

Educational disparity in india



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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION “ I have a heart full of dreams To emulate Lakshmi, my neighbour, Who merrily goes to school; To wear skirts in gorgeous colours; To become a Collector and travel in a car; But, alas, trapped in a heap of matchsticks I am still far from free! ” Etymologically, the word education is derived from the Latin term *educatio* (“ a breeding, a bringing up, a rearing), from *educio* (“ I educate, I train”) which is related to the homonym *educio* (“ I lead forth, I take out; I raise up, I erect”), from *e-* (“ from, out of”) and *duco* (“ I lead, I conduct”).

Education in its broadest, general sense is the means through which the aims and habits of a group of people lives on from one generation to the next. Generally, it occurs through any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts. In its narrow, technical sense, education is the formal process by which society deliberately transmits accumulated knowledge, skills, customs and values from one generation to another, e. g. , instruction in schools. It means the development of character or mental powers by means of giving intellectual, moral and social instruction especially as a prolonged process.

Indian society is characterized by its diversity be it in terms of religion, caste, region or language. This kind of diversity gives rise to people with very different kind of family backgrounds and demographic characteristics.

Though diversity in any state is considered a healthy phenomenon but only when people of different caste, religion or region are provided with same kind of opportunities and growth prospects in terms of access to education, employment and other fundamental services. There should not be any kind

of discrimination between individuals based on their caste, religion, region or sex.

In this light, if we observe Indian society we find that, based on caste and ethnicity, it suffers from substantial inequalities in education, employment and income. If the inequalities are arising due to differences in level of efforts made by individuals of different backgrounds then it is morally acceptable but if inequalities are due to circumstances beyond the control of an individual such as caste, religion, region of birth, sex, ethnicity and so on, then it is deemed unethical and unacceptable and also calls for compensation in some form or other, from the society, to those who have suffered due to inferior circumstances.

In the case of India this problem becomes much more relevant since historically the Indian society is severely divided into different caste, religion and other social group structures with several groups enjoying privileges more than other groups just because of their superior social status.

So, as far as India is concerned, it is very important from the point of view of both academic interest as well as policy implication, to estimate the extent of inequality due to different circumstances of people as it will help in going to the root cause of prevailing income or wealth inequality, evaluating the age old government programs aimed at bringing equality in society, developing policies for bridging gaps between different sections of society and thus leading towards a state which is more just and equal.

1. 1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN INDIA

Monastic orders of education under the supervision of a guru were a favoured form of education for the nobility in ancient India. The knowledge in these orders was often related to the tasks a section of the society had to perform. The priest class, the Brahmins, was imparted knowledge of religion, philosophy, and other ancillary branches while the warrior class, the Kshatriya, was trained in the various aspects of warfare. The business class, the Vaishya, was taught their trade and the working class of the Shudras was generally deprived of educational advantages.

Secular Buddhist institutions cropped up along with monasteries. These institutions imparted practical education, e. g. , medicine. A number of urban learning centers became increasingly visible from the period between 200 BCE to 400 CE. The important urban centers of learning were Taxila (in modern day Pakistan) and Nalanda, among others. These institutions systematically imparted knowledge and attracted a number of foreign students to study topics such as Buddhist literature, logic, grammar, etc.

By the time of the visit of the Islamic scholar Alberuni (973–1048 CE), India already had a sophisticated system of mathematics. With the arrival of the British Raj in India the modern European education came to India. British Raj was reluctant to introduce mass education system as it was not their interest. The colonial educational policy was deliberately one of reducing indigenous culture and religion, an approach which became known as Macaulayism.

With this, the whole education as well as government system went through changes. Educated people failed to get job because the language in which

they got education had become redundant. The system soon became solidified in India as a number of primary, secondary, and tertiary centres for education cropped up during the colonial era. Between 1867 and 1941 the British increased the percentage of the population in Primary and Secondary Education from around 0.6% of the population in 1867 to over 3% of the population in 1941. However this was much lower than the equivalent figures for Europe where in 1911 between 8 and 18% of the population were in Primary and Secondary education. Additionally literacy was also improved. In 1901 the literacy rate in India was only about 5% though by Independence it was nearly 20%. Following independence in 1947, Maulana Azad, India's first education minister envisaged strong central government control over education throughout the country, with a uniform educational system.

However, given the cultural and linguistic diversity of India, it was only the higher education dealing with science and technology that came under the jurisdiction of the central government. Hence the disparity existed and deepened. The government also held powers to make national policies for educational development and could regulate selected aspects of education throughout India. The central government of India formulated the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1986 and also reinforced the Programme of Action (POA) in 1986.

The government initiated several measures like the launching of DPEP (District Primary Education Programme) and SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, India's Initiative for Education for All) and setting up of Navodaya Vidyalaya and other selective schools in every district, advances in female education, inter-disciplinary research and establishment of open universities. India's

NPE also contains the National System of Education, which ensures some uniformity while taking into account regional education needs. The NPE also stresses on higher spending on education, envisaging a budget of more than 6% of the Gross Domestic Product.

While the need for wider reform in the primary and secondary sectors is recognized as an issue, the emphasis is also on the development of science and technology education infrastructure. CHAPTER 2 EDUCATION AND THE CONSTITUTION: SHAPING EACH OTHER Thinking about the interaction between the Constitution and education reveals that they are deeply interconnected, at profound levels of interdependence and complexity. Those connections are often strikingly visible, but are sometimes quite subtle. A fundamental interdependence was formed with the decision to formulate our governmental structure as a democratic republic.

The Constitution created the necessity for adequate public education to prepare the citizenry to exercise the role of self-government. An educated voting public underpins a successful democratic structure, the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities. It is the very foundation of a responsible citizenship. Today it is the principal instrument for awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment.

