CRISIS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled **"CRISIS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS"** has been submitted by Priya Ranjan in partial fulfilment of the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree to any other University and is his own work.

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Dedicated to

**Sadgurus and Saints who have spread the message of
Love, Peace, Humanity, Harmony, Equality, Fraternity,
and Liberty.**

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List of Abbreviations

CABE:	Central Advisory Board on Education
CSS:	Common Schooling System
EDI:	Educational Development Index
IIPS:	International Institute of Population Studies
INGOs:	International Non-Governmental Organizations
MHRD:	Ministry of Human Resource and Development
NCAER:	National Council of Applied Economic Research
NCERT:	National Council of Educational Research and Training
NFHS:	National Family and Health Survey
NGOs:	Non-Governmental Organizations
NSSO:	National Sample Survey Organisation
NUEPA:	National University of Educational Planning and Administration
OBCs:	Other Backward Classes
PROBE:	Public Report on Basic Education
SCs:	Scheduled Castes
SSA:	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
STs:	Scheduled Tribes
UEE:	Universal Elementary Education
UNDP:	United Nations Development Progamme

INTRODUCTION

The aim of education is to create integration and organization in society. It also ensures physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual development of the individual. The future of our country is in the hands of students and the education they receive therefore becomes a key ingredient in the success of the nation. Education is the barometer of a nation's advancement. Quality education makes a nation progress. Therefore, synchronizing with the human investment revolution in economic thought (Schultz 1961), many countries around the world, and more particularly the newly independent developing countries, including India, expanded their educational systems and made heavy investments in education. The rates of growth of education systems in many countries exceeded their rates of social growth. At the time when the planning process was initiated in independent India, the country faced a huge legacy of the colonial educational system. Mass education, comprising of universal primary and upper primary education and adult education, was never a priority in the colonial educational policy, nor was of course the higher education. Educational policy in India was clearly subservient to imperial economic policy. According to Yogendra Singh, in India, the traditional content of education was esoteric and metaphysical, its reach was limited to upper castes and its organization was ascriptive. Modern education, on the other hand, is rational and scientific and open to all groups on the basis of merit. Education is seen as the most influential agent of modernization apart from industrialization and urbanization in India (Singh 1973).

The colonial dependent economic relationships between Britain and India shaped the educational policies in British India. The British laid the foundation of modern education in India. Macaulay's Policy of 1835, Sir Charles Wood's dispatch of 1854 and the Indian Education Commission were the major historical landmarks. The educational organization that emerged gradually possibly will be classified into primary (vernacular), high school/secondary school and college/university education. Primary education (taught in the regional language) remained neglected while higher education (taught in English) received a fillip. The neglect of the primary education continued till it became a provincial subject. Thus, the modern education system in India, started by the British, remained the preserve of the upper castes and the urban, high and rich classes with a heavy slant on higher education. With India gaining independence, the government attempted to extend the reach of primary education to the masses, particularly in the rural areas. Thus, universalisation of elementary education became an accepted concept and a national project.

As a result, India had to start, after independence, almost from scratch, but has made significant progress during the post-independence period. The Government of India has recognized the pivotal role of education in development. The Constitution of independent India has resolved to provide elementary education free to everyone. From the very first Five Year Plan onwards, the attempt was to make education an integral part of economic planning. Plan after plan incorporated a chapter each on education and science and technology, and highlighted their relationship with economic development. It was, however, the Education (Kothari) Commission (1966) that stressed the

relationship between education and productivity and the critical role that education played in national development. It reiterated the fact that education as an investment in human resources plays an important role among the factors, which contribute to economic growth.

The Fifth Five Year Plan recognized education as 'a key factor in production'. Elementary education was made an important component of National Minimum Needs Programme of the Plan. The 42nd Amendment to the Constitution in 1976 brought education, which was largely a State responsibility, into the 'Concurrent List', making it a responsibility of both the Union and the State governments. The 73rd and the 74th Amendments to the Constitution placed a greater role on local bodies for the development of education, among others. Of late, elementary education has been made a Fundamental Right with the 86th Amendment to the Constitution in 2002. The several policy statements (for example, National Policy on Education 1968, 1986 and the revised one of 1992) laid special emphasis on the role of the education as an important means of development, viewing education as a *'crucial area of investment for national development and survival'* (Government of India 1986:29). Both national policies laid stress on the promotion of education, specially, the need for eradicating illiteracy altogether, and to provide universal elementary education to all. They also laid special emphasis on vocational and technical education at the secondary level and on improvement of quality and relevance in higher education. Equity in education by gender, caste, and socio-economic groups, and reduction in regional disparities in educational development have been the major objective of education planning in India.

Enrolments in all educational institutions have increased eight times from about 2.4 crores in 1950-1 to above 21 crores in 2003-3, as per the official statistics. The numbers of students in educational institutions in India outnumber the total population of united Germany, England and Canada taken together. Thus the education system in India is the second largest in the world, with 10.4 lakhs schools, and about 17,000 colleges, and about 329 universities, including institutions deemed to be universities. Schooling facilities at primary level are accessible to the population living in 83 per cent of the habitations within a distance of 1 km., according to the draft Tenth Five Year Plan.

Independence had created an unquenching thirst for knowledge, resulting in an abnormal rise in the social demand for education. Public policy towards equality in education led to the expansion of education horizontally. The rise in the individual earnings created further growth in demand for education. There has been a significant improvement in education with respect to interregional inequalities, and inequalities by gender, caste, religion, etc., during the post-Independence period. The expansion of education since the Independence period has made a significant contribution to social growth. The economic returns of education in India are found to be fairly high. On the one hand, they are comparable to rates of return to investment in physical capital, and on the other, to rates of return of education in other developing and developed countries of the world. The effect of education on agricultural development was also found to be quite high. On the whole, the contribution of education to economic growth in India has been significant (Tilak 1994).

Despite the expansion of the system, the progress achieved has not been satisfactory, both in terms of quantity and quality. A general feeling is that 'education in India is in perils'. India inherited an irrelevant educational system from the British rule. That is, the Indian educational system faced a crisis even before attaining maturity, and the crisis became an integral part of the system. It reflects the deep roots the colonial policies had taken in the system in general and on the state education policies of independent India in particular. After all, education has been under the control of the Indian rulers not just since 1947, but since 1921. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Indian education system still faces the problems that many developed countries had solved in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The unfinished tasks in education seem gigantic. They are related to issues of gender discrimination, low attainment, Quality vs Quantity, social category gaps, accessibility etc.

The present study thus is an attempt to understand this domain of crisis in elementary education. Many policies and programmes have been introduced but we have not achieved the desired goal. The central research questions that the study focuses upon are:

(i)   Why is the study of the sociology of elementary education significant?

(ii)   What is the nature of crisis that we are facing in elementary education today?

(iii)   Has the government been able to provide social justice in the area of elementary education?

(iv)   Has the State been able to achieve the goal of 'inclusive education'?

(v)   How can the current situation be improved?

The salient features of the present study are:

Nature of the Study:

No doubt, dissemination of elementary education does involve economic and political determinants. However, in the Indian context, the ways in which economic and political impediments can accentuate themselves depends on what can very rightly be termed as the 'social context' of education. The present study strives to draw home this argument in a very compelling fashion. The 'social context' can be said to refer to the various facets of the overall socio-economic environment in which a person or a group lives. They include the family and the extended kin group, the caste hierarchy, the economic conditions and class relations, the religious beliefs and practices and the social demography of the region. This social context is extremely relevant to the subject of elementary education in India, mainly because the educational decisions of children and family / household decisions are governed by it. As Jean Dreze puts it aptly, "Literacy achievements in India depend crucially on the social context: The gender division of labour, the kinship system, caste related norms, economic entitlements and so on. The statement is perhaps trivial, but it is worth noting that the overwhelming context dependence of literacy achievements conflicts with the notion of elementary education as a basic right of all citizens" (Dreze 2003: 989). It is evident that the socio-cultural, religious, economic and demographic factors play a vital role in

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enhancing or diminishing educational chances of the children. In fact, many of the reasons for the failure in achieving UEE till date may be rooted in this social context and hence they deserve a detailed examination.

Scope of the Study:

This study is based on a review of the major published literature dealing with the social context of elementary education in India, which includes the relevant books, articles, reports etc. The study, however, does not aim to review literature pertaining to the organization of the education system per se, which focuses on the school and classroom environment, including infrastructure, funding, abilities of students and teachers, etc. The objective of examining the social context of elementary education in India is sought to be achieved by an in depth study of the role of the different factors that constitute this context. These are: (i) economic factors - mainly dealing with the poverty, schooling costs (both direct and indirect) and their impact on enrolment, attendance and completion of primary schooling. (ii) socio-cultural factors - such as marriage and kinship patterns resulting in gender disparities in education; caste hierarchy and discrimination leading to educational deprivation of certain low castes; and exclusion of scheduled tribes from the educational system.

Methodology:

The material for this work is based on secondary literature, as one is not allowed to collect primary data during M.Phil in our department. Being a descriptive research design and owing to the fact that the present M.Phil

dissertation is in a way a preface to a larger Ph.D project, the present study is entirely based on secondary sources of data. Further elaboration and justification for the findings of the study shall be taken up through rigorous ethnographic studies during the PhD study. The secondary sources referred to herein are numerous Government of India publications, Ministry Reports, Education Commission reports, newspapers reports and articles in reputed journals, publications of international organizations like World Bank, UNDP and NGOs like PRATHAM. Though overwhelmingly qualitative in nature, the present study thus takes recourse to quantitative data so as to substantiate certain key arguments.

Scheme of Chapterisation:

The present study has been divided into three substantial chapters besides an introduction and a conclusion. While the "Introduction" places the problem in context; the successive three chapters dissect the intricacies of the problem hence identified. The "Conclusion" presets certain suggestions that ought to have far reaching policy implications in the practice of Elementary Education in India. It would be befitting however to provide a brief outline of the three substantial chapters of the study i.e., Chapters I, II and III.

To begin with, the First chapter is titled *"Theoretical Perspectives on Education"*. Herein an attempt has been made to discuss four fundamental theoretical perspectives related to education, viz.,

A. Functionalist perspective

B. Conflict perspective

C. Interactionist perspective

D. Postmodern perspective

The purpose herein is to highlight the fact that unlike conventional wisdom, education is not a mere mindless indoctrination of facts and figures. Instead, education ought to be seen as a creative engagement between the 'structure' and the 'actor'; a sort of a 'structuration' process (used in the Giddensian sense).

The Second chapter is titled *"Education in India: The Road Yet Traversed"*. It describes the historicity and development of education in India right from the ancient period to the present day. However an emphasis has been laid upon a critical analysis of programmes and committees related to educational policies of India during colonial and post- colonial period. This chapter elaborately reviews the pretext, context and text of the major recommendations of key committees and commissions set up on educational reforms in India. However allotting due consideration to the focus of the present study, main emphasis has been laid upon the changing contours of Elementary Education including a critical evaluation of the Right to Education Bill, 2008.

Finally, the Third chapter titled *"Policies Vs Practices: Understanding the Domain of Crisis in Elementary Education"* presents the crux of the study. It deciphers the structural gaps in the practice of elementary education in India.

Thereupon it suggests remedial measures to stem the tide. It is thus important to contextualize this work to understand the sociological relevance of education. It uprightly raises critical questions relating to: the social context of learning; ideology and curriculum; power and pedagogy.

Relevance of the Study:

The relevance of the present study may be seen in the fact that the sociological perspective - which is unique for its ability to take a holistic look at the thought and behavioral processes of individuals and groups within their social milieu, is very much needed to aid a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of UEE in the Indian context. The literature surveyed highlights the obstacles encountered in achieving universalization of elementary education, as well as the facilitators of this process. This study, thus, should have relevance for policymakers besides contributing to knowledge in this particular field.

Limitations of the Study:

An attempt has been made in this review study to grapple with the very complex and dynamic phenomenon of the crisis of elementary education in India. In view of the enormity and complexity of this subject, a few points of caution that one must keep in mind are in order. A number of factors related to the economy, gender, caste, and tribe have been delineated and dealt with in the work. These factors have been distinguished mainly for analytical purposes. In actuality, these factors operate in tandem, and it is difficult disentangle their respective roles. Thus, social reality has to be understood holistically.

The study is based on the macro-level national surveys and the micro-level empirical studies. The empirical studies pertain to specific regions or states, time periods, issues, and social groups. Evidently, the results are primarily with reference to those specific contexts and prima facie, may disallow generalizations. However, a large number of studies have been examined and they have been grouped according to the similarity of their findings. These similarities form the basis of the generalizations made in this work, which are reasonable but not absolute. In addition to this, from the point of view of current relevance, it has been decided to restrict the review to the studies conducted since 1990 i.e., taking into account the fact that UEE under the globalization era did have a different tone and tenor altogether. Reliance has been placed on the statistical data generated by the census and surveys such as NSSO, NFHS, and NCAER etc. Effort has been made to use the latest data wherever available. However, one had to rely on older data from these surveys, where recent information was not available. In conclusion, it needs to be mentioned that the field of elementary education in India is replete with a wealth of information. The aim of the study was to cover most of the major published literature, but by no means to exhaust it. Efforts have been made to ensure that within the stipulated time allotted for the dissertation preparation viz., one year, no seminal study is left out. The findings of the study therefore are prone to cosmetic revision, reformulation and reassessment, if the need arises.

CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION

Education is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that involves the participation and co-ordination of numerous actors – State, Market and above all the recipients i.e., the Public. Therefore, the perspectives on education strive to speak from the vantage point of one or the other above mentioned actors. The theoretical perspectives on education can be grouped under four typologies. These are: (a) the Functionalist (b) the Conflict and (c) the Interactionist (d) the Postmodernist perspectives. An exposition of each one of these follows herein.

Functionalist Perspective on Education

The functionalist view of education tends to focus on the positive contributions made by education to the maintenance of 'value consensuses' and 'social solidarity' of the social system. It highlights on two important queries viz.

(i)   What are the functions of education for society as a whole? and

(ii) What is the functional relationship between education and other parts of the social system?

According to Durkheim (1956), a key proponent of the Functionalist paradigm, the major function of education is to transmit society's norms and

values. The survival of society or collective life is possible only with a sufficient degree of homogeneity among various members of society. Homogeneity among members is reached by adhering to rules and regulations laid down by the society. Education preserves and reinforces these homogeneity principles of society in a child from the beginning. Durkheim writes:

> "Education is the influence exercised by the adult generation on those that are not yet ready for social life. Its object is to arouse and to develop in the child a certain number of physical, intellectual and moral states, which are demanded of him by both political and social milieu for which he is specifically destined" (Durkheim 1956: 71).

He highlights the role played by education in instituting 'social being' in the 'individual being.' The individual being is made up of mental states that apply only to him/her and to the events in his/her personal life. The social being embodies a system of ideas, sentiments and practices of the group of which he/she is a part. The process of socialization of a newborn differentiates human beings from animals. In his own words:

> "............... of what an animal has been able to learn in the course of his individual existence, almost nothing can survive him. By contrast, the results of human experience are preserved almost entirely and in detail, thanks to books, sculptures, tools, instruments of every kind that are

transmitted from generation to generation, oral tradition etc"(Ibid: 77-78).

The role of the educational system becomes important in complex societies in which families or other primary groups are not fully equipped to prepare the young for adulthood in a way that is expected by the larger society. School operates as a model of micro-social system in which a child learns to cooperate with other children who are not part of their primary group. The training acquired by children in school forms the basis of their behaviour outside the school.

Durkheim once again has defined nature and role of education in society. What we call education cannot be seen without locating it in the context of a given society; its specific needs and requirements. To quote Durkheim:

"In fact, however, each society, considered at a given stage of development, has a system of education which exercises an irresistible influence on individuals. It is idle to think that we can rear our children as we wish. There are customs to which we are bound to conform; if we flout them too severely, they take vengeance on our children. The children, when they are adults, are unable to live with their peers, with whom they are not in accord. Whether they had been raised in accordance with ideas that were obsolete or premature does not matter; in one case as in the other, they are not of their time and, therefore, they are outside the conditions of normal

life. There is, then, in each period, a prevailing type of education from which we cannot deviate without encountering that lively resistance which restrains the fancies of dissent" (Ibid: 65-66).

In other words; there is no abstract/universal content of education; it varies from society to society. And herein education plays a great role in society.

According to Durkheim, specific skills imparted in the educational institutions are necessary to maintain the division of labour in society. As society shifts from simple to complex form there is a corresponding increase in the complexity of division of labour and the emergence of more specialized occupations. In simple societies, division of labour demands generic skill sets that can be passed on easily through families. In complex industrial societies, however, families find themselves at a loss to impart complex and specialized skill sets. Maintaining equilibrium among various layers of occupational structure or division of labour is important in maintaining social order. Educational institutions give the required specific skills to their members according to demands of the society and prepare them to play role sets offered by the society. Durkheim explains that the State holds the responsibility of governing the educational system and it decides the nature of norms, values, and skills imparted by the educational systems are decided without any bias or discrimination to any unit of society aiming at social solidarity. In a way, education should serve two functions: (a) it should prepare the child for a specific occupation, and (b) it should enable the child to internalize the core values of society.

Parsons' (1959) views on educational system are similar to those of Durkheim. According to Parsons, two critical issues are paramount in the context of education in society. The first is that of the internalization of commitments and capacities among children in classrooms for adult roles. Here, the class may be treated as an agency of socialization through which children are motivated and trained to perform adult roles. The second is the allocation of human resources within the role structure of the adult society. He recognizes the role played by various socialization agencies like family, informal peer groups and others in moulding the young by the society. He lays importance on school class as a focal agency of socialization that begins with entry of children to first grade (standard) and lasts till their entry into the labour market or marriage. According to Parsons (1959:51), the school develops commitments and capacities in individuals that are required for future role performance of individuals. Commitment includes *'commitment to the implementation of the broad values within the structure of society'*. Capacities include *'competence or the skill to perform the tasks involved in the individual's role' and 'role- responsibility or the capacity to live up to other people's expectations of the interpersonal behavior appropriate to these roles.'*

Parsons maintains that the school also serves as an allocation agency that prepares human resources and allocates them with in role structure of the society. He observes that a completion of high school is increasingly becoming a norm of minimum satisfactory educational attainment by any individual in the society. Also, the performance or achievement of a child in elementary school determines the nature of college courses. Thus educational system works as the *'first socializing agency in the child's experience which*

institutionalize a differentiation of status on non-biological bases' (Parsons 1959:51). In early stages of schooling, the achievement of a child is measured through assessment of two components: cognitive and moral. Cognitive components are related to intellectual ability of a child in terms of written language and mathematical skills. Moral component is related to responsible citizenship behavior within the school community. These include respects for the teacher cooperative behavior with classmates, and good work habits etc.

During early days at the school children do not understand that achieved rather than ascribed characteristics are the proper bases for most societal rewards. School convinces that they would be evaluated on the basis of achievement, and makes them understand that there is basic consensus on what constitutes achievement in the larger society. In early years of schooling children often deal with a single teacher who takes the place of mother parental figure for them in school. The teacher often remains affectively neutral and treats all children as equal and follows the rules and regulation of the school. Parallel to the socialization process experienced at the school, students tend to develop relationship among their own peer group. The socialization process among peers is different from the family and the school and offers *'a field for the exercise of independence from adult control'* (Parsons 1959:59) and also provides alternative sources of reward.

Davis and Moore (1967) see education as a means of role allocation, but they link the educational system more directly with the system of social stratification. Davis and Moore see social stratification as a mechanism for ensuring that the most talented and able members of society are allocated to

those positions, which are functionally most important for society. The education system is an important part of this process. In Davis' (1967:32) words, it is the *'proving ground for ability and hence the selective agency for placing people in different statuses according to their capacities'.* Thus the educational system sifts, sorts and grades individuals in terms of their talents and abilities. It rewards the most talented with high pacification, which in turn provide entry to those occupations, which are functionally most important to society.

Education is functional for society as Emile Durkheim and other functionalists argue a whole. They assess the contribution of education to the maintenance of value consensus and social solidarity. Education and other aspects of society are seen as interrelated and integrated to sustain the society as an organic whole. In general, functional analysis focuses on the positive role of education for society. Hence, four major functions of education could be seen in relation to society, i.e. socialization, role allocation, value consensus and social solidarity.

Functionalist perspective has often been criticized for having a conservative bias, a prejudice in favor of maintaining things the way they are. The functions of education outlined by Durkheim, Parsons, Davis and Moore are often similar to the official vision presented by government departments. As such they are accused of uncritically accepting the establishment view, and, in doing so, supporting it. Their conservative viewpoint may prevent them from considering many of the possible dysfunctional aspects of education. Critical theorists argue that the educational system is a medium of the ruling

elite and not representative of entire society. According to Collins (1972), the functional role played by education is fulfilling the needs of division of labour is criticized as an exaggeration. There is no evidence to prove that education supplies knowledge and skills necessary for occupations. Only a minor part of the expansion of the education in advanced industrialized countries directly serves the demands of industry in terms of skills, training and knowledge. Most of the occupations involve training in the job itself and employing organisations provide their own training. So, it can be said that the functionalist view of education is not a foolproof theory. It does have some limitations, especially the lack of attention accorded to the Structure-Agency mediation in bringing about societal changes.

