CHAPTER V
5. Women's Education and the Related Problems

Women's Education has drawn the attention of the Government, political leaders and educationists ever since India attained her independence. The Education Commission (1966) said,

> On the quality and numbers of person coming out of our schools and colleges will depend our success in the great enterprise of national reconstruction.

Every society that values social justice and is anxious to improve the lot of its people by cultivation of available talent must ensure equality of educational opportunities to all sections of the population including women. To use education as a powerful instrument of social, economic and political changes, the entire education system not only needed a complete transformation but also adequate expansion so that it could reach the millions of children of independent India. This was no easy task. It was estimated that the total student population would be 70 millions or about equal to the total population of Europe in 1985.

In order to ensure speedy progress of education, schools were set up, education at the elementary level was made free, free books and uniforms were distributed in a number of schools and provision for mid-day meal was made for the poor children. Unfortunately, even in 1985 it was observed that while education of the boys had progressed well, girls' education lagged far behind. In 1983-84, 318 million girls were enrolled altogether in schools against the enrolment of 493 million of boys. Literacy rate among women, who constituted nearly half of the population was very low. If education was to be universalised, more girls must be brought within the ambit of formal education.

The importance of the education of women cannot be over emphasised. As Maulana Azad had pointed out, if women could be made educated then education would easily permeate to the next generation through educated mothers without special effort of the Government.

Women's education had a bearing on the growth of population as well. Studies have shown that one additional year of schooling helps to drop a woman's fertility rate by an average of five to ten per cent. Girls with eight years of education married later and preferred smaller family size. The experience of Kerala clearly illustrates the integral connection between education and social
welfare. This state, which has the highest rate of literacy also has the lowest rate of population growth in the country. Dr. Amartya Sen attributed most of India's failure in coping with the population problem to poor public response to women's education and empowerment. It has been observed that mortality rate of the infants also vary according to the education of the mothers.

For the proper functioning of democracy itself, women must be made conscious educated citizens. No democratic country can leave nearly half of its population ignorant. Lastly, investing in women's education and their capabilities is not only invaluable in itself but is also the surest way to receive their contribution to economic growth and overall development.

The problem of women's education was basically a three pronged one – access to education, enrolment in schools and retention in educational institutions. Access to education implies the provision of a primary school within easy walking distance from the home of every girl. This goal was almost achieved by 1985. Nearly 90% of the boys and girls in the 6-11 years age-group had schools within walking distance from their home. Since co-education was the accepted structure of schools at the primary level, the girls also could be enrolled. Yet, we find that access to education did not result in enrolment of all the children in the 6-11 years age group. The vast bulk of non-enrolled children were girls, tribal children and children of the poorest social strata such as agricultural labourers. One interesting feature in the trend in enrolment at the elementary level is the consistent increase in sex-ratio (enrolment). It had increased from a low 36/100 boys in the year 1950-51 to 65/100 boys in the year 1986-87. In 1985-86, enrolment ratio at the primary level (I-V) is about 108.5 (boys) and 77.1 (girls) and 65 (boys) and 38.1 (girls) at the middle school level (VI-VIII). Since overage and underage children are included in the enrolment figures, it means a lot more rigorous efforts are needed to bring the girls to school.

Despite the fact education for all was accorded high priority right from the beginning of the post-independence period, it has not been possible to remove illiteracy from Indian soil. The amazing number of illiterates may be linked to demographic factors. Our population has virtually exploded to 357 million in

1 See Appendix, Fig. 1 & 2
1951 and has continued to increase at the alarming rate of 2.4 per cent per annum. It cannot be gainsaid that the rate of growth of education must outmatch the rate of population growth if any real and tangible educational growth was to be achieved. In actual practice, although the rate of literacy (male and female) had gone up from 16.61 per cent in 1951 to 36.25 per cent in 1981 (last census), the total number of illiterates had increased due to rise in population.