But it is not only our political system that is dependent upon a viable and successful educational system. Our economic system also proclaims its reliance upon well-trained and educated workers. And our social system

rests on two largely accepted goals that each requires access to education – the “ melting pot” which requires the successful absorption of diverse immigrant populations into a pluralistic social and cultural structure, and “ upward mobility” which requires the permeability of class/caste barriers.

Both goals are achieved substantially through the education system. 2. 1

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK Article 45, of the Constitution of India originally stated: “ The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years. ”

This article was a directive principle of state policy within India, effectively meaning that it was within a set of rules that were meant to be followed in spirit and the government could not be held to court if the actual letter was not followed. However, the enforcement of this directive principle became a matter of debate since this principle held obvious emotive and practical value, and was legally the only directive principle within the Indian constitution to have a time limit.

Following initiatives by the Supreme Court of India during the 1990s the Ninety-third Amendment Bill suggested three separate amendments to the Indian Constitution: * The constitution of India was amended to include a new article, 21A, which read: “ The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine. * Article 45 was proposed to be substituted by the article which read: “ Provision for early childhood care and education to children below the age of six years: The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they

complete the age of sixteen years. ” * Another article, 51A, was to additionally have the clause: “... a parent or guardian [shall] provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, [a] ward between the age of six to fourteen years. The bill was passed unanimously in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian Parliament, on November 28, 2001. It was later passed by the upper house, the Rajya Sabha, on May 14, 2002. After being signed by the President of India the Indian Constitution was amended formally for the eighty sixth time and the bill came into effect. Since then those between the age of 6-14 have a fundamental right to education. * Article 46 of the Constitution of India holds that: The State shall promote, with special care, the education and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of social exploitation. ” Other provisions for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes can be found in Articles 330, 332, 335 and 338-342. Both the 5th and the 6th Schedules of the Constitution also make special provisions for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. CHAPTER 3 VIDYA, VEDA, AND VARNA The 1990s were good years for education in India.

According to the 2001 Census, the literacy rate for men, over the entire decade, increased by 11. 8 (percentage) points and that for women by 15 points with the consequence that in 2000, 57% of India’s (over 15) population was literate, with a literacy rate of 68% among men and 45% among women. Many of the issues relating to literacy are reflected in school participation, defined as the initial enrolment of a child at school. The net enrolment rate of children, aged 6-14, at school varies across the states of

India ranging from 99% for boys and 98% for girls in Kerala, to 91% and 84% in Tamil Nadu, to 69% and 56% in Madhya Pradesh.

All-India school enrolment rates, for boys and for girls, vary considerably between the Hindu, Muslim and the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (hereafter collectively referred to as Dalits) communities: the enrolment rates for Hindu boys and girls are, respectively, 84% and 68% while for Muslim boys and girls they are 68% and 57% and for Dalit boys and girls they are 70% and 55%. In keeping more generally with recent research interest into issues of ethnicity and educational attainment in other societies the key question of inter-group differences in school enrolment rate in India also needs further investigation.

The *raison d'être* is to examine whether, and to what extent, the enrolment of children at school in India are influenced by the norms, or other socio-economic characteristics, of the communities (Hindus, Muslims and Dalits) to which they belonged. There are two issues embedded in this study. The first is that inter-community differences between communities, in the school enrolment rates of their children, could be due to the fact that the communities differed in terms of their endowment of 'enrolment-friendly' attributes. Call this the 'attribute effect'.

On the other hand, inter-community differences in enrolment rates could exist, even in the absence of inter-community differences in attribute endowments, simply because different communities, by virtue of differences in their norms, translated a given attribute endowment into different enrolment rates. Call this the 'community effect'. The overall enrolment rate

is, of course, the outcome of both effects. The average probability of school enrolment is the sum of two (mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive) parts: one that is engendered by the 'community' effect and another whose antecedents are in the 'attribute' effect.

The equation for the likelihood of being enrolled at school is separate for boys and for girls and, in each of the case, the variables differ as to whether the children are Hindu, Muslim or Dalit. Thus, the econometric estimates take cognisance of differences between the children both with respect to their gender and their religion or caste. The econometric estimates are based on unit record data from a survey of 33, 000 rural households - encompassing 195, 000 individuals - which were spread over 1, 765 villages, in 195 districts, in 16 states of India.

In many communities there is no tradition of sending children to school; more importantly, these traditions co-exist with well recognised and established social norms that condone child labour and accept out-of-school children. Given that 'the child is the father of the man', children who do (or do not) go to school will, with a high degree of probability, grow up to be literate (or illiterate) adults. In turn, the life chances of an adult, and his or her children, will be greatly affected by whether or not he or she is literate.

Consequently, if one is concerned with inter-community differences in economic and social outcomes, one should, as a corollary, be concerned with inter-community differences in rates of school enrolment. The determining variables used to specify the equations for the likelihood of boys and of girls being enrolled at school, were grouped as follows: 1. The communities to

which the children belonged: Hindu, Muslim or Dalit. The respondents to the Survey were distinguished along caste lines as: Dalits (Scheduled Caste/Tribe) and non-Dalits. They were separately distinguished by religion as: Hindu, Muslim, Christian, etc.

Consequently, membership of the two categories, caste and religion, could overlap: Dalits could be Hindu, Muslim or Christian and, say, Hindus could either be Dalits or non-Dalits. In this study, the two categories of caste and religion were rendered mutually exclusive by defining Hindus, Muslims, Christians (and persons of 'other' religions) as persons professing the relevant faith but who were not Dalits. No distinction was made by religion within Dalits though, parenthetically, it might be noted that over 90% of them gave their religion as Hindu.

