Chapter Two

Problems in the Growth of Women Education in Rajasthan

2.1 Introduction

Rajasthan is located in the northwest India. The state borders Punjab in the north, Haryana and Utter Pradesh in the northeast, Madhya Pradesh in the east and Gujarat in the south. On the west, it shares a long stretch of border with the neighbouring country Pakistan. Situated on the Thar Desert, Rajasthan protects the western border of the country. The state of Rajasthan has an area of 342,239 sq. km. and a population of 56.51 million. The population of the state continues to grow at a much faster rate than the national rate. (Census 2001)

In the State of Rajasthan, majority of people earn their living by agriculture and rearing animals. There are sharp differences in terms of terrain, modes of livelihood, social structure and diverse patterns of settlement. Industrial and manufacturing sectors do not have significant presence. Income pattern of the various segments of society are highly uneven. Therefore, to ensure that education is universalised and available to all the segments of society is all the more important. The main challenge in the State of Rajasthan confronting the formation of strategies for spread of education is the inclusion of girl child in its fold. Considerable reforms are required for the spread of education to the underprivileged and marginalised groups of the society especially girls, dalits, migrants and nomadic so that they can access the infrastructure created for education in Rajasthan. The object and result of reforms in the field of education should be able to provide adequate avenues for livelihood so that they can improve the quality of their living. Despite considerable increase in investment in the infrastructure for expansion of education the success achieved is low which requires higher participation of the common man and decentralization of the system which would mean the direction and control of programmes should have joint participation both by the common man and the Government.

For successful education strategy lessons should be learned from success stories and examples should be taken of the best practices. In the state of Rajasthan women education has always been the subject of experimentation. Government should incorporate positive factors from the programmes like Non Formal Education, Shiksha Karmi, Lok Jumbish, etc., and then only the education strategies for future should be formed.
Improvement in literacy rate was highest in Rajasthan, as compared to other states in India between 1991 and 2001 during which period literacy rose from 38.6% to 61.03 percent, and literacy rate for males increased from 54.99% to 76.46% and female literacy rate from 20.44% to 44.34%. Despite high growth during this decade the challenge is still substantial with low improvement especially in rural areas, women, schedule castes and schedule tribes. The education scenario is thus constrained on dual fronts – on the one hand achievement level is relatively low in absolute terms on the other hand its distribution across social groups is highly uneven. Therefore, in educational terms the worst sufferers in Rajasthan are women.

Going back in to the history the reasons responsible for lower female education in Rajasthan are found to be - social discrimination, gender based inequality, cultural and religious differences, involvement of girls in household occupations, low level of admission of girls to schools, etc.

2.2 Gender Based Inequality

“Gender inequality holds back the growth of individuals, the development of nations and the evolution of societies to the disadvantage of both men and women”. Gender issues are not simply talking about women’s issues. Understanding gender means understanding opportunities, constraints and its impact of change as they affect both men and women.

The term gender is used by the society to refer to the socially constructed character traits and role expectations which society has defined differently for men and women. It is these socially constructed gender differences that have most often been used to subordinate or oppress women. Generally speaking, the character that is stereotypically used to describe a ‘man’ is largely viewed as positive or neutral, such as strong, big and aggressive, while the character of a ‘woman’ is often viewed as negative – timid, shy, weak, small and so on.

Gender, Age and Generation are the predominant factors influencing the family structure in Rajasthan. Rules laid down by Manusmriti around the period 200 BC define the role, responsibility and female behaviour. Few of the rules defining the duties and responsibilities of woman are –

1. ‘a young girl, a young woman, or even an aged woman is supposed not to do anything independently even at their home’
2. ‘husband must be constantly worshipped as god by a faithful wife despite of his being devoid of good qualities or virtues’ (Wadley 1988)

In the circumstances the behavioural rules make a young woman powerless and at a serious disadvantage making them secluded, subservient and deny self esteem resulting into serious implications on woman’s control on their fate and even on their reproductive choice. (Jejeebhoy, 1994)

These norms are deeply rooted in the social setup of the society and their impact occurs on the behaviour of the man and woman in the family domain and immediate kinship network. Seclusion of a woman is considered a virtue and honour of the family to which she belongs. Large number of restrictions is imposed like movement outside the home, veiling or partial veiling (ghunghat or purdah) of head and face, a strict code of conduct for interaction with men. There are regional and community based norms for seclusion which are also governed by the economic and social status of the particular family and community. In wealthy and higher caste families in Rajasthan strictest purdah system is being observed. The tradition of village exogamy amongst Hindus puts strict surveillance on a young bride who is required to always keep her head covered and rarely socialise. There is no opportunity to create social network. This makes her stranger in her home as well as in the outside village. (Mandelbaum, 1986 Jeffery and Lyon, 1989).

During past quite some time increase of western influence on lifestyle, increase in urbanization and the development of tendency of girl education have reduced the parental influence of seclusion. However, no data is available to measure the magnitude of this change.

