Azim Premji Foundation

The Social Context of Elementary Education in Rural India

October 2004

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION AND PERSPECTIVE

Education in a historical perspective

The concept and phenomenon of education is of modern origin, not only in India, but also in the developing countries and the West. It is only with the emergence of the industrial revolution, that children's education based on school going received a boost in the West.

In India too, contemporary education draws from Western origins. 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 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.

We now take a look at the current scenario of primary education in India.

Primary education: Current scenario

At the time of independence, India's primary education was characterized by the historical inequities. Though Article 45 of the Directive Principles of the State Policy was committed to ensuring free and compulsory education for all, this did not significantly translate into action and school enrolments and participation remained dismally low for decades after independence. However, the picture of elementary education in rural India began to change rapidly due to the new thrusts given by the government's New National Policy of Education (1986) and the Programme of Action (1992), which aimed at improving access, reducing drop outs and improving learning achievements for all children between 6-14 years of age. A host of major initiatives by the government, and the mobilization of external resources for primary education, had a deep impact on the status of primary education, in India. Some of the important initiatives have been the Operation Blackboard (1986), Non formal Education Scheme (1986), the Shiksha Karmi Project (1987), Mahila Samakya (1989), Lok Jumbish (1992), the District Primary Education Programme (1994), the Mid Day Meal scheme (1995) and the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (2001), which aimed at completion of eight years of schooling by all children between 6-14 years, by 2010. Elementary education being made a fundamental right by the 83rd Constitutional Amendment, and the Supreme Court's insistence on States to provide hot cooked meals in schools, are improving enrolments, especially among girls.

This has led to some positive developments:

- Primary education has made remarkable progress, as is evident from the provision of schooling facilities. Indications are that, nearly 83% of habitations (villages) and 94% of the population has a primary school within a distance of one kilometre *(Vimala Ramachandran 2002)*.

- Official statistics reveal near-total universalization of school enrolment at the primary level, in almost all the States of India. This is evident from the Gross Enrolment Ratios of Census 2001 (See table 1).

Table 1 : Gross Enrolment Ratio

Year	Primary (I-V)			Upper Primary (VI-VIII)			Elementary (I-VIII)		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
1950-51	60.6	24.8	42.6	20.6	4.6	12.7	46.4	17.7	32.1
1960-61	82.6	41.4	62.4	33.2	11.3	22.5	65.2	30.9	48.7
1970-71	95.5	60.5	78.6	46.5	20.8	33.4	75.5	44.4	61.9
1980-81	95.8	64.1	80.5	54.3	28.6	41.9	82.2	52.1	67.5
1990-91	114.0	85.5	100.1	76.6	47.0	62.1	100.0	70.8	86.0
1991-92	112.8	86.9	100.2	75.1	49.6	61.4	101.2	73.2	87.7
1992-93	95.0	73.5	84.6	72.5	48.9	67.5	87.7	65.7	77.2
1993-94	90.0	73.1	81.9	62.1	45.4	54.2	80.2	63.7	72.3
1994-95	96.6	78.2	87.7	68.9	50.0	60.0	87.2	68.8	78.4
1995-96	97.1	79.4	88.6	67.8	49.8	59.3	86.9	69.4	78.5
1996-97*	98.7	81.9	90.6	70.9	52.8	62.4	88.9	71.8	80.7
1997-98*	97.7	81.2	89.7	66.5	49.5	58.5	86.4	70.0	78.6
1998-99*	100.9	82.9	92.1	65.3	49.1	57.6	87.6	70.6	79.4
1999-2000*	104.1	85.2	94.9	67.2	49.7	58.8	90.1	72.0	81.3
2000-2001*	104.9	85.9	95.7	66.7	49.9	58.6	90.3	72.4	81.6

* *Provisional*
Source: *Selected Educational Statistics 2001.*

As these enrolment statistics of the Department of Education are inflated (due to over reporting), they need to be treated with caution. These figures do not reflect the actual school participation of children, and have to be validated by attendance rates of the enrolled children, which are often low, especially in the rural areas. Since data of the 2001 census on the school attendance of children is yet to be made available, alternative data sources such as the household surveys like NSSO and NFHS, on educational participation of children, have been taken into account. These surveys are universally relied upon for data on enrolment and attendance ratios by researchers in this area. They have brought out the discrepancies between the enrolment and attendance rates of school going children. Table 2 below shows that, according to 1991 census, while 112.8% of boys were enrolled in school, only 56.6% were attending and while about 87% of girls were enrolled, only 45% of all the girls were reported to be attending school. Despite the inflated nature of the data, the gap between enrolment and attendance is significant.

Table 2 : Percentage of children Aged 6-10 years by Sex, enrolled in school, reported as literate and attending school, India, various years.

Year	Source	Enrolled in School		Reported as Literate		Attending School	
1981	Census	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
All areas		95.8	64.1	38.1	27.9	50.6	31.4
Rural		NA	NA	33.2	21.6	38.3	25.1
1991	Census						
All areas		112.8	86.9	65.2	51.9	56.6	45.4
Rural		98.6	81.8	60.3	44.8	52.3	39.3
1992-93	NFHS-1						
All areas		118.1	92.7	64.0	53.6	75.0	61.3
Rural		NA	NA	59.8	47.1	71.4	55.0
1993-94	NSS (50th round)						
All areas		115.3	92.9	68.5	62.1	75.0	67.8
Rural		NA	NA	60.1	50.2	66.4	56.0
1995-96	NSS (52nd round)						
All areas		98.6 (79.7)	81.8 (68.1)	-	-	73.0	63.0
Rural		(75.8)	(63.0)	-	-	71.0	58.0
1998-99	NFHS-2						
All areas		-	-	73.1	67.4	85.2	78.3
Rural		-	-	70.0	63.6	83.2	75.1

Notes

- The enrolment data is from the publications on educational statistics of the Department of Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- The NFHS 1 and 2 data refer to children aged 6-9 years.
- For 1995-96, figure in parentheses are the gross enrolment ratios estimated by the NSSO.

Source: *Vimala Ramachandran (2002).*

According to the 52nd Round of NSSO, the Gross Attendance Ratio was lower than the Gross Enrolment Ratio for Classes I - V by about 20% *(Sinha Amarjeet 2003).*

There has been a significant improvement in girls' enrolments over the years, as brought out in the two NFHS surveys (See table 3). More recently, in states like Rajasthan, North Karnataka and Chattisgarh, improvement in girls' enrolment has been on account of the hot cooked meals being provided in schools *(Sinha Amarjeet 2003).*

Table 3: Improvement in School Attendance of 6-14 Age Girls

States	6-14 age girls attending schools 1992-93 (NFHS – I)	6-14 age girls attending schools 1998-99 (NFHS – II)	Difference
Andhra Pradesh	54.8%	70.5%	15.7
Assam	66.0%	75.0%	9.0
Bihar	38.3%	54.1%	15.8
Gujarat	68.4%	72.8%	4.4
Haryana	74.7%	85.5%	10.8
Karnataka	64.4%	77.6%	13.2
Kerala	94.8%	97.4%	2.6
Madhya Pradesh	54.8%	70.8%	16.0
Maharashtra	76.6%	86.9%	10.3
Orissa	62.0%	75.1%	13.1
Punjab	77.8%	90.0%	12.2
Rajasthan	40.6%	63.2%	22.6
Tamil Nadu	78.7%	88.5%	9.8
Uttar Pradesh	48.2%	69.4%	21.2
West Bengal	62.9%	76.7%	13.8

Source: *Amarjeet Sinha (2003)*

There has been a decline, in the number of out of school children over the years, which has been brought out in the first and second NFHS surveys. The NFHS I (92 –93) showed 67.5% of the 6-14 age children as attending school, while the NFHS II (1998-99) revealed 79% of the same category as attending school. However, rates of successful completion of primary schooling still fall way behind the desired level *(Sinha Amarjeet 2003).*

With reference to learning achievements, however, statistics indicate that the performance of boys and girls has been dismal, with most having low achievement scores. This shows that in fact, little learning is taking place. Children seem to be progressing in the primary classes in fact on account of the policy of non-detention. Table 4, showing the dropping enrolment scenario, is a pointer to the low learning taking place, as most children are not completing the grades for which they are enrolled (Sinha Amarjeet 2003).

Table 4: The Dropping Enrolment Scenario

Class	Boys (in millions)	Girls (in millions)	Total (in millions)
Class – I	17.1	13.4	30.5
Class – II	13.4	10.4	23.8
Class – III	12.2	9.6	21.8
Class – IV	11.0	8.6	19.6
Class – V	10.2	7.8	18.0
Class – VI	9.4	6.6	16.0
Class – VII	8.3	5.9	14.2
Class – VIII	7.6	5.0	12.6
Class – IX	6.2	4.0	10.2
Class – X	5.4	3.4	8.8
Class – XI	2.4	1.6	4.0
Class – XII	2.1	1.4	3.5

Source : *Selected Educational Statistics*

The improved literacy scenario, as brought out by the 2001 census (See Table 5), shows the tangible progress in the sphere of primary education as well as in increasing literacy levels among adults. Some of the conclusions that can be drawn are:

- For the first time since India's independence, there has been a decline in the number of non-literates from 328 million in 1991 to 296 million in 2001.
- Male literacy was 75.85% and female literacy was 54.16% in 2001.
- Female literacy improved over the decade from 39.29% in 1991 to 54.16% in 2001; male–female literacy gap has come down from 24.84% to 21.70% in 2001.

Table5: Literacy Rates

Census Year	Persons	Males	Females	Male-Female gap in Literacy rate
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	23.98
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16	21.70

Source: *Selected Educational Statistics 2001.*

The above stated progress in primary education and literacy have resulted from the massive efforts of the government, moving forward towards the goal of UEE in India. However, given the enormity of the problem and the complex historical legacies involved, India still continues to lag behind in this field. The reasons for this are not far to seek.

India lags Behind in Primary Education – Why?

It has been widely acknowledged that the socio–economic conditions in rural India have constrained the process of primary education and the social inequalities of caste, class and gender have been identified as the major causes of educational deprivation among children in India. To quote Jean Dreze, "educational disparities, which contribute a great deal to the persistence of massive inequalities in Indian society, also largely derive from more fundamental inequalities such as those of class, caste and gender" *(Dreze 2003; page 982)*. A large proportion of children from the economically poor and socially disadvantaged groups and girls, especially in rural areas, are either denied access or are failing to complete even five years of basic education. The goal of universal elementary education remains a challenge to achieve even after five decades of independence.

In this context it may be worthwhile taking note of a few developments:

- As explained earlier, the focus has now shifted from enrolments to primary school completion, but gains in enrolment do not show as gains in grade completion. The NFHS II survey brought out that only 56% boys and 43% girls in the 15-19 years age group had completed elementary education.

- It is disturbing to note that despite improvements in enrolment rates, dropouts continue to remain high. Census 2001 shows that while Gross Enrolment Ratios were 95.17% for children, the Gross Drop Out Rates were 40.7% (Table 6).

Table 6: Drop-Out Rates at Primary, Middle and Secondary Stages

	1960-61	1970-71	1980-81	1990-91	1992-93	1999-00*	2000-01
Classes I –V							
Boys	61.7	64.5	56.2	40.1	43.8	38.7	39.7
Girls	70.9	70.9	62.5	46.0	46.7	42.3	41.9
Total	64.9	67.0	58.7	42.6	45.0	40.3	40.7
Classes I – VIII							
Boys	75.0	74.6	68.0	59.1	58.2	52.0	50.3
Girls	85.0	83.4	79.4	65.1	65.2	58.0	57.7
Total	78.3	77.9	72.7	60.9	61.1	54.5	53.7

** Provisional*

Source: *Selected Educational Statistics 2001.*

Table 7: All India: Percentage of out-of-school children in the age group of 5-14, NSS 50th Round, 1993-94

Social Group	Dropped out			Never attended		
	5-9	10-14	5-14	5-9	10-14	5-14
Rural Male						
SC	36.1	28.5	32.7	4.0	2.9	3.5
ST	42.5	35.8	39.4	3.2	3.1	3.1
Others	26.8	18.2	22.6	3.7	2.7	3.2
All	30.4	22.0	26.4	3.7	2.8	3.3
Urban Male						
SC	24.9	15.1	20.1	2.1	3.4	2.7
ST	19.3	17.1	18.3	3.4	3.2	3.3
Others	12.3	11.2	11.8	2.6	1.9	2.2
All	14.4	11.9	13.2	2.5	2.1	2.3
Rural Female						
SC	**48.4**	**51.6**	**49.9**	4.3	4.1	4.2
ST	**55.9**	**55.8**	**55.9**	4.0	3.2	3.7
Others	35.6	36.4	36.0	3.9	3.4	3.7
All	40.5	41.3	40.8	4.0	3.5	3.8
Urban Female						
SC	29.0	28.0	28.5	3.1	3.2	3.2
ST	30.8	21.1	25.9	5.2	4.6	4.9
Others	15.1	14.7	14.9	2.9	2.8	2.8
All	17.6	16.6	17.1	3.0	2.9	3.0

Source: *Vimala Ramachandran 2002.*

- The Tapas Majumdar Committee Report (1999) has estimated the size of out of school children to be about 60-70 million *(Jha and Jhingran 2002)*. NSSO data on out of school children (see table 7) aged between 5-14 years, reveals that while the percentage of those who never attended is small, the percentage of those who dropped out is alarmingly high *(Ramachandran Vimala 2002)*.
- Vast variations exist between states in their efforts to provide eight years of elementary schooling. While in states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Maharashtra, nearly all children have reached school and are remaining there, in other states like Bihar, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh, a very significant number continue to be out school *(Sinha Amarjeet 2003)*. Table 8 shows that the school attendance of children aged 6-17 years is more than 90% in Himachal Pradesh and Kerala, and 85-90% in Goa, Delhi, Manipur, Mizoram and Punjab. Overall school attendance at 60% is the lowest in Bihar and is also 70% orlower in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh.

The spread of education has been uneven not only in terms of inter state variations, but also between rural and urban areas, with urban areas being at an advantage compared to the rural areas.

Social inequalities of caste, class and gender have manifested themselves in primary school participation and completion, as a result of which, certain segments of society, such as the SCs, STs, and girls in rural areas, have continued to lag behind the general population. We now see how these three gaps manifest themselves in the sphere of primary education.

Class

Large scale survey-based statistics reveal that the majority of in-school children are from economically better off sections, while the majority of out of school children belong to poorer households. Analysis of enrolment patterns for different income groups from the NFHS data show that only half the children in the bottom 40% households were studying in schools as against more than 90% in the top 20% (see table 9).

Table 8: School Attendance by State

Percentage of the household population age 6-17 years attending school by sex, residence, age, and state, India, 1998-99									
	Male			Female			Total		
State	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
India Age									
6-10 yrs	91.7	83.2	85.2	89.1	75.1	78.3	90.4	79.3	81.9
11-14 yrs	85.1	78.5	80.2	82.8	61.6	67.0	84.0	70.4	73.9
15-17 yrs	65.3	54.8	57.7	60.5	32.8	40.3	63.0	44.0	49.3
6-14 yrs	88.7	81.4	83.1	86.3	69.7	73.7	87.6	75.7	78.6
6-17 yrs	83.0	75.8	77.6	80.0	61.7	66.2	81.5	69.0	72.1
North Delhi	86.0	89.2	86.2	87.6	83.2	87.2	86.7	86.2	86.7
Haryana	87.1	85.4	85.9	86.1	74.7	77.8	86.7	80.5	82.2
Himachal Pradesh	96.4	95.4	95.5	96.3	92.8	93.0	96.3	94.1	94.3
Jammu & Kashmir	83.0	85.8	85.3	85.2	67.6	70.4	84.0	76.6	77.8
Punjab	93.0	84.1	86.7	92.7	78.1	82.7	92.8	81.5	84.9
Rajasthan	83.9	80.4	81.3	73.5	49.9	55.6	79.0	66.0	69.1
Central Madhya Pradesh	84.0	73.1	75.9	77.9	58.0	62.8	81.2	65.7	69.6
Uttar Pradesh	77.7	77.3	77.3	77.0	57.3	61.4	77.3	68.0	69.9
East Bihar	79.1	66.8	68.2	72.1	47.5	50.5	75.5	57.4	59.6
Orissa	78.2	77.1	77.2	75.4	65.8	66.8	76.9	71.5	72.1
West Bengal	78.5	72.5	73.7	76.1	65.9	68.0	77.3	69.3	70.9
North east Arunachal Pradesh	96.7	82.3	84.2	87.3	74.3	75.9	92.2	78.3	80.1
Assam	86.8	73.3	74.2	81.1	69.0	69.9	83.8	71.2	72.1
Manipur	91.8	87.8	89.1	89.3	82.0	84.4	90.5	84.7	86.6
Meghalaya	91.4	75.3	78.5	91.3	76.8	79.9	91.3	76.0	79.2
Mizoram	92.6	78.6	85.5	89.8	79.8	85.3	91.0	79.2	85.4
Nagaland	87.3	84.5	85.1	84.8	78.0	79.4	86.0	81.1	82.2
Sikkim	88.0	82.7	83.2	73.4	83.6	82.6	80.6	83.2	82.9
West Goa	91.2	88.5	89.6	87.2	86.5	86.8	89.2	87.5	88.1
Gujarat	82.8	69.6	74.8	73.4	56.7	63.1	78.3	63.2	69.1
Maharashtra	86.3	82.6	84.1	84.6	75.7	79.1	85.5	79.3	81.8
South Andhra Pradesh	80.1	71.3	73.5	78.5	56.0	61.5	79.4	63.9	67.7
Karnataka	81.9	71.4	74.9	79.7	62.4	68.0	80.8	66.9	71.4
Kerala	95.6	89.7	91.0	94.5	89.8	90.8	95.0	89.8	90.9
Tamil Nadu	84.4	81.6	82.6	84.7	73.3	76.9	84.5	77.4	79.7

Source: *NFHS II*

Table 9: Proportion of 6 to 14 year-olds currently "in school"

Economic Group	Proportion of 6 to 14 year olds currently "in school" (%)
Bottom 40%	50.0
Middle 40%	76.7
Top 20%	94.2

Source: *Jha and Jhingran 2002, calculated from NFHS I data 1992- 93.*

The NSSO data from 1995-96 also revealed (see table 10) similar disparities in primary school enrolments between the poorest 20% and the richest 20% in rural India *(Jha and Jhingran 2002).*

Table 10: Average Primary School Enrolments in Rural India

Quintile (Based on expenditure estimates)	Average Net Enrolment Rate (%)		
	Boys	Girls	Total
Poorest	42.6	31.6	37.2
2nd	53.4	43.1	48.6
3rd	60.5	50.3	55.8
4th	66.1	58.6	62.6
Highest	69.9	65.2	67.7

Source*: Jha and Jhingran 2002, based on NSSO 93-94.*

Gender

In India, the gender gap has persisted in primary schooling, right since independence. Though the situation continues to improve, girls still have had lower enrolments, lower attendance rates, as well as higher drop out rates, compared to boys.

Table 1 on Gross Enrolment Ratios of 2001 censes shows that while 90.3% of the boys were enrolled in the elementary level, only 72.4% of the girls were enrolled.

With regard to school attendance rates, the proportion of boys attending school is higher compared to girls in both rural and urban areas and across most states, as brought out in the NFHS II (see table 8). Table 8 also shows that 50% of the school age girls in Bihar were not attending school, as against 68% of the boys who attended. School attendance of girls was also low in Rajasthan, at 56%, as against 81% of boys who attended school. In Uttar Pradesh, 61% girls attended (as against 77% boys) and in Andhra Pradesh 61% girls attended (as against 73% boys).

Disparity in school attendance by sex increases with the age of the children. As table 8 shows, while in the 6-10 years age group, 85% boys and 78% girls attended school, by the age of 15-17 years, 58% boys and only 40% girls attended school.

More girls than boys tend to drop out of school at all levels. As table 6 shows, dropouts tend to go up as girls move to middle and secondary levels of schooling. Though the drop out rates have been declining over the years, even a modest gap means that more females than males join ranks of persons with incomplete primary education.

The gender gap shows up in a much more focused way when comparisons are made of completion rates, instead of enrolments. As against 44.4% of women of age 15-49 years completing primary education, there were 68.9% men in the same category in 1998-99 (NFHS II).

Caste

Census, NSSO and NCAER data all show that members of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes, who have been historically disadvantaged socially, economically and educationally, have had lower school participation in terms of enrolment and retention compared to the general population. The 1981 and 1991 census data shows that crude literacy rates for both men and women belonging to SC and ST were significantly lower compared to the general population, as is evident from table 11.

