male domination in education' (Dillabough and Arnot 2001:36). Weiner has distinguished between girl-friendly strategies supported by liberal feminists mentioned earlier, and girl-centered strategies advocated by radical feminists, according to Weiner. The girl-centered feminist strategies 'seek radical change in the balance of power between men and women, these include girls'-only schools, quotas for male and female holders of senior posts; such changes are also termed as 'anti-sexist strategies' (cited in Deem 1992:85). In addition, the radical feminists suggest the 'revision of curricula to develop participatory teaching methods and pedagogical change in higher and adult education', according to Acker (1994:52-53).

Radical feminists are criticised on various accounts. It is the least articulated of all feminist perspectives and with regard to education; it is descriptive and not explanatory, according to Middleton (cited in Acker 1994:52). Further, Connell states that radical feminists are criticised for 'essentialism as they make general observations about (all) women and (all) men, this in turn diverts attention from considering men and women

in terms of further divisions of class, age, nationality and race' (cited in Acker 1994:52). Similarly, terms as 'patriarchy' and categories as male/female only reiterate gender divisions and do not make much reference to the multifaceted aspects, which constitute ideas about masculinity and femininity in schools (Dillabough and Arnot 2001:37). With regard to methodological aspects, the radical feminists try to break through the traditional 'male biases in research paradigms' and work on dimensions such as, sexual harassment in schools, according to Acker. Still, there is a need to classify the conditions under which such findings are to be obtained, as it is unlikely that all the teachers favour boys, all the time (Acker 1994:52).

Socialist Feminism and Education

Socialist feminists are influenced by Neo-Marxist trends in sociology of education and 'reproduction' as a concept is central to their work, observes Acker. Further, she states that a 'political economy perspective is depicted by this theory, where the role of schools in reproducing a sexual and a social division of labour in the family and the work force is depicted'. Moreover, they assume that oppression can be removed by abolishing capitalism. Their educational objective is to see how education contributes to the reproduction of gender divisions in society. (Acker 1994:48).

In order to understand the impact of education, the socialist feminists assert that it is important to recognise the importance of 'economic sphere and its effects on the institutional culture and the structure of schooling' (Dillabough and Arnot 2001:38). This leads to an understanding of 'education as a site for reproduction of a hierarchically stratified gendered workforce with women prepared for marginalised positions in the secondary labour market...The structure of gender relations in school are understood as constituting and reproducing particular versions of masculinity, femininity and family life' (Connell cited in Dillabough and Arnot 2001:38).

The emphasis on 'social and economic reproduction' leads to a 'feminist version of social reproduction theory'. Though Bowles and Gintis do not refer to the gender dimension in 'Schooling in Capitalist America' still Dillabough and Arnot refer to the way the feminist sociologists have used the work of Bowles and Gintis to conceptualise 'education as an instrument of capitalism, which reproduces subordination of women,

particularly of working class girls...Thus, social class determines the educational experiences of girls, their identities and consciousness' (Dillabough and Arnot 2001: 38).

It is also necessary to see how 'gender-segregation' is practiced within the school with reference to 'school subjects'. MacDonald explains that some subjects are perceived to be either feminine or masculine, for instance the 'masculinity of science' or the 'femininity of domestic science'. In addition, sometimes subjects considered masculine are seen as feminine such as social sciences, this is because of the pressure exerted on the school and the universities, by the changing pattern of employment of men and women in the labour force. Thus, 'the operation of gender to specific subjects is part of the class culture and its operation in the school legitimates the class domination' (MacDonald 1980: 37-38).

The notion of 'skill' in relation to gender is critically analysed by socialist feminists, for instance, Gaskell mentions that 'skill' determines "occupational placement" and argues that in Canadian High Schools, training is imparted for 'office work' but not for 'male crafts'. Thus, the 'curriculum differentiation' process within the school trains girls in 'office skills' such as word processing but does not train them in allied areas, such as computer science that will allow them to enter alternative careers. Thus, it is observed that the partnership between education and economy operated to limit girls and women in restricted, low paid sectors of employment (cited in Acker 1994: 48).

The links between schooling and motherhood are highlighted in the context of sexual division of labour in a capitalist economy. David elaborates the recommendations of a committee chaired by Plowden (1967) in Britain, where the effect of 'parental attitudes was realised in the success of primary school children'. Working class mothers were encouraged to attend their children's school to help with their work and 'learn to be more effective with mothering' (David 1980: 5).

The concept of 'gender code' used by MacDonald is important in understanding how a child learns 'class-based definitions of masculinity and femininity with sexual division of labour'. According to MacDonald, 'a child learns the gender code in the family', and when he/she enters the school, the school's gender code introduces the child to different aspects of male/female behaviour. Thus, 'the school's gender code challenges

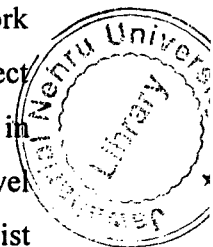
the experience in the family, this results in a confrontation between the school's gender code with what is learnt in the family and finally, there is reinforcement of school's gender code, which represents the form of gender relations specific to the ruling class' (1980: 37-38).

Socialist-feminists perceive potential development with teachers and pupils adopting 'strategies of resistance' and a curriculum that challenges 'dominant hegemony' still the strategies for educational change are 'not well developed', according to Acker. She illustrates this point further, by pointing to Weiner who compares equal opportunities approach favouring girl-friendly strategies (liberal feminism) with anti-sexist approach focusing on girl-centered (radical feminism) strategies, as mentioned already. She does not evolve a separate strategy based on socialist feminism. Weiner also says that 'Marxist analysis is theoretical and academic but not classroom oriented' (cited in Acker 1994:49).

However, the concept of 'gender code' is used to some extent in empirical work to show the operation of class and gender codes, especially in career guidance or subject choice exercises, where schools and labour market are linked. Still, there is difficulty in linking up the 'macro-sociological nature of the theory with the micro-sociological level of most school-based research' (Acker 1994:49). Similarly, the emphasis of Socialist feminists 'on social class relations causes them to pay insufficient attention to private, domestic and familial relations and the significance of women's political agency, intra-class differences, such as ethnic and sexual identities', according to Dillabough and Arnot (2001:39). Further, the extent to which school practices are required for the reproduction of sexual or social division of labour is 'indemonstrable', emphasises Acker. Their focus on capitalism does not allow them to explain the way in which men exercise power over women through control of sexuality and threat of violence (Acker 1994:49).

Post-structuralism and Education

The post-structuralist theory sees 'subjectivity' as constantly in process, being 'constituted and reconstituted through the discursive practices'; each person has access to in his/her daily life (Davies and Banks 1992: 2-3). Thus, subjectivities fluctuate according to the 'positioning in a network of social relations and access to particular discourses, these subjectivities are gendered and the struggle is over what gender is to



mean' (Acker 1994:20). Post-structuralist theory states that the person is not socialised into the social world but *interpellated* into it. That is, people are not 'passively shaped by active others, rather they actively take up as their own, the discourses through which they are shaped' (Davies and Banks 1992: 2-3). Post-structuralism tries to express 'the performative nature of gender and exposes gendered subject positions within education and society', according to Dillabough and Arnot (2001:41). Attention is also drawn to how 'public, political and policy discourses construct different subject positions for men and women' (Watson and Doyal 1999:5).

Post-structural analysis accords possibility of 'agency to the subject', according to Davies and Banks (1992:3). Thus, girls *position themselves* and are no longer seen as simply being socialised to adopt appropriate gender roles. To illustrate this positioning in terms of patriarchy, Jones mentions Walkerdine who said that 'patriarchy is not a monolithic force, which imposes socialisation on girls; rather it produces positions for subjects to enter...Girls become *girls* by participating within the available sets of social meaning and practices-discourses, which define them as girls' (Jones 1993: 159).

Feminine subjectivities differ significantly in variable settings. In the context of education, 'there are various contradictory discourses on femininity operating within the schools and families, which provide several possibilities for a feminine subject and a range of ways in which girls/women can be', emphasise Walkerdine and Davies (cited in Jones 1993:159). Thus, girls are seen as 'multiply located', says Jones and 'a feminist approach to classroom research shifts away from disadvantage focus'. Studies focus on how 'girls are variously positioned in the classrooms'. She gives the example of Bird's (1992) study of girls' in New Zealand primary classrooms which discusses how on one hand, girls are powerful in the classroom through taking on the authority of the teacher in assisting with classroom organisation, instruction and control and in this positioning the girls take on the role of nurturing and ordering authority of the mother however, on the other hand girls are also positioned as objects of boys' harassment. Bird's research reminds that 'while the subject positions available to girls in the primary classroom are multiple, still they are inevitably inflicted with wider gendered power relations as girls' take on the available subject positions of mother/teacher/nurturer' (Jones 1993: 160-161).

Discourse is another important dimension of post-structuralism. It is defined as 'a way of speaking, thinking or writing that presents particular relationships as self evidently true'. For example, the discourse of 'good quiet girl' positions girls differently to boys (Paechter 2001:41). Foucault emphasises that 'the role of discourse in structuring the way thinking is processed is related to power/knowledge interface' (cited in Paechter 2001:43). 'As discourse is related to knowledge, a change in power relations between discourses affects the knowledge relation, as well' (Haw 1998: 26-27). Foucault's work on discourse points to the ways in which 'knowledge influences what can be said, who has the right to speak and who is silenced'. Discourses also 'gain and assign power and control through their inscription in institutional structures and practices and in cultural products'. Overall, then, it is through discourse that 'meanings and people are made and through which power relations are maintained and changed' (Kenway 1998: xvi-xvii).

Criticisms have been directed against post-structuralist feminists. Though, post-structuralist feminism elaborates on the difficulties in deploying any strategy based on simple notion of women or girls still it is difficult to see how post-structuralist feminism adopts practical educational strategies, according to Acker. In spite of various criticisms, feminist post-structuralism is regarded as having important implications for pedagogy and for understanding the possibility of feminist theory (Acker 1994: 22).

The foregoing discussion on feminist theoretical frameworks highlights different perspectives on gender and education. From the liberal feminist emphasis on equal rights to socialist feminist focus on gender and class to radical feminism which draws attention to patriarchy and post-structuralism which provides agency to the subject. These different viewpoints substantiate on gender inequality in education. The chapter that follows discusses in brief, the existing literature on gender and education and highlights the major themes within it.

III

FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The framework used in this study draws from the radical/socialist feminist perspectives. It attempts to move beyond the discourse of 'equal opportunity' of liberal feminism and includes aspects related to "hidden curriculum" and "gender code" to understand the

nature of gender relations in a primary school. According to Chapman, 'hidden curriculum' includes 'things that are learnt in school, other than what is officially timetabled, thus attitudes, values and notions of normal/not normal are transmitted to the children through rules, routines and the hierarchical staffing structure' (1986:113-114). The hidden or the unofficial curriculum of the school influences children, and girls learn to occupy inferior positions to boys/men. In addition, the gender code suggests appropriate roles for boys and girls, which they have to perform. 'The school's gender code sets up categories of masculine and feminine as well as boundaries and relations of power between them', according to MacDonald (1980:38). Further, 'gender code provides cues for gender appropriate behaviour for all social actors in a school...The child tries to conform to the gender identity constructed by everyday routines and rituals in school...Similarly, children also actively participate in the process of gender socialisation in the school' (Bhattacharjee 1999:337). To illustrate, girls learn to be feminine by not disrupting the class, being passive and unassertive.

The classroom interactions, school processes and practices communicate gender identities. Further, even within a coeducational school, different opportunities are created for boys and girls not only within the classroom, also outside it for instance, in extra-curricular activity or sports. The existing literature on gender focuses on some of these dimensions with respect to elementary education. What is shown in the secondary literature becomes obvious in the fieldwork in a primary school.

Chapter III

GENDER AND EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Education has long been one of the most decisive of our life chances, the key to equal opportunity and the ladder to advancement, since men first learned that literacy and communication in the hands of few meant power, government and the control of many.

(Byrne, Eileen. 1978 *Women and Education*. London: Tavistock Publications, p.14)

As suggested by Byrne, men have used education as an instrument to overpower women. The research in the field of education shows growing concern towards women and the need to empower them. This chapter presents an overview of research on gender and school education. It divides research studies into sub-themes such as socialisation, school organization, classroom management, teacher attitudes, curriculum, and policy. The theoretical positions such as liberal feminism, radical feminism, and post-structuralism that underlie individual studies and their findings are highlighted. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part deals with studies specifically in the field of gender and education, and focuses on policy perspectives on gender and education. The second part briefly sketches the status of girl's education in India.

I

FAMILY, GENDER SOCIALISATION AND EDUCATION

The family is the first exposure of the child to the outer world. Durkheim stated that the society ensured 'methodical socialisation of young generation' (1956:67). What appears as natural in the process of socialisation of children is in fact, well planned and pre-determined. The long and tedious process of socialisation begins in the family, while the child is unaware of it. In the words of Boudreau 'Socialisation is the complex process by which individuals learn the habits, beliefs and standards for judgment that make them identifiable members of a group or society' (1986:64). Through the process of socialisation, children attain identities, including gender identities and learn to be male or female. This perspective on socialisation adopts a liberal feminist perspective and suggests that gradually children adopt roles, which suit their gender, which in turn gives way to 'gender role identity'. Thus, females accept those aspects of behaviour considered feminine similarly; males adopt the traits looked upon as masculine (Ibid 1986:68). With regard to implications for education, Karlekar states that 'the views on feminine roles often came into conflict with goals of education'. Families familiarise girls to nurturing

and passive aspects of femininity, which are in contrast to the 'goals of learning such as independence of thought, spirit of enquiry' (Karlekar 2000:90).

The critique of the liberal viewpoint on masculinity and femininity is presented by Connell. He emphasises that patriarchal power/authority has a bearing on the definition of masculinity and femininity and introduced terms as 'hegemonic masculinity' and 'emphasised femininity'. Overall, the superiority of masculinity and its encompassing nature in relation to femininity is examined through these concepts. According to Connell, 'hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women ...the interplay between different forms of masculinity is an important part of how a patriarchal social order works and there is no femininity that is as hegemonic as the dominant form of masculinity, that is hegemonic among men'. Whereas emphasised femininity centres on 'compliance, subordination of men over women... and accommodates the interests and desires of men' (Connell 1987:183).

Family plays a significant role in early gender role socialisation. The parents convey their gender-typed expectations to the child, directly or indirectly. They already have a notion of what is apt for boys and girls, further parental responses and child's understanding of what is expected of him/her moulds the gender role identity of the child. This process of gender learning happens in an indirect way as well, children begin to like what is well-known to them, therefore if their surrounding is gender-typed then they become familiar to gender-typed objects. For instance, if boys are given trucks to play with and girls get dolls then given a choice of toy, children make gender appropriate choices. However, parents perceive this process to be natural and are unable to see the relation between their providing these toys and the child's liking for them later on (Boudreau 1986:74).

There is a difference in the growing up of a boy and a girl and their relation with parents, especially mothers. For instance, 'tied to his mother's apron strings' is a well-known phrase, which gives a glimpse of the traditional attitude associated with the role of women and the relationship they share with the male child. This saying assumes that women do the domestic work at home so they need an apron while cooking, cleaning also

this expression criticises the close relationship between a mother and a child (never father and a child). This is because it suggests that after a point, a child has to be distanced from the mother to avoid him from learning feminine qualities. Boys are expected to be tough, outward going and self-sufficient (Browne and France 1986:2).

Further, in the course of socialisation, boys and girls inculcate different values-a girl learns a less honoured and less esteemed gender role identity while a boy assumes the traditional, male gender role identity (Boudreau 1986:80). Referring to socialisation in the Indian context Chanana asserts that 'socialisation of women favours tradition and the social institutions of family, kinship, and marriage...this in turn relates to the process of role socialisation of boys and girls into masculine and feminine roles or to gender asymmetry' (1988:9). Further, gender roles acquired through the process of socialisation involve a process of 'internalisation of norms, values, attitudes and expectations of the community and the social group' to which one belongs (Nambissan 1995:199). The process of socialisation operates not in isolation and works in conjunction with other factors such as social class, race, and caste (in the Indian context).

Class and Race

Girls are not a uniform, homogenous category and are differentiated on the basis of class, caste, race and so on. The class/economic status influences the socialising experiences of girls. MacDonald states that 'in various sites such as the family, workplace and the education system, the class and gender relations come into focus within the dominant/subordinate paradigm' (1980:30). Sexual division of labour in the family is reflected in roles and responsibilities assigned to boys and girls. A study of parents who wished to admit their children in an elite school in Delhi reveals that parents have different expectations of their sons and daughters. (Parthasarathi 1988:208). Boys are usually asked to work outside the home, run an errand or 'walk the dog' while girls are chosen to help in the kitchen or put the clothes on the line, these tasks take up most of their time. Gender roles and familial expectations rarely assign such tasks to boys (Karlekar 2000:90).

The experience of working class girls and middle class girls differs. A girl in the lower social class contributes to the domestic activities and sibling care at an early age.

For her, school education is minimal and fulfils 'functional literacy' so that she is able to read bus numbers or write a letter after she marries and leaves home. She is socialised to be a good daughter-in-law in another house, in all the self-identity of the girl is lost in roles and relationships (as daughter, wife, mother). In contrast, for a middle class girl, education is prioritised still these girls are socialised to undermine their personal aspiration to the goal of marriage and to the expectations of the family in which they marry (Saraswathi 1999:216-219). Further, the same term such as 'manual labour' is used differently for working class girls and middle class girls. To illustrate, MacDonald observes that for working class girls, manual labour means wage labour practiced by these women or unpaid domestic work. In the case of middle class girls, manual labour either means skilled work in administrative occupations or other professions as social work (1980:39).

Further, juxtaposing of race with gender gives a subordinate position to black girls. Children observe the manner in which 'members of the family communicate with members of ethnic group other than one's own...for instance, a white child watches how a white parent speaks to a black store manager. Similarly, racial identity is also formed in the family, to illustrate this Daniel and Daniel give an account of a black girl who said that her mother made her familiar to 'blackness...femaleness and repeatedly convinced her how the two flaws were of her own making' (1999:27).