Conflict Perspective on Education:

Conflict theorists stand out in contrast to the functionalists in terms of the basic approach. The conflict perspective on education emphasizes two things;

(i) How is the educational system shaped by the economic infrastructure?

(ii) How does the educational system produce the kind of work force required by capitalism?

The Conflict perspective on education involves an investigation of the links between power, ideology, education and the relations of production in capitalist society. In *Schooling in Capitalist America (1976)*, Bowles and Gintis argue that the major role of education in capitalist society is the

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reproduction of labour power. In particular, they maintain that education contributes to the reproduction of workers with the kinds of personalities, attitudes and outlooks, which will fit them for their exploited status. The economic role of education is not so much the reproduction of technical skills needed by neither the economy, nor the selection and grading of individuals in terms of their talents and abilities for allocation to appropriate jobs.

Bowles and Gintis argue that schooling is organized to meet the requirements of a repressive and exploitative capitalist society. The role of the educational system is social reproduction, the reproduction of labour force. They are pessimistic about reforms in the educational system having any real chance of success. Since they believe the capitalist economic system is the basis of inequality and repression both inside the schools and in society as a whole, they argue that the creation of an equal and liberating school system requires a revolutionary transformation of economic life. Bowles and Gintis have been criticized for their insistence that a capitalist economic system is the source of all the evils of American education. Although they recognize that socialism does not automatically produce an 'equal and liberating school system' they place considerable faith in a socialist solution. However, as Jerome Karabel and A.H. Halsey (1977) argue, many of the aspects of American schooling condemned by Bowles and Gintis are found in socialist societies. Karabel and Halsey say that the Cuban educational system places heavy reliance on grades and exams as sources of student motivation and teaching is based on a generally authoritarian and teacher-central method of instruction. In a way, Bowles and Gintis speak a language different from Durkheim, Parsons, Davis and Moore. Bowles and Gintis question the social

system that functionalists took for granted. By questioning the social system they critiqued the role of the schools. This Marxist approach can be seen in the writings of Louis Althusser.

Althusser (1972) sees education as a part of the 'state apparatus'. According to Althusser, 'state apparatus' has two components:-

(a) RSA i.e. repressive state apparatus: e.g. police, army, legal system, government and administration etc. and

 (b) ISA i.e. ideological state apparatus: e.g. religion, education, politics, communication, literature etc.

Althusser says that no ruling class can rule by means of force or repressive apparatus alone. Herein lies the importance of ideology of the hegemony of the ruling class. And education, as an ideological state apparatus, has a central place in contemporary capitalist societies. Althusser says that education not only transmits a general ruling class ideology, which justifies and legitimates the capitalist system, it also reproduces the attitudes and behavior required by the major groups in the division of labour. Althusser argues that via the educational system each mass ejected a route is practically provided with the ideology which suits the role had to fulfill in class society. Thus, Althusser has produced a compelling perspective for the analysis of education in capitalist society.

Another notable contribution in the same direction comes from Ivan Illich. Illich is not a Marxist, by training or profession. But he is highly critical of functionalist views of education. This radical critique of the role of

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education in advanced industrial societies has many parallels with Marxian views. Illich's book *Deschooling Society* (1984) is an important contribution to the sociology of education. According to him, schools are the first, most vital and important stage in the creation of the mindless, conforming and easily manipulated citizen. In fact, the school devises on one's creativity, hampers one's inner growth and deprives one of learning from the flow of life itself. To quote Illich:

> *"School makes alienation preparatory to life, thus depriving education of reality and work of creativity. School prepares for the alienating institutionalization of life by teaching the need to be taught. Once this lesson is learned, people lose their incentive to grow in independence; they no longer find relatedness attractive and close themselves off to the surprises which life offers when it is not predetermined by institutional definition"* (Illich 1984: 51).

Illich proposes a radical solution. He believes in the abolition of the present system of education. He proposes four approaches for implementing the agenda of deschooling:

(a) Necessity of Reference Services to Educational Objects: The goal was to enable anyone interested in learning to use the educational material (the material that could be stored by museums, libraries, laboratories, theatres, factories, airport and farms).

(b) Skill Exchanges: This is a situation in which interested people would be able to list their skills and the conditions under which they are willing to exchange them. It would lead to an abundance of skills.

(c) Necessity of a Communications Network: It will allow persons (who want to learn a particular activity) to describe their specific areas of interest so as to be able to find a partner who would be interested in their enquiry. This 'interest-matching' network would be easier to establish with the help of computers.

(d) Reference Services to Educators – at – large: This would enable one to see beyond teachers and discover all those professionals, para-professionals and freelancers interested in engaging themselves with education as a communicative act.

Thus to conclude, Illich wanted a society in which education would no longer be confused with schooling, or learning with teaching, or creativity with diploma. He was in favour of a society that would become free from bureaucratic/institutional control.

Though not exclusively included under the conflict school, theories particularly of Pierre Bourdieu's cultural reproduction strengthen the views of the conflict theorists. According to Giddens (1993), cultural reproduction refers to the ways in which school, in conjunction with other social institutions; help perpetuate social economic inequalities across the generations. The concept directs our attention to the means whereby, via the hidden curriculum, schools

influence the learning of values, attitudes and habits. Schools reinforce variations in cultural values in life. When children leave school, they have the effect of limiting the opportunities of some, while facilitating those of others. According to Bourdieu (1977), the major role of the educational system is the reproduction of culture of dominant class. Dominant classes are able to define their own culture as 'worthy of being sought and possessed' and to establish it as the basis of knowledge in the educational system. Bourdieu refers to the dominant culture as 'cultural capital' because, via the educational system, it can be translated into wealth and power. Thus, social inequality is reproduced in the educational system. 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 equal opportunity for all. However, Bourdieu concludes that in practice education is essentially concerned with 'the reproduction of the established order'. In a way, conflict perspective is an alternative to the functionalist perspective.

Interactionist Perspective on Education:

Interactionist perspective seeks to explore the ways in which teachers and students interpret and assign meaning to their interactions. Interactionism suggests that the status of the students in an educational system is decided by the nature of interactions with teachers where meanings are constructed beyond academic parameters. A study by Howard Becker (1971) delineated meanings by which teachers evaluated the students. The study demonstrated that teachers constructed the image of an 'ideal student' as one who came from non-working class and of 'problematic student' as one who came from working class.

Another study by Cicourel and Kitsuse (1971) confirms that students' family background and other non–academic factors like their appearance, and manners etc. were given more importance rather than their academic performances.

Apart from evaluation, teacher's perception about students also affects the nature of knowledge imparted. Keddie (1971) finds that social class is an important factor in defining and classifying students. Though students were supposedly divided in term of ability, students within each group exhibited similar socio-economic characteristics in classification of students into various groups. Students who belong to upper socio economic background formed the higher level and lower level was occupied by students from lower socio-economic background. Though teachers were expected to impart similar knowledge, they modified their methods and nature of information imparted to different categories of students. Students who belonged to different groups also responded differently to the nature of the knowledge imparted to them. Thus, from their viewpoint, deschooling would only produce 'occupational misfits' and 'job blues', which are hardly sufficient to transform society as a whole. In a way, Marxian perspective is an alternative to the functionalist perspective. It can thus be argued from an interactionist perspective that success and failure in schools is a product of interaction situations and the meanings that are created, developed and negotiated in such situations. In order to understand and explain educational success and failure, Keddie argues that interaction processes in the classroom must be examined. Sociologists must explore the ways in which teachers and students interpret and give meaning to educational situations.

The interactionist approach has added fresh and valuable perspectives to the sociology of education. It has questioned basic concepts such as ability and conduct, which previously researchers had tended to take for, granted by their acceptance of teachers' definitions of high and low ability students, well and badly behaved students. It has argued that 'bright' and 'dull' students are a product of meanings and definitions, which are created in interaction situations. It has claimed that these meanings and definitions are not fixed and unchangeable. Thus students defined as 'dull' in one series of interactions may well be such as bright in another series based on a different set of negotiated meanings.

Thus although the interactionist perspective has provided fresh insights, it has some limitations. It is difficult to support its contention that meanings and definitions of the situation are simply constructed in classroom interaction. It is difficult to account for the apparent uniformity of meanings, which result from a multitude of interactions. If meanings are negotiated in interaction situations, more variety would be expected.

Postmodern Perspective on Education

Postmodernism has emerged as an alternative theoretical framework to modernism in understanding the real world. In sociology, ideas of postmodernism are related to the emergence of the post-industrial society. Postmodernism rejects grand theories in understanding society and lays importance on social identities.

By the mid 1990s, many sociologists had begun to turn away from social conflict theories towards postmodernism. One important account of what postmodernism means for education is found in the work of Robin Usher and Richard Edwards. To Usher and Edwards (1994), theories of education that are based on functionalist or conflict theory are 'modernist'. They accept a 'meta-narrative' that education spreads rational beliefs in place of pre-modern superstitions. Implicit in this view of education is a view of progress. Education gives freedom to individuals to think freely and rationally, which makes social progress and innovation possible. As postmodernists, Usher and Edwards reject this meta-narrative. They are skeptical of the claim that science and reason can answer all human problems or that there is any one truth. Everything is not possible through science and reason. Usher and Edwards see no reason why one curriculum should be taught rather than any other, or why some subjects are more important than others.

Usher and Edwards' critique of modern education leads to the question, 'What would a postmodern education system look like?' Although they have discussed several possibilities, the one that they are most sympathetic to is the development of a system that accepts the cultural pluralism and diversity that are central to the concerns of postmodernist thinkers. This system would give individuals the freedom to shape their own educational programmes, though lifelong learning or the exploration of cultural difference for example.

As we have already discussed Illich's notion of 'deschooling society', herein we will discuss the work of Freire. Paulo Freire (1972) suggests replacement of curriculum-based education with dialogue based informal

education. He criticizes the existing educational system in being akin to the banking process in which the student is viewed as an empty account waiting to be filled by the teacher. He seeks to abandon the teacher-student dichotomy and favors introduction of reciprocity in the minds of teacher and student. He clearly says that education without dialogue is meaningless. Dialogue creates environment for education. In his words:

> *"Only dialogue, which requires critical thinking, is also capable of generating critical thinking. Without communication there can be no true education. Education which is able to resolve the contradiction between the teacher and student takes place in a situation in which both address their act of cognition to the object the which they are mediated. Thus the dialogical character of education is the practice of freedom does not begin when the teacher-student meets the student-teacher in a pedagogical situation, but whether when the former first asks himself what he will dialogue with the later about. And preoccupation with the content of the dialogue is really preoccupation with the programme content of education"* (Freire 1972:153).

Echoing postmodern concerns, Foucault has discussed the idea of education in his book '*Discipline and Punishment* (1977)'. He has discussed education in terms of 'Discipline' and 'Knowledge'. Foucault, however, claimed to have located a break, a discontinuity, between the classical and modern world's conception of knowledge. Since the enlightenment, according

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to Foucault, knowledge has been conceived as an activity, not a corpus, a fixed body. Therefore, the role of discipline in modern pedagogy is who assists in establishing newly forms of knowledge or episteme in the young.

It is clear form above discussion that postmodernism has given a different meaning to education from others. However, while one supports the democratic, dialogical approach in education; one believes that Ivan Illich underestimated the importance of the teacher in motivating and facilitating learning. The activity of teacher in structuring school studies and making learning materials available at appropriate points results in student's learning a great many things they would note otherwise learn. It is not enough simply to give students learning skills and set them loose: most young people ongoing encouragement and help in order to learn, what they need for life in today's world.

In democratizing education, then, we should not simply dismantle all structures and hope that something happens, but rather try to create structures that give students the support they need and allow them to make a significant input and have optimal control over their learning. While schooling should as far as possible be dialogical, it should not be a mere pooling of ignorance. To be effective, dialogue requires strong input of many kinds: information, examples, stories; feelings, ideas, theories, worldviews, and so on. The point about a democratic approach is not that structure and content are unnecessary, but that students (and teachers) should have a major say in how their learning is structured and what content is made available to them. By this the process of education will be democratic in nature.

CHAPTER II

EDUCATION IN INDIA: THE ROAD YET TRAVERSED

The years roughly between 1500 B.C. and about 1800 AD is referred to as the period of ancient and medieval India. Education in ancient and medieval India was primarily dominated by religions. In the beginning, Vedic religion determined the social, economic and political life of the people. Buddhism emerged in the 6th Century BC as a reaction to the rituals and dogmatism in the Vedic religion. Jainism also arose almost simultaneously. Islam reached India by 1000 AD. Sikhism emerged as a modern religion, which preached for humanity and casteless society. It was a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam. Christianity came to India with the Missionaries early in the Christian era. Ancient Indian education as covered by the Vedic, post-Vedic, Buddhist and Jain systems of education extends over a very long period, from about 1500 B.C. to 1200 AD. A cursory glance at it is presented as follows.

Early Vedic Education

In early Vedic period (1500 B.C.-1000B.C.), education among the masses was found in the simplest form. Education was for survival, which is the first step in the development of all civilizations. Education was based on the oral tradition alone and was developed and practiced in this mode for centuries. The next stage was based upon a written language given by a

specially designated class, and included formal instruction as well as practical learning.

Vedic Education

Vedic Education was imparted only orally for a long period of time. The purpose of Vedic education was to make the learner attain the highest level of perfection as a human being. The concept of education itself was envisaged for the purpose of conserving and nurturing the religious interests of society and the system of education was intended to serve this function. Vedic education had two stages: - primary and secondary. Primary education as it is understood today is meant to equip the learner with basic competencies and knowledge that would enable him to enter into a higher stage of learning. This concept would not have been visualized in the early Vedic period, that is, up to 800 B.C. Writing was not known, grammar was not developed as a subject for study, nor was there any need for accounting, as commercial activities were simple and were not formalized. The curriculum for primary stage included recitation of Vedic verses and exposure to the elements of phonology, meter and grammar, writing of the alphabet and elementary arithmetic. Recitation of multiplication tables and writing on boards has also been referred to in the literature of the period.[1] The primary stage of education was not structured carefully. Rich individuals supported primary schools and where this was not available, individual teachers started schools and depended on the support of parents and the community. There are references to these schools as *lipishalas*

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[1] Keay, F.E., Ancient Indian Education: Origin, Development and Ideals, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1980, pp.40-41.

(alphabet classes) and to the teachers as *daakachavya*.[2] By 600 A.D. primary education had become a definite stage in education with a curriculum that would enable the learner to enter the secondary stage in education. On satisfactory completion of the primary stage as determined by the teacher, the learners were permitted to enter the secondary stage. The second stage of learning was initiated by the ritual of *Upanayana*, which yoked the learner to a period of very serious study of the Vedas primarily, as well as other subjects related to the requirements of conduct of sacrifice. The content included the sacred texts and materials to prepare for life after education. This was the period of *Brahmacharya* or the period of self-discipline, which was to be devoted to study only. *Upanayana* was a very important ritual, which was performed between the ages of seven and fifteen. It initiated the learner to a particular way of life and was expected to provide him with all the knowledge and skills for adult life. The total duration of the primary and secondary stage was expected to be twelve years. The end of the period of study of the Vedas was marked by a ritual *Samavarthan* which could be compared to the modern day convocation. Only those who completed the studies to the satisfaction of the teacher were permitted to complete this ritual in which the learner offered his thanks to his teacher by offering him *gurudakshina* (gift). In this period, the Vedas (the earliest of the religious texts in Hinduism) was the main subject of study. Mythological stories/legends were added, later. Grammar, Etymology, Philosophy, and Law were gradually included in the Curriculum. Teaching and learning practices were based on the oral mode. The learners repeated the verses mainly as a group. They used to practice hard to pronounce them perfectly and memorized them. This oral tradition continued till the

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[2] Altekar, A.S., Education in Ancient India, The India Book House, Benares, 1934, p.208.

secondary stage. The teacher had full authority on all decisions concerning the principles and practices of education with no external control or interference. The Guru decided on the Curriculum, methods of teaching, discipline and finally assessed the learner. His verdict was accepted without any question. Education was open only to the three upper classes of society and was denied to the *Shudras*. The reason cited for this discrimination was that the Vedas had to be recited correctly and wrong intonation would spell disaster. It might not be totally true. *Shudras* could not be exposed to the learning of Vedas since they were not used to speaking the language of the Vedas i.e. Sanskrit, in their homes and so it would be very difficult for them to pronounce the words correctly. Although the *Kshatriyas* and the *Vaishyas* were permitted to enter the higher stages of learning, their periods of the study of Vedas were different from Brahmins and the age of *Upanayana* was also higher for they also had to undergo education related to their occupation.[3]

Post-Vedic Education

Post-Vedic Education (1000 BC-200 BC) reflected the changes in religious thoughts and practices which evolved towards the later part of the Vedic age. The most important development in this period was the emergence of *Brahmanic* literature. The *Brahmanas* which were explanations and elucidations of the Vedas in prose, along with the *Aryanikas,* which elaborated the rituals and the *Upanishads* attained the structure and status of religious literature.[4]

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[3] Sharma, R. K. & R. N. Sharma, History and Problems of Education, Kanishka Publishers, Delhi, 1993, p. 15.
[4] Ibid, p.18.

The aims of *Brahmanic* education were similar to those of Vedic education. Education was valued as the means to gain knowledge. The aim of education was the all-round development of the learner. In *Brahmanic* education non-religious aspects were also included. The aims of education were widened as it was intended to achieve self-reliance, self-control, formation of character, individual development, and knowledge of social and civil life along with physical development and preservation of culture. The process of *Brahmanic* education was similar to Vedic education which included both theoretical and practical aspects. The curriculum was very wide and included *Vyakarna, Nyaya, Shastra, Smriti, Jyotish Vidya* and Vedic mantras. Education took place in *gurukulas* and *ashramas* with learned teachers to guide the students. In the post-Vedic period ancestry became an important criterion for education, while in the Vedic period education was based on occupation. The *Kshatriyas* who were a homogeneous group earlier gradually got differentiated, on the basis of their occupation. The *Shudras* who earlier had access to at least limited education were now occupying a very low position in society as untouchables and were denied education. There is very little mention of education of the different classes, other than the Brahmins, in the post-Vedic period.

In pre-Vedic times, women are known to have taken part in all religious activities. The *Upanayana* ceremony also had to be performed for them. By the post-Vedic period, there was a choice for women to continue with their education if they so wished. Gargi and Maitrayee are well-known scholars of this period. Towards the end of the post-Vedic period around 250 B.C., a change in the position of women in society can be discerned, particularly in the

writings of Manu.[5] Education for girls was stopped after marriage. *Upanayana* ritual was not considered compulsory for women and was gradually stopped. This meant the discontinuation not only of secondary education but also of primary education. Access to education was limited and education of women was not considered essential. They could not participate in religious or social activities. Women were not able even to recite the mantras they were expected to utter at the time of marriage. By 10th Century A.D., as Alberuni reports, all the restrictions on education for girls had been accepted by society.[6] It might not be totally true. A few girls belonging to the higher castes and richer classes continued to receive education.

There were several centers of Higher Education in this period. These centers were renowned for the scholarship of the teachers and drew students from all over the country as well as outside the country. Several well-known centers of education were located in the capitals of benevolent and famous rulers. These were:-

NORTH	CENTRAL	SOUTH
Takshashila	Dhar	Maldhad
Kannauj	Ujjain	Kalyani
Mithila		Paithan

Mithila was an important centre of *Brahmanical* learning and culture. It was the most important centre of learning in Northern India from 12th to 15th century A.D. The college of Mithila was famous for *Nyaya Shastra* (Law

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[5] Altekar, A. S., Ibid, p.223.
[6] Altekar, A.S., Ibid, p.235

Studies) and *Tark Shastra* (Logic). The other centre of Higher Education was Nadia. Nadia is supposed to have been founded because of a rigid condition under which the Mithila system did not permit any of its books to be taken away or to be copied. A student of Logic at Mithila, who was a great scholar himself and belonged to Nadia, is said to have memorized the texts, returned to Nadia, reproduced it and established chairs in different branches for study of Law. The chairs for *Tantrika*, Logic, *Smriti* and Astronomy and the School of *Tantrika* Studies were famous. It became known as a centre of Hindu education around 1063 AD and continued as such till the end of Muslim rule in 1757.

The city of Takshashila was another important centre of education in ancient India. Based on information from *Jatakas*, Altekar noted that Takshashila was underbelly the most important ancient seat of learning in India. It began and flourished as a centre of *Brahmanica*l studies but later it had become a Buddhist centre of education. Panini, the renowned grammarian and Chanakya, the capable minister of Chandra Gupta Maurya had their education at Takshashila. Benares was a well-known centre of education in Eastern India. Benares was mainly a centre of Hindu learning and scholarship and continues to be so. It was also known for the studies of Sanskrit and Indian philosophy. Thus, we can say that Vedic period was a golden period of education, where emphasis was given to access of knowledge. But it was limited to only upper strata of society.