Because of the small number of Christians and persons of 'other' religions in the Survey, the analysis reported in this paper was confined to Hindus, Muslims and Dalits. 2. The regions in which the children lived: North; South; Centre; East; West. The Central region comprised Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh; the South comprised Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu; the West comprised Maharashtra and Gujarat; the East comprised Assam, Bengal and Orissa; and the North comprised Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. 3. The educational levels of the mothers and fathers of the children.

These were classified as: illiterate; low, if the person was literate but had not completed primary school; medium, if the person was educated to primary level or above but had not passed the school-leaving examination (the

matriculation examination, abbreviated, in India, to matric) administered at the end of ten years of schooling; high, if the person was educated to matric level or above. 4. The occupations of the fathers and the mothers. The mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive occupational categories were: cultivator, labourer, non-manual workers, and 'unoccupied'. . Personal and household variables such as an index of the value of productive assets. 6. Village level variables relating to the general level of development of the village and, in particular, the provision of schools within the village. In terms of educational infrastructure, only 11% of the children in the sample lived in villages which did not have a primary school, though 50% lived in villages without anganwadi schools, and 30% lived in villages without a middle school within a distance of 2 kilometres.

Of the children in the sample, 77% of boys and 64% of girls were enrolled at school. However, underlying the aggregate figures, there was considerable variation in enrolment rates by: region; community; parental occupation; and parental literacy status. In terms of region, enrolment rates were lowest in the Central region and highest in the South, the West and the North. However, in every region, except the South, enrolment rates for Hindu boys and girls were considerably higher than those for their Muslim and Dalit counterparts.

In terms, of parental literacy, enrolment rates for children (both boys and girls) were substantially higher for children with literate parents relative to children whose parents were illiterate. When both parents were illiterate the gap between the enrolment rate of Hindu children, on the one hand, and Muslim and Dalit children, on the other, was considerable; however, when

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both parents were literate, the intercommunity gap in enrolment rates was almost non-existent. Lastly, in terms of occupation, children whose fathers were labourers had the lowest rate of enrolment and children with fathers in non-manual occupations had the highest enrolment rate. These show that, with a handful of exceptions, the means of the factors were significantly different between the groups. In particular, a significantly larger proportion of Hindu children had parents who were both literate - and a significantly smaller proportion of Hindu children had parents who were both illiterate - compared to Muslim and Dalit children.

In addition, a significantly higher proportion of Hindu children had fathers who were cultivators and a significantly higher proportion of Dalit children had fathers who were labourers: over half the Hindu children, in the relevant age-group, had fathers who were cultivators while, in contrast, well over one-third of Dalit children had fathers who were labourers. One reason that enrolment rates differed by community is that the distribution of the 'enrolment-determining factors' - region, parental occupation and literacy, availability of educational facilities - were unequally distributed between the communities.

The other is that there were significant inter-community differences in 'attitudes' to education, both with respect to children in their entirety and with respect to boys and girls separately. 3. 1 The 'Community Effect': Religion and Caste as Influences on School Participation The NCAER Survey provides qualitative information on the reasons that parents gave for not enrolling their children at school. Factors like 'school too far' or 'school

dysfunctional' (' demand-side') did not play an significant role in non-enrolment; nor did their incidence vary across the communities.

The incidence of demand-side factors - whereby family financial constraints or the fact that a child was engaged in non-school activity involving work either within or outside the home - was particularly marked for Dalit children: 34% of Dalit parents, compared with 29% of Hindu and 22% of Muslim parents, gave this as their reason for non-enrolment. These inter-group differences in the mean values of the ' demand-side' reasons were significantly different between the communities.

Another significant difference between Hindus and Dalits on the one hand and Muslims on the other, was in terms of the percentage of children who were not enrolled at school because their parents did not think education was important. This was 16% for Hindus and 17% for Dalits, but, at 23%, significantly higher for Muslims. The fact that some proportion of religious and caste groups consider education ' unimportant' suggests that Muslim religious and Dalit caste norms might matter for school participation.

But, there are also several other explanations that might account for the lower enrolment figures for Muslims and Dalits which need to be located within the historical context of educational policy in India towards minorities.

3. 1. 1. Muslim Education in India In recent times the question of Muslims educational backwardness has been an important element of political and social rhetoric in India. Although Muslims are not alone in reflecting educational backwardness yet recent statistic shows they are one of the

most backward communities in the field of education and literacy in the country.

This fact is, no doubt, astonishing for those who know that the very first declaration of the Qur'an- ' IQRA' (to read) is about ' education'. And the Prophet of Islam, Mohammad (pbuh) termed education as basic obligation for every individual - male and female, the very first time in the history of mankind, in 610 (AD). However, this write-up endeavours to locate the educational problems of the post colonial Muslims in India and invites sincere review by the present academia to help practical enforcement of all educational plans to get Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) mission a success story by 2010.

An important cause that may well affect Muslim education is the role of religious institutions and, in particular, the local clergy. It is conventionally argued that the status of women in Islam implies that Muslim parents may invest less in the human capital of their daughters than of their sons. Muslim parents may also be reluctant to send their children to government funded schools owing to the existence of alternatives in community based schooling (in the form of madrasas) and most particularly on account of the lack of Urdu and Arabic language teaching in the formal system.

Islam first came to India as early as 650 AD with the Arab traders, but it was only under Mughal rule, between the 12th and 17th centuries, that education was encouraged. The very first madrasa in India was established in 1781 by Warren Hastings and was called the ' Calcutta Madrasah College for Muhammedans'. Madrasas were greatly encouraged under colonial rule in

the 18th century and, in the second half of the 19th century, they were set up all over India by the Deobandis - a group of Muslims who were trained in the most orthodox madrasa in India, Darul-uloom in Deoband, founded in 1866.

