

**FEMALE EDUCATION IN INDIA : A
SOCIOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE IDEALS,
ACHIEVEMENTS AND OBSTACLES**

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "**FEMALE EDUCATION IN INDIA :A SOCIOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE IDEALS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND OBSTACLES**", submitted by **NARAYANI RAJASHREE KANUNGO** in partial fulfillment of the award of the Degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of Jawaharlal Nehru University has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university. We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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***DEDICATED
TO
MY PARENTS***

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I alone take the responsibility for all errors (of omission and commission) in the project.


RAJASHREE

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

"Nature only presents us with differences or potential differences. Culturally prescribed norms convert differences into inequalities : differences become inequalities only with the application of scales which are not given to us by nature but are culturally constructed by particular human beings under particular historical conditions".¹

Andre Beteille

Education-formal/school education - has acquired a new meaning in our age. Education, it is believed, is a kind of capital that we need to possess in order to make our presence felt in the modern world. Education gives us skill, information and knowledge. Education it is considered, trains us to intervene in the field of material production as well as in the world of cultural/symbolic production. Education, it is argued, is also a kind of socialization that we need to function in a modern/complex society.

1. A. Beteille, The Idea of Natural Inequality, The London School of Economics & Political Science, 1980. P. 8

Needless to add, in our age we see great importance attached to education. Education, it is hoped, is a source of mobility, education breaks the inertia and leads to an emancipatory consciousness. No wonder, in a society like ours that is trying to modernize itself and urging to fight the age-old hierarchies and inequalities, education is expected to play a key role.

And especially at a time when, because of our democratic sensitivity and egalitarian consciousness, we are articulating the demand for gender equality, it is important to examine the state of female education in India. In fact, this dissertation has been written with an urge (that combines academic as well as feminist interests) to probe into the state of female education: Whether it is really benefitting women, creating an emancipatory consciousness and leading to a democratic society.

It is a matter of serious concern that even when India is celebrating its 50th year of independence alongwith its progresses and achievements, Indian women have achieved too little. They are still under represented in almost every aspect of the public sphere, and are considered as the inferior lot. Gender inequality did not emerge just 50 years ago, nor did the attempts to challenge it. But independence brought new opportunities and transformation.

We have been universally acclaimed as the world's largest and successful democracy. Democracy as a form of governance is based on sharing of political power, on political inclusion; and, as a way of life it leads to equity and social justice. But despite some improvements in women's status, Indian women have a long way to go to be treated equally at par with that of men in the society. The recent rape incident in Jaipur (Rajasthan) is a case in point. A woman was gangraped. And raped again for filing a case to protect the right to her own body, her right to say no. And the culprits were assured political support to prove their hegemony in a state ridden with feudal prejudice and antiquated views on women, their sexuality, their place in society. And the brutal reprisal and rape inflicted on the girl shows the system's ruthless attitude towards women who dare protest violation committed on them. And the violence rate against women is on the constant rise the country all over. This absurdity of prejudice does not just affect women, but these are major bottlenecks to the country's development as well. Thus, this disparity disturbs the development activists and planners of Indian society. And women's movements and their struggle for rights and right is gathering strength alongwith. With it, the belief that, apart from changes in socio-political structure, corrective

legislation and economic reforms, the system that formal education will help in achieving equality has been nurtured by many social reformers, feminists and women rights activists.

Our Constitution enshrined democratisation as one of the main objectives of education and anticipated that the democratic expansion of education would serve social and economic mobility. The Education Commission noted : "One of the important social objectives of education is to equalise opportunity, enabling the backward or underprivileged classes and individuals to use education as a lever for the improvement of their condition. Every society that values social justice and is anxious to improve the lot of the common man and cultivate all available talent must ensure progressive equality of opportunity to all sections of the population. This is the only guarantee for the building up of an egalitarian and human society in which the exploitation of the weak will be minimized"²

Given this optimism, one is tempted to learn if the expansion of opportunities for the underprivileged groups (which includes women) has had the ameliorative and

2. See Ministry of Education Report of the Education Commission, 1964-66 New Delhi : Publications Division 1, 1966, p.108.

equalising effect anticipated by our constitution - makers, or whether newly created educational opportunities remain restricted in terms of social and economic status.

It is at this juncture that we need to understand how social theorists have seen the relationship between education and society. A brief, yet meaningful journey to the 'sociology of education' would be helpful in locating our problem.

While discussing education as a social function, John Dewey³ stresses that "educational institutions shall provide something like a homogeneous and balanced environment for the young. Only in this way can the centrifugal forces set up by juxtaposition of different groups within one and the same political unit be counter-acted. The intermingling in the school of youth of different races, differing religion, class and social status, and unlike customs creates for all a new and broader environment". Education system is expected to broaden the horizon of the young and make one more accommodative in a complex society which is composed of a combination of different groups with different traditional customs.

3. See Dewey John, 'Democracy and Education', New York. The Free Press 1944, p.21.

To put Durkheim's⁴ ideas into words, the major function of education is the transmission of society's norms and values. He maintained that, 'society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands.

Writing in the similar direction as that of Dewey, Durkheim argues that in complex industrial societies, the school serves a function which cannot be provided either by the family or peer groups. Membership of the family is based on kinship relationships, membership of the peer group on personal choice. Membership of society as a whole is based on neither of those principles. Individuals must learn to cooperate with those who are neither their kin nor their friends. The school provides a context where these skills can be learned. As such it is a society in miniature, a model of the social system. In school, the child must interact with other members of the school community in terms of a fixed set of rules. This experience prepares him/her for interacting with members of society as a whole in terms of society's rules.

4. See, for example, Emile Durkheim, Moral Education, The Free Press, Glencoe, 1961.

Durkheim also recognized that education teaches the individual specific skills necessary for his/her future occupation. And he goes on to add that this function is particularly important in industrial society with its increasingly complex and specialized division of labour.

Drawing on Durkheim's idea, the American sociologist Talcott Parsons⁵ outlined that school acts as a bridge between the family and society as a whole, preparing the child for his/her adult role. And also he sees that the educational system as an important mechanism for the selection of individuals for their future roles in society.

On the other hand liberal view⁶ asserts that education fosters personal development and self-fulfillment. It encourages the individual to develop his/her mental, physical, emotional and spiritual talents to the full. It gives every one an equal opportunity for developing these capacities and talents.

However, not all sociological writings are as optimistic as that of functionalists or liberals. Many sociologists maintain that classroom interaction can only be

5. See for example, Parsons. T., The School class as a Social System in Halsey, Floud and Anderson, 1961.

6. See, for example, Haralambos. M., Sociology : Themes and Perspectives, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1995.

fully explained by reference to the wider society. In particular, it is argued that the definition and organization of knowledge in the class room must be seen in terms of the nature and distribution of power in society as a whole. Thus, dominant groups in society have the power to define what counts as knowledge in the educational system. If classroom knowledge is based largely upon the knowledge of dominant groups, schooling will automatically favour the children of the powerful and discriminate against those from lower social strata. This makes Bourdieu⁷ to conclude that the major role of education in society is the contribution it makes to social reproduction, the reproduction of the relationships of power and privilege between social classes. Social inequality is reproduced in the educational system and as a result it is legitimated. The privileged position of the dominant classes is justified by educational success, the underprivileged position of the lower class is legitimated by educational failure. The educational system is particularly effective in maintaining the power of the dominant classes since it presents itself as a neutral body based on meritocratic principles providing

7. See, for example, Bourdieu, P. and Passeron J. Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture, Sage Publications, London, 1977.

equal opportunity for all. However, Bourdieu concludes that in practice education is essentially concerned with 'the reproduction of the established order'.

And many other social scientists question many accepted beliefs about educational reforms and the pursuit of equality of educational opportunity.

With this we come back to the problem we are concentrating on. Our purpose is to examine whether education, as it exists, in the country, is really contributing to the emancipation of women. We also aspire to find out whether education is reproducing the prevalent gender inequality. In a way, the problem can be located in the context of a debate between the functionalists (like Durkheim and Parsons) and critical theorists (like Bourdieu).

For our purpose, we have tried to study the ideals, achievements and obstacles relating to female education. A brief look at the way we have designed the substantial chapters would make our point clear.

Chapter one attempts to analyze how female education has evolved over the history of time in India. It aims to include in its analysis the picture of women education in pre-colonial India where, as it will be seen, a declining status of women from vedic to post vedic era is clearly

reflected in women's educational status. The next step will analyze the colonial impact on Indian society and the changes Indian women encountered with this new cultural confluence. The chapter also intends to discuss the state of women education in the age of post - independence enriched/influenced by Nehruvian ideology, and a rigorous sketch of the aims of the policies and programmes follows.

Chapter Two seeks to provide the essential empirical information regarding female education such as female illiteracy, dropout etc. in order to figure out the level of disparity prevalent between men and women in the existing Indian society. In order to understand and have a deep insight into the factors which influence such under representation and low performance of women (in comparison to men) in education system, this chapter also intends to discuss the studies (conducted by few eminent social scientists) on female education in India.

Both these chapters intend to give clear view of the state of female education in India.

How girls look at school knowledge is examined in **chapter three**. This has been done by conducting interviews with few girl students. Their responses on the relevance of school knowledge in their lives, teachers' treatment, the relationship between school knowledge and family ethos,

their expectation from life etc. are sure to provide some valuable first hand information of this issue. Finally, the attempt will be to find out whether there is compatibility between what is evident in the sociological writings of female education and what students themselves perceive about the education as an emancipatory consciousness.

And finally in the conclusion, we have reflected on the emergent challenges and need for intervention in the prevailing education system.

CHAPTER - I

CHAPTER - I

THOUGHTS ON FEMALE EDUCATION IN INDIA : A SOCIO-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

As we are trying to analyze the state of female education in India, it is important to know the operation of various historical, political cultural and economic factors moulding the Indian society. And such historical perspective is all the more necessary in the case of a society with the continuous history of more than three thousand years. It is also crucial to have a brief look at our past because some of the norms and values affecting women today have their roots in the past. However, this chapter intends to concentrate on the thoughts on women's education in post-independence India.

What we are going to inquire here is:

- i. Ideal/nature of female education in pre-colonial India.
- ii. Colonialism : Changing perception of womanhood and new thinking on female education.
- iii. Post-independence India : female education and challenges before a modern nation.
- iv. Salient characteristics of stated ideals.

IDEAL/NATURE OF FEMALE EDUCATION IN PRE-COLONIAL INDIA

India has an ancient civilization of high order prevailed even before the Vedic Age. And it has been discovered that this culture brings India at par with the most ancient civilizations of the world such as Babylon and China. And from the archaeological evidence it is proved that Indian women led well-organized lives at so early a period which may make an Indian still more proud of his/her ancient and dim past.

However, Indian history takes its concrete shape from the Vedic era onwards.

Women's education in Vedic Age :

The women of Vedic India were civilized and cultured, and perhaps could claim more enlightenment than many an ignorant women of today. It was often the pleasant duty of a father to instruct his daughter, or to send girls to forest schools or Gurukulas where they studied with boys and were termed "Brahmacharins".¹ The Atharva Veda insists on a

1. See P. Sengupta, Story of Women of India, India Book Company, New Delhi, 1974.

women marrying only after concluding her education. Apasthamba says, "The knowledge which women possess is the completion of all study". The early forest universities no doubt housed and educated girls as co-education was not unknown. It is in those universities that, as Dr. Radhakrishnan puts it, evolved "the beginning of the sublime idealism of India".² The roles of studentship were clearly defined. The education was of an austere type. Pupils were expected to be modest and restrained, humble and chaste. The object of education was first to develop scholars and the second to cultivate obedience, patience and hardwork. Vedic India possessed writers of hymns and philosophers. Even Manu, who later deprived women of many rights said "A women destitute of knowledge of the Vedas was falsehood itself".³ Vedic studies begin with Upanayama. The sacred thread initiation was performed as regularly for girls at the age of eight as for boys (unlike present day customs where only boys are initiated). An educated girl was required as suitable bride. But towards the end of the Smriti period (500 BC to AD 600) women were eventually declared to be ineligible for the study of the Vedas. In epic times, though women became more and more domestic,

2. Ibid, p.7

3. Ibid. p.9.

education was not rare. It is told that Atreyi attended Valmiki's Ashrama with Rama's two sons, Kusha and Lava. Kausalya, the mother of Rama was said to be a Mantravit, one well versed in the Vedas, and Draupadi a Pandita.

Society was coherent during that period, because the first settlers were very few in number as compared to the population today. The compact villages of the early Aryans were social units where men and women lived a free pastoral life, and where as yet, the differentiating rules as drawn up by later law givers did not exist. Suvira Jayaswal contends that "society in the Rig Vedic Period was still predominantly pastoral and nomadic, it did not produce enough surplus to allow any section of society, to be completely subordinated or with drawn from the process of production".⁴ This perhaps explains comparatively better situation of women in the Vedic period in terms of access to education, religious rights, freedom of movement etc. Though historical data is not enough to build up a detailed linkage, it has been noticed that the growth of a class society which manifested itself in the form of Varnas and the decline in position of women have occurred

4. As quoted in M.Krishnaraj and N. Desai, Women and Society in India, Ajanta Publications, New Delhi, p.33.

simultaneously. This decline dates back to the period of Manusmriti i.e. 500 B.C. to 1800 A.D.