Caste

Caste is an important feature in Indian social structure and influences the process of socialisation of girls. A child takes birth in a caste and follows the prescribed rules and rituals. Family and kinship patterns are tied to the 'institution of caste'. Dube examines how rituals and ceremonies among upper caste Hindus socialise girls to adopt future roles as wives and mothers. This also shows the perspective of the family to the education of girls. Further, the rituals convey that the 'girl's membership in the natal home is temporary and the husband's house is considered to be the real home'... this becomes

obvious in celebrations such as *Durga Puja*.¹ Overall, family contributes to the process of socialising girls as 'gendered subjects' (Dube 1988:166-167).

Likewise, among Muslims, women are expected to conform to the cultural norms; they are introduced to *parda* early in life and earlier were even limited to *zenanah*. Further, they symbolize the *izzat* of the house and their non-conformity is believed to threaten the honour of the family. Girls are socialised to be submissive, obedient and sacrificing. They gradually learn that marriage is the ultimate goal for them in life. With regard to education, Bhatti states that Muslim women started attending schools much later than Hindus or Christians. Sir Syed Ahmed Khan advocated in favour of educating Muslim women though within the confines of *parda*. Women were to be educated to perform their traditional role better and there was no consideration of improving the status of women. After Independence, the attitude towards Muslim girls changed and they started attending schools and colleges (Bhatti 1988:231-237).

By the time children enter, school they already have well-defined gender identities, abilities this in turn influences their access to education and performance in schools. Bhatti mentions the role of educational institutions such as schools in reinforcing gender asymmetry through gender bias in teaching/learning process and curriculum (1988:238).

SCHOOLING

Schooling introduces a child to the formal process of learning in schools where she /he gains education. In addition, this is the next major agency after family, which socialises children to adopt gender identities. There are variations perceived in the schooling of boys and girls in terms of access to schools. Girls' participation in schooling is dependant on variables, which belong to the 'demand side' and the 'supply side'. The demand side includes dimensions as 'parents' attitude, their analysis of the costs and benefits of girls schooling, what relevance this education has for girls, the availability of female teachers, single-sex schools and separate facilities for girls, as toilets' (Human Development in South Asia 2000:106-107). While the supply side, is based on 'whether the school is

¹ Durga Puja: This festival is observed in West Bengal, every year. It is celebrated for five days, as it is believed that during this duration, Durga comes to visit her natal home.

located close to the habitation, flexible structure of the school, commitment of teachers, curriculum, other facilities as scholarships, mid-day meals and availability of crèches' (Ibid: 107). There are certain factors, which belong to both the demand side and the supply side, such as mid-day meals.

Parental Attitudes and Access to Schools

With regard to the demand factors, it has been pointed out that even if the State incurs the cost of schooling children the parents have to decide if the education of a girl is beneficial for the family and have to rule out the cost of sending a girl to the school. The Human Development in South Asia Report contends that parents have to take care of the opportunity cost because the child is not available for household chores or wage labour (2000: 106). Similarly, Karlekar also points out that 'school-going children particularly girls, have to combine non-educational activities after school hours with homework and other tasks, the girls who have dropped out of school or have never attended school are comparatively more involved in household chores than those who attend school'. She further shows the relation between 'poverty and child labour, in turn child labour and schooling'. To illustrate, she mentions a study by Anandalakshmy, who found that 'girls are largely employed in agriculture and work as agricultural labourers or in other activities'. According to Anandalakshmy, 'one-third of them work for six to eight hours, 41 per cent work on all seven days; 21.8 per cent combine schooling with wage labour and this includes girls who work for two to four hours and can attend school' (Anandalakshmy cited in Karlekar 2000: 91-92).

Further, parents see a girl's education as consumption and a boy's education as an investment (Kelly 1984:84). The Human Development in South Asia Report elaborates on this 'parents prefer to provide higher education to sons rather than daughters as sons are perceived to be positive economic assets' (2000:106). On the other hand, girls are perceived as 'future wives or mothers' (Kelly, 1984: 84).

School Availability

Physical availability of schools is an important consideration for girls as they are likely to be constrained due to cultural norms or work at home. Thus, cultural/social access to schools is as important as physical access. The supply-side concentrates on aspects as the

distance between the school and the habitation, Nambissan argues that an important reason for 'non-enrolment and drop-out of girls is that the schools are not available within a walk able distance' (Nambissan 1995:202). The National Family Health Survey showed that 80 per cent of rural habitations had a primary school, 45 per cent had a middle school and only 26 per cent of villages had a secondary school (2000:47). It is also important to differentiate between schools made 'available' and those made 'accessible', according to Kelly. The schools have to 'adapt to the way the lives of girls are structured by work, religion and social norms...planning to provide education to girls is not the same as planning to provide education to boys'. A project done in Pune indicated that parents were happy to send their daughters to school, when the school recognised the role of the girls, in the family and the work-fields. The classes were held in the night and in places that were accessible to girls. Girls were escorted from home to class and back again; villagers were also hired to help in the lessons imparted in the school. Thus, the accommodation of social and cultural norms with school organisation, timings, the school staff and the nature of instruction is important for girl child's access to schools (Kelly 1984:87). Sudarshan also states the importance of 'flexible timings, curricula to make schooling relevant enough to fulfill the demands of children in the age-group of six to fourteen years' (Sudarshan 2000: 61). Similarly, other facilities as mid-day meals, scholarships, books and stationary are specifically needed when parents are unable to meet the extra costs of educating the child (Karlekar 2000:87).

The availability of single-sex schools, female teachers and separate toilets for girls, are other considerations, which demand attention. Kelly illustrates with the help of research done, 'how women's access is affected by whether a school is coeducational or single-sex'. In certain countries as Pakistan, where single-sex schools exist as a rule, whenever the Pakistan Government has to open a school, it prefers a boy's school to a girl's school. This is because 'the government associates girls' school with reinforcing traditional values and boys' school with efforts towards modernizing the nation' (1984:87). The Human Development in South Asia Report states that in South Asian Countries 'parents place a high value on the chastity of girls and are reluctant to allow their daughters to be taught by male teachers or to enroll in schools without separate facilities for girls' (2000:106). Karlekar believes that girl's schools and women teachers

play an important role in encouraging parents to send their daughters to schools, particularly in rural areas. She points to a study by Nayar where 'parents were not totally against coeducational school but were concerned with the absence of female teachers on the school staff' (Karlekar, 2000:86).

SCHOOL PRACTICES AND PROCESSES

Organisational practices within the school create gender identities. According to Whyte, this takes the form of separate records of boys and girls in registers, distinct seating arrangement and different uniforms for boys and girls, where girls are discouraged from wearing trousers (cited in Chapman 1986:68). Similarly, different tasks are assigned to boys and girls from the early years due to 'parental role expectations' and this is later, strengthened through the school processes.

Bhattacharjee's research indicates that 'the areas of responsibility for girls in the school are an extension of those at home... the assigning of tasks by the teacher magnifies gender dichotomy and make girls dutiful daughters and boys roughhousing rogues... This domestication of girls is achieved through assigning tasks, which label them as dependent and adaptable to adult authority... These tasks restrict their sphere of responsibility to the spaces within the classroom/school and keep them under the direct protection of the teacher whereas boys have the freedom to go outside the premises' (1999: 341)

Children also learn to fulfill the expectations of the teacher and know the tasks they have to do. Girls see boys being asked by the teacher to lift heavy objects therefore when given a chance to do the same they are unable to do it. For instance, when Bhattacharjee asked a girl to lift a bench, she refused and said that 'she cannot! Nobody gives her'. Ultimately, two boys got the bench. In another instance, it is observed that 'girls are relied upon for certain tasks more than the boys'. Although, the teacher said that the handwriting of boys and girls is equally good still, girls are called more frequently to write on the blackboard than boys (1999: 344). Nambissan also states that 'gender decides what tasks have to be given to whom; girls arrange things neatly and clean up as and when required, while boys lift heavy things' (Nambissan 1995:204).

The District Primary Education Programme with a focus on gender presents similar findings in different districts of India. In Kolar district, Karnataka in relation to school chores, girls sweep or clean while boys fetch tea/coffee from the shop for guests/teachers (Periodi 2002:204). Likewise, in Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu boys climb heights when needed, run errands outside the school and ring the bell while girls do the washing of dishes or fetch water (Rathnam 2002:248).

Teacher Attention

Studies have looked at teacher attention and how it differs with regard to boys and girls. LaFrance examines the different educational experiences of males and females in an educational setting in North America. The findings show gender bias in the response of teachers to verbal participation of female students. For instance, the teacher's discourse 'relies on the generic 'he' to refer to both men and women (LaFrance 1990:3). The nature of teacher expectancy is related to the sphere of activity as well. LaFrance says that it is important to observe the nature of tasks for which boys and girls get a chance to fulfill teacher expectation. For instance, Worrall and Tsarna (1987) found that the science teacher expected lower achievement from 14-year-old girls (Ibid 1990:9).

With reference to race, a study on Asian girls in the British context explains the manner in which Asian girls are ignored; get less teacher attention in a mixed class of white/colour pupils. Brah and Minhas state that Asian girls are perceived as 'docile and passive... These girls are forgotten in the classroom except when a mention of arranged marriages or polygamy is made' (1985:19). In addition, Grant (1982) states that girls receive less feedback for work in comparison to other race-gender groups and are even encouraged less for academic achievement (cited in LaFrance 1991:9).

The variation in the assistance provided to the male and female students is also noticed (LaFrance 1991:1). Teachers are found not paying equal attention to boys and girls in a classroom; usually boys are attended to more than girls. Using a liberal feminist framework, Hammersley states that in mixed classrooms there is 'an imbalance in classroom participation' between girls and boys (1990:125). Similarly, non-verbal messages also give an indication of gender-based differences LaFrance mentions that 'female students are quick enough to grasp those cues that indicate which behaviours are

desirable for them and which are not... In classroom interaction, lack of a supportive cue is taken as a negative feedback' (LaFrance 1991:11). Sadker's study (1985) in Columbia observes that in the classroom discussions boys dominate as they participate in more interactions than girls do. In addition, when a boy calls out to answer without raising hand the teacher acknowledges and responds while when girls do the same, teachers usually warns and asks not to repeat the same behaviour. Thus, the girls do not get equal opportunity to participate in the formal classroom interaction. The teachers do not respond appropriately to the verbal participation of girls and dismiss most of what the girls say (cited in LaFrance 1991:4-6).

French and French operationalise the concept of teacher attention 'to mean number of turns, the child gets to speak to the teacher'. Their findings suggest that boys get nearly four times as many turns as girls. Thus, they claim that there is a 'gender imbalance' in the turns at talk and in distribution of teacher attention (cited in Hammersley 1990:127). Similarly, Swann and Graddol examine the way in which turns at speaking are allocated in the classroom. They observed two sequences of classroom interaction; in one of them, the teacher discusses the results of experiments with pendulums. The teacher leads the question/answer session and pupils contribute answers without raising hands and without being selected by the teacher. The other sequence is a follow-up session to a television programme on coal mining. Here, the pupils raised hands to answer questions and are selected by the teacher (cited in Hammersley 1990:133). The findings of the research show that there is greater participation by boys than by girls. The boys engage actively in the 'competitive environment' of the classroom. According to Hammersley, in the pendulum sequence, the greater participation rates of boys show greater ability and willingness among boys to answer the questions while in the mining sequence; the teacher's bias in selection is obvious. Further, the quality of teacher attention is another important dimension, here the questions addressed to girls are rhetorical or yes/no kinds while boys are asked challenging and open variety questions. In the pendulum sequence, it is noticed that the 'gaze' of the teacher is an important non-verbal cue in assigning turns to pupils (Ibid 1990:134-136).

Play in a Primary School

Play is an important component of a child's activity and is necessary for the all-round development of the child. From the early years, girls and boys are diverted to play with different toys; this in turn acquaints them to future gender roles. Askew and Ross interviewed infant children in a racially mixed London primary school and asked them about their favourite activities, what toys they played with, how often they played, who played with them, how they used the toys and what interested them most. This study shows that 'most of the boys used Lego to make cars while girls made houses'. With reference to the 'home corner', while the boys pretended to be dogs and jumped around the room, the girls used the same space for conventional domestic activities. Overall, Askew and Ross say that 'in the classrooms, boys are involved in an individualistic way in processes of making, constructive play, and use space extensively. On the other hand, girls are involved in various forms of social play and restrictive use of space' (Askew and Ross 1988:18-19).

The conventional norms that children learn to follow are what they think as socially desirable, therefore even if their interests are otherwise they try to pursue what is acceptable. Reay shows that the inclination to conform to conventional sex role behaviour is exaggerated when others are present. For instance, in a study set in a playroom, Serbin (1978) states that 'children who play with cross-sex toys (boys with dishes and dolls, girls with trucks and airplanes) abandon them to others, that is sex-appropriate toys, when another child enters their play space' (cited in Reay 1990:38).

Askew and Ross say that boys dominate playground space and engage in active, physical pursuits' while girls occupy peripheries or the quiet playground space together with the smaller children. Boys occupy themselves in 'manipulative play' using large area and girls play games that do not require large space. In addition, in the playground, 'competitiveness' is visible in the activities of boys, which is also a 'source of motivation' for them. For instance, they are concerned as who finished the work soon or who could play well. The activities that require cooperation and are collective in nature feature competition for them. In contrast, girls always interact and collaborate for any activity. Further, there is a greater need among boys to identify activities as female or

male. This is done to take on a role in the activities considered to be male and avoid those viewed as female (Askew and Ross 1988:21-23).

Curriculum

This is one of the organizing elements in the school. It involves textbooks, storybooks, daily interaction with the teachers and the values, which the school inculcates in the children. Byrne said that the 'hidden curriculum' of the school is 'subtly different for girls because of the different interests that parents, nursery school teachers, and relatives encourage them to regard as feminine and acceptable' (1978:82).

Many studies have been conducted to identify how women are represented. Spender's study points to the 'invisibility' of women in primary school curriculum (cited in Chapman 1986:67). Studies on NCERT textbooks in India, find them to be male-oriented where women are invisible for instance, the ratio of boy-centered stories to girl-centered stories was 21:0 (Nambissan 1995:205). This invisibility of women is referred to, as 'symbolic annihilation... women are absent as actors in the histories of Western civilization' (MacDonald 1980:42). To illustrate gender bias in school subjects, Whyte (1983) says that females are absent in mathematics textbooks and mathematical problems serve to interest boys, consequently young children begin to regard mathematics as a 'male subject'. In the same way, history textbooks concentrate on 'male exploits', geography explains men working, for example, in mines (cited in Chapman 1986:67). Thus, the curriculum is designed to get the attention of boys; as a result, girls are neglected. The bias in curriculum is perceived not only in terms of gender; according to Foster sometimes racism combines with sexism. She says that girls in Britain grow to womanhood without coming to know about black women such as Sarojini Naidu who studied in Cambridge and became Governor of Uttar Pradesh later (Foster cited in Weiner 1985:45).

Women do not appear in active roles in such fields as history, politics, literature or drama. For instance, Kalia did content analysis of few Hindi and English textbooks used for classroom instruction in higher secondary sections of Northern Indian schools, the findings demonstrated women's representation in passive roles, further traditional notions about gender appropriate activities were reinforced by suggesting different

occupations for males and females (Kalia 1979:7,120). The school texts show 'women's inferiority, her lack of intelligence, ability, sense of adventure or creativity'. Women appear in low status jobs where their domesticity is emphasised, such as that of a nurse (MacDonald 1980:41-42).

Even, when women are represented, it is usually in a 'distorted' and stereotypical manner (MacDonald 1980:42). For instance, research done on children's books shows that out of 58 books examined, there were 25 female characters and 21 were wearing an apron (McRobbie and McCabe cited in Chapman 1986:67). Moreover, the studies undertaken in United States and Britain also show that when domestic science, literature is combined with University level disciplines such as sociology, psychology, a 'distorted model of woman' appears (MacDonald 1980:41-42).

Even in children's stories, such gender asymmetry is perceived, according to MacDonald. These stories give an understanding of the 'dominant discourses of gender'. For instance, Lobban's study on storybooks shows adult women in only eight occupations, such as mum, granny, princess whereas men were shown in around thirty-three occupations (MacDonald 1980:42).

However, the dominant discourses on gender are not passively accepted and there is resistance inherent in the attitude of children. This is shown in a study by Westland, which perceives the way children; both boys and girls respond to the gender stereotyped fairy tales.² On the basis of research done in five Cornish schools, it is stated that girls favour upside-down fairy tales where scenarios give independence to their heroines and the boys' favour traditional image of the prince for the same reason. Thus, girls are 'resisting readers' as they are able to criticise the gender images presented to them (Westland 1993:237-238).

In a primary school study, Davies and Banks focus on 'gender discourses', available to the children. They interviewed few children to get their opinion about 'gender order' and their place in it. They state that there is a correlation between 'accepting the dominant discourse on gender and acceptance of adult authority'. The

² In a study by Lieberman it is widely accepted that fairy tales as Snow-white, Sleeping Beauty have a damaging affect on the children as they serve to acculturate children to traditional sex roles and perpetuate myth of happy ever after marriage (Westland 1993).

findings suggest that children who believed that male/female are separate accepted 'adult authority'. This male/female dualism is linked to adult/child relationship where adults and male have authority and females have none. For instance, if a child perceives a feminist story as 'Princess Smarty pants'³ as one in which the male figures are central and heroic, then for this child maintenance of 'gender order' is essential. Whereas, a child who considers male/female as not so distinct and prefers stories in which heroic individuals struggle according to the plot without any consideration to fit into male/female categories, then it becomes obvious that this child does not accord importance to the gender order (1992: 6-7, 21-23).