Directive principles in the constitution have laid down that, within 10 years, free and compulsory primary education should be provided to females up to the age of 14 years. However, the 1981 census data suggest that only 1/3rd of the girl population between 5-14 years age (lower numbers in rural areas) were actually attending school as compared to ½ of all the boys. Question arises why despite such a great concern laid down by the Constitution the rate of female literacy, their enrolment to schools and attendance is so low. Answer lies both in availability of educational opportunities for them and the willingness amongst the various social groups (Jejeebhoy, 1994). The basic cause is reluctance of the parents for educating their daughters vis – a – vis the education of their male children which is seen more as an investment towards future financial returns. Education of girls is not seen as an
advantage to the family as they are to migrate to other family after marriage whereas male child is seen as a support to the parents in their olden days. The other predominant factor for not educating girl child is that their role is considered to be only reproductive and in rural areas for working in the fields as an agricultural labourer requiring no formal education.

Due to patriarchal norms and exogamy in some of the areas girls are married off in distant districts and are required to remain in seclusion during their reproductive years. Even if they work they are not allowed to control their wages resultantly even the working women are also not able to support their parents making it a disincentive for the parents to provide them education. Besides, work opportunities for women are limited and even if wherever available their wages are extremely low. As such, comparatively women education rate is higher in areas where work opportunities and wages are higher (Rosenzweig & Evanson, 1977). Some better educated boys prefer better and higher educated brides resultantly some parents now prefer to educate their daughters.

As boys go to schools girls replace them in labour besides doing their usual household work responsibilities. It is shocking to note that the percentage of girls of 11 to 13 years of age in rural labour force which was 24 percent in 1981 has gone up to +30 percent. Also less than 2% of such girls who were engaged in rural labour attended school. On the other hand during the same period there is decline in boys in rural labour force by around 8% which implies that there is shift in the quantum of labour in rural work force from boys to girls due to increase in the level of education of the boys. The more pathetic part of it is that roughly 40 million nonworking girls of the age group of 11 to 13 years are not sent to schools and are kept at home for fulfilling household responsibilities. In rural areas although both boys and girls perform household responsibilities girls work for longer hours than boys for performing activities like procuring water and collecting fuel, cleaning, cooking, rearing younger siblings and seasonal work on their family farm. Although the earning capacity of these girls is lower than the boys of the similar age group, the opportunity cost for their parents in not sending them to schools is high due to their utility in the maintenance of household functions and hence they are not sent to schools (Jejeebhoy, 1993). Also the utility of spending money on their education being the least of use, parents in rural areas are unwilling to bear the direct cost of educating their daughters. Although in Government Schools there are no tuition fees for girls, the cost of books and other study materials, uniforms, transport etc. is a heavy burden which many poor families in rural areas are not in a capacity to bear. They prefer to incur that amount of expenditure on their boy siblings than daughters.
Besides, the future cost of educated daughters is considered to be higher as educated girls will be required to be married to better educated boys only, who demand higher dowry. Another disincentive for sending daughters to schools is concern for their virginity. Because schools in rural areas are located at longer distances (Table 2.1), teachers in these schools are generally males, schools are common for both boys and girls on account of whom parents are unwilling to expose their daughters to possible assault of virginity which plays a vital role in removing young girls from schools.

On account of the above factors there is poor demand for education of the girls. Supply factors have also failed to counter these obstacles. School timings are inflexible to the labour demand on young girls, schools are not conveniently located, almost 10% of the villages do not have primary schools, 15% do not have a middle school, and there are no female teachers. The ratio of female teachers in primary and middle schools is less than one third. Although some of the Government Programmes exist to cover cost of text books, learning material, uniforms to poor girls, these programmes are not suitably administered and do not cover the areas where literacy rate of girl children is extremely low and calls for sensitive strategies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Average Distance from the Village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>34594</td>
<td>1.5-2 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPS</td>
<td>20791</td>
<td>2310</td>
<td>23101</td>
<td>3-4 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>4686</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>5122</td>
<td>6-7 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Secondary</td>
<td>1869</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>2312</td>
<td>12-15 km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Director of Education, Government of Rajasthan, 2001*
2.3 Social Customs Related to Women in Rajasthan

2.3.1 Sati

A social custom known as ‘Sati Pratha’ was prevalent in Rajasthan amongst some communities wherein a woman whose husband expires was either voluntarily or by force or coercion would be required to immolate herself along with her deceased husband. It was more prevalent in the then provinces of Bengal and the Rajputs of Rajputana. One traditional view about Sati Pratha was that the husband and wife are two bodies but one soul and thus if husband is dead it results in the death of a wife, it brings fame to her faithfulness and loyalty. Therefore, in ancient India wife used to join her husband on his funeral pyre. Slowly, it became a traditional practice in Hinduism. Another view associated with Sati pratha is that during the Mughal period after the defeat in the battles, the Rajput women used to do Jauhar (Self-immolation) to protect their dignity from the victorious mughal army. In the eighteenth and nineteenth century the orthodox and the traditional people of the society started forcing the wife of a dead man to self-immolate herself and thus accompany her husband’s dead body in the funeral pyre.