5.1 Imbalanced growth

A relevant question that emerges from a study of the progress of women's education is what specific problems hindered its development. The answer to the question may be traced to the socio-economic ethos of different communities. The customs, ideas and ideals cherished by a particular community determine the response of its women to educational programmes. This response varies from State to State and even from district to district within the same State. This created an imbalanced growth of women's education. Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, United Province and West Bengal were identified as educationally backward States by the Deshmukh committee. The Vaktavatsalam Committee had enquired into the causes of backwardness with regard to women's education of six States – Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. The Committee identified poverty, purdah, the custom of child marriage and general social backwardness as causes of slow progress of women's education. While these States were backward, Madras and Bombay stood out in terms of enrolment of girls in all institutions and the expenditure by the government on girls' education. This is so possibly because these States came in close contact with the East India Company through trade relations. Besides, social conditions in South India, were different. As the society was much more settled and was not subjected to the pressure of continuous invasion, the position of women underwent no serious changes. In Kerala and Maharashtra the 'purdah' system and the consequent sex segregation had not been practised. Kerala had the
PERCENTAGE OF ENROLMENT OF CHILDREN IN THE PRIMARY & MIDDLE STAGE, (1980-81)

Fig. I

PRIMARY LOW MIDDLE HIGH

PRIMARY HIGH MIDDLE HIGH

MIDDLE

PRIMARY LOW MIDDLE LOW

PRIMARY HIGH MIDDLE LOW

Fig. I

PRIMARY ENROLMENT
PERCENTAGE OF GIRLS ENROLLED IN PRIMARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL STAGES 1980-81

AVERAGE ENROLMENT
PRIMARY -- 66.2
MIDDLE -- 27.2

Fig. II
PRIMARY ENROLMENT

KERALA
LAKSHADWEEP
(152.4 + 76.3)
DELHI
GOA, DAMANAND DIU
PONDICHERY
ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS
CHANDIGARH
PUNJAB
HIMACHAL PRADESH
NAGALAND
TAMIL NADU
MANIPUR
GUJARAT
MAHARASHTRA
ASSAM
TRIPURA
KARNATAKA
SIKKIM
HARYANA
JAMMU & KASHMIR
UTTAR PRADESH
RAJASTHAN
BIHAR
MADHYA PRADESH
ARUNACHAL PRADESH
WEST BENGAL
ORISSA
ANDHRA PRADESH
DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI
added advantage of having matriarchal system among the Nairs which assigned a relatively better position to its women. Even among the Nambudri Brahmins of Kerala, the practice of pre-puberty marriage was not prevalent at any time. Thus in the south women's education had progressed much faster. Calcutta was a centre of Company's activities, not doubt, but girls' education did not spread to the conservative districts of West Bengal mainly due to societal restrictions. In the North Eastern States where missionary activities were effective, education of girls had made a beginning.

The level of different States with respect to primary and upper primary education has been drawn in Fig. 1. (Percentage of enrolment of children at the primary and middle stages 1981). The comparative analysis of different states has been done with reference to the all-India average. (See previous Fig. 1)

The States falling the in the first quadrangle have more than the all India average for primary as well as upper primary education. The States of Goa, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Manipur, Gujarat and Maghalaya fall in this category. Some Union Territories like Lakshadweep, Mizoram and Pandicherry also belong to this group.

The second group consists of those States where the growth of primary education has been more than the all India average, but upper primary education has been lagging behind. These states are Andhra Pradesh, Tripura and Karnataka.

The third group consists of those States in which the level of educational development is low both for the primary and the upper primary levels. The states of Assam, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan Madhya Pradesh, Arunachal and Orissa fall in this category.

The fourth group consists of those States where the upper primary level of education is above the national average and the primary level of education is below average. The three states which fall in this group are Haryana, Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir.

A study of the level of different States with respect to primary and middle school education of girls has been made in Fig. 2 (See previous Fig. 2). It reveals that several States that had made more than average progress in education at the primary and secondary levels could not record the same rate of growth in
women's education. Thus Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh registered slow development of women's education at the primary stage though they had made progress in total enrolment. Assam had slow level of women's education at the primary level though not at the middle stage. West Bengal has made progress at the primary level.

Imbalanced growth of women's education may also be discerned in the rural-urban differential. Imbalance had developed in the educational growth between the rich and urban level on the one hand and the poor and rural level on the other. Western education began in the town while the rest of the land suffered from a total eclipse. This inherited imbalance in educational growth continues even to day. The following table shows the distribution percentage of persons attending schools by age and sex.