In recent years, educational statistics on primary Gross Enrolment Rates of SC children are shown as significantly higher, as revealed by the 2001 census, where 96.8% of SC children were reported as enrolled in primary classes. These figures strongly suggest over-reporting of SC enrolments (World Bank Report 1997). More reliable information can be sourced from the 'India Human Department Report' of NCAER 1999. Table 12 shows the ever-enrolment rates for different social groups. The ever-enrolled rates for SCs and STs was 61.8%, that is about 10% less than that of the general Hindu population.

Table 11: Crude Literacy Rate among Scheduled Castes and Tribes by Sex, India, various years

Year	Source	Scheduled Castes		Scheduled Tribes		Others	
		Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
1981	**Census**						
All Areas		30.9	10.8	24.5	8.0	52.3	29.4
Rural		27.9	8.5	22.9	6.8	46.1	21.7
1983	**NSS**						
All Areas		NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Rural		35.6	13.0	30.5	11.5	50.7	26.3
1987 – 88	**NSS**						
All Areas		47.5	24.6	46.7	28.2	-	-
Rural		37.5	15.5	32.5	13.4	50.7	30.5
1991	**Census**						
All Areas		49.9	23.8	40.6	18.1	52.7	32.2
Rural		-	-	-	-	47.4	25.4

Source: *Vimala Ramachandran 2002.*

Table 12: Ever-Enrolment Rates (%) for Social Groups

Social Groups	STs and SCs	Hindus	Muslims	Other Minorities
	61.8	72.0	61.6	83.5

Source: *Jha and Jhingran 2002, from India Human Development Report NCAER 1999.*

Data available from census and surveys (Table 13) clearly point out that SC and ST children have lower school attendance and higher drop out rates compared to the general population. Table 13 shows that according to the 1991 census, less than 50% of SC male children were attending school in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal. Among SC girls, the proportion attending school was less than 50% in all of the states except Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Gujarat. The situation is even more dismal for ST children, as the table shows.

NSSO data on out-of-school children (see table 7) show that dropouts are much higher among rural girls of SC and ST communities, when compared to the general population. Approximately 50% of SC and 56% of ST girls dropped out of school compared to 36% from the 'others' category.

NFHS 2 data found that women's educational attainment varies widely by caste and tribe. While 44% women of general category were illiterate, 73% of ST women and 79% of ST women were reported as illiterate. ST women, followed by SC women, are less likely than other women to have completed primary or middle school (NFHS II).

Educational attainments of SC and ST children may indeed have improved between 1991 and 2001, but recent data regarding this is not yet available.

Religion

The table on enrolment rates for social groups (Table 12) shows that Muslims as a religious minority are at a disadvantage educationally with only 61.8% being enrolled compared to Hindus (72.0%) and even other minorities (83.5%).

NFHS II data on the level of education by background characteristics shows that Christian, Sikh and Jain women have substantially higher literacy compared to Hindu and Muslim women (NFHS II).

The above account clearly demonstrates the continuing role of income, caste and gender disparities in school participation and completion as brought out by census and survey data. This was only meant to introduce the subject and provide a perspective on the social context of elementary education in India. Further examination, on the causes of income, caste, tribe and gender gaps, will be explored in the following sections.

Table 13: Percentage of children aged 6-10 years reported attending school, by Sex and Caste for major States of India, 1981 and 1991 Census.

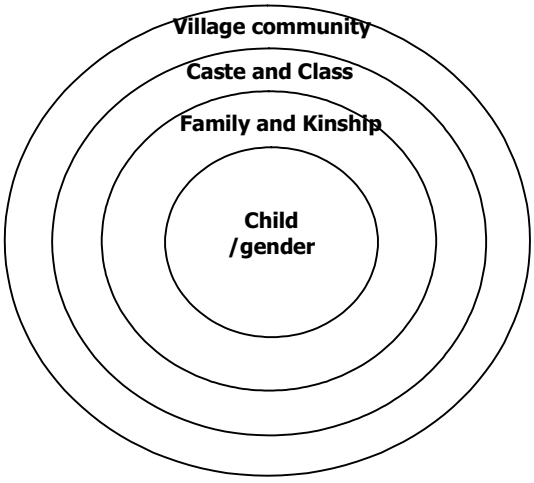
State	Rural Areas, Males					
	Scheduled Castes		Scheduled Tribes		All Population	
	1981	1991	1981	1991	1981	1991
Andhra Pradesh	40.0	46.9	28.5	35.0	49.2	54.5
Assam	NC	55.0	NC	48.7	NC	47.0
Bihar	24.9	-	33.4	-	40.2	38.8
Gujarat	64.7	74.1	45.1	56.8	59.2	65.1
Haryana	44.0	52.4	NA	NA	56.8	64.7
Himachal Pradesh	63.7	72.6	58.4	71.2	73.7	78.4
Karnataka	42.7	53.8	42.6	53.4	53.4	63.1
Kerala	85.5	90.0	58.0	73.3	89.5	90.8
Madhya Pradesh	38.4	45.5	27.8	32.6	42.8	48.5
Maharashtra	57.8	66.0	43.3	46.8	65.5	69.6
Orissa	50.0	48.4	40.6	37.5	56.6	58.9
Punjab	54.4	58.1	NA	NA	65.2	66.5
Rajasthan	34.3	37.0	32.1	32.1	42.7	45.8
Tamil Nadu	58.8	75.3	39.0	50.0	70.6	78.3
Uttar Pradesh	33.0	-	42.0	-	41.1	41.5
West Bengal	37.0	33.1	28.9	28.3	45.6	44.7
All India	41.6		35.3		50.6	52.3
Rural Areas, Females						
Andhra Pradesh	23.90	29.8	13.6	17.6	30.6	39.6
Assam	NC	48.8	NC	43.3	NC	68.2
Bihar	5.7	-	15.1	-	18.5	22.1
Gujarat	45.0	62.2	28.9	42.2	41.6	52.4
Haryana	17.8	41.4	NA	NA	31.0	51.6
Himachal Pradesh	44.8	62.4	28.7	56.8	57.5	70.3
Karnataka	22.0	36.6	20.9	37.1	36.4	51.1
Kerala	83.6	89.4	51.4	71.0	88.6	90.7
Madhya Pradesh	13.2	27.1	9.6	20.4	18.6	34.3
Maharashtra	36.7	52.9	24.9	34.3	44.4	59.1
Orissa	25.6	35.6	18.1	22.6	36.1	45.7
Punjab	40.2	47.8	NA	NA	55.6	60.3
Rajasthan	4.4	9.7	4.3	7.7	11.5	18.9
Tamil Nadu	39.9	66.0	27.2	39.8	58.0	71.6
Uttar Pradesh	8.1	-	19.1	-	17.5	24.6
West Bengal	23.9	26.4	14.0	18.8	34.4	37.6
All India	20.5		17.3		31.4	39.3

Source: *Vimala Ramachandran 2002*

ABOUT THE STUDY

What is the social context and why study it in relation to UEE?

The social context refers 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 are family / household decisions, and 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; page 989)*. It is evident that the socio-cultural, religious, economic and demographic factors play a vital role in 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. Such as examination is the objective of this study.

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 rural India, which include the relevant books, articles, reports etc. This is the scope of the study that has been undertaken.

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, school curriculum, funding, abilities of students and teachers, pedagogy etc.

The content and structure of the report

The objective of examining the social context of elementary education in rural India is sought to be achieved by an in depth study of the role of the different factors that constitute this context. These are:

- The economic factors - mainly dealing with the poverty, child work, schooling costs (both direct and indirect) and their impact on enrolment, attendance and completion of primary schooling.
- The 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; exclusion of scheduled tribes from the educational system; and the role of religion in educational attainments.
- The socio-demographic determinants - such as the health status of children, their birth order in the family, age at marriage, family size, migration etc.

The study report is divided into two parts -

Part I is a compendium of the brief summaries of the findings of each of the empirical studies, case by case, presented in a categorized format, detailing the aim of the study, the research setting and the main findings. This part has covered most of the available published literature on the topic.

Part II of the report delineates, from these studies, as discussed above, the role of economic, socio-cultural and socio-demographic factors in hindering as well as promoting universalisation of elementary education in rural India.

Relevance of the study to Azim Premj Foundation

Azim Premji Foundation is working towards catalyzing the efforts of all concerned for achieving the universalization of elementary education in rural Karnataka. The relevance of the present study to the mission of Azim Premji Foundation 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 behavioural 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 rural Indian context. The study aims to do exactly that, buttressed by the rich empirical study findings and survey data.

The specific focus areas of Azim Premji Foundation include:

- Improvement in the quality of education in government schools.
- Improvement in levels of learning of the children.

The social context governs the access, retention and achievement levels of school going children, and hence this study is relevant to the objectives of Azim Premji Foundation.

The literature surveyed highlights the obstacles encountered in achieving universalization of elementary education in different regions, as well as the facilitators of this process. This can be a valuable input for Azim Premji Foundation.

Points of Caution

An attempt has been made in this review study, to grapple with the very complex and dynamic phenomenon of the social context of elementary education in rural India. In view of the enormity and complexity of this subject, a few points of caution that the reader must keep in mind are in order.

- A number of factors related to the economy, gender, caste, tribe, religion and social demography have been delineated and dealt with in the report. 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 report 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 report, 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 1985.
- Reliance has been placed on the statistical data generated by the census and surveys such as NSSO, NFHS, NCAER etc. Effort has been made to use the latest data wherever available. However, we have had to rely on older data from these surveys, where recent information was not available.
- 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 no major study is left out and the review is comprehensive.
- This report is based essentially on published literature, and has presented the views and finding of the authors, by systematically grouping them in a logical framework. The study however does not attempt to come up with its own postulates.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

Introduction

The role of economic factors and their influence on educational decisions of families is widely acknowledged. According to the Probe Report, " education is treated as an investment" *(Probe Report 1999)*. Especially in the rural context, under conditions of socio-economic deprivation, costs and benefits of this 'investment' are rationally analyzed in terms of two aspects:

- Expectations of benefits, which may be economic and non-economic in nature.
- The ability of families to sustain both the direct and indirect costs involved in schooling.

The absence of any of these could lead to a situation of educational deprivation characterized by non-enrolment, irregular attendance and discontinuance. Conversely, it has also been found that economic well being facilitates this process of schooling.

In order to understand the exact role played by the economic factors in determining access and retention of rural children in schools, we examine the relevant surveys and empirical studies. After briefly discussing the role of economic indicators in facilitating schooling, a detailed examination of how poverty has been impeding the schooling process is undertaken by examining the interface between poverty, child labour and schooling.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS FACILITATING ENROLMENT AND RETENTION IN SCHOOL

Available evidence from studies and statistics reveals that the large majority of in–school children come from economically better off households. The following are some of the economic indicators positively associated with schooling:

□ Percapita Income

The income group a family belongs to co-relates with enrolment. Enrolment and participation rates are lower for low-income families, while greater household wealth enhances school participation of both boys and girls.

Based on the NFHS I data, Filmer and Pritchett showed that there is a strong wealth effect on the probability of enrolment. All else being equal, a child from a household from the highest quintile is 31 percentage points more likely to be in school than a child from a poor quintile *(Filmer & Pritchett 1999)*.

Dreze and Kingdon (2001) as well as Sipahimalani (1996) point out that household wealth significantly enhances school enrolment and participation of girls in particular. They also suggest that poorer households allocate limited finances for the education of boys. Other studies also confirm this finding *(Jha and Jhingran 2002; Filmer & Pritchett 1999; Duraiswamy 1998; Visaria and Visaria 1993; Reddy. Shiva et al 1992; Tilak 2002)*.

□ Land Owning Patterns and Enrolment

Land owning status, which is the main determinant of economic position in rural areas, exerts a great influence on enrolment as can be seen by higher enrolments among families with larger land holdings. Children of families with small / marginal land holdings face a problem, as their children are often withdrawn to work on land *(Reddy Shiva et al 1992)*. Jeemol Unni points out that as the size of cultivated land increases, the proportion of girls attending school increases *(Unni 1996)*. Similar findings are reported in other studies also *(Visaria and Viasria 1993; Jha and Jhingran 2002; Dreze and Saran 1993; Kanbargi and Kulkarni 1984; Bashir quoted in Bhatty 1998; Ramachandran Vimala 2002; Reddy Shiva et al 1992)*.

□ Nature of Occupation

The main occupation of households in rural India also affects school participation of children. Studies show that non-agricultural households have a greater chance of children attending school compared to agricultural families. Within agricultural groups, the children of labourers are least likely to get enrolled and studies have found a high degree of illiteracy amongst them. Shiva Reddy's study of Andhra Pradesh finds that, a village where the majority of population depends on non-agriculture for their livelihood was one of the best enrolled villages at all levels of education *(Reddy Shiva et al 1992)*. The study conducted by Pandey and Talwar on educational attainment of children in Uttar Pradesh, shows that the occupation of the father is closely associated with child's literacy status. It was found that fathers working as agricultural labourers have the largest percentage of illiterate children while fathers in service had the

lowest. Also, children of agricultural labourers often had to discontinue schooling to engage in some job for improving the economic status of the family *(Pandey and Talwar 1980)*. Similar findings are reported from Nayan Tara (1985), Seetharamu and Usha Devi (1985), Ramachandran Vimala (2002), Jha and Jhingran (2002) and Vaidyanathan and Nair (2001).

- **Adult Women's Work Force Participation**

Studies have found a positive association between adult female work force participation and school attendance of both male and female children, showing the crucial role played by women in educating their children. Working increases their decision-making role in the household *(Jayachandran Usha)*.

- **Parental Motivation for Son's Education**

A wealth of evidence is available from literature on primary education, to show that an overwhelming majority of parents attach great importance to the education of their children. However, this educational motivation is highly gender-specific. While the parental motivation for the son's education is high amongst all social groups, a commitment to female education is still rather inadequate.

This differential motivation is a result of the differences in the perceived benefits from the education of boys versus girls. The overwhelming reason for the high parental interest in sons' education, as brought out by various studies, is 'economic'. This refers to the economic returns accruing to the family, from the employment the son may get. Moreover, educating sons is also important for providing parents with financial assistance and security in their old age. Caldwell et al, in their study of rural Karnataka, show how at the end of elementary school, if the son does well and shows scholastic interest, the family considers educating him further, anticipating substantial returns to their investment *(Caldwell et al 1985)*. Indian families prefer to invest in the son's education since returns of this investment remain within the family. In contrast, returns of the investment in daughter's education typically flow into her husband's family *(Dreze and Saran 1993; World Bank Report 1997)*. This predominantly economic reasoning for educating sons leads to prioritizing boy's education over that of the girl's, since he is regarded as the potential breadwinner for the family. This is brought out by a number of studies *(Kaul 2001, World Bank Report 1997; Jejeebhoy 1993)*.

Apart from the economic benefits, parents also realize the social benefits of educating the son, leading to improvement in one's social status and increasing his own confidence and self esteem, apart from providing the family with avenues for social mobility *(Caldwell et al 1985; Probe Report 1999; Bhatty 1998)*.

Thus, the crux of high parental motivation in favour of sons appears to be because the son is regarded as an 'asset', while the girl a 'liability' *(Probe Report 1999; Caldwell et al 1985; Bhatty 1998; Dreze 2003; Kaul 2001; Sipahimalani 1996; Sinha Amarjeet 1998)*. The issue of parental disinterest in girls' education will be dealt with in more detail, separately.

Analysing the economic returns to elementary education, the Probe Report, quoting from a number of studies in India, found that the earnings of adults with primary education were twice as high compared to illiterates. Compared to mere literacy, primary education enhanced a person's earning by 20% *(Probe Report 1999)*.

ECONOMIC FACTORS IMPEDING PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTAINMENT

This section tries to examine, in detail, the whole debate regarding the manner in which poverty acts as a constraint on the schooling of children in rural India. While examining this relationship between poverty and schooling, a few facts must be borne in mind before we proceed further.

While traditionally it had been assumed that poverty hindered enrolment and completion of primary schooling by children, recent research, based on surveys and studies shows a positive trend of high enrolments even among the poorer sections in rural India. Regular attendance and completion of primary schooling, however, still remain as issues.

The fact that poverty is a hindrance to schooling should not be looked at in absolute terms. Inter-regional variations in educational achievements between UP and Kerala, for instance, show that while both the states had an average of 45% people below the poverty line, Kerala had a literacy rate of 90%, while UP's literacy rate was only 40.5% *(Bhatty 1998)*.

Other empirical studies also show that among the very poor landless labourers, in poor economic conditions, parents send their children to school more easily, as they are not needed for productive work on the farm. Narayan (1984) found that a harijan village in Tamil Nadu, with abject poverty, had a literacy rate of above 99% for males and females *(quoted in Bhatty 1998).*

These instances and exceptions go to show that the relation between poverty and schooling must be seen in the proper context and not in isolation.

In general, however, poorer sections of society are to be found with poor educational levels. In order to assess the extent to which poverty acts as a decisive constraint on schooling decisions, we take a closer look at the evidence from the field, emanating from the all India surveys as well as empirical studies.

According to the 55th Round of the National Sample Survey, official estimates put the percentage of those below the poverty line, in the all India rural context, at 26.3% in 1999-2000 *(Deaton and Dreze 2002)*.

Poverty leads to educational deprivation, because children, from poorer households, find it difficult to access school, attend it regularly, and continue and learn for a sustained period of time. This happens due to two reasons:

- Children are engaged in domestic or productive work in the household or family farm thereby contributing economically. Thus, the poor families cannot spare their services.
- The direct costs of education are unaffordable for poor families.

Thus, poor children are educationally disadvantaged compared to the children of the wealthier households. The validity of these arguments will be examined in the ensuing discussion.

The fact that poverty leads to educational deprivation is supported by large-scale survey-based statistics as may be seen in table 14.

In a study of 15 states conducted by NCAER in 1994, it was found that the children of poor families are less likely to be enrolled in schools than children of better-off families. It showed that the ever enrolment rates in the lowest annual income households was, on an average, 25 percentage points lower than the rates for the highest income households.

Table 14:Ever Enrolment Rates (%) for States

State	Ever- Enrolment Rates (%) for Household Income Groups (Rs. Per year).			
	Up to 20, 000	**20,001-40,000**	**40,001-62,000**	**Above 62,000**
Haryana	69.2	78.5	86.2	86.4
Himachal Pradesh	90.6	96.0	94.7	90.1
Punjab	83.3	85.8	88.9	96.4
Bihar	49.8	66.5	70.9	83.6
Uttar Pradesh	54.7	67.7	75.5	85.3
Madhya Pradesh	54.6	67.7	73.2	79.4
Orissa	65.2	81.6	83.9	90.7
Rajasthan	53.9	61.9	75.4	79.2
North-eastern Rg.	78.3	80.1	90.1	84.5
West Bengal	59.9	77.1	80.0	92.5
Gujarat	74.0	89.1	82.8	91.5
Maharashtra	82.8	84.8	90.9	76.5
Andhra Pradesh	77.4	77.9	88.5	98.8
Karnataka	75.9	79.7	82.0	81.1
Kerala	98.6	98.7	97.9	98.9
Tamil Nadu	86.0	89.0	93.4	94.7
All India	**65.3**	**75.1**	**80.9**	**86.9**

Source: *Jha and Jhingran (2002) from India Human Development Report NCAER 1999.*

Table 15: Age-specific Ever-Enrolment and Discontinuation Rates

Population groups (household annual income group)	Ever Enrolment Rates (%)			Discontinuation Rates (%)		
	6-9 yrs	**11-14 yrs**	**6-14 yrs**	**6-9 yrs**	**11-14 yrs**	**6-14 yrs**
Up to Rs. 20,000	63.4	69.5	65.3	2.9	15.8	7.2
Above Rs. 86,000	87.4	93.1	89.3	1.0	7.1	3.2

Source*: Jha and Jhingran (2002) from India Human Development Report NCAER 1999.*

The disadvantage of being poor is more pronounced in the higher age group, with discontinuation rates being higher for children in the 11-14 age group in low-income households, compared to those in high income households.

The survey also shows that states or regions, which are poorer, have larger number of out-of-school children, such as Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh. Moreover, the disparity in enrolment rates between high and low-income groups is wider in states with poor enrolment rates and with greater number of poor. States like Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, have lower enrolment in the last two income categories (see Table 14), while states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra show the difference in enrolment rates across different income groups *(Jha and Jhingran 2002)*.

Discontinuation rates for the poorest children are also two times higher than for children from the higher income households. The World Bank report on primary education, quoting NCAER household survey data of 1992-93, states that, the drop out rate for poorer children, from families with below Rs. 3000 per capita income, was on an average four times higher than for the children of richer households with above Rs. 10,000 per capita income *(World Bank Report 1997)*.