In the nineteenth century as per the traditions of Bengal, “Becoming a sati was an important social custom and hence, must be accepted stoically.” Social reformer Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar pleaded the case of widows and thus said:

“Oh poor India!...you think the woman whose husband dies immediately turns into a stone; she does not have sorrow anymore, cannot feel pain anymore and all her senses of passions and sensualities disappear without trace suddenly! But you well know that such notions are based on false pretences as evidence to the contrary abounds. Just think how these erroneous notions are poisoning this world. How sad! The country, whose male population is unkind, unreligious and unaware of the distinction between the good and the evil and don’t care about justice and fairness and where abiding the rituals is the chief preoccupation of religion, should not give birth to girls!”

Around 1812, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, a social reformer from Bengal, started campaign against this evil practice. For this he started convincing widows not to so die, and wrote articles against Sati Pratha and tried his best to prove that Sati Pratha was not required by the Hindu scriptures. Resultantly, on 4th December, 1829 this practice was banned by the then Governor Lord William Bentinck. The abolition of sati can be seen as a great moment for Indian women and a first step taken towards their freedom.
But in the past six and a half decades at least forty cases of Sati have come in light in the rural areas of Rajasthan and most of these in the district of Sikar near Jaipur (Capital city of Rajasthan), and possibly many more unpublicised cases. Thus, can we say that the outlook towards the women has changed and they are given the freedom of choice, freedom of life if not the freedom of expression or the right to education as per our constitution?

2.3.2 Purdah

Purdah Pratha is a custom where women are supposed to cover their face in front of the male members of the family and outsiders. Gradually Purdah Pratha along with child marriage became compulsory in the Hindu society pushing women in the darkness of ignorance. There is a difference of opinion on the issue whether the Purdah Pratha was prevalent in ancient India or not. Some researchers are of the view that in pre-Muslim era it was not prevalent, whereas some are of the view that Hindu women used to wear veil even before the Muslims came to this land. The available evidence on this point is of a dubious nature and can be interpreted to support either of the two views. However, it is beyond doubt that Purdah was not in vogue before the century 200 B.C. During Indo Iranian times women had liberty of freely moving in the society and of managing their agriculture activity, if required. In Vedic period also education of girls and boys was together. There was a tradition during Vedic period to show the bride to all the assembled guests at the end of the marriage ceremony, the purpose was that the bride should be able to express herself with composure as she grows elder. Presence of females in social and public functions was quite welcome and a normal feature. Rather anything graceful or charming was being compared by Vedic poets with a beautifully attired lady going out for attending a function. In century 500 B.C. ladies used to attend courts of law to establish their inheritance claims. (Nirukta) Neither Rig Veda contains any reference to Purdah system nor there do any reference in the scriptures dating to century 500 B.C.

2.3.2.1 Origin of Purdah

The origin of purdah can be credited to the ruling aristocratic Rajput families of the then Rajputana following the Muslim invasion of the 12th century. The general upheaval brought about by the invasion, as well as the direct attacks upon the Hindus, created an atmosphere of insecurity among the people specially women. Attracted by the beauty of the Hindu women the Mughal invaders used to whisk them portraying no value for their life and honour. Thus, to save the honour of the women and the family strict purdah system was implemented by the
society on women. Purdah provided protection against covetous eyes; outsiders were denied even a glimpse of a woman’s physical appearance. Consequently, fear of the invading Muslims, and the idea that purdah could provide protection led to the widespread adoption of the custom. It gave an assurance for the security of life and honour of the women. All these benefits made it easy for the custom of purdah to penetrate Hindu society not only in Rajasthan but throughout the country. The custom of purdah was initially adopted as a security measure but later changed its face as a mark of respectability and a status symbol.

2.3.2.2 Impact of Purdah Pratha

Purdah pratha started a rigid demarcation in the society on the basis of gender. Common women simply veiled her face at home in the presence of the male members, elder or younger in the in-laws house. She was allowed to venture out of the house only when garbed in a thick sheet of cloth that gave her full cover, from head to toe. Among the women of the royal families visibility was strictly denied. This decline in public visibility eventually became a complete seclusion of women in the four walls. A cursory observation of the *zenana* (ladies) palaces of Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Udaipur and others, reveals an interesting feature of architecture i.e., the presence of high walls with small windows located high up in the palace, overlooking the central courtyard and providing a general view of the exterior. The conditions of purdah dictated the presence of *jali* or screen across the windows.

Due to strict observance of purdah education to the girls was given at home in the higher class families, tutors used to come to the palaces to teach them the necessary aspects of education. While in the lower classes, girls were denied education as all the teachers in the schools in those days were male teachers; therefore, parents were reluctant to send their girls to the male teachers. Thus, purdah system increased illiteracy of girls in Rajasthan.

The effects of urbanisation and modernisation proved inimical to the institution of purdah. New infrastructure made its way to urban centres and cities; advances in science and technology; a variety of means of transport and communication; facilities for education; health and medicine; clubs; and basic services like electricity and water. Most of the traditional families discovered that they were better-off leaving their traditional homes and migrating to the cities. This move affected their lifestyle and brought about changes in their way of life. The new houses that were constructed for their families followed a different pattern and were comparatively more open for the women of the house. Women learnt to take
care of their personal matters. In such a set up, strict purdah observance was no longer possible, and relaxations were inevitable.