Buddhist Education

Buddhist education emerged as a reaction to Hinduism. The main aims of Buddhist education were to explain the teachings of Buddha to the learners and to train them to become religious teachers through a rigorous period of preparation. The Buddhist system of education reflects many of the practices of the Vedic system of education with differences, often only in nomenclature and in extent and emphases. Buddhist education was imparted only in the Buddhist monasteries and Viharas in which Buddhist monks resided in large numbers and were in charge of large numbers of students. Education was totally in the hands of the Buddhist monks. They determined the number of students they would admit, the methods of instruction to be followed, maintained discipline and order and finally decided whether the learners had attained the capability for admission to the order.[7] The mode of teaching was verbal through which Buddhist Theology, Philosophy and Logic were taught, as the main aim of Buddhist education was to inculcate in the learners the philosophy and tenets of Buddhism and to train them to be religious teachers. Though writing was developed by this period, the emphasis was on verbal teaching. Conferences were held to enhance their scholarship and also widen their knowledge.[8] The duties and responsibilities of a teacher were sacred and were not to be violated. The Sangha maintained a strict code of ethics for teachers. Only a Bhikku who had been a Bhikku for ten years after his ordination as a monk could become a preceptor.[9] The teacher-learner relationship was very close like that of father

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[7] Keay,F.E., Ibid, p.89.
[8] Sharma, Y. K., History and Problems of Education, Vol. I, Kaniska Publications, New Delhi, 2001, p.61-62.
[9] Keay, F.E., Ibid, p.59.

and son. The teacher (*Uppajjhaya*) was chosen by the learner (*Saddiviharika*) through a simple ceremony.[10]

Several changes were made in the system of education at a later stage. The system of education had widened its courses to make this transition possible. Following subjects were included in the courses of studies:- Sanskrit literature, Astronomy, Medicine, Law, Administration, Music, Arts, History, Prosody, *Dhwani*, Poetry, *Vyakarana*, *Jyotisha* and *Yoga*. The Buddhist scholars realized the need to understand and master the philosophy of the period. Comparative courses in Hinduism and Jainism were offered in the centers of higher education as also in the Hindu centers. As for the education of girls, Lord Buddha did not encourage the initiation of women into the order and it was only after the long persuasion of his foster mother and his favorite disciple Ananda that Buddha eventually agreed to permit entry of women as disciples. F.E. Keay reports that the Buddha expressed his sorrow at the decision and said that the admission of women may create problems for Sangha.[11] A Bhikkuni who had completed a hundred years of study was considered inferior to a Bhikku even it he had just been ordained. The Buddhist girls experienced the same restrictions as the Hindu girls of that period. Primary Buddhist centers of Higher Education were situated in north and north- eastern India.

As mentioned earlier, as the period advanced, Takshasila, a centre of higher education, which began with *Brahmanical* studies gradually turned into a centre of Buddhist study. Nalanda, Valabhi and Vikramshila were major

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[10]Keay, F.E., Ibid, p.90.
[11]Keay, F.E., Ibid, p.112.

centers of Higher Education. Nalanda, which became educationally important by the beginning of the 5th century A.D. was neither a capital nor a place of pilgrimage. It had become a very important centre of Buddhist education by the middle of 5th century A.D. According to R.K.Mookerji,

> *"It was the most famous of Buddhist centers of education*
> *which received the royal patronage of Hindu Gupta kings as*
> *well as of the Buddhist rulers particularly Ashoka and*
> *Harsha."* [12]

A conservative estimate puts the numbers of teachers at 1,500 with 8,500 students and around 100 lectures per day. [13] Nalanda retained its position till about the end of the 12th century A.D. RK Mookerji mentions that Nalanda and Valabhi were the two most famous centers of Buddhist education in the 7th century A.D.[14] Valabhi, which is situated now in Gujarat, was a commercial as well as an educational center. Although it was center of Buddhist learning, there is mention of Hindu learners' enrolling here. It also attracted students from outside the country. Vikramshila monastery was founded by Dharmpal, the ruler of Pal dynasty in the 8th century A.D. It developed into a big institution with a large number of temples and halls. At Vikramshila, *Dwarapanditas* (the scholar gatekeepers), interviewed students at the Eight Gates and permitted only those who answered their questions satisfactorily to enter the institution.[15] The center was particularly known for its studies in

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[12] Mookerji, R.K, Ancient Indian Education (*Brahmanical* and Buddhist), Macmillan, London, 1951, p.559.
[13] Ibid, p.564.
[14] Ibid, p. 588.
[15] Keay, F.E. ibid, p.105.

Grammar, Logic, Metaphysics and Ritualism. Bakhtiyar Khilaji, the officer of the slave king Qutb-ud-din, destroyed this famous university in 1203.

Jain System of Education

The education system that the Jains organized reflected their religious principles. Jainism in its attempt to explain the different concepts of the religion contributed to the scientific heritage of Indian thought and suggested several new ideas for the discipline of education as well as for teaching practices.[16] Like Buddhist education, Jain education was given in large monasteries and viharas to learners by monks who had received training for this purpose. Jain education was also intended to train these learners to become good religious teachers after their ordination as monks. An important objective of Jain education was to build in the learners the capability to acquire control of their senses so as to perform their duties dispassionately. The Curriculum of the Jain system of education was intended to explain and inculcate the different concepts preached by the founders. The following subjects were offered:- Mathematics (which has been identified as their main area of specialization), Astronomy and Geography. The participation of the learners in the learning process was essential as ideas and concepts were to be accepted only after the views of all concerned were heard and clarified. The democratic process in classroom learning was in-built in the religious principles, which were to be explained. The process of learning was as important as the conduct to be transmitted. Scientific inquiry was very important and was an integral aspect of the whole process of teaching and learning. "For Jain monks scientific

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[16] Chaube, S.P. and A. Chaube, Foundations of Education, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1996. pp.193-5.

inquiry was not a specialized discipline but a way to achieve the final spiritual state in which the basis of the world is fully understood and realized."[17] The outcome of the Jain system of education could not be measured in terms of mastery and content alone. Change of attitudes and development of scientific temper and scientific inquiry were aimed at, which implied that a different way of life had to be accepted. It was the process of education, which determined the success of the education system.

Jain thinkers have produced a number of texts on scientific topics. The book on Mathematics is scholarly works, which are contributions to the development of the subject and continue to be relevant today. It has also been recorded that several Jain ascetics who came to these places started Pathshalas or primary schools where the instruction was in the vernacular language embellished with Sanskrit words. The influence of Jainism like Buddhism on learning and literacy in Kerala has been recorded as significant during the early centuries of the Chritain era. The Jain monasteries at Nagercoil, which was then part of Kerala, Perumbavoor and Wayanad provided mass education on a systematic basis. Jain centers of education were scattered mainly in Bihar and Gujarat in the north.

Thus after analyzing the ancient Indian education system, we find that India has had a very rich tradition of education in Ancient times. In Vedic period it was limited to only upper strata of society. Girls had less excess of education. Buddhism came in the fore front as a challenge to the Brahmanism, Buddhism spread education to masses. It was open for all. But patriarchy was

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[17] Ashok Raj, 'Scientific Heritage of Jain Philosophy', The Times of India, New Delhi, April24, 2002.

prevalent at that time. Buddhism paved the way for girl's education. However, the greatest contribution of ancient Indian education is its search for the truth, for the knowledge of self, Atman and Brahman.

As Ghosh writes,

> *"Such search still continues vigorously in the world and often acquires the technical shape of a satellite around the earth and beyond or the scientific treatise of a philosophical dimension as in Stephen Hawkins 'A Brief History of Times' or in Carl Sagan's popular series 'Cosmos'."*[18]

Education in Medieval India

Medieval India is known for transformational phase of social and cultural synthesis. Through the history of education, we try to know the history of society. In other words an attempt hereby is made to make sense of Social History, which can broadly be interpreted with an analysis of politics, economics and religion of medieval India. This medieval period is also known for its great contribution in Bhakti and Sufi ideology, which had played a crucial role in the long drawn process of medieval mechanism of integration in society. The early Indian education and many of its centers continued in the middle ages.[19]

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[18] Ghosh, S.C, The History of education in Ancient India, Munsiram Manoharlal Publication, New Delhi, 2001, p. 160.

[19] Alam, Muzaffar (1991) "Higher Education in Medieval India" In Moonis Raza (ed.), Higher Education in India: Retrospect and Prospect, AIU, New Delhi, p.10.

Primarily Medieval India is known for Islamic system of education. The main aim of Islamic education was to spread knowledge of the Islamic religion, its philosophy, literature and history. Primary education was imparted in *maktabs* and secondary education in *madrassas*. Both were located and managed in mosques. The age for initiation in '*maktab* ceremony' was four years four months and four days. In *maktabs*, the curriculum was confined to the '*Ayats*' (verses) of Quran, which were memorized. At the age of seven, the learners were taught the Quran, and received instruction in religious precepts and usages. This seems to be the minimum education given in many of the *maktabs*.[20] Students who wished to continue their education moved on to *madrassas*. In addition to the learning of the Quran, the students were exposed to the teachings of Mohammed, fundamental doctrines of Islam, and Islamic laws and History. Separate papers covered Grammar, Rhetorics, Logic, History, Philosophy, Mathematics, Geography, Politics, Economics, Astrology, Agriculture and Medicine.[21]

Teacher student relationship was not as in the Gurukula system of the Hindus or the Guru-Shishya relationship of the Buddhist system of education. The main reason was the lower status accorded by society to teachers who were appointed to teach in *maktabs*. They were not considered as learned persons as they possessed only the minimum qualification required. Some teachers were able to sign their names and often did not understand the matter they were reading and teaching.[22] But the Islamic system of education was not for all, The very poor students were often excluded. Most of the richer boys

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[20] Keay, F.E. ibid, p.132.

[21] Ghosh, S.C. The History of Education in Medieval India, Originals, Delhi, 2001, p. 22.

[22] Vakil, K.S. and S. Natarajan, Education in India, Allied Publisher, Bombay, Rev. Edn., 1966, p.34

and girls were taught in their homes by private tutors. The practice of purdah and the general restrictions imposed on participation of women in all activities by the Muslim religion led to limited access of education to women as well. Education was denied to poor Muslims in general and in this situation the education of poor Muslim girls was severely curtailed. They had access to primary education but education in the Madrassas was not easily available. Girls from well-to-do homes were educated at home. We read of several women of the royal families as being well educated i.e. Razia Begum, Nur Jahan, Mumtaz Mahal etc. But on the whole, education of Muslims girls was not encouraged. It is clear from the history of education that girl's education has suffered in each and every period of history.

In the later stage of medieval India; a new religion came which was based on principles of social justice and gender emancipation. It was anti – ritualistic in nature. It was a synthesis of Hinduism and Islam. Sikhism is comparatively a young religion. Its main founder is Guru Nanak. He was born in 1469. He preached the true principles of religion and social reform and laid the broad foundations, which enabled his successors to preach his tenets both in letter and spirit. Sikhism arose in response of fundamentalism and casteism.

Guru Nanak thought of God as the Supreme Being who is universal, all powerful and truthful. He believed that truth was greater than all the religious rites and ceremonies one performed. His basic thought of religion can be summed up in just three words: Equality, Unity and Fraternity.

As far as education is concerned, Guru Nanak was clear in his mind as to the nature of education, which should be imparted to the nation's youth. As the educational institutions of Hindus had been suppressed, Nanak considered spiritual instruction essential to retain peace of mind. He condemned purely textual education: "One may read cartloads of books. He may read camel-loads. He may read boatfuls. He may read books, which will full a cellar. One may read for days, even for months. One may read for his whole life, even for all his breaths. Nanak, only one thing will count. The rest is all an exercise in egoism."[23]

Guru Nanak lays down the qualification of a teacher: "A teacher may be termed educated when he dispenses knowledge spontaneously. He digests what he reads and arrives at the reality and fixes his attention on the name of God. The egoist sells knowledge, earns poison and eats poison. The fool does not understand the word and is stepped in ignorance. But if an educated man is greedy, avaricious and vain, he is to be termed as a fool."[24] Guru Nanak expected high standards of morality, spirituality and intellectual attainments from a teacher. He must practice what he taught. Only then he could inspire his disciples. "The egoists indulge in mere talk; they do not practice what they say", declared Nanak.[25]

Guru Nanak observed: "Comprehension of learning consists in doing good to others. Mere reading of religious texts without understanding and without acting up to them is not of much avail. Nothing approaches the

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[23] Bhai, Jodh Singh, Guru Nanak Quincentary Number in The Spokesman Weekly (34), 1969.
[24] Ibid
[25] Ibid

knowledge of Truth but true conduct excels it."[26] Egoism increases by learning without realizing the purpose of life and singing the praise of God. So, it is clear that Sikhism has given much importance to education. These teachings of Guru Nanak are still offered in those schools, which are guided by Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. According to Sikh teachings, education is not only for survival of life, but also for good conducts and emancipation of life.

Education in Colonial India

Missionaries had played a great role in spreading education for the purpose of colonial India. They started schools as the medium to spread their message. The Portuguese missionaries started a degree college in Bandra in Bombay. However, the Portuguese were overpowered by the British. From 1818 onwards, missionary activities were taken up for promoting girls' education through the setting up of schools and orphan homes for them. A boarding school for girls was started in 1821 in Tinnevelly (now Tirunelveli) in South India. By 1854, there were about 7,000 girls in these Missionary schools. Besides, girls' education, missionaries also took interest in opening co-educational schools in many parts of India, particularly by the Church Missionary society. Education was not a State responsibility in the late 1700s and 1800s. The company was unwilling and uninterested in taking on any responsibility in the field of education in India. In fact, the East India Company did not make any attempt to impose a western system of education on its Indian

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[26] Ibid

subjects for a long time.[27] English Higher education in India can be said to have begun with the establishment of the Hindu college in Calcutta (now Kolkata) in 1817. In Eliphistone's 'minute' of 1823, there was pressure on the establishment of schools for teaching English and the European sciences.[28] Subsequently, Macaulay in his 'minute' of 1835 stated that the object of the British government ought to be the promotion of European Literature and Science amongst the natives of India.

The British themselves were convinced that they needed a class of educated Indians for secondary level posts in the Government and to act as intermediaries between the Raj and the Indian population. Basu (1991) says that Indian urban elite wanted English education because it was not only open to jobs but it also spread the western secular education which had a special role to play in the social and political regeneration of India that would create the capacity for Self Rule. The elite were the beneficiaries of this system and have had a vested interest in its continuance.[29] Both Macaulay's 'Minute' of 1835 and the Wood's Dispatch of 1854 laid down the basic objectives for the development of English education in India. Adding to it, Curzon's University Reforms represented the official attitude against the spread of higher education, which had been developing since the mid-fifties of the nineteenth century. Curzon's government was the first to apply a check to free enterprise in education.[30] He had introduced a system of control, which extended to all grades of institutions from the university to primary schools. Curzon in fact

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[27] Basu, Aparna (1991) "Higher Education in Colonial India" In Moonis Raza (ed.), Higher Education in India, AIU, New Delhi, p.22.
[28] Power, K.B., (1995) "Higher Education in India" In K.B. Power & S.K Panda (eds.) Higher Education in India- in search of quality, AIU, New Delhi, p.38.
[29] Basu, A. in Moonis Raza (ed.), op cit, p. 22.
[30] Mishra, B.B. The Indian Middle Classes, Oxford University Press, London, 1961, p.288.

shifted the emphasis from the education of few to that of the many. Finally, it could be said that education in colonial India was a transformative experience. It emphasized girls' education. It opened the door of western system of education. In toto, it can be said to have opened the door of rationalization of education.

Education in the Post-Independence Era

Independent India inherited a system of education from the colonial set-up. Colonial education system was for producing clerks and subordinates as it is clear from Macaulay's 'minute' of 1835. So, the need for the reconstruction of education system was felt. The national leadership at first got the opportunity to tackle this problem with Nehru's remark to the first All India Educational conference (January, 1948), where he very strongly expressed the view that,

> *"Whenever conferences were called to form a plan for education in India, the tendency, as a rule, was to maintain the existing system with slight modification. This must not happen now. Great changes have taken place in the country and the education system must also be in keeping with them. The entire basis of education must be revolutionized."*[31]

Basically Nehru was emphasizing that education must be made relevant to the new national goals of independent India. Our national goals were:- (a)

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[31] Ghosh, S.C. The History of Education in Modern India, Orient Longman Limited, New Delhi, 2000, p. 178.

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Democracy, (b)Secularism, (c) Elimination of poverty, (d) Creation of a Socialist society, (e) National Integration, etc.[32] In this regard, many initiatives were taken. Many committees were set up like:-

(i)   University Education Commission – 1948 – Chairman – Dr. Radhakrishnan

(ii)   Secondary Education Commission – 1952 - Chairman – Dr. A.L. Mudaeliar

(iii)   National Emotional Integration Committee – 1961

(iv)   Kothari Commission – 1964

(v)   National Policy on Education –1986

A summary of their major recommendations is as follows.

After independence, the Government appointed a University Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. Radhakrishnan in 1948. This commission made recommendations regarding the education and structure of the education system. Some of the main recommendations were:-[33]

(a) The School course should extend over a period of twelve years. Only after completion of this period, one could enter to the University system. The first degree could be obtained in three years thereafter. In other words, it advocated a 10+2+3 system for graduation.

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[32]   Naik, J.P. Education Planning in India, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1965, pp. 78-80.

[33] Government of India (1950), Report of university education commission, 1948-49 New Delhi.

(b) Professional education has to be taken up in a big way for the technical needs of development arising after independence. High-caliber teachers should be attracted by good remuneration.

(c) College and universities should be made autonomous.

(d) The Central Government must take charge of seeing to it that universities had the wherewithal for being run effectively and that they adopt suitable policies.

(e) A Central University Grants Commission should be established for allocating grants to universities. Rural Universities should be set up for rural reconstruction.

Thus as pretty clearly evident, basically this Commission's recommendations were for higher education. There was no focus on elementary education and gender education.

The Government appointed a Secondary Education Commission under Dr. A.L. Mudaliar in 1952. This Commission looked at the following ills of Secondary Education. It came up with the following findings:-

(i) Secondary education was bookish, mechanical and stereotyped.

(ii) It did not develop the qualities of discipline, co-operation and leadership.

(iii) Its examination - oriented teaching methodologies needed great improvement and good teachers.

(iv) It was isolated from life and therefore could not be put to use.

(v) It lacked emphasis on facilities such as reading, extra-curricular activities, play and recreation.

Based on the above findings, this Commission made the following recommendations:-

(i) It recommended for 10 years of schooling instead of 12 years.

(ii) It reiterated the adoption of the three language formula fof the mother tongue, Hindi and English.

(iii) There should be the diversification of courses to cater to children with different aptitudes, needs and interests, and the curriculum should be closely connected with the life of the students and their environment.

(iv) The commission also recommended the setting up of multipurpose schools which would help students take up vocational training to equip them for jobs immediately after finishing secondary education.

Other important recommendations were improvement and strengthening of libraries and laboratories, better methodologies of teaching etc. The recommendations of this commission were very much progressive in the field of education. But the government did not give much importance to this Commission's recommendations. Naik and Nurllah point out that the only tangible result, which came from the above set of recommendations, was the improvement and service conditions of Secondary teachers.[34]

The Government of India then appointed a National Emotional Integration Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Sampuranand in May, 1961. This committee recommended the following major measures:

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[34] Naik & Nurullah, A Student's History of Education in India, Macmillan Company, 1974, p. 444

(i)   There should be common pattern of education in the country.

(ii)   There should be twelve years of schooling before entering the University.

(iii) The Three Language Formula should be adopted.

(iv)   Higher Secondary courses should be planned as multi-purpose i.e., either for terminal education or as preparatory to the university.

(v)   It also recommended a special subject called 'National Integration.' This was to be made compulsory for all college students.

If we look at the recommendations of this Committee, we find that it had tried to touch almost all levels of education. But we also find that there is less focus on qualitative education and gender education.

Kothari Commission Report (1964-66):

The Commission was set up by M.C.Chagla, the then Education Minister of India. Dr. R.S Kothari, an eminent and outstanding scientist, and chairman of the UGC, was nominated as its chairman and J.P.Naik, as member secretary. The members included eminent educationists from abroad as well. This report is the most important document on education in India. The report covered all three tiers of education and was therefore a comprehensive document relating to the education system as a whole. The report made very important and useful recommendations covering all aspects for proper and future development of national education. This report advocated for far reaching reforms. The Report emphasized the need for an in-built flexibility in the system of education, and for the necessity of education to be both science based and in coherence with

Indian culture and values.[35] The main recommendations of this Commission are following:

(i) It recommended for a several fold expansion in agriculture, engineering and post- graduate courses in science subjects.

(ii) It called for introduction of work experience and social service as an integral part at all levels of education.

(iii) There had to be special emphasis on training and quality of teachers in schools.

(iv) There should be a common school system with equal access to children in the form of educational opportunities.

(v) In order to ensure Equalization of Educational opportunities, the Commission advised that there should be freeships and scholarships so as to provide educational facilities to at least 10% of physically challenged children, backward classes, nomadic groups, tribals and women.

(vi) There should be development of all modern Indian languages, while pursuing the Three Language Formula.

The Kothari Commission touched almost every aspect and all levels of education. As far as the implementation of the Kothari Commission is concerned, the recommendations were discussed in both the Houses of Parliament, and what emerged from the Government's side was the National Policy on Education in July 1968.[36] Needless to say, the recommendations of the Kothari Commission were progressively diluted at every stage of the discussions. Alas! had a few things been taken off, there would have been since long an expansion of educational facilities and most rural areas would already

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[35] Power, K.B. In K.B. Power & S.K. Panda (eds.) op. cit., 1995, p. 39.
[36] Ghosh, S. C., The History of Education in Modern India, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 183-4.

have had a school within easy reach. Nevertheless, certain valuable recommendations were accepted like, expansion of educational facilities, acceptance of the 10+2+3 structure, science and mathematics as compulsory subjects in schools etc. But all that was not enough. A clear strategy was needed.