Table 5.1
Distribution (percentage) of persons attending schools by age & sex, India 1981

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Total Males</th>
<th>Total Females</th>
<th>Rural Males</th>
<th>Rural Females</th>
<th>Urban Males</th>
<th>Urban Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-9</td>
<td>44.33</td>
<td>32.21</td>
<td>39.63</td>
<td>25.83</td>
<td>61.65</td>
<td>55.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14</td>
<td>62.07</td>
<td>37.47</td>
<td>57.74</td>
<td>29.18</td>
<td>77.00</td>
<td>65.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>36.03</td>
<td>15.51</td>
<td>30.92</td>
<td>8.88</td>
<td>50.24</td>
<td>34.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The data shows women's education in India was mainly confined to the urban areas and had not spread in the required degree to the rural localities. The urban parents were "aware of the relationship between the academic performance and the occupational prestige system of the capitalist society". So they took the initiative of educating their daughters. But socio-economic forces which encouraged the urban girls to go to schools also restricted the rural and backward girls from education. The relevance of formal education of women was and still is determined by the societal expectation from them, the perception of family members and by their own conditioned self-perception. The society assigned role for women as wives and mothers had decided their educational needs and goals, specially in the rural areas. But to have a proper educational
development, it is essential that the level of educational attainment should be uniform all over the country. The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women (1974) had also stressed the need for an even and balanced growth of female education. It had also suggested that any plan for female education must take these regional imbalances into account and arrange for equal distribution of educational privileges not only among men and women but also among women belonging to different regions, castes and religious groups.

Though schools were set up even in distant villages and special schemes to educate the rural girls through Community Development Projects and Minimum Needs Programme were adopted, the differential between the enrolment of urban and rural girls persisted. Regarding the imbalanced educational growth with respect to States, not much was done to help the backward States to come up. Most of the educational schemes were gender neutral. Even the central measures, adopted exclusively for women's education, were class and State neutral. Dr. Triguna Sen, Education Minister, was asked about financial assistance to U.P. with respect to girls' education and he had confessed that the central and centrally sponsored schemes of the Ministry of Education were meant for all States and in implementing them preference was given to all backward States including U.P. But no special scheme was prepared by the Central Government for bringing U.P. to the level of other states. This was so despite the fact that the development of primary education in general and of girls' education in particular at all stages in U.P was much below the average for all the States. Elementary education was primarily the responsibility of the State Government and progress in this field was achieved in accordance with the financial capabilities of the states. But to enable the education system to play its role effectively in the process of national development "it is essential that besides ensuring that all people get the benefit of education, it should also be arranged that the level of educational attainment among people would not be too disperate between sexes, among social groups and across geographical regions."

5.2 Problem of dropouts

The problem concomitant with enrolment of girls was one of their retention in school. The Council for the Status of Women in India (CSWI) found in 1971 that of every 100 girls enrolled only 30 reached class V. But according to a U.N. Lok Sabha Debates, July 1967, Vol. 1 Col 14677
Study, at least four years of continuous study in educational institutions will give permanent literacy. In the absence of four years of schooling and back up library system, the drop out girls dwindle to illiteracy. Of all the children enrolled in primary stage in 1973, 67.73 per cent of girls and 58.61 per cent of boys did not reach the middle school stage. Figures for the year 1979-80 show that 59.8 per cent children dropped out of the school system by the end of the primary stage and 76.6 per cent by the end of the middle stage. Even during the Sixth Five Year Plan period out of every 100 children that entered Class I only 36 completed class V. The proportion of drop outs had remained almost unchanged since the beginning of planning in the country. The reduction in the drop-out rate for boys and girls was only marginal.

But as the Kothari Commission pointed out:

"The task of universal education begins when the children are enrolled in class I. It is completed only when they are successfully retained till they complete class VIII." 

A study of the enrolment pattern in classes IX to XII revealed that in class X the enrolment was only 79.38 percent of class IX while it was 29.50 percent in class XI and 17.37 percent in class XII. Amongst boys X, XI and XII enrolments were 80.69 percent, 31.59 percent and 18.88 percent, respectively of class IX boys' enrolment while amongst girls these figures were 76.36 percent, 24.65 percent and 13.37 percent respectively of class IX girls' enrolment. The retention of girls in schools in classes IX onwards was much less compared to that of the boys. The fact that more girls than boys are withdrawn from school reflects basic differences in parental and societal attitudes towards the sexes in general and towards investing in their education in particular.