It was in this phase of their expansion that madrasas were funded primarily by individual contributions rather than by princely patronage and when they developed a formal institutional structure similar to western educational institutions, including their own presses for publishing in Urdu. In post-independence India, madrasas were allowed to be set up in India under Articles 30(1) and 30(2), which allows all minorities to establish educational institutions, and which also protects the property of minority educational institutions.

In the 1990s, many madrasas have been set up, largely through funds from the Middle East, on the western coast of India and in the border regions of north-eastern India. Today, madrasas mainly teach the principles of the Islamic religion, including an elementary level of the reading of the Qur'an. The Indian government has tried at various times to encourage some madrasas to combine religious education with 'modern' subjects such as mathematics.

For example, a programme was launched to modernise education in the madrasas in 1993, and some prominent madrasas such as the Darul-uloom in Deoband introduced reforms into their curriculum as a consequence. The Jamia Mohammadia Mansura in Malegaon, Maharashtra is reputed for its teaching of medical science, and the Darul-uloom Nadwar-ul-ulema in

Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh even teaches the English language and English literature as core subjects. However, although in some states such as Karnataka and Kerala, madrasas are a useful complement to the formal schooling sector, such efforts have not, in general, been successful.

Urdu (which is spoken in only 3 countries of the world - India, Pakistan and Mauritius) is widely regarded by Muslims in India as 'their' language. However, in post-independence India, Urdu was not given the status of a 'modern Indian language', despite the fact that a substantial proportion of Muslims and non-Muslims particularly in northern India use it as their primary language of communication; in schools Sanskrit was taught as the preferred alternative in the three-language (Hindi-English-Sanskrit) formula.

This has had important implications for Muslim education in India particularly as it has tied the issue of education-provision with considerations of religious and political identity, and cultural autonomy.

3. 1. 2. Dalit Education in India
In their analysis of school enrolment, Dreze and Kingdon found that Dalit children had what they term an 'intrinsic disadvantage' - they had a lower probability of going to school, even after controlling for other non-caste factors such as household wealth, parents' education etc. Dalits - who, generally speaking, constitute the 'untouchables' of India comprise, approximately, 17. % of India's population. Although, the practice of 'untouchability' is illegal in India, the reality of life is very different. Often, Dalits live in segregated colonies on the outskirts of villages, usually in the southern fringes because that is where the Hindu god of death, Yama, is supposed to dwell. Dalits are not allowed to use common crematoria.

Sharecropping, a dominant form of agriculture in most parts of India is not

common among Dalit households due to the concepts of ' ritual purity' observed by those within the caste system.

More significantly, the practice of untouchability cuts right across religious boundaries, and is observed in day to day interactions not only by Hindus, but by Muslims, Christians, and other religious groups in India as well.

Studies of education and caste in India show that the Dalits are less likely to send children to school. Acharya and Acharya [1995] report that the differences between Dalits and non-Dalits in dropout rates are very large: the dropout rates for Dalits are 17% higher than for others in Classes I-V, and 13% greater for those in Class I-VIII.

The historical origins of inequality in the access to education by caste lie in colonial policy towards education. After 1835, education policy in the sub-continent was altered considerably by Macaulay's Minute on Education which changed the dominant language of the curriculum to English, giving rise to what Nehru cynically termed an ' education for clerks'. Western education both resulted in greater social prestige for the upper castes and greater inequality between castes.

The success of the non-Brahmin movement in southern India meant that this inequality was addressed there by positive discrimination in favour of the non- Brahmins, in education and in jobs; however, this was not the case in other parts of India. The influence of religion and caste on school enrolment encompasses both sociological factors such as the role of cultural norms, and historical influences such as colonial and post-colonial policy towards education in India. Collectively, these non-economic factors might exert an

important role on current schooling decisions, even after controlling for the economic factors that affect them.

CHAPTER 4 THE RURAL AND URBAN DIVIDE India is a vast country with a large population of about 121 crores. About 70 per cent of the people live in villages. They are engaged in agriculture or small cottage industries. Though there has been rapid expansion of facilities for education in the urban areas, the rural areas have remained neglected to a great extent. The main reason for such lopsided expansion has been the attitude of our rulers. As in other matters, the urban vocal population has in this matter as well been able to get the lion's share.

Many Universities, Colleges and institutions of higher learning have been established in big urban centres and cosmopolitan cities. The villages and small towns have had to be contented with primary, middle and high schools, with certain exceptions of Intermediate Colleges and a few degree Colleges. The villages have not got their due share in the facilities for education. Education has been a state subject, i. e. , a responsibility of the state governments in their respective jurisdictions. Expansion of education required huge sums of money.

The State governments with their limited resources have not been able to allocate as much funds to education as they should have done. Rich agriculturists could afford to send their wards to cities for education. The rest of the poor and non-vocal motions of the population suffered. The nature of agriculture is ill loch that all the members of a farmer's family have to work in the fields. Thus the children of farmers start helping their parents in

agricultural operations. This is a great hindrance to the expansion of education in the rural areas.

If an analysis is attempted, it will show that the illiterates in the rural areas far outnumber their counterparts in the cities. Further break-up would show that not only adults but even children in the age-group 5—15 in the villages do not avail themselves of the facilities for education, available in their neighbourhood. It is not that there are no schools in the villages. Schools are there, but they are not in adequate numbers. Children have to go a long distance to attend schools. These schools are not as well equipped as the schools in urban localities. There are very few school buildings.