Post Vedic Age :

With establishment of the caste system and the priestly oligarchy, the status of women deteriorated. Education of women which was an accepted norm during the Vedic period, slowly began to be neglected and later on girls were totally denied any access to education. Upanayana or sacred thread ceremony which was performed to initiate a person into the Vedic studies, was prohibited in the case of women and Sudras by the Manav code, thus, closing the doors for any formal education to women. Bhagavat Gita, one of the sacred books of the Hindus places women and Vaisyas & sudras in the same category, and describes them all as being of sinful birth. Manu says, "A women should never be independent. As a daughter she is under the surveillance of her father, as a wife, of her husband and as a widow of her son".⁵

The Buddhist Age :

Brahminical Hinduism was well established in North India at the time Buddhism arose to protest against the

5. Ibid. p.34.

steadily rigidifying varna stratification. Many unjustifiable social rigours, like introducing the practice of pre-puberty marriages and denying right to education, right to mate selection, right to participate in the religious discourses etc. were imposed on women during the period of Brahmanas & Puranas. In the Buddhist period the status of women improved to an extent. In the religious field, women came to occupy a distinctly superior place. They had their own Sangha, called Bhikshuni Sangha which was guided by the same rules and regulations as those of the monks.⁶ New opportunities of education opened up for Buddhist women and many a learned bhikshunis became teachers to others in turn. Thirteen such women are mentioned by Buddha himself in the commentary called "Manavatha Purani", the most distinguished among them being Dharmnadina who attained such spiritual wisdom that her instruction was sought by even her husband. In the social field, they had an honoured place. Their political and economic status, however, remained un-changed.

6. For further detail see P. Thomas, Indian Women through the Ages, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1964, p.82-88.

Bhakti Movement :

Another liberal current which to some extent widened the horizon for women was the Bhakti movement—the medieval saints' movement. Bhakti/Sufic tradition a product of cultural dialogue between Hinduism and Islam. The saints emphasized salvation through devotion to a deity where in no intermediary such as pundit or a purohit was required. The vaktas vehemently attacked ritualism and overlordship of Brahmins, used vernacular as a language of communication and opened the gates of religion for women. Not surprisingly it is the Bhakti movement which produced women saints like Meerabai & Lalla in the North, Andal & Akka Mahadevi in the South and Bahara bai in the west. As the movement did not basically challenge the unequal social structure it limited itself only to individual salvation. It could not fundamentally affect gender subordination.

II

COLONIALISM, CHANGING PERCEPTION OF WOMANHOOD AND

NEW THINKING ON FEMALE EDUCATION

The condition of the Indian women at the beginning of the colonial rule was that of absolute degradation. Her birth was lamented and all kinds of possible ritual

precautions were taken to prevent it. During childhood, she was kept denied of any education, and was instructed only in the practical matters of house-keeping, bearing and rearing children and making her family happy. She was given away in marriage at puberty if not before since child marriages were very common at the time.

The British in their early decades of ruling contended that India was a great civilization that had fallen on bad times because their despotic form of government denied its subjects basic liberties, thereby drying up all sources of energy, initiative, enterprise and creativity. The British said they were engaged in establishing a government based on 'liberty' and hoped in due course to arrest and reverse India's decline. From about 1820 onwards, liberalism, which had by then become a dominant ideology in Britain, generated a new mode of discourse. The British began to justify their rule in terms of the increasingly fashionable concept terms. India was supposed to be a 'Semi-barbaric' country occupying a place halfway between the 'African savages' and the 'civilized Europeans'. Its historical development had suffered an arrest not because of such political factors as the so called 'Asiatic despotism' as they had earlier argued, but because of cultural factors, especially the absence of a scientific and rationalist approach to life.

It needed not just a new form of government based on 'liberty' but also new ways of life and thought based on 'reason'. The 'reign of reason' of which Britain was deemed to be transcendently accredited historical agent, was to 'silently under-mine the fabric of error and superstition' in economic, social, political, moral, literary and other areas of life.⁷

Once the British began to justify their rule in civilisational terms, educational metaphors began to abound. They were engaged in the enterprise of initiating their subjects into new ways of life and thought, and inculcating in them new habits, virtues and qualities of intellect and character. Educational institutions became the chief instrument of social change and the central terrain of political action. To receive English education was not merely to learn a language, nor merely to gain access to modern science and technology, but to be educated out of Indianness and into English ways of life and thought, to be transformed into a new species. Indians were keen on education in English as their much needed window of the world, but deeply uneasy about English education which seemed to make them aliens in their own country.

7. Bhikhu Parekh, Colonialism, Tradition and Reform, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989, pp.25-26.

However, it was not easy for Indians to accept this British superiority over their culture. And it was felt that Indians could only enjoy equality with their rulers under two conditions: namely, by insisting that they had nothing to learn from them, or that they also had something to teach them. To admit that they had something to learn from their rulers was to concede the latter's superiority. Ideally it implied no such thing; in the colonial context it appeared self-evident. Since they couldnot deny that they had many things to learn, they had to compensate, for the implied inferiority by asserting their superiority in some other aspects. Unless cultural exports equalled cultural imports, the moral balance of payments remained in the red. This attitude was pervasive and deep and reflected in the writings of every Hindu leader. To quote Vivekananda, "There cannot be friendship without equality and there cannot be equality when one party is always the teacher and the other party sits always at his feet If you want to become equal have to teach as well as to learn, and you have plenty yet to teach to the world for centuries to come."⁸

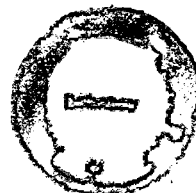
And our leaders realized the need to strengthen Indian civilization by bringing about various changes/reforms

8. Ibid, p.28.



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inorder to cope with colonialism. And with this new thinking on civilization, a new notion of 'womanhood' emerged. Influenced by the western culture enriched with egalitarian ideology, reformers like Rammohun Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidyasager, Dayananda Sarṣwati attempted hard to uplift the status of Indian women. And this was done by helping remove the traditional practices against women like Sati, child marriage, women's seclusion etc. and introducing new hopes for their emancipation. Simultaneously women were expected to preserve the age old Indian culture in their lot. And this new notion of womanhood led to a new thinking/intervention in the field of female education.

However, the very first schools for the education of girls were started by English missionaries around the beginning of the nineteenth century and in 1819 the first text on women education in an Indian language (Bengali) by an Indian Gaurmohan Vidyalankara was published. By the third decade there were 12 girls' schools run by missionaries in Hoogly district, the Ladies' Society for Native Female Education opened schools in and around Calcutta which were run by a Miss Cook. Missionaries were also the first to make forays into the 'Zenana' on the 'andarmahal' to initiate adult education.

By the mid-nineteenth century women's education had become an issue which was campaigned for, by unorthodox Hindus, Brahmans and radical students in Bengal. Fears of evangelical intentions of missionary schools were aired at the same time as the starting of these schools and were, at least, partly, responsible for their opening.

The movement for women education and especially, its subsequent 'Indianization' is generally believed to have been initiated basically by the need of a rising middle class to adapt it's women to a western milieu, evidenced in the declaration of a Bombay Parsi Framji Bomanji. 'We want English education, English manners and English behaviour for our wives and daughters and until these are supplied, it is but just that the present gulf between the Englishman and the Indian should remain as wide as ever'.⁹

With the growth of British education and new employment opportunities for men, the public/private dichotomy grew into opposition between the world and 'the home'. The home instead of being complimentary to the world outside started, in the new environment to represent the deed weight of tradition which was scorned by this new class as

9. See R.K. Sharma, National Social Reform and Indian Women, Janaki Prakashan, Patna, 1981.

barbaric. Education of women was a way to bring back the complementarity of the two worlds. The zeal to get rid of the 'barbaric' element was so great that all forms of traditional entertainment were scrutinized and forbidden to the Bengali bhadramahila, which curtailed the traditional space for expression of the woman's voice further.

At this juncture, some natives did react to this overpowering colonial culture on the ancient Indian culture. K.C. Sen felt that even though the 'encounter with Christianity' was one of the best movements in Indian history, Bengali literature and Brahma religious instruction was essential in the curricula of his girls' school. Moreover most schools had home economics and needle work as compulsory subjects for girl students. Implicit in this was a new definition of Indian womanhood which was simultaneously different both from the 'Western' and the 'traditional' ones. The 'new woman' was to be educated not to attain the highest virtues which Dayananda Saraswati claimed was the goal of true education both for men and women, but keeping more functionalist goals, of good motherhood and wifeness, in mind. Brahma schools for girls taught cooking, sewing, nursing and such like..... (which were) deserving of quite as much encouragement and reward, as purely literary proficiency. Thus a woman who played a

crucial role in forming the child's consciousness was to be educated, so that she could educate her children. This ideology was apparently, also internalized by the women themselves. Thus, it may be concluded from the above discussion that women education was given importance by certain educated lot to make women profound house wives & mothers than empower them in public sphere. To quote Swami Vivekananda, "It is only in the homes of educated and pious mothers that great men are born".

The new women, thus, despite now being educated still embodied self sacrifice, benevolence, devotion and religiosity all the spiritual characteristics that defined her innate femininity. The education despite emphasizing the new bourgeois virtues of orderliness, thrift, cleanliness, and personal sense of responsibility, the practical sense of accounting and hygiene and the ability to run the household according to the new physical and economic conditions set by the outside world, which would also require her to move out of the confines of her 'home' did not threaten this femininity. This was mainly because femininity was now defined in terms of socially approved differences of male and female conduct instead of being defined by physical confines of home and purdah. This emphasis on spirituality did not, then, impede the chances

of the woman moving out of the physical confines. On the contrary they facilitated it.¹⁰

During this period there were two major movements which affected the position of women. These were the social reform movement of the nineteenth century and the nationalist movement of 20th century. Both these movements raised the question of equal status of women. The social Reform movement has been regarded as a key to the intellectual processes that went into the making of modern India. The issues which attracted the attention of the 19th century social reforms were Sati, the ill-treatment of widows, the ban on widow re-marriage, polygamy, child marriage, denial of property rights, and education to women. The social reformers of that period strongly believed that "we are a nation with a tremendous spirit of recovery and right thinking. And they felt that the social evils of the society should be eradicated by raising consciousness and making people sensitive to the injustice perpetuated on women. They thought that by giving women the access to education and by enacting progressive legislation, social change could be initiated. Raja Rammohan Roy, Iswar Chandra

10. See, for example, Partha Chatterjee, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question in K. Sangari and S. Vaid (ed.) Recasting Women : Essays in Colonial History, New Delhi, 1989.

Vidyasagar, M.G. Ranade, Mahatma Phuley, Durgaram and others from all parts of the country raised their voice against some of the unjust practices while revivalists like Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda and Annie Besant believed in reviving the old Vedic society presumed to be the ideal society for women.

Nationalist movements, non-cooperative movement, civil disobedient movement etc. had also played massive role in reawakening Indian women from their previous hidden status. The nationalist movement not only drew a large number of women to political activity but it also generated strength and confidence among women which helped them to organize and to fight for their 'own' cause rather than depend upon the 'benevolent' men in society to promote their cause. This political period was marked the beginning of awareness at the sufferings of women due to oppressive social status. During this period a favourable climate was created to improve the status of women through legal reforms. And doors of education were opened to them. Mahatma Gandhi contributed a lot to emancipation of women. He strongly believed in women's education and made sincere efforts to propagate his ideas throughout the nation. This is how the root of women's education as an institutionalising factor was established during the colonial period.

POST-INDEPENDENCE INDIA : FEMALE EDUCATION AND CHALLENGES

BEFORE A MODERN NATION

The British left India on 15th August, 1947 and India has come a long way since independence. The democratic framework, multi party system and freedom of association and speech have encouraged free and frank debate on policies and programmes between government and the public.

The Indian experience in improving the quality of life of the people and promoting equity provides a wealth of ideas and practices for new directions for the future, the thrust towards poverty eradication, investment in social and economic infrastructure, spread of extension services, information dissemination and strengthening of institutions - social, economic and political both Governmental and non-governmental. This political and administrative framework has also ensured space for reflection and accommodation of the diversity and heterogeneity of India.

A deep concern about the rights and status of women has marked Indian political thinking. A striking feature in Indian society has been the symbolic and mutually complementary relationship that has developed over the years between Government, women's movement and non-governmental organizations. The women's movement in India continuously

interacts with and influences public opinion and government action. This is a tribute both to the maturity of thinking within the government and the movement and to the deep rooted democratic tradition of this nation.

The framers of Indian Constitution were aware of the sociology of the problem of emancipation of the female sex. They also know that sex equality was crucial for national development. It was evident that in order to eliminate inequality and to provide opportunities for the exercise of human rights and claims, it was necessary to promote with special care educational and economic interests of the women and to protect them from any social injustice and exploitation. With this aim in view the Constitution lays down some targets which also have great educational significance. Some of them are:¹¹

Article 15 : The state shall not discriminate against any citizens on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.

Article 16 : No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be

11. D.D. Basu Constitution of India, Prentice Hall of India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1995.

ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect of employment or office under the state.

Article 45 : The state shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commence of this constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

This led to a general quickening of political and social consciousness among women. Education is the most important instrument for human resource development. Education of women, therefore occupies top priority amongst various measures taken to improve the status of women in India. Education enables women to acquire basic skills and abilities and fosters a value system which is conducive to raising their status in society. Recognizing this fact great emphasis has been laid on women education in the Five Year Plans.

First Five Year Plan (1951-56) :

Shortly after 1947, India felt the need of planning its future development. Accordingly a planning commission was set up "(1) to make an assessment of the material, capital and human resources of the country, including technical personnel and investigate the possibilities of augmenting

such as these resources as are found to be deficient in relation to nation's requirements; (2) formulate a plan for the most effective and balanced utilization of country's resources. The commission made certain observations as regards women's education. Whereas women constituted nearly half of the population, the girl pupils in the primary, middle and high school stages in 1949-50 were only 28, 18 and 13 percent respectively of the total number of pupils. The percentage of women students in universities and colleges represented 10.4 percent of the total enrolment. Large wastage occurred at different stages of education. There was a great dearth of women teachers.

The Planning Commission fixed certain targets to be reached after the completion of the First Five Year Plan period.¹² The percentage of girls of the school going age (6-11) attending schools should go up from 23.3% in 1950-51 to 40% in 1955-56. The percentage of girls at the secondary stage school should go up to 10%. In the field of social education atleast 10 percent of women of the age group 14-40 should receive education in the wider sense of the term. The planning commission considered the needs of different

12. See, Government of India Five Year Plan (1951-56), Planning Commission, New Delhi, 1951.

age-groups and of those girls who could not continue their studies due to social and economic conditions. Along-with prescribing subjects which are essential for discharging household duties, the commission proposed to equip women to take up employment. It sought the co-operation of different social worker's organisations for undertaking propaganda work to educate parents to the need of educating their daughters.