Purdah, in its relaxed form, is still observed by the women of Rajasthan. It is the public manifestation of purdah—which was essentially observed by most of the women—that has ceased to operate for the vast majority. At the same time, rural women in their original towns and villages continue to observe a sort of public purdah.

Traces of purdah observance can still be seen in specific public gatherings organised by the traditional Hindu communities. For marriage celebrations, for example, separate arrangements for men and women are made for the assembly and seating. A certain degree of separation between men and women can be witnessed on such occasions. Mixed gatherings can also be seen on other non-religious and informal gatherings. In the domestic set-up, as well, there has been relaxation to some extent. The restriction on married women speaking directly to older male relatives—or even appearing before them—has been relaxed to a certain extent. Today, in some families, young daughters-in-law simply veil their faces in the presence of their fathers-in-law and other older relatives; they are no longer required to remain behind screens. In many other families, they converse directly, if and when necessary.

Purdah observance has been practically abandoned. To be sure, women continue to cover their heads, using either the end of their sarees or odhnis. This is merely a mark of respect for the elders. These practices are considered to be cultural traits that try to preserve the dignity of women today.

2.3.3 Child Marriage

Gender equality goes back to the Vedic times. During Vedic period woman played an equal role to that of man in sacrificial rites and upholding ‘dharma’. With the advent of time there developed a belief, probably a misconception that women are weak and needed protection.

The strategy of protection goes back to the time period of Manu. Manu considered woman as an object to be protected by man. According to Manu;

“Pitha Rakshathi Kaumare
Bhartha Rakshathi Youwane.
Rakshathi Sdhavire Puthra
Na Sthree Swathnthuramarathi..
It means that in childhood the woman must be protected by her father, in youth by her husband and in old age by her sons. Thus a woman is denied independence.

The ardent desire to preserve the purity of a girl for upholding the honour of the family is the key factor contributing to early marriage. As per the society norms, virginity and chastity are the precious possessions of a girl. This undue importance given to the chastity paved the way for the seclusion of girls from interaction with others and early marriage (Child Marriage), to protect the girls from possible sexual abuses. This in turn leads to the withdrawal of the girl students from school on attaining puberty to protect girls from sexual harassments. The high rate of dropout of girls at the secondary level of education in India indicates the attitude of the parents to restrain the girls from education on attaining puberty. Thus they prefer early marriage as a resource to protect the girls from sexual exploitation.

Apart from this, another reason for child marriage is the practice of giving dowry, among the higher classes. Traditionally dowry was not a common practice among the lower caste, and most of them followed the opposite custom of bride price. In the recent years, despite the legislation prohibiting dowry, the custom of dowry has been extended to both the high and the low classes. It is also to be noted that the quantum of dowry increases with the age and educational level of the girls. Thus, parents prefer to keep their daughters uneducated and get them married at the earliest. There is also a custom of mass marriages on the day of Akha Teej in Rajasthan to avoid much expenses as well as this day is considered as an auspicious day for marriages. The newspaper reports clearly reveal that during Akha Teej thousands of child marriages takes place in Rajasthan. It is always difficult to gather specific data of child marriage in the absence of registration, reports coming from rural areas confirm the open violation of the law against child marriage (The Hindu, 2003).

According to B. S. Nagi, in Rajasthan people are reluctant to depart from this custom, inspite of the work of social action groups, including governmental and non-governmental organisations, people continue to adhere to the traditional custom of child marriage.

Early marriage is still a custom may be seen from the figures given on the next page (Table 2.2 and 2.3):
Table 2.2
Percentage of married girls’ age wise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Currently Married</th>
<th>Married without Gauna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-12</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Rural: percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Currently Married</th>
<th>Married without Gauna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-12</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-14</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>17.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-19</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2.3
The singulate mean age at marriage in Rajasthan from 1961 to 1998-99 as per the NFHS-2 (age in years)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961 Census</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971 Census</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981 Census</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991 Census</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-93 NFHS1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99 NFHS 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: National Family Health Survey India: Rajasthan. 1998-99)
It may be seen that the mean age at marriage for rural girls is still below 18 years. Also girls between the ages 6 to 14 are getting married but are waiting at their parents’ place because they have not reached menarche to start their reproductive role.

2.3.3.1 Educational Impact of Child Marriages

As per the Constitution of India, education is the basic human right (Article 13, 26 (1), “Universal declaration of Human Rights 1948”) which stands in the forefront of all the fundamental rights (Article 45, Constitution of India). It develops human personality and a sense of dignity and increases the respect for human rights and fundamental freedom. It empowers the individual with necessary skills, expands personal choice and induces self-confidence. It equips the people to cope better with work, family responsibility and social obligations.

Women’s education produces profound positive effects in the socio-economic scenario. Mr. K. Venkatasubramanayan, member of Planning Commission observed that the educated women have comparatively less number of offspring who are generally healthier and they are normally in a better economic state.