Classes are generally held either under a shed a tree or in the open. The low-paid teachers of these schools do not pay enough attention to their students. The illiterate parents are not very enthusiastic about the education of their children. Many children in the villages do not go to school at all. The parents of even such children, as are enrolled in the school, pay little attention to their education. They appear to be convinced of the futility of the schooling of their children. They rather engage their children as helpers in the agricultural operations, which they consider better utilisation of their time and energy.

Not only children, but a majority of adult men and women in the rural areas are illiterate. This is one reason of their being negligent towards their children's education. To them there appears no better future for their children even if they take education. The large scale unemployment is another factor responsible for their indifference to their children's education.

Lack of enthusiasm in the village people for the education of their children is due to several other reasons. First of all most of them are themselves uneducated.

Secondly, the gains of education have not reached the villages. Villagers are conservative in outlook. They do not like sending daughters to schools abridging their practices. So far as their sons are concerned, they do not find any direct correlation between their education and future progress. Very little attention is being paid to the education of adults in villages. There is no doubt that a little education or even literacy will generate much confidence among the rural adults, who would find it useful in their occupation as well as in general life.

It would be interesting to note that the objective of providing free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 could not be achieved because of inadequate resources for school buildings and teachers, non-realisation by parents of the beneficial value of education, and poverty. The pool of illiterates and drop-outs grows wider each year, even as governmental efforts are being reinforced. Two-thirds of the non-enrolled children consist of girls. A vast majority of non-enrolled children are again from weaker sections of the community, like Scheduled Castes, Schedules Tribes, Muslims and landless agricultural labourers.

Such children constitute the hard core of the problem. They do not attend school, and even if they do, they drop out soon after joining school. | RURAL-URBAN disparities, particularly in post-colonial India, have for long been one of the causes of concern for the policymakers. The disparities are seen in all

spheres of human life – economic and non-economic. The extent of disparities, however, differ from region to region. The long colonial rule in India had created an urban-rural divide.

What causes great concern now-a-days is the sharp increase in the level of disparities after a few decades of planning, especially because planning was conceived as an instrument to narrow down rural-urban disparities. Rural India encompasses a little less than three-fourths of the country's population and is characterised by low income levels, poor quality of life and a weak base of human development. Nearly one-third of the national income comes from villages, but there is a significant rural-urban divide especially when it comes to education.

Agriculture is the mainstay of most post-colonial countries. It supports roughly two-thirds of the workforce. But the lion's share of India's national resources is directed to the non-agricultural sector. This is the primary reason why a vast Indian rural population has been left uneducated or with lowest levels of education. The inability of the government to address issues such as gender bias is also an important factor which has brought about educational disparity. The agricultural sector has been growing at less than half the pace of the other sectors.

During the Seventh Plan, agriculture and allied sectors grew at a rate of 3.4 per cent, while the national economy grew at 6 per cent. In 1997-98, there was a negative growth of 2 per cent in the agricultural sector, although the national economy grew by 5 per cent. The slower rate of growth of agriculture has serious implications for the rural-urban relationship. In an

article in Alternative Economic Survey, Kripa Shankar has shown that it results in the further widening of the divide, as the following data relating to agricultural and non-agricultural gross domestic product (GDP) at 1980-81 prices indicate.

The GDP per agricultural worker was Rs. 2, 442. 49 in 1950-51, followed by Rs. 3, 196 in 1970-71 and Rs. 3, 627 in 1995-96. The GDP per non-agricultural worker rose sharply from Rs. 4, 469. 63 in 1950-51 to Rs. 9, 179 in 1970-71 and to Rs. 16, 715. 08 in 1995-96. There has been a further steep rise after the Central government accepted the Structural Adjustment Programme. While the GDP per agricultural worker rose from Rs. 3, 544. 98 in 1990-91 to Rs. 3, 627 in 1995-96, the per non-agricultural worker rise was from Rs. 14, 660 to Rs. 16, 715. 08 during the same period.

The data tend to show that the ratio between the agricultural output per farm worker and the average output per non-farm worker, which was 1: 1. 83 in 1950-51, rose to 1: 4. 6 in 1995-96. The introduction of the policy of liberalisation has affected non-farm employment in rural areas. In 1997-98, the annual increase in non-farm employment in rural areas was 4. 06 per cent. In 1983-84 it was 3. 28 per cent. During 1999-2000 it came down to 2. 14 per cent. The consequence has been a very slow reduction in rural poverty. In 1993-94 it was 39. 6 per cent, in 1999-2000 the figure came down marginally to 36. 35 per cent. According to one estimate, the average income of an urban dweller is four times higher than that of a rural dweller. Rural deprivation becomes crystal clear if we look at the data on rural India's contribution to the GDP and what the rural areas get back. Rural contribution is 27 per cent but the return is 5 per cent. As a result of the decrease in the

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actual value of the income from agriculture, inflation being one governing factor, the rural population is unable to afford and finance the education of their family members.

Besides, the large family demands have to be met by curtailing expenses on some front. In this kind of a case most of the expenses are curtailed in the educational front. The Human Development Report of India (1999) attempted to divide the rural and urban house-hold on the basis of their incomes as shown in the table. The income status is reflected in the per capita consumption expenditure. In 1999-2000 the per capita per month consumption expenditure on the rural areas was Rs. 486. 08 and in the case of urban areas it was Rs. 854. 96, according to HDR 2002.