In rural areas girls who were withdrawn from school predominantly belonged to families with little or no land and with limited resources e.g. families of agricultural labourers, small farmers and artisans. In urban areas the girls who did not attend schools were from families that lived in slums and whose adult members worked in a variety of poorly paid, low status occupations and jobs such as those in the unorganized or informal sector. In both urban and rural

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6 Women in India, Ministry of Social and Women's Welfare, p. 44
7 Sixth Five Year Plan p. 224
8 Kothari Commission Report p. 157
areas, the elementary school participation rate of girls from the Scheduled Castes and tribes tended to be comparatively low. Prior to 1975 the rate of drop outs and non-enrolment of girls was generally attributed to social attitudes that did not favour the education of girls. The Committee on the Status of Women in India had observed that except in the case of particular communities whose cultural taboos might prevent girls from attending schools, other factors were responsible for their non-enrolment.

The committee identified involvement in labour – paid or unpaid, distance of the school and the consequent problem of security faced by the girls and absence of women teachers as obstacles to women's education and reasons for their dropout from school.

Three major sets of factors are responsible for low enrolment and poor retention of girls in school. The first comprises economic considerations which cause parents to withhold or withdraw their daughters from school; the second consists of societal attitudes leading to non-enrolment of girls; the third refers to the educational structure and the character of elementary schools that affect the enrolment and retention of girls.

5.2.(a) Economic constraints/considerations.

The most crucial factor retarding the growth of women's education was economic. For most poor people to whom a square meal was the overriding concern, sending their daughters to school was the last thing on their mind. Though education for girls up to the higher secondary education is free, the direct cost of education such as expenses for uniforms and books can be heavy burden on poor families. If only one child could be educated, it had to be a boy who would, at a later stage, look after the old parents. It is worth noting here that discrimination against women is rampant not only in India but all over the world so that 2/3 rds of the 900 million illiterates in the world are women. The vast majority of children of elementary school age who have never enrolled or dropped out come from families with very limited income and assets and low in the caste and occupational hierarchy. Their parents tend to be illiterate or semiliterate and have either never attended school themselves or have very little education.9

9 Unesco Publication 1986, p. 11
Parental dependence on the earned and unearned income of the children resulted in their non-enrolment and withdrawal from schools. C.S.W.I (Committee on the Status of Women in India) identified involvement in labour, paid or unpaid, as a concrete obstacle to the growth of women's education. Based on the 32nd National Sample Survey, the Planning Commission estimated the number of working children at 17.4 million in 1983. Children, both boys and girls, work in restaurants, match factories, carpet and textile factories, in shops etc. or in domestic service in private houses. There is practically no data available on children who work as domestic workers, non-domestic non-wage workers, bonded labourers or those engaged in marginal economic activities. Many girls from poor rural families are in fact child labourers. Engaged for the most part in unpaid work, their tasks include domestic charges such as fetching water and fuel, cooking, sweeping, washing clothes and looking after younger siblings. These rural girls also have responsibilities on the farms during the planting, growing and harvesting seasons. Officially recorded work force participation rates for girls aged 11-13 are significantly high, 24.3 percent in rural areas and 9.3 percent in urban areas. Most working girls are found in the primary sector (86.4%).

The diversity of the work and the time spent on it has been explored in a time allocation study of work patterns in rural families in Rajasthan and West Bengal. The data collected also allowed a comparative study of the boys' and girls' work load. In Rajasthan, on an average, girls 5-9 and 9-14 years old worked everyday for 5.5 hours and 7.7 hours respectively, compared with 1.8 hours and 8.6 hours respectively for boys. Girls from Rajasthan worked longer hours in agriculture and allied activities than boys. In both Rajasthan and West Bengal, girls spend far more time on domestic work than boys.

In India child labour in socially accepted and economically important. Though legal prohibitions are there, these cannot be enforced.

The use of child labour is likely to continue among the peoples of the Third World because as long as fertility is high and children are loyal to their parents, it is an economic resource available to families with few other resources.