Apart from class distinctions, it has also been found that, caste, tribe and gender gaps in school participation of children are also exacerbated by poverty.

In the highly stratified rural Indian context, the poorer sections are also those which form the bulk of the lower castes, such as the SCs and STs. Social exclusion and discrimination, together with landlessness and poverty, combine to keep them out of the sphere of education. The World Bank Report on Primary Education also finds that the effect of income on schooling of girls was more pronounced in the lowest income quintile *(World Bank Report 1997)*.

As a result of this economic deprivation, suffered by a majority of households in rural India, an estimated 100 million children are currently out of school. Vimala Ramachandran estimates that approximately 70% of out of school children in our country are girls *(Ramachandran Vimala)*. Quoting the NSSO survey, Vasavi and Mehendale (2003) find the proportion of out of school children to be greater in rural areas (by about 30%) and higher in the age group of 5-9 years *(Vasavi and Mehendale 2003)*. The growing number of out-of-school children calls for a closer examination of the causes of such educational deprivation.

The Context of Out of School Children in Relation to Poverty and Child Work

Typically, the phenomenon of out of school children is linked to two factors - poverty and child labour. In the rural context, these out-of-school children comprise those who are never enrolled, the nominally enrolled with irregular attendance and those who joined but discontinued or dropped out.

In rural India, poverty is essentially linked to the nature of agriculture, which is the main source of livelihood for people and is often subsistence based. Being rain dependent it is characterized by low productivity and uncertainty of returns. Land distribution is unequal, with concentration in the hands of a few. Majority of the people possess small and marginal land holdings, while others are the landless labourers. There is also absence or inadequate livestock holdings and a high dependence on wage work. *(Jha and Jhingran 2002; Subramanian 1999; Vasavi and Mehendale 2003)*.

Studies show how the context of poverty and deprivation in poor households is characterized by, amongst other things, instability, uncertainity, indebtedness, food insecurity, short term survival strategies, engagement of children in work and illiteracy in the family *(Jha and Jhingran 2002; Subramanian 1999)*.

Such a set of economic conditions significantly affects the lives of children in rural India. Jha and Jhingran point out that since hiring labour for agricultural activities proves uneconomical for families with small land holdings, family labour is utilized. Children in poor families are thus engaged in a variety of economic activities for their family - domestic chores, sibling care, cattle grazing, farm work etc (Jha and Jhingran 2002). The implication of this is that they are unable to attend full time school regularly.

Economic Role of Children in the Rural Family

At this juncture, it is necessary to state, as sociologists point out, that the economic participation of children in the rural Indian family has been a part of the ancient Indian culture and tradition *(Dube 1981)*. Among the agriculturists, who, then as also now, formed the majority of our population, children were given specific tasks such as keeping a watch on crops, while older children helped out in looking after younger siblings. Children of artisans and craftsmen learnt the skill of the craft through training imparted by family members. Leela Dube, quoting from mythology, gives the example of Krishna, who as a boy became a cowherd like all other boys of his age, going out to graze cattle in the vicinity of his village.

The author states that children were entrusted with work that was time consuming but not arduous. It kept them occupied, allowing elders to pursue heavier labour and complex skills. It is significant that children's work was not disassociated form play and education. "From their early years, children started learning to be, and then functioning as, participants in and productive members of the family and community" *(Dube 1981)*.

While child work may be an important cause, it may not be the only reason why children remain out of school. It would hence be useful at this juncture, to understand, in its entirety, the reasons why children have remained and continue to remain out of school in rural India. This is attempted in two parts - based on the findings of various empirical studies and based on an analysis of the important national surveys.

Why are Children out of School? What Empirical Studies Show

Children seldom remain out of school for only one reason and generally a combination of factors operate in keeping them out. There exists a vast array of empirical studies, which deal with the economic causes of educational deprivation among children. These reveal that poverty is known to constrain the schooling of children in two ways. Different aspects of these two sets of reasons will be examined in detail.

- Poor families depend on children for their survival and hence the opportunity costs of schooling a child are high. 'Opportunity costs' refer to the 'value' of the time in terms of economic benefit that is lost when children have to forgo labour and attend school.
- Poverty makes it difficult for families to bear the direct costs of schooling a child. Direct costs refer to the actual amount of money to be spent by families on primary education.

□ Opportunity costs of child's time

According to the data from the 1991 census, of the 203 million children in the 6-14 age group, there exist about 110 million children who are considered out of school. Data on labour force participation from 1991 census puts the number of working children as 11.28 million. The number of out of school children is how ever far in excess of the number of working children. This is because the census recognizes only full time work with wages as labour. Researchers are now asking questions about the nearly 100 million children (of whom nearly 60% are girls) who are out of school but not counted as child labourers *(Burra 2001)*. This vast majority of unaccounted children appear to be engaged in family labour assisting in domestic work at home or in the farm without wages.

For such part time child workers, engaged in family labour, work may still not be compatible with schooling *(Probe Report 1999)*. Thus, even though high enrolments are being reported among the poor, regular attendance and completion of primary schooling still remains an issue. Studies reveal that even though children are willingly sent to school in the initial years, they gradually drop out, or are withdrawn, as they grow older. They become valuable assets at home, freeing adults to got to work, assisting on the family farm, or less often working as wage labourers *(Jha and Jhingran 2002; Caldwell et al 1985; Ramachandran et al 2003; NSSO 93-94)*.

In order to comprehend this argument in entirety, we discuss at first the various aspects of the opportunity costs of a child time, such as gender, age, seasonality etc. after which the counter views borne out by recent research will be examined.

- ***Gender***

A number of empirical studies show that the multitude of tasks out of school children are engaged in, is governed by the division of labour. Engagement in working for their own household is more common for children, than working for wages.

Studies reveal that, in the Indian context, girl children begin to work in the household from a very early age. Girl children are mainly engaged in domestic / household activities such as cooking, cleaning, fetching water and fuel wood, looking after old and sick family members and more importantly taking care of younger siblings.

Almost all the studies recognize the role of the girl child as invisible child labour at home. S. Ananda Lakshmy notes that irrespective of economic status, the female child's role in household work and cooking is constant *(Ananda Lakshmy in Karlekar 2000)*. Studies show that girls spend twice or even sometimes thrice as much time working than boys, mostly on domestic duties. Some studies reveal that the birth order determines the educational chances of the girl child. The eldest daughter is often the biggest loser, as she has to take over the responsibility of household work. By doing so, young girls release their mothers for work and hence this activity is an economic contribution to the household, also enables her brothers to attend school *(Chanana 1990; Jejebhoy 1996; Ramachandran et al 2003; Nayar 1993; Burra 2001; Nayar and Nayar 1995).*

These rigid household duties are performed by girls all the year around and may not be easily reconciled with schooling. Hence, opportunity costs of the girl child's time are high and she is educationally disadvantaged compared to the boys.

Boys on the other hand are engaged in activities outside the home, such as cattle grazing, care of goats and cattle, agricultural activities on their own family farm (which could be seasonal), forest produce collection and occasionally, agricultural or other wage work, to supplement to the family income.

(Jha and Jhingran 2002, Vasavi and Mehandale 2003; Ramachandran et al 2003; NSSO 50th Round 1994; Jaychandran; Probe Report 1999; World Bank 1997; Jejeebhoy 1996; Nayar 1993; Kaul 2001; NSSO 50th Round 1994; Seetharamu and Usha Devi 1985; Unni 1996; Kanbargi and Kulkarni 1991; Sumi Krishna 1996; and Shariff 1991; Burra 2001).

- ***Age***

Empirical studies also show that the nature of work done by children differs according to age. The pattern of children's work, across the study villages in Jha and Jhingran's study was as follows:

While, the younger boys (6-9 years) are utilized for cattle grazing and collecting forest produce, the older boys (9-13 years) are utilized for seasonal work on their own farm, or for agricultural wage work. Younger girls (6-9 years) were involved in sibling care and household work and in forest produce collection and older girls (9-13 years) also worked on the family farm and were involved in agricultural farm work with their mothers *(Jha and Jhingran 2002)*.

Findings from Kanbargi's study demonstrate that children performed a variety of activities useful to the family from a very young age. However, the demand on their time becomes stronger as children grow older and are capable of more productive work. While younger boys tended livestock, the older boys between 12-14 years, working for wages was more common *(Kanbargi and Kulkarni 1991)*.

Vimala Ramachandran's study of the three states of U.P, A.P, and Karnataka finds that socio-economic participation of children in household activities seemed to be far ahead of age expectations. She found even very young children in the age group of 3-6 years taking on the responsibility for a range of sibling care / household and farm activities *(Ramachandran et al 2003)*.

- ***Seasonality***

A feature of farming on small land holdings is that it becomes uneconomical to hire paid labour, and hence most families perform all agricultural operations themselves. At the time of sowing / harvesting, all members including the children are engaged. Studies show that in many families there is a high dependence on full time child work during peak agricultural activity, such as sowing and harvesting, during which time children are withdrawn from school. Many authors thus recommend flexibility in school calendar and timings so that these don't clash with the agricultural activity in rural areas *(Probe Report 1999; Shariff 1991; Sen 1971; Jha and Jhingran 2002)*.

- ***Supply of Family labour***

Certain studies have found that certain changes in the composition of the family labour causes children to be withdrawn from school and they are discontinued till the supply of family labour force becomes adequate. Caldwell et al's study of rural Karnataka shows how young girls may be withdrawn as elder sisters are married, grandparents are disabled or mothers become pregnant. Young boys may end schooling as an elder brother goes to town to seek work *(Caldwell et al 1985)*.

The 50th Round of the NSSO survey also found that about 18 to 20 % of working children in rural areas reported 'Shortage of labour' in household enterprise as reason for their working *(NSSO 1997)*.

- ***Economic Uncertainty***

Lastly, studies have highlighted that though families may have a high interest in education, they may not be able to translate the same into action because of the context these poor families find themselves in *(Dreze 2003; Subramanian (1999), Jha and Jhingran 2002).*

Ramya Subramanian's study of primary education in Raichur district of Karnataka finds that, the area, being rainfed and under developed, is characterized by economic uncertainty and instability. This often forces families to opt for short-term survival strategies to supplement to family income, and creates ambivalence in their minds in committing children to full time schooling. This economic participation by children led to highly irregular school attendance. Their economic situation has thus prevented their high interest in education from being translated into an education investment strategy. Moreover, since parents are unsure about the long-term returns to education, divorcing the children from work appears a risky proposition. More importantly, children are in fact often encouraged by parents to work, as they feel that full time education may prevent them from forming networks with employers, which are necessary for gaining employment in the future. The author states "It was clear from my research that

there is a persistent exclusion of children from particular livelihood / caste groups for whom forcing a choice between work and formal schooling often led to a default choice in favour of work". *(Subramanian 1999)*.

◻ Opportunity Costs of Time - The Counter View

While it has been well established that children in India are working on a large scale, in the household, or on the family farm, what is not so well established by research, however, is how many children are working, how much time is spent on that work and how much is the income, thus earned or saved (by allowing parents to earn). Moreover, as discussed above, this form of child work is part time activity and hence the scope of adjustment to school hours is a feasible option. Thus, the direct causal link between child labour and non-attendance is now being questioned by recent research.

- ***Time Utilization of Children***

In order to assess whether opportunity costs of children's time do in fact forbid schooling, studies now question the actual time being spent by such children (boys and girls separately) on household duties or paid work.

In a study of rural Karnataka, Kanbargi and Kulkarni found that the total number of hours spent on all work (household and productive) ranged from 4 hours in the 5-7 years age group to about 7 hours in the 12-14 years age group for boys. Girls worked for long hours in both the age groups, with those in the 12 –14 age group spending about 8 hours a day in household and productive work *(Kanbargi Kulkarni, 1991)*. Ananda Lakshmy (1994) from the 'Girl Child and Family Studies' found a large proportion of girls engaged in agriculture and related activities. While 1/3rd of the girls worked for 6-8 hours a day – more than an average school day, about 41% said they worked on all seven days of the week *(Ananda Lakshmy 1994 in Karlekar, 2000)*.

Karbargi's study also shows that while the magnitude of child work in terms of time spent may be substantial, their contribution to the family income is not so substantial *(Kanbargi and Kulkarni, 1991)*.

B.M. Dinesh's study of three villages in rural Karnataka found an average of 3 1/2 hours a day being spent by children on household activities *(quoted in Bhatty 1998).*

Sajitha Bashir's study of schooling in Tamil Nadu found that unpaid household work took up about 1-2 hours a day for children. Also, in rural areas, girls spent on an average twice as much time as boys on domestic duties. According to Jejeebhoy and S. Kulkarni, the number of person days of work put in by the average child in a year, was 19 days for boys and 34 for girls. This increased to 60 days for boys and 105 days for girls, for the older age group *(quoted in Bhatty 1998)*.

Data on time utilization of out of school children from the Probe Survey Households finds that working hours of young children were relatively short. Boys aged 6-12 years worked for around 4 hours a day, while out-of-school girls spent about 5 hours a day, working on an average *(Probe Report 1999)*.

Other studies by Arup Maharatna (West Bengal), Srivatsava (U.P.) and Jemol Unni (Gujarat), all show that children's involvement in work becomes more significant for older children (10-14 age group) and for girls who are generally involved in domestic work (quoted in Bhatty 1998).

From the results of the research done, we can safely conclude that the time spent by small children on household work is negligible and increases only as they grow older and become capable of more productive work. Thus, opportunity costs are not relevant for smaller children, and become high only after the primary school stage. From this, it appears that the clash between family labour and schooling is not inevitable, and it is possible for children to attend school, with some amount of regularity, given the fact that school hours are relatively short in rural India (Probe 1999).

In order to totally negate the 'opportunity costs of time' argument, more evidence is needed on the amount of income being earned or saved by the household as a result of child work either *per se* or by freeing parents to pursue other economic activities. Unfortunately, there is a paucity of research in this area.

- ***Child labour, Poverty, Land ownership***

A number of studies go to show that there is a positive link between child labour and land ownership. Studies by Kanbargi and Kulkarni (1991) and Sajitha Bashir (1994) highlight the relation between agriculture and its demand for child labour, which varies between land owning and landless families. Children are more likely to be employed as family help and in productive work in households that own land, cattle or other productive assets. Among the landless, on the other hand, not having cattle or land greatly reduces demand for children in productive work. Hence, children of landless labourers are freed from labour on the farm, and thus can attend school *(Bhatty 1998; Reddy and Reddy 1992; Kanbargi and Kulkarni 1991) (S. Bashir 1994; Majumdar 1997; Sinha and Sinha 1995 as quoted in Bhatty 1998).*

- ***Child labour as default activity***

Recent research on time utilization of children reveals that not only is the time spent by them on household activities small, in fact their contribution to the family income is not so substantial, thus implying that working may not be a financial imperative and that the drop out children may be put to work by parents as a 'default option'. The reasons for dropping out of school may be totally unconnected to the opportunity for work, as the studies show. Nidhi Mehrotra's (1995) study of Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh finds the phenomenon of parents using labour of children, 'expost' dropping out of school *(quoted in Bhatty 1998).*

Pandey and Talwar's (1990) study of UP, found that out of the children not going to school, 80% were non workers *(quoted in Kiran Bhatty 1998)*. Kiran Kapadia (1997) observed that in rural Tamil Nadu, children, were are put to work by parents to keep them out of trouble once they had dropped out of the school *(quoted in Dreze 2003)*. Dissatisfaction with the school may cause children to drop out after which they may enter the labour force *(Lieten 2000, Tilak 2002; quoted in Vasavi and Mehendale 2003)*. Choudhri highlights the role of 'nowhere children' who do nothing or perform household work, as forming a potential pool from which child labor is drawn *(quoted in Vasavi and Mehendale 2003).*

This research thus points to the fact that child labour need not cause educational deprivation, and that very often the direction of causation may be the other way round.

- ***Child labour and the Drop out Phenomenon***

Research studies on the drop out phenomenon among school going children throw light on the relationship between child labour and non-attendance.

Most studies reveal that drop out takes place during the early stages of schooling being heavily concentrated in grades 1 and 2. Seetharamu and Usha Devi found that 35% of children in Karnataka dropped out in grades 1 and 2 *(Seetharamu and Usha devi 1985).* Nayan Tara also reports drop out rate of 31% in grade 1 *(Nayan Tara 1985)*. These studies thus go to show that drop out of children is at younger ages, when child labour is relatively unimportant and hence non attendance could be due to reasons other than opportunity costs of children's time.

- ***Substitution of Child Work by other Members***

There is evidence in empirical studies to support the argument that much of household work done by children can be taken up by adults, implying a degree of substitutabily between different family members. Arup Maharatna's study indicated a surplus of labour hours for adults during the slack period in agricultural activity, indicating the possibility that adults can do a large part of the work that children do *(Maharatna quoted in Bhatty 1998)*.

The above empirical evidence brings out the complex interconnection between poverty, child labour and schooling. The opportunity costs of time argument as a reason for the non-attendance of school children has been contested and disproved by various studies. However all studies do recognize that opportunity costs do play a decisive role in the schooling of girls, when compared to boys.

□ Direct costs of schooling

The direct costs of schooling which refer to the actual amount of money to be spent by poor families on primary education has been found to be another obstacle to primary schooling, causing both non enrolment as well as withdrawal of children from school.

It is widely believed that since government schools do not charge tuition fees, elementary education at the primary level is free in India. However, there is evidence to suggest that elementary education is actually quite expensive in government schools, since it involves expenditure by parents on various items such as note books, stationery, uniforms, tuitions, and cash payments like exam fees, sports fee etc which can all add up to a substantial amount.

According to Dreze, "a more pertinent interpretation is that elementary education should not involve any expenditure for the parent". In that broader sense, elementary education in India is far from free" *(Dreze 2003; page 980)*.

- ***Actual Costs of Education***

The actual annual costs involved in sending a child to school have been brought out by different studies. The Probe Survey calculates the North Indian parents spending about Rs.318 per year, on fees, books, states, clothes etc, on an average, in a government primary school (see table 16). Dreze, quoting a recent survey, finds that sending a child to a government primary school in a rural North India costs around Rs.360 on an average at 1996 prices *(Dreze 2003)*.

A study by N. Mehrotra (1995) of three states of Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala, highlights the role of direct costs as a cause of non enrolment where the author states that it is the "inability to meet direct costs (which include fees, costs of textbooks and other writing materials) which compels parents to withdraw children from school" *(Mehrotra quoted in Bhatty 1998; page 1735)*. Almost all schools in her sample charged fees in some form or the other.

Sinha and Sinha's field investigation of primary schooling in North India found annual costs of educating a child to be anywhere between Rs.90 and 380 *(Sinha, Amrajeet, 1998)*. Jha and Jhingran estimate the hidden costs at Rs. 170 per annum. Rekha Kaul's study of 93 schools across Karnataka found that, despite claims to the contrary, primary education was not free even in government rural schools. Other than tuition fees, parents spent on stationery, transport, school bags, uniforms etc. Her study showed that on average poor parents in rural areas spent Rs.600 to Rs.800 per child, per annum *(Kaul 2001)*.

JBG Tilak's article based on 42nd Round of National Sample Survey Organisation on household expenditure on education concludes that only less than half the students in government schools in rural India received free primary education *(Tilak 1996)*.

Panchmukhi's study, which is based on primary data of three major states in India i.e. Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, found that tuition fees per student, per year in government schools for elementary education amounted to Rs.32.12 in Karnataka; Rs.59.71 in Maharashtra and Rs.243.64 in Rajasthan. In addition, students spent on private coaching, stationery, transport and other items, which was a sizeable amount (*Panchamukhi 1990 in Tilak 1996).*

From a more recent study conducted by NCAER (1994) of 15 major states in India, Tilak found that households incur huge expenses on elementary education in all states, in rural and urban areas, on girls' and boys' education. Unfortunately the results do not distinguish between government and private schools (Tilak 1996).

Table 16: Average Cost of Sending a Child to School(Rs./year at constant 1996-97 prices)

Primary Level	Rs.
• NSS estimate, 1986-7*	212
• Probe estimate, 1996	318
Elementary Level	
• **NCAER estimate, 1994**	478

(Excluding clothing expenses)
Source: *Probe Report 1999*

While on the face of it such direct costs of schooling appear negligible, they can become a major burden on poor families with several school going children. Thus, as the Probe Report points out, an agricultural labourer's family in Bihar, with three children, would have to spend more than a month's earnings to keep them in primary school *[Probe Report 1999].*

A few interesting findings have also emerged from the empirical studies. Debi's (1997) study of Orissa, and Vimala Ramachandran's study of three States point out to the emergence of private tuitions, for primary level children in Karnataka, which greatly increase the household's expenditure on schooling. V. Ramachandran shows that private tuitions in Karnataka costed Rs.30/- a month. Parents believed that children learn and cope better with their studies, by attending tuitions, and make up for the teacher absenteeism and negligent teaching which are practically a feature of government schools *(Debi quoted in Bhatty 1998; Ramachandran et al 2003)*.