The National Policy on Education 1986 and its Program of Action (1986)

The document on the National Policy of education is divided into twelve parts.[37] It evolved through extensive discussion among experts and assisted by 23 Task Forces, deliberated upon by the Union and the States. It was then taken up at the CABE meeting in August 1986. It was a participatory exercise of the best minds in education in the country. It was further refined in 1992 and thereafter a Programme of Action 1992 did materialize as well. It has been the basic document to guide action in the educational field in recent years. The two key themes of emphasis as delineated in our National Policy on Education 1986 were as follows:

(i) There should be emphasis on elimination of disparities in the educational system, including the promotion of women's equality, special provisions for SCs & STs and other educationally disadvantaged sections like the minorities, the physically challenged and people in backward areas.

(ii) It advocated the need to evolve a national system of education based on a common educational structure, a national curriculum framework and minimum levels of learning for each stage of education.

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[37] Ghosh, S.C. op. cit. 2000, p. 184.

In addition, universalisation of primary education, elimination of illiteracy, and skill development in the 15-35 age groups, vocationalisation of education, and preparation of manpower for developmental needs, scientific and technological research and improving the quality at all levels was envisaged. It tried to bring out the best in the field of education. But the achievements were not on expected lines. Post NPE (1986), the Indian State's policy on education has witnessed a major shift. Ravi Kumar writes:

"The Directive Principles of State Policy were ignored for over half a century and the state evaded its responsibility to impart free and compulsory education of good quality. It began meeting demands for formal schooling by implementing non-formal schemes under the garb of increasing the literacy rate. These changes left their impressions on the reports of different education committees as well. The only departures from the customary stance were the National Policy on the Education Review Committee (1990) or the Rammurti Committee Report and Yashpal Committee (1989). However, these recommendations were either rejected or shelved. The State's discomfort with the Rammurti Committee was such that a CABE Committee on policy was appointed in 1991 under Janardhan Reddy to review it. The ploy was to shelve some of the 'radical' recommendations made by the Rammurti Committee. The CABE Committee was against the neighbourhood school

concept, argued against a local context-based curriculum, and supported a multiple-layered government education of Navodaya Vidyalayas as well as NFEs, as many other things" (Kumar, 2006: 23-24).

It is clear that we can see a drastic turn in India's education policy in the post-1990 period. The irony of dissonance between policy and practice as evident in numerous high-sounding governmental interventions did feature in the educational spectrum as well. Therefore before we move on to the next chapter that strives to come to terms with the existing maladies, it would be imperative to have an eagle's eye view on the state of elementary education in India.

The State of Elementary Education

There has been a spectacular growth in elementary education in India during the post-independence period. Enrolments in primary education have increased from 1.9 crore 1950-1 to 12.2 crore in 2003-3; and those in upper primary education by nearly 15 times form 31 lakhs to 4.7 crore. In all, the enrolments in elementary education – primary and upper primary; both of which together constitute the constitutional goal of universal elementary education – have increased from 2.2 crore in 1950 -1 to 16.9 crore in 2002-3.

But unfortunately data on enrolments in India are subject to serious problems. There are wide differences between the data on enrolments provided by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the National

Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) on the one hand, and the Census, National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) and other surveys such as those done by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER: 1994) and International Institute of Population Studies (IIPS 1993, 2000) on the other. The differences are accounted by two factors:

1)   MHRD/NCERT figures generally refer to *gross enrolment* (unadjusted for over-and under-aged children) in schools, while NSSO/Census and other surveys refer to *net enrolment* (exclusive of over – and under aged children); and

2)   Earlier studies (for example, Kurrien 1983) have revealed that there is a 25-40 per cent difference between the two sets of enrolment figures in the case of primary and elementary education. It is also important to note that Census/NSSO and other surveys fail to make any distinction between 'enrolment' and 'attendance', while MHRD/NCERT take note of it.

But regardless of these statistical inconsistencies, if we take recourse to assessments by independent agencies like say IIPS (2000), certain unquestionable truths do emerge out. To begin, an All-India Representation of Literacy standard can be presented in Table 2.1. Official estimates on gross enrolment ratios have increased, from 42.6 per cent in primary and 12.9 per cent in upper primary in 1950-1 to 95 per cent in the case of primary and 61 per cent in the case of upper primary education. The overall gross enrolment ratio in elementary education was 82.5 per cent in 2002-3. All this may represent significant growth in elementary education. Coming to the recent survey (IIPS 2000), in 1998-9, only 79 per cent of the children in the age –

group 6-14 years were to be attending schools. The available NSS data refer to children of a given age group (5-9, 10-14, 15-19 and 20-4 years) attending school of any level – pre – primary to higher. It is observed that only 67.2 percent of the children of group 5-9 years in rural areas and 82.1 per cent in urban areas attend schools (pre primary, primary, or middle 72.1 per cent of the children of the age group 10-14 rural areas and 84.5 per cent in urban areas attend schools).

Table 2.1: States Classified Based on Rate of Literacy

1991

High Literacy states (>75 per cent)	Medium Literacy states (50-75 per cent)	Low literacy states (<50 per cent)
Kerala	Maharashtra	Orissa
Mizoram	Himanchal Pradesh	Meghalaya
Goa	Tamil Nadu	Madhya Pradesh
Delhi	Naganland	Andhra Pradesh
	Gujarat	Chhattsgarh
	Tripura	Arunachal Pradesh
	Manipur	Jharkhand
	Punjab	Utter Pradesh
	Uttaranchal	Rajasthan
	West Bengal	Bihar
	Karnataka	
	Haryana	
	Assam	

2001

High Literacy states (>75 per cent)	Medium Literacy states (50-75 per cent)	Low literacy states (<50 per cent)
Kerala	Tripura	Madhya Pradesh
Mizoram	Tamil Nadu	Orissa
Goa	Uttaranchal	Meghalaya
Delhi	Gujarat	Andhra Pradesh
Maharashtra	Punjab	Rjasthan
Himachal Pradesh	West Bengal	Utter Pradesh
	Manipur	ArunachalPradesh
	Haryana	Jammu & Kashmir
	Nagaland	Jharkhand
	Karnataka	Bihar
	Chhattisgarh	
	Assam	

Nearly or above 90 per cent of the children of the age – group 5 – 9 and 10 -- 14 years of the highest expenditure category attend schools, while among the bottom expenditure group only half in rural areas and about 60 per cent in urban areas attend schools. Based on an analysis of the NSS (1995-6) data, Tilak (2002) concluded that all indicators of education development ratio,

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attendance rate, non/never enrolment/ participation rate, rate of drop out, etc. are very systematically related to economic (expenditure) levels of households.

About one – third of the children of age group 5-9 years in rural areas and 28 per cent in urban areas, are not attending schools. In urban areas, the ratios are relatively small, nevertheless high: 17.5 per cent and 15.5 per cent respectively of the age groups 5-9 and 10-14. While there is some improvement --- decline in non-attendance rate – in the case of the children of the age group 5-9 and 10-14 between 1993-4 and 2000; the improvement is very small in case of groups (and secondary and higher education). The case of out-of-school children represents the most failure of the Indian education system, especially of universalization of elementary education.

Universal Elementary Education includes not only universal enrolment, but also universal retention and universal achievement. The retention rate of the school system is also at a very low level. Out of every 100 children enrolled in Class I, about 47 reach Grade VIII and 37 Grade X, according to the rates of dropouts estimated for 2002-3. The corresponding ratios were 65 per cent and 78 per cent respectively in 1960-1. Universalisation of Elementary Education, a goal set by the Government to be achieved within a ten – year period after the Constitution was framed, still eludes and remains as the most conspicuous failure of the Indian education system. The Policy on Education 1986 resolved that by '1995, all children will be provided free and compulsory education up to 14 years of age'. Now, according to the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, an umbrella scheme launched by the Union Government in 2001, unversalization of elementary education with respect to and retention will be achieved by 2010.

The Right to Education Bill (2008): A Critique

Of late, the Government has brought out the 'Right to Education' Bill. This move of government has stirred the sleeping discussion on the Bill. The historic Supreme Court verdict to make education as a fundamental Right in Unnikrishanan Vs State of Andhra Pradesh case revealed that at every stage the ruling government/s failed to demonstrate the political will to ensure 'equitable quality education' to all children until the age of 14. At every point the central government/s either disheartened the people by taking anti- children and anti-people positions on the issue of Right to Education or distorted the Constitutional commitment to provide quality education which was further unambiguously reiterated by the Supreme Court in 1993. V.P Niranjanradhya[38] has written in his article that people have a reason to distrust government's commitment to avail education as a Fundamental Right. Firstly, the central government/s took almost ten years to move an Amendment of the Constitution to materialize the Unnikrishanan judgment in 1993 (i.e., to provide the status of Fundamental Right to Education in the Constitution under part III). Secondly, the much delayed 86th Constitutional Amendment Act 2002, not only diluted the Supreme Court verdict of 1993 but also reversed the aspirations of the people which was the product of the historic freedom struggle embodied in the constitution in the form of Articles 14, 15 (1) (3), 24, 39 (e) (f), 45 and 46 which have direct impact on children and their education. Therefore, in essence the 86th Amendment Act is the distorted version of people's aspirations. Thirdly, despite these not so positive alterations, the persons and organizations demanding a full-fledged Fundamental Right to

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[38] Niranjanradhya , V.P. The Hindu, 17, 2008

Education complied with the State and welcomed it with the hope that the 86th constitutional Amendment Act would at least assure the Fundamental Right to 'equitable quality education' to all children. But later on the Central Government made every attempt through the legislative process to dilute the 86th Amendment Act through a sub-committee constituted under the Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE) to place the Fundamental Right under non-justiciable rights.

The CABE sub-committee was never opened for people to have their say in the matter and failed to hear the voices of the people. The Central Government had circulated the bill among all the states in 2006 as the model Right to Education Bill and the States were asked to enact legislations on its basis. In fact, many States rejected the model bill, which tries to shift the onus entirely on them; though education is a subject in Concurrent List. Further, in February 2008, contrary to its earlier position, the Central Government constituted one more committee to re-examine the bill. The revised bill was not even opened for public debate. Anil Sadgopal (2008) sees many flaws in this bill. He writes that this bill is not based on principles of Equality and Quality. This bill does not envision for an ending of the class-based 'multi-layered schooling'. Instead it tends to legalize them. At the same time, this bill also encourages privatization and marketization of education. The Planning Commission had called for a meeting of public-private-partnership in schooling education in the month of April 2008, where representatives of 18 corporate houses were present. There was no Educationist / Sociologist in that meeting. So, it clearly indicates the nature of tone, tenor and temperament that the Government seems to have for making Education a Fundamental Right.

And if at all, it does become a Fundamental Right, how far will they address the grueling questions of inequity and quality in educational quality is the million-dollar question that yet remains to be answered.

Government says that this Bill will change the face of elementary education. But one has doubts about this because this Bill has serious flaws that have to be addressed. This Bill is not based on principles of equality and quality. This Bill says 'Children in the 6-14 age groups will enjoy the fundamental right to free education.' Now the question is of those who are under six years, who will take care of their education. Government will provide education up to the age of fourteenth. After the fourteenth year, what? We know very well that without at least doing intermediate we can't get admission in ITI, Polytechnique or professional courses. Anil Sadgopal notes that this exclusion of some age groups contradicts the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child, which describes a child as 'every human being below 18 years'. He says 'The government of India is a signatory to this convention....... By excluding those under six, we are ignoring 17 crores children.' At the same time, pre-school support is also necessary for children, and ignoring the less than six age group lead to the promotion of child labour. Exclusion of this age group will mainly affect the poor strata of the society.

The second issue is related to equality in education. Article 14, 15, and 16 of our constitution provides equal opportunity for all without any discrimination. Our education system does not follow the spirit of Constitution. Our education system is based on caste, class, economy and religion. There is no uniformity in education. There is currently multi-layered school system.

This bill does not have any vision for abolishing multi-layered school system but legalizes them. In this bill there is provision for keeping multi-layered school system; such as simple government schools for poor children, Kendriya Vidyalayas for government employees' children; Navodaya schools for rural middle class and high class, private school for elite class. This bill legalizes for above type of schooling. Why this type of hierarchy in elementary education? How can we create equality in education? This type of hierarchy is made for keeping inequality in society through education. Do you think those who read in government school would be able to complete with higher quality private school's students? No doubt, there will be qualitative difference. And government has no interest to provide qualitative education to all.

The bill, by the premises it accepts, discriminates against the weaker sections of society. If we look at Kothari Commission report (1966), we find that it had introduced the idea of Common School System. The report has recognised the responsibility of education system to bring different social classes and groups together and promote an egalitarian and integrated society. The commission report noted that education tended to 'increase social segregation and to perpetuate and widen class distinctions.' As the commission explained, this was because many government schools were of poor quality while private schools were better off in many ways. To mitigate such disparities, Common School System for all children should be an integral part of the 'Right to Education Bill'. There should be no relation between good education and social class. Everybody should get qualitative education under the same roof irrespective of their caste, class, religion etc. Sadgopal adds that

a common school system would also mean that all the children in a neighborhood attend the same school, within whose jurisdiction they fall.[39]

The third issue is related to accessibility of education. This bill is difficult. In this regard, it is no wonder that a majority of the excluded and non-achievers come from the most deprived sections of society—Dalits, OBCs, STs, girls, Muslims and the poor-precisely the people who are to be empowered through education. Why they don't have access to education? It might have three reasons:- poverty, illiteracy and lack of will power. According to Anil Sadgopal, government has failed to recognise poverty as a major reason for children not attending school in the first place. And by asking parents to help in the schools, it would put their daily wages at work. The availability of schools cannot ensure that every child will have an education. There are other socio-economic issues that play a role and the success of the Bill depends on changes in other areas. Vinod Raina says 'One of the key barriers, particularly for the poor and the deprived is the issue of cost. That is where one of the critical aspects of Article 21A comes into play, namely the state shall provide 'free' education. Normally, 'free' is interpreted as non-payment of fees by the parents of the child. But numerous studies have concluded that the fee constitutes only one of the components of educational expenditure. And since the landless, poor and socially deprived cannot meet the other expenses, this result in the non-participation of their children in education.'[40] Even Krishna Kumar also says that there is plenty of evidence to say that India's present –day society lacks the desire to have every child at

[39] Sadgopal (january2009), Buniyadi Adhikaro me Shiksha!, New Delhi : Dainik Bhaskar
[40] Vinod Raina(January 2009), Semiar,593

school. So, it is clear that this Bill is lacking the vision of accessibility in education.

The fourth issue is related to alternative schools and alternative texts. This Bill does not have any vision to learn from alternative schools and alternative texts. This Bill is not based on the vision of Gandhi, Tagore and Aurobindo. There is less scope for freedom, dialogue, creativity, humanism, and a reciprocal teacher-taught relationship in our present day education system. Students lose interest in education because of that. Paulo Freire (1972) has criticised present system of education. Freire says that present system of education is a banking concept of education. Banking education privileges the teacher. It assumes that the teacher knows everything; that the student is merely passive; that there is no possibility of a creative engagement between the teacher and the student. As Freire sees it, the banking concept of education suffers from 'narration sickness.' The banking concept of education is, therefore, 'an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor (Freire 1972:55)'. In fact, in the banking concept of education, 'knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing (Ibid: 56)'. This means that it is hierarchical; it perpetuates inequality and oppression. It is anti-dialogic. Freire favours dialogic relationship in education. As Freire says, 'through dialogue, the teacher-of-students and the students-of-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teacher (Ibid: 53)'. In other words; through dialogue, creativity starts which makes education meaningful. This Bill does not have any vision for meaningful education. This Bill should learn from alternative texts. Here is one example of Eklavya texts.

It has been developed by a team of scholars. These texts have been written in a child-centred language; its dialogic form makes the texts more personal and arouses the imagination of the child. Textbooks have been presented in the form of narratives. So it is clear that this Bill lacks the vision for meaningful elementary education.

The fifth issue is related to privatisation of elementary education. This Bill goes ahead with privatisation of elementary education. In Eleventh five-year plan, government is moving ahead for public-private partnership in elementary education. It means government is going to use public money for privatisation and marketisation of education. According to Anil Sadgopal, Planning Commission had called for a meeting for public-private partnership in schooling education where representatives of eighteen corporate sectors were present. There was no educationist or sociologist or teacher in that meeting. So, government's intention is clear that private player should play a greater role in school education. By doing this, government is killing the future of crores of children who would not be able to afford expensive education. This Bill says that private schools will reserve 25% seats for the poor children. Government will support in this regard. How many children attend in private schools? As per the Seventh Educational Survey, about four crore children out of 19 crore in the 6-14 age group are currently studying in private schools at this stage (Class I-VIII).[41] It means only 1 crore poor children will get admission in private schools. What about others? Would they be able to survive there? We also know this fact that private schools take different types of fees other than tuition fee. Who will pay all those fees? They will get admission till Class VIII.

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[41] Anil Sadgopal (9Nov.:2008), Education Bill: dismantling rights, The Financial Express.

What will happen to them after Eighth? Once again they will suffer from educational crisis. Then how can one say that this Bill will change the face of education system.

Vinod Raina notes that private players do not want the state to invest in education and instead prefer to leave it to the markets.[42] According to media reports, while many schools have refused admission to students from economically weaker sections, citing 'no vacancy' as the reason, some others claim to have already admitted the required number but are reluctant to prove it. Additionally some schools have been very clever with the notices, announcing admissions to their 'institutions not in Hindi dailies, but in English ones, which most people from this section of society don't subscribe to.' It is clear that private schools do not want to implement 25% quota for the poor children wholeheartedly. When we privatize something, it means we are involved with commodification. Private players see education as a commodity. So their interest is to get maximum profit from this commodity. They will not deliver social justice in the field of education. When we say that India is a 'welfare' state; it means state should take full responsibility of providing qualitative education to all. Privatization of education will always perpetuate inequality and hierarchy in the field of education.

So, it is clear from the above discussion that the Bill lacks the vision of what constitutes equality, quality, and equity in schooling education. This Bill is half-hearted measure of the government and is a manifestation of the lack of

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[42] Vinod Raina (January:2009) Seminar 593

political will to achieve the constitutional directive of equality and quality. This Bill promotes hierarchy, inequality and privatization in its present form.

In short, the problems of the education in India include inadequate quantitative expansion, poor quality of education, and a high degree of inequities-regional, rural-urban, gender, and by socio-economic groups of population. All this exists despite the explicit assertions in the plans in favour of equality of opportunities, and for balanced regional development in education. In fact education in India is passing though critical phases. Government has formed many committees and commission in this regard. But we did not get the desired result yet. If we see the history of education we find that elementary education has not been in the priority list of the Government. Assuming this, the next chapter attempts to come to terms with this crisis in Elementary Education.

CHAPTER III

POLICIES VS PRACTICES: UNDERSTANDING THE DOMAIN OF CRISIS IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

Elementary education in India has been defined by the National Policy on Education. The National Policy on Education (1986) defined that the structure of elementary education would consist of 5 years of primary education and 3 years of upper primary education. But there are variations in the states with regard to organization of elementary education. For example, some states have 4 years of primary and 3 years of upper primary structure. Some states have 5 years of primary and 2 years of upper primary structure. In spite of these variations, elementary education structure is understood as defined by the National Policy on Education (1986) as presented in following table:

Table 3.1: National System of Education

Age 4-6	Pre- Primary
Class I-V; Age 6-11	Primary
Class VI-VIII; Age 12-14	Upper Primary
Class IX- X; Age 15-16	Secondary
Class XI- XII; Age 17-18 .	Senior Secondary

So, Elementary Education is provided to the children in the age group 6-14 years. This is the most important and formative period in a child's life. The social benefits of elementary education are immense. A person with proper elementary education can become a self-reliant, sensible and productive citizen of the country. According to World Bank, research has shown that increasing the average primary schooling of the labor force even by one year can increase output substantially. Elementary education leads to perpetuation of benefits from one generation to another. The importance of elementary education is very crucial not only for the country but also for all citizens of the country.

Resurgence of the Relevance of Elementary Education in 1970s

Before 1976, education was the exclusive responsibility of the States. The Constitutional Amendment of 1976, which included education in the concurrent list, was a far-reaching step. The substantive, financial and administrative implication required a new sharing of responsibility between the Union Government and the States. While the role and responsibility of the States in education remained largely unchanged, the Union Government accepted a larger responsibility of reinforcing the national and integrated character of education, maintaining quality and standards including those of the teaching profession at all levels, and the study and monitoring of the educational requirements of the country.

In 1994, the Supreme Court gave a directive to the government that the State must provide universal elementary education for children from 6 to 14 years of age. It was in the year 2002 that article 45 of the Directive Principles

of State policy, which asked the state and compulsory elementary education for all children until they complete 14 years, was amended by the 93rd Constitution Amendment. So, free and compulsory education to all children up to the age fourteen is the constitutional commitment in India. At the time of adoption of the constitution in 1950, the aim was to achieve the goal of Universal Elementary Education (UEE) within the next ten years i.e. by 1960. Keeping in view the educational facilities available in the country at that time, the goal was too ambitious to achieve within a short span of ten years. Hence, the target date was shifted a number of times. Till 1960, all efforts were focused on provision of schooling facilities. It was only after the near realization of the goal of access that other components of UEE, such as universal enrollment and retention, started receiving attention of planners and policy makers. It is the quality of education, which is at present in the focus in all programmes related to Elementary Education. Though many policies and programmes have been introduced, but the quality of elementary education is far from being satisfactory.