Curriculum not only involves textbooks and storybooks, it also consists of teacher interactions. Using a post-structuralist framework, Davies points to the 'presence of a distinctive pattern of maleness and femaleness in a school setting'. She explains how teachers' 'discursive practices position girls such that the beliefs about the male-female dualism embedded in the curriculum become a lived reality'. She illustrates it through a lesson being taught to seven-year-old pupils, in which the teacher is teaching children about 'sex roles and equality between the sexes'. However, the teacher instead, taught them inequality as he explained how maternal instinct is common and paternal instinct is unheard of. Davies says that 'the fact that women possess this instinct became a biological fact with moral implications and locked women in the existing social order' (Davies 1989: 232-233).

³ **Feminist fairy tales:** Unlike, usual fairy tales, such as Sleeping Beauty or Snow-White, where the male played the role of a hero and the female was portrayed as passive, in the feminist fairy tales such as Prince Smarty pants, The Tough Princess, there was an attempt to provide varied and active roles to women to counteract the stereotypes of traditional stories. To illustrate with an example, the story of Prince Smarty pants mentions a prince that did not marry, the king and the queen told the prince to marry or he would be locked in the pink room. The Prince agreed to get married at last, on the condition that he would marry the princess who would be able to cross all obstacles, these were the wolf, the dragon and other horrible pets. Seven princesses came and all were to scare except one who was able to beat all the horrible pets, the Prince did not like this, and ran away. He killed himself and so did the princess and the prince never got rid of her (Davies 1992).

CO-EDUCATION VS. SINGLE-SEX SCHOOLS

The debate between coeducation⁴ as against single-sex schools has been an important one where gender equality in education is concerned. Coeducational schools are preferred and encouraged by proponents of equal opportunity as they provide common space for boys and girls to interact and share experiences. This is the liberal perspective framework, which favours equality of opportunity for all pupils by improving teaching methods and teaching strategies. According to Weiner, 'the advocates of coeducational schools supported this perspective' (Weiner 1985:vi). As has emerged in the foregoing discussion, schools are increasingly becoming spaces where girls are marginalised and are dominated upon. Supporters of single-sex schools with their theoretical base in radical feminism, stress that 'gender inequalities within education are seen to be a part of wider social pattern of inequalities between the sexes, with men playing the dominant roles'. It is held that 'advances by girls and women in education will be made only if boys and men give up their hold on the education system' (Ibid 1985:vii).

Radical feminists suggest that 'coeducation schools are not started to provide social solutions to girls lack of opportunities... Most of the early coeducation schools are either girls' schools, which admit few boys, or boys schools which admit girls' (Deem 1984:xiii-xiv). The advantages of coeducation schools are largely seen in terms of influence of girls on boys. For instance, coeducation schools are meant to help in reducing homosexuality among boys and in civilising the rough behaviour of boys. Further, it is felt that 'co-education leads to happy marriages and a wider choice of occupations for both sexes, it also offers varied educational experiences to either sexes'. Critics of coeducation schools argue that 'the interests of girls are sacrificed for those of boys in coeducation schools' (Ibid 1984:xiv). Radical feminists state that coeducation in primary schools becomes education for and on the behalf of boys. Thus, importance of girls' only groups in enhancing the communication possibilities of girls is realised. The single-sex groups in classrooms are a means of 'redressing the imbalance in terms of

⁴ Coeducation defined by Alice Woods in 1919 means that both sexes are taught most subjects in common without sex-segregation. She emphasizes that coeducation is to be distinguished from single-sex schooling, which segregates girls from boys socially and academically within the same building (Weiner 1985).

time, attention and space given to boys and girls, they also enhance a girl's self-esteem, which in turn helps in improving academic performance' (Reay 1990:38).

Intervention Strategies

A number of intervention strategies such as equal opportunity approach (girl-friendly) and anti-sexist approach (girl-centered) with grounding in liberal and radical feminism respectively seek to ameliorate the status of girls. Weiner contends that the concept of equal opportunity got 'official recognition in the 1944 Education Act', it holds that pupils are to be given the opportunity to realise their full potential. Gradually, in the 1950s and 60s, a class bias perceived in the education system shows that the working class children do not receive the full benefits of school education as the middle class children, of the same potential. Similarly, research suggests that female pupils (and teachers) are under-represented and ignored in schools. This gender inequality in education is directly related to the general subordination of women by men. Further, equality of opportunity suggests 'equal allocation of school resources and educational benefits, though no attempt is made to initiate positive discrimination in favour of girls, or to make up for past discriminatory experiences'. It encourages girls to move into 'male dominated areas of curriculum for example, science, technology, while boys are encouraged to take up subjects like Arts and Humanities to become more sensitive and caring' (Weiner 1985:6-7).

According to Weiner, the equal opportunity strategies suggested for educational change includes 'analysis of textbooks for stereotyping, reviewing aspects of school organisation, for example registers, assemblies, uniform and disciplinary methods; devising non-sexist courses and materials to change the stereotyped perceptions of girls and boys; establishing mixed sex equal opportunities working parties to develop and monitor school policy and establishing a single-sex grouping in certain subjects, that is science, mathematics and to encourage girls to achieve standards set by boys'. The principal aim of this approach is to promote girls and women to move into advantaged positions in existing educational institutions. It does not seek to bring any fundamental changes in schooling (Ibid 1985:8).

Anti-sexist Approach to Schooling

According to Weiner, there is a difference between 'egalitarians (those advocating equal opportunities) and the feminists (those advocating girl-centered education), while the former fail to address the relationship between patriarchy, power and women's subordination, the latter place it at the centre of their thinking'. The feminists are doubtful about the equal opportunity policies as they deny or ignored competing education (and economic) interests and criticise policies of educational change which fail to acknowledge the constant competition for power and control, between women and men, black people and white, and black and white class interests' (Ibid 1985:9-10).

Kruse argues in favour of 'equal worth' as against 'equal opportunity' and says that there is a need 'to work towards a transformation of society, its hierarchies of power and division of labour, this is to focus on abolishing the unequal power between men and women...Equal worth calls for political action on the basis of values and commitment that women have developed in the struggle against oppression, it states that formal rights, equal access or equal opportunities do not lead to equality'. Hansen and Orum observe that *Nothing is more unjust than to give equal rights to people who had been socialised to inequality* (cited in Kruse 1992: 96).

The central concern of radical feminists is to challenge sexism and discrimination in schooling and to place 'girls and women at the centre rather than at the periphery of the classroom...Their work in schools suggests inclusion of a curriculum to explain the past and present experiences of girls and women, developing a sense of solidarity with other members of their sex and a female-based confidence...Certain characteristics of present day schooling such as hierarchical school organization, competitiveness, are to be replaced by cooperation, egalitarianism and community feeling, feminist teachers, parents and pupils are to be aware of widespread oppression of women by men' (Weiner 1985:11).

According to Berge, most of the action research projects in Sweden initiated to encourage gender equity in schools adopt a liberal feminist orientation to change traditional gender patterns, such as 'creating similar conditions possible for each sex, helping students to cross traditional gender boundaries in choice of education and

occupation, changing girls and boys attitudes and behaviour and to provide equal amounts of time for work with traditional masculine or feminism activities'. Others had a more radical feminist approach, with a focus on differences between the sexes. These aim at 'radical changes in positions of power, and were devoted to consciousness-raising and to strengthen girls self-reliance through a single-sex group. The focus is on teachers teaching, girls and boys perception and experiences of teachers teaching, and gender relations in specific classroom contexts (Berge with Hildur Ve 2000:3-4).

Action Research

Using an anti-sexist approach related with radical feminism, Reay observes that a project undertaken to assess the impact of 'hidden curriculum' and 'sex stereotyping' in primary schools also tried to improve the achievement of girls. The study done in a school in North London attempts 'to broaden curriculum experience into non-stereotypical areas, for both boys and girls'. This was a single-sex initiative within coeducational schools to explore the 'issues of gendered subjectivity, male sexism and female depreciation'. For the study, the boys and girls were segregated into 'girls only' and 'boys only' groups for a year. Reay clarifies that in this project it became explicit that the boys perceived themselves to be innately superior' (Reay 1990:37). The findings of the study show that girls started to reclaim the space from the boys, and it improved their level of confidence. Their performance improved and they were able to assert themselves better in mixed groups. Finally, the projects succeeded in making girls learn that 'boys are not the best and girls are just as good as boys' (Ibid 1990:42).

A similar study conducted in Danish elementary, co-educational schools segregated girls and boys in certain subjects. The findings show that when girls got an opportunity to be in girls' only groups, in the beginning, they felt insecure and restrained, gradually they became assertive. Another point stated is that while the girls easily accommodated to this change and spent time on, building self-confidence, friendships, for boys this change was 'problematic' and was spent in 'conflict-solving'. Later, in a mixed setting it is realised that 'the empowering effect does not become obvious until girls have longer as well as frequent period in their own settings and on their own terms' (Kruse 1992:88-92).

Attempts are made in Sweden to change the pedagogical practices of pupils aged 8 to 13 years. According to Berge, action research, as a method of change is adopted to pursue 'feminist research in education'. Two concepts became visible in the project, that is 'moment of equity and moment of normalisation'. Moments of equity refer to 'occasions when one is aware that gender relations exist and can be transformed... While moments of normalisation refer to resistance to such attempts to redefine masculinity and femininity or normal gender relations in the classroom (Berge with Hildur Ve 2000:32). For instance, when a girl claims space in the classroom, the teacher says that 'she was a real nuisance'. This response to her shows 'moments of normalisation' (Ibid 2000:37). The project also aims to analyse whether normalising aspects of dominant discourses subvert equity pedagogy. The process through which gender is constituted is discussed from a post-structuralist framework. Feminist post-structuralism highlights the 'possibilities for individual through critical thinking to resist and change conventional gender power relations, as in classroom' (Ibid 2000:4-5).

To illustrate with an example, Berge states that in Eva's classroom action research for gender equity is initiated with children in the age group of 7-10 years. During a lesson, Eva highlights how girls and boys, men and women are treated differently in the world. Through this, she ensures her support to girls and interrupts boys in their domination of the classroom. She tries to make the unequal power relations visible (Berge with Hildur Ve 2000:55-56). Similarly, while teaching another lesson about birds and their behaviour, she mentions that the mother bird and the father bird help each other with in the kids, suggesting that men also play a caring role. Further, she tries to make girls learn to limit their caring duties and refuse firmly and. She also organises single sex classes (Ibid 2000:58). During mixed sex classes, she tries to give equal space to boys and girls and gives every second question to girls (Ibid 2000:59-60).

Later, during interviews, girls supported the school's equity policy and recognised changes in the classroom in their favour (Berge with Hildur Ve 2000:60-62). The boys suggested their understanding of men's/boy's domination and knew why Eva wanted single-sex groups, during some lessons. They realised that when boys and girls are together, the girls often do not speak up. Furthermore, when some boys were asked to write what about an ordinary weekend 20 years ahead, they described themselves as

taking an active role in housework and child caring. Thus, both girls and boys in Eva's classroom became aware of hierarchy and segregation between sexes in schools. In terms of equity, girls suggested that they understand that they have to challenge subordination by pursuing a career. On the other hand, boys said that moments of equity are when girls and boys are kind to each other (Ibid 2000:62-63).

Teachers' Initiatives

Teachers have also taken up gender concerns. In a London school, using an anti-sexist approach to gender, teachers make it clear that they prefer Ms to Mrs. or Miss in order to cancel out the view that women are to be defined according to their relationship with men (Ord and Quigley 1985:109). Gradually, the teachers make an effort to increase staff awareness towards sexism and bring about curricular change. They cancel an option between home economics and technology and organise single-sex groups in certain subjects. In addition, books are chosen with strong female characters, classroom tasks are equally allocated to boys and girls (girls helped in lifting furniture), the non-sexist language is avoided in school correspondence such as headmaster, chairman; it is also observed what became of boys and girls after they left school. Further, teachers state that girls be allowed to wear trousers throughout the year, these claims were accepted after resistance (Ibid 1985:110-111). In the process, girls also learn to assert and contradict the boys and claim single sex groups for discussions on sensitive issues, such as abortion (Ibid 1985:117).

The above section focuses on the socialisation process in two institutions, the family and the school. Within the family, children learn about gender so that the school strengthens this gender identity further, through teachers, curriculum and other organisational practices. Girls and boys become gender subjects where boys take up the dominant position and girls learn to be dominated. Different strategies are devised to help boys and girls overcome this gendered socialisation, these include equal opportunity and equal worth (anti-sexist) approaches. The State also endeavours to frame policies and implement the same to help women/girls gain their rightful status.

POLICY

Policies are instruments framed and implemented by the State to attain certain, specific predetermined goals and objectives. Equal opportunities policies, using liberal feminist perspective have been implemented in various countries on a large scale to make work, family and school environment conducive, and equal to women. In the case of United Kingdom, Rees argues that from the beginning there has been an attempt to incorporate equal opportunity measures in the legislation, for instance, in 1975 the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) was set up to ensure that schools and Local Educational Authorities work against sex discrimination. However, in the course of time, it became obvious that 'despite the legislative and institutional progress made to recognize and redress some forms of discrimination and disadvantage, it remains clear that gender and ethnic origins continue to profoundly impact education, training, pay and other life chances of an individual' (Rees 1999:165-183).

The example of Sweden is significant. According to Elgqvist-Saltzman 'in 1968, Sweden became the first country in the world where the government introduced a series of policies to achieve equality by changing the role of men as well as that of women... The Swedish equality efforts seek to strengthen women's position in the labour market and men's position in the home'. In 1990, the Swedish goal of Equality was redefined to mean 'equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men; to have work that provides economic independence, to care for children and home; and to participate in political, union and other activities in society'. This goal includes a 'quantitative' and 'qualitative content', the quantitative aspect implies 'an equitable distribution of women and men in all arenas of society such as educational, recreational activities and positions of power and the qualitative aspect implies that the knowledge, experiences of both women and men are used to enrich and affect the development within all spheres of society'. In this policy, 'education is regarded as the main road to an equal society where everybody is supposed to share in the social, cultural benefits that an expanding society offers its citizens'. This educational policy defines "straight roads" for women by making the system equitable still, women experience "winding tracks" as they have to combine education with work and family (Elgqvist-Saltzman 1992:41-42). Thus, it is realised that there is still a long way to go before gender equality is achieved.

Due to the shortcomings of equal opportunity policy, there arises a need to review other strategies designed to attain equality. Rees reviews the three approaches to equal opportunities that are equal treatment, positive action and mainstreaming equality. Equal treatment legislation includes, for instance, 'the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919', which provides access to women in certain professions where earlier access is denied to them, for example, 'in the Universities, even after successfully finishing the degrees women are denied the right to graduate'. Similarly, in the 1970s, the 'Equal Pay Act' was introduced, still it is realised that there are 'differences between men and women' which cannot be ignored. Men tend to work in an uninterrupted manner from the time of finishing education till retirement while women are responsible for domestic and caring work so they have to take breaks, in the course of their work. Thus, Rees concludes that equal treatment does not lead to equal outcomes; this leads to the notion of positive action (Rees 1999:169-170).

The positive action approach, according to Rees, seeks to create opportunities for women to make-up for those, which they have lost due to their gender. In the work sphere, there are 'positive action measures as flexible hours, quotas (women to be recruited, where they are under-represented) and part-time work'. Still, these measures also have their own limitations as they make women feel as 'special objects despite proven efficacy' (Rees 1999:170-171). These concerns make way for the need to 'mainstream equality', which is about 'integrating equality into all policies, programmes and actions, from the earliest stage of their formulation to their implementation and review' (Ibid 1999:165). This approach is a more radical one, in terms of attaining gender equality (Ibid 1999:175). It is rooted in the post-modern approach of valuing diversity and difference, at the same time challenging male-centered ways of seeing and doing, mainstreaming seeks to accommodate differences between men and women (Ibid 1999:173). The strategies adopted include a re-examination of 'public policy and practices, and recognising differences and diversity'. Rees shows that in United Kingdom, mainstreaming is adopted in the policy papers in the National Agenda for Action and even, the European Union (E U) has adopted mainstreaming as a strategic approach. Further, this approach is effective when adopted in conjunction with equal treatment legislation or positive action measures (Ibid 1999:165-166).

Overall, from the above analysis it seems that various countries (Developed ones) are introducing equal opportunity measures to ensure equality to girls/women and are even combining these equal opportunity programmes with other strategies such as 'mainstreaming' to attain positive results in the arenas of education and occupation. There is a need to focus on the present situation of girls in India with a focus on policy dimensions adopted to make provisions for further changes to promote them.

Girl's Education in India's Policy Perspective

Girls' education is a priority area in India and various policies and programmes have been framed to encourage it. The National Policies play a pivotal role as they decide the strategy to be adopted in reaching the goals. According to Nayar, 'the National policies are designed to reach out to girls and other disadvantaged groups in remote areas' (2001:9). She further states that there has been major policy shifts in the field of girl's education, such as 'from macro, centralised planning to decentralised micro-planning with people's participation, from welfare to development and, finally to empowerment, from seeing girl's education as a moral commitment to seeing it as a sound investment, and from manpower/human capital to human resource development; to human development and human rights' (Nayar 2001:10-11).

Since independence, various committees and commissions have been set up to review the nature of the education of girls, and highlight the intervention areas. The Durgabai Deshmukh Committee on Education of Women (1959) made an important contribution. The Committee made the following recommendations to promote primary education among girls: 'coeducation to be adopted at the primary stage as a general policy, the need to appoint school mothers in coeducational schools where there were no women teachers, the opening of crèches as a number of girls were not sent to school by their parents because they had to look after the younger children while their parents went to work, thus the girls could attend schools only if there were alternate arrangements for looking after the children, and the need to educate public opinion to lessen social prejudice against women's education, organisation of enrolment drives, Women's Education Days, Weeks and Rallies and use of Audio-Visual aids were some of the

means suggested to arouse favorable public opinion regarding the education of girls' (Report of the National Committee on Women's Education 1959:52-54).