Education is a necessary factor which empowers a woman to manage the household affairs with perfection. The observation made by Geeta Rao Gupta is quite pertinent in this context: “that education is not a magic pill but it boosts the confidence of a young woman, enhances her life skills, and equips a woman to make her own judgement. It enables her to assert her right to select the man and time of her marriage. Education also shifts the skewed distribution of power between a woman and her husband. Besides, it provides vocational skills, economic empowerment and freedom from dependence.”

But in Rajasthan, in the matter of education, there is biasness between girls and boys. In a patriarchal society, parents give prime importance to the education of sons and compel them to continue their education at any cost. But girls are often denied such an opportunity. From childhood onwards, girls are destined to take their traditional female roles such as looking after younger siblings and domestic animals and helping the mother in household affairs. Many parents still believe that investment in girl’s education is a waste because she is going to be married and work in another house. Even though girls’ education is free in Rajasthan, the incidental expenses like buying books and uniform are not affordable to many poor
families. Some parents insist on stopping the education when girls attain puberty for the fear that while at school she may be exposed to the risks of sexual harassment, pre-marital sex and pregnancy. If we observe table 2.4 percentage of child marriages is maximum in Rajasthan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States</th>
<th>10-14 years</th>
<th>15-19 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>55.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>55.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Registrar General of India*

### 2.3.3.2 Child Widowhood

The worst thing associated with early marriage is child widowhood. The child brides married to older men soon become widows. Sometimes they become widows even before the marriage is consummated. In orthodox Hindu society, it is difficult for the widows to get remarried. They become instruments of social discrimination and isolation. No means to earn, they easily become prone to social malpractices such as illicit relations and prostitution. As stated by Swathi Ghosh, they are often abandoned in remote pilgrim centres by families.

Deporting them to a distant land was a convenient strategy to get rid of them. Deserted by their families, they quickly fall prey to the grossest forms of exploitation. Many of them are forced to adopt flesh trade for getting their livelihood. Paucity of economic independence, want of family support and illiteracy are the major factors which prevent them from asserting their rights. These isolated and marginalised innocent child widows present a miserable and failing picture of Indian Legal System.

Another evil practice prevailing in Rajasthan associated with widows is ‘Nata Pratha’. According to this practice, the women are sold without their consent as a commodity by their
father to a third person for a meagre amount of money ranging from 10,000 to 50,000. The husband of the woman also gets a share in the name of ‘Jhagna’ a price mutually agreed upon (The Hindu, 1998).

The amazing fact is that the matter is generally settled by the Panchayats. In these transactions every party including the woman’s father, husband (if alive) and the Panchayat authorities exploit the woman to get the maximum amount. It is indeed shocking that even after 65 years of independence the practice continues uninterrupted.

2.3.4 Female Foeticide and Female Infanticide

Half of the human population on this earth constitute women but in spite of that they are differentiated, humiliated and exploited inspite of the fact that in which country they live in, whatever religion they propagate and in which era they live in. Everywhere women are facing innumerable challenges of her survival. Our constitution states “right to life” for all the human beings but women are denied this most basic and fundamental right, “the right to life” due the the worst forms of violence against her, i.e., ‘Female Foeticide’. Female foeticide prevails in many states of India. It is the elimination of a female embryo or a foetus after the pre-natal sex determination for the want of a boy.

Woman is created equal to man in all the areas. “Women have equal rights with men on earth; in religion and in the society they are a very important element. Divine justice demands that the rights of both sexes should be equally respected since neither is superior to the other in the eyes of Heaven.” These authoritative statements from the Bahai’s writings are regarded by Bahai’s as expressions of the Divine Will.

This practice of female infanticide and female foeticide has created the social imbalance and is leading to serious problems like sexual abuse of woman, sharing of woman within and outside wedlock and insecurity of women in the society. The most surprising fact is that the problem is grave in urban areas rather as compared to rural areas, and among educated rather than uneducated women.

The research conducted in the state of Rajasthan reveals;

- In prosperous urban areas the ratio of girl kids to boys (between the age of 0 – 6) is comparatively declining fast as compared to 2001.
- In rural areas where modern ultrasound technology is not available birth rate of girl child is more but due to non availability of public health facilities survival rate is low.
• Due to lower survival rate in rural areas, selective abortions in urban areas and a trend for smaller families’ aversion to daughters is deepening.
• Laws relating to pre natal sex determination and selective abortions are being flouted and the sex determination technology is widely being used for avoiding birth of girl children.
• Ultrasound technology is largely being considered a safe mode to plan a family.
• Therefore, despite laws and Government policies for protection of girls’ rights and improvement in their literacy rate, education and employment, pressure to have male children is seen increasing.

As stated above the ratio is declining fast in the urban areas despite better literacy level and economic condition, this is due to dowry system and thus birth of a girl child is a burden for educated people and girls being the other man’s property parents think raising a girl and spending money in her upbringing and education is a sheer waste. If the same money is spend on the upbringing of a boy and his education, the parents are in a position to demand dowry as per their wish.