Causes of Underachievement in Elementary Education

The Education Commission (1996:269) found that 65 percent of the dropouts were due to poverty. NCAER (1994) also found that economic factors were more important than any other factor in explaining non-enrolment and drop outs in elementary education in several states in India. Economic factors and lack of interest in education were found to be the two major reasons for non-enrolment of children in schools, according to the 35th round of the NSS (Visaria et al. 1993). According to the 52nd round of NSS, more than 50 percent

of the non-enrolment was due to economic factors and lack of interest in schooling accounts for another 30 per cent. Several studies have found that participation in schooling is influenced by three set of factors: (a) household economic factors, (b) school environment, including quality of physical and human infrastructure and quality of instruction, and (c) social and cultural/ traditional factors. If we analyse the latest data of NUEPA (2008) we find that schoolrooms in many States have as many as 100 students in a class, with a single teacher in-charge of 67 or more. Bihar, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh have one of the highest Student Classroom Ratios (SCRs). In case of primary schools, Bihar, Jharkhand and Utter Pradesh have SCRs as high as 92, 79 and 53 respectively. Assam at 45 students per classroom, Madhya Pradesh at 43 and West Bengal at 50 are also on the higher side. As many as 16.45 per cent schools have SCR of 60 and above. The Report has also warned that these states should look into the matter without delay. Otherwise, it would be difficult to retain children in school and may also be difficult for a teacher to handle all the children. A higher SCR has been observed in primary schools and has been termed as needing 'immediate intervention'. Bihar scores low on another count as well- the number of female teachers, a priority under Operation Blackboard. Bihar (27.65%), West Bengal (28.31%), Jharkhand, Rajasthan and Tripura have the least number of female teachers, while Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Punjab have over 60% female teachers. Bihar and Jharkhand also stand at the bottom of the Educational Development Index (EDI).

Another key indicator that influences classroom transaction is the Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR). There too the same set of States lie at the end of the tally. Against a comfortable average of 40:1, Bihar has a ratio of 67:1 in

government schools. Interestingly, the case is even worse in privately managed schools, with the ratio standing at 71:1 in aided schools and 67:1 in non-aided schools. Utter Pradesh is no better, with a PTR as high as 55:1. As many as 12% primary schools in UP have a PTR of 100, against just 0.02 per cent such schools in Kerala. However, overall the country has shown an improvement in PTR, with the ratio dropping from 36 to 34 percent from 2005-06 to 2006-07. The data on teacher qualification shows up more shocking details. As many as 44.71 per cent teachers who impart elementary education in the country are higher secondary and below. While in many states the minimum qualification prescribed is secondary, a few teachers are even below this level. Just over half (54 per cent) teachers across schools in rural and urban areas are graduates and post-graduates, with the number higher in urban areas.

So, it is clear that all is not well with Elementary Education. Inspite of implementation of numerous policies and programmes, Elementary Education in India is still suffering from three major crises. They are:-

(i)   Caste-Based Disparities

(ii)   Gender Hierarchy

(iii)   Crisis in Curriculum

[I] Caste-Based Disparities

A major source of social inequality in Indian society is the caste system, which has divided the society into endogamous groups, arranged in a strict hierarchical order. Castes are ascriptive groups into which people are born

and where they remain, with little scope of individual mobility to a higher level of social status. The caste system is governed by the concept of purity and pollution, which, according to Louis Dumont (1970), underlies the principle of hierarchy i.e., the superiority of the pure over the impure. The two must be kept separate. To maintain the purity of his caste, it is obligatory for a traditional Hindu to restrict his interpersonal relationships to within his own caste in terms of commensality (restrictions on acceptance of food and water), restrictions on marriage and the hereditary occupation he follows (Fuller 2003). At the top of the hierarchy are the three upper or twice born castes the Brahmins (learned men), the *Kshatriyas* (aristocracy) and the *Vaishyas* (men of wealth). All power and access to resources are concentrated in them. At the bottom are the *Shudras* (workers), who were meant to serve the other classes. Outside the caste system were the Chandalas or untouchables who performed polluting and menial tasks and were subjected to extreme stigma by the upper castes. In between the Brahmins and the untouchables are a whole range of endogamous jatis (castes), each performing a specific occupation e.g. barber, washer man, dhobi, potter, artisan, weaver, carpenter etc. As Fuller states, the whole is constituted by the complete set of complementary relations among castes (Fuller 2003). These castes are ranked by their relative purity i.e. by the rules of commensality, their rituals, marriage patterns etc. The hierarchical structuring of the different castes was by no means unquestioned. As M.N. Srinivas put it, there was considerable debate regarding their position, as each caste would try to claim superiority over the other (Srinivas 1986). Agriculture, however, was practiced by all castes in addition to their traditional occupation since it was not assigned to any particular caste. The peasant farmers mainly belonged to the land owning caste, while the agricultural labourers were the lowest castes. According to M.N.

Srinivas, in many villages, certain castes are locally dominant because they exercise control over the agrarian economy and the village polity (Srinivas 1986). There are also many regional and linguistic variations in the structure of the caste system. Suffice to say that this system of social inequality remains a salient feature in the lives of people in rural India, even today. The institution of caste, which is unique to and is the primary basis of social stratification in India, has been identified as one of the most important factors for the existence of inequality in education (Naik and Nurullah 1975). Indian society did not believe in equality of educational opportunity. In traditional Hindu society, education was centered on religion and access to it was limited to the three upper castes. It was denied to women and the bulk of lower castes that lived in poverty and were hence educationally deprived.

Yogendra Singh explains the nature and content of education in early times. Traditionally, the content of education was esoteric, metaphysical. Its communication was limited to the upper classes or the twice born castes .The structure of its professional organisation was hereditary and closed (Singh 1973). Modern education, introduced by the British was, on the contrary, liberal and scientific and based on merit. In keeping with their overall advantageous position in the past, the upper castes were also the first to take advantage of modern education, especially higher education. They thus formed the educated middle class or elite. In keeping with the tenets of modern education, the British sought to expand education among intermediate / low castes, SCs, tribes and among girls. Geetha Nambissan points out how the British rulers and missionaries went about this task by establishing special schools and night schools for the depressed castes, so that they would not need to come into

contact with the upper caste children. She also states how the reaction of upper caste Hindus to this was one of utmost opposition as they saw no point in educating those whose life was to be one of ignorance (Nambissan 1996). The spread of education among the depressed castes and women was also a result of the social reform movements led by the educated elite and leaders such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Tagore, Gandhi, etc who also revolted against certain social customs and caste discrimination prevalent in the Hindu society. Thus, with the coming of the British to India, and the secularization of education, the concept of education, as being confined to a few castes, has ceased to exist. The fundamental principle now is that every citizen has equal access to every kind of knowledge, and the recent 83rd Constitutional Amendment has made elementary education a fundamental right for all citizens. However, the actual spread of schooling among the lower castes started in independent India, together with the introduction of protective measures (abolition of untouchability and the policy of reservations). Also, efforts to establish primary schools to enable easy access to SC / ST populations have been made along with incentives such as the provision of scholarships, free uniforms and text books etc. Employment opportunities, through the policy of reservations, have also been provided to them. These benefits of reservations in educational institutions / government are also enjoyed by the Other Backward Castes which cover a wide spectrum of intermediate castes. Though they do not suffer from untouchability, these castes have always had a social status lower than that of upper castes, but above that of the scheduled castes. According to M.N. Srinivas, high caste dominance in education and new occupations, in newly Independent India, provided the *raison d'être* for the emergence of the Backward Class movement. The backward classes attempted to attain western

education and the fruits it yielded, in an attempt to raise their social status. The desire for social mobility through caste groups found expression through caste associations, aimed at improving social and economic status of the members of the caste. This was done by setting up schools, colleges, and hostels and starting scholarships for students of their respective castes (Srinivas 1972). Thus an impetus to the spread of both primary and higher education was given by this means. The government has tried to provide education for all. But it has not achieved its goal. Government has introduced following programmes to bridge social category gaps:

(a) District Primary Education Programme

The Centrally-sponsored Scheme of District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was launched in 1994 as a major initiative to revitalize the primary education system and to achieve the objective of universalisation of primary education. This programme also focuses on reduction of disparities among social groups.

(b) Mid-Day Meal Scheme

It has emerged as the world's largest school feeding programme. It was launched on 15 August 1995, and was revised in September 2004. One of the main objectives of this programme is to boost universalisation of primary education (classes I-V) by improving enrolment, attendance, retention, and learning levels of children especially those belonging to disadvantaged sections.

(c) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

The Scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan(SSA) was launched in 2001. SSA is a historic stride towards achieving the long cherished goal of Universlisation of Elementary Education (UEE) through a time bound integrated approach, in partnership with the States. SSA, which promises to change the face of elementary education sector of the country, aims to provide useful and quality elementary education to all children in the 6-14 age group. One of the major goals of SSA is to bridge all social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and elementary education level by 2010.

But even after 7 years or more of implementation of the above programmes, we have not achieved the desired goal. If we see the percentage of SC & ST enrolment to total enrolment of 2005-06, 2006-07, and 2007-08; we find that their percentage of enrolment is not satisfactory. It is clear from the following Tables 3.2 and 3.3.

Table 3.2: Percentage of SC Population and Enrolment

States/UT	% SC Population & Enrolment				
	% SC Popu.	% SC Enrolment (Class I to VII/VIII)			
	Census 2001	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	% Girls Enrolment (2007-08)
A & N Islands	0.00	0.03	0.07	0.04	57.14
Andhra Pradesh	16.20	19.29	19.10	18.91	49.12
Arunachal Pradesh	0.60	1.01	0.83	0.68	46.71
Assam	6.90	10.53	9.88	9.68	49.24
Bihar	15.70	15.44	16.85	16.89	43.96
Chandigarh	17.50	12.92	11.84	10.61	47.98
Chattishgarh	11.60	14.04	14.93	15.28	48.52
Dadra&Nagar Haveli	1.90	3.47	2.22	2.37	48.69
Daman& Diu	3.10	4.27	5.00	4.71	44.33
Delhi	16.90	12.25	10.04	11.97	47.88
Goa	1.80	2.54	2.79	2.53	49.27
Gujarat	7.10	7.51	7.83	7.98	46.95
Haryana	19.30	31.39	30.50	28.21	47.42
Himachal Pradesh	24.70	28.64	28.24	28.04	48.30
J & K	7.60	9.52	9.37	8.85	45.57
Jharkhand	11.80	14.30	14.60	15.03	47.65
Karnataka	16.20	20.70	19.56	19.18	48.14
Kerala	9.80	11.01	11.45	11.28	48.58
Lakshadweep	0.00	2.71	0.02	0.07	50.00
Madhya Pradesh	15.20	15.76	17.63	17.59	48.18
Maharashtra	10.20	14.37	14.27	14.71	47.74
Manipur	2.80	3.21	3.99	3.68	49.18
Meghalaya	0.50	1.05	1.29	1.00	48.90
Mizoram	0.00	0.51	0.73	0.16	45.14
Nagaland	0.00	1.88	2.08	0.03	43.56
Orissa	16.50	20.04	21.54	19.96	48.60
Puducherry	16.20	18.33	17.43	19.04	49.49
Punjab	28.90	47.33	46.89	49.19	47.09
Rajasthan	17.20	19.53	19.27	19.48	44.79
Sikkim	5.00	7.20	7.06	6.80	50.47
Tamil Nadu	19.00	24.81	24.65	24.65	48.65
Tripura	17.40	19.19	19.66	19.46	49.34
Uttar Pradesh	21.10	27.66	27.10	27.34	48.58
Uttrakhand	17.90	26.12	27.10	26.18	48.84
West Bengal	23.00	27.67	26.70	26.81	48.54
All States	16.20	18.64	19.87	19.83	47.76

Source: NUEPA: Flash Statistics 2007-08

Table 3.3: Percentage of ST Population and Enrolment

States/UT	% ST Population and Enrolment				
	% ST Popu.	% ST Enrolment Classes I to VII/VIII			
	Census 2001	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	% Girls Enrolment
A & N Islands	8.30	8.06	7.92	7.02	46.94
AndhraPradesh	6.60	9.38	9.76	9.64	47.31
Arunachal Pradesh	64.20	73.13	74.78	75.95	48.48
Assam	12.40	16.00	14.98	15.57	49.12
Bihar	0.90	1.28	1.69	2.29	45.05
Chandigarh	0.00	0.09	0.09	0.13	44.83
Chattishgarh	31.80	32.62	32.23	32.03	48.63
Dadra&Nagar Haveli	62.20	69.53	72.59	71.03	47.43
Daman& Diu	8.80	12.00	14.06	12.94	46.44
Delhi	0.00	0.45	0.41	0.31	47.33
Goa	0.00	5.60	7.72	7.85	47.13
Gujarat	14.80	18.34	18.04	18.41	48.10
Haryana	0.00	0.50	0.57	0.13	41.48
Himachal Pradesh	4.00	5.51	5.63	5.64	48.10
J & K	10.90	12.93	13.06	13.09	43.38
Jharkhand	26.30	32.67	30.78	30.49	48.08
Karnataka	6.60	7.91	7.56	7.51	48.11
Kerala	1.10	2.06	2.07	1.93	48.90
Lakshadweep	94.50	95.01	96.76	99.59	48.42
Madhya Pradesh	20.30	19.15	23.09	23.59	48.03
Maharashtra	8.90	10.89	10.94	11.34	46.78
Manipur	34.20	37.84	41.98	42.68	48.46
Meghalaya	85.90	92.89	92.42	93.08	50.68
Mizoram	94.50	97.09	97.53	99.24	48.76
Nagaland	89.10	94.65	93.88	93.75	49.08
Orissa	22.10	24.46	23.13	25.35	47.9
Puducherry	0.00	0.07	-	0.68	51.21
Punjab	0.00	0.21	0.27	0.25	47.88
Rajasthan	12.60	14.77	14.62	14.97	44.49
Sikkim	20.60	36.26	36.63	36.10	51.13
Tamil Nadu	1.00	1.81	2.09	1.88	47.62
Tripura	31.10	38.73	38.27	38.95	47.30
Uttar Pradesh	0.10	0.69	0.58	0.63	47.75
Uttrakhand	3.00	3.88	4.36	3.77	50.40
West Bengal	5.50	6.15	6.20	6.27	47.78
All States	8.20	9.02	10.69	10.95	47.64

Source: NUEPA: Flash Statistics 2007-08

The above tables clearly show that there still is a gap among General (GEN), Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) students in the case of enrolment ratio. At the same time, if we see the table of Drop-Out Rates, it is clear that a huge gap still exists among GEN, SCs & STs.

Table 3.4: % of Drop Out among General SCs and STs

Drop Out %	Class (I-V)	Class (VI-VIII)
General	29.99	53
SCs	49	68
STs	64	79

Sources: Dept. of Education, GoI, 2006

It is clear that it is not only SCs who are deprived of education benefits, but also tribals. They lag behind SCs when it comes to availing educational facilities as indicated by the above tables. The 1986 National Policy on Education specifically laid down that opening of primary schools in tribals areas should be undertaken on priority basis. It also emphasized on the need to develop instructional material in tribal languages at the initial stages in order to create propitious conditions for their smooth shift to regional language education. Despite such recommendations, there still exists a yawning gap between policy and practice. Not much effort has gone into preparing textbooks in tribal languages. Neither has their educational status shown much improvement.

At the same time, we find that the caste system with its 'typical' hierarchy is still creating hurdles for SCs to access education of comparable quality. To quote Ravi Kumar:

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"Even if SCs children gain entry into schools, they confront a variety of problems as they attempt a total inclusion in the system at par with others. These problems may range from discriminatory behavior of teachers and classmates and in distribution of midday meals, to growing social pressure and poverty" (Kumar 2006, 101).

The question of equal educational opportunities for SCs / STs is closely related to the State's policies. This relation is more important because it is SCs / STs who go to government schools because they cannot afford the private education system. Hence, the emphasis on improving the condition of formal Government schools and expanding their reach is extremely important. But the State has not made much headway in this regard. Whatever may be the reasons, it is clear that we have not yet achieved the goals of 'inclusive education'. Dispensation of social justice still remains elusive in the arena of elementary education.

Understanding the Caste puzzle in Elementary Education:-

The above account has clearly demonstrated the variations in educational attainment among upper caste groups, Scheduled Castes, and Scheduled Tribes. This section examines the possible causes for this variation and explores the impediments faced by SC children, from the point of view of the household, the community and the school.

1. Income and Caste

In the first instance, many studies show that the economic cause is the most evident one in explaining the caste gap in education (World Bank Report 1997). Income and caste are typically correlated with lower castes having lower incomes and higher castes having better endowments in terms of land, income and other resources. Thus, caste and class inequalities tend to reinforce each other and thereby impact the schooling process of lower caste children. The Mode-Unicef Report states that the socio-economic profile appears to be a barrier to enrolment of SC/ST families (Ramachandran, Vimala 2002; World Bank Report 1997). Dalits and Adivasis are economically the most vulnerable sections in rural India and are still plagued by poverty. According to the NSSO 93.94%, about 48% of the Dalits and 51% of the Adivasi population, compared to 29% of the general category, in rural areas were below the poverty line (Nambissan 2003). They form the bulk of the landless, lowly paid, low skilled and illiterate, wage earners. Indebtedness and destitution characterize dalit families (Nambissan 1996; Jha and Jhingran 2002). Majority of dalits have marginal landholdings - below one hectare and approximately half of the rural work force are agricultural labour comprising of dalits. This reflects their economic and social dependence on upper castes (Nambissan 1996). In Jha's study, half the dalit families are landless, the average landholding size being the lowest at 1.25 acres. Economic constraints thus prevent Dalits from being able to meet the direct costs of schooling, as they are unable to meet expenses of fees, uniforms, transport etc (Jha and Jhingran 2002). In this way, poverty seriously impedes schooling for an average dalit family.

2. Child Work

Schooling represents an indirect cost to SC families, since children are involved in domestic / economic activities, inside and outside the home. Children may be required to participate in such activity either full time or part time, which usually leads to non- enrolment, irregular attendance or dropping out of school by children. Nambissan, quoting the NSS survey, states that maximum participation in household chores is by children who have dropped out of school (Nambissan 1996; 2003). According to Agarwal and Sibou, in 1981, 70% of SC children were out of school and working, compared with 24% of other caste children (Aggarwal and Sibou 1992). Work participation of boys and girls is higher among backward caste households, compared to upper caste households and consequently the proportion of school going children is also lower amongst them (Caldwell et al 1985; Jha and Jhingran 2002; Nambissan 2000).

3. Parental Illiteracy and Problems of First Generation Learners

Studies have shown that SC children fare badly when it comes to parental literacy. The overwhelming majority of scheduled caste parents are illiterate. This is seen as the major reason for non-enrolment and discontinuation among SC children across the various states surveyed (Vaidyanathan and Nair 2001). Jha's study shows that the average year of schooling is 1.05 years for dalit adults. Many SC children who enroll are thus first generation learners, who come from illiterate families. They, thus, have to single handedly grapple with school life, mastering language and cognitive skills without parental help and

guidance. Ramya Subramanian's study of Raichur shows the fate of illiterate parents, who were caught in a trap of not knowing how much to push the child (Subramanian 1999).

4. Physical Segregation

In all villages, irrespective of regions, Dalits face physical segregation and live in separate clusters / colonies on the periphery of multi-caste villages. This isolation makes access to facilities difficult; as they have to walk a long distance to obtain water, fuel wood etc. Such physical segregation affects access to schools. Even if the school is situated at a reasonable distance, it may not be socially accessible. If it is located in an upper caste settlement, it may lead to feelings of alienation or fear of caste tensions, making SC children reluctant to attend school. Vasavi points out how villages and habitations of low-ranked castes are not served with effective schools. Thus, the most serious impediment of social positioning of the scheduled castes is the non-availability of school within or near their habitation, which denies them access to education (Vasavi and Chamaraj 2000).

5. Social Segregation

The position of SCs as untouchables in the Hindu caste system has been the most serious obstacle to their education. dalits are not only physically, but also socially isolated and are still subject to social discrimination both in the village community, as well as within the school. Nambissan and Jha show, how the practice of untouchability is still prevalent in parts of rural India, even though it

has been abolished. Dalits are still barred from using village wells; access to temples is still not permitted and inter-caste dining is still a taboo. Physical violence against dalits is also reported (Nambissan 1996, Jha and Jhingran 2002). Jha speaks of how any other community in the village does not accept water from dalits, and how dalits are not allowed to enter houses/ kitchens of other castes (Jha and Jhingran 2002).