The Education Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. Kothari suggested that the approach for the growth of girl's education 'should emphasise special programmes recommended by the National Committee on Women's Education and should give attention to the education of girls at all stages'. Further, in accordance with the recommendations of National Committee on Women's Education, the Education Commission suggested that there should be 'a common curriculum for girls and boys till class X and options should be equally provided to them'. Likewise, it suggested, options such as Music, Fine Arts and Home science for girls (not to be made compulsory) at Secondary and Higher Secondary stages. In addition, girls should be encouraged to opt for Mathematics and Science at Secondary stage and beyond, for this efforts should be made to prepare women teachers to teach these subjects (1964-66: 123,189).

The National Policy on Education 1968 emphasised that 'the education of girls should receive emphasis, not only on grounds of social justice, but also because it accelerates social transformation' (1968: 5). Further, in 1974, the Committee on the Status of Women in India following an equal opportunity approach like other policies mentioned, recommended 'provision of primary schools within walking distance from home, adoption of a system of part-time education for girls who cannot attend school continuously on a full-time basis, provision of sibling care in every school and multiple entry system for girls who could not attend schools earlier or had to leave school before becoming functionally literate' (1974: 274, 278). On the whole, in the 1970s attention was drawn to the way education was organised for boys and girls. However, only in the 1990s, education was perceived to be an instrument to empower women.

The National policy on Education 1986 focused on revising curricula and training teachers, administrators to be sensitive to gender concerns. It also seeks to provide vocational, technical education to girls at various levels to make them self-sufficient. Further, Nayar observed that this policy 'is unlike earlier approaches such as the National Policy Resolution on Child (1974), which see child as a gender neutral category and ignores the need for segregated targets and strategies for reaching out education and

health services to girls in gender discriminatory cultures' (Nayar 2001:30). The National Policy on Education 1986 emphasises the 'equal opportunity and social justice approach and expected education to become an instrument of women's equality and empowerment' (Ibid 2001:9). The box below consists recommendations suggested in the policy with the objective of providing equal opportunities to girls /women in education, to empower them.

Box 3.1: National Policy on Education, 1986

Education for Women's Equality

- 4.2 Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past, there will be a well-conceived edge in favour of women. The National Education system will play a positive, interventionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, textbooks, the training and orientation of teachers, decision makers and administrators, and the active involvement of educational institutions. This will be an act of faith and social engineering. Women's studies will be promoted as a part of various courses and educational institutions encouraged to take up active programmes to further women's development.
- 4.3 The removal of women's illiteracy and obstacles inhibiting their access and retention in, elementary education will receive overriding priority, through provision of special support services, setting of time targets, and effective monitoring. Major emphasis will be laid on women's participation in vocational, technical and professional education at different levels. The policy of non-discrimination will be pursued vigorously to eliminate sex stereotyping in vocational and professional courses and to promote women's participation in traditional occupations, as well as in existing and emergent technologies.

National Policy on Education 1986: 6

The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was initiated in 1994 in accordance with the policy guidelines of National Policy on Education, 1986. It is

currently operational in 18 States⁵ and 271 Districts. It concentrates on problems of access, retention and achievement levels. It tries to 'create community demand for girls' education as well as enabling conditions for greater participation' (2002: 4-5). It was initiated in districts where rural female literacy was below national average of 39 percent in 1991. It is to be noted that these low female literacy districts have shown maximum gains in literacy levels, especially in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. Likewise, the share of girls' to total enrolment in very low female districts has increased from 43.8 percent in 1995-96 to 46.7 percent in 1998-99 (Aggarwal cited in Ramachandaran 2002: 42).

The strategies adopted include 'provision of free textbooks, scholarships and escort services for girls to encourage enrolment and reduce absenteeism, also engendering curriculum and pedagogy, disseminating gender sensitive teaching learning material to eliminate gender bias in textbooks, integrating gender component in teachers' training, and introducing girl friendly classroom processes. However, Ramachandaran states that the impact of these initiatives has been limited and suggests that the classroom processes studied have not been sensitive to gender issues (Ibid 2002: 64-66).

II

EDUCATIONAL SITUATION OF GIRLS IN INDIA

This section specifically looks at elementary education. In 1997-8, there were 109 million children enrolled in the primary grades, classes I-V, 39.5 million in classes VI-VIII and 27.3 million in classes IX-XII. Girls formed 43.62 per cent of those enrolled at the primary level, 40.12 per cent at the middle stage and 37.09 at the higher/higher secondary stage (Nayar 2002:36). This shows gender gap in education, which increases with subsequent levels of education.

⁵ These States are Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, and West Bengal.

Enrolment and Attendance in School

Table 3.1 presents gross enrolment ratios.⁶ As seen in the table, overall, the gross enrolment ratios have increased from 42.6 in 1950-1 to 95.7 in 2000-01 at the primary level and at the upper primary level from 12.7 in 1950-1 in to 58.6 in 2000-01. The increase in gross enrolment ratios is far more significant at the primary state compared to the upper primary state, which shows that enrolment of children at this level has a long way to go. Further, the gross enrolment ratios for boys are higher than that for girls in grades I-V. At the upper primary stage, the gender disparity is far greater. In the year 2000-01, whereas the gross enrolment ratio for boys is 66.7, for girls it is only 49.9.

Table 3.1: Gross Enrolment Ratios (GER), 1950-51 to 2000-01

Year	Primary (I-V)			Upper Primary (VI-VIII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1950-1	60.6	24.8	42.6	20.6	4.6	12.7
1960-1	82.6	41.4	62.4	33.2	11.3	22.5
1970-1	95.5	60.5	78.6	46.5	20.8	33.4
1980-1	95.8	64.1	80.5	54.3	28.6	41.9
1990-1	114.0	85.5	100.1	76.6	47.0	62.1
1995-6	97.1	79.4	88.6	67.8	49.8	59.3
1998-9 *	100.9	82.9	92.1	65.3	49.1	57.6
2000-1 *	104.9	85.9	95.7	66.7	49.9	58.6

* Provisional

(Source: Sub-table-IX, Selected Educational Statistics, 2002, p.61)

Age specific attendance rates present a clearer idea of the proportion of children actually availing of schools. Table 3.2 presents percentage of children attending schools according to age, gender and residence. In the age group 6-10 years, the overall

⁶ The Gross Enrolment Ratio is defined as the percentage of enrolment in the primary (classes I-V) and Upper primary (classes VI-VIII) to the estimated child population in the age group, 6 to below 11 years and 11 to below 14 years respectively.

percentage of male child attending schools is 85.2, which is greater than the overall percentage of female child that is 78.3. Similarly, on the whole, in the subsequent age groups the gender disparity in attendance rates increases, as the table below shows. There are also urban/rural differences for instance in the age group 6-14 years, the percentage of urban female child attending schools is 86.3 and the percentage of rural female child attending schools is only 69.7.

It is noted that gender disparity in school attendance rates increases with age. In the age group 6-10 years, there are 91.7 percent urban males attending schools and there are only 89.1 percent urban females of that age attending schools. Further in the age group 11-14 years while the percentage of urban male child attending schools is 85.1, for urban female child attending schools, the percentage is 82.8. This pattern of gender inequality is visible throughout; the percentage of rural female child attending schools is less in all age groups, as the table below shows.

Table 3.2: Percentage of household population attending school by age, gender and residence, India, 1998-99

Age (In years)	Males (in %)			Females (in %)		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
6-10	91.7	83.2	85.2	89.1	75.1	78.3
11-14	85.1	78.5	80.2	82.8	61.6	67.0
6-14	88.7	81.4	83.1	86.3	69.7	73.7
6-17	83.0	75.8	77.6	80.0	61.7	66.2

(Source: National Family Health Survey 2000, p.33)

Drop-out Rates

Dropout rates indicate the number of children in all, and boys/girls separately, who leave school before completing a particular stage of education. Table 3.3 shows that overall the dropout rate for primary stage class has gone down from 64.9 percent in 1960-1 to 40.7 percent in 2000-01. At the elementary stage (which includes classes VI-VIII), the dropout

has fallen from 78.3 percent in 1960-1 to 53.7 percent in 2000-01. On the whole, the number of dropouts at the elementary level is more than at the primary level.

It is also important to emphasise that the gender gap persists at both primary and elementary stages, as seen in the table below. Within the primary level, in the case of boys, the rate of dropouts has gone down from 61.7 percent in 1960-61 to 39.7 percent in 2000-01. With respect to girls, the dropout rate at the primary level has gone down from 70.9 percent in 1960-61 to 41.9 percent in 2000-01. This shows that the proportion of dropouts among boys is less than that among girls. This pattern of high dropout rates among girls is repeated at the upper primary level as well.

Table 3.3: Dropout Rates at Primary and Elementary Stages, 1960-61 to 2000-01

	1960-1	1970-1	1980-1	1990-1	1992-3	1999-00*	2000-01*
Classes I-V							
Boys	61.7	64.5	56.2	40.1	43.8	38.7	39.7
Girls	70.9	70.9	62.5	46.0	46.7	42.3	41.9
Total	64.9	67.0	58.7	42.6	45.0	40.3	40.7
Classes I-VIII							
Boys	75.0	74.6	68.0	59.1	58.2	52.0	50.3
Girls	85.0	83.4	79.4	65.1	65.2	58.0	57.7
Total	78.3	77.9	72.7	60.9	61.1	54.5	53.7

(Source: Sub-table-XII, Selected Educational Statistics, 2002, p.68)

GENDER IN CLASSROOMS

Classrooms are spaces where gender forms an essential component of interactions between pupils and teacher interactions with pupils. Gender is used to organise children. Bhattacharjee⁷ observes that girls and boys make separate lines, sit separately and are

⁷ Bhattacharjee did a study in two classes of standard IV, in a municipal primary school in Baroda for one year using participant observation in 1994-95.

even listed separately on registers; further, gender restrictions are imposed on group games, as well (1999: 339-340). Madan also states that in Lalitpur District (Uttar Pradesh) it is seen that *ling bhed* is maintained by seating boys/girls separately (cited in Ramachandaran 2002: 105). Even punishment is defined by gender; a common form of punishment in schools is 'making the boy sit with a girl so that both feel embarrassed at crossing the gender divide' (Nambissan 1995:204). Similarly, in Shahdol District (Madhya Pradesh), 'girls were assumed to be incapable of learning and were not given much attention by the teacher' (cited in Ramachandaran 2002: 105-106).

Researchers have suggested various interventions to equalise opportunities in the classrooms. Nambissan and Paranjpe⁸ suggest the need to strengthen the role of teachers in overcoming gender segregation in schools. For this, gender concerns have to be integrated in teacher training also teachers' have to realise that favouritism on the basis of gender exists in the classroom and they have to initiate strategies to overcome it (1995: 207; 1995:77). However, Nambissan states that 'such interventions are confined to western societies and there is still not much attention given to the Indian situation...The research on the issue of gender in classrooms pertains mainly in countries such as Britain and United States of America. In India, classroom processes are still a neglected area of research' (1995:207). These concerns draw attention to the next chapter, which is based on a fieldwork done in a primary school. It highlights how gender identities are formed in the context of the classroom /school.

⁸ Paranjpe (1995) did a study in a coeducational public school in New Delhi, using the method of non-participant observation. She observed classes I to V for a period of two months.

Chapter IV

GENDER RELATIONS IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY

This chapter presents findings of an exploratory study of gender relations carried out in a primary school in Delhi. It attempts to highlight the way gender is used as an organisational category in school. The study is based on two months of fieldwork, that is, the months of January and February, in a Kendriya Vidyalaya located in Delhi. In the hierarchy of schools Kendriya Vidyalayas are placed well above the schools run by Municipal Corporation of Delhi and Delhi Government. The main objective of the study was to understand how school practices and classroom processes influence gender roles and gender identities. This involved a study of classrooms, play, curricular/ extra-curricular activities and patterns of interaction.¹

The discussion that follows is divided into two parts. The first one discusses Kendriya Vidyalayas, in general and school² studied, in particular. The second part focuses on how gender as a category is used as an organising principle in assignment of tasks, discipline and classroom management. The hidden curriculum, which becomes obvious in teacher attitudes and pedagogical practices, also highlights gender divisions. It seeks to understand how practices within the school construct femininity/ masculinity and in the process define 'the hidden curriculum of gender'.

I

THE KENDRIYA VIDYALAYAS

Kendriya Vidyalayas have been set up for the benefit of the children of Central government employees including defence personnel liable to frequent transfers. In 1962, Central schools Organisation was started as a unit of Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government of India. Later on, in 1965 an autonomous body namely, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan took over the task of opening and managing Central School, that is, Kendriya Vidyalaya (Annual Report of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan 2003: 43). In 1963-64, there were only 20 Kendriya Vidyalayas and by March 2002 these had increased to 849, in all. In the same year, the total number of students enrolled was

¹ With regard to methodology, as already mentioned, one section of Class IV was observed for 20-25 days. Subsequently other sections were also observed in the remaining days. Informal interviews with two teachers and Head Mistress were also conducted. Discussion was also held with groups of children.

²The school will be referred to, as the Vidyalaya, in this chapter.

7,20,120, of these 4,05,381 or 56.29 per cent were boys and 3,14,739 or 43.71 per cent were girls (Ibid 2003: 50; GOI 2003:112-114).

The Kendriya Vidyalayas operate with the objective of attaining excellence in School Education. They use a bilingual medium of instruction, which includes, both English and Hindi. They are affiliated to the Central Board of Secondary Education; some Kendriya Vidyalayas such as in the States of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are also affiliated with State Boards at +2 level. In addition, tuition fees are not charged from boys up to class VIII and for girls and Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe students up to class XII. In these schools, 15 per cent of seats are reserved for Scheduled Caste and 7.5 per cent for Scheduled Tribe, in all-fresh admissions. Also, 3 per cent seats are 'horizontally reserved'³ for handicapped children (Annual Report of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan 2003:43, 50). In order to encourage girls, special provision is made whereby thirty percent of seats are reserved for them (Nayar 2001:46).

The Kendriya Vidyalayas are also opened in Public Sector Undertakings or in Institutions of Higher Learning; these schools are referred to as Project Schools. Table 4.1 shows the distribution of the project schools. Here, the concerned Public Sector Undertaking or the Institution of Higher Learning bears all recurring and non-recurring expenditure on the proposed school, besides making available free of cost suitable land and building for housing the Vidyalaya. As a result, children of the sponsoring Public Sector Undertaking or the Institution of Higher Learning get the first priority in the matter of admission and children belonging to other eligible categories of Civil and Defence employees are considered later for available seats. This table shows the distribution of Kendriya Vidyalayas in various sectors, such as defence, civil, public sector undertaking and the institution of higher learning. A decrease in the number of Kendriya Vidyalayas is recorded in public sector undertaking over the years; otherwise the number of Kendriya Vidyalayas has remained consistent.

³ Horizontal reservation means that 3 percent of 15 per cent is reserved for handicapped children of the Scheduled Caste, 3 per cent of 7.5 per cent is reserved for handicapped children of the Scheduled Tribe and 3 per cent of 77.5 per cent is reserved for handicapped children of General categories (Annual report of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan 2003).

Table 4.1: Sector-wise distribution of Kendriya Vidyalayas 1999-2002, India

S.No.	Sector	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002
1.	Defence	358	351	351
2.	Civil	349	354	355
3.	PSU*	146	130	125
4.	IHL**	18	19	18
	Total	871	854	849

*Public Sector Undertaking

**Institution of Higher Learning

(Source: Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, Annual Report, 2003, 47).

It is important to study the staff structure of Kendriya Vidyalaya to understand the way teaching as a profession is gender-stereotyped. There are certain fields such as music where more females than males get recruited as teachers. As seen in table 4.2 below, the Kendriya Vidyalayas staff comprises of around 53 per cent males and 47 per cent females. However, a large percentage of females around 75 per cent occupy the primary level either as teachers or as Head Masters. It is also interesting to note that a male status term that is 'Headmaster' is used to refer to women, occupying this authority position. Very few women are in leadership position such as that of the Principal (only 21 percent). Such a pattern seems obvious in Acker's research as well. She states that most of the teachers and head teachers of infant and primary schools are women since women are more likely to teach younger children unlike men who teach the older ones. She questions this 'sexual division of labour in teaching' and the way it places women at a 'disadvantageous position' (1994:75-76).

Table 4.2: The Distribution of male/female staff of Kendriya Vidyalayas as on March 31st, 2002

S No.	Name of Post	Male	%age	Female	%age	Total
1.	Principal	618	79	164	21	782
2.	Vice-Principal	91	58	66	42	157
3.	Head Master	46	17.8	212	82.2	258
4.	PGT	2955	54.8	2441	45.2	5396
5.	TGT	3967	43.7	5108	56.3	9075
6.	PRT	2708	25.2	8037	74.8	10745
7.	Music Teacher	310	37.9	507	62.1	817
8.	PET*	716	78.2	199	21.8	915
9.	Dr. Tr.**	430	76.2	134	23.8	564
10.	SUPW Tr.	666	69.3	295	30.7	961
11.	Yoga Tr.	195	72.8	73	27.2	268
12.	Librarian	476	61.8	294	38.2	770
13.	Office Staff***	7524	88.8	949	11.2	8473
	Total	20702	52.8	18479	47.2	39181

*Physical Education Teacher

**Drawing teacher

***Office Staff includes hostel staff and group 'D' employees

(Source: Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, 2003, Annual Report, p. 51)

THE CASE STUDY

This is an exploratory study of gender relations, done in a primary branch of a Kendriya Vidyalaya. It is located in the campus of an Institution of Higher Learning. This is a Project School. The Institution of Higher Learning provides the basic infrastructure. The middle /secondary school is located, at a distance in the same campus. There is not much

interaction between the children studying in these two branches, except on special occasions such as Republic Day celebrations.