Another new phenomenon brought out by Vimala Ramachandran's study was the trend of compelling children to buy guide books. Her study in Uttar Pradesh found that the provision of free textbooks was of little consequence because most children purchased 'guide books' right from class I. While parents stated that it was at the teacher's insistence, teachers said that the parents bought them voluntarily *(Ramachandran et al 2003).*

- ***Incentive Programmes of the government to reduce direct costs***

It is well known that governments have initiated several incentive schemes such as the provision of free textbooks and uniforms, awarding scholarships to SC/ST students, and the introduction of the mid-day meal scheme in various states to enable children from deprived families to attend school. Studies reveal that while some schemes

have successfully increased enrolments, the benefits of other schemes have yet to reach the beneficiaries. Sajitha Bashir's study of rural Tamil Nadu found that free text books provided by the government remained at block headquarters, and were not collected from there. Majumdar (1997) also found that in Tamil Nadu, where free uniforms are supplied to government schools, these did not reach the beneficiaries on time, often forcing parents to spend out of their pockets for this purpose *(Majumdar 1997; Sajitha Bashir 1994 quoted in Bhatty 1998)*. In Vimala Ramachandran's research area, while there was no delay in distribution of textbooks, the distribution of scholarships and uniforms left little to be desired. The research found that in Uttar Pradesh, teachers in government schools were collecting Rs.5 to 10 during national festivals for issuing Transfer Certificates or releasing scholarship money *(Ramachandran et al 2003)*.

There also exist large inter state variations in the implementation of incentive schemes. Tilak notes that material incentives were restricted to a few, in some states. While 70% of students in rural Tamil Nadu and Karnataka received textbooks, in eight out of sixteen states, text books/ stationary were provided to less than 7% of the students (Tilak, 1996). While major initiatives like the school meal programme have taken off in States like Kerala and Tamil Nadu, in other states, the general pattern is one of haphazard interventions *(Probe Report 1999)*.

On the other hand, certain other incentive programmes have been a huge success. The impact of the mid - day meal schemes, all over the country, have been widely acknowledged by almost all the studies. SC Babu and A. Hallam's (1989) study of Tamil Nadu shows how the nutrition programme resulted in a significant increase in enrolment and continuation beyond primary level *(quoted in Bhatty 1998)*. Vimala Ramachandran (2003) reports that the mid-day meals scheme introduced in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have been a huge success. Jean Dreze's recent study on the future of mid day meals, based on a survey of 81 villages in Rajasthan, Chattisgarh and North Karnataka, shows the resounding success of the programme in increasing pupil enrolments in Class I. This was twice as much for girls as compared to boys *(Amarjeet Sinha 2003)*.

Studies and surveys have thus proved that there do exist 'cash costs of schooling children', even in government primary schools, in the form of stationary, guide books, private coaching and also for text books and uniforms; clothes, travel and other expenditure. This imposes an economic burden on poor families who cannot bear these extra costs on a consistent basis. Rekha Kaul's study of Karnataka points out that this inability often leads to an uncertainty in the minds of students regarding their continuance, which in turn leads to lower aspirations amongst them *(Kaul 2001).*

- ***Strategies to meet direct costs***

Since schooling is thus found to be expensive, many families tend to adopt strategies to divide their limited resources amongst a large number of children. Vimala Ramachandran shows how poverty influences parental choice of how many children go to school and up to what level. The same household may send a few and retain the others at home *(Ramachandran et al 2003)*.

Other studies show that families allocate their limited finances for the education of boys at the cost of girls *(Tilak 1996; Jejeebhoy 1993; Sipahimalani 1996; Sinha, Amarjeet 1998; Ramachandran Vimala 2002).*

Jejeebhoy's study of rural Maharashtra shows how parents allocate resources disproportionately among sons, especially eldest sons, rather than equally among all children, irrespective of sex. Girls are withdrawn from school, to take over additional work responsibilities both at home and on the farm thereby freeing her brothers from work responsibilities and enhancing chances of his educational attainment *(Jejeebhoy 1993)*.

Tilak shows how gender disparities exist in household expenditure on education. The NCAER data revealed that households tend to spend less on the education of girls than on boys, which is true for all income levels and areas *(Tilak 1996)*.

Since education in reality is not really free, this has implications for girls' participation in schooling. Gender is a determining factor in parental decision-making and researchers have noted that parents discriminate between girls and boys in the choice of schools. Despite the rapid growth of private unaided schools, the proportion of girls in government schools is higher. Many villagers report that girls are sent to government schools because they are entitled to various types of incentives *(Aggarwal 2000 in Ramachandran Vimala 2002)*. These gender disparities in education are primarily a result of the gender bias in the mind-set of parents, emanating from the socio cultural values and attitudes regarding gender roles and responsibilities, which will be examined in detail in the following chapter.

From the detailed evidence gathered from empirical research, it can be conclusively stated that poverty has affected the schooling of children, in that, the opportunity costs of educating girls are perceived to be higher, relative to male children. Together with the direct costs of schooling, poverty does play a discouraging role in

primary schooling of children. However, a better performance of incentive programmes, by the government can go a long way in reducing or eliminating the direct costs of schooling for the poor.

Why are Children Out of School? What the Surveys Reveal

Apart form empirical studies, a number of surveys have also been conducted by the NSSO as well as NFHS to collect information on reasons for non-attendance in school by children. Data from these surveys is presented in table 17 and 18.

Data from NFHS 2 shows that for both boys and girls, the cost of schooling is cited most often as the main reason for never attending school. For nearly 50% of boys from both rural and urban areas, high cost as well as a lack of interest in studies were predominant reasons for never having attended school.

Table 17: Children aged 6 – 17 years, Reasons for never attending or dropping out of school, NFHS II, 1998-99

Reasons	Males		Females	
	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural
Never attended school:				
%	6.4	13.6	9.0	25.7
School far away	1.5	4.4	3.4	5.2
Education not necessary	6.1	7.8	12.9	13.1
Required for work at home or outside for cash / kind	12.6	17.1	15.4	24.5
Costs too much	28.5	25.8	30.1	23.8
Not interested in studies	26.5	25.7	15.7	15.9
Other	26.5	17.0	19.7	15.4
Don't know	3.0	2.0	2.8	2.1
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
Dropped out of school				
%	10.6	10.6	11.0	12.6
School far away	0.3	1.4	1.2	7.5
Education not necessary	2.4	2.3	5.4	4.3
Required for work at home or outside for cash / kind	21.9	28.4	20.8	26.2
Costs too much	15.2	13.3	17.0	11.4
Not interested in studies	42.5	40.0	30.2	24.8
Repeated failures	6.0	5.3	6.1	3.7
Other *	5.9	5.5	14.3	18.2
Don't know	5.7	3.8	5.1	4.0
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

** In the case of girls, this category also includes reasons such as lack of proper school facilities for girls and marriage, among those who dropped out.*

Source: NFHS II

For girls on the other hand, along with costs of education, their contribution to household work were given as reasons for non enrolment. For nearly 13% of the girls form rural areas, education was perceived as unnecessary.

For children dropping out of school, the major reasons appeared to be a lack of interest in studies in the case of nearly 40% of the boys and 25% of the girls. Another major reason was that boys and girls were needed for work both inside and outside the home.

Thus, the three prominent reasons that emerged from the survey for non-attendance by children were **1)** high schooling costs, referring to hidden costs of books, stationary and clothes; **2)** Lack of interest in studies which could stem from a number of reasons, from an inconducive home environment to a poor quality schooling system; and **3)** As far as work is concerned, it could be possible that children are withdrawn because they are needed to contribute to the household income. Equally possible could be the fact that they are engaged in household activity, after dropping out *(Ramachandran, Vimala, 2002).*

Table 18

Why do children in Rural Areas Never Enroll in Schools? (Percent)			
Reasons for Never Enrolment	**1986 –1987**		
	Males	**Females**	**All**
1.Too young to go to school	5.70	3.88	4.61
2. Schooling facilities not available	9.94	10.46	10.25
3. Not interested in education	25.18	32.32	29.46
4. For participation in household economic activities	18.87	9.04	12.98
5. For other economic reasons	31.12	23.56	26.59
6. Busy in attending domestic chores	1.27	9.87	6.42
7. Others	7.92	10.88	9.69
	1995 – 96		
1. No tradition in the family	1.50	5.40	3.90
2. Child not interested in studies	20.50	15.10	17.30
3. Parents not interested in studies	27.80	35.60	32.60
4. Education not considered useful	2.70	2.90	2.80
5. Schooling facilities are not available conveniently	2.00	2.30	2.20
6. The child has to work for wage / salary	2.20	0.90	1.40
7. The child has to participate in other economic activities	4.60	3.00	3.60
8. The child has to look after young siblings	0.70	1.60	1.30
9. The child has to attend other domestic activities	0.70	4.00	2.70
10. Financial constraints	16.30	13.60	14.60
11. Others	21.00	15.50	17.60

Source: *JBG Tilak, 2000.*

JBG Tilak, has analysed the NSSO data of 1986 – 87 and 1995 – 96, which bring out the important reasons of never enrolment of children in rural areas. The important findings of the survey were:

- While non-availability of schools appeared to be a reason of never enrolment in 86-87, this was not the case in 95-96, indicating probably an improvement in access to schooling facilities. The score of this factor came down from 10% to 2% in the two time periods.

- Economic factors such as opportunity costs, participation in household economic activity, domestic chores and other economic reasons were the most important factors in 1986-87 survey (this being especially relevant in the case of girls). However, the data shows that the economic factors including financial constraints accounted for only 23.6% in the 1995-96 survey. According to Tilak, this fact may mean that child labour and opportunity costs as causes of never enrolment are given rather an exaggerated place in the literature *(Tilak 2000)*.

- Lastly, the single most important factor preventing children from going to school appears to be the lack of interest in education. In the 86-87survey, for 30% of the children, this was the predominant response. In 1995-96, the question was split into two parts - lack of interest of child and lack of parental interest. Together they accounted for about 50% of the response rate.

Analyzing the cause of this factor, Tilak concludes that lack of interest in studies by poor households should not be taken at face value. This factor could be due to underlying causes such as poverty of households, absence of good quality schooling facilities or high costs of schooling. The relevant point Tilak makes here is that lack of interest in studies may be due to multiple underlying causes or due to a combination of many of these factors, which are not possible to disentangle. Thus, lack of interest cannot be treated as an independent factor *(Tilak 2000).*

Similar conclusions are drawn from the Probe survey of five North Indian states, which tried to examine the causes of why children are never enrolled in school and why they drop out. Economic constraints i.e. (need for child labour and the burden of school expenses) were the perceived obstacles in case of never enrolled children. While for girls, labour referred to domestic work and sibling care, for boys, helping in farm work and other income earning activities were important. Analyzing the cause of drop out among children, the survey finds that the major cause was withdrawal by parents, for two major reasons: 1) the child being needed for other activities and 2) schooling being expensive *(Probe Report 1999).*

POVERTY, SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

In the preceding pages we have examined how poverty imposes constraints on primary education and why poor children remain out of school, based on empirical studies and surveys.

Research has also shown that even when poor children manage to enroll and attend school, they do not escape the burden of work resulting from poverty. As they seek to combine both school and work, the result is that their levels of learning and achievement are affected and do not reach their full potential.

Olga Niewhuy's study indicates how children work in their spare time to support their families. This dual workload of school and work may be detrimental to their education, development, health and safety *(quoted in Vasavi 2003)*.

Vimala Ramachandran's study of three states finds that the intensity of poverty is such that many children above 6, attending government schools, reported working before as well as after school hours. They were also engaged in full time work during peak seasons, holidays and weekends. The implications of this phenomenon on primary schooling was that:

- Most children did not get sufficient time to revise their books / lessons, especially older girls on whom the major work responsibility fell.
- Their poor nutritional status also compounded the problem, by lowering energy levels, and affecting concentration levels.
- The pressure of morning chores was such that many children especially girls reported not having time to eat before attending school, and in Andhra Pradesh several girls drank only water in the mornings. Lack of a proper meal before school negatively affects the child's performance and its ability to learn new concepts (*Ramachandran et al 2003).*

Studies also show that poor performance and learning outcomes among children from poor economic backgrounds has an adverse impact on their continuation. Ramachandran's research has found that in U.P, children of class 2, who could not recognize the alphabets, or of class 3 who were unable to read / write, were immediately withdrawn from school, by their parents. Comments such as 'what is the use of sending him to school?"I pulled him out after class 4 and he now helps me with my work' were common *(Ramachandran et al 2003)*. Caldwell notes from his sample that poor learning leads to immediate withdrawal from school, this being seen as an investment turned sour *(Caldwell et al 1985)*. Zaidi's study of dropouts at the elementary level finds that poverty-ridden parents pull their children out at the first signs of failure. Combining the two factors of poverty and poor performance, the author classifies four categories of dropouts:

- Poor performers with sound economic base.
- Poor performers with weak economic base (who drop out at an early age for e.g. class 1)
- Good performers with weak economic base, who may continue for sometime due to good performance or drop out due to economic compulsions
- Waiters in the job market *(Zaidi, 1991)*

DOES POVERTY JUSTIFY EDUCATIONAL DEPRIVATION? THE RADICAL VIEW

This gamut of literature on poverty, child labour and schooling and our understanding of the same would remain incomplete, without bringing forth view points of a set of scholars and social activists, who totally reject the poverty argument as a cause of educational deprivation.

Scholars such as Shantha Sinha (2000) and Myron Weiner (1991) criticize the Indian government, for basing all its policies on elementary education and child labour on the 'poverty argument'. This argument justifies children of poor families being out of school and working, and feels that any attempt to ban child labour would put a further burden on the already impoverished families. Hence, the government has banned child labour only in hazardous industries. These scholars reject the distinction between child work and child labour, stating that all forms of child work in rural areas should also be treated as child labour and the government should ban all forms of child work. The entire formal schooling system should be strengthened and elementary education should be made compulsory for all children *(Sinha Shantha 2000; Myron Weiner 1991).*

Arguing along similar lines, Neera Burra objects to the definition of child labour by the Indian government, as being confined only to those children earning wages or in hazardous employment. She calls for an expansion of the term to

include all labour done by children paid / unpaid, within / outside the family, (especially by the girl child) as child labour. In other words the term would include all children out of school under this heading, so that they can become objects of public policy. Once this is done, efforts should be made to improve the formal schooling system and to ensure that all children join it, even if their parents want it other wise. This would lead to the path of universalization of education *(Burra, 2001).*

Highlights

As an examination of these divergent viewpoints, emanating from empirical research and surveys shows, the relation between poverty, child work and schooling is indeed a complex one. The evidence suggests that poverty does play a discouraging role in the schooling process in the following ways:

- Opportunity costs of schooling girl children are high;
- For boys the opportunity costs appear relevant with reference to being withdrawn during season of the peak agricultural activity; and
- The direct costs of schooling are a major deterrent, for poor families.

Efforts are on to overcome the poverty constraint at the household level, through effective implementation of incentive schemes by the government and various initiatives to mainstream girls into the schooling process in various states.

It is clear that there is a factual correlation, but not necessarily a casual relationship, between poverty and low schooling levels and for a more definitive statement on this relationship, further research would indeed be useful.

SOCIO CULTURAL FACTORS

Individual behaviour is largely social behaviour and is best represented in the context of his membership in the specific social groups to which he belongs. In the Indian society, some of the prominent social groups of which a person is a member are his family, extended kin group, caste or tribe and religion. Membership into these groups is ascriptive, that is by birth.

Social behaviour is governed by the norms and values of the society, which are a crucial component of its cultural traditions, continuing over generations. Thus 'Socio Cultural Factors' refer to the social behaviour of individuals and groups, as governed by their culture.

These factors impinge on the entirety of the individual's social life including his or her educational choices and opportunities. Hence, educational decisions of children too are group decisions, taken by the family or the household. These are governed by the socio cultural determinants such as the socialization process within the family, the marriage and kinship patterns, the religious beliefs of the group and the norms governing caste relations within the village community. Numerous empirical studies have brought out the fact that educational decisions are made by the household on behalf of the children. These pertain to issues such as enrolment, attendance and withdrawal. As Caldwell et al state, "the family decides that the child must be withdrawn from school... the child is very rarely warned or consulted and most families do not believe that these decisions and actions are in any way the child's business" *(Caldwell et al 1985)*. Many other studies have reached similar conclusions *(Dreze and Kingdon 2001; Tilak; Sipahimalani 1996; Kanbargi and Kulkarni 1991; Unni 1996; Bhatty 1998; Subramanian 1999).*

These very socio-cultural factors can also explain the educational disadvantages suffered by certain categories and groups such as girls, lower castes, certain tribes and some religious groups, and the advantages enjoyed by others. The process of generation and perpetuation of these educational disparities of gender, caste, tribe and religion, will be explored in this section.

GENDER

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).

Living in a rural environment characterized by poverty affects girls and women more severely, since girls in rural India are engaged in domestic chores, which keeps their mothers at work and brothers at school. Thus, the cycle of low female schooling continues unbroken. As Usha Nayar states, "It is patriarchy and low status, which keeps women down and girls out of school. Poverty would be a constant, 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 Brahmanical 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.

Girl's Education - Current Scenario

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.

- The figures in Table 19 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 it is among 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 *(Nayar 1993; 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 *(Srivastav and Dubey 2002)*.

Table 19: Enrolment attendance and literacy rates

Data	Boys	Girls	Reference
Literacy rate (Census 2001)	75-5%	54.16%	(Table 3)
Enrolment ratio (Census 2001)	90.7%	72.4%	(Table 1)
Girls attending School (6-14) yrs NFHS II (1998-99)	83.1%	73.7%	(Table 8)
Completion of Primary Schooling (5-19) Yrs NFHS	56.0%	43.0%	(Page 8)
Drop out from school (rural areas) NCAER (1993-94)	26.4%	40.8%	(Table 7)
Literacy rate for SC (all areas) (Census 1991)	49.9%	23.8%	(Table 11)

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.

(Jha and Jhingran 2002; Ramachandran et al 2003; Kaul 2001; Kanbargi and Kulkarni 1984; Reddy and Reddy 1992; S. Jejeebhoy 1993; Nayar 1993; Duraiswamy 1998; World Bank Report 1997; Shilpi and Sanwal 2002; J. Unni 1996; G. Nambissan 1995; Raj Rani 1993).

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. The manner in which these socio-cultural factors hinder primary schooling among girls, is the focus of this section. Thereafter, the role of the socio-cultural factors in facilitating female education will also be examined.

◻ Socio Cultural Factors Impeding Schooling of Girls

- **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.

Families also prefer to have more sons than daughters because the sons are regarded as 'economic assets', providing the financial assistance and security to parents in their old age. Despite son preference, families desired to have at least one daughter, for her short term contribution to household work, and for providing emotional support and to fulfill the religious obligation of 'Kanya daan' (giving a daughter away at the time of her marriage), which would enable parents to attain 'punya'.

This prominent position accorded to sons, led to the inferior status of the girl child in the Hindu family. According to Dreze, "Patrilineal inheritance and patrilocal residence are major sources of gender inequality and female dependency" *(Dreze and Saran 1993)*. Dube 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 *(Leela Dube quoted in Chanana 1990)*. Dreze and Saran, from their study of Palanpur in Uttar Pradesh, found that parental preference for boys was very strong with one of its symptoms being a high level of female mortality among infants and young children *(Dreze and Saran 1993)*. Many other studies have revealed similar findings *(Nayar 1993; Dube 1988; World Bank 1997; Chanana 1990; Dreze and Saran 1993; Shilpi and Sanwal 2002; Raj Rani 1993).*

Attitudes about son preference were elicited by the NFHS II, 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., (See table 20).

Table 20: Indicators of sex preference by State

Mean ideal number of sons, daughters and children of either sex for ever-married women, percentage who want more sons than daughters, percentage who want more daughters than sons, percentage who want at least one son, and percentage who want at least one daughter, according to State, India, 1998-99.