6. Caste Discrimination at School

Children from the disadvantaged castes are also discriminated within the school environment. Geetha Nambissan highlights the hidden curriculum that underlies school processes, i.e. the message of social inferiority conveyed by the teacher and peers to such children (Nambissan 2000). Elsewhere, Nambissan quotes various studies, which bring out the blatant forms of discrimination faced by SC children. They were made to sit separately in one corner of the classroom. They were also spared physical punishment for fear of pollution. They were refused drinking water and made to dine separately. Another study mentions exclusion of SC students from singing songs and worshipping Gods (Nambissan 1996). Other research studies highlight the ill treatment received by SC children at the hands of teachers. Cases of teachers refusing to touch low caste children, verbally abusing and beating them, and subjecting them to harsh forms of punishment have also been reported. Sarcastic comments on their caste / occupations are often made. Such caste differences tend to exacerbate the social distance between the teacher and the students. The failure of teachers to empathize with such children is looked upon as the most important factor for their dropping out of school (Vasavi and

Mehendale 2003). Caste biases against SC children and negative stereotypes on the part of teachers are common phenomena in schools. Teachers look down upon the mental abilities of dalit children, and even regard them as uneducable. Promoting and favouring upper caste children reflects the biases of the teachers and is brought out in many research studies (Jha and Jhingran 2002; Nambissan 2000; Ramachandran, Vimala 2003; PROBE Report 1999). Dalit children also face hostile peer behaviour from upper caste children who often bully them and do not treat them as equals. Rekha Kaul's study reveals that, though within the school, the peer group appeared friendly, outside the school, there was no social interaction between the children of SCs and upper castes (Kaul 2001).

Thus, it can be well remarked that social discrimination against SCs in the community over a long period has led to a hesitation and collective diffidence towards education. The adverse learning environment affects the overall confidence and esteem of these children, leading to lower aspirations and consequently lower achievement levels amongst them (Jha and Jhingran 2002; Nambissan 2000). Though the positioning of SC children in the caste hierarchy has impeded their educational advancement, efforts by governments and NGOs, have paved the way for their inclusion into the formal schooling system through expansion of educational facilities, employment opportunities, and political and social mobilization.

[II] Gender-Hierarchy in Education

Perhaps the sharpest and most common form of educational disparity in India is based on gender differentiation. Discrimination faced by girls in

enrolling and attending school is rooted in the wider socio-economic and cultural context, which sustains such gender inequalities. Women in India occupy a low status, which is measured in terms of lower literacy levels, lower employment rates, lower wages for equal work, poor health and nutritional status and high infant female mortality levels (Chanana 1990). The low status that women occupy can, to some extent, be explained by the status of a female in a typical patriarchal society (where the sons occupy a predominant position and are preferred for continuity of lineage and inheritance of property). As Usha Nayar states, it is patriarchy and low status, which keeps women down and girls out of school. Poverty would be a constraint, if gender discrimination was not at work (Nayar 1993). Historically, girls had a rich tradition of education in ancient India, but the decline in the overall position of women started during the *Brahmanic*al period, when various restrictions were prescribed for them, limiting their role to the domestic realm. Women were thus assigned an inferior position compared to men. In the 19th century, education was seen as necessary for raising the status of women and early efforts to this effect began with the advent of the British rule. Public awakening during the freedom struggle and the efforts of the social reformers also gave a fillip to the education of women. In post-independence era, the State has introduced many programmes for ensuring gender parity in elementary education. Some of them are:

(a) District Primary Education Programme

It was launched in 1994 as a major initiative to revitalize the primary education system and to achieve the objective of universlisation of primary education. The thrust of the scheme is on disadvantaged groups like girls, SCs /

STs, working children, urban deprived children, disabled children, etc. There are specific strategies for girls and SCs / STs.

(b) Mahila Samakhya

Mahila Samakhya addresses traditional gender imbalances in educational access and achievement.

(c) Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas

Under the scheme of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, 750 residential schools are being set up in difficult areas with boarding facilities at elementary level for girls belonging predominantly to the SC, ST, OBC and minorities. According to Government: the scheme would be applicable only in those identified educationally Backward Blocks where, as per census data 2001, the rural female literacy is below the national average and gender gap in literacy is more than the national average.

(d) National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary level (NPEGEL)

The NPEGEL under the existing scheme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan provides additional components for education of girls under privileged / disadvantaged at the elementary level.

(e) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

The Scheme of SSA launched in 2001, one of its major goals to bridge gender gap at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010.

However, despite introducing so many programmes for ensuring gender balance in elementary education, we have not achieved the desired goal. If we look at Table 3.5 and 3.6, we find that the gender gap still exists in elementary education. At the same time, the condition of SC/ST girls is also critical in elementary education. Table 3.7 clearly shows it. In fact the World Education Forum that met in Dakar in April 2000 did highlight upon the fact that nations worldwide ought to ensure better appreciation of the role of education as an instrument of women's equality and empowerment.

Table 3.5: Percentage of Boys & Girls Enrolment in primary & UpperPrimary classes: 2006-07

State/UT	Classes I-V		Classes VI-VIII	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
A & N Islands	50.92	49.08	52.42	47.58
Andhra Pradesh	50.71	49.29	51.80	48.20
Arunachal Pradesh	52.34	47.66	52.85	47.15
Assam	50.73	49.27	50.60	49.40
Bihar	54.11	45.89	58.34	41.66
Chandigarh	55.42	44.58	54.81	45.19
Chattishgarh	51.12	48.88	52.71	47.29
Dadra&Nagar Haveli	52.35	47.65	58.38	41.62
Daman& Diu	52.12	47.88	52.32	47.68
Delhi	53.27	46.73	53.18	46.82
Goa	51.99	48.01	53.34	46.66
Gujarat	53.19	46.81	55.32	44.68
Haryana	52.69	47.31	51.82	48.18
Himachal Pradesh	52.71	47.29	52.84	47.16
J & K	53.85	46.15	55.19	44.81
Jharkhand	51.41	48.59	54.76	45.24
Karnataka	51.60	48.40	52.04	47.96
Kerala	50.54	49.46	51.75	48.25
Lakshadweep	52.06	47.94	50.08	49.92
Madhya Pradesh	51.25	48.75	54.97	45.03
Maharashtra	52.69	47.31	52.93	47.07
Manipur	50.16	49.84	50.67	49.33
Meghalaya	49.65	50.35	47.56	52.44
Mizoram	51.78	48.22	51.17	48.83
Nagaland	50.93	49.07	51.22	48.78
Orissa	52.36	47.64	53.61	46.39
Puducherry	51.58	48.42	52.17	47.83
Punjab	54.13	45.87	53.95	46.05
Rajasthan	53.22	46.78	60.12	39.88
Sikkim	50.36	49.64	46.90	53.10
Tamil Nadu	51.61	48.39	51.86	48.14
Tripura	52.15	47.85	51.22	48.78
Uttar Pradesh	51.14	48.86	52.71	47.29
Uttrakhand	51.16	48.84	51.44	48.56
West Bengal	50.70	49.30	50.44	49.56
All States	51.91	48.09	53.49	46.51

Source: NUEPA: Flash Statistics 2007-08

Table 3.6: Gender Parity Index

States/UT	Gender Parity Index (Enrolment)					
	Class I-V			Classes VI-VIII		
	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
A & N Islands	0.97	0.96	0.95	0.88	0.91	0.90
Andhra Pradesh	0.98	0.97	0.97	0.91	0.93	0.94
Arunachal Pradesh	0.90	0.91	0.92	0.88	0.89	0.89
Assam	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.95	0.98	1.01
Bihar	0.80	0.85	0.87	0.64	0.71	0.76
Chandigarh	0.83	0.80	0.81	0.86	0.82	0.81
Chattishgarh	0.95	0.96	0.96	0.85	0.90	0.92
Dadra&Nagar Haveli	0.89	0.91	0.91	0.69	0.71	0.76
Daman& Diu	0.86	0.92	0.88	0.86	0.91	0.79
Delhi	0.89	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.88	0.85
Goa	0.90	0.92	0.94	0.88	0.87	0.85
Gujarat	0.89	0.88	0.88	0.79	0.81	0.83
Haryana	0.90	0.90	0.85	0.93	0.93	0.87
Himachal Pradesh	0.91	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.89	0.90
Jammu & Kashmir	0.85	0.86	0.87	0.81	0.81	0.82
Jharkhand	0.90	0.95	0.96	0.79	0.83	0.87
Karnataka	0.95	0.94	0.94	0.93	0.92	0.93
Kerala	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.93	0.93	0.96
Lakshadweep	0.91	0.92	0.97	0.74	1.00	0.88
Madhya Pradesh	0.95	0.95	0.96	0.79	0.82	0.84
Maharashtra	0.90	0.90	0.89	0.88	0.89	0.88
Manipur	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.97	0.97	0.96
Meghalaya	1.02	1.01	1.01	1.08	1.10	1.10
Mizoram	0.94	0.93	0.95	0.96	0.95	0.96
Nagaland	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.98	0.95	0.95
Orissa	0.93	0.91	0.95	0.86	0.87	0.91
Puducherry	1.07	0.94	0.98	1.05	0.92	0.96
Punjab	0.86	0.85	0.85	0.88	0.85	0.86
Rajasthan	0.88	0.88	0.87	0.62	0.66	0.69
Sikkim	0.99	0.99	0.98	1.13	1.13	1.18
Tamil Nadu	0.93	0.94	0.94	0.92	0.93	0.93
Tripura	0.91	0.92	0.94	0.95	0.95	0.96
Uttar Pradesh	0.91	0.96	0.97	0.83	0.90	0.94
Uttrakhand	0.98	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.94	0.95
West Bengal	0.98	0.97	0.96	0.96	0.98	0.98
All States	0.92	0.93	0.93	0.84	0.87	0.89

Source: NUEPA: Flash Statistics 2007-08

Table 3.7: Percentage of SC&ST Girls Enrolment to Total Enrolment: 2006-07

States/UT	Total Elementary Enrolment			
	SC	SC Girls to Total SC	ST	ST Girls to Total ST
A & N Islands	0.07	34.29	7.92	47.05
Andhra Pradesh	19.10	48.87	9.76	47.01
Arunachal Pradesh	0.83	41.45	74.78	48.40
Assam	9.88	48.89	14.98	48.99
Bihar	16.85	43.01	1.69	45.35
Chandigarh	11.84	48.01	0.09	45.79
Chattishgarh	14.93	48.26	32.23	48.39
Dadra&Nagar Haveli	2.22	49.08	72.59	46.99
Daman& Diu	5.00	47.31	14.06	47.83
Delhi	10.04	58.52	0.41	53.60
Goa	2.79	49.46	7.72	47.89
Gujarat	7.83	46.96	18.04	47.96
Haryana	30.50	47.60	0.57	44.03
Himachal Pradesh	28.24	48.34	5.63	47.89
J & K	9.37	45.89	13.06	42.62
Jharkhand	14.60	46.95	30.78	47.47
Karnataka	19.56	47.98	7.56	47.99
Kerala	11.45	48.49	2.07	47.86
Lakshadweep	0.02	0.00	96.76	48.98
Madhya Pradesh	17.63	47.58	23.09	47.57
Maharashtra	14.27	47.79	10.94	46.61
Manipur	3.99	47.35	41.98	48.66
Meghalaya	1.29	50.31	92.42	50.73
Mizoram	0.73	62.94	97.53	48.25
Nagaland	2.08	51.38	93.88	49.13
Orissa	21.54	47.31	23.13	45.72
Puducherry	17.43	49.85	2.54	34.93
Punjab	46.89	47.09	0.27	47.52
Rajasthan	19.27	44.53	14.62	44.36
Sikkim	7.06	50.58	36.63	51.01
Tamil Nadu	24.65	48.66	2.09	48.11
Tripura	19.66	48.76	38.27	46.58
Uttar Pradesh	27.10	48.13	0.58	46.31
Uttrakhand	27.10	48.71	4.36	49.58
West Bengal	26.70	48.47	6.20	47.49
All States	19.87	47.53	10.69	47.24

Source: NUEPA: Flash Statistics 2007-08

Socio-Cultural Factors Impeding Schooling of Girls

Karuna Chanana (2006) argues that social reality plays an important role in the education of the girl child. She stressed on the need to question the nature of social relations and structure. She very correctly advocates that it is critical to have an understanding of the nature and functioning of familial socialization as the process of gender construction and its impact on the education of the girl child. Girls will remain excluded from education till schools continue to function as sites for perpetuation of 'gendered identity'. Even when girls are enrolled in schools they drop out at very early stages. Many studies have tried to identify the reasons for this absence of retention. The dropout rate put forth by the Government indicates that 39.7 percent boys drops out in classes I to V, where as the figure for girls is 41.9 percent. Fifty percent of girls drop and 57.7 percent of girls drop out by class VIII. The trend continues to go up as we move up. According to various reports; the drop-out rate for girls in some States is staggeringly higher compared to the national average. The NFHS Survey (IIPS and ORC Macro 2000) puts the male household population, in the age group of 6 to 14 years, attending school at 83.1 percent against 73.7 percent female attendance. In case of states like Rajasthan (55.6 percent), Madhya Pradesh (62.8%), Utter Pradesh (61.4%), Bihar (50.5%) and Andhra Pradesh (61.5%) the attendance of female was much lower.

It has been observed that there is a gender bias in choice of schools by parents. They send girls to Government school and boys to private schools, which are considered better (Ramachandran and Saihjee 2002). Most schools

have raised concerns about whether girls will get equitable education even if their enrolment increases (Nambissan 2004). The gendered dimension of education, especially at the elementary level, is multifaceted. Studies have shown absence of parental enthusiasm to education of girls, gender-biased perception of teachers who stereotype tasks for girls in school or attend to girls differently in classrooms, and so on. Even the textbooks reflect an overwhelming male-centric approach. Though gender identity is acquired 'prior to their entering schools', schools further crystallize them.

A quick recapitulation of the statistical data from census and surveys shows that within each economic and social group, and across all regions, girls still lag behind boys in terms of school participation. They show that while the gender gap in enrolment rates has narrowed over the years, the share of boys attending school is still higher compared to girls. The magnitude of dropouts among girls from schools in rural areas is greater than the boys. The gender gap in education is significantly larger among Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes compared to the general population. Rural girls belonging to these disadvantaged communities suffer the triple jeopardy of caste, class and sex and constitute the bulk of the illiterate population (Ramachandran Vimala: 2002). In coastal areas, and in predominantly tribal dominated areas, as in the North East, egalitarian gender relations have contributed to higher literacy rates among girls. Apart from the statistical data, there also exists a wealth of information, in empirical field studies, all of which corroborates these statistical findings that large gender inequities exist in school participation of children with girls as a group lagging behind. Many studies have concluded that female disadvantage in primary education is because the opportunity costs of the girl child's time are

high as she spends a higher time on domestic work compared to boys. This leads to fewer enrolments and larger dropouts among girls. Studies have also brought out the fact that gender differences in education can be linked to the way in which parents view education of their daughters. The low parental motivation for girl's education in India is rooted in a host of socio-cultural attitudes practices. Some of them include:

1. Son Preference

In India, the birth of a son is considered prestigious for a woman. The superior position accorded to the son in the Hindu family is due to the patrilineal, patriarchal kinship system, prevalent in most parts of India, where continued land ownership requires sons, since property is passed down from the father to the son. Sons are also desired to extend the family lineage. The birth of sons is also culturally prescribed, as they are needed to perform the last rites of the parents. This prominent position accorded to sons, led to the inferior status of the girl child in the Hindu family. Patrilineal inheritance and patrilocal residence are major sources of gender inequality and female dependency. Leela Dube(1988) shows how this preference takes the form of preferential treatment given to the sons in the family. She notes how milk and curd is given only to boys, while they also did a lesser amount of work, and how only they were allowed to attend school.

Attitudes about son preference were elicited by the NFHS II Survey, which showed a consistent preference for sons over daughters in every state. While 33% women in rural areas wanted more sons than daughters, only 2.2%

wanted more daughters than sons. Son preference tends to be stronger in the northern states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh while weakest son preference was found in Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tamil Nadu, Kerala etc. The gender division of labour is based on the dichotomy of male versus female roles. The sexual division of labour allotted a number of home-related tasks to girls such as cooking, cleaning, child minding, caring for the aged, etc., thereby building on the feminine role of the nuturant and confining the girls to the household. Boys, on the other hand, were rarely given such heavy domestic activities and were assigned tasks outside the home. They were seen as strong, aggressive and independent. (Nambissan:1995; Dube: 1988). These different gender roles are learned in the family through the process of socialization (a process where individuals internalize norms, values and expectations of the community or group to which they belong). Children are taught to think and act in ways appropriate to their sex. K. Chanana (1988) points out how gender typing of tasks begins early in life. From infancy, girls are socialized to help, be submissive, and learn the centrality of their domestic realm. Girls are also trained from childhood, to fit into the role of the housewife and the mother. Thus, feminine qualities of adjustment, tolerance, sacrifice, restraint and obedience are all taught with a view to help her adjust in her husband's house. Expectations regarding women's roles tend to vary with social strata. Amongst the upper caste Hindus, marriage is regarded as the over-arching goal of a woman's life and Leela Dube (1988) describes how girls are prepared for their future roles as wives and mothers. However, among the lower strata of the rural poor, women perform concrete economic roles, participating as marginal workers in addition to undertaking domestic duties and childcare. As a result, a great portion of the woman's work is taken up by the girl child (Nambissan:

1996). This gender division of labour, and the role adult women are expected to play, have strong implications for female education. Parents come to regard the education of girls as superfluous, since it is unrelated to the tasks she has to perform later on in her life as a housewife most of which is unpaid household work. It is in the light of these social expectations that female education appears too many parents to be pointless. Thus, education of girls is regarded as a wasteful investment, and as Dreze states, the benefits of female education are less clearly perceived, and less strongly valued than the economic returns to male education (Dreze: 2003).

2. Puberty and the Notion of Morality

The onset of puberty introduces dramatic changes in the life of a girl in India. It signifies that she has crossed the threshold of childhood. As a small girl she was given freedom to attend school, but special rituals and confinement of the girl mark the onset of puberty. As Leela Dube points out, it is during the period between puberty and marriage that her sexual vulnerability is at its peak. The main concern is to protect her purity and control her sexuality in the direction of motherhood (Dube 1988). Thus, restrictions are imposed on her movement and on her interactions with male members of the society. She is thus kept away from attending school or even going out. Many studies have shown what implications the onset of puberty and early marriage has for the schooling of girl children. It has been found in a number of studies that girls are withdrawn from school at the onset of puberty and parents are reluctant to send daughters outside the village for education if there is no school within. Singh, Kumari and Dubey (1990) have mentioned many causes for underachievement

of girls' education. One of them is early marriage. In their words, "Early marriage is another trend prevalent in the rural areas. The urgency to get the girl (who is usually perceived as a temporary resident of her natal home) married off, is not merely because she is treated as a burden but also because of the belief, particularly amongst the upper castes, that once the girl starts menstruating she becomes capable of reproducing. Therefore, is she is not married off, the father is held guilty of killing the seeds which could have been fertilized" (Kumari, Singh and Dube; 1990: 11). Caldwell's studies of Karnataka found that 1/5 of the girls were withdrawn from school at menarche, to be married off as soon as possible. Menarche is still a major reason for the cessation of a daughter's education among Muslims, peasant castes and artisans (Caldwell et al 1985). Thus, the absence of a school within safe distance, predominance of male teachers as well as co-education, all become obstacles to girls education in this context, as found by numerous studies.

3. Early Marriage

Menarche is directly linked to the practice of early marriage, which becomes a preferred option for parents. Since they have to preserve the girls purity till marriage, they are in a rush to marry her off as soon as possible. This compulsion of early marriage makes schooling a poor option for girls, not only because they are withdrawn at puberty but also because it becomes unlikely that they can make any financial contribution to their parental house. Jha and Jhingran's study shows how the practice of early marriage was widely prevalent among girls in the Dalit communities as well as in a few tribal groups, in a majority of the regions they studied (Jha and Jhingran 2002). While most of the

field studies find that girls are married off at an early age, this is also substantiated by official statistics which showed that of the 4.5 million marriages which take place annually, at least 3 million brides were in the age group 15-19 years. Data from NFHS II also found that majority of women aged 20- 49 years married before they reached the minimum age of 18 year.

4. Child Marriage

The practice of child marriage, prevalent in many parts of India, constrains educational chances of girls. Studies show that, in some parts of the country, girls are married at the ages of 8 or 9, which prevents them from attending school. Vasavi's study of five districts of Karnataka shows how child marriages were rampant in the districts of Bijapur, Raichur, Bidar and Gulbarga. Such marriages caused children to be withdrawn from school as early as Standard III (Vasavi and Chamaraj 2000). Jha and Jhingran report the practice of child marriages being most prevalent in Sidhi and in the tribal groups of Gonds and Kols, as well as among some Dalit groups (where girls are married of between 8-12 years). The PROBE Survey also refers to the child mothers of Ranchi district who are married between ages of 13-16 years. (PROBE Report 1999; Vasavi and Chamaraj 2000; Jha and Jhingran 2002).

5. Marriage as the Ultimate Objective

Across the country, marriage is seen as the ultimate objective of a daughter's upbringing. Girls are regarded as *parayadhan* or belonging to another family. This temporary membership of a girl in her natal home, which she has to leave

once she is married, makes her education a less beneficial and less relevant option for poor families. Renuka Singh (1990) has shown through many case studies that because of early marriage girls have to give up their education in early stage of life. They suffer from lots of crisis due to this reason. According to Singh; those girls who have got early marriage; they have less career options. One of the main reasons for early marriage of girls is parental pressure. The kinship system of patrilocal village exogamy, prevalent in many parts of India, especially in the North, is another oft-cited reason for parental disinterest in female education. In simple terms, this means that at marriage, a woman leaves her parental home to become a part of her husband's family, usually residing in a different village. When this happens, the girl's links with her parental house is severed and become extremely weak. The relations between the two families are marked by social obligations with wife givers occupying an inferior position. Living far away also implies that daughters are unable to provide emotional security to the aged parents. On the other hand, educated sons are expected to get employment, stay with the parents and provide financial support and security to them in their old age. Thus, as Dreze comments, the fact that educating a daughter does not bring any tangible benefits to her parents, and is no less costly than educating a son, may well be the most important cause of gender bias in schooling opportunities (Dreze 2003). Similar findings can be seen in other studies also (Nambissan 1995; Dreze 2003).