Basic Infrastructure and Facilities

The Primary school is a large building. It has well-constructed classrooms with corridors outside. There is ample space to move around the school and a sizeable area is in possession of the school. This school has a compound wall covering only one side; the other side opens into a big field. There are eighteen rooms and of these, ten are classrooms. Each Class has two sections. The rooms are well ventilated and have sufficient natural and artificial light. The desks and chairs are arranged in rows giving space to the children to move around. For classes I, and II the tables are large enough to accommodate five children and there are five such tables in a class. These tables and chairs are appropriate for children of this age. From class III onwards, each child gets a desk and a chair to do the work.⁴ The classrooms have one cupboard each, in which the class teacher keeps teaching aids, note-copies, storybooks and charts made by students and the teacher themselves. All the classes have a blackboard and several charts, which are informative in nature; these charts are put on the wall.

The Vidyalaya has other rooms as well such as, the music room in which the children learn both dance and music. Also, a bed is kept in one corner so that any child, if unwell can rest. There is an SUPW⁵ room, where the craft works of children are displayed. Apart from this, there is a Junior Science Laboratory, which is not functional and is used as a storeroom. The computer room⁶ has no computers and is kept locked. In the staff room, there is a small blackboard on which the number of teachers absent on any day is written. There are separate toilets for boys and girls, placed adjacent to each other. These toilets smell most of the time. However, a sweeper comes to clean them, at least once in a day.

⁴ In some classrooms, the furniture was inconvenient as either the desks were too high or the chairs were too low. On being asked, one of the teachers said that there was insufficient furniture and the children had to manage with whatever the school had.

⁵ SUPW: This is an abbreviation of Socially Useful Productive Work. The teacher taught children how to make items out of waste products as using a fused bulb to make the face of an old man. The school had a room, where such items made by the children were kept.

⁶ A child said that soon two computers were going to get installed in the room as their teacher had said that few of their lawn tennis classes would be converted into computer classes.

A big field serves as a playground. This has a cemented patch, which is used to play Lawn tennis. There are many swings and slides. There is a basket ball net attached to the wall, for younger children. Two Lawn Tennis coaches have been appointed on contractual basis for the primary school and the middle /secondary School.⁷ The coach refers to Lawn Tennis as 'Mini Tennis'. This is because the school does not have an appropriate court to play the game and it is only an arrangement made to acquaint the children with the game. The school has other accessory items, which are required to play this game, such as rackets, balls and the net.

Some children have their homes close by, so their parents come to take them back from school. Others went back in autos, hired by the parents for the purpose. The children of the defence personnel come in a bus. If any child is left unescorted, the gatekeeper makes necessary arrangements for the child. The Primary school does not have a tuck shop or a canteen. According to the Head Mistress, it existed some time ago and was made to close down, as there was complaint of stale food. The children bring food from home to have it in the lunch interval. The teachers make tea themselves or rely on the near-by *dhaba* for snacks. The middle /secondary school has a tuck shop.

Children of the Vidyalaya

Children are admitted to the School, that is, to class I at the age of five and a relaxation of maximum two years is given so that by the time they reach class V they are nine to eleven years old. The teachers are of the view that many parents keep their children in the village till the age of five and only later bring them to this school for admission. The children are sure to be taken in because this is a project school for employees of the concerned institution.

In all, there were 308 students enrolled in the Vidyalaya in the year 2002-2003. As seen in the table below, there were 129 girls (41.9 percent) and 179 boys (58.1

⁷ The coach in the primary school said that Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan had entered into a contract with a Lawn Tennis Academy situated in Delhi. This academy provided coaches for various Kendriya Vidyalaya schools and reimbursed the coaches. Further, each child had to contribute ten rupees in a month.

percent). The proportion of girls was relatively uniform in all the classes. Most of the girls in this Vidyalaya belonged to the General category (44.8 per cent). Subsequently, there were more girls belonging to Scheduled Caste (34.2 per cent) than Scheduled Tribe (33.3 per cent). What seems interesting to note is that in each category, there were more girls enrolled in class I than in class V. Further, there were few children belonging to Other Backward Classes as well (which have not been mentioned in the table below).⁸

Table 4.3: Percentage of Girls in each class/category in the Vidyalaya in 2002-2003

Classes	General			Scheduled Castes			Scheduled Tribe			All		
	Total	Girls	%age*	Total	Girls	%age	Total	Girls	%age	Total	Girls	%age
Class I	41	20	48.8	11	4	36.4	5	2	40	57	26	45.6
Class II	45	17	37.8	16	7	43.8	0	0	0	61	24	39.3
Class III	49	22	44.9	12	3	25	1	0	0	62	25	40.3
Class IV	45	20	44.4	20	8	40	0	0	0	65	28	43.1
Class V	43	21	48.8	17	4	23.5	3	1	33.3	63	26	41.3
Total	223	100	44.8	76	26	34.2	9	3	33.3	308	129	41.9

(Source: Information collected from class registers)

The children of the Vidyalaya come from lower middle class background and their mothers are usually housewives, just literates and not highly qualified and fathers are employed in the Institution of Higher Learning, as a class III and IV Central Government Employee. Except few fathers, most are school educated. On the whole, parents have attained only modest levels of education.⁹

School Organisation¹⁰

This school has sixteen teachers including the Head Mistress. Two teachers are recruited on casual basis, that is, their services are requisitioned when any permanent teacher is on leave. There is also a lawn tennis instructor. All fifteen teachers are women and have a

⁸ There were three Other Backward Classes children, one girl and two boys.

⁹ This information was obtained from the interviews conducted with the teachers.

¹⁰ This section is based on interviews with teachers.

Bachelor's degree (B.A.) with a Bachelor's in Education (B.Ed.).¹¹ Only, the lawn tennis instructor is a male. Teachers in the Vidyalaya have fairly long years of service, and come from relatively well-educated family background as compared to students. Two teachers and the Head Mistress interviewed also had long years of service and their children were pursuing higher education or were working in high status professions such as medicine, management.¹²

According to the Head Mistress, the Kendriya Vidyalaya maintains a norm of not more than thirty-five pupils in any class. In this school, the teacher pupil ratio in different classes varies from twenty-seven to thirty-four. According to the Head mistress, this ensures quality attention to the children by the teacher. The Vidyalaya is held for around six hours each day. During summer's, it starts at 7:30 a.m. and gets over by 1:40 p.m. while during winters; it starts at 8 a.m. and gets over by 2:10 p.m. There are eight periods held everyday, of roughly thirty minutes each, in addition to the Morning Assembly and the Lunch Break, which constitute an hour. Each teacher has to take thirty-six classes in a week and the Head Mistress takes only eighteen classes. When there are few teachers on any day, one teacher is assigned a particular class for the whole day.

A pupil is to have a minimum attendance of 75 per cent of the total attendance of the academic session to take the annual examination (Student Diary, 2001-02:19). The class teacher takes attendance twice in a day.¹³ The first one is just before the morning assembly and the second one is after the lunch interval.¹⁴ Also, month wise aggregate attendance is calculated for each child. Transfer cases as well the children struck off the roll due to non-payment of fees are also regularly recorded.

¹¹ A teacher said that in Kendriya Vidyalaya Schools, the transfer of the teacher was in the hands of the Principal. The Kendriya Vidyalaya Teachers' Union was dissolved and the teachers were not able to voice their demands. Sometimes, the teachers were transferred after every five years, which caused them inconvenience.

¹² The Vidyalaya also had one Group D employee (peon), a gardener, a sweeper and two guards. They kept vigil on the children during lunch interval. The peon ran errands to the middle/ secondary school and took the circular to the teachers to get their signatures.

¹³ In the register, the names of boys and girls were written in different colours, if the names of boys were written in blue, the names of girls were written in red.

¹⁴ The guardians sometimes took their children during the lunch interval. The teachers never encouraged it and always asked children to take permission from the Head Mistress.

Perspective on Gender and Education

The policy of the Vidyalaya states the importance of equal opportunity for boys and girls and encourages mixed groups in most activities. The Head Mistress and two teachers on being asked about their views on gender inequality emphasised that the question of equal opportunities to boys and girls was *not* a problem in the primary schools. At this stage, gender issues did not need much attention. Further, there was no exposure of the teachers to the issues related to the education of the girl child in any course, pre-service or in-service.¹⁵ A teacher of class I, repeatedly said that 'she had never thought, on these lines'. This relates to what Acker discusses on innovative ethnography of a primary teacher-training course where Skelton (1985) reports that, 'gender (on the face of it) is a non-issue... One of the tutors said that it was interesting that you have said that, I had never thought about it' (1994:94).

Teacher's opinion on parent's attitude to education suggests that girl's education still shares a contested terrain. Concerns of marriage influence their education. If girls study, it is for a good 'match'. The Head Mistress also said that when parents educate their daughters they do so in order that if their daughter gets into a profession, she will get a good 'match'. On the other hand, if girls were not allowed to study it was to get them married. For instance, when a teacher informed a father that his daughter was not doing well in class II, his main concern was to marry her off after she got a pass certificate in class V. *Father: Kisi tarah class V kar le, phir to shaadi kar deni hai, Certificate to mil hi jayega!* (Let her finish class V at least and then I will get her married, in any case she will get the certificate).

Further, according to a teacher, girls and boys are treated as equals in the beginning, only later the equations change when parents get concerned about a girl's security. Then, they tend to think that after class X or so they must marry their daughter. Parents seem to be more bothered about the education of the boy as he had to be the

¹⁵ Once appointed in Kendriya Vidyalaya schools, the teachers go through an induction course where they are 'acquainted with latest advances and techniques in pedagogy'. Similarly, in-service courses are organised to cover all the teachers, in a cycle of six years. Here, they are 'exposed to the latest literature on the relevant subject and are motivated to add interesting material to the lessons'. They are also 'introduced to methodologies of curriculum transaction, educational technology' (Annual Report, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan 2003).

earning member of the family. The Head Mistress states that due to limited means of parents they want their sons to do well in studies. A teacher states that if education of girls is to be promoted then it is essential to change the thinking of the parents. Gradually, parents have become concerned about the education of girls and want them to do better. The Head Mistress said that few mothers want their daughters to be educated so that they do not have to work in other people's houses like their mother.

II

BEGINNING THE DAY IN VIDYALAYA: THE ASSEMBLY

The Vidyalaya begins with the taking of attendance in each class. The duration of the assembly is 20-25 minutes. The Head Mistress presides over the assembly, if she was not around any senior teacher took over. What was striking was that children entered the assembly in lines on the basis of gender; boys and girls made separate lines. If the line of girls' was small, the teacher asked the boys to join in, at the back.

Teachers moved around to see that children stand attentive. Any child whispering to another child or causing disruption through his or her actions was made to stand at the end of the line. It was observed that a child seen to cause disruption always happened to be a boy. The children who came late were treated differently, according to their gender. The teachers asked the boys who came late to stand separately, on the stairs and the girls were asked to join in the lines.

The assembly began with a morning prayer sung by children. All the children faced the teachers who played musical instruments such as *tabla* and *harmonium*. Commands were given by children, usually a boy gave commands such as 'Stand at ease' 'Stand alert!' At times, girls were asked to give these commands. During two months of observation, girls were asked to give commands only thrice. It was observed that when girls gave the commands, there was always a giggle followed by initial reluctance. Also, a boy gave a command in an authoritative manner bringing his foot down on the ground while a girl/girls, if and when she got a chance, uttered it simply. In other words, a boy gave commands confidently while girls hesitated to do so and appeared uncomfortable. For instance, when the assembly was held separately on the two floors On the ground floor, the children of classes one, two, three and a section of class IV gathered while on

the first floor, class V and IV stood together, in the corridors attached to the classrooms. The boy who used to give commands did so on the first floor and few girls on the ground floor were asked to follow up with the children on that floor. These girls hesitated and giggled when they had to give the commands. In between, these girls got slightly ahead of the children, and then they were stopped and asked, to collectively continue with others.

After the prayer, the children took the pledge. This was accompanied by a thought for the day, the news and the National Anthem. The children were called to read the thought for the day. In most cases, boys were called. Girls seemed nervous when called to read the thought of the day. For instance, a girl read 'United we fall, Divided we stand' instead of the opposite 'United we stand, Divided we fall'. She was corrected then and there.

Physical Education was given five to ten minutes everyday. As the Vidyalaya has four houses¹⁶, in which children are distributed, each house gets a chance to conduct assembly/drill. Both boys and girls led the drill from the front and other children followed the exercises they did. Two girls beat the drum. Last of all, when a boy said, 'whole school disperse', the children moved in separate lines, boys and girls, towards their classes. After some distance, they did break into informal groups. These again were formed gender-wise.

INSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Classroom provides the physical space for peer relations, curriculum transaction and teacher pupil interaction. It relates how these processes mediated by gender identities and notions of appropriate gender behaviour form part of the hidden curriculum.

Sharing Space: Seating and Grouping

Segregation on the basis of gender was more than visible in the classroom, both in the formal space (seating /grouping arrangements related to classroom activities) and when children interacted informally. Teachers said that they organised children, both girls and boys in a random manner or on the basis of roll numbers. The formal seating arrangement varied in different classes, in classes I and II, five children sat at a table. The children sat

¹⁶ These four houses in the Vidyalaya were based on the names of popular leaders or artists, all males.

on rotation basis and had to sit on the same seat for a week; each table had a leader. Further, from class III onwards, the children usually sat according to the roll number. Each child was given a desk and a chair, to do the work.

Where seating was unstructured, the girls usually sat in smaller spaces and were clustered together while the boys tended to spread out. This was observed in the television room. All the classes from I-V had television period, when the children watched Cartoon Network or Discovery Channel under the supervision of a teacher. In the television room, there was a *durry* spread out for the children to sit and watch. The girls sat in the first few rows and the boys were usually behind them. The space in the room was distributed in such a way that the children sitting in the first few rows had to face the wall so they had to sit diagonally, to watch the television. Often, girls occupied this marginal space and faced considerable discomfort.

The gendered division of space was most visible when the two sections of the same class sat together. This happened whenever there were only few teachers present in the Vidyalaya. On such occasions, teachers called more than one class to watch television. Invariably, boys of both the classes sat together at the back of the room, while the girls sat at the front. There were slight variations here. If there was a senior class sitting with a junior one, that is, Class II with Class I, then the boys often sat near the girls, away from the older boys. However, younger girls never sat close to older boys and preferred to sit with other girls.

The children were divided in groups on the basis of gender, as mentioned already. For instance, during the group dance competition, the boys were asked to sit behind girls similar to the way in which they stand in the Morning Prayer. *Teacher: Pehle, girls, keval girls. Boys inke piche jaise yeh baithe hai! Jaise prayer mein line banate ho* (First girls will sit boys will sit behind them like the way it is done in the morning assembly). Further, the teacher asked boys of class II to sit behind boys of class I. *Teacher: Boys, Hind Z ke boys inke piche betho!* (Boys of class II, sit behind these boys). The girls and boys appeared comfortable in their respective gender groups.

In all the classes, girls and boys made their lines separately, be it going to the library/television room or coming back to the classroom. Five minutes before the school

got over the teachers asked boys and girls to make separate lines. Thus, even when the children of class IV were asked by the teacher to make one line (*Ek hi line mein!*) the children made separate lines, of boys and girls. Then, the teacher made two lines into one; it was still not one where boys and girls stand randomly. In this single line, the girls joined the line first and the boys followed them. This practice was contrary to what teachers formally professed. According to them, in Kendriya Vidyalayas, from the beginning the children were asked to sit together regardless of gender.

Children had their own notions of 'space' segregated by gender in the classroom. Girls hesitated to interact with boys. For instance, it was observed that a girl preferred to go to the nearest girl to clarify doubts rather than to a boy who may be seated next to her. This informal segregation was distinct in class IV as well as in class I. Even in class I, the girls asked boys to keep to themselves and not intrude among them. *Girl: Us ladke ko mana kariye, woh hamare beech mein aa raha hain!* (Ask that boy not to intrude in our space).

Text and Pedagogy

Text is an important element of teaching/learning process, it communicates knowledge, desirable and acceptable values and norms to the children, and thus, moulds the behaviour of children. The process through which the text is transacted, the pedagogy used, draws attention to the indirect socialisation of children into different roles based on gender. For instance who is asked to read, to answer questions or called to solve sums on the blackboard. Therefore, aspects, which relate to text and pedagogy, have to be highlighted. This sub-section presents an analysis of a lesson of class IV and class I English textbook to mark the gender divisions that continue to find a place in the curriculum. The transaction of these lessons formed a part of the observation done in the two classes.

During observation in class IV, the English teacher taught the story 'Half the price' from the textbook.¹⁷ It is about a fisherman who wants to get his daughter married. He looks for a potential bridegroom for her, still nothing gets finalised, as he does not

¹⁷English Reader, Book I (For Class IV) (1969) (Reprinted 2002). Prepared by Central Institute of English. Hyderabad, Special Series, New Delhi: NCERT.

have enough money. Then, his friends advise him to go to the Raja for help. The fisherman decides to go and catches a big fish from the sea to gift it to the Raja. On his way to meet the Raja, a gatekeeper stops him. This gatekeeper wants half a share in whatever the Raja will give to the fisherman, in return, as a price for that fish. The fisherman agrees and is allowed to enter.

The Raja likes the fish and wants to give the fisherman anything he wants. To this, the fisherman says that he wants two hundred lashes, after much reluctance, the Raja consents. Then, the fisherman asks the Raja to order his guards to call the gatekeeper as the gatekeeper has to have half a share in whatever this fisherman gets from the Raja. This moment the Raja realises that the gatekeeper had demanded bribe from the fisherman, he asks his guards to give the gatekeeper two hundred lashes, for this dishonest act. The Raja is amazed by the wisdom of this fisherman and asks him to demand anything. The fisherman replies that he has a daughter and wants to give her away in marriage. This cannot be done, as he is old and poor. The Raja says that the fisherman can choose a suitable bridegroom for his daughter and he will himself get her married.