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11 Ibid p.13
12 R. Le Vine and M.I. White, Human Conditions – the Cultural Basis of Educational Development, p. 175
Almost the entire child labour force remained, even in 1985, outside the ambit for formal education. The census reported that only about 2 per cent of the rural girl workers and 1% of the urban girl workers in the elementary school age-group of 6-13 were attending school in 1981.  

This happened despite the fairly wide understanding of the need for girls' education. The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women noted that 77.8 per cent of the respondents in its survey rejected the statement that girls should not be given any education. The 1976 Report of the Gujarat Socially and Educationally Backward Class Commission (SEBC) noted that almost all heads of tribal households surveyed agreed that girls should be educated upto standard VI.

The poor return from girls' education also resulted in their non-enrolment in school. While the basic aim of education was development of mental faculties and potential, its practical aim was securing suitable employment. Lack of job opportunities after schooling resulted in frustration among the girls themselves and discouraged them to go for formal education. Even the vocational courses at the secondary level were conceived with little imagination. These offered neither a reasonable chance of worthwhile employment nor any advantage towards entry into professional education. Female education, thus, had only a 'status' value and had practically no economic function. As Dr. Phulrenu Guha pointed out in the Lok Sabha.

"...The number of women who get the opportunity to work in very insignificant. In 1971 census it was stated that 52.5 per cent of the able-bodied male population is actually working. But only 13.8 per cent of the able bodied women population were found to be working."  

High direct cost of education, the need for child labour at home, the low returns to parents from investing in daughter's education were important factors responsible for non enrolment of girls to school.

5.2.(b) Societal and parental attitudes :

The societal environment which constantly "pigeon-holds women as wives,
mothers, home-makes and housekeepers has made education irrelevant to the girls”. Even the average women of India did not really care for a high school certificate or a college degree which was inconsequential to her future life. Parental perception, that their daughters who were destined to be house-wives and mothers required little formal education, reinforced traditional low priority to girls' education.

The social customs which continues to favour early marriage for girls also caused their withdrawal from school. Although instances of child marriage were on the decline yet it could not be completely stopped by law simply because laws were powerless against tradition.

According to 1971 census the mean age of marriage of females in rural India was 16.7. Accepting that girls, specially in rural areas were not admitted to school at the right age of 6+, a girl did not complete her education till class VIII before the age of 16. Most of the rural girls were withdrawn from school before they reached puberty. Education was to them an alternative to marriage.

The following table gives the mean age of marriage for rural and urban areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A personal survey conducted in several girls' schools in the backward locality of Calcutta, identified early marriage as the main cause of withdrawal of girls from school. The girls themselves seldom protested against the system which gave preference to marriage over education – thus reinforcing the notion that education provided the waiting period for marriage. However, from the late seventies the occurrence of early marriage was less frequent, though not completely absent. Yet, a report published in the newspaper indicates that even in 1992 nuptial knots were tied on thousands of children, many of them infants in an age-old practice in Rajasthan. "Akha Teej", a particular day in the year, was
considered auspicious for solemnizing marriage without consulting any pandit.16

5.2.(c) Structure of schools

Though less important than economic constraints and social attitudes, the structure of schools also play an important role in determining girls' attendance in elementary school. Some of the factors responsible for high rate of dropouts were 1) large number of primary or incomplete primary schools with three classes almost forcing the pupils enrolled in them to drop out; 2) the 'inefficient' primary schools where only one teacher was in charge of classes I to V 3) an uninteresting methods of teaching. As already mentioned, the Fourth Education Survey (1978-79) had indicated that 34.75 percent primary schools were single teacher schools. In enrolment and drop-out studies, parents' explanation for non-enrolment or withdrawal of daughters included: lack of interest in education, failure or lack of academic progress, inconvenient location of schools, absence of teachers and irregular functioning of schools. These responses indicate inferior quality of education available to children of the poor – in both urban and rural areas.