With the completion of the first plan the educational facilities improved considerably. The number of girls institutions and their enrollment increased. But the rate of progress could not match the hopes and the expectations. The target fixed for (6-11) age group could reach only 33 percent instead of 40. Similar was the case at other stages also.

The Secondary Education Commission Report (1952-53) :

During the first plan period another commission was set up under the chairmanship of Dr. A. Lakshmanswami Mudaliar to examine the prevailing system of secondary education and to suggest measure for its re-organization and improvement. One of the main defects of the existing system of Secondary Education was, that the special needs of girls were not taken into consideration. The Commission expressed the view that "every type of education open to men should also be

open to women."¹³ While suggesting the improvement of home science teaching in schools, it added that it was "not necessarily with the idea that a women's place is restricted to the home, but because it is essential that she should be educated to fulfill a two fold duty to the family and society".

Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) :

The Second Five Year Plan¹⁴ gave longer importance among other things to the provision of larger opportunities for education of girls and women. It was found that during the first plan period, the education of girls and women could not compare well with the education of boys and men in all the age groups. The Second Plan observed that special efforts at educating parents, combined with efforts to make education more closely related to the needs of the girls were needed.

The task of training women teachers had to be approached as a matter of urgency, since the shortage of women teachers was one of the main obstacles in the progress

13. Government of India Report of the Secondary Education Commission 1952-53 (Delhi : Manager of Publications, 1953), p.58

14. See Government of India Five Year Plan (1956-61), Planning Commission, New Delhi.

of women's education. The provision for better housing facilities for women teachers in villages and opportunities for part time employment could be useful steps in this direction. Special scholarship scheme was recommended for girls to take up different courses such as nurses, health visitors, teachers and so on. There was great disparity between the literacy of men and women. The second plan suggested the establishment of fundamental education centres for training social education organizers, in addition to national extension and community development programmes. Though the proposals of the second plan applied equally to the education of men and women at all the stages, special measures were suggested for increasing the enrollment of girls and the number of women teachers. In 1957-58 a centrally sponsored scheme was introduced to accelerate the enrollment of girls in primary schools.

As a result, the enrollment of girls exceeded the estimated target fixed for the second plan period, at all the stages. In the field of higher education, among a number of important development projects, was that of Home Science Education and Research under the Indo-United States Technical Co-operation Programme. Intensive literacy campaigns were also organized. In 1960-61 there were 301077 women on roll in adult centres.

National Committee on Women's Education (1958-59) :

One of the chief features of the post independence period was the enquiry into the special problems of girls and women's education. A National Committee on Women's Education was set up by the Government of India on 19th May, 1958 under the Chairmanship of Smt. Durga bai Deshmukh. The terms of reference of the committee were : to suggest special measures to make up the leeway in women's education; to examine the problem of wastage and adult education; to survey the nature and extent of material and other facilities offered by voluntary welfare organizations; and to examine the possibility and methods of encouraging a larger number of women to go into vocational traits by providing suitable vocational training. The committee submitted its report in January, 1959. It made valuable recommendations. A few of the recommendations are as follows.¹⁵

- The education of women should be regarded as a major and a special problem in education for a good many years to come and a bold and determined effort should be made to face its difficulties and magnitude and to close the existing gap between the education of men and

15. See R.K. Bhandari, Educational Development of Women in India, Ministry of Social Welfare, New Dlehi, 1982.

women in as short a time as possible.

- The highest priority should be given to schemes prepared from this point of view and the funds required for the purpose should be considered to be the first change on the sums set aside for the development of education.
- Steps should be taken to constitute as early as possible a National Council for the Education of Girls and Women.
- The problem of the education of women is so vital and of such great national significance that it is absolutely necessary for the centre to assume more responsibility for its rapid development.
- There should be a senior officer of the rank of Joint Educational Adviser at the centre to look after the education of girls and women.

A similar arrangement was suggested for the states. The committee sought the co-operation of the government, non-official organizations, local bodies, voluntary organizations, teachers' organizations and members of public in the promotion of women's education at all stages.

- The Planning Commission should set up a permanent machinery to estimate, as accurately as possible, the women-power requirements of the plans from time to time

and make the results of its studies available to Government and the public.

- The Government should set up, as early as possible, a high power committee to examine the so called wastage in the medical and professional education of women.

This was the first committee ever appointed to examine in detail the problems of women's education. The appropriateness of the recommendation was highly recognized. But their financial implications are not easy to meet. Still many of these were put into practice. The National Council for Women's Education was set up in 1959 with State Councils in the states, to advise the Government on the problems of women's education at all levels. A special unit has been created in the Ministry of Education for this purpose.

Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) :

The authors of the Third Five Year Plan¹⁶ had in mind the fact that a very big gap still existed between the proportion of boys and girls attending school. While 80.5 percent of boys in the six to eleven age group, attended schools, the percentage of girls in this age group attending

16. See Government of India Five Year Plan (1961-66), Planning Commission, New Delhi.

school was only 40.4 percent in 1960-61. The proposals in the third plan was made mainly on the lines suggested by the National Committee on women's education. The third plan also proposed to take additional steps to enlarge the supply of women teachers and attracting them to services in rural areas. In backward areas, educational institutions were to be so located that almost every child could go to a school within easy walking distance from her house. In view of the importance of the programme for extending education to all children in the age group six to eleven, it was made clear in the third plan that financial considerations shouldn't stand in the way of its execution in any state.

The third plan emphasised the need for the introduction of local community efforts in the form of the organization of enrolment drives, persuading parents to send girls to the school, the construction of school buildings and provision of additional equipment and furniture for schools and mid-day meals and free clothing for poorer children. The most important objective of the third plan was to expand facilities for the education of girls at various stages and to increase the proportion of women students in colleges and universities, to take up different occupations. The third plan sought to continue the liberal assistance for women's colleges and hostels and courses of special interest to

women such as home science, music, drawing, painting and the like. In order to encourage women students, special scholarships were further provided.

A proposal for setting up an institute for training women in organisation administration and management was under consideration. Special emphasis was laid on creating suitable conditions for encouraging parents to send their daughters to schools and educating public opinion. To help overcome inadequate supply of women teachers, it was proposed to select promising students at the post matriculation stage and assist them with scholarships and stipends through the entire period of training with prospects of assured employment. In return, they were to be under an obligation to serve for a prescribed period.

Report of the Indian Education Commission (1964-66) :

During the Third Plan period an Education Commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari on 14th July, 1964 to consider the development of the entire educational system and to formulate a national system of education. The approaches of the commissions and committees prior to this, though useful in their own way, were piecemeal. The Education Commission was unique also in the sense

that some eminent scientists and educationist from U.K., USA, USSR, France and Japan were associated with it.

As regards the education of girls and women, the commission pointed out that the significance of the education of girls cannot be over emphasised. For full development of our human resources, the improvement of homes, and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of infancy, the education of women is of even greater importance than that of men.... In the struggle for freedom, Indian women fought side by side with men. This equal partnership will have to continue in the fight against hunger, poverty, ignorance and ill health."¹⁷ The commission fully endorsed the recommendations of the National Committee on Women's Education on special programmes for Women's Education, educating public opinion, popularising mixed primary schools, providing free books and the like to the girls, expansion of secondary Education among girls, part time and vocational education for girls programmes of scholarship and financial assistance, setting up of a special machinery in the Central Government and the states, to look after girls' and women's education and the employment of women teachers.

17. Government of India, Report of the Education Commission 1964-66 (New Delhi : Ministry of Education, Government of India, 1966), p.135.

On the issue of differentiation of curriculum for boys and girls, the Education Commission endorsed the recommendations of the Committee on Differentiation of Curricula between Boys and Girls, appointed by the National Council for Women's Education under the Chairmanship of Smt. Hansa Mehta. According to the committee, education should be related to individual capacities, aptitudes and interests, which are not strictly related to sex. Hence there is no need to differentiate the curricula on the basis of sex. Girls should, rather, be encouraged to study science and mathematics and at higher stage should have free access to all types of courses. The commission suggested that one or two universities should set-up research units to deal especially with women's education,. These should take follow up studies of educated women, consider women's education from the point of view of employment opportunities available to women and ensure proper planning of women's education particularly at the stage of higher education.

And this trend continued in the Fourth and Fifth Five Year Plans.

Although there was a large scale expansion of facilities for education upto the Fourth Five Year Plan, vast disparities existed in the relative utilization of available facilities by boys and girls at various stages of

education. Hence the major thrust in the Fifth Five Year Plan was to offer equality of opportunities as part of the overall plan of ensuring social justice and improving the quality of education imparted. To promote enrolment and retention in schools in backward area and among under privileged section of the population, in addition to the incentives like free distribution of text books, mid-day meals etc. Girls were to be given uniforms and attendance scholarships were given to local girls to complete their education and training leading to a teaching career. Besides condensed and correspondence course were organized for the less educated women. Emphasis was also laid on the need for orientation of the curriculum to meet the special needs of girls.

The Sixth Five Year Plan :

A land mark in the Sixth Five Year Plan¹⁸ was the inclusion of women's education as one of the major programmes under women and development which was an outcome of the publication of the report of the Committee on the Status of Women In India. The programmes for universalization of elementary education were specially

18. See, Government of India Five Year Plan (1980- 85) , Planning Commission, New Delhi.

directed toward high enrolment and retention of girls in schools. Science teaching in girls' schools and colleges had to be strengthened to achieve greater participation of women in engineering, electronics, agriculture, veterinary, fishery and forestry courses were stressed. Instead of adding more separate womens polytechnics, which were developed as multi-purpose institutions for imparting training in arts, crafts, etc. Coeducational institutions were encouraged as far as possible.

The Seventh Five Year Plan :

It envisaged restricting of the educational programmes and modification of school curricula to eliminate gender bias. Enrolment of girls in elementary and secondary and higher education courses, formal as well as non-formal, has been accorded high priority. At the elementary stage, education has been made free for girls. Sustained efforts are to be made through various schemes and measures to reach 100 percent coverage in elementary education. Efforts are to be made to enrol and retain girls in schools, especially in rural areas (and also to enrol children belonging to SC & ST's). Non-formal elementary education is to be expanded to benefit girls in the age group of 6-14 years. Talented girls are to be encouraged to pursue higher education. It

is also proposed to expand the open learning system, including correspondence courses for them. In order to promote technical and vocational education for girls, more women polytechnics are to be set up and programmes for vocationalization of education are to be expanded.¹⁹

The Eighth Five Year Plan :

In this plan,²⁰ special programmes are to be implemented to complement the general development programmes. The flow of benefits to women in the three core sectors of education, health and employment are to be monitored vigilantly.

The National Policy on Education, 1986 is a land mark in its approach to women's education. It has attempted for the first time to address itself to the basic issues of women's equality. In the section titled "education for women's equality", the policy states:

"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

19. See, Government of India Five Year Plan (1985-90), Planning Commission, New Delhi.

20. See, Government of India Five Year Plan (1992-97), Planning Commission, New Delhi.

play a positive, interactionist role in the empowerment of women. It will foster the development of new values through redesigned curricula, text-books, training and orientation of teachers, decision-makers and administrators".²¹

It has given over riding priority to the removal of women illiteracy and obstacle inhibiting their access to and retention in elementary education. Emphasis has been laid on women's participation in vocational., technical and professional education at different levels and also to promote women's participation in non-traditional occupations and existing and emergent technologies.

So many measures have been suggested to achieve the stated objectives of the National policy on Education (NPE). The action planner enunciated that every educational institutions should take up by 1995 active programmes for the development of women. All teachers and non-formal adult education instructors should be trained as agents of women's development. Special programmes should be developed by research institutions to promote general awareness and positive self-image amongst women through programmes like discussions, street-plays, wall papers, puppet shows etc.

21. As quoted in A.M. Sinha, Women in a Changing Society, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, p.121.

Preference in recruitment of teachers up to school level should be for women.

IV

SALIENT CHARACTERISTICS OF STATED IDEALS

In the previous section we have provided a detailed account of the plans and policies on female education designed by the policy makers of our post-independent India. Emancipation of female sex is crucial for the nation's development and it is realized that education enables women to acquire basic skills and abilities and fosters a value system which is conducive to raising their status in society. However, the salient characteristics of the stated ideals may be briefed as follows :

- Women should be educated to fulfill a two fold duty to the family and society.
- There should be larger opportunities for education of girls and women.
- The percentage of girls who receive education should go up.
- Any type of education open to men should be open to women.

- Task of training women teachers should be approached as a matter of urgency, since the shortage of women teachers was one of the main obstacles in the progress of women's education.
- Special scholarship should be provided to girls and financial consideration should not stand in the way of primary education.
- Need for local community efforts should also be recognized and people should be educated to encourage female education for the societal development.
- And along with, various committees are set up to examine the sociological problems of women's education.

These are the thoughts/ideals document in our texts/policy reports. A major task of empirical sociology is to examine whether these ideals have been implemented. It is also important to examine the actual state of affairs in the arena of female education and reflect on the nature of socio/cultural obstacles to female education. In the next chapter we propose to reflect on these critical questions.

CHAPTER - II

CHAPTER - II

SOCIOLOGY OF FEMALE EDUCATION AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

Having discussed the state of female education in India through ages, this chapter aims to provide the essential empirical information regarding female education such as female illiteracy, drop-outs etc., in order to figure out the level of disparity prevalent between men and women in the existing Indian society. Some of the contemporary sociological writings are also discussed in order to learn the factors that influence the state of women's education in India.

What we intend to analyze here is as follows :

1. Empirical information regarding female education : female illiteracy and drop-out etc.
2. Contemporary sociological writings on female education.
3. New challenges before the nation.

I

EMPIRICAL INFORMATION REGARDING FEMALE EDUCATION,

FEMALE ILLITERACY AND DROPOUT ETC.