In this lesson¹⁸, all the characters are male except the daughter who was to be married. The male characters are assigned active roles and the only female character has a passive role to play. Further, the story presents male and female in conventional, stereotypical roles- a father who is anxious to get his young daughter married, a daughter waiting to be married to the man of her father's choice, men as potential bridegrooms who demand money, the wise Raja and so on. Overall, the female character remains in the background and the males in the foreground. The sex roles are crucial to the character/plot. Had the fisherman not had a daughter to be married away, he would not have gone to the Raja and displayed wisdom.

In the same way, if the sex roles are reversed the plot will not remain the same. In place of a girl, had there been a boy of this age, the fisherman would not have been so worried to get him married and thus, would not have had any urgent need for money.

¹⁸ This content analysis is based on the understanding developed after having read Haydock, Karen (2001). *Benchmarks for Gender sensitivity- Some Ideas*. New Delhi: Centre for Science Education and Communication.

This story is a typical example of gender bias in language teaching through textbooks in school. When the teachers teach such texts, the girls and boys learn that women have no major role to play in the society at large and basically, men decide the fate of women. The girls see themselves as inactive, in the role of that girl who waits to be married away and the boys see themselves in the role of the wise fisherman, or in the position of authority like the Raja, or the gatekeeper who occupies a responsible position, though he is corrupt.

In NCERT¹⁹ 'Learning English' textbook²⁰ for class I, males and females are depicted in a stereotypical manner. To illustrate, in lesson 11, 'What are they doing?' girls are shown sitting on a bench and playing an indoor game, that is *ludo*, outside, in the open while boys are shown to be playing football in the field. In lesson 15 'What do they do?' men are shown in traditional occupations as those of a carpenter, farmer and a postman while women are depicted as a teacher and a doctor. Moreover, the content of the poem 'Little Birdie' taught to the children of class I from the same textbook, was also revealing. A little bird speaks to her mother bird and insists on flying away. The mother bird asks her to stay a little longer in the nest, till her wings become stronger. This is not an extreme example of gender bias still the mother bird is depicted in the stereotypical role of care and nurturance. Could the father bird be also shown in the poem to express similar emotions of care and sensitivity? When the teacher taught this poem she asked children to listen to their mother and not go anywhere when she asked them not to. Father was not mentioned in terms of warmth in relationships. *Teacher: Jaise apki mummy kehti hain, bahar mat jao rasta bhool jaoge, mother bird chotti bird se yehi kehti hain!* (Do as your mother says, don't go out alone or you will forget the way, similarly mother bird asked the little bird not to go out alone).

The pedagogy mainly used was one where children were asked to read the text. This was followed by question/answer sessions, sentence making etc based on the text. While this form of pedagogy hardly motivates children or arouses their interest, it is important to understand that the roles given to boys and girls in the transaction of the text

¹⁹ NCERT stands for National Council for Educational Research and Training. This pivotal organisation frames curriculum for Indian school education since its inception in 1961.

²⁰Khan, Nasiruddin, Sahoo, Sandhya Rani and Vaidyanathan, Nirmala (2002) Learning English, Textbook I for Class I. New Delhi: NCERT.

vary. The girls learn to think in terms of marriage and boys visualise themselves as potential breadwinners. In the English class, children were asked to read the text and form sentences. Further, children often took sentences directly from the text. It was observed that mainly boys read the text and volunteered to form sentences. The examples mentioned below reflect masculine/feminine qualities. The sentence made by the teacher was also one where marriage was associated with girls and they were praised in terms of beauty.

Girl: Man and woman become husband and wife after marriage.

Teacher: She is too young to marry.

Teacher: Reeta is a beautiful girl.

Interest in science is also a result of teaching practices. In class IV during science lesson, the teacher simply asked children to read the whole lesson 'Work, Force and Energy' with no use of supplementary teaching /learning material. Further, boys were called to read while girls were not called at all, to read.

During interviews, a teacher stated that they gave examples and added to what was in the text to make it gender sensitive. For instance, if the text mentioned that *Sita is weak so Ravana took her away*,²¹ this was supplemented by giving the example of the way, *Durga killed the Buffalo Demon*²² so that the children did not think that women were weak. However, the example of Durga appears as an exceptional instance and is of an extraordinary woman. Overall, the text and its transaction did not reflect the reality of everyday life where male and female participation in various spheres of life was highlighted. The concern for gender equality was also not reflected. For instance, while teaching social studies in class IV, the teacher mentioned folk dance items such as

²¹ Here, the teacher made a reference to Ramayana, a Religious text. In this, Sita was the wife of Rama and was abducted by Ravana in the absence of her husband. This example was to exemplify that text which portrayed women weak could be juxtaposed with a meaningful interpretation, to show that women also have a strong role to play.

²² Here, reference was made to Durga Saptatithi, where Durga punished the Buffalo Demon. This highlights female power.

dandia.²³ However, she did not give examples of renowned male/female dancers of India such as Raja Reddy, Birju Maharaj, Radha Reddy.

Assigning Tasks

The teachers assigned various tasks to children in the Vidyalaya. These included carrying note-books/ registers, lifting furniture and cleaning the classroom/ blackboard. Tasks were also assigned on the basis of gender; the help of boys was sought in lifting heavy objects. A teacher said that boys were called whenever there was some furniture to be lifted because the school did not have sufficient manpower. For example, when some furniture was to be thrown from the first floor to the ground floor, the Head Mistress called boys of class V to do the work.²⁴ On the day of the group dance competition also, a few boys lifted furniture and spread *durries* for the children to sit on. Similarly, in the tennis class when the period got over, the coach asked boys to carry tennis equipment *Boys racket lao* (Boys, collect the rackets).

Boys were also encouraged to help girls in lifting furniture and other heavy objects. In class IV, when a girl found her chair broken she complained to the teacher. The teacher did not understand and asked her to continue using it, only later she asked a boy to help her. This girl stood nearby while the boy changed the chair. *Teacher: Chair chotti hai kya...us mein kya nahin hai Girl: Dandi chotti ya badi nahin, hai hi nahin. Teacher: Vaise hi baith ja, Acha, Rohit tum Shruti ki madad karo, seat badal do!* (Teacher asked the girl: Is the chair small for you? Girl: The chair is broken. Teacher: Try to sit like that! When the girl insisted on changing the chair, the teacher asked a boy (Rohit): Why don't you help her, change the chair?).

In contrast, girls were given lighter tasks, such as to carry registers or note-books, mentioned in the figure below. Further, a teacher admitted that girls also wanted to be assigned tasks so sometimes the teacher asked them to lift a chair. This teacher said that she realised this when a girl came to her and asked her if she could keep the attendance register in the cupboard. Earlier, the teacher did it herself, after this incident she began

²³ **Dandia:** This dance form belongs to the western part of India, Gujarat. Men and women participate in this dance. However, in the school only girls were trained to dance this particular item. While dancing, two sticks are used and have to be struck in different ways.

²⁴ Absence of lower level staff made peon take advantage of the boys of the Vidyalaya.

asking this girl to do this task. *Teacher: Boys ko bolte hain girls ko nahin* (we usually ask boys, not girls to do various tasks). Girls *want some work*. On an occasion, both boys and girls were asked to tidy the classroom as it was dirty. According to the teacher, the boys refused to clean the classroom, saying that they had never done it. *Hum ladke hain; hum classroom saaf nahin karenge!* (We (boys) will not clean the classroom). The teacher had to insist that they do it whereas the girls were cleaning the classroom without any protest.

There was also a practice of checking toilets before the Vidyalaya was off for the day, a boy was asked to go and check if there was any boy left in the boys' toilet and a girl checked the same in the girls' toilet. This was followed as a ritual, to ensure safety of children. Though not of much significance, still it can be pointed out that from the beginning, children were taught to see themselves as boys and girls and there were separate spaces for them.

Box 4.1: Tasks assigned to boys and girls

Boys	Girls
Lift furniture and other heavy items	Carry registers, note-copies
Mind the boys (monitor)	Mind the girls (monitor)
Check boys toilet	Check girls toilet
Spread durries	

Managing the Classroom

It was not surprising when teachers stated that girls were obedient, disciplined and interested in studies. *Ladkiyan bhi vahi karti hain jo unhe bataya jata hain!* (Girls do what is required of them). Another teacher added, *Ladkiyan fatafat kaam kar leti hain, ladke sunte bhi nahin hain!* (Girls do work quickly whereas boys do not even listen to what is asked of them!). This was seen as *natural*. As mentioned earlier, boys frequently got into physical fights with each other. While watching television, two boys started to fight among themselves. The teacher asked them to stop that, still they did not listen and at last, the teacher had to go and separate them. Ultimately, she made them sit at two different ends of the room. Boys never sat still on their seats, they usually kept moving

around, in the room. Unlike them, when girls were not studying, they involved themselves in other activities such as drawing. Thus, they kept themselves occupied and did not disrupt the class. The Head Mistress also observed that boys were more interested in playing and did not listen to what was said while girls were just the opposite. She said that girls could be managed quickly as they were suppressed at home with boys it took time. *Teacher: Girls, shaant rehti hain!* (Girls stay quiet). *Head Mistress: Girls, ghar mein suppressed jo hain, girls jaldi manage ho jati hain, boys mein time lagta hain!*

Docility was regarded as 'natural' to girls, for instance a teacher remarked that *by nature, girls are docile*. She said that *they gradually developed hesitation* towards boys and did not feel comfortable interacting with them. This is similar to the findings of Bhattacharjee's study where she suggests that teachers 'subscribe to the natural theory of boy's behaviour and accept the ideology of innate aggressive masculinity' (1999:346).

Gender as a category was also used to discipline children. Girls were expected to be not as unruly as boys and were reprimanded when they were noisy by suggesting that their behaviour was as bad as that of boys. *Teacher: Girls bhi vasi hi hain, jaise boys* (Girls are no better than boys, in terms of maintaining discipline). A distinction was also made between girls who followed the instructions of the teacher and finished work soon and those who like boys (tomboyish) were not responsive to the work assigned. *Teacher: Yeh ladki hi hai jo kabhi kaam nahin karti hain! Ladkon jaise* (Teacher points to a girl and says that this girl is like boys since she never does work on time).

As boys had to be frequently disciplined they often got more teacher attention than girls. This was observed in various activities such as watching television, reading stories or playing. Teachers frequently used verbal threats to discipline them. For instance, in the television room while watching cartoon network, the children became noisy and the teacher took names of few boys who were disruptive. She warned them that if they continued to be noisy, she would switch off the television.

Punishment meted out in the Vidyalaya ranges from hitting children, pulling their ears, and making them stand outside the classroom. Children were also made to do sit-ups on the floor near the blackboard and walk around the classroom without the shoes. It was observed that boys were usually subjected to more punishment than girls. The researcher

observed that the teachers often slapped the boys. On one occasion in class IV when a boy had not finished his work, the teacher made him stand near the blackboard. Punishment was meted out to the whole class as well. In one instance when the teacher came late, children of class II went to the playground to play. When the teacher arrived, she went to the field and immediately asked the children to hold their ears and stand for the whole period. Without being told, boys and girls made separate groups and stood there.

The peon also punished children; the Head Mistress or the teachers did not stop him from doing so. He punished girls as well. The girls said that they always preferred not to tell their parents about such incidents. If the parents got to know and came to the school to complain, then the teachers scolded these children. In an instance, after the school got over, two boys started to fight. The teacher handed them over to the peon. He made them do sit-ups and refused to give them back their bags. After they apologised, they got the bags. The Head Mistress was there when it happened; she did not stop him from punishing those kids. This suggests that may be all teachers being females resorted to the male authority of the peon to discipline difficult children, especially boys.

Monitors provide a support network to the teachers in maintaining discipline in a class. The teacher of class IV said that the monitors were to mind the class when the teacher was not around. They were to help other children and sometimes lift furniture; as mentioned earlier the latter task was assigned to boys. The teachers chose monitors on the basis of popularity through the chit system.²⁵ Usually, one representative was appointed as a monitor from the girls and one from the boys in each section of the class. In a few classes, there were only boys or only girls as monitors. Teachers interviewed mentioned that a monitor should be dominating, good-natured and good in studies. Monitors must not hit children too often and must see that the children remain in their seats. When asked how a boy monitor differed from a girl monitor in maintaining discipline, a teacher said that that the boy monitor complained of children more often than the girl monitor. Another teacher maintained that a girl was not as efficient as a boy when she had to

²⁵ **Chit System:** The teacher asked three to four children, both girls and boys to volunteer and rest of the children were asked to write two names out of the children who volunteer. The teacher collected these and counted them for each name to find out who got the maximum number of chits. The first two (a girl and a boy) were then appointed as the monitor of the class.

manage a class alone. She said that *Girls do not have the nature to mind boys. Thoda sa farak to hai!* (There is a difference in the way a girl and a boy manage the classroom).

When asked, the boys of a section of class IV (that had only a boy monitor) said that, none of the girls in their class were good enough in studies to be monitors. *Boys: Ladkiyan padti bhi nahin hain aur mind bhi nahin kar sakti hain!* (Girls are neither good in studies nor in managing the classroom!). Similarly, a teacher said that girls were able to mind well only if they were good in studies. The boys did not listen to girls as they thought themselves to be *superior* in all ways.

Children from senior classes were also sent to mind children in lower classes.²⁶ Teachers usually sent them in groups of a few girls or a few boys rather than a mixed group of children of both genders. For example, on one occasion a teacher asked four girls of class IV to mind class I. The teacher asked them not to hit the children, there. In another instance, two boys from class IV were sent to mind class I. *Teacher: Reading karana, marna nahin!* (Don't hit children of the lower classes; make them read).

The issue of class-pass was significant in portraying the way organisational practices distinguished between boys and girls. When the practice for the group dance competition was going on, a teacher announced in the Morning Assembly that passes had to be made to facilitate movement of children outside the classroom. Every time children went out of the classroom, they had to get the signature of a teacher, on that pass. It is surprising that boy and girl monitors made separate passes for children of their own gender. For instance, in class IV, the girl monitor of the section made the class-pass for the girls in the period following the Morning Assembly while the boy monitor still had to make it for the boys of his class. Once this pass was ready, the teacher signed it and the girls or the boys could go out of the class to practice in the music room.²⁷

²⁶ Any child was chosen by the teacher to mind the junior class.

²⁷ There is a mention of 'class-pass' in the Student diary. However, this does not say of separate passes for boys and girls, it only states that every time any child goes out of the class, he or she has to carry a class-pass signed by the teacher present in the class. This was not practiced in this Vidyalaya and the mention of class-pass during Republic Day Celebration was the sole example.

CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY

A number of extra-curricular activities were organised in the Vidyalaya. During this observation, a group dance competition was organised. Other competitions such as drawing, painting and alpana had already been conducted. Children participated house-wise as they were divided into four houses. These four houses called Tagore, Raman, Ashoka and Shivaji had three teachers each, to train the children to participate in various activities.

The researcher was able to spend considerable time observing practice sessions for the dance. In the music/multipurpose room, the girls and boys were practicing dance. A teacher felt that girls were better at dance than boys. *Teacher: Humhe lagta hain dance to ladkon ki field nahin hai!* (We feel that dance is not an arena for boys). When more boys were required for group dance, the teachers asked two girls to dance as boys. They chose girls, who were tall and had short hair.

There were girls in all the four dance items whereas only four boys had participated. The girls and boys appeared conscious while dancing with each other. When girls had to hold hands with the boys or put their arms around them, they giggled and felt embarrassed. Such a response was not perceived in terms of boys, though they also seemed uncomfortable.

The teachers made stereotypical remarks with the assumption that girls knew dance better than boys. Girls were told to be flexible and to dance gracefully. When a girl was not able to do a step properly, the teacher rebuked her and said that she was supposed to dance, and not run. Similarly, while teaching the girls another step, a teacher asked them to put their hands and do that particular action as effortlessly, as if they were milking a cow.

Teacher: Tum kya kar rahi ho, gandhi ladki! Dodo mat. (What are you doing, dirty girl! don't run)

Teacher: Vaise karo jase gaye ka doodh nikalte ho (Do it the way, you milk a cow).

Teacher: Aise karo, Football, khel rahi ho kya? (Are you dancing or playing football?)

Teacher: Aapko haryanvi banna hai, matakna hai! (While dancing, you have to swing like a girl from Haryana!)

Singing like dancing was also associated with girls as is reflected in a teacher's remark, *gaane ke liye to ladkiyan nahin hain!* (There are not enough girls for singing the songs). Songs chosen for dance by the teachers related to the conventional roles of women such as that of a wife and as a daughter-in-law. In a particular song, a woman asks her husband to get vermilion to put in the partition of hair, to get *kajal* to put in her eyes, and to get her anklets...*Maang ka laio sindoor, nazar ka kajal laio, mori payal laio*...Nayar asserts that 'the songs reinforce in girls the temporary nature of their membership of the natal home as they are told that their real home is their husband's. They are prepared for adjustment and compliance in their husband's home' (1995:18).

The music teacher was of the opinion that girls looked good with long hair and was critical of those with short hair. Teachers felt that mothers got their daughter's haircut since they did not have enough time to comb their hair. Overall, the group dance practice shows patterns of differential expectations from girls and boys. Though the policies of the Vidyalaya accord equal space to boys and girls, still certain arenas were more feminine/masculine than others. Through, this discussion on group dance, it was perceived that girls not only outnumber boys in dance, they were also expected to perform dance *naturally*.

PEER INTERACTION

Peer relations are an important dimension of schooling, particularly in the informal space, and contribute to the process of learning as children grow in each other's company. The general impression of teachers was that boys and girls show different patterns of behaviour in the Vidyalaya. While boys were active, girls were passive. The researcher also observed that boys were boisterous while girls were docile. For instance, while watching television, usually the boys started to fight among themselves and were seen indulging in arm-wrestling. More often than not, the teachers had to disentangle them. Further, the teachers checked the boys more often than girls. On the other hand, girls murmured to each other or watched the television. In all, the boys were more vociferous than girls. Thus, the boys managed to get greater teacher attention than girls.