The crime statistics during 1997-1998 shows an increase of 8.8 percent in female foeticide and 6.5 percent of female infanticide. In some communities of Rajasthan, birth ratio, naturally expected to be that of 100 males for every 103 females are dramatically lowered to 60 females for every 100 males (Jain Sharda, 1999). The declining number of females in sex ratio is the direct consequence of female foeticide and female infanticide.

In relation to female foeticide, I have collected and compiled some of the comments of the eminent people cited after the incident of female foeticide occurred in Navagarh district of Orissa. Magsaysay award winner and India’s first woman IPS officer Kiran Bedi on 04.08.2007 (Saturday) in Bhubaneswar said, cases of female foeticide could be prevented only when people changed their mindset. “People should not consider a girl child as a financial burden. There are lots of opportunities for girls now to choose a career option. Take my example, we are four sisters but all of us are well established.” Ms. Bedi said. The senior police officer while addressing hundreds of students and their parents at the 19th Foundation Day celebration of DAV School, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar, said, “only framing of laws was not a solution to prevent the heinous crime, people should come forward to lodge complaint on these incidents and then only the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques
(Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act could be properly implemented” (The Hindu, 2007).

The leader of opposition in Parliament and BJP MP Mrs. Sushma Swaraj while addressing a function (in Cuttack on 01.09.2007) by an all India youth organisation to launch its campaign “Jago Maa Jago” to save female foetus has confessed that Legislative action and enforcement of law has failed to put any check on mass scale female foeticide in the country. She has appealed the youth of the country to launch a nationwide campaign by taking the help of the religious priests to save the threatening sex ratio in the country. National Women Commission member Manju Snehlata Hembram who was also present in the function also endorsed the views. Mrs. Swaraj mentioned that as a Union Health Minister several measures were started by her for preventing female foeticide by making tennis player Sania Mirza as a female role model, none of the plans succeeded because our society is guided by blind belief of having a male child mental block.

She mentioned that rituals like “Shraddh”, “Pind Dan”, performing last rites by a son etc. have made strong belief in the minds of the people that without a son/male child in the family their soul will not rest in peace after death. These beliefs and notions which are not true are needed to be removed from the minds of the society to give a place of pride to the girl child (Article published in The Hindu on 5th August, 2007).
2.3.5 Dowry

As per the definition of dowry as given in the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and as amended in 1980 gifts of jewellery, clothes and cash traditionally given by groom’s family are also covered by the law and declared illegal. The Act provides “any property or valuable security given or agreed to be given either directly or indirectly by one party to a marriage to the other party to the marriage or by the parents of either party to a marriage or by any other person, to either party to the marriage or to any other person at or before (or any other time after the marriage) in connection with the marriage of the said parties”
2.3.5.1 Dowry vs Stridhan

As per Hindu customary practice Stridhan is the exclusive property of a woman and includes gift of money, jewellery, property or a share in family business given to a female as a daughter/sister, wife or daughter-in-law. It also includes gifts or wealth given to her by her parents or in-laws at the time of her marriage. No one in the family can touch it and it passes from mother to daughter.

Due to illiteracy generally it is taken away by force. Even in the case of extreme emergency if it is used for family needs it is expected to be returned with interest. Traditionally stridhan given to a girl at the time of marriage is as per predictable norms a pre-mortem inheritance. But in the present times it has degenerated to dowry and is emerging as a problem because it started getting related to the groom’s income and status of his family in society. Higher the groom’s social and financial status equally higher dowry is asked from the parent of the daughters.

Dowry became a device for disinheriting daughters from the parental property and started pushing them towards the darkness of illiteracy and has become a social permanent menace. All Indians irrespective of caste, creed, region or religion, have to give dowry in one form or the other. The system of giving dowry to the bride’s parents has gone topsy-turvy. Now the groom’s parents put a dowry demand in advance and the bride’s parents will have to give it in any way if they want to marry their daughter. Since the girls being an anta-property (paraya dhan) are to be married and sent to another house, the parents have to manage the dowry at any costs. Therefore, many parents consider that having a daughter is a great financial liability. Due to such thinking in many cases girl baby foeticides occur. And those who allow the girl to take birth, take the birth of the girl as an inauspicious happening and thus, no joy or celebrations are arranged. It cannot be denied that the girls, that is, women are the genesis of the human society, but they are the victims of this serious gender bias due to dowry system.

When a girl child is born families start diverting their economic resources for future expenditures on their marriage resultanty they are denied good and expensive education as this expenditure is not considered to be an investment of good return in future. According to Janice Raymond (1994 pp. 24) girl children are given breastfeed for shorter duration than required and are also not immunised that deteriorate their health and cause sickness. Girl children are not supported by their biological families adequately because young brides are favoured in some parts of the country and especially in Rajasthan where in their husband’s
family they are considered a cheap labour to perform household and farm activities. Also they do not question any injustice done to them.

2.4 Human Trafficking in Rajasthan

The third largest source of profit for organised crime is identified as Human Trafficking besides weapons/arms and drugs which generate billions of dollars annually. The labour used in trafficking works under exploitative conditions and is gross violation of human rights and labour standards. The victims work under the fear of no option. In this business children and more particularly girl children are at greater risk than adults who are held under the control of the perpetrator.