State	Mean ideal number of			Percentage who want more sons than daughters	Percentage who want more daughters than sons	Percentage who want at least one son	Percentage who want at least one daughter
	Sons	Daughters	Either sex				
India	1.4	1.0	0.3	33.2	2.2	85.1	80.1
North							
Delhi	1.2	0.9	0.3	23.1	2.6	85.5	82.0
Haryana	1.4	0.9	0.3	37.5	0.5	89.8	80.9
Himachal Pradesh	1.1	0.8	0.3	25.9	0.6	87.5	79.4
Jammu & Kashmir	1.4	1.0	0.3	38.0	2.7	87.6	82.5
Punjab	1.2	0.8	0.3	29.1	0.4	86.2	78.0
Rajasthan	1.6	1.1	0.1	47.5	1.3	95.7	89.4
Central							
Madhya Pradesh	1.5	1.0	0.3	42.5	2.9	87.8	82.4
Uttar Pradesh	1.8	1.1	0.2	53.3	1.4	94.1	89.3
East							
Bihar	1.9	1.3	0.1	47.9	2.1	97.2	93.6
Orissa	1.5	1.0	0.2	37.6	2.1	92.8	85.3
West Bengal	1.1	0.9	0.4	20.7	3.4	79.9	75.5
Northeast							
Arunachal Pradesh	1.8	1.3	0.1	41.9	2.5	93.5	90.5
Assam	1.6	1.2	0.1	38.2	2.9	94.5	91.0
Manipur	1.9	1.6	0.1	36.5	4.8	96.2	93.0
Meghalaya	2.3	2.2	0.2	20.9	16.9	94.7	93.6
Mizoram	2.0	1.9	0.1	26.0	19.0	97.6	97.1
Nagaland	2.0	1.7	0.3	32.7	6.3	91.6	88.7
Sikkim	1.1	0.9	0.3	22.4	3.1	83.4	77.6
West							
Goa	0.9	0.8	0.7	17.0	5.1	67.9	64.9
Gujarat	1.2	0.8	0.5	33.2	1.8	78.9	68.1
Maharashtra	1.2	0.9	0.3	27.1	1.9	84.5	79.3
South							
Andhra Pradesh	1.0	0.8	0.5	19.8	2.7	76.0	71.3
Karnataka	0.9	0.8	0.5	13.0	1.9	70.0	67.5
Kerala	1.0	0.8	0.7	14.6	5.2	72.6	70.7
Tamil Nadu	0.8	0.7	0.6	9.6	1.9	66.3	63.9

Source: *NFHS II*

- **Gender Division of Labour**

The gender division of labour is based on the dichotomy of male versus female roles. M. Karlekar shows how, families, for their survival and unity, built on the 'nurturant and docile feminine qualities, of women who came to be regarded and natural care givers.

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. *(M. Karlekar 2000; 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 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 *(Chanana 1990).*

Geeta Nambissan points out that, 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 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 1995).*

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. Dreze and Saran, from their study of Palanpur in U.P., conclude that, "The vast majority of girls are expected to spend most of their adult life in domestic work and child rearing…irrespective of their educational achievements". It is in the light of these social expectations…. that female education appears to many parents to be "pointless" *(Dreze and Saran 1993; 42).* 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).*

Similar views have been expressed by many other writers *(Karlekar 2000; Dreze and Saran 1993; Probe Report 1999; Sinha 1998; Bhatty 1998; Rangarajan 1990).*

- **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 1998; and Dube quoted in the Chanana1990)*. 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 have for the schooling of girl children. It has been found in a number of studies that girls are withdrawn form school at the onset of puberty and parents are reluctant to send daughters outside the village for education if there is no school within. An in depth rural survey of six villages in three Indian states showed that the lack of a conveniently located or well equipped school was the major reason for influencing drop outs of children, and girls in particular. Parents said they educated girls up to whatever level the village school provided, but were unsure about sending their daughters outside the village, which entailed traversing empty fields *(quoted in Oonk 1998)*.

Caldwell's study of Karnataka found that 1/5th of the girls were withdrawn from school at menarche, to be married off as soon as possible. "Menarche is till a major reason for the cessation of a daughters 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. *(Nambissan 1995; Nayar 1993 and 1995(a); Sinha 1998; Jha and Jhingran 2002; Dube 1998; Caldwell et al 1985; Chanana 1990; Karlekar 2000; Duraiswamy 1998; Unni 1996; Ramachandran Vimala, 2002; Probe Report 1999).*

- **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. Nayar and Nayar 1995; Ramachandrn et al 2003; 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).

Table 21

Age at first marriage

Percentage of women married by specific exact ages, median age at first marriage, and median age at first cohabitation with husband, according to current age and residence, India, 1998-99

Current age	Percentage ever married by exact age						Median age at first marriage	Median age at first cohabitation with husband
	13	15	18	20	22	25		
URBAN								
15-19	1.1	4.8	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20-24	2.8	9.0	27.9	47.0	NA	NA	NC	NC
25-29	4.4	13.9	36.6	57.2	71.0	83.9	19.1	19.3
30-34	6.2	16.9	43.3	63.4	76.6	88.3	18.5	18.7
35-39	8.3	21.4	49.4	67.2	79.3	89.5	18.1	18.3
40-44	7.9	20.2	51.2	69.9	82.0	91.0	17.9	18.2
45-49	9.4	23.3	54.4	71.1	83.2	92.8	17.5	18.0
20-49	5.9	16.2	41.3	60.4	NA	NA	18.7	18.9
25-49	6.8	18.4	45.5	64.6	77.4	88.4	18.4	18.6
RURAL								
15-19	6.0	17.8	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20-24	11.4	29.1	58.6	74.8	NA	NA	16.9	17.6
25-29	15.0	35.0	67.4	81.8	89.2	93.9	16.1	16.9
30-34	17.5	38.0	73.0	85.6	92.6	96.2	15.8	16.6
35-39	19.2	39.7	73.9	87.1	93.3	96.7	15.7	16.5
40-44	22.8	44.1	76.0	88.4	94.7	97.6	15.4	16.4
45-49	25.6	45.9	77.3	88.0	94.3	97.2	15.3	16.3
20-49	17.1	36.9	69.2	82.9	NA	NA	16.0	16.8
25-49	19.0	39.4	72.5	85.5	92.3	96.0	15.8	16.6
TOTAL								
15-19	4.7	14.3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NC	NC
20-24	8.9	23.5	50.0	67.1	NA	NA	18.0	18.3
25-29	12.1	29.2	58.9	74.9	84.1	91.0	16.9	17.5
30-34	14.2	31.9	64.3	79.1	87.8	93.8	16.4	17.1
35-39	15.9	34.1	66.5	81.0	89.0	94.4	16.2	16.9
40-44	18.4	37.0	68.7	83.0	91.1	95.8	16.0	16.8
45-49	20.7	39.0	70.4	82.9	91.0	95.9	15.8	16.7
20-49	13.9	30.9	61.1	76.4	NA	NA	16.7	17.4
25-49	15.4	33.3	64.6	79.4	87.9	93.7	16.4	17.0

NA: Not Applicable
NC: Not calculated because less than 50 percent of women in the age group have married or started living with their husband by the start of the five-year age group
The current age group includes both never-married and ever-married women.

Source: *NFHS II*

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 (Karlekar 2002). Data from NFHS II also found that majority of women aged 20- 49 years married before they reached the minimum age of 18 years. The median 1st age at marriage for women aged 20-49 years in rural areas was only 16 years.

- **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 3 *(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)*.

- **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 *(Jha & Jhingran 2002; Sinha Amarjeet 1998; Dube Leela 1998).*

- **Kinship System of Patrilocal Village Exogamy**

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 are severed and become extremely weak. The relations between the two families are marked by social obligations with 'wife givers' occupying an inferior position. Thus any benefits from female education would accrue to a different, distant and alien household *(Dreze and Saran 1993).* 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; page 983)*. Similar findings can be seen in other studies also *(Nambissan 1995; Dreze 2003; Dreze and Saran 1993; Bhatty 1998)*.

- **Hypergamy and Dowry**

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 girls' 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)*. Other studies have also noted this. *(Dreze and Saran 1993; Dreze 2003; Chanana 1990; Caldwell et al 1985; Jha and Jhingran 2002; Probe Report 1999)*.

- **Intra household Biases**

Studies reveal that parents tend to discriminate against girls in favour of boys, in respect of various household matters such as distribution of food, clothes and health care. In poor households surveyed in V. Ramachandran's study, food distribution was in favour of men, boys and finally girls and the last of all, the women (Ramachandran et al 2003).

Usha Nayar found that parents' perceptions of gender equality revealed that they had lesser confidence in the girls' ability to earn equal wages and have equal freedom as boys *(Usha Nayar 1995)*. These gender biases also found expression in household discussions pertaining to education. This resulted in poor families prioritizing boy's education over that of the girls, thereby curtailing her educational chances and confining her to domestic responsibilities. As already discussed, the eldest girls were most severely affected in this regard *(Jha and Jhingran 2002; Ramachandran et al 2003; Usha Nayar 1995; Jejeebhoy 1993)*.

- **Gender Inequality in Classroom Processes**

Apart form the socio cultural constraints to girls' education as discussed above, it is important to note that gender inequality is reinforced in the classroom itself, in many subtle ways. Research studies show how girls conform to sex role stereotypes, indulging in 'feminine' behaviour (such as being quiet, reserved and non-participative), which is expected of them by teachers. This restricts their classroom performance and academic achievement. Gender stereotype in the school set up is also visible in the organizing of separate seating arrangements for boys and girls and in the allocations of separate tasks fro girls and boys (the job of cleaning up is given to girls and that of lifting heavy articles to boys). As Geeta Nambissan states, all of these tend to form part of the "hidden curriculum" of the school and tend to reinforce gender identities among children *(Nambissan 1995; Chanana 1990; Probe Report 1999; Ramachandran, Vimala, 2002).*

Thus, it can be stated that with reference to girls, the perceived low economic returns to parents, together with norms governing marriage and kinship patterns, combine to create a negative impact on parental motivation for female education. Against this background, it would be interesting to understand the reasons as to why parents have started to send their daughters to school in large numbers. While concern for the daughters' well-being may be one factor, it may not fully explain variations in female school attendance in different areas, and over periods of time.

◻ Factors Facilitating Girls Education

- **Male Literacy of the Community**

Dreze points out that as the level of male literacy rises in a particular community, female education becomes an asset instead of a liability. A girl's education becomes desirable in such communities because it plays a role in improving her marriage prospects. This happens because, as men become more educated, they aspire to marry literate brides. On the other hand, where male education is low, an educated girl may find it difficult to marry *(Dreze 2000)*. The role of female education in improving her marriage prospects is also brought out by other studies *(Caldwell et al 1985; Dreze and Saran 1993; Jejeebhoy and Kulkarni quoted in Bhatty 1998; Ratna Sudarshan 2000).*

- **Parental Literacy and Awareness**

The educational status of both parents is known to have a positive impact on the schooling of children both boys as well as girls. Sipahimalani highlights three ways by which parents educational attainment impacts schooling of children. This happens because a) they realize the non – pecuniary benefits of child schooling; b) they are able to reduce costs of schooling and c) they are less credit constrained *(Sipahimalani 1996).*

Malathi Duraiswamy states that not only does parental education lead to an increase in enrolments, but the percentage of dropouts also falls as parental education levels rise *(Duraiswamy 1998)*. Jha and Jhingran's study found the important influence exerted by literacy levels of parents on schooling of children. About 80.5% of households with both parents literate had all children in school, as against only 44.2% with illiterate parents *(Jha and Jhingran 2002; Nayar 1995; Krishnaji 2001).*

A greater awareness on the part of parents of the social returns to female education, which are far greater than that of male education, could definitely create a positive impact in favour of girl's education *(Bhatty 1998; Oonk 1998).*

Some studies differentiate educational status of the father from that of the mother and the consequent impact on children. Kanbargi and Kulkarni (1984) and Pandey and Talwar (1980) show how school attendance of children improves with the level of education of the father. Pandey and Talwar found that 21% children of illiterate fathers go to school, compared to more than 50% in case of children of literate fathers *(Pandey and Talwar 1980; Anuradha Pande 2000 quoted in Vaidyanathan and Nair 2001; Geeta Nambissan quoted in Vaidyanathan and Nair)*. Other studies bring out the gender differentials showing that while father's education influences the boy child's schooling positively, maternal education has a strong positive impact on the daughter's education *(Jeemol Unni 1996; Dreze and Kingdon 2001; V. Sipahimalani 1996l; Jaychandran; Duraiswamy 1998).*

- **Mother's literacy and Education of Girls**

Studies also bring out the fact that the mother's education level has a stronger impact on the school participation of children, especially of girls. Duraiswamy, in his study of rural South India, found that "mothers education has a bigger effect on the probability of child enrolment in rural areas" *(Duraiswamy quoted in Bhatty 1998; Ramachandran et at 2003; Duraiswamy 1998; Jaychandran 2001; Sinha Amarjeet 2003; Sipahimalani 1996).*

Amarjeet Sinha, in his report 'Basic Education for All', substantiates the linkage between girls' participation in school and female literacy. Linking data on female literacy from the census with that of school attendance from NFHS, it was inferred that states with high female literacy (more than 60%) have a higher girl attendance (more than 80%) in schools. These states were Kerala, Maharashtara, Punjab and Tamil Nadu. On the other hand, states with low female literacy (below 50%) such as Bihar, Rajasthan and U.P had lower girl attendance (less than 70%) (See table 22).

Table 22: Girls Attending School and Female Literacy

6-14 age Girls Attending School Female Literacy	High Girls Attendance (More than 80%)	Medium Girls Attendance (70 –80%)	Low Girls Attendance (Less than 70%)
High Female Literacy (More than 60%)	Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu,	West Bengal	
Medium Female Literacy (50-60%)	Haryana	Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa,	
Low Female Literacy (Less than 50%)			Bihar, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh,

Source: *Amarjeet Sinha 2003.*

Inference:

Very strong linkage between female literacy and Girls' attendance.

Need for special female literacy / Girls' education efforts in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.

- **Equitable gender relations and Higher Status of Women**

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 relations 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 *(De 2002)*.

- **The Matrilineal Kinship Principle**

This kinship principle is the converse of patriliny. It implies that property is inherited by female descendants. Such a kinship principle was found to be prevalent in certain communities such as the Nayars of Kerala and in many tribal groups of the North Eastern states. The matrilineal system is responsible for raising the status of the woman within that community, which thereby facilitates female literacy.

Studying the gender differentials in the North Eastern states, Srivastav and Dubey (2002) found the gender gap in literacy rates to be lowest in Mehghalaya (rural), which was a tribal dominated region, with major tribes practicing the matrilineal social system. Factors, which discourage female education in other states, such as the property rights and family system, which lower the worth of women, were absent in the states of the North Eastern region *(N. Srivastav and Dubey 2002)*.

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 matriliny, 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)*.

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 (see table 3). This shows us that there is a scope for a positive change in parental attitudes towards female education. This may be further enhanced if people are made aware of the 'social benefits' of female education.

CASTE

Introduction

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, 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.

□ Caste and Education – The Historical Context

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 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. Geeta Nambisan 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 don't 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'etre* 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.

□ Caste and Education – The Current Scenario

Educational attainments in terms of enrolment and retention generally correspond to the hierarchical order in rural India. While the upper castes have traditionally enjoyed these advantages, as explained above, and they continue to do so, the scheduled caste and backward caste children have lagged behind in primary schooling. According to Aggarwal and Sibou "Physically and socially isolated from the majority communities, SC children have lower enrolment and achievement rates and higher dropout than the general population" *(Aggarwal and Sibou 1992)*. Dreze quotes the Probit analysis of 1983-84 to show that caste has a significant influence, independent of per capita income. Specifically, children from SC families are less likely to attend school than children from other families at a given level of income *(Dreze and Saran 1993)*.

- ***SC Children's Participation in Schooling – What Surveys reveal***

  Data from the Census, NSSO and NCAER surveys, all suggest that school participation of SC children is lower than it is for children of the general population. Enrolment statistics for SC children reveal 96.8% of SC children as enrolled according to the 2001 Census. NCAER data, which is more reliable, shows 61.8% of SC children enrolled (see table 12).

  Since figures on school attendance of SC children according to 2001 census are not yet available, we refer to 1981 and 1991 census data which clearly shows that, in almost all the states, school attendance of SC girls and boys was significantly lower compared to the general population (see table 13).

  Table 7, based on NSSO 50th Round 93-94 data on out-of-school children, also shows how dropouts are much higher among rural SC boys and rural SC girls compared to the general population. 32.7% boys and 50% of girls of SC category dropped out compared to 22.6% boys and 36% girls of the 'other' category.

  Researchers have pointed out that 50% of dalit children who enter primary schools, leave by class V, with a majority dropping out before reaching class III *(Nambissan 1996)*.

  There also exists a wide gender gap in literacy rates of scheduled castes as NCAER data indicates, which is significantly large in U.P., Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. For instance, in UP, the gender differential in literacy was 48.10% for males and 13.80% for females, while in Rajasthan, it was 51.80% for males as against 9.10% for females *(Ramachandran, Vimala 2002).*

- ***Caste and Education: What Empirical Studies say***

Almost all empirical studies in the field of primary education, in different parts of the country, demonstrate the fact that the social status in terms of caste affects the schooling patterns of children. Scheduled caste and backward caste children have a lower chance of enrolment, grade attainment and completion of primary schooling compared to the upper caste children. *(Acharya 1994, Unni 1996, Duraiswamy 1998, Dreze and Kingdon 2001, Vasavi and Mehendale 2003, Jha and Jhingran 2002, Ramachandran Vimala 2003, Visaria and Visaria 1993, Kanbargi and Kulkarni 1991, Sheriff 1991, Kaul 2001, Sipahimalani 1996, Vaidyanathan and Nair 2001, Reddy Shiva et al. 1992)*.

Empirical research studies have brought out how the reasons for enrolling children in school differ form caste to caste. In Caldwell's study of rural Karnataka, Brahmins, Jains and Lingayats stressed the virtues of literacy more while enrolling children. In contrast, the peasant castes, harijans and backward castes valued education of children for the employment they may secure *(Caldwell et. al.1985)*.

- Vimala Ramachandran's review of DPEP states, found that backward caste families enrolled children at a somewhat later age, compared to higher caste groups, as a result of which the proportion of 6 year olds who have not entered school was higher among them *(Ramachandran, Vimala 2002)*.
- Studies also reveal that children of SC's and backward castes were withdrawn from school at an early age, by about 8 or 9 years *(Sharieff 1991; Caldwell et al 1985; Jha and Jhingran 2002)*. An important reason for withdrawal of children from school was the cost and work needs of poor SC households *(Caldwell et al 1985)*.
- Field research throws up the fact that there is a clear divide in the villages, along caste lines, regarding access to schools. Evidence from Vimala Ramachandran's study showed that almost all well off / forward caste children attended the private aided schools, while the SC and backward caste children attended the government schools. This phenomenon is termed by her as 'hierarchies of access'. This takes place because it is the poor who access government schools, and SC populations are among the poorest. Vasavi has also reported similar phenomena in her study of elementary education in Tanjavur (Tamil Nadu). Here, the very poor children of the scheduled caste groups and a small percentage of Most Backward Castes enrolled in the municipal school because it provided a number of incentives. The well off sent their children to the private school where English and computers were given more importance *(Vasavi 2002)*.
- The tendency in favour of private schools was found to be influenced by people's perception, in rural areas, of private schools, as a means of imparting quality education in the English medium *(Ramachandran, Vimala 2002)*. Micro studies done in Haryana, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu also pointed towards a trend among the better off dalits and tribals to send their children to private a schools *(Ramachandran, Vimala 2002)*.

- ***Caste, gender and schooling***

It is now widely recognized that the major stumbling block in the path to girls' education, apart from poverty, is caste. There is irrefutable evidence to show that poor rural girls from disadvantaged groups are excluded from the schooling process. As Usha Nayar states, in rural India, women belonging to the historically deprived groups like the SCs and STs, suffer the 'triple jeopardy' of caste, class and sex *(Nayar 1993)*.

The educational lag of SC girls exists because they enter late into school and drop out earlier. Dropouts are high among SC girls because poverty of the dalit households compels these girls to work and thereby stay out of school *(Nayar 1993, Ramachandran, Vimala 2002, Jha and Jhingran 2002, Reddy Shiva et al 1992, Probe Report 1999)*.

□ Caste as an impediment to Education

The above account has clearly demonstrated the variations in educational attainment between upper caste groups and the Backward Castes and Scheduled Castes. 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.

- ***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, as Dreze and Saran say, caste and class inequalities tend to reinforce each other and thereby impact the schooling

process of lower caste children *(Dreze and Saran 1993)*. The Mode-Unicef Report states, "The socio economic profile appears to be a barrier to enrolment of SC/ST families. *(Ramachandran, Vimala 2002; World Bank Report 1997; Sen 1971; Jha and Jhingran 2002).*

Dalits and Adivasis are economically the most vulnerable sections in rural India and are still plagued by poverty. According to the NSS survey 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.