Education has been considered as one of the basic instrument for curing the ills of society. The developing

countries placed great emphasis on it and hoped that expansion of education would also bring about greater equality in their societies. Thus, emphasis was placed on the growth of education among all sections of society regardless of caste, creed or sex. As a result, enrolment in educational institutions expanded phenomenally after the achievement of independence in India. All sectors of population shared in this expansion. The disadvantaged sections alongwith women made their entry into education.¹

Common for providing equality to women in education was an integral part of the nation wide social reform movement in pre-independence India. This concern became enshrined in the constitution and has been reaffirmed in various official documents in the post-independence period. As a result, women's education gained momentum after independence. For instance the female literacy rate has been increasing steadily. It increased from 7.93% in 1951 to 39.4% in 1991. Table (a & b) discuss the breakup of crude literacy rate in all details.

1. See Karuna Chanana 'Introduction' in Karuna Chanana (ed.), Socialization Education & Women, New Delhi, Ramson Printers 1988, pp.2.

Table I (a)

**India : Crude Literacy Rates according to the 1981 and 1991
and the 38th and 43rd Round (1983 and 1987-88
respectively) of the NSS**

Major States	Males				Females				Both Sexes			
	1981	1983	1987-87	1991	1981	1983	1987-87	1991	1981	1983	1987-87	1991
Rural Areas												
All India	40.8	45.0	48.4	47.4	18.0	22.0	25.9	25.4	29.7	33.7	37.4	36.7
Andhra Pradesh	32.2	36.7	41.0	40.1	14.1	17.0	20.8	20.8	23.2	26.9	30.9	30.5
Assam	N.A.	57.0	61.1	47.5	N.A.	38.8	44.9	31.9	N.A.	48.5	53.3	40.0
Bihar	34.4	36.2	38.8	38.7	10.2	11.4	14.3	14.6	22.5	23.9	26.7	27.2
Gujarat	47.9	49.3	54.7	56.2	24.1	28.1	31.2	32.8	36.2	39.0	43.1	44.8
Haryana	43.4	49.0	53.7	51.8	15.4	17.3	26.8	27.1	30.3	34.2	41.1	40.2
Himachal Pradesh	51.4	55.6	59.3	60.9	29.4	36.1	38.3	41.9	39.7	45.5	48.8	51.4
Jammu & Kashmir	31.6	37.7	45.1	N.A.	10.5	16.3	23.5	N.A.	21.6	27.4	34.8	N.A.
Karnataka	42.1	42.6	48.6	50.5	19.8	22.0	28.6	29.0	31.0	32.3	38.7	39.6
Kerala	74.1	77.2	80.8	80.0	64.3	69.2	73.0	74.2	69.1	73.0	76.8	77.0
Madhya Pradesh	33.0	38.9	41.6	40.6	9.0	13.4	15.6	15.7	21.2	26.4	28.9	28.5
Maharashtra	51.3	53.7	57.5	57.7	24.9	27.4	32.7	33.8	38.2	40.5	45.2	45.9
Orissa	44.5	46.5	50.7	49.6	18.5	22.3	26.9	25.8	31.5	34.4	38.9	37.8
Punjab	41.9	45.6	52.0	50.5	27.6	32.4	38.1	36.9	35.2	39.4	45.4	44.1
Rajasthan	29.7	34.5	39.0	38.0	5.5	8.0	9.8	9.2	18.0	21.7	24.8	24.2
Tamil Nadu	51.2	55.4	58.8	58.2	25.8	31.0	37.0	36.7	38.6	43.0	48.0	47.6
Uttar Pradesh	35.2	39.6	43.8	41.8	9.5	13.8	17.2	16.0	23.1	27.3	31.2	29.7
West Bengal	43.6	50.6	49.9	50.4	22.1	28.0	30.8	31.4	33.1	39.5	40.6	41.2

Table 1 (b)

Major States	Males				Females				Both Sexes			
	1981	1983	1987-87	1991	1981	1983	1987-87	1991	1981	1983	1987-87	1991
Urban Areas												
All India	65.8	69.5	72.3	69.3	47.8	51.6	55.9	54.5	57.4	61.0	64.6	62.3
Andhra Pradesh	61.9	66.3	69.4	64.9	41.5	46.6	50.5	48.3	52.0	56.6	60.1	56.3
Assam	N.A.	78.8	81.0	74.2	N.A.	72.0	68.1	63.3	N.A.	75.7	75.3	69.2
Bihar	62.5	60.7	64.5	66.1	39.8	36.3	40.6	46.4	52.2	49.2	53.5	57.0
Gujarat	68.6	71.0	74.2	71.4	51.1	54.5	60.4	57.6	60.3	63.3	67.6	64.8
Haryana	64.9	65.9	74.4	68.7	47.3	47.1	57.6	53.5	56.9	57.1	66.6	61.6
Himachal Pradesh	73.3	81.5	82.0	78.4	60.0	65.0	67.5	68.1	67.4	74.3	75.4	73.7
Jammu & Kashmir	53.5	61.7	62.4	N.A.	36.4	42.9	46.6	N.A.	45.9	52.9	55.0	N.A.
Karnataka	65.0	68.4	69.8	70.5	47.8	53.3	56.6	56.3	56.7	61.0	63.4	63.6
Kerala	80.1	83.3	85.7	83.6	72.2	76.2	79.6	78.7	76.1	79.6	82.6	81.1
Madhya Pradesh	64.4	68.5	72.8	67.8	42.2	46.9	54.0	48.7	54.0	58.4	63.9	58.8
Maharashtra	71.8	76.0	78.1	74.9	54.6	59.1	62.7	60.4	63.9	68.1	71.0	68.1
Orissa	65.1	69.6	72.6	69.9	42.7	47.1	53.5	52.0	54.8	58.8	63.7	61.6
Punjab	60.7	65.0	72.1	65.9	49.7	52.4	60.1	56.8	55.6	59.3	66.5	61.6
Rajasthan	60.6	59.7	67.7	64.7	34.4	32.7	40.9	42.0	48.4	46.8	55.1	54.1
Tamil Nadu	72.5	74.3	77.9	75.0	54.0	56.4	62.5	60.9	63.4	65.4	70.4	68.1
Uttar Pradesh	51.7	59.8	60.3	58.0	35.4	40.2	42.7	41.8	45.9	50.6	52.1	50.5
West Bengal	69.1	76.6	76.9	72.0	54.8	65.4	61.9	60.0	62.7	71.0	70.1	66.5

Sources :

1. Census of India 1991, Series 1, India, Paper 2, Provisional Population Totals, pp.93-94.
2. Census of India 1981, Series 1, India, Part II-B(i), Primary Census Abstract, General Population, pp.5-17.
3. National Sample Survey Organization, Results of the Fourth Quinquennial survey on Employment and Unemployment (All India) 43rd Round, Sarvekshana, September 1990, pp.55-58.
4. National Sample Survey Organisation, Thirty-Eighth Round, (January-December 1983), Report No. 341/1 to 341/17.

The enrolment of girls and women at the different levels of education as well as the institutions meant for them showed a steep incline. As against 33 girls for every 100 boys at all levels in 1950-51, their number increased to 55 in 1980-81. The enrolment of girls in all institutions and at all levels of education has gone up from 64 lakhs in 1950-51 to 398.64 lakhs in 1980-81.² Table 2 gives the breakup of enrolment of girls by level and year. It is noticed that their enrolment has been increasing throughout the period from 1950-51 to 1980-81.

So far as higher education is concerned whether one looks at the age specific enrolment of girls at various levels in the schools or at their enrolment in various faculties, they have registered an increase in numbers. The number of women in all faculties per 100 men has been increased from 16 in 1950-51 to 45 in 1980-81. Therefore while the gap between the enrolment of women and men is narrowing, it has not disappeared. Enrolment of men continues to be twice as high as that of women. Again, there is variation in enrolment by faculty. For example, the proportion of women students has increased in some faculties and decreased in others. The decrease in

2. See R.K. Bhandari, Educational Development of women in India, Ministry of Social Welfare, New Delhi 1982, p.33.

enrolment of women in the arts and science faculties is common to men as well. The exception is the decline in the enrolment of girls in medicine.³

Enrolment of Girls per 100 Boys

Year	Primary	Middle	Secondary	College & University General Education
1950-51	39	22	16	16
1960-61	48	35	25	27
1970-71	60	43	37	38
1980-81	65	52	43	45

Source : Karuna Chanana Introduction; Channa (ed.), Socialization, Education and Women, New Delhi, Renson Printers, 1988 pp.7.

However, the proportion of women to men continues to be lower in all faculties. (Table - 3). If one looks at their enrolment in higher education lower in all faculties (Table 2). If one looks of their proportion of girls to total enrolment increased at all levels.⁴ The proportion of women in higher education increased consistently and at a rapid rate till the mid-seventies. Since then, the increase has been so gradual that it has become almost stagnant.⁵

3. See Karuna Ahmad, Equity and Women's Higher Education, in journal of Higher Education, UGC 1979, pp.37, 45.
4. R.K. Bhandari, 'Educational Development of Women in India', Ministry of Social Welfare, New Delhi, 1982.
5. See Karuna Ahmad, 'Equity & Women's Higher Education', In Journal of Higher Education in India, UGC, 1979.

The number of illiterate women per thousand illiterate men has increased from 1055 in 1911 to 1322 in 1981. This gap is higher in states with a higher literacy rate, as for example, there are 1,428 illiterate women per 1000 illiterate men in Kerala, 1,482 in Maharashtra & 1521 in Tamil Nadu. On the other hand educationally backward states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Meghalaya and Nagaland have a lower illiteracy sex ratio.⁶ The literacy rate of women in rural areas is nearly 18 percent while it is almost 48 percent in urban areas. In other words, nearly 82 percent of rural women and 52 percent of women in the urban areas are illiterate. The corresponding figures for men are 49 percent and 34 percent respectively. Again 93 percent of SC women and 91 percent of ST women in the rural areas are illiterate. In the urban areas, the corresponding figures are 73 and 76 percent respectively.⁷

6. Vina Majumdar, Higher Education of Women in India in Journal of Higher Education in India, New Delhi 1985, pp.3-4.

7. See Amita Dighe. "Nonformal Education for Women paper presented at the National Seminar on Education for Women's Equality, New Delhi, Nov. 1985.

According to the 1981 census 80 percent of girls in the 6-14 age group are out of school.⁸ At present, girls comprise 80 percent of the children who are non-enrolled in the 6-14 age group. The age wise breakup of boys and girls who are out of school is given in Table-3 below.

NON ENROLMENT OF CHILDREN

	Boys	Girls (Figures in %)
6-11	20	45
12-14	57	75
15-17	71	85

In one of her recent studies Githa B. Nambissan contends that one of the most striking inequalities that are visible in education in India is the unequal participation of girl children as compared to boys in schools.⁹ She goes on to add that statistics on schooling reveal that despite regional variations the trends are as follows.

A significantly higher percentage of boys in the 5-14 age group attend schools as compared to girls. This holds true across regions and is most pronounced among the poorer and more vulnerable groups.

8. See Majumdar Vina, Education Development & Women's liberation : Contemporary Debates in India, Ghosh, R. & Zacheriahm 1985, pp.13.

9. See Githa B. Nambissan, 'Gender and Education : The Social context of Schooling Girl Children in India', Perspectives in Education' Vol.II, Nos. 3 and 4, 1995, pp.197-198.

- The magnitude of drop-outs among girls from schools is greater than that among boys and this is progressively sharper at each successive stage of education.
- The percentage of children who opt for arts and 'general' courses as compared to science and profession oriented courses, causes which have brighter job opportunities, is higher among girls as compared to boys. The empirical data summed up by her is projected in the form of table in Table - 4.

TABLE - 4

GENDER INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION IN INDIA

	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
1. Literacy rate (1991) *	39.4	63.9	52.1
2. Attending Schools (1981) ** (5-14 years) %			
a General			
Total	34.8	52.9	44.2
Rural	28.4	48.3	38.8
b Scheduled Caste (Rural) ***	17.4	39.2	28.9
3. Enrolment Ratio (1991-92) **** class (VI-VIII)	47.4	74.2	59.2
4. % Persons 5-14 years enrolled in PCE ¹ (1987-88)			
a Rural < Rs. 65	22.7	39.6	--
> Rs. 370	68.1	79.1	--
All	41.1	58.9	--
b Urban < Rs. 90	91.5	92.1	--
> Rs. 700	69.9	76.4	--
All			
5. Dropout from school (1988-89) ***			
Class I-V	49.7	46.7	47.9
Class I-VIII 68.3	59.4	65.4	--

Source :

1 - PCE - Per Capita Expenditure Class (NSSO 1989)

* Census of India 1991

** Census of India 1981

*** Education for All Govt. of India, 1993

**** NSSO 1989. Taken from G. Nambissan. 'Gender & Education in Perspective in Education Vol.II, Nos.3 & 4, 1995.

In general, girls are less likely to be in school in the villages than in urban areas. In the mid sixties, only 16.58 percent of rural girls were enrolled in secondary schools, as against 28.69 per cent in urban areas.¹⁰ In 1964 a committee appointed to investigate the causes for the unsatisfactory state of education for girls in rural areas came to the conclusion that among other things, inadequate women teachers, irrelevant curricula and a lack of adjustment of school time-tables to seasonal requirements resulted in low participation rate.¹¹ Not surprisingly the committee found that the majority of girls outside the system were from the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. Relevant figures show that three times as many women from the general Indian population are literate as compared to their Scheduled Caste counterparts.¹²

Though on the whole, girls' education is lagging behind that of boys, more girls are being educated every year. At the same time, in the higher education sector, girls tend to

10. Figures provided by the Ministry of Education.

11. See the recommendations of the committee to Look into the causes for lack of public support particularly in Rural Areas for Girls' Education and to Enlist Public Cooperation, Ministry of Education 1965.

12. As quoted by Malvika Karleker, Education and Inequality, 1982, pp.223.

be concentrated in certain types of courses : due to an implicit streaming process, girls are enrolled more in the arts, education and nursing courses.