Rajasthan is one of a State where trafficking of women and girls is done for commercial sexual exploitation along with Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. Out of 32 districts in Rajasthan, 27 districts (Alwar, Tonk, Dholpur, Sawaimadhopur, Bharatpur, Jaipur, Pali, Bundi, Chittorgarh, Udaipur, Jalore, Jodhpur, Hanumangarh, Dausa, Dungarpur, Bhilwara, Barmer, Rajsmand, Ajmer, Jhalawar, Nagaur, Banswara, Baran, Shriganganagar, Sirohi, Jaisalmer and Sikar) are infested with some or other form of prostitution, where women are traditionally or circumstantially forced to undertake Commercial Sexual Activities for the survival of their children and families.

Brothel based organised commercial sexual activities are rampant in the eastern districts of Rajasthan, along highways and main roads. It is mostly rife among the Scheduled castes such as Nat, Kanjar, Bediya, Santiya, Sansi, Banchchada. The major districts involved are Alwar, Tonk, Dhaulpur, Bharatpur, Bhilwara, Chittorgarh, Bundi, Jhalal and Sawaimadhopur. In the western districts of the State of Rajasthan, i.e. Sikar, Nagaur, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Churu, Jhunjhunu, Bikaner, Hanumngarh and Ganganagar, women belonging to various castes such as Navak, Od, Baori, Damami, Sikhlinagar and Mazhabi are involved in prostitution individually or in its unorganised form. In Hanumangarh and Ganganagar traditional organised forms of prostitution is also prevalent. In some districts of southern Rajasthan commercial sex activities are being done by various tribal woman for their living. To make a mention some such communities generally found in Baran, Dungarpur, Udaipur, Banswara and Jhalawar districts are Bhil, Garasiva, Akmor, Kalbelia, Banjara, Jogi etc.

In the recent developments, trafficking to Mumbai and Pune in Maharashtra for bar girls has emerged as new phenomena and maximum numbers of girls are taken up from Rajasthan directly or indirectly. 17% women in Delhi brothels come from Rajasthan. Rural Female Sex
Worker in Rajasthan: A Mapping Study by Human Environment Action Research Society, Jaipur 2002, undertaken as the India-Canada Collaborative HIV/AIDS Project had identified 62,204 rural females, 7570 households, and 220 villages engaged in commercial sexual activities in Rajasthan. Out of total number of women trafficked and engaged in commercial sexual activities 25 to 30 percent are minors. Girls forced into sexual activity are generally at the age of puberty. Besides, trafficking of minor girls into commercial sex, a very large number of children are sexually abused and exploited by trafficking them for various economic activities like gem and diamond industry in Jaipur in Rajasthan in which out of 2,00,000 gem workers around 20,000 are children (source ICFTU, “Union investigation reveals dirty end of the diamond and precious stone business” 1997). Similarly a study of US Department of Labour, 1997 has cited the status and problems of leather workers has reported the involvement of children in leather and tanning industry in Rajasthan. This prevalent traditional sanction along with the lacklustre response to this problem by the State Government is responsible for its magnitude. A recent study undertaken by the India/Canada Collaborative HIV/AIDS Project in Jaipur 2002 have revealed that since independence none have enacted a law similar to that in Andhra Pradesh or Madhya Pradesh against religious or traditional sexual exploitation or came out with a plan to remove or deal with the problem even after 5 years of National Plan of Action 1998. State Government’s response to this Union Government Plan is not encouraging and is limited to doing away with the administrative and legal formalities. Despite a large number of women affected by this there is no scheme to rehabilitate the victims and reintegrate them to the main stream of society even within the existing Central Government Plan. In pursuance to the Supreme Court directive in Vishal Jeet Case in 1994 and amendment to ITPA Advisory Committee was formed in 1994. However, formation of State or District level committees is yet to be completed. Similarly as per directions of the Supreme Court in Gaurav Jain case in 1997 as per provisions contained in National Plan of Action 1998 for Anti-Trafficking and Prevention Cells in Red Light Areas/High Supply Areas have not been formed as directed under ITPA. Advisory bodies of social workers as required to be formed under section 13.2(b) of the ITPA for helping the Special Police officers have not been formed despite lapse of 5 years since the formation of the National Plan of Action. Similarly, no action has been taken for establishing training cum employment projects in red light areas have been made nor any centre for HIV infected victims established as provided in this plan. Only one Women Counselling and Protection Centre was set up in Mahila Thana, Gandhi Nagar, Jaipur in the year 2002 and orders for establishment of 6 such police stations in range headquarters were issued on
Although Zila Sahayta Samities for care and protection to woman in need have been formed but there is no data to reflect their functioning status. In the entire state there is only one help line run by Rajasthan University Women Association.