- ***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 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)*.

J. Unni's study shows that 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 *(Unni 1996; Caldwell et al 1985; Jha and Jhingran 2002; Nambissan 2000)*.

- ***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 Nair 2001).* Jha's study shows that the average years 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; Nambissan 2000; 2003).*

- ***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 *(Nambissan 1996; Ramachandran, Vimala 2002; Kaul 2001, Jha and Jhingran 2002, Probe Report 1999, Filmer and Pritchett 1999)*. 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)*.

- ***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.

Geeta 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, Kaul 2001)*. Jyotsna 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)*.

- ***Caste Discrimination at School***

Children from the disadvantaged castes are also discriminated within the school environment. Geeta 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 *(Jalaludin 1991; Lal and Nahar 1990; Khosta 1987 quoted in 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. *(Vasavi and Mehendale 2003, Jha and Jhingran 2002, Kaul 2001, Nambissan 1996, Ramachandran, Vimala 2002, Sinha Amarjeet 1998, Probe Report 1999, Dreze 2003)*. 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 *(Jha and Jhingran 2002; Nambissan 2000; Probe Report 1999; Kaul 2001)*. 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)*.

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.

◻ Caste as a facilitator of Education

While in general, it has been seen that the caste system has deprived certain groups of educational opportunities, it is also seen that it has acted as a facilitator both in case of the upper as well as lower castes. While in the case of upper castes, their advantageous position in the caste hierarchy has helped them to reap the benefits of education, in the case of the Backward Castes, it has often spurred them to seek education as a means of social mobility, in an otherwise rigid social system.

- ***The norm of schooling***

Almost all census reports, surveys, and empirical research studies, as discussed earlier, show, that upper castes have always had a higher enrolment, retention and achievement rate, as compared to lower castes.

Many studies have shown how the norm and tradition of schooling has always been very strong in the upper castes, especially Brahmins. Caldwell's study of rural Karnataka showed that the households belonging to castes higher in the caste hierarchy, such as Brahmins, Jains and Lingayats, stress jobs less and the virtues of education more.

Findings, from the Caldwell's study, on the age of cessation of education, also show that the children of Jain and Brahmin families spent the longest duration in school. This was followed by the children of merchants, farmers, and finally the agricultural labourers. Discontinuation of children from school took place only in exceptional cases of the families facing, severe economic hardships *(Caldwell et al 1985)*.

Dreze and Saran find that in Palanpur (Uttar Pradesh), the 'Kayasths', who are traditionally engaged in administrative jobs, attached an extremely high value to education and made extraordinary efforts to ensure the education of their children. The scheduled caste persons, engaged in unskilled casual labour, did not lay much importance to education. Thus attitudes and values associated with certain castes, determine their educational achievements *(Dreze and Saran 1993)*.

Some studies reveal that the norm of schooling is so strong among the upper castes that even the poor amongst them would send their children to school, reflecting the perceived value attached to education. This however does not hold good in the case of scheduled castes *(Seetharamu and Usha Devi 1985; Jha and Jhingran 2002)*.

- ***Absence of child work***

It has been pointed out that the practice of engaging boys in any form of child work is non-existent among the upper castes, which facilitates their continuation in school. This however, is a common feature among the Backward / Scheduled castes *(Jha and Jhingran 2002)*.

- ***Caste and social mobility***

Caste groups have historically shown an interest in education, in an attempt to seek social mobility. As explained earlier, caste associations mobilized resources for setting up of hostels, colleges and schools, to facilitate the spread of education among their caste members. Rekha Kaul's study of education in Karnataka, discusses the active role played by caste and community mutts, in educational activities. The Lingayat Mutt, Siddaganga Mutt, Admar Mutt, Vokkalinga Mutt etc, are examples of such caste associations, where children of respective castes could be educated *(Kaul 2001)*.

Communities as a whole, often consciously encourage their children to access education in search of an upgraded social identity. In Betul district of Haryana, the backward 'Kurmi' community took to educating their children, to attain a higher social status. This enabled them to become the dominant caste in the region *(Ramachandran, Vimala 2002).*

At the familial level, lower caste households have often looked at education as a vehicle of social mobility. Caldwell in his study found that education and the subsequent attainment of town jobs was often looked upon by families as a way to break out of their position in the caste hierarchy *(Caldwell et al, 1985, Vaidyanathan and Nair 2001)*

- ***Predominance of a Caste Group***

Lastly, Dreze and Saran elaborate that in some areas of India where scheduled castes constitute the predominant group in the region, their educational achievements are comparatively high. They quote a study by Nair et al (1984) who describe a mono caste Harijan village of Tamil Nadu, where adult literacy rates were above 99 percent *(quoted in Dreze and Saran 1993).*

TRIBE

Tribe is a social category that is not a part of the traditional Hindu caste structure. Tribals have also been described as 'aborigines', 'primitives', adivasis, 'vana jatis' etc. India has the single largest tribal population in the world, constituting 8% of the total population. Tribals constitute a majority in some States and UTs e.g. Mizoram (94.75%), Lakshwadeep (93.15) and Nagaland (87.70%) and Meghalaya. The rest are spread out in various States. There are 574 tribal groups who have been identified as scheduled Tribes in India, and there exist specific provisions in our constitution to safeguard their interests *(K. Sujatha 2000).*

The distinguishing feature of tribal society is that the majority of tribals live in small, scattered habitations in remote and inaccessible settlements, in hilly areas or forests. Tribals are thus physically isolated from other communities. Tribal areas lack basic facilities such as roads, communication, electricity, transport etc. The most tribals depend on forests, or rudimentary agriculture for their livelihood. There is extensive use of family labour as both women and children participate extensively in various economic activities. Their overall economic condition is characterized by poverty. A distinct cultural identity and a strong sense of exclusivity characterize most tribes. Each tribe has its own customs, festivals, deities, and languages and dialects, which are distinct and exclusive to them. Tribes are endogamous and identify with their own tribe members. Some tribes have distinct kinship marriage patterns, for e.g. matrilineal (Meghalaya) or polyandrous (Jaunsar). The status of women is higher in many tribes (as in the N E Region) and a strong sense of community ties is also prevalent amongst them *(Jha & Jhingran 2002; K. Sujatha 2002; Nambissan 2000; Srivastav and Dubey 2002)*. Being economically and culturally marginalized, tribal children have low school participation, levels.

The literacy rate for Scheduled Tribes is low at 30% according to the 1991 census, which is well below the national average. States with higher tribal concentration (of the North East region) have achieved higher literacy rates while in other States like Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, tribal literacy is very low (K. Sujatha 2002; Bara et al 1991).

School participation of tribal children is very low compared to the general population. Enrolment of tribal children was only 9 million in classes I – V during 1997-98. However, girls' enrolment showed a positive growth in all tribal concentrated states (K. Sujatha in Govinda 2002). Vasavi's study of marginalized communities in M.P, found that non-enrolment in schools was highest among ST families and the most important reason was that they had no information on how to enroll (Vasavi 2002).

High levels of absenteeism, and alarming drop out rates characterize tribal areas. A study of two tribal districts of Andhra Pradesh showed high absenteeism among the tribal children who had enrolled (K. Sujatha 1987). The NSS 50th Round (93-94) on All India percentage of Out of School children showed that 40% of rural ST male children and 56% of rural ST girls dropped out of school (see table 7). Vasavi's study of Khatgoan shows that tribal girls are withdrawn by parents for household chores and responsibilities, which are particularly heavy for them (Vasavi 2002). All studies on learner achievement show that tribal students in primary classes have lower achievement compared to non-tribals. While some authors attribute this to the differences in socio - economic status (K. Sujatha 2002), others such as, Geetha Nambissan points, out that dropout and poor levels of achievement among tribal children may be due to the cultural and linguistic problems that they bring with them (Geetha Nambissan 2000).

An attempt is now made to examine the causes of educational backwardness among tribal children. We also take note of the factors, which have positively facilitated schooling among them in other cases.

- **Factors impeding Education among Tribals**

  - ***Cultural Discontinuity***

    Tribes have a distinct cultural identity of their own, which often leads to a discontinuity between the tribal culture and the formal schooling system. K. Sujatha, in her study of the Khammam tribes, elucidates this phenomemon. The socialization of children in tribal society presents them with a lot of freedom, and interaction with nature. Moving around freely, climbing trees, hunting, swimming etc, form a part of their daily life. In schools, on the other hand, children are expected to be highly disciplined, follow rigid timings and be confined to the classroom. This conflict between norms of the school and socialization at home results in resistance and an unwillingness on the part of the children to attend school. Research findings show that this sharp division between family and school is a major factor behind non-enrolment of tribal children *(K. Sujatha World Bank Report 1997; Nambissan 2000; World Bank Report 1997; Ambhasht and Rath 1995).*

  - ***Language as a medium of Instruction***

    It is a known fact that the language / dialect of tribals are an integral part of their cultural identity. Though the government of India's policy permits instruction in the local language, in reality teaching often takes place in the widely spoken regional language, which may not be understood properly by the tribal children. According to K. Sujatha, the inability to establish communication links with the teacher, could lead to low attendance and high drop out rates among them *(K. Sujatha 2002)*. Moreover, a rejection of the tribal language could cause irreparable harm, and damage the self worth of the children. *(Geetha Nambissan 2000)*. Geetha Nambissan also highlights the fact that tribal languages are seen as 'under developed' and 'inappropriate' and their usage is discouraged in the school. She quotes studies, which show that children are ridiculed and humiliated for speaking their own language. Such societal stereotypes can be gravely damaging to their self worth of leading to failure, poor comprehension and overall low learning levels *(Vasavi and Mehendale 2003; World Bank Report 1997; Ambasht and Rath 1997; Nambissan 1996; K. Sujatha 1987)*. Daswani's research revealed that even though teachers knew the tribal language, they would prefer to use the dominant regional language in classrooms. Tribal children were thus torn between their tribal mother tongue and the need to adapt to a new language *(Daswani et al 1995).*

  - ***Poverty***

    The poor economic condition of tribals often explains educational deprivation amongst them. Low productivity from agriculture, dependence on forests, low income and high indebtedness, contribute them adverse living conditions. Their impoverishment makes the direct and indirect costs of schooling unbearable. Children are involved in economic activities, like cattle grazing, collection fuel and fodder, and leaves and fruits from the forests. Adivasi girls tend to be frequently withdrawn by parents for a range of household chores, which may be particularly heavy. Such economic participation of children leads not only to non-enrolment, but also irregular attendance and wastage *(Nambissan 2000; Jha and Jhingran 2002; Vasavi 2002; Sujatha 1999; Daswani 1995)*.

- ***Parental illiteracy***

The high level of parental illiteracy among tribal families and the consequent poor learning environment at home, also constrains the education of tribal children. Lacking an educational background, such children are often first generation learners. The absence of academic support at home forces them to grapple with tasks of mastering language and cognitive skills alone. The fact that the formal schooling system is asympathetic to their needs often leads to wastage and stagnation amongst them *(K. Sujatha 1987; Nambissan 2000; Jha and Jhingran 2002).*

- ***Location of the School***

The remoteness and scattered nature of tribal habitations, together with difficult terrain, makes school attendance a difficult proposition for young tribal children. According to K.Sujatha, about 1/5th of the tribal population is constrained by this problem *(Sujatha 2002)*. Studies by Jha and Jhingran and K. Sujatha show how tribal children in Andhra and Orissa had to cross-hills, ravines and walks long distances to reach school every day, which was responsible for the high level of absenteeism among them *(K. Sujatha 1987; Jha and Jhingran 2002).*

- ***The Role of the Teacher***

Jha and Jhingran point out how the acceptance of the 'teacher' by the community appears critical in increasing school participation in tribal areas. A person, who understands and respects tribal culture and practices, could gain acceptance. Non-tribal teachers would tend to be biased and regard tribal children as inferior, while tribal teachers in general would be more sensitive to the problems of ST children *(Jha and Jhingran 2002).*

- ***The Content of Education***

Many research studies have shown that the content of education taught in schools is far removed from what tribals are familiar with. Thus modern education is often seen as irrelevant to the life and needs of the tribal people *(Sujatha 1987; Dreze 2003; Nambissan 2000)*. Daswani's study, conducted as part of DPEP, found that many tribes asked for a curriculum linked to the economic activities of their local context *(Daswani et. al 1995)*.

- ***Social discrimination***

Social discrimination of tribal children, within the classroom, at the hands of teachers and the peer group, has also been studied. Geeta Nambissan refers to studies, which show the biased attitudes of upper caste teachers vis-à-vis the tribal children. They are often called 'dullards' 'backward' and 'uncivilized' by the teachers *(Nambissan 2000)*. Sarada Balagopalan's study of Adivasi children shows how overt discriminative practices result from prejudices in teacher's minds. Adivasi students are given menial responsibilities such as sweeping / swabbing etc and they are derided for using their mother tongue. These discriminations get internalized into the psyche of Advasi children and parents *(Balagopalan 2003)*.

□ Factors facilitating Schooling among Tribals

Despite the impediments to tribal education, positive experiences of tribal children participating in schooling have taken place notably in the North Eastern region, tribal districts of Himachal Pradesh, parts of Southern Bihar and Eastern M.P. *(Dreze 2003)*. The section below attempts to delineate some of the factors responsible for the successful participation of tribals in schooling in the Indian context.

- ***Role of Christian missionaries***

K. Sujatha explains the pioneering role of Christian missionary activities in tribal areas, where the British followed an isolationist policy. The missionaries undertook several social and educational activities in tribal areas and did pioneering work, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya and parts of Chotanagpur. In Mizoram, the missionaries' work began in 1898, when they set about developing Mizo alphabets in the Mizo phonetic. This initiative then spread to the 'community teachers' who were chiefly adult males of the tribal community. The literacy movement in Mizoram was a result of a combination of factors resulting in a literacy rate of 82.27% according to 1991 census. Bara et al in their study of tribal literacy among the Mundas of Chotanagpur, discovered that the role played by Christian missionaries in settling up schools in the region and encouraging tribals to send children to school, was a major factor in explaining high levels of literacy among them *(Sujatha 2000, Hom Chaudhri 2002; Bara et al 1991)*. Jha also recognizes the role played by Christian missionaries in advancing school participation in certain tribal pockets of their study, acknowledging that the state of education has been better where these forces were active *(Jha and Jhingran 2002).*

- ***Cultural identity***

The cultural identity of tribes, promotes strong community ties amongst the tribal people. An absence of caste divisions among tribals promotes a strong sense of identification with each other. Tribal communities are hence egalitarian unlike caste societies. Jha finds this among the Gonds, Bhumiyas and Soligas who consider themselves superior to other tribals *(Jha and Jhingran 2002)*. The Mizo society too is a close knit one, and attaches importance to kinship, social relations, and co-existence *(Hom Chaudhri 2002)*. The strong sense of community and absence of sharp social disparities has often facilitated the spread of education. As Dreze says, social equality is conducive to the emergence of consensual social norms in educational matters. In Himachal the notion of schooling has acquired the characteristic of a widely shared social norm *(Dreze 2003*). Chaudhri explains how, in Mizoram, the norm of studying from Monday to Friday was inculcated by parents in the children *(Hom Chaudhri 2002).*

- ***Gender equality***

Female literacy is an indicator of the high social status of women. Tribal women though not equal, have a relatively higher status compared to women in caste societies. This higher status of tribal women exists found in the North Eastern States, Himachal Pradesh, as well as among the tribals of Chotanagpur. Studies show that the high degree of participation of tribal women, outside the household especially in economic activities is responsible fort their higher status. Jha and Jhingran (2002) and Chaudhri show the greater economic role in all earning and livelihood activities played by tribal women. Anuradha De points out that the highest proportion of female workers exist in the two tribal districts of Himachal Pradesh – Lahul-Spiti and Kinnaur. Tribal women of the Mundas community in Chotanagpur also participated in the selling their surplus produce in village markets *(Dreze 2003; Dc 2002; Bara et al 1991; Chaudhri in Govinda 2002).*

It has also been noted in various studies that male – female differentials in education are very low amongst tribals. Girls' enrolment has shown positive growth in all tribal concentrated States Srivastav and Dubey's study of the North Eastern states shows how the female literacy rate in these states is higher than the all India average. Tribal female literacy was also high among the Mundas of Chotanagpur (K. Sujatha 2002; Srivastav and Duby 2002; Bara et al 1991).

- ***Family and kinship patterns***

Tribals often have family, kinship and marriage patterns, unlike those found in other parts of India, which could possibly explain for the higher status of tribal women and consequently higher literacy levels amongst them. Factors such as property rights and a patrilineal / patriarchial family system, which lower status of women do not play any role in tribal societies. Srivastav finds that the gender gap in education was lowest in Meghalaya, a tribal dominated region practicing a matrilineal social system *(Srivastav and Dubey 2002)*. There exist a sizeable number of female headed households in Himachal Pradesh which arose since men folk often worked outside the state / district *(De 2002)*. The Munda and Oraon marriage customs, which permitted freedom in selection of partners, as well as widow remarriage also played a positive role in raising the status of women *(Bara et al 1991).*

- ***Concentration of Tribals***

An interesting feature is the inter-regional variations in tribal education. Data indicates that status with higher tribal concentration such as Mizoram, Nagaland, Mehalaya have done exceeding well in terms of literacy rates. In other states, where tribals form a minority compared to general caste Hindu-population (such as Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh), their literacy continues to be very low. Dreze and Saran point out that, where tribals constitute the dominant group, their educational achievements are comparatively high. "The tribals in the North East have been able to surge ahead of the Central Indian and dispersed tribes because political control and much of education is in their own hands… where education is in the hands of outsiders, tribal literacy is low, since upper caste attitudes as well as vested interests in their cheap labour go against their education" *(Bara et al 1991).* Thus tribe based homogeneity of the region or state helps educational advancement as compared to that of dispersed tribes forming a minority of the predominantly caste Hindu population.

In conclusion, it can be stated that, a combination of forces is always at work while determining participation in schooling of the disadvantaged groups in the rural Indian context. Dubey's study of North Eastern states as well as Bara et al's study of Chotanagpur tribals indicate that despite poverty, literacy is high among these groups. The negative influence of poverty has probably been counter weighed by the positive characteristics of tribal society such as absence of caste divisions, and greater gender equality which in combination with the role of Christian missionaries have evidently lead to higher literacy rates among them *(Srivastav and Dubey 2002; Bara et al 1991).* The above account substantiates our premise that single focus explanations of educational advancement or deprivation in India will not stand the scrutiny of empirical studies.

RELIGION

The religious beliefs and practices of a community can largely impact the overall attitudinal and behavioural profile of an individual or group. In the Indian context, religion has a sway over people's minds and exerts a great influence over their behavior. The motivation and attitudes of the people towards education, are also moulded, to a large extent, by their religious beliefs. Vaidyanathan and Nair, state that religion is an important socio-cultural variable, which significantly influences school participation, and there are clearly marked differences in the extent to which children of different religions participate in the educational process *(Vaidyanathan and Nair 2001)*. This section examines the role of religion as a socio-cultural variable in determining the educational achievements of children, with specific reference to Islam and Christianity.

◻ Role of Islam

Many studies have noted that the educational status of Muslims is probably the lowest compared to other major religious communities in India. To quote Jha and Jhingran, "Muslims are also educationally one of the most backward communities. They have apparently not taken to secular education in a big way even in the past decade when there has been considerable expansion of school facilities and significant increases in enrolment." *(Jha and Jhingran 2002).*

The literacy rate for Muslims is notably lower compared to Hindus. As per the NFHS data on educational attainment of women and selected background characteristics (1988-89), as may be seen in Table 23, Christian and Sikh women have far lower illiteracy rates compared to Muslim women. Incidentally, the illiteracy rate of Hindu women as a whole is not far better than that of Muslim women.

With reference to enrolments, table 12 shows that ever-enrolment rates of Muslims are the lowest compared to Hindus as well as other minorities.

The differential in educational attainment, between Muslim children and others becomes much wider when the proportion of students completing the upper primary and secondary levels of schooling is taken in to account. The dropout rates are also said to be notably high among Muslim children *(Ahmed 1984 quoted in Reddy, P.H 2003; Jha and Jhingran 2002).*

Table 23: Respondent's Level of education by background characteristics

Percent distribution of ever-married age 15-49 by highest level of education attained, according to selected background characteristics, India 1998-99.