Maithreyi Krishnaraj observed that 'it is obvious that sex role expectations influence choice.¹³ She further established that even when women do go in for science, they are mainly studying courses in home science, psychology, zoology, and botany. Relating a science education to subsequent employment, Krishnaraj concluded that there was a higher degree of involuntary unemployment among women scientists than among men; she felt that this was due either to employers' reluctance in employing women, or the disinclination of an institution to make any allowance for women who have often to combine a home-making role with that of a wage-earner. It is fairly clear, then, that a women scientist is often discriminated against because of her sex. This policy results in a loss of valuable human resources to the wider system.¹⁴

13. See M. Krishnaraj, The status of women in science in India, 'Journal of Higher Education, Spring 1980, Vol.5, No.3, p.388.

14. See Maithreyi Krishnaraj, 'The Status of women in Science in India', Journal of Higher Education Spring 1980 vol.5, No.3 pp.388-9.

Dealing with the same theme, Karuna Ahmad¹⁵ has pointed out that the tendency of women in higher education to be concentrated in arts subjects, education and home science and to some extent in medicine and science indicates that there are certain factors which work against female enrolment in technical institutes, engineering and the basic sciences such as physics and chemistry. She concludes that it is possibly due to various socio-cultural factors or due to discrimination that girls tend to be concentrated in certain courses. Ahmad further hypothesized that the role of male teacher in discouraging girls from applying for male dominated courses cannot be ruled out. Again, role perceptions and self images, developed in early childhood and reinforced in the school, emphasize the role of home maker. If women are to seek employment, the preferred choices are government employment, school teaching and perhaps nursing.¹⁶

The entire question of the education of girls in rural or urban areas, in school or in colleges, is related to whether parents consider it worthwhile to educate their daughters. A late nineteen sixties NCERT Survey of primary

15. See Karuna Ahmad, 'Equity and Women's Higher Education', Journal of Higher Education, Monsoon 1979 Vol.5, No.1, pp.33-49.

16. Ibid, p.59.

and middle school children found that, while the wastage and stagnation rate was 84.7 per cent for girls, it was 75 per cent for boys. Further, 34.4 per cent of girls dropped out of school at the primary level because they were expected to look after younger siblings and do other household chores. It was significant that only 31.2 per cent of the boys left for this reason. At the middle school level the study found that domestic work, marriage, betrothal and parental indifference towards education are relatively more important in the case of girls than in the case of boys. Together, these reasons accounted for 55 per cent of the total wastage among girls at this level.¹⁷

The empirical information regarding female education discussed above do present a clear picture that the aim to provide equality to women in education has not been reached so far. And it needs a lot of reconstructions of the policies, programmes and socio-cultural attitude in order to translate this dream into reality. Recently 'female education in India' has become a major area of concern among the political activists, economists and social scientists and a good amount of sociological writings are dealing with this subject in order to analyze and re-analyze the social

17. NCERT, n.106, p.89.

context of women's education in India and also has come out with valuable suggestions.

II

CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGICAL WRITINGS ON FEMALE EDUCATION

A recent growth area in educational research has been the issue of gender. When educational inequalities were first examined, the effects of being a male or female pupil were not considered relevant to educational performance, even though women have protested about unequal access to education for a long time in history. Inequality between male and female was simply not considered as an issue - reflecting the expected roles of men and women of the time. On the surface the provision of equality of educational facilities for all boys and girls appeared to offer equal opportunities to both. The fact that far fewer girls than boys (as discussed in the previous section) ever enrolled or went on to further higher education was not regarded problematic.

A typical way of organizing the society centred around men has been redefined and reconstructed with the development of a society based on capitalist mode of production. Women are largely excluded from all economic, political and cultural spheres and are concentrated in the

domestic sphere which is certainly considered inferior to the former spheres. This is how women are placed (in a renewed fashion) in the inferior status and their standpoint as a class is silenced in the public sphere - cultural (educational) sphere being no exception. The industrial society, where the relation of ruling is mediated by texts, it has been observed that 'women have been largely excluded from the forms of thoughts and the images and symbols in which thought is expressed and ordered. This is how the tradition is formed.

With the colonial impact and development of print technology, Indian education system has undergone massive transformation and the western ideology and policy are very much reflected in the post-colonial (existing) education system of India as well. Owing its origin to the liberal policy, women are given equal access to avail the educational facilities (as that of men). But the wide gap between the ideology and practice disturbs the social scientists of India today. 61% women's illiteracy rate, massive drop-outs of girl-children from school, weak performance of women students in educational sphere and systematic exclusion of women from many prominent sections of public sphere helps the society to establish the popular belief that women are "naturally" inferior to men and are

inefficient to cope up with the existing system - thus be placed in a lower strata in the hierarchical division of society. But in an industrial society, where the gender division of labour has replaced the sexual division of labour, the consideration of women as inferior to men is the outcome of cultural belief. And our culture does not arise spontaneously, it is manufactured. And it is manufactured by the male members of the society. This androcentrism is very much reflected in the education system as well. Men having the hegemony over the 'cultural capital' forms the system and women are expected to adjust to it. But owing to the traditional setting of the society, the cultural experience of women is entirely different from that of men. Thus, women feel alienated in the existing system as they are treated as 'others' in the politics of education. And their placement in a lower strata (in the hierarchy of education system) is culturally constructed. Various other factors influence the education system to politicize this construct.

These theoretical frameworks have inspired many sociological writings on education of the century. However, most of the Indian sociological writings on female education are committed to the principles of equal opportunities. And much of these research works not only demonstrate that

inequalities exist, but reveals the processes in schools and society at large which discriminate against pupils on the basis of gender. The works in this field are increasingly policy oriented - that is it seeks to influence the educational policy makers in order to achieve real equality in the education system, proposing specific measures to counteract the effects of gender conditioning. Few of the eminent sociological works are discussed in brief details as follows.

On female Education : Jean Dreeze & Amartya Sen:¹⁸

According to Dreeze and Sen, the expansion of female literacy in the twentieth century (and particularly after independence) is a positive development. But they go on to add that, in comparative international terms, however, India's record in this respect remains dismal. For instance, the available estimates suggest the adult female literacy is higher even in Sub-Saharan Africa than in India.

They blame the poor functioning of India's schooling system as one reason for the persistence of endemic female illiteracy. In this connection, it is important to stress

18. See Jean Dreeze & Amartya Sen 'India : Economic Development and Social opportunity' Oxford University Press 1997. (pp.132-134).

that the failure of government primary schools in large parts of India is not gender neutral, especially in rural areas. A common response of parents to the poor functioning or non-functioning of a government run village school is to send their sons to study in other villages or in private schools. But the same response is far less common in the case of girls, because parents are often reluctant to allow their daughters to wander outside the village, or to pay the fees that would be necessary to secure their admission in a private school. The break down of a government village school typically affects female children more than male children."

However, Dreeze & Sen clarified that the low levels of female education in India are not exclusively due to the poor functioning of the schooling systems. Field investigations indicate that, even when local teaching standards are relatively good, male participation in education is usually much higher than female participation. The problem of low parental motivation for female education needs attention on its own, in addition to the issue of poor functioning of the schooling system.

'The low value attached to female education in much of India links with some deep rooted features of gender relations' - as is said by Dreeze and Sen. And in their

work they have figured out three of these links which have been widely observed.

First, the gender division of labour (combined with patrilineal property rights) tends to reduce the perceived benefits of female education. In rural India, a large majority of girls are expected to spend most of their adult life in domestic work and child rearing (and possibly some family labour in agriculture). It is in the light of these social expectations about the adult life of women that female education appears to many parents to be somewhat 'pointless.' Of course, female education can bring immense benefit even within the limited field of domestic work and child rearing, but these benefits don't always receive adequate recognition.

Second, the norms of patrilocal residence and village exogamy (requiring a woman to settle in her husband's village at the time of marriage, in effect forcing her to sever most links with her own family), prevalent in large parts of India, have the effect of further undermining the economic incentives which parents might have to send their daughters to schools. Since an Indian girl is but a sojourn

in her own family,'¹⁹ as Sudhir Kakar aptly puts it, the investments that parents make in the education of a daughter primarily 'benefit' other, often distant households. This can strongly reduce the perceived value of female education, at least from the point of view of parental self-interest. The perception is neatly summed up in such popular sayings as "bringing up a daughter is like watering a plant in another's courtyard."²⁰

Third, the practice of dowry and the ideology of hypergamous marriage (it being thought best that a woman should marry 'up' in the social scale), also influential in large parts of India, can turn female education into a liability. If an educated girl can only marry a more educated boy, and if dowry payments increase with the education of the groom, then given other things, an educated girl is likely to be more expensive to marry off. There is some evidence that this pre-occupation is quite real for many parents.

19. See for example Sudhir Kakar "Inner world", Oxford Univ. Press, Delhi, 1978.

20. As quoted by Leela Dube. Construction of Gender, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1988, p.168.

Missing Girls in Schools : Maithreyi Krishnaraj & Neera Desai :21

M. Krishnaraj and Neera Desai observed a number of reasons which keep girls away from school. Important among these are (i) the high opportunity cost of education in relation to the poverty of families (ii) social factors such as early marriage and a widespread belief in female seclusion, increasing the demand for girls schools and women teachers and (iii) discriminatory processes of work within the school system itself. As explained further : (i) The high opportunity cost of education: The existence of poor families is heavily dependent on the work of children and of women. In such a situation, the returns on education - which normally means a few years of schooling - are low. Being in school means foregoing the opportunity to earn or help in the home, thereby leasing adults for productive activity. In poverty situation, the costs in real terms are too high and schooling is seen as a poor investment which provides no definite access to better employment. Further, more girls than boys are employed at an early age and if there is a question of choices, boys are more likely to be

21. See M. Krishnaraj & N. Desai, 'Women & Society in India', Ajanta, Publication, New Dlehi, p.162-167.

given the option of a few years of schooling : it is hoped that it may improve employment chances.

(ii) Social factors :

One important social factor affecting participation in education is early marriage. Though girls now marry at an average age of 17, pre-pubertal and child marriages are not uncommon. Increasingly, among the middle class, an educated, if not employed daughter is an asset in a competitive marriage market; however, there are certain limitations to the nature and extent of education as well as to the kind of employment to which girls can have access. A survey sponsored by the Committee on the Status of Women in India revealed some significant attitudes to the education of girls. While a statement that girls should not be given any education at all was categorically rejected by the majority, many felt that higher education for girls was not necessary. Parent's willingness to send girls to school depended on whether certain facilities are available such as more girls' schools, more women teachers and nearness of schools to their homes, better transport and toilet facilities while the latest government document states that 95 per cent of the population is within a kilometer of a primary school and 80 per cent has the same facility as far as middle school is concerned. The same document states the lack of vital

facilities in schools such as potable water, buildings, black boards and so an. The document also noted that through the rural sector caters to a much larger segment of the population, relative expenditure on this sector is comparatively much lower than the money spent on urban schools. Nor is it that schools in the towns and cities are all well equipped; however, the question of facilities acquires particular importance in rural India as it is linked to the urgent need to reach out to village girls.

(iii) Discrimination within schools :

The issues relating to the education of girls clearly don't end with ensuring a higher rate of enrolment in schools : there are certain processes within the school which work to reinforce stereotyped notions of what it means to be a girl. While some influences are more subtle than others, the end product is a perpetuation of inequality between the sexes. M. Krishnaraj & Neera Desai have dealt with two specific aspects of the inner life of the school in order to discuss this inequality, namely the content matter of text books and the access of girls to certain kinds of courses. And by citing enough examples and experimental evidence, they proved that the school curriculum is highly male-centered where girls tend to feel alienated. And also

societal restrictions are far more evident in choosing their courses for a girl than for a boy.

The Social Context of Schooling Girl Children : Geetha B. Nambissan²²

In one of her recent works, Geetha B. Nambissan observes that in order to understand the dynamics of schooling girl children today it is important to relate their participation in schools to broader socio-cultural and economic structures which sustain gender inequalities. Such structures, for instance the organization of production and sexual division of labour, pattern of inheritance, social institutions and cultural practices, which devalue the position of women are likely to impinge on the status of girl children and constrain their access to education and other opportunities. She focuses specifically on social processes within the family and school that have implications for the education of girls.

The family and gender socialization :

Gender roles are learned largely through the process of socialization wherein individuals internalize norms, values and attitudes and expectations of the society, community and

22. See Geetha B. Nambissan, 'Gender and Education : The Social Context of Schooling Girl Children in India', 1995. Perspectives in Education Vol.II, Nos 3 and 4.

social groups to which they belong. Socialization is an interactive process, the earliest and most important part of which takes place within the family. Research suggests that from the moment of birth, parents and elders interact with the child on the basis of perceived gender and organize socialization processes accordingly. Certain behavior patterns are expected of each sex (and what is socially approved varies in different classes and cultures). "Children learn that acting and thinking in ways appropriate to their sex meets with approval" says Chapman.

Girls find that they are considered relatively fragile and in need of protection and that grace, nurturance, obedience and performance of domestic tasks is smiled upon. Boys on the other hand are seen as strong, needing activity and less dependent. Aggression and assertiveness usually discouraged among girls is approved of as a sign of masculinity among boys.

The division of labour within the family also forcefully brings home to children gender differences in roles and status of their significant others. Children observe that with the roles of mother and father go distinctly different tasks which are also evaluated differently. Toys, stories and games also serve to communicate to children subtle (and often not so subtle)

messages of culturally approved qualities of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. The media is also found to be increasingly important in the construction of gender identity. Considerable emphasis is placed on the stereotypical images of men and women that are conveyed particularly by the visual media.

She also points out that gender relations are mediated through economic and social structures, cultural norms and expectations regarding women's roles, and hence gender socialization, is likely to vary across social strata.

In urban middle class and professional families cultural norms and expectations in relation to women are likely to be less rigid and gender roles relatively more flexible than the traditional ideal. However, even in such families, gender based socialization patterns can be easily discerned in the tendency of parents to assign 'work outside the home' to boys and tasks within the home such as 'helping in the kitchen' and 'washing' up to girls.