Another feature of the North Indian kinship system, which plays a role in reducing parental interest in female education, is the emphasis on hypergamous marriage and dowry systems. According to this practice, a girl is supposed to be married into a family of a higher social status than her own, and the higher that

status, the larger the amount of dowry to be paid by her parents. Thus, a well-educated daughter could actually become a serious liability on a poor farmer or labourer who would have to find a more educated groom and thus pay a higher dowry. From an economic point of view, the girl's education is perceived as a liability and it does not seem to be beneficial for the parents. Chanana also notes that parents are hence reluctant to invest in dowry as well as in their daughters' education, since they cannot afford to spend on both (Chanana 1990). Caldwell's study in rural Karnataka shows that parents were worried that education would make daughters unmarriageable because a woman must be married to a male with at least as much education (Caldwell et al 1985).

Greater gender equality reflects the higher status occupied by the woman in that community, which also results in high female literacy levels. This was found to be true in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala as well as in the North East. In all the North Eastern states, women have a higher status, and higher female literacy levels compared to the all India average. The gender gap in literacy was also lower in Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland, compared to other parts of India (Srivastav and Dubey 2002). Higher status of the woman is because of her greater participation in economic and social life outside the household. A more equitable gender relation also exist in Himachal Pradesh, which has a higher rate of female participation in the labour force, compared to other states such as Haryana, UP and Punjab. V.K. Ramachandran (1996), in his study of Kerala s development achievements, points out that a significant section of the population practiced the matrilineal system. This included the Nayars, the Ambalavasi castes, sections of the Izava castes as well as a section of the Muslims of the Malabar region. The Nayars were also matrilocal which meant

that children became members of the mother's joint family and took her family name. Nayar women had greater personal freedom and did not suffer from female seclusion. They played a crucial role in making household decisions and had greater authority, as inheritance of property happened through them. Such a system was thus conducive to raising the status of women in Kerala. Though it would be absurd to say that Kerala's literacy achievements were a result of a history of matrilineal, nevertheless, the matrilineal system of marriage and inheritance had an enormous influence on the literacy achievements by contributing to the development of progressive social attitudes towards female survival and female education (Ramachandran V.K. 1996). Maria Mies (1980) has also discussed the educational condition of Indian women in her work. She says that because of role conflicts; they are not able to do well in the field of education. Courses offered to girls also patriarchal in nature. In her words; "The new subject in secondary schools, colleges and universities that should prepare women generally for a job is Home Science. By this subject women are to be given the necessary basic training that prepares them for the three roles which the Indian society prescribes for them: - (i) the housewife-mother role (which still has priority), (ii) the economic role which acquires even greater importance economic pressure, (iii) the role of service to society, which belongs to the ideal of the Indian women since the independence movement (Mies 1980: 132)". She also mentions that there is a huge gap between urban and rural women in the terms of education and literacy. She says that patriarchal notions and expectations on education created hurdles for girls' education. To overcome from these problems; she says, "If Indian women want to liberate themselves from the shackles of patriarchy they will have to wage a struggle which goes beyond partial demands of economic equality. They will have to challenge the

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whole hierarchical social system based on caste, class, and sex asymmetry and its accompanying ideology" (Ibid: 294).

We conclude this section by stating that this in depth examination shows us how socio-cultural phenomena have hindered school participation of girls. Nevertheless, as data reveals, girls are enrolling in schools in large numbers, and there has also been an improvement in the school attendance of girls as the NFHS II reveals. This shows us that there is a scope for a positive change in parental attitudes towards female education.

[III] Crisis in Curriculum

The curriculum undoubtedly stands out as the soul of any educational practice. Crises in curriculum are related to numerous aspects of education. Many seemingly disparate phenomena like drop out, retention, gender imbalance etc. are intricately related to the nature of the school curriculum. Curriculum occupies a central space in imparting education in terms of both quantity and quality. A quick flashback of the history of educational practices in the Indian context undoubtedly points to the fact that the State has tried to control education primarily through the course curriculum. In colonial India, the main aim of the Britishers was to create subordinates through dispensation of English education. It is another story however that, they could not succeed on their intended designs. Much to their surprise, British Education provided the breeding ground for the emergence of a new Indian Middle class. As noted earlier, Louis Althusser (1972) says that the State tries to control its people through two types of 'State Apparatus', viz., the Repressive State Apparatus

(Police, army, legal system, government and administration) and the Ideological State Apparatus (religion, education, politics, communication, literature, etc). No ruling class, according to Althusser, can rule by means of force or Repressive State Apparatus alone. Herein lies the relevance of Ideological State Apparatus for establishing the hegemony of the ruling class. Under such a setting, educational curriculum, as an Ideological State Apparatus, has a central place in contemporary societies. For example, in recent years it has been found that whether it is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government or the Congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government, none have left any stone unturned to change textbooks of History, Literature etc. according to their own ideology. Hence, curriculum suffers from such a crisis of neutrality.

Pathak (2002:109) has also discussed the crisis of curriculum. He says that school curriculum cannot be regarded as 'legitimate knowledge' and 'objective truth'. He criticizes it on two bases:-

(i) Instead of thinking in terms of 'objective' / 'disembodied' truth, it is better to see in terms of Karl Mannheim's contributions to the Sociology of Knowledge, which has taught us the possibility of multiple perspectives. As the horizons of the 'knower' differ, there are many representations of the world. And each perspective, rather than being absolutely true or false, is a segment of truth or, to use Mannheim's words, a kind of 'total ideology', which is 'situationally determined' and 'relational' in character. It is, therefore, obvious that the knowledge that school texts contain can also be seen as a perspective; a

way of seeing the world from a particular vantage point. It need not be seen as something 'given' and 'eternally defined'.

(ii) Not all perspectives get the same kind of status / legitimacy in human society. In a stratified / unequal society, it is the perspective of the dominant class that tends to acquire greater legitimacy and power. It is, therefore, possible to argue that school texts, particularly the 'official' variety, may privilege the perspective of (to use Pierrre Bourdieu's words) the 'cultural capital' of the dominant class. In other words, school knowledge far from being a doctrine of eternal truth is a form of an ideological representation.

Our curriculum has been taken for granted. Everything in curriculum is 'given.' The curriculum has a paternalistic attitude. It is one way. It is not inclusive. If we see the textbooks of NCERT, we find that much importance has been accorded to the thoughts of Gandhi, Nehru etc., whereas that of Ambedkar, Jyotba Phule etc have been given a conspicuous under-treatment. In a certain sense it can be said that there almost exists a sort of an absence of a Subaltern Perspective. For example, numerous women have substantially contributed in our freedom struggle but their role has been undermined in textbooks.

In the school curriculum, there is a sort of negligible attempt to arouse the critical consciousness of the students; to make him/her see the darker/neglected side of India and inspire him/her to create a new social order. Our course curriculum should learn from alternative texts. Here is one example of *Eklavya (1999)* texts, which have been developed by a team of scholars.

These texts have been written in a child-centred language. Its dialogic form makes the texts more personal and arouses the imagination of the child. Textbooks have been presented in the form of narratives. In fact, *Eklavya* has described its agenda as follows:-

> *"The textbooks of this programme seek to bring children*
> *close to experiencing the life and circumstances of people,*
> *including those in other times and places, by creating stories*
> *and case studies. They give space to the realistic experiences*
> *of people from all walks of life viz farmers, labourers,*
> *artisans, tribals, traders, rulers, etc."* (Eklavya 1999)

Thus, the curriculum should be inclusive in character. It means that the curriculum should not be imposed. Instead it should be evolved. When it is imposed, it leads to demotivation of teachers and students. In our curriculum, there is less scope for dialogue and learning. Creativity and freedom among students takes a beating. Creativity encompasses not just the possibility to develop ideas but to bring these ideas into practice.

Our present school curriculum over-emphasises the importance of examinations built on just reproduction of facts and ideas and do not equip children with problem solving techniques. Thus, in the process, imagination and creativity is lost. The learning process should help children develop an inquisitive mind, encourage curiosity about nature around them, a joy and zest for discovery, and a love and respect for all forms of life. By arousing their

interest in nature certain simple aspects of science could be incorporated even at the primary level of teaching.

Our curriculums do not have a holistic approach. A holistic approach means that there should be involvement or participation of parents, students, teachers and the community in an innovative curriculum making process. *Eklavya* texts are example of holistic approach. The teaching/learning material at *Eklavya* is developed through interaction between teachers and children. *Eklavya* has started cooperating with village panchayats in making them partners not only in the management but also in sharing the belief of the purpose of the school.

One major crisis of curriculum is that its medium of instruction is different from their mother tongue. The fact that the mother tongue is different from the medium of instruction for a large percentage of students has serious implications for learning and achievement. Bridge materials therefore should be developed to facilitate transition to the standard language for the initial grades. But the Government unfortunately has not done much in this regard. Curriculum is less focused on activity-based and students-centered teaching. In the last 100 years or so, educationists, psychologists, behavior scientists have discovered (what was intrinsically understood by many tribal and agrarian societies) that we actually learn only when we act; when we engage with something and when we interact. And here, we have forgotten the importance of Gandhi's nature of education i.e. 'Basic education'. Mahatma Gandhi had focused on craft-centred education. It was not narrow. Gandhi's basic education was not limited merely to the craft. Through the craft, he wanted to

impart knowledge on all important branches of learning: history, geography, science and arithmetic. Pathak (2002), for example, notes that for Gandhi, the handicraft was the medium, which he thought, would enable the learner to relate ideas to practice as well as arouse his/her curiosity and enthusiasm in learning, because the 'lessons' would be rooted in the learner's vocation. Unfortunately our educational policies have dismally failed in showing any interest in activities based on learning / teaching.

The content of the curriculum is not adapted to suit local specific context. A student feels alienated during study because he/she is not able to relate herself/himself with curriculum. He/she just becomes a tool of study not participatory of study. He/she feels 'disenchantment'. Here we have forgotten the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. Aurobindo says 'Start from local, then go to far'. First, students should be given the knowledge of local river, mountains environment etc. All these will create a learning environment for him/her. So, it is clear from the above discussion that our curriculum has many flaws, which has to be addressed as early as possible, otherwise we would not be not able to achieve the goal of qualitative elementary education.

Thus the abovementioned analysis points to the fact that quantity and quality of schooling facilities determine the interest in education or lack of it on the part of children/parents. This can be referred to as supply side factors, and socio-economic factors such as poverty and income levels can be referred to as demand side factors. These are the two important sets of factors that mutually interact with each other and influence the level of education of the population. Several factors have been identified by the NFHS, such as: lack of

interest and not considering education necessary, costs of schooling, opportunity costs, school related factors and others. Tilak (2002) has shown that even the so-called free elementary education is not free. Families pay tuition fee, even in government and government aided schools, and various other kinds of fees, and also incur huge expenditures on other necessary items like textbooks, transport, etc. As the household costs of schooling are indeed high, it is natural for families to feel that 'schooling costs too much'. Two other important factors include:

(a) the feeling that education is not considered necessary, and /or

(b) that children are required for farm/family business or for outside work. Contrary to general understanding, some still seem to view that education is not necessary or development. This is more true in the case of girls' education.

The single most important reason for never-enrolment of children in schools reported is lack of interest on the part of the children. It would be useful to probe into the aspects relating to lack of interest in education. For example, according to PROBE Report (1999:14), we note that 98 per cent of the parents surveyed in rural north Indian states felt that education was important for their boys and 89 per cent felt that it was important for their girls too. Illiterate parents and backward castes too value education highly. Parents were also found to be aware of the social, economic, and cultural gains of their children's education. Information to decompose the 'lack of interest' factor is not available from the NFHS or NSSO surveys. However, it may be plausible to argue that 'lack of interest' could be attributed a substantial extent to:

(a) The poor quality and quantity of physical and human infrastructure,

(b) Poor quality of instruction, including the alienation to and irrelevance of the curriculum

(c) Economic and other social factors from the side of the families.

Why do children drop out of schools? The implications of the array of figures on factors responsible for no-enrolment in, and drop out of children from schools can be summed up as follows. To attract children into schools, it is necessary that interest is created in the minds of the children and more particularly in the minds of their parents. Besides providing truly free education, financial incentives may have to be offered to the poor. Gender differences are also important in both the phenomena. A larger number of girl children are required for household work, in addition to taking care of siblings (both in rural and urban areas). In fact, the opportunity costs of girls' education are much higher than in the case of boys' education (both in rural and urban areas); the difference being much larger in the case of rural areas. The phenomenon of drop out of children from school could be seen as reflective of the failure of the school system to retain them in the school until the completion of the given level of education. For instance, interest in education can be created by providing a good schooling facility and/or enabling the children or parents to demand education by improving their economic condition and by reducing the need for household expenditures on schooling, etc.

Resolving the Crisis: Some Existing Measures

Most of the policies and programmes adopted by the Government so far have aimed to enhance access, quality, equity, and retention in elementary education. State efforts have also focused, in recent years, relatively more on elementary education. While the initiatives taken by the government in universalizing elementary education are many, a few recent measures to curb some structural inadequacies of elementary education need special mention.

Efforts to Reduce inaccessibility to Schools

Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS)

Education Guarantee Scheme has been viewed as an effective answer to the problem of physical access to schools. This is an important initiative that the Government has taken at the national level in 1999-2000. Aimed at 'providing an opportunity to the rural poor, especially those belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes to secure education for their children', drawing from the experience of the Education Guarantee Scheme of the government of Madhya Pradesh, a national programme of EGS was launched. The Scheme is meant for those areas where no school currently exists within a radius of one kilometer. These areas could be the areas where the poorest of the poor live. But the EGS has a major internal contradiction. The EGS envisages the poor local community to

(a) Come forward, expressing demand for a school,

(b) Specifically provide the premises required for a school,

(c) Provide for a local part-time teacher, and

(d) Maintain the school at least for two years with the gram panchayat

mobilizing contributions in cash and kind from the local community.

The scheme presumes that a full formal school with all the required basic facilities is not necessary, and hence a qualified and trained teacher is dispensable. Secondly, and more importantly, the notion that a community must demand a school facility, rather than receive it as an 'entitlement' or a right from the government, implies shifting of responsibility of opening schools from the shoulders of the government of those of the people themselves. Thirdly, it is assumed that while it is 'unviable' for the government to run school in such contexts, it would be 'viable' for the community to do so! However, claims are being made on the grand success of the scheme and it is now make a part of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and according to official reports, 4.4 crore children are so far covered by EGS by 2004 (MHRD Annual Report 2004-5). However, government will have to change its strategy once again.

Operation Blackboard

The government of India has initiated the Operation Blackboard programme, as a follow-up of the National Policy on Education 1986 to improve the infrastructure facilities, and quality of primary education. The scheme was started in 1987-8 and aimed at substantial improvement in basic facilities in all primary schools run by government and local bodies. It consists of three different components:

1.   a building comprising at least two reasonably large all-weather rooms with a deep verandah and separate toilet facilities for boys and girls,

2.   at least two teachers in every schools, as far as possible one of them a woman, and a third teacher if the enrolment in a school is above 100, and

3.   essential teaching learning material including blackboards, maps, charts, toys, and equipment for work experience.

The third category includes provision of variety, of minimum level of facilities and material, including teachers' material (for example, text books, modules, and syllabi), classroom material (for example, maps, globes, charts), play material (blocks, strips, tiles, puzzles, games, and toys), games equipment (skipping rope, balls rings), primary science kit, mini-tool kit, mathematics kit, books for library, musical instruments, classroom equipment (chairs, tables, mats, blackboards, chalks, dusters), miscellaneous facilities (water facilities), etc.

The Revised National Policy on Education (1992) suggested an expansion of the scope of Operation Blackboard to provide three reasonably large rooms and three teachers in every primary school, and to extend the scheme to upper primary level. Accordingly in the Eighth Five Year Plan, provision was made for:

(a) Continuation of the scheme to cover the remaining schools identified in the Seventh Plan,

(b) Provision of three teachers and three classrooms to primary rooms where enrolment exceeds 80, and

(c) Extension of the scheme to the upper primary level. It was hoped that this scheme would improve the quality of education significantly.

It was hoped that this scheme would improve the quality of elementary education significantly. But in 1993, when the sixth All-India Educational Survey (NCERT 1997-8) was conducted, more than 20,000 primary schools in rural India, that is, 17.1 percent of the schools, were being run in open space, nearly 2000 tents, 16,000 in thatched huts, and another 48,000 in *kutcha* buildings. According to the latest survey (NCERT 2005) in 2002, 17,000 schools were still found to be running without any buildings and 29,000 in kutcha buildings. This is despite a clear resolve that a building with at least two *pucca* rooms usable in all-weather would be provided to each primary school, according to the National Policy. A few schools, 5.3 percent, were without any rooms of any kind in 1993. Teaching takes place, if at all it does, in these schools under a tree or in a verandah or so. As a result, most of the schools have to be practically closed during rainy days and even during severe winter and summer days. Realizing the problem of inadequate building facilities, quite a few states have adopted the practice of running schools in double shift. With respect to the provision of ancillary facilities, the improvement is modest and the overall situation is still very unsatisfactory. More than 60 per cent of the primary schools and 40 per cent of the upper primary schools did not have even drinking water facilities. Toilet facilities are available only in a rather negligible proportion of schools. The current situation might be different, as much progress has been claimed to have been made during the last decade with additional investments being made, partly under the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP).

Efforts to Reduce Household Costs

'Free' Elementary Education

To reduce the households' direct costs of schooling of children, India, like many other countries had resolved long ago to provide free elementary education – specifically tuition fee free. Based on the 42nd round of the NSSO, Minhas (1992) has shown that only 85 per cent of the children attending schools in rural areas and 51 per cent in urban India receive free primary education. Government-aided private schools, popularly called 'private-aided schools', receive aid from the government to meet nearly their full recurring expenditures and are expected to provide free education. But nearly half the children in private aided schools are charged fees. Private schools that do not receive any State aid are however free to charge fees, and most of the children in these schools pay rather hefty amounts of fees. In all, 25 per cent of the children attending school do not receive free primary or upper primary education. It is only now in the draft Free and Compulsory Education Bill (2004), a redefinition of free education as free from not only tuition fee but also all kinds of fees in elementary schooling has been attempted (Tilak 2004).

Surveys by the NSS and NCAER provide valuable information on the extent of household expenditure on education. According to NSSO reports, on an average, households had to spend Rs 500 per student in primary education and Rs 915 in upper primary education in 1995-6. This expenditure increased as one went up the educational ladder. Household expenditure on education increases for higher economic levels of the household. A national scheme of

mid-day meals was launched in 1995. The scheme aims at increasing enrolments, retention, and attendance in schools as well as improves the nutritional status of children in primary and upper primary schools. But the programme did not receive serious attention until the new national scheme was launched. Though there are several weaknesses in the execution of the scheme, there has been some progress, and now, following the judiciary's intervention, cooked meal is provided to every child. The scheme is believed to have a significant positive effect on enrolments. For example in Rajasthan, Karnataka and Chattisgarh, enrolments in Class I have increased by nearly 15 per cent on an average. It is interesting to note that while the coverage of students by the scheme is increasing from 3.3 crore in 1995-6 to 10.6 crore in 2003-04, the allocation of expenditure has not been proportionately increasing. For example, in 1999-2000, there were 9.9 crore children who benefited from the scheme, and the expenditure was of the order of Rs 1500 crore. In 2002-3, 10.3 crore children were being covered by the scheme, but the estimated expenditure was only Rs 1099 crore. In other words, the per student expenditure in nominal prices per annum on the scheme has declined.

Table 3.8: Pattern of Expenditure per Student over the years

	No of Students (Crores)	Expenditure (Rs Crores	Per Student Expenditure (Rs)
1995-6	3.34	441.21	132.10
1996-7	5.57	800.00	143.63
1997-8	9.10	1070.38	117.62
1998-9	9.79	1600.15	163.45
1999-2000	9.90	1500.00	151.52
2000-1	10.54	1299.00	123.24
2001-2	1035	1030.27	99.54
2002-3	10.36	1099.03	106.08
2003-4	10.56	1375.00	130.21

Source: Annual Report (various years) MHRD, Government of India

Pattern of Public Expenditure on Education

The National Policy on Education 1968, reiterated in the National Policy on Education 1986 to invest six per cent of Gross National Product (GNP) in education. But the goal of allocating six per cent of national income to education has been repeatedly postponed. But provision of appropriate education to all might require resources of a higher order – above eight per cent of GNP.

Table 3.9: Growth in Public Expenditure on Education in India

Year	Per cent of GDP	Per cent of budget	Per capita (Rs) 1993-4 prices
1951-2	0.64	7.92	49.00
1960-1	1.48	11.99	123.00
1970-1	2.31	15.10	124.00
1980-1	3.08	13.48	186.00
1990-1	4.07	13.97	329.00
2000-1	4.26	12.23	509.50
2001-2	3.82	10.80	470.34
2002-3	3.97	12.60	494.89
2003-4*	3.74	12.31	498.19
2004-5+	3.49	12.27	-

Source: Based on Selected Educational Statistics; Analysis of Budgeted Expenditure on Education, Census on India, and EPWRF (2003).