	Respondent's Level of education							
Background characteristics	Illiterate	Literate< primary school complete	Primary school complete	Middle school complete	High school complete	Higher secondary school complete	Total percent	Number of women
Religion								
Hindu	59.3	5.4	13.0	8.3	7.2	6.8	100.0	72,903
Muslim	60.5	9.5	14.8	6.1	5.6	3.5	100.0	11,190
Christian	32.9	7.3	15.4	13.1	14.6	16.7	100.0	2,263
Sikh	38.9	3.0	18.1	9.8	16.4	13.8	100.0	1,427
Jain	6.8	2.5	22.6	14.3	23.4	30.4	100.0	331
Buddist / Neo Buddist	44.7	10.8	14.6	13.2	8.7	7.9	100.0	676
Other	70.3	6.2	8.5	8.8	4.0	2.1	100.0	285
No religion	51.2	17.7	5.3	12.3	5.5	8.0	100.0	44

Source: *NFHS II.*

Divergent views have been expressed while explaining this educational backwardness. Some have claimed that the orthodox nature of Islam and the madrasa system of education, which is "archaic and primitive", has been a causative factor *(Bandopadhyay 2002)*. Others have highlighted the role that the madrasas have played, for long, in actually promoting literacy among Muslims *(Sikand 2001; Kaur in Jha and Jhingran 2002)*.

Some other authors have found that poverty among Muslims, who also happen to be one of the most economically backward groups, is the actual reason for their preference for madrasas, because they are absolutely free and more flexible compared to formal government schools. This seems to be the only option for poor Muslims, who often can't afford to pay for the education. It is noticed that, while poor and 'low-caste' Muslims send their children to madrasas, more or less as a default option, rich and 'upper caste' Muslims opt for 'secular educational institutions' *(Jha and Jhingran 2002; Bandopadhyay 2002; Sikand 2001).* A strong need, has however been felt, of late, to modernize the functioning of the madrasas *(Godbole 2001).* Finally, trends are also available to show that Muslims often send children to madarasas due to the 'high perceived employment linkages' (where they are likely to be absorbed as religious teachers); many children attend both religious and formal schools; many families send one son to madarasa and the other to a formal school etc. All these indicate the growth of a certain rationalistic thinking on the part of the Muslim parents *(Jha and Jhingran 2002).*

Due to absence of data from across the country, and the vast inter-regional variations, particularly between the Muslims of northern parts of the country and those who live in the south, concrete generalizations are not possible while discussing their educational backwardness. Nevertheless, while the economic backwardness of Muslims and attachment to religious education are clearly visible phenomena, their increasing urban concentration and role of modern Muslim educational institutions may bring about a positive change.

□ Role of Christianity

The positive link between Christian religion and literacy can be seen in various parts of India such as the North Eastern states of – Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland as well as in parts of Chotanagpur. It is also found in Kerala, Goa, parts of Tamil Nadu etc., literacy is high in those states, which have a high proportion of Christians.

Data from surveys reveal (see table 12) that the high enrolment rate of 83.5% of 'other minorities' (of which Christians evidently form a major part) as well as the very low illiteracy rates of Christian women (see table 23) shows the formidable strides made by Christians in the field of education.

The reasons for the above lie very clearly in the role of Christian missionaries in fostering elementary as well as higher education across the country. The three groups, which have traditionally suffered educational disadvantage in India, have been women, tribals and the oppressed and low castes. It is these three groups that became the target of Christian missionary activity for the spread of education and religious conversion.

The essence of the approach of the Protestant missions, which played a pioneering role in Kerala was that they viewed the spread of literacy as a prerequisite to their religious mission of spreading the Gospel *(Mathew 1990)*. This explains their role in establishing schools and spreading education. In Kerala, missionaries targeted the oppressed castes (Izahavas) and women, by attempting to educate them and thereby raise their social status. Thus they attempted to transform the traditional hierarchical social fabric into a more egalitarian one. They also influenced the social modernization of Kerala, by the role they played in education and social reform *(Mathew 1990; Ramachandran, V.K.1996).*

The pioneering role of the Christian missionaries in the spread of education in the tribal dominated states of the North East has been widely recognized. In Mizoram, they set about developing the Mizo alphabets based on Mizo Phonetic. This was of great value for a society, which did not have a written script till the end of the 19th century. Mizoram stands first among the North Eastern states with the highest literacy rate and has also closed the gender gap in literacy *(Hom Chaudhuri 2002; Srivastava and Dubey 2002).* Even in the Chotanagpur, Christian missionaries involved themselves in elementary education, which led to high levels of literacy among the Munda tribals, especially the women *(Bara et al 1991).*

Researchers have noted the fact that where the Christian population is large, non-Christians have also become more literate. It appears as if the school network created by the Christian missionaries has had a positive influence on other communities as well. Evidence from Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu is suggestive of this *(Vaidyanathan and Nair 2001).*

Thus we can conclude by stating that, while in the case of Islam, children's secular education was not so much encouraged, Christianity has promoted education by transforming it into a social value.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS AFFECTING SCHOOLING

Socio-demographic phenomena refer to the relation between the general socio-cultural factors on the one hand and the population processes on the other, there often being a reciprocal link between the two. The impact of the socio-cultural factors on population dynamics is well known; for e.g. high female literacy, often results in lowered fertility levels. At the same time, demographic factors also affect social processes for e.g. poor health status of children has an impact on their educational attainment.

This section is concerned with the manner in which socio demographic factors such as family size, and seasonal migration, among others, have an impact on the process of primary education in rural India.

- ***Health and Nutritional Status of Mother and Child***

It has been found that poor health and low nutritional status of the mother and child can actually prove to be a barrier to children's school attendance and educational attainment.

Vimala Ramachandran's study of three states of A.P, Karnataka, and UP found that poverty, low health awareness and increased work load led to poor health of mothers and low birth weight of babies. In UP the study found that some children were even partially immunized due to the non-existence of health services *(Ramachandran et. al. 2003)*.

Studies by Vimala Ramachandran and Jean Dreze also show how the nutritional status of children affects their school participation. Many children were reported coming hungry to school. Hunger is seen to be major limiting factor responsible for children remaining out of school and also being responsible for the low levels of learning within the school. The strong linkage between mal-nourishment and non-participation among children in schools is brought out in table-24, which utilizes (NFHS 2) data on the severely malnourished group of children.

It is to be noted that states with a higher percentage of severely mal-nourished children than the all India average, such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh were also the ones, which were educationally backward. Conversely, states with a low percentage of under-nourished children as such as Kerala, HP and Tamil Nadu had higher literacy levels.

Table 24: Table on Nutrition Status of Children by State
Nutrition Status of Children by State – The Severe Category

State	Weight for Age – Percentage below – 3SD (severely under nourished)	Height for Age – Percentage Below – 3 SD (Severe Stunting)	Weight for height Percentage Below – 3 SD (Severe Wasting)
Haryana	10.1	24.3	0.8
Himachal Pradesh	12.1	18.1	3.3
Punjab	8.8	17.2	0.8
Rajasthan	20.8	29.0	1.9
Madhya Pradesh	24.3	28.3	4.3
Uttar Pradesh	21.9	31.0	2.1
Bihar	25.5	33.6	5.5
Orissa	20.7	17.6	3.9
West Bengal	16.3	19.2	1.6
Assam	13.3	33.7	3.3
Gujarat	16.2	23.3	2.4
Maharashtra	17.6	14.1	2.5
Andhra Pradesh	10.3	14.2	1.6
Karnataka	16.5	15.9	3.9
Kerala	4.7	7.3	0.7
Tamil Nadu	10.6	12.0	3.8
All India	18.0	23.0	2.8

Source: *NFHS 2*

In Vimala Ramachandran's research area of U.P, A.P and Karnataka, most children in the pre-school years (3 to 6) were severely to moderately mal-nourished. Children ate little and that too a few times a day. She highlights the three ways in which mal-nourishment affected the children.

- Children used up available energy for physical activity at the cost of growth and development of mental functions.
- Malnutrition dulled motivation and curiosity, thus restricting their psychosocial development.

- Inadequate nutrition manifested in short term hunger syndrome, which impacted a child's ability to learn and retain new concepts *(Ramachandran et.al. 2003)*.

Medical evidence from the study also revealed that direct malnutrition and chronic illness were a direct impediment to a child's participation in school. The severity and frequency of illness a child suffered from, affected its regularity and attendance in school *(Ramachandran et al 2003)*.

Conversely, the study by Jean Dreze on "The Future of the Mid- Day Meals" in 81 sample villages of Rajasthan, North Karnataka and Chattisgarh, showed how the provision of hot cooked meals in schools resulted in bringing to an end, class room hunger, in fostering social equity as well as increasing pupil enrolments in class 1 especially among girls. *(Sinha, Amarjeet 2003)*.

- ***Absence of adequate Early childhood care and Education***

The absence of early childhood care among pre school education among the 3-6 years olds also has implications for primary education. Absence of pre-school learning often tends to lead to poor school participation by the children. Very often, the first generation learners from very poor families have an inadequate home environment, which cannot provide them with supportive experiences. Household observations in various studies have found little monitoring by parents of children's activities. Ramya Subramanian reports the problems experienced by parents of first generation learners who did not know how much or how far to push their child. *(R. Subramanian 1999; Ramachandran et al. 2003).*

Pre school learning is a vital component of education, which can go a long way in improving school preparedness of such children, and in bridging the absence of a learning environment at home. *(Sinha Amarjeet 2003)*.

- ***Adverse Sex Ratio***

India is one of the countries where the sex ratio is adverse to females. Sex ratio is a powerful indicator of the status of women and an adverse sex ratio reflects the low status of women in India, which in turn leads to lowered female literacy levels. The lowered life expectancy among women, higher female feticide and a lowered valuation of female life, in a society where son preference is predominant, have all contributed to an adverse sex ratio.

Usha Nayar brings out the relationship between sex ratio and female literacy in India. Taking 1991 census figures, she shows how North Indian states with an adverse sex ratio (below 850) in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, also have lowered female literacy levels. On the other hand states like Kerala (with a ratio of 1040) and Himachal Pradesh had a favourable sex ratio and higher female literacy levels. *(Usha Nayar 1993).*

More recent data from 2001 census shows the worsening scenario, with the all India sex ratio, for the 0-6 years age group, declining from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001. The major culprits were the more prosperous states of Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat and Maharashtra, which recorded more than a 50-point decline in the female child sex ratio since 1991 *(Nayar 1993; Nayar and Nayar 1995; Sinha Amarjeet 2003; India Today, November 10, 2003).*

- ***Sex Composition of Children***

A prominent finding of most studies is that boys are more likely than girls to attend school and complete primary and middle school. Being born a girl is inherently a disadvantage, when it comes to being educated due to the socio-cultural reasons already discussed. Moreover, there are economic disincentives in educating girls, due to the lack of returns accruing to parents. Being born a son on the other hand is inherently advantageous and parental motivation for educating him is high due to the economic advantages accruing from his employment.

In a family with limited financial resources, boys' education is prioritized over girls' education due to the reasons explained above *(Harichandran 1992; Sipahimalani 1996; Kaul 2001; Jejeebhoy 1993).*

Shireen Jejeebhoy, from her study, points out that while sons of any order are given preference in a family to receive schooling, this interest is absent with regard to daughters *(Jejeebhoy 1993).*

- ***Birth Order of Children***

The placement of a child among siblings in a family greatly affects his / her, educational chances.

Shireen Jejeebhoy's study found that the eldest son is at a particular advantage, being the most likely beneficiary of middle school education, compared to other sons and all daughters *(Jejeebhoy 1993).*

Eldest daughters on the other hand are particularly disadvantaged and are less likely to be in school. The burden of work most severely falls on the first born, especially if it is an eldest daughter, as she is withdrawn to take over a host of domestic responsibilities and sibling care. This is especially true in families where both parents went out to work. *(Jejeebhoy 1993; Ramachandran et al 2003; Kaul 2001; Usha Jayachandran; Dreze and Kingdon 2001; Pandey and Talwar1980).*

Vimala Ramachandran's study of three states reveals that for girls higher up in the birth order, the impact of child work on primary schooling is that, they do not get enough time to revise or read their books *(Ramachandran et al 2003).*

It has also been found in studies, that having an elder sister improves a boy's chances of attaining educational milestones as she takes over household responsibilities and even participates in farm work *(Jejeebhoy 1993; Nayar 1993; Nayar and Nayar 1995).*

- ***Family Size***

Household or family size, referring to the number of children, affects schooling of children in a family. Shireen Jejeebhoy's study of rural Maharashtra shows that children from smaller families are more likely to attain educational milestones compared to children in larger families. There is a consistent and inverse association, between family size and percentage of children who have completed primary schooling. Larger families tend to have older children, than smaller families, and hence, given the educational attrition, older children are more likely to be out of school than the younger ones *(Jejeebhoy 1993).*

Hence, limiting family size has positive consequences for children's educational attainment.

More specifically, Shireen Jejeebhoy's study shows that boys in smaller families have a distinct educational advantage, over boys in larger families, while girls of both large and small families are withdrawn from school for work responsibilities *(Jejeebhoy 1993).*

A household with a number of children is negatively associated with child schooling, not only because of the burden of expenses, but also because elder daughters have to leave school to take care of large number of younger siblings *(Unni 1996, Dreze and Kingdon 2001; Usha Jayachandran……; Duraiswamy 1998; Nayar 1995a).*

- ***Age at Menarche***

Gender studies in education reveal that menarche is still the major reason for the cessation of schooling among girls. This is linked to the notion of early marriage and the issue of morality. Puberty is seen as a sign that the girl should be married off as soon as possible and to avert the danger of an unmarried pubescent girl being in public.

Girls are thus not allowed to travel outside the village to study, and thus lack of access to upper primary schools within the village causes most girls to drop out after the primary level *(Ramachandran, Vimala 2002; Caldwell et al 1985; Nayar 1993; Sinha Amarjeet 1998).*

- ***Seasonal Migration***

This factor has been seen in a number of studies as disrupting the educational opportunities of children. Seasonal migration is more prevalent in the under-developed, rain dependent areas, where low returns from agriculture compel people to migrate in search of alternative sources of employment, for the economic survival of their families. Jha points out that children's migration with parents is mainly on account of two reasons **1)** there is nobody to look after them in the village **2)** they are needed at the place of migration to take care of younger siblings.

In their study, Jha and Jhingran found that none of the children migrating with families reported going to school at the place of migration. Instead, they were found engaged in earning activities and household / sibling care *(Jha and Jhingran 2002).*

Vasavi's study of primary education in five districts Karnataka shows that the quantum of seasonal migration was rampant in Bijapur. Here, whole families were taken by an agent to towns in Maharashtra to work as construction labourers. Though earnings of such families were substantial, these were at the cost of the children's education.

Migration was also widespread in Bijapur district, after the Kharif harvest during May and October, where many poor households migrated to work in sugar cane belts, or as construction labour in the brick kilns of Maharashtra. Children above eight years of age were withdrawn from school, in most of these villages, to accompany their parents, while some families left children behind with older members to continue schooling.

Thus, seasonal and temporary migration, though leading to higher economic gains for the households, was often at the cost of children's education *(Vasavi and Chamaraj 2000).*

Ramya Subramanian's study of Raichur district found that school participation of children was affected to an extent of about 35-40% during the harvest season and for the children of migrating families. Being a drought prone rain-fed area, most farmers migrated during the second agricultural season, either afar or within the district, in search of alternative livelihood strategies. The study found that keeping the family together was an important motivating factor and many parents migrated with children in the absence of alternative care arrangements (Subramanian 1999).

CONCLUSION

So far, the study has analysed the role of the socio-cultural, economic and socio-demographic factors in hindering / facilitating the attainment of primary education among children in rural India.

It will be worthwhile, at this juncture, to recapitulate the major findings of this study, to provide a comprehensive view of the 'social context'. As an offshoot of this study, a few methodological implications that have emerged will also be presented.

1. Major Findings

While examining the current scenario, it could be noted that governmental and non-governmental interventions across the country in the last 50 years, have led to remarkable progress in universalization of elementary education, which is evident in the improved provision of schooling, rising enrolments, higher attendance of girls in schools, and higher literacy levels.

India, however, is still seen to be lagging behind in the field of primary 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 rural India, marked by caste, class and gender inequalities.

The role of the economic factors influencing schooling decisions is of primary importance. Studies reveal that factors such as higher income levels, land ownership, non- agricultural occupations, adult women's workforce participation, and the economic motivation in the son's education are positively correlated with high enrolment, attendance and continuation of children in primary education.

On the other hand, poverty has impeded primary school attainment. Poorer households are also educationally disadvantaged with low enrolment, high discontinuation and dropout rates. Poverty is a hindrance to schooling because of the costs involved in educating children, which are of two types- opportunity costs and direct costs.

The opportunity costs refer to the 'value' of time lost when children forgo work and attend school. The role of the girl child and her burden of domestic work; the role played by boys in supplementing farm labour; the differential labour participation by children of different age groups; and the economic uncertainty and instability faced by really poor families, have all hindered sustainable schooling.

Recent research studies have countered the theory of the 'opportunity costs' of children with data on time utilization of children. This finds small children spending a negligible amount of time on work and opportunity costs becoming high, only as children grow older and become capable of more productive work. Other arguments are – demand for child labour is high in families with marginal land holdings and is not relevant for landless families; child labour is more often than not a 'default activity' taken up after children have dropped out rather than being the cause of discontinuation. Lastly, dropouts are high in the early stages of schooling when child labour is relatively unimportant.

All the studies however, recognized the importance of opportunity costs for the girl's child in hindering her educational attainment.

The direct costs of schooling, which refer to the actual amount of money spent by families on primary education, are found to be significant in many parts of the country, although primary schooling is supposed to be "free" in government schools. This takes the form of expenditure on notebooks, stationary, uniforms, sports and exam fees and of late on private tuitions and guidebooks. The various incentive programmes of the government to meet these direct costs have not successfully reached those for whom they were intended. However, the mid day meal scheme has been successful in increasing enrolments in many States.

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 out comes.

A radical view held by some scholars and activists, totally rejects the poverty argument as a cause for the failure of universalization of elementary education and put the blame squarely on the government. This view considers child work and child labour as one and the same, and holds that the exploitative class relations in rural India perpetuate it.

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, 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 girls 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.

Finally, the set of socio-demographic factors have also determined educational chances of rural children. Poor health and nutritional status of children; inadequate early childhood care; adverse sex ratio; age at menarche; a large family size; birth order of children and seasonal migration have adversely affected the school participation of children.

2. Methodological Implications of the Study

The methodological implications emanating from the study are as follows:

What has come to the fore consistently, during the course of this study, is that the process of elementary education is being impinged by a complex configuration of social determinants. 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. Religion (Christianity) has played a positive role in the spread of education. 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 over coming the great barriers to mass education in Indian society … gender and caste discrimination and class oppression." *(Ramachandran, V.K.1996; 271)*. 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)*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Acharya, Poromesh. 1994. "Problems of UEE". *Economic and Political Weekly* 29 (40) Dec 3rd.
2. Agarwal, Y.P and S. Sibou. 1992. Educating Scheduled Castes. NIEPA. New Dehi.
3. Agarwal, S. P., and Usmani Meena. 2000. Children's Education in India: From Vedic Times to 21st Century. Shipra Publications, New Delhi.
4. Agarwal, Yash. 1988. "Towards Education for all children Intent and Reality". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*. 21(1& 2).
5. Agarwal, S.P., and N. Kanta. 1990. Child Education in India: Index to Scholarly Writings. Concept Publishing Co. New Delhi.
6. Ambasht, N.K., and K.B. Rath. 1995. "A study of the Effect of Household, Community and School Factors on the Enrolment, Retention and Achievement of Scheduled Tribe children at Primary Level". *Indian Educational Review* 30 (1) January.
7. Anitha, B.K. 2000. Village, Caste and Education Rawat Publications, Jaipur.
8. Atal, Yogesh, (ed). 1997. Perspectives in Educating the Poor. Abinav Publications.
9. Babu, S.C., and J.A. Hallam. 1989. "Socio-Economic Impact of School–Feeding Programmes Empirical Evidence from a South Indian village". *Food Policy* (Feb).
10. Balagopalan, Sarada. 2003. "Neither Suited For the Home Nor for the Fields: Inclusion, Formal Schooling and the Adivasi Child". *IDS Bulletin*. Vol 34, No1.
11. Balagopalan, S., and Ramya Subramanian. 2003. "Dalit and Adivasi Children in Schools; Some Preliminary Research Themes and Findings". *IDS Bulletin*. Vol. 34, No.1.
12. Bandyopadhyay, D. 2002. "Madarasa Education and the Condition of Indian Muslims". *Economic and Political Weekly*. April 20th 37(16).
13. Bara, D., R. Bhengra and B. Minz. 1991."Tribal Female Literacy: Factors in Differentiation among Munda Religious Communities". *Social Action*, Vol. 41, Oct-Dec.
14. Bhattacharjee, N. 1999. "Through the Looking Glass: Gender Socialization in a Primary School" in T.S. Saraswathi (ed), Culture, Socialization and Human Development. Sage Publications, New Delhi.
15. Bhatty, Kiran. 1996. "Child Labour. Breaking the vicious cycle". *Economic and Political Weekly* 31(7) Feb 17.
16. Bhatty, Kiran. 1998. "Educational Deprivation in India, A Survey of Field Investigations". *Economic and Political Weekly,* July 4th.
17. Bhatty, Kiran. 1998. "Educational Deprivation in India. A Survey of Field Investigations". *Economic and Political Weekly*. 33(28) July 11th.
18. Burra, Neera. 1986. "Child Labour in India. Poverty, Exploitation and Vested Interest". *Social Action*. Vol. 36 July-Sept.
19. Burra, Neera. 2001. "Cultural Stereotypes and Household Behaviour. Girl Child Labour in India". *Economic and Political Weekly* (Feb 3-10).
20. Caldwell, J.C., P.H. Reddy, and P. Caldwell. 1985. "Educational Transition in Rural South India". *Population and Development Review*, Vol.11. No.1.
21. Chakrabarti and Banerjea. 2000. "Primary Education in Himachal Pradesh. A case study of Kinnaur district". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*. Vol. XIV No. 4
22. Chakravarthy, B. 1989. Education and Child Labor – Chugh Publications, Allahabad.
23. Chanana, Karuna (ed). 1988. Socialization, Education and Women: Explorations in Gender Identity Orient Longman,, New Delhi.
24. Chanana, Karuna. 1990. "Structures and Ideologies: Socialisation and Education of the Girl Child in South Asia". *The Indian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 3 no. 1.