If we look at the poverty data, a similar situation is noticed. India, a developing economy of over a billion people, recorded a relatively high economic growth during 1980-2000, especially during the 1990s, a decade known for noteworthy structural economic reforms. This period also recorded a decline in the incidence of poverty and improvement in parameters of human development such as levels of literacy, health and nutrition conditions. Development policies focussed on enhanced and targeted public investments in programmes that facilitated improvements in the quality of life of the masses, but the disparity remains. The disparities in the social development sector are mind-boggling. Rural adult illiteracy is a matter of alarming concern. In 2001, the urban literacy rate was 80. 06 per cent but the rural literacy rate was 59. 21 per cent. Thus, the difference in rural - urban areas in terms of percentage points is 20. 85. Data released by the Planning Commission show that among illiterate people aged 60 years and

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above, 78. 2 per cent live in rural areas. In urban areas the figure is 48. 2 per cent. Of the illiterate people who are 15 years and above but not beyond 60 years, rural areas have 55. per cent and the urban areas 25. 1 per cent. Of the school-going children in the age group of 5-14 years, 82. 4 per cent live in urban areas. The rural figure is 63. 3 per cent. Kerala has been able to bring this disparity down quite considerably - 93. 2 per cent in villages and 94. 3 per cent in urban areas. Policymakers are of late talking about the introduction of technology to improve the quality of life of the people by enhancing education. The bias of the state in favour of urban areas is evident from the per capita expenditure on basic services.

According to the estimate of the Eleventh Finance Commission, per capita expenditure on basic services in rural areas during 1997-98 was Rs. 24, but in urban areas it was Rs. 49. Rural India contributes 27 per cent to the GDP, but gets back only 5 per cent, which is less than one-fifth of its contribution. While the share of expenditure on urban poverty alleviation programmes in the total budgetary allocation by the Central government declined from 1 per cent to 0. 8 per cent during the period between 1990-91 and 2000-01, the per capita expenditure for urban poor increased from Rs. 11 to Rs. 8 during the same period. But for the rural poor, the per capita expenditure it is just one-eighth of this. In a post-colonial capitalist country like India, uneven rural-urban development or rural-urban disparity is not unusual. While it is almost impossible to bring it to an end, it is possible to reduce the disparity to a tolerable level. It may be recalled that Gandhi emphasised on rural growth and pleaded for village swaraj. He wanted the engine of India's

development to start rolling down from the villages. But it became clear from the discussions in the Constituent Assembly that it would not happen. Dr. B.

R. Ambedkar characterised villages as “ a sink of localism, ignorance and communalism”. Nehru felt that villages were culturally backward and no progress could be made from such places. Urban bias was clearly reflected in the attitude of the policymakers. This seems to be continuing unabated. Apart from taking steps to increase human development facilities in the villages, such as health and appropriate infrastructure such as roads and marketing facilities, there is the need for generating employment, which can better the living conditions of villagers and thereby enable them to finance education seeking process.

We need to adopt a long-term policy, keeping in mind the requirements of the rural and urban areas. A close look at the development plan exercises tends to demonstrate that ad hocism permeates the policy processes.

CHAPTER 5 GENDER DISPARITY IN EDUCATION There is little denying the fact that investing in human capital is one of the most effective means of reducing poverty and encouraging sustainable development. Yet, women in developing countries usually receive less education than men. More so, women in general enjoy far less employment opportunities than men.

Any claims and efforts then, to remove poverty and make women independent, can show results only if they address the issue of gender inequality in education. In recent decades, there have been large gains, no doubt on comparable levels, in basic rights and opportunities, in life expectancy and enrolment ratios for women. But despite these gains, the

stark reality has not changed. There still are large gender disparities in basic human rights, resources, and economic opportunity, and in political rights. So until India is able to address this issue of gender inequality and resolve it, the vicious cycle of poverty will continue to pervade.

This is because poverty leads to and aggravates gender discrimination - it is in the poorer sections and nations that instances of gender biases and inequality are more evident. Women and girls are at the bottom of the social, economic and political ladder. Access to the means to influence the development process is a rare and a difficult possibility. And yet, by the same logic, gender discrimination hinders development. So while denial of basic rights (be it education, employment or health care for women) is detrimental to women, this denial, ultimately also harms the society, the nation at large too, by hampering development.

Clearly, the gender gap in education that are widespread, is an impediment to development. The only solution to this is gender equality, which strengthens a country's ability to grow, to reduce poverty and provide its people - men, women and children - a better life. Just because gender inequality is inextricably linked to societal norms, religion or cultural traditions, it should not be either a deterrent or an excuse to gender sensitive development planning. India represents a picture of contrasts when it comes to education and employment opportunities for girls.

Cultural, social and economic factors still prevent girls from getting education opportunities so the question of equality is still a mirage. However, the rural and the urban areas present a contrast. In the rural areas the girl

child is made to perform household and agricultural chores. This is one of the many factors limiting girls' education. Cleaning the house, preparing the food, looking after their siblings, the elderly and the sick, grazing the cattle and collecting firewood are some of the key tasks they have to perform.

Households are therefore reluctant to spare them for schooling. Physical safety of the girls, especially when they have to travel a long distance to school and fear of sexual harassment are other reasons that impede girls' education. In the urban areas, however, there is a discernible difference in the opportunities that girls get for education and employment. Though the figures for girls would still be low as compared to boys, what is heartening to see is that whenever given the opportunity, girls have excelled more than boys.

For instance, in the Central Board of Secondary Examinations for grades 10 and 12, which are at an All India level, girls have for over a decade now, bagged all the top positions and secured a higher over all percentage compared to boys. In employment opportunities too, women in India today have stormed all male bastions. Be it piloting aircraft, heading multi-national corporations, holding top bureaucratic positions, leading industrial houses, making a mark as photographers, filmmakers, chefs, engineers and even as train and lorry drivers, women have made it to all hitherto considered male bastions in India.

However, this is not reason enough for cheer. For the number of girls and women who have been left out of education and employment opportunities, still far outweighs those who have got them. And what needs to change this

scenario, is not just governmental efforts but a change in societal norms, in cultural and traditional biases and in general mindsets of people. And in this the media, the civil society, and the youth, the women and girls have a lot to contribute.