Among the poorer strata, gender norms are mediated by their material circumstances and are translated into concrete economic roles and responsibilities for women and girl children. Among the rural poor, women have always participated in the labour force primarily as marginal workers. This is in addition to domestic duties, child care

and meeting the family's energy and water requirements. Caste and community membership often dictate the nature of women's work as well as the case with which survival tasks can be carried out. With the increase in poverty and ecological degradation, the burden of women's work is adversely affected. Research studies and National Sample Survey reports suggest that young girl children below the age of 14 are not nearly engaged in sibling care but contribute substantially to the collection of fire wood, water and fodder as well. They also participate in cultivation, wage labour and household industry.

The reality of the economic situation in poorer household has profound implications for the socialization of little girls. For them the internationalization of the female role is far harsher than those who belong to the middle and upper classes. The latter, immersed in dolls and kitchen sets, spend a considerable part of their girlhood in the world of make believe.

It has also been observed that the approval given to feminine qualities in the socialization of girl children results in their learning towards, 'passivity and diffidence' which undermines confidence in school and expectations of success. Toys given to girls such as dolls, pots and pans help maintain a link with women's 'domestic

roles' and constrain their perceptions of future role options.²³ On the other hand the tendency towards greater vocalization with infant girls, it is felt, particularly explain the relatively greater verbal abilities that researchers have found in them as compared to boys. For boys the pattern of socialization encourage autonomy, independence and confidence, qualities that facilitate academic achievement.

Classroom Processes and Gender Inequity :

It has been observed that children enter schools' with well developed idea of what constitutes 'correct' male and female behaviour. Bourdieu for instance notes that "children by the age of five are able to categorize sex appropriate behaviours and have begun to value those attitudes and behaviors associated with their own sex."²⁴

The pre-school socialization of girls into passivity, obedience and willingness to please is seen by scholars to better equip them to play 'the students role' as compared to boys. However, as girls are better behaved in school than boys they tend to receive less of the teachers' attention

23. See, Frazier, N. and Sadkar, M. 'Sexism in School and Society', New York : Harper and Row, 1973.

24. See. Bourdieu, Sex Roles and Social Patterns, p.25.

and in the process are often marginalized in class rooms. On the contrary it has been observed that efforts of teachers are usually geared to sustain the interests of more noisy male pupils and class room activities are structured around their interests. Again, reinforcement by teachers is seen to vary for girls and boys. Boys are rewarded more for their academic work while girls receive greater appreciation for conformity, acquiescence and being 'good'. It is suggested that girls consciously conform to gender stereotypes in their efforts to seek social approval particularly that of teachers. Scholars have noted that expectation of teachers of 'feminine behaviour' from female pupils tend to constrain their participation in the classroom, academic achievement as well as their future expectations of success.

Gender based expectation of teachers can also be seen in the allocation of tasks within the classroom. For instance flower arrangement, cleaning up, and putting things neatly away is usually assigned to the girls. Boys on the other hand may be more readily asked to perform tasks that are seen as requiring 'strength', such as lifting heavy articles or technical skills for instance fixing lights' and so on. These attitudes and stereotypes which may underlie classroom interaction comprise part of the hidden curriculum

of schools that tend to further reinforce identities as roles and females among children.

Towards the end of school when curricular choices are made (i.e. at the secondary stage) it is observed that girls tend to cluster in the more 'feminine' arts and humanities courses while boys are found in greater numbers in 'career oriented science and commerce streams. The subject choices of girls thus reveal striking gender inequity in education which severely constrains future options and life chances.

Socialization Education and Women : Karuna Chanana²⁵

Karuna Chanana's work is committed to the principle of equal opportunities and it has focussed on the effects of early socialization and the education system. It points out the existing inequalities and also underscores the process which differentiate between students on the basis of gender in the school.

Socialization in the context of women seems to be heavily weighted in favour of tradition, and the social institution of family, kinship and marriage. It is closely intertwined with the process of role socialization of boys and girls which eventually leads to the dichotomising of masculine and feminine roles or to gender asymmetry.

25. See Karuna Chanana (ed), 'Socialization Education and Women,' Renson Printers, N. Delhi, 1988.

Cultural and social differences are seen to be based on biological differences and therefore viewed as 'natural'. In this way the difference between the biological, the natural and the social is obliterated through the process of value internalization within the sacred confines of the family and kinship group. These are further reinforced through religious ideology, myth and rituals.

Educational institutions reflect and reinforce these differences between men and women in various ways. This is seen first in the organization of separate schools and classes for boys and girls. Secondly, through the context of their syllabi in which the dichotomy of masculine and feminine roles is projected. Thirdly, through the organization of subjects and extra-curricular activities in a manner so that girls are taught different subjects from boys. For example, girls are not encouraged to study science; they are not allowed to play football even in co-educational schools. The informal views and comments of teachers (i.e., by their socialization) as to what boys and girls ought to do, are another influence.

In this formal setting, the teachers, the organisers of the educational institutions, the writers of text books and all those involved with the running of the educational institution constitute components of a complex whole. The

socialization of the girls and women within the formal institutions is a variable by itself. Together, these gives rise to perceptions, views and images of women that are presumably not and perhaps cannot be taken into account within the formal structure of the organization of schools, their curricula and their various activities.

However, schools operate to maintain and perpetuate gender relations in subtle ways thereby reinforcing the socializing values and norms. For instance, the organization of the schools assumes that boys and girls have different needs and interests based on sex. These are referred to as 'gender codes'. As such, from the time of registration itself boys and girls are treated differently. Registration, seating arrangements in the class room, organization of games (boys play foot ball and girls swing) choosing of subjects (domestic science and needle work for girls, crafts for boys) - all take the sex of the students into consideration. Teachers refer to students as 'boys' or 'girls' rather than as 'children,' and they are encouraged not to compete. Moreover, students see men in authority positions and leadership roles in most schools. Even in co-educational schools they find women teachers in the junior section and men in the senior section. All these

gender typed arrangements reinforce social stereotypes and their expectations from education.

Schooling perpetuates sexual division of labour in other more subtle ways too. For example, the organization of working hours in most jobs is not compatible with the domestic role of women. Therefore, teaching remains most compatible with feminine roles and therefore girls take to teacher's training. This in turn, perpetuates the sexual division of labour - by delimiting labour force participation of women to certain jobs and by excluding them from certain others. On the basis of a study of eleven societies, Bourguigman ~~man~~ concludes that even salaried jobs for educated women and such work opportunities in the public sector for women who previously didn't have them does not necessarily give them greater freedom or increase their power, authority or status.

This assumes special significance for girls since in their case the social and the educational functions are seen as one, whereas in the case of boys these functions are separated. Education is expected to perform a function for boys which is quite a part from their social role while it is expected to reinforce the social role of girls which is seen as that of a housewife and a mother.

Reluctance towards girls education: Malvika Karleker:²⁶

In her work 'Education and Inequality' Karleker points out that it is not merely a lack of facilities but also attitudes conditioned by the socio-economic environment which hinder the schooling of girls. Talking to Bhangi women in a Delhi basti she observes that while mothers were aware of the relationship between mobility and education, economic pressures, a fear of discrimination as well as a basic conservativeness towards girls' education, resulted in more sons than daughters being in school. Almost three quarters of the mothers of sons wanted them to complete their education, whereas 50 percent of those with daughters admitted that their girls had not studied beyond class I. In addition, there were six families out of a total of 80 where sons were being educated while their sisters were at work as sweepers. A mother whose daughters were working felt that there was 'no point in wasting money on daughters' education.' An educated bride was no asset: 'She will get big ideas and be beaten by her husband if she refuses to go into our traditional occupation.'

26. See Malvika Karlekar, 'Education and Inequality'.

NEW CHALLENGES BEFORE THE NATION

The examination of the empirical information and research studies on female education in India projects a clear picture that treating women as a discriminated strata is the product of the existing patriarchal ideology in India. And one of the major aims of the modern education system, enriched with the liberal policies, is to minimize inequality. But the gap between the suggested policies and the prevailing practices is clearly seen in the empirical informations provided in section-I of this chapter. The education system does not seem to have freed itself from the dominant patriarchal ideology and has reduced itself to function as a part of the larger social system where "treating women as a subordinate and inferior strata" is considered only but natural.

However, this disparity prevalent in the education system owes ones its origin to various factors which may be broadly characterized as follows.

Economic : The differential gender division of labour in the society plays a deciding role in women's representation in education system. A typical way of organizing the society centered around men has been redefined and reconstructed with the development of a

society based on capitalist mode of production. The dichotomy in the industrial society is based on gender division of labour (in contrast to the agrarian or primitive societies based on sexual division of labour) where the public (economic, social and cultural) sphere is considered as the sphere of men and women are concentrated in the private (domestic) sphere. As the existing education system falls in the category of public (cultural) sphere women's participation in this system is considered as unnecessary and thus, devalued.

Social: It owes its origin to the traditional setting of Indian society where early marriage, pattern of inheritance (mostly patrilineal), social institutions and cultural practices which devalue the position of women, poverty etc., are seen to have adversely effected the status of girl children and limit their access to education and other opportunities.

Role of schools : Schools seem to internalize this patriarchal ideology and operates to maintain and perpetuate gender relations in subtle ways thereby reinforcing the socializing values and norms. For instance, the organization of the school assumes that boys and girls have different needs and interests based on sex. And this is reflected everywhere in the school sphere - school

curriculum, teachers' attitude, differential role expectations from boys and girls, seating arrangement etc.

The above summary presents the salient features (based on the findings of the social scientists discussed in the previous section) of the unequal treatment of women in the existing education system in India.

The above discussion projects that the ideology of patriarchy present in the existing society plays a deciding role in determining the position of women in society. Women are given a restricted role to play in the society and often it has been the case that women are absent, ignored, relegated in some discipline - to limited areas, and are commonly misrepresented. Their freedom is curtailed and restrictions are imposed on their decision making power in order to safeguard the inherent patriarchal ideology present in the society. This distorted visibility of women is culturally constructed in order to protect the hegemony of men in the society. Certain modernizing forces such as education system seem to have its contributions in maintaining this status quo.

Education as a liberating force seems to be losing its meaning in case of women due to their lack of accessibility to it or the discrimination experienced within the system

itself. And in order to uplift her status in the social stratification, Indian woman needs to recognise her own potentiality and power and act collectively to achieve the goal. 'Women's resistance to male domination should be the basic aim of the feminist struggle and it needs to be recognized within the framework of the existing education system.

All that we have examined so far tends to suggest that it is patriarchy that poses a real threat to the democratic aspirations that as a modern nation Post-Independent India Cherished. The fact is that, despite the rich history of our freedom struggle and despite India's experiments with modern democracy, the patriarchal structure with modern democracy, the patriarchal structure has not been overcome. patriarchy, it has to be realized, creates a mind-set that is inherently hierarchical, dualistic and oppressive. It seeks to silence the voices of women; it isolates women from the public sphere of work and knowledge; it privileges men and subjugates women. Patriarchy is not just an institution that exists out there; patriarchy is often internalized.

That's why, it needs perpetual self-search; it needs new sensitivity, particularly on the part of women to resist the monologue of patriarchy and realize the libertarian

potential of education and rescue it from the oppression of patriarchy.

Perhaps despite these real obstacles, Indian women are struggling, resisting and acquiring new sensitivity. It is with this optimistic vision that we have tried to examine how school girls in our own times are relating to education.

CHAPTER - III

CHAPTER - III

EDUCATION AND DYNAMICS OF CONSCIOUSNESS : INSIGHTS FROM A SCHOOL

Having examined the social reality of female education in India by analyzing the socio-historical perspective, the empirical information and sociological writings on female education in the previous chapters, this chapter intends to gather and explore some first hand knowledge regarding the relevance of school education in a girl's life. It attempts to do so by probing how the utility of school education is perceived by girl-students.

For this purpose I have chosen the Central School, JNU Campus. And I have studied the experiences of 30 girls between the age group of 14-18. Before I reflect on the findings, it is necessary to understand the significance of this empirical venture.

Technically speaking, this is not a rigorous field study. Instead, it can be described as an exercise that sensitizes about the field. That's why a small/limited endeavour of this kind has got its limits. Nevertheless, it is important to realize that even a limited endeavour of this kind, because of its field sensitization, gives us some fresh insights about the reality of female education. And

it also helps us to throw new lights on the existing literature on female education.

The method that I have adopted is simple. I have chosen 30 students at random. I have initiated a dialogic conversation with them.¹ Our conversation lasted for about one hour to two each. The entire exercise was done during 8th January 1998 to 16th March 1998. The social/economic background of the students is as follows.

TABLE - 1

CASTE DISTRIBUTION

CASTE	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Upper Castes	16	53.33%
Other Backward Castes	12	40%
SC/ST	2	6.66%
Total	30	100%

The table - 1 shows that 53.33% respondents belonged to upper castes; 40% of the respondents were from other backward castes where as 6.66% respondents were from schedule castes/schedule tribes.

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1. Refer to the Appendix, for interview schedule put up for interview.

TABLE - 2

DISTRIBUTION ON THE BASIS OF ECONOMIC STATUS

PARENTS' INCOME (PER MONTH)	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Poor (Below 5000)	3	10%
Middle class (Between 5000-10,000)	18	60%
Rich (10,000 and above)	9	30%
Total	30	100%

The table 2 shows that 10% of the respondents were from poor background; 60% from middle class family where as 30% were rich.

Essentially, through the conversation I sought to gather their experiences with school education. In order to systematize my findings, I have classified, their experience :- the experiences narrated in the next section.

I

SCHOOL GIRLS AND THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH EDUCATION

Now we intend to understand the views of interviewed girl students regarding school education and its essentiality in their lives as girls. The qualitative analysis on the basis of findings may be provided as follows:

(I) Relevance of School education in a girl's life.

All the thirty respondents recognize the importance of school education in their lives. And all of them feel that "school going" essentially makes one a better placed and more cultured human being besides the specific utilities pointed out individually.

Most of the respondents (28) view that school education broadens one's horizon. First of all education teaches one how to read and write. "That provides us with ample opportunities to read more and more about the world around and learn many things which would have been nearly impossible to know otherwise. Reading makes me a better human being as well. Mother Teresa's life story has influenced me to such an extent that I dream of becoming like her one day. At least I want to devote my life for social cause." Puspanjali,² one of the respondents asserted.