Girls and boys did not share a positive relationship within the Vidyalaya. Boys laughed at girls, ridiculed them and made a mockery of whatever they did. Girls stated that boys were not well behaved and were often heard using slang words for each other. In addition, boys often made negative remarks about girls and undermined their potential. For instance, in the library class, a teacher gave an exercise to the children wherein they had to read a library book, write the name of the book they had read (any one) and a brief summary of ten sentences. A girl was the first to finish the work, when she went to the teacher with her notebook, a boy remarked that she must not have written anything *Nahin lekha hoga!* Similarly, in another instance, children were practicing patriotic songs to be sung for the Republic Day Celebration. A boy in the group gave the commands, while other children were singing and acting as if they were flying kites. The boys could act it well and the teacher who was in charge tried to help the girls to do it better. Then, a boy remarked that girls would not know how to do it, *Girls, ko to nahin aata patang udana!* (Girls do not know how to fly kites!). Other boys agreed with him. However, most of the girls giggled in response and few tried to improve this action by practicing it again. On the whole, the teachers never rebuked boys for their uncalled for behaviour towards girls. The teachers did not even try to make them understand that negative comments about girls must not be made.

This pattern was repeated in the informal space where boys did tease girls and even hit them. For instance, when a girl who learnt classical dance (*Kathak*) was asked to show a step or two, she felt shy and said that later the boys would tease her in the auto rickshaw. *Girl: Baad mein ladke auto mein chidayenge!* (I will not dance here, as later on the boys will tease me in the auto). Further, she complained that boys in her class teased her because of her dark complexion. They called her *kali*.²⁸ Also, when the teacher was not around, the girls complained that boys troubled them. *Yeh ladke hamara hair band le jate hain aur catch-n-catch khelte hain!* (These boys snatch away our hair bands and play with them). Invariably, boys did also hit girls. Girls retaliated by hitting them back (usually, with no success). Often, the teacher tended to overlook the treatment of girls by boys and ignored the complaints of girls. At times, she asked the boy to apologise. Often, this apology was out of repentance and the boys repeated the act of hitting.

²⁸ Kali was used here by boys to refer to the dark complexion of this girl.

Segregation is another essential component of peer interaction. Girls did not encourage boys to participate in their gatherings and similar was the case with boys. On an instance, girls were in a group and boys tried to listen to their conversation, just then a girl asked these boys to go away and said that boys were not allowed in girls' space. *Yeh ladkiyon ki jagah hai, ladke thodi na aayenge!* (This is girl's space and boys need not come). This aspect of separateness was internalised by both girls and boys and they did not allow any transgression. For instance, in the lawn tennis class, the coach insisted that the boys play with the girls. However, the girls did not agree to play with boys. This shows that girls' resisted and did not passively accept the dominance of boys. Coach (to boys): *Girls ke saath khelo, aao khilata hoon* (Play with girls; I will make everybody play). *Girls, boys ke saath khelo!* (Coach asks girls' to play with boys). Girls: *Nahin Bhaiya!* (Girls refuse to play with boys).

The response of teachers to peer interaction shows their attitude to gender. Girls and boys were encouraged to treat each other as brother and sister, be it the playground or the classroom. This in turn, hampered the process of development of healthy interaction among children as boys and girls. For example, while teaching English in class IV, the teacher asked a girl to help a boy. When this girl appeared unwilling, the teacher said that she must help him the way she helps her brother at home. *Meena, koi baat nahin, aap kara do ghar mein bhi to bhai-bahan karte hain* (It does not matter, help him like the way you help your brother at home). In another instance, a teacher took class IV out for play and suggested that they play kho-kho. She asked girls to play with the boys. They appeared to be uncomfortable, and giggled. Finally, they agreed to play with the boys. *Teacher: Ladkon ke saath khel lo, kyon kya hua?* (Why don't you play with boys? What has gone wrong?) *Girl: Boys ke saath khel lete hain!* (Let us play with boys!) Similarly, Bhattacharjee states that 'the teachers encourage boys and girls to stay as brothers and sisters...however such a relationship does not ensure equality because sisters share a subordinate position in the power structure of the family' (1999:352).

THE PLAYGROUND

The children have fixed periods to play in a week. Each class plays Lawn Tennis at least four times in a week. Lawn tennis was mainly a boy's game in terms of number of

“turns” the children got to play or the tournaments that were arranged. Girls got fewer opportunities to play lawn tennis and were not considered eligible to play in competitions. For instance, the children from class IV and class V were selected to play in the middle /secondary school for a Tournament. The coach conducted matches only among boys of these classes. On being asked, he replied that girls did not know how to play lawn tennis. A girl heard this and retaliated by trying to push the coach. *Coach: Ladkiyan, kahan khelti hain?* (Girls hardly know how to play lawn tennis).

More often than not, the coach devoted most of the time with the boys and the girls were there, as passive onlookers. The coach played with the boys while the girls watched them. Meanwhile, few girls began reading their books and others spoke to each other. Whenever, the coach missed the ball, two girls standing near-by picked up the ball and gave it to him. As compared to girls, the boys were always active in the game and rarely carried any books to read /study in this period. Also, they were not seen standing idle or even in groups talking to each other. They waited for their turn to play lawn tennis or when they finished playing, they were seen running around in the field, or playing ‘catch-n-catch’.

Boys delineated space not only on court but they also laughed at girls’ attempts to play the game, suggesting that the game required expertise. Boys’ often made remarks such as these *Inko khelna nahin ata* (They don’t know how to play), *Dant se nahin khelna hain!* (You don’t have to play tennis with your teeth so there is no need to laugh while playing). Girls were also referred to as *Kukar Ki Sitti!* (Girls take time in understanding anything; they are ‘slow’).

The role of the coach was interesting, in terms of his concentration on boys and lack of attention to girls. In one instance, a girl went crying to the coach as somebody had taken the racket with which she was playing. The coach laughed at her saying *Rona acha hai, aankhen saaf hong!* (It is good to cry, this cleans your eyes). He also tended to trivialise their efforts at playing tennis. When a girl was playing lawn tennis with him, he remarked that he already knew that this girl had a lot of energy so there was no need to exhibit it. *Aaram se mar, mujhe pata hai tere andar bahut power hai!* (Play easy! I know you have a lot of power). It was also noted that the coach readily gave the tennis ball to

the boys to play tennis while he somehow appeared reluctant to give it to the girls. Further, the coach was observed playing *catch-n-catch* separately with boys and girls of class IV; in the beginning, he was throwing the ball and asking boys to get it; later, girls got a chance to play with him. Children started to play separately, quite early, on an occasion the coach was playing *ek ke piche kala chor* with the boys of class I while the girls were playing the same game, a little away.

After a lawn tennis practice session of fifteen-twenty minutes, the children started to play informally. There were some games that boys usually played such as *catch-n-catch*²⁹, cricket, football and basketball. On the other hand, girls were seen dancing on the play-field. There were games both boys and girls played such as *kho-kho*³⁰, *stapoo*³¹, *pithoo*³², *dog n bone*³³, *vish/amrit*³⁴ and *Posham pa*³⁵. However, these games were played by boys and girls, separately. The gender-segregated pattern of play appeared distinct to children as well. There were certain games recognised as girl's games and a distinction was also perceived in 'playing like girls' and 'playing like boys'. When boys were asked which game they were playing, a boy replied that they were playing *stapoo* like girls, *hum girls ki tarah gallery khel rahein hain!* (We are playing

²⁹ **Catch-n-catch:** Two teams are formed and a child from any team throws a ball, which the children in the other team have to catch. Both teams get adequate chances to throw and catch the ball. Accordingly, they distribute points.

³⁰ **Kho-kho:** In this game, children are divided into two groups randomly and the toss decides which team gets to sit or run. There is a leader in each team. Each person in the sitting team has to sit alternately. They give a chance to one another to run saying *kho* and touch any child of the other team, after which that child is out of the game. Once all the participants of the running team are out, the sitting team gets a chance to run and the running team sits.

³¹ **Stapoo:** This is also referred to, as hopscotch. A tabular column is drawn on the ground and the child has to hop lifting his leg and take the small stone out of the drawn figure without touching the lines. There are other ways of playing this game; this is one of the many.

³² **Pithoo:** Stones are kept one over the other and a child has to hit it from a distance so that it falls. If the child makes it fall, he or she gets a chance to hit it again. Otherwise, the next child in the queue gets the chance.

³³ **Dog-n-bone:** Two teams are formed for this game. One child from each team comes and moves around the handkerchief kept in the middle. At a time, both of them eye handkerchief and within seconds one has to pick it and take it away, who so ever does it, the team he belongs to, gets a point.

³⁴ **Vish/amrit:** One child is made to run and catch others referred to as the den, once he catches them he has to say 'vish' meaning poison, and this child has to keep sitting till anybody comes and says 'amrit', that is life saving liquid, then he can run around like others. The den has to 'vish' as many children as possible.

³⁵ **Posham pa:** Girls usually play this game. Two children hold hands and the rest of the children have to pass through. Simultaneously, these two sing a poem also. Once they finish whosoever is within the reach of their arms has to do, whatever is asked and cannot continue to participate in the game.

gallery³⁶, like girls). Another boy immediately remarked that they play 'like boys'. *Hum boys ki tarh khel rahein hain!* (We play like boys).

The teacher of class I stated that as far as the play field was concerned, once the boys understood how they had to conduct themselves, they stopped playing games, which were considered to be feminine *Boys mein jab samajhdari aajati hai, ladkiyon vaale games nahin khelte, bethte nahin hain!* (In the process of growing up, boys discontinue games associated with girls and do not even sit for long, like girls!). Thus, there were games considered to be boy's games and those seen as appropriate for girls. For instance, a teacher said that a when a boy was seen playing *langdi taang*³⁷ with girls, other teachers asked him, why did he play with girls, not boys. *Teacher: Ravi, kyon khelte ho unke saath?*³⁸ (Why do you play with girls?).

When, girls tried to cross the boundaries of gender and assume a different role, the teachers appeared to thwart their attempt. On one occasion, a teacher insisted that boys and girls play together. After much reluctance, girls agreed to play *kho-kho* with boys. When a girl volunteered to become the captain of a team, the teacher did not consent. She said *Asha, tum nahin banogi!* (You will not become the captain) and instead asked two boys to volunteer to become the captain of the two teams. Since there were only four girls, they were put in the two teams. The girls appeared uncomfortable when they began to play. The attitude of the boys was patronising towards the girls. The captain of one of the teams asked another boy to give a chance to the girls as well, *girls ko bhi chance do!* (Give chance to girls, as well). As observed above, the access of girls to various sports and the treatment they received differed from that of boys.

³⁶ The same game 'stapoo' was called here, gallery by boys.

³⁷ **Langdi taang:** In this game, within a limited area, one child hops and has to catch others. The one who gets caught, then has to hop.

³⁸ This example is based on an interview with a teacher of class I.

Box 4.2: Games played by boys and girls

Boys	Girls	Both (played separately)
Cricket	Doctor-doctor	Pithoo
Football	Four corners	Kho-kho
Basketball	Langdi-taang	Lawn tennis
Catch-n-catch	Posham pa	Ek ke piche kala chor

THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM

As mentioned earlier, hidden curriculum manifests itself in various dimensions of school organisation and classroom processes in the Vidyalaya. The understanding of gender appropriate behaviour was never formally stated but was reflected in peer interaction, teacher attitudes and quality of teacher attention. This is quite clearly seen in the foregoing sections on seating and grouping, co-curricular activity, assignment of tasks, managing the classroom, play and transaction of the text.

The attitude of teachers towards children is important. Through the teachers, the children learn acceptable and non-acceptable codes of behaviour. During the observation, it appeared that the teachers were not equally sensitive to the needs of girls and boys. They did not appear concerned while listening to the complaints of girls directed to the boys, who did unnecessarily hit and tease them. There was a variation in the amount of teacher attention to boys and girls. Girls appeared to receive less attention and many of their comments were ignored. The teacher of class IV asked children to make sentences using either/or. Two boys were called to write the sentences on the blackboard. They wrote *Rohan either eats chapatti or rice. Mohit either plays football or Hockey.*³⁹ When a girl said that these sentences were taken directly from the workbook, the teacher paid no heed to her and did not ask girls for some more examples. Further, in one instance in class IV, a boy informed the teacher that another boy had not had his food in the lunch interval so the teacher asked him to eat food in another room. When a girl also said that

³⁹ In these sentences, the agency was given to the boys; girls were not even referred to.

another girl has not had food, this was not taken note of and teacher continued to do her work.

Within the classroom, it was necessary to observe the tasks for which, girls were praised. Girls received praise for doing work neatly. In class IV, during English class the teacher appreciated a girl for neat work, *dekho kitna sunder colour kiya ha* (look, how beautifully, she has coloured this). In addition, she said that this was unlike boys who spent time fighting *tum to lad-lad kar mar jaoge, ek yeh ladki aur ek tum....* (You, boys! will keep fighting all the time, look at this girl, she has done such neat work!!). Similarly, in class I, girls were observed to receive praise for good handwriting. Their notebooks were displayed and children were asked to clap for them. Bhattacharjee also asserts that 'the ideal norm of good handwriting contributes to the gender divide' (1999:344). However as observed, unlike girls, boys received praise for solving a mathematical problem correctly on the blackboard and reciting a poem.

Often, teachers used participation of girls in dance/singing to reprimand them if they were not satisfied with their work. To illustrate, in class IV while teaching English, a teacher appeared dissatisfied with the work of a girl and referred to this girl's participation in singing to rebuke her; *kaam karo, gaane-vaane se kuch nahin hoga!* (Singing will not help; you must work hard in studies). Likewise, another teacher in the same class while teaching Social studies asked everybody if they had taken down the syllabus for the upcoming unit-test. A girl had not done, so the teacher rebuked her, *tumhe dance karna hi ata hain!* (You only know how to dance!).

The teachers formally state that the interaction between girls and boys is positive and girls are not shy to sit with the boys. In fact, they are comfortable speaking to boys. The Head Mistress and a teacher repeated that girls and boys learn distinct gender patterns of behaviour at home not in the Vidyalaya. While in the Vidyalaya, they are socialised to follow egalitarian values. Teachers feel that the way they handle gender relations is appropriate. As mentioned earlier, boy/girl relationship is seen within the framework of sibling relationship. A teacher said that if a girl refused to sit with a boy, she was asked to treat that boy as her brother, so in this way 'instincts' did not develop. *Ladka, kya hai, bhai hi hai! Shuru se hi to instincts develop nahin hote! Class mein*

bithaya hi aise hai (We tell girls that these boys are your brothers. From the beginning, we take care not to let girls and boys develop any other instinct towards each other, we make them sit in a mixed way in the classroom).⁴⁰ However, in contrast to what the teachers think, this approach of treating boys in classroom as brothers, does not promote meaningful interaction between boys and girls, as individuals.

This fieldwork has focused on gender concerns in the context of a primary school. It has attempted to show how the 'hidden curriculum' of gender operated both within the classroom and outside it. This was observed in terms of seating and grouping, transaction of the text, assignment of tasks, teacher attitudes, co-curricular activity and play. The 'gender code' simultaneously framed gender appropriate roles for boys and girls in the school. Where girls and boys tried to fulfill the gender-stereotyped expectations of the teachers. By and large, this study draws attention to the pervasiveness of gender-defined relations in schools.

⁴⁰ This is based on interview with a teacher.

Chapter V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Unequal gender relations are pervasive in day-to-day life. Family, school and media are various agencies, which socialise girls and boys to follow long established and time-honoured roles. The all-encompassing nature of gendered images, roles and identities in the society mediate education as well. The present study focuses on gender inequality in education and specifically on gender relations within the context of primary schools. This chapter summarises the foregoing discussion and presents the major findings that emerge from an exploratory study done in a primary school.

The main feminist perspectives such as liberal, radical, socialist and post-structuralist address a range of issues including education, in its relation to women. They provide a platform for diverse groups of women, of varied regions to come together and share experiences relating to patriarchal domination. The feminist movement highlighted women's issues/concerns and gave them a voice to speak against injustice and the discourses of silence. It began with liberal feminists who favour equal rights to women. According to Tong (1989), there is a difference between classical liberals and welfare liberals. The classical liberals assume that the state is important in protecting civil liberties such as voting rights; in contrast welfare liberals seek state intervention in the form of school loans, and other social security measures.

The disillusionment with the liberal feminists paved way for the radical feminists. They consider 'patriarchy' to be the cause of women's subjugation to men. The radical feminists suggest the need to raise women's consciousness toward male domination through women-focused education. However, the socialist feminists draw attention to the linkages between gender and class and the way it led to oppression of women. These feminist frameworks are criticised for ignoring women of colour and those belonging to a different class.

Feminisms address education in different though inter-related ways. Liberal feminism focuses on equal opportunity and draws attention to sex-stereotyping and sex discrimination in schools. The concepts of justice and fairness are central to them and they suggest 'girl-friendly strategies'¹ such as encouraging girls to opt for science/

¹ Weiner (cited in Acker, 1994) has distinguished between girl-friendly strategies and girl-centered strategies.

mathematics in schools, to overcome gender bias in schools, according to Weiner. The drawbacks of liberal feminism, for example their inability to defy the status quo led to radical feminism. The radical feminists' focal point is the need to analyse the domination of males in knowledge and the sexual politics in schools. They recommend 'girl-centered strategies' such as single-sex schools. In addition, the socialist feminism based on Neo-Marxism attributes significance to the process of 'reproduction' in schools which causes sexual and social reproduction in the family and the labour force. They observe how school subjects are gendered and lay emphasis on the gender code of the school. Post-structuralism as interpreted by feminists' tries to examine the 'subjectivities' in play and aims to provide 'agency' to the subject.

The studies done on gender, family and education highlight the role of the family in socialising the child, wherein gender identities are formed through division of labour in the family, allocation of tasks and also through exposure to toys. The children 'imitate' what they see in the family and 'reinforce' the behaviour that is acceptable to the family. If they see the women in the family busy with domestic tasks, they associate these tasks with women, according to Chapman (1986:63-64). Caste, class and race also influence the process of socialisation of girls.