CHAPTER 6 GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR PROMOTING

EDUCATION . 1 The Growth of Centrally Directed Projects The national policies of 1968 and 1986 were developed through processes led by the Government's Ministry of Education and subsequently its Ministry of Human Resource Development and involving widespread consultation at the state level. While the centre always contributed funding to the states through the planning commission process and annual incremental plan allocations, implementation responsibility lay squarely with the state authorities until 1976.

From 1977, implementation responsibility lay jointly de jure with the state and the centre and through the 1980s and the 1990s central government became gradually to play a much more directive role in programmes for primary, through the modality of projects. Up to the 1980s there had been little or no foreign involvement in the planning and funding of programmes in basic education. But from the 1980s, and some years before the production of the 1986 national policy on education, a small number of foreign funded projects, designed to improve access to and the quality of primary education, were initiated in various states.

These would become the forerunners of the more expansive District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) of the 1990s and the country-wide Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) programme of the 2000s. 6. 1. 1 The Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project One of the first projects was the Andhra Pradesh

Primary Education Project (APPEP) started in 1984 through a programme funded jointly by the Government of India, the UK government and the State Government of Andhra Pradesh. Starting in eleven districts and 328 primary schools the project was planned to reach all 48, 000 schools in the state.

A large scale construction programme designed to increase access to schooling was accompanied by a comprehensive human resource development programme for teachers, teacher educators and education administrators, the provision of materials to support activity-based learning and professional support for teachers on a continuous basis through teacher centres. 6. 1. 2 The Shiksha Karmi Project In the state of Rajasthan, the Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP) commenced in 1987 through a collaboration between the Governments of India and Sweden and the Government of Rajasthan.

Literacy rates were lower than in Andhra Pradesh, especially among girls and women, and the SKP sought to counter teacher absenteeism in remote schools, increase enrolment, especially among girls, and reduce dropout. An innovative strategy was the substitution of frequently absent primary school teachers by a two resident Shiksha Karmis (educational workers). This approach was inspired by a small scale project run and funded locally during the 1970s by an NGO, the Social Work and Research Centre (SWRC), in which three experimental primary schools were run by village youth trained as they worked as teachers.

Between 1978 and 1986 the experimental programme was expanded gradually to new sites with support from SWRC and other NGOs and the

government of Rajasthan. The success of the small scale projects prompted the desire to expand the Shiksha Karmi idea on a larger scale. In 1987 foreign involvement and funding was formalised through an agreement for a ' six-year' joint venture between the governments of India and Sweden. 6. 1. 3 The Lok Jumbish Project Shortly afterwards, in 1988, the first draft of an even more ambitious project in the same state - the Lok Jumbish (People's Movement) Project - was drafted.

With three core components - the quality of learning, community involvement and the management of education - it sought to transform the mainstream system in Rajasthan by building from it and interacting with it. Involving a politically radical strategy and complex design, the leaders of LJ saw it as ' developer, demonstrator, catalyst and transformer of the mainstream education system from the outside' (Lok Jumbish Joint Assessment, 1993). Many of its ideas were drawn from SKP and its predecessors, and, like SKP, it attracted financial support from the Government of Sweden, but on a much larger scale.

Like the large scale Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project before it LJ was another example of a three way relationship between the central government, the state government and a foreign agency. LJ gave substance to the 1992 National Policy of Education's declaration that the Government of India: will, in addition to undertaking programmes in the Central sector, assist the State Governments for the development of programmes of national importance where coordinated action on the part of the States and the Centre is called for.

LJ also gave substance to the framework evolved in 1991 by the Central Advisory Board of Education for the availing of external assistance for basic education projects (Lok Jumbish Joint Assessment, 1993: 74-76). In the case of LJ however, the partnership involved a fourth agency - the Lok Jumbish Parishad (LJP) - a non-governmental agency based in Jaipur, Rajasthan that worked alongside the state government. Indeed, were it not for the work and drive of those who established LJP, the Lok Jumbish project would probably never have materialised, nor would some radical elements of the programme have emerged.

LJ had three major components - community involvement, the quality of learning and the management of education. The component envisaged for improvements in the quality of learning was not especially radical, even if it posed implementation challenges. It involved the training of teachers and teacher educators, a curriculum and pedagogy reform led by the framework of minimum learning levels (MLL), and a system for professional support.

The Programme for Community Mobilisation was more radical and involved the mobilisation of the community through public debate, the sharing of information and knowledge to create informed decisions and village household surveys to establish the numbers of children not attending schools and the reasons for non-attendance. Mobilisation involved the establishment in the village of a core group who became an activating agency for the village, the involvement of women's groups in education decision-making and the involvement of male and female adults in the design of school buildings, construction and maintenance. . 1. 4 The District Primary Education Programme Already by the early 1990s the government

had decided to launch the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) across seven states with support from a range of foreign donors. From an educational planning perspective DPEP represented a shift from removing supply side constraints to a greater focus on quality improvement. In 1994 DPEP was launched in the 42 mostly educationally disadvantaged districts in seven states.

The DPEP strategy was drawn in tune with the national objectives of universal access, retention and achievement of minimum levels of educational attainment with a focus on girls and children belonging to socially deprived and economically backward sections of the society. Besides the achievement of the quantitative and qualitative targets within the stipulated period, the major thrust of the DPEP is to promote the decentralised management with active involvement of stakeholders that will have a considerable impact on the sustainability of the project beyond its life cycle.