5.3 Reorientation of education and curriculum

A very important issue pertaining to education was one of reorienting the system according to the changing needs of the country. It was felt that "in order to strengthen national unity, promote social integration, accelerate economic growth and generate moral, social and spiritual values," reform of the education system was urgently needed. But in spite of the expressed awareness, the old Colonial system of education was allowed to continue with marginal changes. Possibly, the staggering expenses required for the transformation was responsible for the perpetuation of the old system. Or may be, the framers of the education policy themselves, coming from upper and middle class families, being products of Colonial education, preferred to retain the same elitist system. Whatever may be the reason, no serious attempt was made to make education fruitful to the millions of boys and girls who lived outside the upper and middle class periphery. Perhaps the only effort to relate education to the aptitudes of the pupils and the requirements of the country was made at the secondary level through diversification of curriculum. Different subjects including vocation

16 The Telegraph, 4th May, 1992
oriented subjects were introduced at the secondary stage. A child could choose the subjects according to his/her aptitude. The result, it was expected, would bring two-fold benefits – (i) less pressure on higher education as a large section of the students would go for vocational training and (ii) the growth of technical hands, which the country needed. Yet, the subjects offered at the secondary stage testify that the framers of the curriculum were not free from gender bias. Subjects like carpentry, plumbing and even electrical repairing were reserved for boys whereas Health and Nutrition, Home science, Child-care etc. were subjects offered to the girls. Accepting that these subjects were more suitable for women, we have to recognise that a girl might grow up to be a good electrician or a good plumber, if given an opportunity. A recent report revealed that the tribal and backward women of Banda, Uttar Pradesh, were working as plumbers, tractor drivers and hand pump mechanics thus challenging the existing gender inequalities17. By and large, the diversified secondary education did not help the women to remove the gender stereotypes.

Reorganisation of education involved formulating appropriate curriculum. Since the educational needs of all children, irrespective of sex, is the same at the primary stage, the same curriculum was decided to be followed for both. But since the purpose of education was different for boys and girls the curriculum was to be differentiated at the secondary stage. It was felt that "if education had any value for a girl it must make her more fit for household work and daily life." The necessity for the girls to seek employment led to a demand for common curriculum. Thus differentiated curriculum slowly gave place to diversified curriculum at the secondary stage.

...Education will be related to individual capacities aptitudes and interests which are not related to sex. There would, therefore, be no need ... to differentiate curricula on the basis of sex.18

Despite the attempt to diversify curriculum, girls, specially from rural areas did not enrol themselves to school. Besides, the tribal people who might be classified as hunters, fishers, shifting cultivators, settled agriculturists, nomadic cattle rearers or workers in plantation remained outside the purview of school

18 Report of the H. Mehta Committee p. 54
education. Even the larger tribes, the Santhals, Gonds, Bhils and Oraons continued to avoid formal education. Speaking a variety of dialects which differ from major Indian languages, they pose a difficult problem for the Government. To educate the tribals it will be necessary to appreciate their culture and draw up a structurally different education system. Needless to say, the tribal girls demonstrate little interest in education.

5.4 Outlay on Education

While these problems plagued the progress of women's education, the independent Indian Government, fully aware of the education scene, adopted several measures to counteract these regressive forces. Apart from making girls' education free up to the secondary stage and adopting scholarship schemes, the outlay on education was also increased, at least in absolute term, through successive Five Year Plans. (Rs. 169 crores in the First Five Year Plan to Rs. 2524 crores in the Sixth Plan). Unfortunately teachers' salaries, rent and contingencies had been taking up almost all the funds available thus reducing other necessary items to a minor share. This was particularly true of rural areas. Teachers' salaries accounted for 90 per cent of the total expenditure and very little money was left for equipments, libraries, laboratories and materials required for handicraft. Hence, the total outlay on education had to be increased further if adequate rate of growth was to be ensured. Unfortunately, however, though, the outlay on education was increased, it varied from 3 to 4 percent of the total plan outlay. A moderate expectation of expenditure to the tune of 4 to 6 percent of the total national income could not be fulfilled. This happened in spite of the Resolution on National Policy on Education which stated –

... The aim should be gradually to increase the investment in education so as to reach a level of expenditure of 6 per cent of the national income as early as possible:"

Excepting the Third Plan period, the share of education in the total plan outlay had been declining from one plan to the other. This low allotment on education explains the inherent failure of the Government to introduce universal free primary education.

Educational growth is related to the volume of expenditure on it. The following table shows that as expenditure on education increased, the enrolment
figures both for the boys and the girls also increased at the primary level.