Schools expose child to the external world. However, the difference between physical access and social/cultural access is of specific concern where girls are concerned. A school can be within walking distance and yet not be accessible to girls, cultural norms and social practices determine whether girls will go to school, thus the question of cultural access comes into play. Overall, schools can be made 'available' still they need not necessarily be 'accessible'. Access means that schools have to incorporate the living patterns of people and then decide how to proceed, for instance, for girls who contribute to family earnings would be able to join a school, which has a shift system and has an escort provision to send them back home, when needed.

Research has shown that practices and processes within the school create gender distinctions. Studies show that tasks are assigned to boys and girls differently. Girls are asked to do lighter jobs while boys carry out heavier tasks such as lifting furniture. This differentiation in tasks assigned is seen an extension of what is learnt at home. Similarly,

existing literature shows how girls are appreciated for womanly qualities such as being neat in their work. The attention of teachers is unequally divided between boys and girls. Commonly, 'he' is used to refer to women and men. Girls are not expected to perform well in science. They are not encouraged to participate equally in classroom discussions. The quality of teacher attention is also seen to vary. Boys get to answer difficult questions unlike girls who get yes/no kind of rhetorical questions. When sexism is combined with race, research shows that Asian girls are not treated at par with white/colour pupils, in terms of assistance provided and teacher attention given to them.

The competitive spirit of the boys is visible inside the classroom as well as outside it. Boys are more enthusiastic in participating in the classroom and it matters to them as who finishes the work soon or plays games well. Play reinforces notions of gender identities among children. Certain games are associated with boys such as playing with cars, and others with girls, for instance playing with dolls. Research has shown that girls use space marginally whereas boys use space extensively in various activities.

Curriculum is written/unwritten text, which infuses values in children. Studies show that the 'hidden curriculum' is organised differently for boys and girls. Girls learn feminine aspects such as being docile, unassertive while boys learn to associate with masculine activities and in turn become aggressive. Women are made 'invisible' in the curriculum; for instance women leaders are not mentioned in the text. The school subjects are also categorised, mathematics is more masculine than feminine, and to the same effect needlework is more feminine than masculine.

Even, if women are represented, it is usually their 'distorted' image, one that is stereotypical and grounded in tasks, which place women in subservience to men. There are more women represented as nurses or housewives rather than as engineers or surgeons (MacDonald 1980). Children's stories present a similar finding where women/girls are shown as passive princess waiting for a prince to rescue them. However, studies in the West for instance, that of Westland (1993) shows resistance of girls to these images.

The above discussion points to the need to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of coeducational schools. The liberal feminist framework of equal

opportunity emphasises on girl-friendly strategies and favours coeducational schools. This stands in contrast to the radical feminist perspective, which advocates all-girls' schools and suggests the importance of 'equal worth' with a focus on girl-centered strategies. Many action research projects have been initiated in the West using either of these two approaches to make school environment conducive to the girls. Teachers have also initiated changes in the organisation of the school and classroom processes to favour girls.

Policies have been framed to initiate strategies for intervention to improve the state of girls' education. These have attempted to change the gender-segregated pattern followed in schools to a more equity-based approach. In United Kingdom, Equal opportunity Commission was framed to ensure the implementation of equal opportunity measures in schools. Rees (1999) suggests the need to combine equal opportunity and positive action legislation with 'mainstreaming equality' to achieve better results in ameliorating the condition of women.

With respect to India, since independence policies have been framed with a focus on the girl child. There has been a shift from those times when education of girls was promoted to achieve objectives related to 'welfare' to the modern times where education is now perceived as a tool to 'empower' women. The National Committee on Women's Education (1959) chaired by Durgabai Deshmukh, Committee on Differentiation of Curricula between boys and girls (1962-64), Education Commission (1964-66), National Policy on Education (1968) and (1986) are some of the important policies, which recommended measures to accelerate the pace of girls' education. Programmes such as the DPEP, an outcome of National Policy on Education, 1986 seek to universalise elementary education. The educational indicators such as enrolment rates, dropout rates and school attendance rates have shown marked improvement for girls. Still the gender gap persists and this calls for greater attention and diversion of resources.

The above discussion on gender and education shows how gender as a category is used to differentiate children in schools. In order to draw further insights, a study was conducted in a primary, coeducational, government school in Delhi for a period of two months. This exploratory research uses the concepts of 'hidden curriculum' and 'gender

code' to focus on school practices and classroom processes with a perspective based on radical and socialist feminism. Thus, the study moves beyond 'equal opportunity' framework of liberal feminism. It attempts to understand how power relations mediate the experience of girls in schools. The main findings of the study are discussed below.

PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER

The Vidyalaya believes in a policy of equal opportunities for boys and girls and does not consider gender inequality to be of concern at the primary stage. The teachers appear to view educational opportunity as the removal of barriers to formal access to schools. Thus, equal opportunity for girls is considered to be a problem at the post-primary stage. It emerges from the context of the family and social norms when concerns of marriage and security of girls become important to parents.

The teachers stated that girl's education is influenced by concerns of marriage. Parents educate their daughters to find a good match for them. However, if they decide not to educate them after a level, it is to marry them. The father of a class II girl had remarked that he just wanted her to finish class V since after that he would marry her. The Head Mistress also stated that education of a boy is given preference over that of a girl. Boys are perceived to be future breadwinners for the family. If the resources of a family are limited, they are diverted to educate a son. Overall, teachers believed that if girl's education is to be promoted it is important to change the attitude of parents.

The gender hierarchy in Kendriya Vidyalayas also shows how authority and decision-making follows a gender-segregated pattern. In the Kendriya Vidyalayas, most of the women are employed as either primary school teachers or head masters of the primary sections. While men occupy the positions of authority at the middle or secondary level. This reflects gendered nature of the workforce. Similarly, Acker (1994) also suggests that often women are employed in large numbers to teach younger children whereas men teach the older ones and occupy the positions of authority. This sexual division of labour in teaching places women in an unfavourable position.

SEATING AND GROUPING

Gender appeared to be a significant feature in terms of seating children or arranging them in groups for various activities. Boys and girls usually made separate lines while going to the assembly or the television room or the playground. In the morning assembly, commands were usually given by boys. Sometimes girls got a chance to give commands. It was observed that girls were not as comfortable as boys in giving commands. Children were also called to read thought for the day. Usually boys were called. On one occasion when a girl came to read the thought for the day she felt nervous and faltered.

Gender segregation was visible in formal and informal seating patterns. In the television period, girls generally sat in the first few rows and the boys behind them. These girls occupied marginal space unlike boys, and had to make a special effort to watch television. When two sections of a class sat together to watch television, girls of both the sections sat separately from the rest of the boys. On the day of the group dance competition, children were asked to sit in groups formed on the basis of gender. Boys were asked to sit behind girls.

In the classroom, though, children were asked to sit according to the roll number. Still when the teacher was not around, girls usually preferred to go to the nearby girl to clarify doubts rather than to the boy who may be seated next to her. Teachers sent children of senior classes to mind junior classes. Not even once was a mixed group of children sent to mind, it was mostly either boys or girls. Even when children were being punished, boys and girls made separate groups and stood likewise on their own.

TRANSACTION OF THE TEXT

It was observed that in class IV, the English lesson taught to the children assigned gender stereotypical roles to men and women. This is similar to the extensive research done by Kalia (1979) on gender-bias in curriculum. In the story discussed, all the characters are males except one. The male characters have active roles to play and are in the foreground. The female character has a passive role to play and is in the background. After the lesson was read out fully, teacher asked children to make sentences. These sentences formed by the children, mostly boys, and the teacher reflected stereotypical masculine and feminine qualities.

Lessons in the textbook also depict male/female in conventional roles. In the textbook of class I, in a lesson what are they doing? Boys are shown playing football while girls sit and play *ludo*. In another lesson, male and female are shown in gender stereotypical occupations. Man is shown to be a carpenter, farmer and a postman while a woman is shown as a teacher, doctor. In the same class, while teaching a poem 'Little Birdie' the teacher acquainted children to the maternal instinct and made no reference to care/sensitivity in terms of fathers. During informal interview a teacher said that if the text was not gender sensitive an effort was made to make it gender inclusive. However, this was not reflected in the process of classroom instruction.

LaFrance (1991) suggests that girls do not get equal opportunity in the formal classroom interaction. This was also seen in the present study. In an English lesson, the teacher asked children to make sentences. Usually boys suggested these sentences and most of these sentences had a male subject. No agency was assigned to girls. In a science lesson also, it was observed that children were taught by simple reading where girls did not even get a chance to read.

CO-CURRICULAR SPACE

In the co-curricular sphere, that is the group dance competition, it was seen that mostly girls participated in dance since this activity is considered to be 'womanly'. The teachers were of the opinion that girls were better at dance than boys. In a dance sequence, when two boys were required the teachers asked two girls with short hair to dance in place of boys. The teachers made stereotypical remarks towards girls and asked them to dance gracefully. Singing was also associated with girls. Nayar (1995) observes that songs reinforce conventional gender roles. Likewise, it was observed that the songs chosen by the teachers socialised girls to adopt familial roles of wives, daughter-in-laws and mothers.

DIVISION OF TASKS

Tasks assigned to children were also divided on the basis of gender. Boys were asked to lift heavy furniture. Girls usually carried registers or notebooks. This synchronises with the findings of Bhattacharjee's (1999) work and Nambissan's (1995) observations. After the Vidyalaya got over each day, girls were asked to check girl's toilet and boys checked the boy's toilet. This was done to check if any child was left inside. In the course of the interview, a teacher said that when children were asked to tidy the room, girls readily did it. However, boys refused to do it in the beginning and only on teacher's insistence agreed to do so. For the Republic Day celebration practice, girls and boys were issued separate 'class pass'. The girl and the boy monitor of each class prepared these passes for children of their gender. This shows explicitly how the hidden curriculum of the Vidyalaya functioned to segregate boys and girls.

PEER INTERACTION

Girls and boys did not share a positive relationship. Boys were observed hitting girls, ridiculing them and making a mockery of what they said or did. This happened both within the classroom and outside it. In addition, boys continued to undermine the potential of girls by suggesting that they were incapable of playing lawn tennis or finishing class work on time. At times girls tried to resist by trying to hit back boys. However, often they did not say anything to boys and started to cry. This reinforced radical feminist viewpoint on power relations in schools that expresses how boys exercise aggressive masculinity in the schools and girls have to put up with this harassment. Girl's complaints to the teachers were often ignored since the teachers believed that 'boys will be boys' and thus accepted the natural theory of boy's aggressive behaviour. Such instances carry serious implications for girl's experience of schooling and cause concern. This also explains why radical feminists emphasise on single-sex schools for girls.

Space was gender-segregated. Girls attempted to check boys from entering their space for instance when few girls were discussing something boys wanted to come and be a part of it. The girls prevented them from joining the discussion and said that boys must not intrude into girl's space. In turn, boys dominated the classroom and the playground. It was observed that boys occupy large space on the playground and girls often play in the

peripheries. Askew and Ross (1988) state that boys use space extensively while girls make use of space in a restrictive manner. Sometimes when the teacher came late, children started to play games such as *catch-n-catch*, cricket. Boys generally played cricket in the classroom while girls occupied marginal space in the corridors outside the classroom.

Usually, boys and girls played separately, be it tennis or other games such as *kho-kho*, *stapoo*. However, when the coach or the teacher on some occasions insisted that they play together. Girls either refused to play with the boys or just played with the boys to comply with instruction and later continued to play among themselves. The teachers asked girls to regard the boys as their brothers. This is similar to the findings of Bhattacharjee's study (1999) in a primary school. She also contends that teachers ask girls to regard the boys as their brothers. However, it is necessary to understand that sisters do not share an equal relationship with the brother in the power structure of the family.

MANAGING THE CLASSROOM

The general impression of the teachers was that boys were active and often got involved in physical fights. Girls were considered to be passive. Thus, boys managed to get more teacher attention than girls. The teachers contended that girls readily did whatever was asked of them. Boys did not even listen to what was said. Boys usually disrupted the morning assembly as well as the classroom. If girls were not studying they involved themselves in other activities such as drawing. Boys, on the other hand occupied themselves in physical fights.

The Head Mistress said that the attitude of girls differed from that of boys. This was because girls were socialised to be docile and submissive at home. Similar to what Bhattacharjee (1999) observes the teachers accepted the ideology of innate aggressive masculinity. Gender code was more than visible when teachers had to discipline children. Teachers referred to children as boys and girls. Girls were not expected to be unruly. They were reprimanded for disorderly behaviour by suggesting that their behaviour was like boys. Punishment was meted out to boys more often than girls. The peon being the

only male was called by the teachers to discipline difficult children, thereby indicating the need for male authority.

Monitors were chosen by the teacher in each class. In most of the classes a girl and a boy were chosen to be the monitors. The boys of a class emphasised that girls were neither good at studies nor in minding the class. The teachers were also of the opinion that girls were not as efficient as boys in managing the classroom. Thus, gender codes for a boy and a girl monitor were well defined and operated to the disadvantage of girls.

PLAY

A clear gender divide characterised games. Lawn tennis was observed to be a boy's game. Girls got few chances to play. They were not given the opportunity to play in competitions. Even the coach believed that girls did not know how to play the game. Often girls got books to read or watched while the coach played with the boys. Boys never got books to read and were always seen actively involved in playing games.

Boys delineated space not only through their comments on the court, they also laughed at girls and ridiculed them. The boys remarked that girls did not have the expertise to play lawn tennis. The coach also trivialised the efforts of the girls to play lawn tennis. He did not even give enough attention to the girls. He was most of the time involved with boys. If he was not playing lawn tennis with them, he played other games such as *catch-n-catch*, *ek ke piche kala chor* with boys. The children played other games as well such as *stapoo*, *langdi taang* etc. It was observed that girls and boys played these games separately.

There were certain codes operating on the basis of gender. The teachers preferred to see boys and girls behaving within those definitions. If they saw any transgression they tried to check it. On an occasion, a teacher saw a boy playing with girls so she asked that boy why he played with girls and not other boys. The teachers believed that boys discontinue games considered to be feminine, once they understand the difference between 'male' and 'female' games. Askew and Ross (1988) also mention that there exists a greater need among boys to identify games as masculine or feminine. It was observed that even if boys played games associated with girls they asserted that they were playing like boys, not like girls.

THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM OF GENDER

The foregoing discussion distinctly shows how hidden curriculum manifests itself in the organisational aspects and teacher attitudes, which have been discussed above. It also becomes obvious through the way teachers expect boys and girls to conduct themselves. For instance, a teacher asked boys and girls to play *kho-kho* together, when a girl volunteered to become the captain of a team, she refused her. Instead, she chose two boys to become captains of the two teams. On those few occasions when girls volunteer to do something, teachers thwart their attempts. This was not the only instance. In another instance, a teacher asked children to volunteer to convey a message to another teacher. A girl enthusiastically came forward to do this task however the teacher refused her and sent a boy in her place. The 'gender code' and the 'hidden curriculum' of the Vidyalaya prevented girls from crossing the gender boundaries that were defined in the context of school practices and processes.

Thus, the present study shows that gender inequality is very much a part of the experience of schooling from the early years of education. Children are differentiated for various activities on the basis of gender. Certain tasks are considered to be suitable for girls while others are considered to be appropriate for boys. This reflects how the school's 'gender code' and the 'hidden curriculum' operate to create distinct gender identities. This exploratory research done in a primary school provides insights into some of these aspects.

Researchers and policy makers in India have highlighted the situation of girls with respect to education. Their major focus has been on gender disparity in relation to access, enrolment and retention of girls in schools. Equal opportunity is not sufficient to make education equally accessible to girls. Girl's education has to be perceived beyond removing only the formal barriers to schooling. The experience of schooling itself is important. Gender plays a major role in influencing the quality of schooling. School practices and classroom processes need not only be girl-friendly where girls are provided with mid-day meals, scholarships and other such benefits. They have to be girl-centered with girls' only groups in mixed schools for various activities.

ANNEXURE

THE FIELDWORK

First of all, permission was taken from the Principal who agreed to two months of observation in a Primary school. One section of class IV was observed at length, and then some time was given to the other section; gradually class I, II and III were also observed. An attempt was made to examine the way children learnt the subtle way of distinguishing themselves on the basis of gender.

In the beginning, the teachers were cooperative and tried to accommodate the researcher in the classroom, while they taught. However, continued observation for a lengthy period led to certain problems. After few days, the teachers became impatient and wanted to know how long this observation would continue. In the field, certain dilemmas arose and in spite of knowing that in non-participant observation one did not have to take sides, on one occasion this could not be avoided. For instance, when the group dance competition was held, this researcher was made one of the judges.¹ It was later realised that teachers whose houses won this competition were helpful in further research work while others were not very cooperative. One day a teacher expressed her discontentment at being observed continuously. She said that she would raise this issue in the teacher's meeting and the matter would be taken to the Principal, if needed. The Head Mistress tried to explain that this observation was only for research purpose and was not to evaluate. Then, it was decided to observe those classrooms where the teachers felt comfortable, being observed. In this manner, in the given time the research work was completed. Some teachers still disapproved of observation and denied access to their classrooms. There were instances of teachers shutting the door and bolting it from inside. However, few teachers were still willing to cooperate and because of them, this work got finished.

¹ This observer was made a judge along with two other judges, one of whom was a mother of a child studying in the School and the other was a Casual teacher, that time one of the House teachers came to me and wanted me to give grace marks to her House children. When this was not done, her attitude became different and she started expressing her discontentment on being observed, in an indirect way by speaking about it to other teachers.

What could not be done in this Field study?

In this exploratory study, only one school was observed for a period of roughly two months. Approximately, three to four hours were covered in a day. The children were observed in the classroom, the playground and in co-curricular activities. Still, what remains uncovered is more than what has been covered. There were suggestions to observe children in classrooms in other schools as well, as Municipal Corporation of Delhi schools, Government schools and Public schools; since this is an exploratory study it was limited to one school.

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