A senior administrator recalled the growing political will for basic education around this time. In contrast to some other sectors, education, and in particular universal elementary education (UEE) enjoyed consensus with respect to its value and to its need for financial investment. Since the early 1990s there has been a sustained approach from parties of all political hues in their support for UEE and the states themselves ' have been trying to outdo each other' (interview with the author). Barring some issues of governance in one or two states there has been a clear shift in the level of support for UEE.

Political relations between the centre and the state are generally good, reinforcing an underlying push for reforms in UEE. Rarely are there any discordant views about how to move forward on the 'easy' elements of provisioning e. g. infrastructure. Discord revolves around how fast or slow state governments proceed (interview with the author). Evaluations of the impact of DPEP on a range of education performance indicators suggest that disparities in enrolment and retention were reduced the most in those districts with the lowest female literacy levels. In all 42 districts the percentage increase in female enrolment was 12. %. In the districts with very low female literacy rates the gain was 13. 2% and in districts with low female literacy rates it was 16. 2%. Positive change in the share of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe enrolment to total enrolment was also highest in those districts with the lowest female literacy rates. These enrolment gains were accompanied by reductions in the pupil: teacher ratio, in the pupil: classroom ratio and in repetition rates. While the centre promoted the DPEP programme, states also continued to innovate and to launch major programmes designed to support improvements in access to education.

One example was the Midday Meal Programme for children in the lower primary grades introduced in Karnataka in 1995. The programme involved a dry ration of three kilograms of rice per month for each child enrolled in the school. The idea grew out of a huge grain surplus that was going to waste. Although the surplus did not continue, the scheme, once introduced, would continue. Inspired in part by a popular midday meal programme in the state of Tamil Nadu some 25 years earlier, the Karnataka scheme would become a central government initiative in 2004. Dry rations were replaced by a cooked

meal and central government funding of 1. rupees per child per day were matched by 0.5 rupees by the states. In principle the fund covered cooking costs, fuel, pulses and vegetables, salt and masala. In 2008 the programme was extended to the upper primary grades country-wide. Some 120 million children were fed on a daily basis in one million schools. Analysis of evidence generated from the PROBE survey conducted in the Northern states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh in the late 1990s indicated the positive impact of midday meal programmes on school participation in rural areas, especially among girls (Dreze and Kingdon, 2001).

6. 1. 5 Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

The generally positive perception among many stakeholders of the results of DPEP across seven states led on to an even larger nationwide programme, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). Translated from Hindi as 'education for all movement', SSA describes itself on its official website as: An effort to universalise elementary education by community-ownership of the school system. It is a response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country. The SSA programme is also an attempt to provide an opportunity for improving human capabilities to all children, through provision of community-owned quality education in a mission mode.

In terms of the international discourse, SSA is the Government of India's main programme for the delivery of Millennium Development Goal 2, the achievement of universal primary education by 2015. In terms of the national discourse it gives substance to the 2002 constitutional amendment on elementary education as a fundamental right. Its aim is to universalise by 2010 an improved quality of education for all children in India aged between

the ages of 6 and 14 (Ward, forthcoming). Interestingly SSA's self-description on the web employs the concept of 'political will'.

It describes itself as 'an expression of political will for universal elementary education across the country'. SSA has certainly enjoyed 'will' and push from the centre. A senior bureaucrat commented that since SSA was a centrally sponsored scheme, the centre was pushing it very strongly. But political will and ownership at the level of the state is also important. The source of funding is key to will and ownership at state level. During the time of earlier DPEP the centre funded 85% of expenditure and the states 15%. SSA has introduced a tapering formula such that by the end of 2011/12 the ratio should be 50-50.

SSA is further described as: * A programme with a clear time frame for universal elementary education. * A response to the demand for quality basic education all over the country. * An opportunity for promoting social justice through basic education. * An effort at effectively involving the Panchayati Raj Institutions, School Management Committees, Village and Urban Slum level Education Committees, Parents' Teachers' Associations, Mother Teacher Associations, Tribal Autonomous Councils and other grass root level structures in the management of elementary schools. A partnership between the Central, state and the local government. * An opportunity for states to develop their own vision of elementary education. In 2001 its performance targets (on the website described as objectives) were defined ambitiously as: * All children in school, Education Guarantee Centre, Alternate School, 'Back-to-School' camp by 2003; All children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007 * All children complete eight years of

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elementary schooling by 2010 Focus on elementary education of satisfactory quality with emphasis on education for life * Bridge all gender and social category gaps at primary stage by 2007 and at elementary education level by 2010 * Universal retention by 2010 The Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) referred to in the first target was introduced originally in 1977 under the title of the Non Formal Education Scheme. That scheme enjoyed only limited success and was re-launched in 2000 (Gol, 2002: 29).

Its aim was to provide further coverage in small habitations with no schools within a one kilometre radius. The current scheme targets out-of-school children in the 6-14 age group and uses strategies such as bridge courses, back-to-school camps, seasonal hostels, summer camps, mobile teachers and remedial coaching. For the last several years, many of these EGS centres have been upgraded to the full status of primary schools, but concerns remain about the quality of education which they offer as well as their long-term sustainability. 6. 1. 6 The Right to Education Bill

The most significant change in national policy on access to elementary education in recent years was the Right to Education Bill. Although a number of states have had compulsory education acts on their statutes for many years, some from before independence, these acts had not been formulated in a way that rendered them 'justiciable' i. e. no-one could be prosecuted if those rights were not met. In 1992, the Indian government signed the International Convention of the Rights of the Child. An important legislative spur came in 1993 when the Supreme Court ruled in the Unnikrishnan vs.

State of Andhra Pradesh [1993 (1) SCC 645]. The Supreme Court ruled that Article 45 of the Constitution which asserted the obligation of the state to provide free and compulsory education up to age of 14 sh