### Table 5.2 Outlay on Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Enrolment of boys</th>
<th>Enrolment of girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td></td>
<td>137.7</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951-56</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>175.3</td>
<td>76.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-61</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>233.8</td>
<td>109.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961-66</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>301.2</td>
<td>195.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-69</td>
<td>307</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-74</td>
<td>823</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The successive Five Year Plans

Applying the formula for correlation between expenditure and enrolment we get a positive number as co-efficient. It implies that when expenditure on education in a year was above average, change in enrolment also was above average and vice versa. This demonstrates that enrolment responds positively to financial expenditure both in case of boys and girls. Since correlation for boys exceeds that for girls, the data set reveals that financial incentives mattered more for the boys than for the girls. In calculating the expenditure according to the Plan outlay, the special incentives offered to the girls in the forms of attendance scholarships, free uniforms and books have been excluded. If our data is to be accepted, then the question that emerges is why did financial expenditure have differential effects? Apparently, the response of the women to the attempts to develop education was less than the response of the boys.

### 5.5 Voluntary Agencies

The staggering expenditure required for education could possibly be shared by voluntary or private agencies. In the past, private funds used to come into the field of education in substantial amount. Private enterprise, as the Committee of Members of Parliament had observed, had made and could make useful contribution to the progress of women's education. So, as pointed out by K.L. Srimali, the Deputy Minister of Education, the policy of the Government was to encourage the growth of private institutions both at secondary and collegiate levels.
It should be our endeavour to give liberal assistance to voluntary organisations and to strengthen the association of the people in the development of education at all stages.\(^{19}\)

There were three types of private schools. First, the private institutions run by religious minorities. The Constitution guarantees the right to establish such private schools which are entitled to grants in aid from public funds. Secondly, private schools charging high fees and providing a high standard of education were also set up. The richer sections of society, particularly in urban areas, were beneficiaries of such schools. Thirdly, private schools were established by voluntary agencies to serve the poorer people in rural areas. Such institutions lacked necessary equipments and good teachers and hence could not impart education of good standard. Notwithstanding this, their contributions in the field of education cannot be ignored. These schools imparted education both to the boys and the girls, sometimes separately and sometimes through co-educational institutions. The state had encouraged the private schools to function specially in distant areas because it was an "economic device" and costless to public treasury.

The extent of private enterprise varied from State to State. In States like Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the old tradition of private schools had survived and private enterprise occupied a very important place. But in several states like the Punjab and Madhya Pradesh it provided only a small proportion of the total number of schools.

Apart from opening schools, private enterprise helped the growth of women's education by setting up hostels and vocational training centres. The Government gave financial assistance to these projects. By the end of 1984-85 voluntary agencies were assisted in the construction of 344 hostels for working women. Nearly 3000 women were given training for modern industries and provided employment. Employment and income generating "Training cum Production Centres" for women, condensed courses of education and vocational training courses were also organised by a number of voluntary organisations benefiting 1,11,000 women\(^{20}\).

According to a report, non-government funding of education as a proportion of total expenditure on education had fallen from 32.01% in 1950-

\(^{19}\) K.L. Srimal's speech at the 27th meeting of CABE in A Biswas and S. Agarwal (ed), Indian Educational Documents, p. 51

\(^{20}\) Seventh Five Year Plan, important notes p. 324
51 to 11.27% in 1983-84\textsuperscript{21}. Yet, we must not undermine the efforts of individuals and social organisations in promoting women's education. Religious minorities like the Christians, the Muslims and the Khalsas had set up girls' schools. Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj, Sanatan Dharma and Ramkrishna Mission had also established educational institutions for girls. Besides setting up schools, the All India Women's Conference also agitated for more and better education for women. Recognising the supportive value of private and voluntary enterprise, Government provided aid to most of the minority schools and voluntary organisations. Aids in the form of Dearness Allowance was also offered to the teachers serving in these schools. But after independence since the state started taking greater initiative in the field of women's education, these voluntary organisation began to take less interest in it.

Still as long as there are people who have funds to spare, there is no reason why they should not be induced to offer land and buildings and also funds for financing hostels, laboratories and libraries to be named after them. It is possible that the response will not be very large, in spite of the tax concessions allowed on such donations, but whatever is available should be harnessed for the common good\textsuperscript{22}.