School education makes one aware of his/her rights and duties. Education teaches a girl that all human beings are equal and one should always fight for equality of opportunity. "Being a girl doesn't bother me much, ^u ~~u~~ like my uneducated counterparts, now that I know I am equally

2. Puspanjali Raina, a student of Class-XI-E Central School JNU Campus, was interviewed on January 28, 1998.

capable to struggle for my rights, and achieve any thing I want in life." Bipasha,³ who aspires to become an MBA in future, points out.

School guides one in choosing her career. Education makes one better equipped to opt for more prestigious and lucrative jobs. "It is very important to be financially independent in order to have a say in the society and lead a life of my own." Ritu Kaushal,⁴ a commerce student, does not seem to compromise with a dependent and job less life. "My mother has never been to school. She is a "mere" house wife. I empathize with her, but I cannot imagine a life shut within the boundaries of four walls. There is a much larger world beyond this. Education expands our out look."

School education makes one more confident and competent. "Now we are at a stage to compete with boys." Divya,⁵ the head girl of her section remarks. "Like, for example, I always make it a point to supercede boys. If in my section, I or any other girl comes first it is alright. But I cannot take it if a boy comes first (It was found out

3. Bipasha Banerjee (WB), a student of Class IX-C Central School JNU Campus was interviewed on January 14, 1998.

4. Ritu Kaushal (HP), a student of Class XI-B was interviewed on February 11, 1998.

5. Divya Seth is the headgirl of Class - XI-E Central School, JNU Campus. Interviewed on January 14, 1998.

that in this section, girls in average perform much better than that of boys). In order to justify her envy, she added, "after all, they have to pay for their past mistakes." It has been a tendency with the boys to show girls as inefficient and inferior. "We need to prove that we are much better than their lot." A very vocal and confident Vidya goes on.

School also helps in better socialization. Most of the respondents point out that we mix with children from different parts of India and learn their culture and lifestyles. It indeed makes one more accommodative and adjustive.

However, not all respondents believe that school education helps boys and girls equally in striving for a life they want for themselves. To quote Minakshi,⁶ "I don't think education could help me in anyway in finding a career. My parents plan to get me married off after my schooling where as my brothers will continue with higher education. I've to be obedient, after all how can one disobey one's parents." A timid Minakshi succumbs. "But I am happy that at least I will be able to teach my children how to read and

6. Minaksi Vasta (Haryana), a student of Class-IX-B was interviewed on February 5, 1998.

write." However, Minakshi recognizes the importance of education in bringing up the younger generation. "It is impossible to convince people of our society that a girl is equally capable of reaching the height like any other boy." Geetha,⁷ another girl remarks.

Respondents were equally vocal in pointing out the loopholes of school education system. Girls need to be given equal opportunities to participate in all kind of sports like that of boys, most of them point out. The kind of education we are getting is quite bookish. We should be taught to deal with practical problems as well. Some of them comment Education system may be made more interesting and innovative. "We should be encouraged to read all kinds of books besides text books and should be given projects to work on." Sweta,⁸ who aims to write her autobiography, was quick to add.

(II) How She looks at teachers : their biases etc.

The instant reaction to this question was that "teachers treat all of us 'almost' equally." They are like role models for them (students) and none of them intends to

7. Geetha V. (AP) a student of , Class-XI-D was interviewed on January 20, 1998.

8. Sweta Tyagi (UP), a student a headgirl of Class IX-B was interviewed on 6 February, 1998.

be critical about their teachers. Teachers are the source of inspiration - as most of the respondents point out. And they teach us how to be assertive and articulate. They also teach us how to inculcate good habits and manners.

However, some of them (4) reluctantly hint at few 'exceptions' in teachers' attitudes towards girls.

In sports periods teachers' attitude is most explicit. Girls are not expected to participate much in out door games. Games like 'football' and cricket are exclusively for boys. There is no such provision for girls to play these games. "Most of the girls don't participate in games and just sit and gossip in these periods and teachers don't say anything." Arpita,⁹ the vice-captain of the school, sincerely disapproves. "Sports and games are essential for one's physical fitness. How can one just omit such an important issue?" She would add.

"I am in scouts and guides, and though our teacher doesn't make it obvious, when ever we go for a camp, he makes it a point to take more boys alongwith. More boys means more protection. And girls need more protection. It makes me feel so inferior - school cannot do anything

9. Arpita Motilal (WB), a student of Class-XI-F, was interviewed on February 3, 1998.

independently unless the general attitude toward girls does not change." Purnima,¹⁰ gave an insightful answer.

In SUPW periods, the stereo typical role expectations are manifested more bluntly. Girls are taught to cook or stitch where as boys go for gardening or painting. "I don't follow the logic." Bipasha,¹¹ would complain, "I would rather like to paint than cook. Why is it compulsory for a girl to learn cooking where as we just let the boys go?" The grievances against learning household works 'meant for girls' is reflected in most of the answers given by the respondents.

"Our Hindi teacher would often insist us to behave in a particular manner because we are girls. We need to be coy, docile and submissive by nature. Girls should not be aggressive and out going." Isha,¹² would figure out. It is expected that girls should be well mannered and possess good character. Teachers are not that particular about boys. Some of the respondents remark.

10. Purnima Sahni (Punjab), a student of Class IX-A was interviewed on 22 January 22, 1998.

11. Bipasha Banerjee (WB) is a student of Class IX-C was interviewed on January 14, 1998.

12. Isha Dutta (Punjab), a student of XI-D was interviewed on January 16, 1998.

But teachers always encourage the talented lot to do well in studies. Even sometimes teachers treats girls in a better manner than boys. For example, punishment is often much more severe for boys than that of girls." Some of the respondents celebrate their treatment as 'delicate' and 'mild' with such excitement.

(III) The tension/relationship she sees between school knowledge and family ethos

There was a mixed response to this question. Most of the respondents realize, there is a difference between school knowledge and family ethos. However, the experiences and intensity of response vary in degree.

A major portion of respondents (barring 3) acknowledge that they get enough of support from their families to continue with and do well in their studies. And also, parents encourage them to find a career for their own and be independent. "I consider myself very lucky as my parents give me all kind of support to excel in my studies. They give me all their attention and I owe all my success to them. I never feel discriminated". Divya,¹³ the topper of her section, answers. But after a pause, she adds, "may be

13. Divya Seth, a student of Class-XI-E was interviewed on January 14, 1998.

because I don't have a brother, that's why I don't know the difference." With the course of discussion she would go on "... But some of my friends complain that at home parents treat boys and girls differently. Even in my village in Gujarat girls are not allowed to do so many things unlike boys. Girls out there are not very career minded like us. It's not their fault you see, if you don't give them opportunities how will they prosper?" She further clarifies.

"At home and society outside school premises, things are quite different." Most of the girls agree. In school, boys and girls are treated almost equally. But at home there are a lot of 'restrictions on physical mobility of girls.' 'My mother does not like it when I go out in the evening to play' An irritated Navketi,¹⁴ reacts. "My brothers don't face such hurdles." In school, girls are equally taught to be independent and have a career for themselves. Which means going out and mixing with people. These kind of restrictions at the home front limits one's horizon. The respondents recognize.

14. Navketi (Haryana), a student of Class XII-F, was interviewed on January 22, 1998.

Another most pointed out response among girls is that of division of labour on the basis of gender. At home these things are obvious. Girls are expected to cook, do the cleaning part and in some cases take care of their younger siblings. Boys on the other hand are expected to do the 'outside' work like marketing. But the unfortunate part is that though girls do most of the household work, their position is not given much importance. "We are three sisters and we do most of the household work. But our father keeps complaining that if he had a son, he would have been of great help. He feels that it would have been great if we were sons instead. I feel so degraded sometimes. They should understand that girls are equally capable like boys. In my family my parents just want that we get married so that they will get rid of us. It is very derogatory, but the worst thing is that we have to live with it." Ritu¹⁵ discloses.

'Role-expectations from girls are quite different from that of boys. "My mother would insist that I should be a bit less aggressive and submissive. She wants me to be passive and listen to people rather than arguing and proving my own point. At school we are expected to be out-going and

15. Ritu Jha (Bihar) a student of Class IX-D was interviewed on February 6, 1998.

vocal sometimes I get tensed. She is a nice lady and I don't wish to hurt her. But she has those typical 'house wife' qualities. And I am a career oriented person. I need to be assertive and vocal in order to get ahead in life." Chayanika¹⁶ hesitates. Most of the respondents more or less agree with this kind of role expectation from family members which confuse them about their status and position. Vandana¹⁷ adds, "I live in a joint family and everybody at home thinks that girls should be obedient and stay at home rather than go out and mix with boys. I don't like it when they impose their views on my decision making ability. They say, girls shouldn't aim too high, it would hamper her family life. They also want me to be proficient in household work. I don't like it but quite often I have to listen to them and worse still, obey them. What's the point if we are getting good marks in schools if we are not allowed to lead the kind of life we want."

The responses give an impression that girls face more stress coping up with these conflicting situations between home and school expectations than that of boys. Though most

16. Chayanika Singh Vatti (Punjab), a student of Class-IX-G, was interviewed in January 16, 1998.

17. Vandana Kashyap (Punjab), a student of Class-IX-G, was interviewed in January 30, 1998.

of the girls (28) feel that they are privileged in many ways, but it is acknowledged that "girls are the discriminated lot" and at the home front the discrimination is much more explicit and the family ethos hamper their potentialities to meet the demands of the school education.

(IV) Whether she attaches any gendered meaning to career/professions:

Most of the respondents appear to be very ambitious and optimistic about their career and life at large. And they deny that gender has any role to play in their opting for a profession. Though they acknowledge that 'being a girl does make a difference', they don't seem to bow down, and are quite convicted to achieve their goal 'inspite of all odds.' They don't seem to think about their career options on the basis of gender, though implicitly in their minds, they are quite aware of the hazards they are going to face being a part of the women species. "I know life would have been easier (if not easy) if I were a boy. But no point cribbing over circumstances we cannot change. We need to have the courage to move ahead in life inspite of our limitations." Geeta,¹⁸ who wants to become a pilot, confidently adds.

18. Geeta Soni, a student of Class-IX-G was interviewed on February 27, 1998.

The idea of sacrificing a career for the smooth functioning of the family was rejected curtly by most of the respondents. "It sounds preposterous to give up one's job in order to meet family demands. Life is going to be hard for a career minded woman, but sacrifices don't solve the problem." Jeanett,¹⁹ who is preparing herself for the engineering entrances opines. "Career is more important for me than family's wellbeing." Bipasha's,²⁰ (whose main aim in life is to become an MBA) priorities in life is entirely different from that of her mother or grandmother as she points out. "My husband should co-operate in taking care of the household works. Time is changing and I am quite hopeful. In extreme situation, we might keep a maid servant to look after the household work." An otherwise independent minded Arpita,²¹ who wants to become a successful administrator, replies.

Some of the respondents apprehend marriage as an obstacle in their freedom and rule out the possibility of

19. Jeanett Joy (Kerala), a student of Class-XI-G, was interviewed on January 28, 1998.

20. Bispasha Banerjee (WB), a student of Class IX-C, was interviewed on January 14, 1998.

21. Arpita Motilal (WB), a student of Class XI-F, was interviewed on February 3, 1998.

marriage in their lives. To quote Prajna,²² "Life becomes so very monotonous. You get married, have kids and spend ~~most~~ most of your life looking after them and the rest of the family." "I am a completely career oriented person, and I wish to devote my life to my career. Being married means an added responsibility which, I am afraid, I won't be able to manage." Archana,²³ who aspires to become a doctor, recognizes that 'marriage restricts opportunities'. However, among the exceptional few was Manasi who is ready to sacrifice her career if need be. "It is always expected that women should take more responsibilities of family than of men. We need to live up to society's expectations." She is ready to compromise. To quote Shivani,²⁴ who wishes to become an airhostess. " I will quit the job after marriage. A happy family life is more important for me than a career. Often it is seen that women who work outside are unable to manage both the front."

22. Prajna Khunteta (Rajasthan), a student of Class XI-E, was interviewed on January 21, 1998.

23. Archana (Haryana), a student of Class - IX-B, was interviewed on February 9, 1998.

24. Shivani Sehgal (Punjab) a student of Class IX-F was interviewed on March 3, 1998.

V) Her expectations from life : whether education in a way enables her to challenge gender differentiated role expectations

All the respondents under study wish for themselves 'a happy and successful life.' And the importance of school education in shaping their lives and thoughts has been acknowledged by all. As Bhawna²⁵ puts it 'I wish to lead a successful life. And education plays an important role in what I am today and what I am looking forward to. And yes, educated people are always better off (in many ways) and if girls are educated, they can have a say and interfere in society's stereotypical role expectations, and, if capable enough, may bring about some changes. Society and its expectations have been changing anyway and I am quite optimistic about a better tomorrow."

According to some respondents, education introduces them to the world 'outside'. They are now aware of the fact that they are capable of much greater things in life than doing household chores. To quote Kiran,²⁶ "...Education has played a vital role in shaping my ambitions. Being

25. Bhavna Kutreti (Uttar Pradesh), a student of Class-IX was interviewed on February 16, 1998.

26. Kiran Gusai (Uttar Pradesh), a student of Class-IX-F, was interviewed on February 9, 1998.

educated, we have developed a sense of responsibility for the society at large, because we consider ourselves more efficient. And ofcourse, education helps the girls to learn that they are no inferior to boys. And, they get to know that girls also can reach out for the goal they set for themselves by proving their potentialities. Education opens up opportunities."²⁷

The respondents feel that school education provides them with a lot of confidence. "I want to lead an independent life. I need a lot of freedom in life. And education has helped me to have this conviction. Education of course enables us to challenge gender differentiated role expectations. We became more ambitions, learn and realize that we are no inferior to boys and we develop a competitive spirit. A spirit to fight the gender stereotypes. Society's role-expectations from girls will remain the same. But now we are in a position to deviate." To quote Navketi,²⁷ who wants to become a IPS officer against her parents' will.