Note: Deflators are derived from 1993-4 series. * revised estimate. + budget estimate.

In the annual budget of the government, which is a relatively reliable gauge of what is really happening, and which provides direct evidence of the relative priority given to education, a steep decline in the share of education in the budget over the years is to be noted, presently it is about 12 per cent while in a 'model' budget, education should receive about 20 percent, as noted by Griffin and McKinley (1993). In the case of both the indicators, namely: (a) share of education expenditure in national income and (b) the total government expenditure, the overall performance is not satisfactory. Further, interstate variations are also large. While the needs of the educational system have been increasing, the priority accorded to education in the country has been coming down. The relative importance given to education in the Five Year Plans has declined gradually over the years, from 7.9 percent in the First Five Year Plan

to 2.7 per cent in the Sixth Five Year Plan, and later increased to 6.2 per cent in the Ninth Five Year Plan (refer Table 3.9).

Table 3.10: Expenditure on Education in the Five Year Plans

(as Per cent of Total Expenditure in the Five Year Plans)

	Total education	Elementary	Secondary	Higher
First Five Year Plan	7.86	4.3	1.0	0.7
Second Five Year Plan	5.83	2.0	1.1	1.0
Third Five Year Plan	6.87	2.3	1.2	1.0
Fourth Five Year Plan	5.17	1.5	0.9	1.2
Fifth Five Year Plan	3.27	0.8	0.4	0.5
Sixth Five Year Plan	2.70	0.8	0.7	0.5
Seventh Five Year Plan	3.55	1.3	0.8	0.5
Eight Five Year Plan	4.50	2.1	0.8	0.3
Ninth Five Year Plan	6.23	3.2	1.1	0.5

Source: First Year Plan documents.

Note: Other levels/types of education are included in Total.

An equally important question relates to the relative priorities within education. The pattern of intra-sectoral allocation, that is, allocation of resources across different levels of education, in India shows a lopsided emphasis on different layers of education. A clear-cut but not meaningful shift

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in the priorities is apparent. While universalization of elementary education has become an increasingly difficult task, causing repeated postponement of the goal, the relative priority accorded to elementary education. The Five Year Plan expenditure in all sectors has gradually declined over the successive Five Year Plans – from 4 per cent in the First Five Year plan to 0.8 per cent in the Sixth Five Year Plan. Only in the later years after the National Policy on Education 1986 was formulated has it shown a somewhat steady but slow increase. It seems plausible to argue that elementary education suffered in India, due to, apart from several factors, insufficient allocation of financial resources, and had the priority given to elementary education in the First Five year Plan continued, universalization of elementary education would not have been as elusive as it is today, if not already accomplished.

Decentralization

An important development of the 1990s refers to the significant efforts of the government to decentralize educational planning and administration and the involvement of the community at various levels in planning, administration, financing, monitoring, and supervision of the working of the school system. Following the constitutional amendment in favour of panchayati raj institutions, and also the launching of externally aided projects in primary education, village education committees, school development committees, and similar committees at various levels have been set up with the similar committees at various levels have been set up with the involvement of the local community. Local, more specifically district primary educational plans are being formulated at decentralized levels. With the participation of several local

committees, efforts are also being made to mobilize physical and financial resources for the village communities to finance elementary education. For example, the School Reform Act in Andhra Pradesh provides for the establishment of committees for people's participation in educational activities at various levels. These committees at various levels are expected to be composed of parents, community leaders, and teachers, with a fair representation of women. These committees are vested with several powers including resource generation. Thus a significant move has been made on the part of the government to decentralize the administration of school education in the state. While such experiments are, however, not being spread all over the country evenly, many states realize the importance of community contributions to elementary education.

In general, decentralization has become a 'fashionable' approach to the development of education in recent years (Streeten 2000). Decentralisation per se is desirable; it is also particularly important in large size developing countries, where the central government may not be able to effectively plan, provide, manage, and supervise the education systems in all parts of the country. While few doubt the importance of decentralized approaches to education development, it is also important to note that some central governments find it convenient to use decentralization as a mechanism of abdication of their own responsibilities of educating the people. The decentralized approach is also viewed in many places as a mechanism of raising resources from the local communities, which will substitute the budgetary resources of the central government for education. Reliance to a great extent on local resources might contribute to regional inequalities. The

dangers involved in decentralization are too serious to ignore. Even if decentralization is confined to an increased role to local bodies in education development, the experience is not very encouraging. For example, local bodies run a large proportion of schools in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Rajasthan as compared to states like Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, and Karnataka. Their performance with respect to education development is well known. While there may not necessarily to be one-tone relationship between decentralization and development, the weaknesses, however, need to be noted. The experience at least stresses the need for new methods and mechanisms of decentralization in education development.

Encouragement to Private Schools

Finally, the other important initiatives include encouragement to private schools. With respect to private schools, the present tendencies indicate that government favours in the name of 'building partnerships', the growth of private schools - both schools that are financially supported by the State as well as self-financing private schools. With dwindling public budgetary support for education, the government's preference in the recent years is more in favour of the latter. Government aided private schools are decreasing in the number and also as a proportion of the total number of schools. The private unaided schools are increased rapidly at the primary and upper primary level. The relative size of the governmental sector in education (government and local body schools) gets diminished, aggravating the problems of access, equity, and even quality. Studies have shown that there are effects on equity, besides having effects on other dimensions of education and society. With the growth of such schools,

the government might not feel the need for opening new government schools and as a result, the access of the poor to schools would be seriously affected. That means private schools promote dualism in education – an expensive system for the rich and a poor quality one for the poor- is well known and such forces get accentuated in the context of economic reform policies. It is a well known fact that private schools had got land at very cheap price and they had promised that they will provide free education to some poor children. But they did not keep their promise. Private schools have become means of exploitation. They are taking unnecessary fees in the name of educational development of student. So, it is clear that encouragement to private schools is not 'viable' option for State.

To sum up, the crisis in elementary education can be said to be more acute on institutional parameters than as much on infrastructural ones. In fact scores of constitutional provisions, umpteen governmental interventions and mushrooming civil society actors have made the arena quite a competitive one. However amidst all this fanfare, the lack of public participation in turning the vision of UEE into a reality is quite a frustrating reality that can hardly be ignored. In a Habermasian sense, the 'structural transformation of the public sphere' is heavily called upon at this juncture. A reflexive dialogue amongst the legitimate practitioners and intended beneficiaries is the only panacea to all crises that looms around the elementary education sector in India today.

CONCLUSION

Thus, in conclusion, it can be undoubtedly said that India has made significant achievements in the development of education. The education system at all levels was thrown open to all the rich, the poor, and middle income classes, men and women, rural and urban populations, and backward and non-backward segments of the society. As a consequence, there has been a veritable explosion in numbers – student numbers, schools, and teachers. In toto however, it cannot be denied that while the achievements of six decades of development planning are impressive, the failures are also shocking. Important failures pertain to:

(i)   Universalization of Elementary Education; a goal set by the constitution for accomplishment by 1960

(ii) Transformation of the country from a predominantly illiterate society into a literate one and

(iii) Development of secondary education and higher education for excellence.

Even after nearly six decades of Independence, the number of children in the compulsory age group (6-14 years) outside the school system is large. Also despite significant improvements, inequalities – gender, regional and caste - are still high in the elementary education system. The quality of elementary education is depressingly low.

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According to the Constitution of India, elementary education of eight years duration has to be provided free to all by 1960. Unfortunately, despite being a fundamental right in India, this has neither been compulsory in all the states in India, nor has it been provided free to all. Significant quantitative expansion, notwithstanding the goal of universal elementary education, still eludes the Indian society even after 58 years of Independence. Universalisation must ensure not merely universal enrolment, but also universal retention and provision of high quality education for all. Given that economic factors are important in explaining enrolment/non-enrolment and retention/drop out in elementary education in India, to achieve universalisation of elementary education in India, it is necessary that the elementary education system include the provisioning of free textbooks, learning materials, uniforms, noon-meals etc., to all and also scholarships liberally in such a way that the need for household expenditure on elementary education does not arise. Though no effectiveness of compulsory education acts in the states could be ascertained from the contemporary historical experience of many states in India in terms of universalisation of elementary education legislation of the same, even if it i.e., symbolic of the same, even if it is symbolic in nature, might provide important signals on the intention and seriousness of the government with regard to universalisation of elementary education. Equally important is the need for measures to effectively abolish child labour.

India is still seen to be lagging behind in the field of elementary education, characterized by irregular attendance, high dropouts and non-completion of primary education among children. The reasons for these lie in the socio-economic conditions of India, marked by caste, class and gender

inequalities. The role of the economic factors influencing schooling decisions is of primary importance. Poverty has impeded primary school access and attendance. Poorer households are also educationally disadvantaged with low enrolment, high discontinuation and dropout rates. Poverty is hindrance for schooling. A number of nationwide surveys, probing reasons for the non-attendance of children, indicate that high direct costs of schooling, children being required for work, and the lack of interest in studies by parents and children, have been the major reasons for non-enrolment and dropping out. Where poor children do attend school, field studies show that poverty often puts a double burden on children who have to combine school and household work, which thus affects their learning outcomes.

In fact, economic factors, in combination with many socio-cultural factors, are known to operate in the Indian context to hinder the spread of elementary education, amongst girls, lower castes, tribes and certain religious groups. Certain socio-cultural factors also positively impact the educational chances of these deprived groups. In rural India for example, girls' participation in schooling is lagging significantly behind that of boys. Low parental motivation for sending the girl child to school, and sustaining it, is due to the superior position accorded to the son in the prevalent patrilineal / patriarchal system; the gender division of labour which confines the girl child to the domestic realm; the problems associated with menarche, restricting the girls movement and thereby affecting continuation of her schooling, if it implies travel outside the village; the practice of early marriage; the kinship pattern of patrilocal village exogamy and the system of hypergamy and dowry. All the above have had a detrimental impact on the educational chances of the girl

child. At the same time, recent trends indicate that parents have begun to send girls to school in larger numbers than before, and that parental attitudes are positively changing, due to parental literacy and higher levels of awareness amongst them. The hierarchical caste system has historically created unequal educational access so that backward castes and scheduled castes have been excluded from participation in school. The poor education profile of scheduled caste children has been mainly due to poverty and child work, physical segregation, social discrimination and the practice of untouchability. SC girls face the triple jeopardy of poverty, social oppression and gender discrimination. Scheduled caste children also face discrimination at school, which takes many forms. At the same time caste has also facilitated education amongst certain groups through the formation of caste associations, which encouraged education of caste members in an attempt to gain higher social status. Tribes in India have been traditionally marginalized from the mainstream and factors that have severely impeded the spread of education amongst them are cultural discontinuity, alien language being the medium of instruction, poverty, parental illiteracy, distant location of the schools, prejudices of the teachers, incongruous content and pedagogy and social discrimination against the tribal children all of which combine to keep tribal children out of school. However, certain factors have also facilitated tribal literacy, which is high in states of the northeast. Importantly, gender equality amongst tribals, an egalitarian social system, the role of Christian missionaries, as well as tribal dominance in a particular state, have also played a significant role to this effect. Thus, in spite of poverty and exclusion, a combination of the aforesaid factors has led to high literacy levels among tribal children, especially girls, in certain areas. Religious beliefs have impacted schooling of certain religious groups. While Muslims have lagged

behind other groups educationally, Christians have surged ahead of all other communities, due to the facilitative role played by Christianity in India.

To argue that the problem of under-achievements in education is essentially a problem of poverty and economic backwardness is not totally correct. Provision of schooling facilities of good quality that could attract and retain the children in schools is also equally, if not more, important. In fact, this may be treated as an essential basic condition for improving the educational status of population. At least, primary schooling facilities need to be provided within every habitation, rather than expecting primary school children to walk 1-1.5 km everyday to the school and a same distance back home. In fact, it would be better to provide good elementary (primary + upper primary) school facilities, and even integrated secondary school facilities, rather than providing facilities just for primary schooling or for a part of it. Schooling facilities also include teachers. Adequate provision of qualified and trained teachers is critically important. This has not only direct effect on the quantity and quality of schooling, but teachers are also associated with externalities, in the form of providing a learning environment in the villages. Large-scale interstate differences with respect to a variety of indicators highlight the need for national uniform norms with respect to not only overall policies but also with respect to practices regarding a few important aspects such as rural – urban differentiation, gender differences, and public – private school differentiation. One might not favour any differentiation by gender, though in general protective discrimination in favour of girls is advocated. Similarly, norms may have to be fixed on the proportion of States (and Union) budgets that need to

be allocated to education, which might help in reducing interstate differences substantially.

Thus, in other words, social reality has to be understood in terms of the combined role of multiple factors operating in tandem. Focusing on any one factor or determinant, in isolation will not suffice because the depth of understanding demands a holistic approach. As Jean Dreze aptly says, single focus explanations (highlighting one particular cause of educational deprivation and ignoring the others), which are common in public debates, do not survive close scrutiny (Dreze 2003:982). There thus exists a combination of factors at work when a child is out of school or in it. We have seen how most of these factors operate in unison leading to educational disadvantage in certain regions. In the north Indian states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, for instance, we come across a pernicious caste hierarchy, patrilineal kinship patterns loaded in favour of the son, low status of women and feudalistic land ownership patterns creating large economic disparities. Thus class, caste and gender have combine to create an adverse and negative impact on the educational advancement of rural children. Factors often work in varying combinations, in a manner such that, the negative impact of some factors may be counterweighed by the facilitating role of others. The high level of literacy attained by the North Eastern states is an example in this context. Despite a large proportion of people living below the poverty line, these states have high literacy levels. Gender disparities are low, with the status of women being high among the tribals. Tribal society is relatively egalitarian contributing to a positive sense of tribal unity and identity, unlike the fissures seen in caste-based societies. Finally, tribal based dominance and homogeneity has aided

educational advancement. It is thus seen how the factor of poverty which is known to play a discouraging role in schooling of children, has been counterweighed by other positive influences, such as gender equality, an egalitarian social system and the positive role of religion in the North East.

Just as social factors have combined to hinder educational advancement, they can also act in positive unison to facilitate / promote mass literacy among the people. The case of Kerala and Himachal Pradesh provide examples of this. With reference to Kerala's literacy achievements, V.K. Ramachandran says, 'mass education cannot be that without overcoming the great barriers to mass education in Indian society-gender and caste discrimination and class oppression' (Ramachandran: 1996). In Kerala, the agrarian and communist movements led to land reforms, which changed the traditional agrarian class relations in favour of reduced economic disparities. Social reform movements and Christian missionary activities worked against the practice of untouchability and raised the status of the oppressed castes. The prevalence of the matrilineal family system, among a significant section of the population, and the absence of female seclusion led to progressive social attitudes in favour of female education. Thus, Kerala's achievements became possible, in Ramachandran's words, 'because traditional patterns of gender, caste and class dominance were transformed radically' (Ramachandran, V. K. 1996: 328). Himachal Pradesh's success story in the area of elementary education exhibits a case where the major obstacles of caste, class and gender had been traditionally weak, thus creating a favourable atmosphere, so that governmental interventions could successfully bear fruit. Dreze points out how the village communities of Himachal Pradesh have had a relatively equal social structure

marked by an absence of large inequalities of land ownership, relatively narrow social distance between castes and finally, gender equality with high participation of women in social life. These weakened social disparities promoted the spread of education through the emergence of consensual social norms in favour of schooling among the people (Dreze 2003). The above discussion shows that the modus operandi of the social economic factors is that they operates not in a singular but in a contributory fashion either for preventing universal education or promoting it. Since the educational system merely mirrors the larger social system of which it is an organic part, social hierarchies have led to hierarchies of access and attainment in education. While the fundamental link between educational deprivation and social inequalities continues to apply, significant progress has been made in enhancing literacy rates and improving school participation of children through governmental and non-governmental programmes and interventions. To quote Dreze,

"consolidating and extending these achievements calls for wider acknowledgement of elementary education as a fundamental right of all citizens (Dreze 2003: 989)."

The Way Out........

It is said that Elementary Education System of France is very good all over the world. We should learn something from France in the context of Universalisation of Elementary Education. In France, school is compulsory until the age of 16. All professors in public school and universities are employed and paid by the state. Most schools are public (85%) but there are

also private schools throughout France. Just 13.4 % of elementary school children and 20 % of high school attend private schools. Education is almost free at all levels (except for private schools and buisness schools). All classes (the poor, the rich) are mixed because the priority is to provide equality among students through education. Overall, 98 % of children between 3 and 5 are in school in France.

Education needs to be transformed into a powerful instrument of social change and national development in our country. Unfortunately, neither are the total resources available to education adequate, nor are they spent efficiently on various levels. The costs of under-investment in education and of the misallocation of resources within education are quite high. The under-investment in education and inter and intra-sectoral pattern of allocation of resources is found to be a source of imbalances in the development of education in the country. There is a strong need for the government to substantially increase their spending on elementary education. It is generally felt that it is not the financial resources, but a strong political will that is lacking (Dreze and Sen: 1995). But the critical importance of finances cannot be ignored. While the repeated resolve of the government to allocate six per cent or even more of GDP to education should be welcomed, it would be desirable to fix certain short medium and long-term norms regarding the proportions of central and state budgets that should be allocated to education.

In the present context of growing budget squeeze for education, in an economy like India the private sector may play an important role in easing the financial crisis in education, but given the experience, is extremely limited.

Heavy reliance on privatization and on cost recovery measures at this stage might hinder the growth of education and its equitable access and correspondingly on growth and social justice. The limitations of the private sector in education are well-known. Specifically, the government must finance school education in totality. Resources from the non-governmental sector may be generated to marginally supplement government efforts. It may be noted that without financial resources, many of the education goals remain distant dreams, though the provision of financial resources does not serve as a sufficient condition for development. Suitable norms may be developed in such a way that a minimum proportion of the state and central budgets are allocated to education. Consistently short-term economic compulsions should not lead to the introduction of long-term policies that adversely affect the quality, equity, and efficiency aspects relating to elementary education and the overall egalitarian fabric of the welfare state.

As we believe in 'hope' and 'change', still something could be done to make elementary education more meaningful. Some suggestive measures in this direction are as follows:-

(i)   Fundamental right of education should be extended to 0-18 years for all students.

(ii)   Government should provide accessibility of education to those who belong to deprived sections of society.

(iii)   Government should primarily focus on girl's education. In this regard, government should increase budget allocation for education and at the same time there should be gender budgeting of education.

Girls' education will directly affect the social development of country.

(iv) There should be abolition of multi-layered schooling system because it promotes hierarchy and inequality in society. Government should introduce Common School System, which has been advocated by Kothari Commission (1966). A CSS can be defined as a system of schools providing education of an equitable quality to all children, irrespective of their caste, class, creed, community, language, gender, physical or mental ability. This is the only way to getting equality in education.

(v)   There should be complete ban on privatization of elementary education. Privatization of elementary education will never deliver social justice in the field of education. State should take control of all private schools. It should provide adequate funds for education. Professor Amartya Sen has told the confederation of Indian Industries in December 2007 that school education can be funded only by the state.

(vi) Our present education system should learn something from alternative schools and alternative texts, which have been offered by various social organizations. Our course curriculum should promote following things among students: - creativity, dialogue, humanism, imagination, freedom, reciprocal teacher taught relationship etc.

(vii) Government should conduct a yearly survey in the field of elementary education to know the crisis of elementary education.

(viii) Governments should promote the vision of Mahatma, Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekanada, Sri Aurobindo, and J. Krishnamurthi in the field of elementary education.

(ix) Government should create a National Education Commission through the help of educationists, sociologists, NGOs that should be apolitical in nature. It should be objective and unbiased in nature regarding forwarding any type of recommendation in the field of elementary education. This commission should create student-friendly environment in the field of elementary education.

(x) Government should take help of Anganwadis, Self Help Groups, NGOs, and INGOs, and religious organizations in the field of elementary education. They should given freedom to provide elementary education.

(xi) Government should take help of those retired persons who are willing to contribute in the area of elementary education. They will teach and at the same time they will also provide some basic skills.

(xii) Poor parents should encourage their children to go to schools. Parents should understand that child's education is necessary for their development. The parents must be duty bound to send the child to school, regardless of any pressing need to make cowdung cakes, manual labour, graze the cow or attend a wedding or guest.

(xiii) Government should encourage media houses to campaign for elementary education. In this regard, The Times of India's 'Teach India' initiative is appreciable.

On an optimistic note, it can be hoped that if the abovementioned points are duly considered, education would turn out to be a truly liberating experience. The new face of elementary education hence conceived will play a great role in the societal development of the public sphere. We may conclude with some philosophical notes as suggested by the UNESCO:

> *"Education thus has a special responsibility to exercise in the building of a more mutually supportive world, and the commission takes the view that educational policies should forcefully reflect that responsibility. Education must help to engender a new humanism, one that contains an essential ethical component and sets considerable store by knowledge of, and respect for, the cultures and spiritual values of different civilizations, as a much - needed counterweight to a globalisation that would otherwise be seen only in economic or technological terms" (Learning: the Treasure Within, Delores Report, 1996, p.50).*

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