Four children home for boys, one for girls, 32 destitute homes run through NGOs and 1 rescue cum rehabilitation home viz. Rajya Mahila Sadan is located at Jaipur. One mahila sadan for rehabilitation of destitute woman and victims of CSE is under construction at Sanganer township in Jaipur in the proposed name of Bharat Ratna Mother Teresa Mahila Sadan. A rescue cum rehabilitation home viz. Balika Grah is being run by the Government for girls of 16-18 years of age. 12 counselling centres are functioning in Rajasthan – five in Jaipur town, two in Kota and one each at Ajmer, Jhalawar, Parat, Mawalpur and Udaipur. Out of these 12, eight are being run through Central Social welfare Board and 4 through State Social Welfare Board.

High supply areas are being targeted for economic empowerment through Kishori Balika Yojana, Kishori Shakti Yojana, and Swayamsidha Yojana. Though as per the policy, priority is given for admission of girl child of victims in hostel/boarding homes of education department but there is no clear picture regarding the number of beneficiaries. Conclusion may be drawn from the above facts that there exist serious gaps in the State policy and priority. The Supreme Court directives in 1990 (Vishal Jeet) and in 1997 (Gaurav Jain) Case and the National Plan of Action has made little difference to the State government. The State government seems out rightly unconcerned with the violation of the constitutional rights of the SC, ST and backward sections of the society and the human rights of the victims. It is totally insensitive to the State obligations to protect the citizens.


**2.5 Conclusion**

**2.5.1 Right to Education**

The importance of education has been recognised in Indian policy making from the very beginning. Article 45 of the Constitution of India stipulated that the State would endeavour to provide, within 10 years, free and compulsory education for all the children below 14 years of age. As per the 93 Constitutional Amendment 2001, article 21 will be followed by article 21 A, stating that the State shall provide free and compulsory education for all children between the age of six to fourteen years.
Rajasthan is facing lot of problems for girls in the area of educational access, their enrolment and achievement in primary education. These problems are; (i) availability of schools in the rural areas which are non-functional, (ii) absenteeism of teachers, (iii) lack of female teachers, (iv) poor quality of education, (v) poor infrastructure, (vi) distance between the village and the school, (vii) poor quality of education, (viii) single teacher schools, (ix) lack of basic amenities like chalk, blackboard, etc., (x) unwillingness of female teachers to be posted in the villages due to which parents become reluctant to send their girl child to the school (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5
Number of Male/Female Teachers in 2002-03 (Rajasthan)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>71676</td>
<td>26913</td>
<td>98589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Primary</td>
<td>105993</td>
<td>38087</td>
<td>144080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>39942</td>
<td>13315</td>
<td>53257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Secondary</td>
<td>35942</td>
<td>15227</td>
<td>51169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Director of School Education, Government of Rajasthan

Along with the initiatives of the State in the field of education even the parents are showing the interest in education for their girls, but gender difference is also equally strong. Still marriage for girls is of utmost priority when compared with education. As per the various educational plans of the State Government community participation has been given priority but in reality the participation of community has been very low. Due to poor quality of teaching and lack of educational facilities children from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minorities are deprived from schooling. The academic performance of these children is poor and thus their parents are not interested in sending them to school. At home too children do not get conducive environment to study due to drunkeness of their father and the prevailing poverty in the family.
Dropout rate (Table 2.6) is closely associated with the financial status of the family, in the poor families dropout rate is highest as compared to the lowest rate in the rich families. Thus children from the poor families are prone to illiteracy and thus when they become adults they are again trapped in the vicious circle of poverty due to illiteracy. Due to poverty of the family and family having many children to go to school it becomes a financial burden on the parents to pay the fees, buy books and uniform, and thus the easy way out is not to send the children to school. To overcome this financial burden parents choose to send their sons to the private schools and the girl child to a Government school where fee is negligible. Sons are send to the private schools because it is a common perception that education in the private schools is good compared to the Government schools.

### Table 2.6

**Dropout rate in various years at different levels in Rajasthan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>IX-XII</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>63.38</td>
<td>56.66</td>
<td>23.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>66.79</td>
<td>59.21</td>
<td>20.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>68.45</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>19.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Director of School Education, Government of Rajasthan*

### 2.5.2 Discrimination against Girls in Education

Due to various social, religious and cultural prohibitions girls in Rajasthan are deprived of education. In this chapter I have tried to focus on the factors responsible for the deprivation of education for the girls like gender discrimination sati, child marriages, dowry, widowhood, purdah pratha, female infanticide and foeticide etc. One more belief associated with higher level of education of the girls is that if girls are highly educated they take their own decisions, disobey their parents and there is problem of finding a proper match for them and therefore, their marriage becomes a problem. Once girls attain puberty parents like to withdraw their girls from the school because they are worried for their sexual vulnerability. Child marriages
in Rajasthan are associated with the dropout rate of girls from school. All the above mentioned social factors are the cause of poor literacy ratio (Census 2001);

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th>MALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>44.3%</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above mentioned ratio as per the Census 2001 clearly reflects that due to the gender disparity throughout the State of Rajasthan the male literacy ratio is at par with the national ratio, but female literacy ration is lagging far behind the national ratio.

Therefore, it can be stated that ‘gender bias’ is the main cause of high levels of illiteracy among girls in the State and there is an urgent need to sensitize parents, families and society towards educating their girls.