II

27. Navketi (Haryana), is a student of Class XII-F, was interviewed on January 22, 1998.

A THEORETICAL REFLECTION ON THE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The views of the respondents discussed in the previous section may be summarized as follows.

A) School as exposure : Most of the respondents view that school education helps both in vertical and horizontal expansion. Information and knowledge gathered from books and teachers enriches one's mind and interaction with students from different socio-economic strata broadens one's horizon. Also, education provides one with scope for better career opportunities.

B) Treatment of Teachers : Teachers treat girls and boys "almost" equally except for the few exceptions in certain spheres like sports and SUPW - where role-expectations from students differ on the basis of gender, which, girls find discriminatory. Though over looked, it is not denied that teachers' treatment is not altogether free from gender stereo-types.

C) School Knowledge vs Family ethos : However, the gap between school knowledge and family ethos (for girls) is highly recognized. It is found out that girls' performance in school is highly influenced by their family expectations and encouragement. And it is also realized that role

expectation from boys and girls in the home front differ drastically. When girls are expected to confine themselves in the household 'duties', boys go for outside 'work'. The resentment (of girls) against these kinds of role-expectations which curtail their physical mobility and decision making power at large is manifested in their remarks. School is believed to be a much more safer and ideal place for girls than that of the society beyond the school walls.

D) Role of gender in career opting : The responses do not attach any gender meaning in career opting as the aspirations vary from becoming a house wife to teacher to doctor to administrator to journalist or pilot with out the slightest doubt in their potentialities. However, they candidly agree, "it would have been lot easier for them to achieve their goal if they wée boys."

E) Role of education in shaping ambition : And to conclude, it is asserted that education does help in challenging the gender differentiated role expectations prevalent in the existing society. The prevailing education system broadens women's horizon and provides them with a chance to cross the boundaries of the private sphere and

'work' outside in the public sphere like men which is functional in more or less erasing the discrimination against women.

The brief up of the responses derived from the field study give a strikingly positive orientation to school education, though with some reservation. On the other hand, the empirical information and research works give a very critical picture of female education in India. 61% women's illiteracy rate, massive dropout of girl children from school, weak performance of women students in educational sphere and systematic exclusion of women from many prominent sections of public sphere helps the society to establish the popular belief that women are naturally inferior to men and are inefficient to cope up with the existing system - thus, be placed in a lower strata in the hierarchical division of society. However, social scientists contend that this belief is culturally constructed. Many sociological writings have been developed to justify this argument. Our society is male dominated and is established on the basis of patriarchal ideology. This androcentrism is very much reflected in the education system as well. Men having the hegemony over the cultural capital forms the system and women are expected to adjust to it. But owing to the traditional setting of the Indian society,

the cultural experience of women is entirely different from that of men. Thus, women feel alienated in the existing system as they are treated as 'others' in the politics of education.

Though functionalists and liberals claim that the aim of modern education system is to provide equality & opportunity to every human being, the research works conducted on 'female education in India project that despite its aim, modern education system has played a limited role in uplifting the status of Indian women. The traditional setting of Indian society gives limited access to women to enter into the education system. Besides, the disparity prevalent in education system owes its origin to various social and economic factors based on patriarchal ideology. (as already discussed in chapter - II) School seems to internalize this ideology and operates to maintain and perpetuate gender relations in subtle ways thereby reinforcing the socializing values and norms. For instance, the organization of school assumes that boys and girls have different needs and interest based on sex. And this is reflected everywhere in the school sphere - school curriculum, teacher's attitude, differential role expect - action from boys and girls, sitting arrangement etc.

However, the commonalities and/or differences between

the responses of the girl students and the sociological writings may be outlined as follows.

The responses of the girl students claim that school education plays a very important role in women's life. It is essentially a liberating force that helps in women's emancipation. It helps them in gathering knowledge, shaping their thought process and opening up of better career opportunities. School treats all students as equal irrespective of their sexes. It also provides equality of opportunity to every student which makes girls more competent, assertive and ambitious despite their inferior status (than that of boys) in the society beyond school boundaries. School is projected to be an ideal place for girls in order to improve their status in society.

However, the sociological writings and research works (discussed in previous chapters) don't give a very positive picture of the role of the school in uplifting the status of women in society. Though sociologists point out that the aim of education is essentially to provide equality of opportunity to every human being and give equal status to women as that of men in society, the gap between the ideology and practice is recognized by most. They figure out that too much is expected from education, and education cannot contribute to women's upliftment independently of the

social structure. The existing education system is highly influenced by the traditional setting of Indian society based on patriarchal ideology and various socio-economic factors limit women's participation in education thereby losing its status as a provider of equality of opportunity. The school curriculum is highly influenced by androcentrism as well. Schools differentiate between students on the basis of gender. From the time of registration itself boys and girls are treated differently. Registration, seating arrangements in the classroom, organization of games (boys play football and girls swing) choosing of subjects (domestic science and needle work for girls, (crafts for boys) - all take the sex of the students into consideration. This kind of differential treatment of boys and girls within the school sphere leads the sociologists to conclude that the education system acts as a mere agent of the existing social structure where division of labour is based on gender, thus overpowering the ideology of education which aims to provide equality of opportunity to every human being irrespective of their race, class or sex.

Secondly, respondents claim that teachers treat girls and boys 'almost' equally. However, though overlooked, it is not denied that teachers' expectations is not altogether free from gender stereo-types. They seem to sense it in

various experience such as in sports or SUPW periods, or when teachers ask them to behave in a particular manner because they are girls.

Social scientists also figure out these differential role expectations of teachers from students on the basis of gender in their research works. As has been pointed out by Karuna Chanana, 'teachers refer to students as 'boys' or 'girls' rather than as 'children' and expect 'boys' and 'girls' to perform the roles meant for them respectively. To put Geetha Nambissan's ideas into words, girls are usually well behaved in school owing its origin to their pre-school socialization and as girls are better behaved in school than boys they tend to receive less of the teachers' attention and in the process are often marginalized in classrooms. Again, as she points out, reinforcement by teachers vary for girls and boys. Boys are rewarded more for their academic work while girls receive greater appreciation for conformity, acquiescence and being 'good'. Such expectations of teachers of 'feminine behavior' from female pupils tend to constrain their participation in the classroom academic achievement as well as their future expectations of success.

Thirdly, the tension/relationship between school knowledge and family ethos (for girls) is highly recognized by the respondents. Family expectation and encouragement seem to influence girls performance in school. At home, role expectations from girls and boys are highly manifested and it is often seen in the responses that girls are always treated as the discriminated lot. This absurdity of prejudice is highly recognised by the respondent and they intend to fight against it. School, for them, is an ideal place where gender roles are not as obvious as that of society out side. And though they have some reservations against certain role expectation in school sphere, they tend to overlook them and claim that, inspite of few exceptions, school helps then to fight against the existing wave.

Certain research writings also point out that few girls, education is highly influenced by the broader socio-cultural and economic structures which sustain gender inequalities. However, whereas the respondents give much credit to the education system for acting as a liberating force for the emancipation of woman independent of the broader social structure, most of the sociological writings feel that education system is merely an agent of the existing social system which is based on patriarchal ideology, and thus, does not have much role to play in

uplifting the status of women.

Fourth, most of the respondents are highly ambitious and they are quite sure of what they want in life. They don't attach any gender meaning in career opting as they are quite confident that they are equally capable of achieving their goals as that of boys. Though they agree that social constraints are severe for girls, they are optimistic to overcome the hurdles.

Sociological writings do not provide such an optimistic picture however. Studies show that when curricular choices are made (i.e at the secondary level) it is observed that girls tend to cluster in the 'mere 'feminine arts and humanities courses while boys are found in greater numbers in career oriented science and commerce streams. The subject choices of girls thus reveal striking gender inequality in education which severely constraints future options and life chances. Girls are often found out to be less ambitious and less committed in career opting than that of boys.

To conclude, we can argue that the social reality is terribly complex. True, the reproduction of discourses have revealed, shapes the school knowledge and socialization. Yet, it has to be realized that, because of growing democratization and the resultant gender sensitivity, things are altering, although not always in a way we expect. Moreover, it is also possible to see teachers and school authorities becoming increasingly sensitive to the feminist

question. Finally, the new generation girls, as they grow up, are becoming more and more enthusiastic about the liberating potential of education. Their renewed agency is also responsible for the changing character of school education. Perhaps these are the reasons that explain why our respondents - school girls from Central School - are attaching a positive meaning to their school experiences.

May be, the more and more affirmation of the feminine power would eventually alter the dominant system of education - so heavily shaped by the patriarchal ideology.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Though with the help of various development programmes, significant gains in respect of women's status have been achieved, women continue to be discriminated in almost every sphere. Female illiteracy and dropout rates are far lower than that of man, they continue to be in marginal employment and low level skills, their contribution being largely 'invisible'. The prevailing social construction of gender largely relegates women to the inside sphere. Reproduction and responsibilities of nurturance, management of a fragile environment, and low paid or unpaid but heavy work responsibilities in traditional sectors create a syndrome of gender stereotypes, marginalization, alienation and deprivation. One of the India's greatest poets, Rabindra Nath Tagore, had expressed the pain and inequity of the situation more than half a century ago, thus,

"O Lord! why have you not given women
the right to conquer her destiny?
Why does she have to wait head bowed,
By the road-side, waiting with tired patience,
Hoping for a miracle in the morrow?"

We have discussed the traditional setting of Indian society and the state of female education in India through ages. The empirical information and sociological writings, how girls perceive the role of education in their lives have also been examined and analyzed. The concluding section now aims to discuss the emergent challenges and need for intervention.

It is believed that education is a must. Literacy is a silent reformer and an instrument of change. However, accessibility to education for every individual being is constrained through various social factors. And it is seen that Indian women fall into this discriminated lot. The barriers to women's education are structural as well as cultural. Both are closely intermeshed and are present in the school and the family or the home. For example, while the family structure prevents women from stepping out, the cultural constraints also limit their access to education. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that so long as society is unequal and certain other societal forces are not unleashed to promote equality, education alone cannot achieve much. If the objective is equalization of educational opportunity, the minimum that is required is that women should get equal access to educational facilities as that of men. Isolation of women, who constitute 50% (approximately) of the

population from the national mainstream, must be avoided at all costs. It should be realized that every issue is a women's issue, and their contribution and role in the family as well as in the economic development and social processes are pivotal. There should be recognition of the dignity of women's work and proper understanding of its dimensions. And the three issues of information, education and communication efforts are vistas for the upliftment of women. As to quote Dr. Radhakrishnan, "Women are human beings and have as much right to full development as men have. In regard to opportunities for intellectual and spiritual development, we should not emphasize the sex of women even as we do not emphasize the sex of men. The fact that we are human beings is infinitely more important than the psychological peculiarities which distinguish us from one another. In all humanbeings, irrespective of their sex, the same drama of the flesh and the spirit, of finitude and transcendence takes place".

And the educational system is considered as one of the major institutions which can counteract the deep foundations of the inequality of the sexes that are built in the minds of men and women through the traditional setting of the society and socialization process. It must make a deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to replace the

traditional value system, based on inequality, by the new value system which accepts equality of sexes. Though it was expected that education would neutralize the impact of tradition, we have concluded from our previous discussion that, it has failed to do so to an extent. In fact, in certain cases, it has helped to perpetuate traditional prejudices through its curricula, classification of subjects on the basis of sex and the unwritten code of conduct on the pupils. Steps need to be taken for more meaningful female education for the upliftment of status of women in India and development of the society at large. And areas where major changes are needed are in the context and organization of education alongwith changes in societal orientation. The patriarchal attitude that shows women as the inferior lot needs to be altered and women's role in upbringing the society needs to be recognized and valued.

Though it has been observed so far that education system cannot contribute to women's upliftment independently of the social structure, and it has various loopholes within the system itself, this shouldn't, however, lead us to suppose that it can make no contribution to bringing out change in women's status. In fact education can be viewed as a vehicle for introducing a developing society (like India) to new needs and expectations and even to the idea of

change itself. It can do all this through the transmission of values and by changing the attitudes of the people. In other words, education can help take our society away from the old, and towards the new, it can inspire a belief in change, in adaptability and achievement, and in rationality. The optimism reflected in the responses of the tender aged school girls gives us the impression that education can help women become confident and competent enough to demand and find their rightful place in the society. And education essentially brings about an emancipatory consciousness among women and they realize the absurdity of prejudice against their lot which is practiced by the patriarchal society since the beginning of history. Education, despite its limitations, does act as a liberating force which gives women the strength to aspire for success against all odds. As to quote Christabel Pankhurst, "Women must stand erect now and forever more. Then, even if they should not win success - and we know that they will win it - at least they will deserve success, and that is what matter more than all beside."

And with the removal of the pointed out loopholes within the education system (such as school curriculum, knowledge etc.) and changes in the attitude of the existing

society, a more meaningful, gender neutral education system may be established. And with the perceived changes, we may dream of a non-patriarchal, egalitarian, non-violent, ecologically sensitive society - a kind of society which would provide enough scope for all round development and encourage hope for the future.

GROUP - A

1. NAME :
2. AGE :
3. STATE OF DOMICILE :
4. AMBITION :
5. EDUCATION STATUS :
6. ECONOMIC STATUS : (ON THE BASIS OF PARENTS' INCOME PER MONTH)
 - (i) BELOW 5000
 - (ii) BETWEEN 5000 AND 10,000
 - (iii) 10,000 AND ABOVE

GROUP - B

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- Q1. How do you look at school education : its relevance/irrelevance in your life.
- Q2. How do you look at teachers? Do you feel any kind of bias against or in favour of you on the basis of gender? If yes, specify.
- Q3. Is there any kind of tension/relationship between school knowledge and family ethos? Elaborate.
- Q4. Do you attach any gendered meaning to career/profession.
- Q5. What do you expect out of life : does education in a way enable you to challenge gender differentiated role-expectations.

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