5.6 Problem of priority

Apart from these basic issues that the Government had to settle while developing women's education, it had also to face a few problems relating to general policy formulation. It had to determine the area of priority in education, i.e. the stage of education which should receive maximum support from the public fund. There was a strong view that primary education should be accorded the highest priority, specially in view of the constitutional directive. On the other hand there was also the opinion that elementary education contributed to social justice, but not to economic growth. Hence, greater emphasis ought to be placed on post-primary education and the making of future leaders of India. Shyama Prasad Mukherji, spoke against curtailing expenditure on higher education on the ground that future nation builders must be highly educated. It may be argued

\textsuperscript{21} The Telegraph, 20th November, 1993, P.T.I. Report
\textsuperscript{22} Bhabatosh Datta Commission Report p. 293
that higher education was required to produce nation builders, policy formulators, scholars or scientist but it should not flourish at the cost of elementary education. If a large number of children are deprived of even the basic elementary education, their inherent talent can neither be determined nor utilised. Studies have shown that investment in elementary education yield the highest rate of return and have significant impact on productivity and the general well being of the masses. Universal elementary education also means provision of equal opportunities to all. Despite this, in practice, secondary and higher education was emphasised possibly because education policy framing was done by men from upper and middle classes whose interest lay in secondary and higher education. A comparative study of the total expenditure on education and the proportionate allotment to primary, secondary and higher education, will reveal that the expenditure on education was tilted in favour of higher education. In 1950-51 expenditure on primary sector of education constituted the largest proportion (43%). It was followed by expenditure on high/higher secondary sector (29.7%). By 1976-77 the share of primary education in total expenditure had declined to 27%. The largest increase in educational expenditure was registered by middle schools. Its share for this level doubled from 9.9% to 20.7%.\textsuperscript{23} It is clear that our education system had not been greared to serve the interest of the masses. The provision of education for all children in the age-group of 6-14 had never received adequate resources and attention. It may logically be argued that since the majority of the non-enrolled children were girls, this policy of emphasizing higher education in preference to primary education adversely affected the education of the girls more then than it did the education of the boys. Yet, the Government was bound by the Constitution to provide universal free primary education!FN.

It will be wrong to assume, however, that the public education policy was solely responsible for the speedy growth of secondary and higher education. The socio-cultural and economic changes that were slowly but unmistakably taking place in the post independence decades made its spread imperative. There was also an increase of public demand for it. The expansion of elementary education itself created a pressure from below which gradually mounted up to secondary and higher sectors.

\textsuperscript{23} Challenge of Education, p. 216
\textsuperscript{FN} See Appendix Fig. 5
Besides, as has already been pointed out, the rising cost of living forced many women to seek jobs outside their home. The job seekers, in the face of competition, looked upon secondary education as the minimum and university education as the optimum education they needed to have. The requirement for jobs generated demand for education and consequently enrolment of girls to school. At any rate, the large number of students seeking higher education is "not so much an index of the desire for higher education, as of the failure of economic planning to provide employment to the growing labour force."

The reason for this scramble for education among the girls was not merely economic. It had a social significance as well. Formal higher education was considered to elevate an individual and her family culturally and socially. The strongest social support for girls’ education, however, came from its increasing demand in the marriage market. The demand for educated brides compelled the parents to send their daughters to school.

Another social development – the rising age of marriage brought many girls to secondary schools and even colleges. While the practice of child marriage hindered the growth of women’s education in rural areas and among backward communities, the rising age of marriage helped its progress in towns and cities. Since the age of marriage for girls rose to 16.7 for rural women and 19.2 for urban women, the unmarried girls started going to school.

But then, why was there a gap between the enrolment of boys and girls even in 1985, presuming that consciousness about the utility of girls education had been aroused? The answer to the question may still be found in the societal structure of the country. Social milieu exercises a major influence on the educational environment. What is essential is a complete transformation of social ethos and attitude of the people. If absolute equality – social cultural and economic – can be acquired by the girl, then women’s education will follow as a natural corollary.

Finally, it must be mentioned that it is only through constant preaching and education that a change in the social thinking can be brought about. Educating the girls is not only valuable in itself but is also the surest way to secure their contribution to economic growth and overall development of the country. Hence arises the need to tackle the problem of women’s education on a war-footing.