25. Chanana, Karuna. 1996. "Gender Inequality in Primary Schooling in India: The Human Rights Perspective". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration* 10(4).
26. Chaudhri, Buddadeb, (ed). 1992. Tribal Transformation in India: Education and Literacy Progammes. Inter India Publications. New Delhi
27. Colleta, M., and M. Sulton. 1989. Achieving and Sustaining Universal Primary Education. International Experience Relevant to India. World Bank Policy, Planning and Research Working Paper 166.
28. Daswani, C.J. Neeraj Shukla, and K. Rama Vani. 1995. "Educational Problems of Tribal Children." *Indian Educational Review* (special issue).
29. Deaton Angus and Jean Dreze. 2002. "Poverty and Inequality in India: A Re-examination". *Economic and Political Weekly*. Sept. 7th.
30. De, Anuradha, Claire Noronha and Meera Samson. 2002. "Primary Education in Himachal Pradesh: Examining a Success Story" in R. Govinda (ed) India Education Report. Oxford University Press. New Delhi.
31. Diwan, Rashmi. 1992. "An Analytical Review of Schemes of Incentives at the Primary Stage of Education". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*. Vol. 6, No: 3 July.
32. Dreze, Jean. 2003. "Patterns of Literacy and their Social Context" in Das V. et.al (ed). The Oxford India Companion of Sociology and Social Anthropology. Vol II. Oxford University Press. New Delhi.
33. Dreze, Jean and M. Saran. 1993. "Primary Education and Economic Development in China and India". Discussion Paper. DEP 47. London School of Economics. London. Processed.
34. Dreze, Jean, and H. Gazdar. 1996. 'Uttar Pradesh: The Burden of Inertia', in Dreze and Amartya Sen (eds) Indian Development: Selected Regional Perspectives. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
35. Dreze, Jean and Geeta Kingdon. 2001. "School Participation in Rural India". *Review of Development Economics,* Vol. 5. (1).
36. Dube, Leela. 1981. "On the Economic Roles of children in India Methodological issues" in G. Rodgers and G. Standing (eds) Child work, Poverty and Underdevelopment. ILO.
37. Dube, Leela. 1998. "On the construction of Gender Hindu Girls in Patriarchal India" in K. Channana (ed). Socialization Education and Women Explorations in Gender Identity. Orient Longman.
38. Duraisamy, Malathy. 1998. "Children's Schooling in Rural Tamil Nadu: Gender Disparity and the Role of Access, Parental and Household Factors". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*, 12 (2).
39. Filmer, D., and Lant. Pritchett. 1999. "Educational Enrolment and Attainment in India– Household, Wealth, Gender, Village and State Effects". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration.* Vol. 3. No.2.
40. Fuller, C.J. 2003. "Caste" in Das V. et al. (ed). The Oxford India Companion of Sociology and Social Anthropology. Vol. I, Oxford University Press. New Delhi.
41. Godbole, M. 2001. "Madarasas; Need for a Fresh Look". *Economic and Political Weekly.* October 13, 36(41).
42. Govinda, R. (ed). 2002. India Education Report – A Profile of Basic Education. Oxford University Press. New Delhi.
43. Harishchandran, D. 1992. "Girls Education in India: A situational Analysis". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration* Vol. VI. No: 2
44. Hom Chaudhri, S. 2002. "From Scriptless Status to a Literate Society. The story of Mizoram's Uphill Journey" in R. Govinda (ed) India Education Report. Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
45. International Institute for Population Studies. National Family Health Survey. 1998-98.
46. Jabbi, M.K., and C. Rajyalakshmi. 2001. Eduation of Marginalised Social groups in Bihar in A. Vaidyanathan and P.R.G. Nair(ed) Elementary Education in Rural India. Sage Publications, New Delhi.
47. Jagannathan, Shanti. 2000. Role of NGO's in Primary Education. A study of NGO's in India. World Bank Policy Working Paper. August.
48. Jaychandaran, Usha. 2001."Understanding School Attendance and Children's Work Participation in India". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*. Vol. 15.No.1-4.

49. Jaychandran, Usha. Socio Economic Determinants of School Attendance in India.
50. Jejeebhoy, Shireen J. (1993) - "Family Size, Outcomes for Children, and Gender Disparities." *Economic and Political Weekly*.28:18.
51. Jha, Jyotsna and Dhir Jhingran. 2002. Elementary Education for the Poorest and Other Deprived Groups. Centre for Policy Research. New Delhi.
52. K. Sujatha.1987. Education of the forgotten children of the Forests N.D. Konarak Publications.
53. K. Sujatha. 2000. Education of Indian Scheduled Tribes. A Study of Community Schools in the District of Vishakapatnam. International Institute of Educational Planning. Paris.
54. K. Sujatha. 2002. "Education among Scheduled Tribes" in R. Govinda (ed) India Education Report. Oxford Universtity Press. New Delhi.
55. Kabur, Naila., G.B. Nambissan and R. Subramanian (eds). 2003. Child Labour and the Right to Educaiton. Needs vs Rights. Sage Publications, New Delhi.
56. Kamat, A. R. 1985. Education & Social Change in India. Somaiya Publications, Mumbai.
57. Kanbargi, R., and Kulkarni. 1991. "Child work, Schooling and Fertility in Rural Karnataka" in R. Kanbargi (ed). Child Labour in the Indian Subcontinent. Sage Publications, New Delhi.
58. Kanbargi, Ramesh. (ed). 1991. Child Labour in the Indian Sub continent: Dimensions and Implications. Sage Publications. New Delhi.
59. Karlekar, Malvika. 2000. "Girls' Access to Schooling. An Assessment" in R. Wazir, (ed). The Gender Gap in Basic Education: NGO's as Charge Agents: Sage Publications, New Delhi.
60. Kaul, Rekha. 2001. "Accessing Primary Education Going Beyond the Classroom" *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol. 36. No. 2 January 13-19.
61. Kumar, Krishna. 1983. "Education and Society in Karnataka" – *Economic and Political Weekly* 17, No: 28. July 9th.
62. Kumar, Krishna. 1998. "Education and Society in Post Independent India. Looking towards the future". *Economic and Political Weekly*. June 6.
63. Krishnaji, N. 2001. "Poverty, Gender Schooling – A study of two districts in Andhra Pradesh" in A. Vaidyanathan and P.R.G. Nair (eds) Elementary Education in Rural India. Sage Publications.
64. Krishnaswami. S and Rajnalkar. 1995. "Role of Family Dynamics in School withdrawal of girls". *Journal of Education and Social Change* – Vol 9. No: 2 and 3.
65. Kumar, Krishna.1989. The Social Character of Learning (New Delhi: Sage).
66. Kurrien, J. 1983. Elementary Education in India; Myth Reality, Alternative. Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi.
67. Lieten, G.K. 2000. "Children, Work and Education". *Economic and Political Weekly"*. June 10 – 17th.
68. Lockheed, Marlaine, and Adrian Verspoor. 1991. Improving Primary Education in Developing Countries: New York: Oxford University Press.
69. Mathew, A. 1990. "Perspectives on Inequities in Education". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration.* Vol IV. No. 2, April.
70. Mehta, Arun. C. 1995. "Education for All in India. Some Recent insights in the light of Results of NFHS". *Journal of Education and Social Change* 9(2):
71. MHRD 2001. Selected Educational Statistics.
72. Naidu, Usha. 1987. "Child Labour and Education in India in R. Ghosh and M. Zachariah (Ed). Education and the Process of Change. Sage Publications.
73. Naik, J.P. 1966. Elementary Education – India: The Unfinished Business. Asia Publishing House. Mumbai.
74. Naik, J.P. 1979. "Equality, Quality and Quantity. The Elusive Triangle in Indian Education", *International Review of Education*, Vol. 25

75. Nambissan, Geetha. 1995. "The Social Context of Schooling Girl Children in India." *Perspectives in Education.* Vol. 11(3-4).
76. Nambissan, Geetha. 1996. "Equity in Education - The Schooling of Dalit Children in India." *Economic and Political Weekly.* April 20-27.
77. Nambissan, Geeta. 2000. "The Social Context of Learning and the Schooling of Dalit and Tribal Children" in Quality in Elementary Education. A collection of Articles. Ecumenical Christian Center. Whitefield, Bangalore.
78. Nambissan, Geetha. 2001 "Social Diversity and Regional Disparities in Schooling. A study of rural Rajasthan" in A. R. Vaidyanathan and P.R.G. Nair (ed). Elementary Education in Rural India. Sage Pubs. New Delhi.
79. Nambissan, Geeta. 2003. "Social Exclusion, children's work and Education: A View from the Margins" in N. Kabeer et al (ed). Child Labour and the Right to Education. Sage Publications.
80. Nambissan, G and Mona Sedwal. 2002. "Education For All: The Situation of Dalit Children in India" in R. Govinda (Ed). India Education Report. Profile of Basic Education. Oxford University Press. New Delhi.
81. Nayan Tara, S. 1985. Education in a Rural Environment, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi.
82. Nayar, Usha. 1993. Universal Primary Education of Rural Girls in India NCERT. New Delhi.
83. Nayar, Usha. 1995 a. "Gender Issues in Primary Education". *Indian Educational Review* 30 (1) January.
84. Nayar, Usha. 1995 b. "Planning for Universalization of Primary Education of girls and Women's Empowerment. Gender Studies in Haryana". *Journal of Indian Education.* Vol 21. No. 3. November.
85. Nayar, Usha. 2000. Education of Girls' in India: An Assessment Year 2000. Assessment Education for All. MHRD. NIEPA.
86. Nayar. U and Nayar A. 1995. The Girl Child in India. *Journal of Indian Education* 21(3).
87. Neyazi, T. Ahmed. 2002. "Madarasa Education". *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol. 37 (38), Sept. 21st.
88. NSSO. 1997. "A note on Economic Activities and School Attendance by Children of India. *Sarvekshana*. Oct – Dec.
89. Oonk, Gerard. 1998. Elementary Education and Child Labour India Committee in the Netherlands. July.
90. Pal S.P. and D.K. Pant. 1995. "Strategies to Improve School Enrolment Rate". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration.* Vol. 1. No. 2
91. Pande, Anuradha. 2001. "Education of Rural children in UP. Himalayas" in A.Vaidyanathan and P.R.G. Nair (ed). Elementary Education in Rural India. Sage Publications, New Delhi.
92. Pandey, G.D. and P. P. Talwar. 1980. "Some Correlates of Literacy, Educational Attainment among children in rural Areas of UP". *Demography India* (1) and (2).
93. Premi, Kusum. 1990. "Working Children and UEE". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration* Vol. 4.No.1
94. Raj Rani. 1993. "Education of Girls in Rural India" in Ved Prakash (ed) School Education in Rural India. Mittal Publications, New Delhi.
95. Rajan, S.L., and A. Jayakumar. 1992. "Impact of Noon-Meal Programme on Primary Education: An Exploratory Study in TamilNadu." *Economic and Political Weekly*. October.
96. Ramachandran, V.K. 1996. "On Kerala's Development Achievements" in Dreze and Amartya Sen (eds) Indian Development; Selected Regional Perspectives. Oxford University Press. New Delhi.
97. Ramachandran, Vimala. ( ) - Girls' and Women's Education in India.
98. Ramachandran, Vimala. 2001. "Community Participation in Primary Education". *Economic and Political Weekly*. June 23.
99. Ramachandran, Vimala. 2002. Gender and Social Equity. Hierarchies of Access. The European Commission.
100. Ramachandran, Vimala. 2003. "Backward and Forward linkages that strengthen primary education". *Economic and Political Weekly*. Vol 38, no: 10, March 8th–13th.

101. Ramachandran, Vimala, K. Jandhyala and A. Saihjee. 2003. Through the Life Cycle of Children: Factors that Facilitate / Impede Successful Primary School Completion. Education Resource Unit. Delhi.

102. Ramanamma, A and Usha, Bambawale. 1978. "Sociological implications of school drop outs in Maharashtra". *Social Change* June vol. 8(2).

103. Rangarajan, C. 1999. "Dimensions of Primary Education". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*. Vo. 13, No. 3, July.

104. Ravindranathan, M.N. 1996. "A Sociological analysis of the problems of primary education in India". *Journal of Indian Education* 21 (4) February.

105. Raza. M and Ramachandaran. 1990. Schooling and Rural Transformation. NIEPA. New Delhi.

106. Reddy, P.H. 2003. Education and Employment among Muslims in India. Unpublished Paper.

107. Reddy, Shiva and P. Sanjeeva Reddy. 1992. "Inequality of Educational Opportunity in Rural Areas: A Case Study". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration.* Vol. VI. No.3 July.

108. Ruhela, S. P.(1996) – India's struggle to Universalize Elementary Education. MD publications, New Delhi.

109. Seetharamu A.S and Usha Devi. 1985. Integral Dimensions of School Participation. A Study of Dropouts. Institute of Social and Economic Change.

110. Sen, Amartya. 1971. Primary Education in Rural India Participation and Wastage. Agricultural Economics Research Centre. New Delhi. 1968.

111. Sengupta P, and J. Guha. 2002. "Enrolment, Drop out and Grade Completion of Girl Children in West Bengal". *Economic and Political Weekly.* 37(17). April 27th.

112. Shariff, Abusaleh. 1991. "The Family Economy in South India" in R. Kanbargi (Ed). Child Labour in the Indian Subcontinent. Sage Publications.

113. Shilpi and Sanwal. 2002. "Gender Discrimination: A Hurdle in Primary Education", *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration* Vol. 16, No. 3, July.

114. Shukla, Neerja. 1995. "Effectiveness of Various Interventions for Improving Tribal Education. A Research Study" in *Indian Educational Review.* Vol. 30, No.1, January.

115. Sikand, Yoginder. 2001. "Targeting Muslim Religious Schools". *Economic and political Weekly*. Vol. 36 (35). September 1.

116. Singh, Yogendra. 1973. Modernization of Indian Tradition. Thomson Press. Faridabad.

117. Sinha, Shanta. 1996. "Child Labour and Education Policy in India." *The Administrator* Vol. 41 (No. 3-4) (Special issue, July – September).

118. Sinha, Shanta. 2000. "Child Labour and Education in R. Wazir (ed) Gender gap in Basic Education 2000. Sage Publications, New Delhi.

119. Sinha, Amarjeet. 1998. Primary Schooling in India. Vikas Publication House, New Delhi.

120. Sinha, A. and Sinha. 1998. Primary Schooling in North India. A field Investigation in Sinha A. Primary Schooling in India. New Delhi.

121. Sinha, Amarjeet. 2003. Basic Education For All. The Elusive Quest for Social Justice in a Dynamic Democracy. The Case of India.

122. Sipahimalani, Vandana. 1996. Education in the Rural Indian Household: A Gender Based Perspective. Mimeo. NCAER.

123. Srinivas, M. N. 1986. India : Social Structure Hindustan Publishing Corp. New Delhi.

124. Srinivas, M.N. 1972. Social Change in Modern India. Orient Longman.

125. Srivastava K. K. and D.K. Nautiyal. 1995. "The economic contribution of children in farm households in tribal society and its effect in schooling". *Asian Economic Review* 37(1) April.

126. Srivastav. N and Amaresh Dubey. 2002. "Elementary Education, Poverty and Gender Differentials in North-East India: Some Issues". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration* Vol, 16, No. 3, July.

127. Subramanian, R. 1999. The District Primary Education Programme. The Decentralisation Challenge. Paper Presented at a Workshop Needs Vs Rights. Social Policy from a Child – Centered Perspective. New Delhi. July.

128. Sudarshan, Ratna M. 2000. "Educational Status of Girls & Women's: The Emerging Scenario" in R. Wazir (ed). The Gender Gap in Basic Education: NGO's as Change Agents. Sage Publications, New Delhi.

129. Sumi, Krishna. 1996. Restoring Childhood: Learning, labour and gender in South Asia – Delhi: Konark Publication Pvt. Ltd.

130. The Probe Team. 1999. Public Report on basic Education in India. Oxford University Press.

131. Tilak, J.B.G. 1996. "How Free is Free Primary Education in India?" *Economic and Political Weekly*, February 3rd and 10th.

132. Tilak, J.B.G. 2000. "Why do Some children Never go to School in Rural India?" *Kurukshetra*. October.

133. Tilak, J.B.G. 2002. Determinants of Household Expenditure on Education in Rural India. Working paper series 88. NCAER. New Delhi.

134. Unni, Jeemol. 1996. Who is Schooled and Why? Differentials in Education. Gujarat Institute of Development Research.

135. Vaidyanathan, A and P.R.G. Nair. 2001. Elementary Education in Rural India - A Grass Roots View. Sage Publications, New Delhi.

136. Vasavi, A. R., P.G. Chand, Vijaya Sherry and R. Shailesh Shukla. 1997. "Blueprint for Rural Primary Education. How Viable?" *Economic and Political Weekly.* 13th December.

137. Vasavi, A. R., with K. Chamaraj. 2000. Community - School Interlinks. Preliminary Report of a Socio Anthropological Study of Primary Education in five districts of Karnataka. National Institute of Advanced Studies.

138. Vasavi, A. R. 2002a. Caste, Class and School. Tanjavur, Local Education Report. National Institute of Advanced Studies.

139. Vasav,i A. R. 2002b. Marginalized Communities and Dysfunctional Schools. Khategaon. Local Education Report. National Institute of Advanced Studies.

140. Vasavi, A. R. 2003. "Schooling for a New Society. The Social and Political Bases of Educational Deprivation in India". *IDS Bulletin*. Vol. 34. No. 1.

141. Vasavi, A.R., and Archana Mehendale. 2003. "Out of School Children: Contexts and Experiences of Educational Deprivation". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*. Vol. XVII. No.1. January.

142. Vemuri, Muralidhar and U.V.K. Sastry. 1991. "Participation of Children in Economic Activity. A Regional Analysis of Rural India" in R. Kanbargi (ed). Child Labour in the Indian Sub continent Sage Publications.

143. Visaria P, Anil Gumber and Leela Visaria. 1993. "Literacy & primary Education in India 1981 – 1991. Differentials & Determinants". *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration* 7(1). January.

144. Wazir, Rekha (ed). 2000. The Gender Gap in basic Education – NGO's as change agents. Sage Publications, New Delhi.

145. Weiner, Myron. 1991. The Child and the State in India: Child Labour and Education Policy in Comparative Perspective Princeton University Press.

146. World Bank Report 1997 - Primary Education in India – Development in Practice. Allied Publications, New Delhi.

147. Yadav A.K. and M. Srivastav. 2002. "Is Universalization of Primary Education Possible?" *Journal of Educational Planning and Administration*. Vol. 16 No. 1. January.

148. Zaidi SM. 1991. "Problems of wastage in School Education: Drop outs at Elementary Level". *Journal of Educational Planning & Administration*. Vol. 5 No. 2.